

“The Journal of Sciences and Travel”

A review of the 1947-1949 editions

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Editorial form & educational mission

*The Journal of Sciences and Travel*¹ [*Ziarul științelor și al călătoriilor*] is a particular form of continuity in the process of modern architectural discourse dissemination nationwide. Its particularity derives from the very type of popular science publication, following the American models of *Popular Science* (1872), *Popular Mechanics* (1902) and the French *L'Aerophile* (1893), thus a potential pretext for less censored information and special views on architecture during the communist regime. Through this dual presence in the Romanian cultural life, equally unique and popular, yet a niche of the Stalinist propaganda (1947 – 1949)², the journal runs strong as an educational tool and contact with the international scene of the time. Initially close to a “form without content”³ type of mimicry, *The Journal of Travels and Adventures by Sea and Land* [*Ziarul caletoriilor și al întemplărilor de pe mare și uscat*] is created in 1884 by Luigi Cazzavillan⁴ and Victor Anestin⁵ and printed in monthly editions all the way through the two World Wars until 1949. During its 65 years of life, this popular science magazine remains a direct connection to the international machine age technology, graphic design trends and up-to-date industrial information. Through its correspondents in New York, Paris, Berlin, Moscow and Asia, translations of articles, technical manuals and Jules Verne books, it inherently educates. The American model of magazine is adopted not only in content and layout, but also through initiating “The Science for All” Library⁶ or “Universul” Technical Library⁷, where manuals for product designers, engineers and aviation pilots are translated by the *École Polytechnique* ones, Jules Verne’s fantastic tales published, all supplemented by air models to crop and games to

1 Luigi Cazzavillan creates in 1898 the generically called *The Journal of Travel and Popular Sciences*, 1884-1949, that successively reformulates its title using the same words. The publication was interrupted only during World War I. The editions preserved and accessible for study are published in 1898, 1912-1913, 1913-1916, 1920-1949. The magazine is the first popular science publication and very appreciated during the inter-war period. This study continues *The Machine Metaphor in Modern Architectural Discourse. Le Corbusier and Norman Bell Geddes*, personal doctoral research, thesis defended in 2012.

2 Preserved issues of *The Journal of Travel and Popular Sciences* at the Carol I Central University Library in Bucharest (BCUB) : 1-23, 25-40, 42-44, 46 (1947); 1-6, 8-50 (1948) and 3-15 (1949).

3 Theory showing a major symptom in the modernization process of Romanian culture (Titu Maiorescu, *Against today's direction in the Romanian culture*, 1868).

4 Luigi Cazzavillan (1852 – 1903), Romanian journalist and teacher of Italian origin, the founder of *Universul*, *Tezaurul familiei* and *Frăția româno-italiană* magazines and the “Queen Margherita” Italian School in Bucharest (1901).

5 Victor Anestin (1875 – 1918), Romanian journalist, science popularizer, astronomer and science-fiction writer. Together with Luigi Cazzavillan and continuing another 15 years after his death, Victor Anestin edited *The Journal of Travel and Popular Sciences*, changing the name once and increasing the circulation to 15,000.

6 Biblioteca „Știința pentru Toți”.

7 Biblioteca Tehnică „Universul”.

solve. As well as its *archetype - Popular Science*- the magazine becomes also an outlet for writings and ideas by different debutant authors, fans of the fantastic literature trend. From university teachers signing the articles, to the new polytechnic and architecture students, non-specialist readers and children, the magazine tries to confirm its subtitle: “Written for all to understand”⁸ so very close to the *Popular Mechanics* one, “Written so you can understand it”. The publication’s educational mission is vital all the more so as it takes place in the beginning of the Industrial Age, when science knowledge fascinates and new technical professions appear. The fascination for a *mechanical menagerie* translated into the machine metaphor of Western arts is the context that shapes the modern architect, the urban planner as well as the product designer. Investigating 50 years of journal editions, within this scientific renaissance frame, one may discover the evolution of Romanian engineers: from the 1900’s enthusiasts to the communist missionaries in 1949. The scientific knowledge discourse gradually changes from a literary one focused on western technology between 1898 and 1940, to an equal accent on American and Russian innovations in the 1940’s through 1946, only to end with a soviet-oriented one from 1947 to 1949. The magazine’s graphic design continuously serves this gradual evolution: from Jules Verne-like book covers, fonts, layout and illustrations, to Modernist aesthetics with skyscrapers, airplane crops and Art Deco letters illustrating visions of the future in a two-colour play. Finally, the 1947-1949 layouts use the soviet polychrome aesthetics and the *space race* images. The journal’s cover functions as a poster especially during the communist time, embedding strong images of workers, soviet aviation and engineering, progress through science and architecture. Soviet titles for architecture articles between 1947 and 1949 are diverse: “Houses of paper”, “Technical books written by soviet workers”, “Science in Lenin’s creation”, “Technical standardisation”, “Is living in a glass house pleasant?”, “Matters of artificial illumination”, “The industrial architecture”, “Industrial geometry”, etc. Evolving from World Industrial Fairs, the avant-garde of Marcel Iancu, Modernist villas to social housing solutions, standardised products in glass, wood and metal, the 1947-1949 editions are yet able to gently avoid blind political propaganda. The industrial revolution transporter turns into a mild soviet industrialization one, yet rich in undertones.

Meaningful contributions & understanding architecture

So how does a popular science magazine approach architecture? The industrial age represents a context of superposition between the modern architectural discourse, urban anticipation scenarios⁹, war effects and technical standardisation, all influenced by the new mechanical objects: airplanes, railways, automobiles and ocean liners. In addition to its cultural background, this technical age has the means to communicate, spread and illustrate information. Therefore an editorial strategy through layout and content affixes the beginning of marketing. At a close investigation, one may observe that even though a popular science magazine, *The Journal of Travel and Popular Sciences* [*Ziarul călătoriilor și al științelor populare*] introduces specific consecrated expressions of the modern architectural discourse: from simple terms to Corbusian ones and presents principles of the new industrial aesthetics. This architectural language accompanies illustrations of Western and Romanian modern buildings: Bourke-White-like grain elevator photography¹⁰, urban camouflage

8 „Scrisă pe înțelesul tuturor”, the slogan and subtitle of *The Journal of Travel and Popular Sciences*.

9 The anticipations trend began through European and American literature for urban scenarios in the early 1900’s with authors like H.G.Wells, Lewis Mumford, Harry Petit’s “King’s Views of New York” drawings, Lang’s cinematography and even by Le Corbusier, in *Architecture ou Revolution*.

10 Margaret Bourke-White, the first American woman photographer and the first to take pictures of soviet industrial architecture, especially grain elevators used by Le Corbusier and Norman Bel Geddes in their publications.

war techniques¹¹, and English or soviet models of prefabricated wooden houses during 1945-1949. A special theory article is the one spread in the 34th¹² and 35th¹³ edition of 1932, entitled „The Architecture of today, the Architecture of tomorrow” (fig.III and IV) written upon the five architectural principles, *The City of Tomorrow* book by Le Corbusier and *Alain's twenty lessons upon arts*¹⁴. It marks the gradual introduction of Modern theoretical terms: *machine à habiter*, iron house and floating city as expressions for ocean liners, glass house, etc. By contrast, the standardised language and soviet industrial keywords are presented through practice cases in the 1947-1949 issues: “the carcass type K.I. model 1947” created by the architect Lozovschi and engineer Kolomin - both Stalin prizemen - “the screen type” and “the girder type” social houses. These articles are signed by Russian authors, illustrated in detail and promoted together with special State Bank credits, while the prefabrication industry is described through a metaphor as “the factory of cities”. The exploration of the USSR universe does not exclude the western trend, but in turn it is presented as the best alternative to Finnish or English similar models. If during articles of the 1920's, there is a clear interest in architectural history through built heritage around the world, from Italy to Japan, during Gheorghiu-Dej regime the fascination of progress denies it. One will observe the use of image coupling in order to create subliminal messages, as Le Corbusier did in *Vers une Architecture*. The shallowness of the USSR monumental and social architecture is camouflaged into an engaging spirit through positive visual associations.



The Journal of Travel and Popular Sciences, successively reformulating its title as one may notice on the covers ranging from 1898 to 1949: *The Journal of Popular Sciences and Adventures by Sea and Land* [Ziarul caletoriilor și al întemplărilor de pe mare și uscat] between 1898-1912, *The Journal of Popular Sciences and Travel* [Ziarul Științelor Populare și al Călătoriilor] between 1913-1916, *The Journal of Sciences* [Ziarul Științelor] in 1944-1947 or *The Journal of Sciences and Travel* [Ziarul Științelor și al Călătoriilor] since 1947 through 1949.



The Journal of Sciences and Travel, a selection of articles, 1930 – 1949.

11 Urban camouflage projects are introduced in European, American Polytechnics and architecture schools as workshop activity during wartime.

12 I.J.F., „Today's architecture, tomorrow's architecture”, I, *The Journal of Popular Sciences and Travel*, 34 (1932): 536-538.

13 I.J.F., „Today's architecture, tomorrow's architecture”, II, *The Journal of Popular Sciences and Travel*, 35 (1932): 552-553.

14 Alain, pseudonym of Émile-Auguste Chartier, French philosopher (1868-1951).

After 1949, *The Journal of Sciences and Travel* transforms into *Science and Technique for the Young* [*Știință și tehnică pentru tineret*] magazine, then to the contemporary *Science and Technique* [*Știință și tehnică*], following the *science* trend of the communist Golden Age. This popular science journal remains a meaningful and particular “transporter” of selected architectural information, by sharing it in response to genuine interest.



Left: The cover of the 34th edition, 37th year of publication, dated 23rd of August 1932 and introducing „The Modern Bucharest”.
 Top right: The article „The Architecture of today, the Architecture of tomorrow”, the first part in the 34th edition, 37th year of publication, dated 23rd of August 1932 and introducing Modernist theories and Corbusian expressions.

Bottom right: The article „The Architecture of today, the Architecture of tomorrow”, the second part in the 35th edition, 37th year of publication, dated 30th of August 1932. This second part presents *The City of Tomorrow* by Le Corbusier and focuses on functionalist urban planning principles.

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:

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