

A Music-Oriented Analysis of the Cultural Relations between Türkiye and the USSR

Türk-Sovyet Kültürel İlişkilerine Müzik Yönlü Bir Bakış

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ABSTRACT

Cultural interactions are as significant as political relations in fostering proximity between nations. Many states utilize cultural events to serve their own aims, ideologies, and interests due to their broad appeal and lasting impact. The 1930s marked a period when relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Türkiye were culturally diverse and numerous. The present study aims to analyze the relations between the two countries, with a special focus on the art of music in its cultural dimension. The cultural relations between Türkiye and the USSR in the 1930s, and the VOKS organization, through which the USSR conducted cultural diplomacy activities with foreign countries, are outlined, and the mobility in the field of music between both countries are analyzed. This study seeks to answer questions such as how the USSR and Türkiye incorporated music into their foreign policies and the impact of these efforts on political relations. The study employed sources such as the Ulus newspaper, formerly known as *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* until 1934, the State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, and contemporary sources from Russia and Türkiye.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Relations, Türkiye-USSR Relations, VOKS, Music

ÖZ

Ülkelerin birbirleri arasında yakınlık kurmasında siyasi ilişkiler kadar kültürel ilişkiler de önem arz etmektedir. Hatta daha geniş bir kitleye hitap etmesi ve kalıcı olması nedeniyle pek çok devlet, kendi amaçları, ideolojileri ve çıkarları doğrultusunda kültürel faaliyetlerden yararlanma yoluna gitmişlerdir. 1930'lu yıllar, Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetler Birliği (SSCB) ile Türkiye arasındaki ilişkilerin kültürel bakımdan çeşitlilik ve sayıca fazla olduğu bir sürece işaret etmektedir. Bu çalışmada her iki ülke arasındaki ilişkileri kültürel boyutuyla müzik sanatı özelinde ele almak amaçlanmıştır. 1930'lu yıllarda Türk-SSCB kültürel ilişkilerine ve SSCB'nin yabancı ülkelere kültürel diplomasi faaliyetlerini

yürüttüğü VOKS teşkilatına ana hatlarıyla değinilerek, her iki ülke arasındaki müzik sanatı alanındaki hareketlilik mercek altına alınmıştır. SSCB ve Türkiye'nin dış politikalarında müzik sanatının olanaklarından ne şekilde yararlandığı ve söz konusu faaliyetlerin siyasi ilişkileri ne yönde etkilediği gibi sorulara yanıtlar aranmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında 1934 tarihine kadar adı *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* olan *Ulus* gazetesinden, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivlerinden ve konuyla ilgili Rusya ve Türkiye'de yayımlanan güncel kaynaklardan yararlanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Diplomasi, Türkiye-SSCB Arasındaki Kültürel İlişkiler, VOKS, Müzik

Introduction

The foundations of the close and intimate friendship between Türkiye and the Moscow government were laid in 1919 when the Turkish War of Independence in Anatolia broke out. The representatives of both sides maintained contact during the process of founding their respective countries. The negotiations held by the Turkish Grand National Assembly committees that visited Moscow in the summer of 1920 and the winter of 1921 resulted in the conclusion of a “Treaty of Amity and Brotherhood” on March 16, 1921¹. The collaboration that emerged between the two countries during the war persisted with the influence of various developments such as the 1929 World Economic Depression that had repercussions in the international conjuncture in the wake of the war.² The 1921 Treaty under which Russia denounced the Treaty of Sèvres and recognized the National Pact borders of the Ottoman Empire became the baseline of the relations between the two countries for long years³. The state of war conditions in Türkiye and the civil war in the USSR following the October Revolution became a driving force for the cooperation⁴. The Russo-Turkish relations that gained an official character during Lenin’s rule continued with the foundation of the Soviet Union in 1922, Stalin’s succession following the death of Lenin and the presidency of Mustafa Kemal upon the declaration of the republican regime in Türkiye. Concluded between Chicherin and Tevfik Rüşti in Paris on 17 December 1925 and later extended with the supplementary protocols in 1929, 1931 and 1935, the “Treaty of Neutrality and non-Aggression” regulated the relations between the Turks and the Soviet Union until the World War II and guided all the political developments in this frame thereafter⁵. The official visits between the representatives of the two countries helped to establish the political relations on amicable grounds. The reciprocal relations were reinforced with the visit of a Turkish committee led by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü in 1932 and the return visit by a Soviet committee led by B. Voroshilov in 1933 so as to attend to the Tenth Anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye⁶.

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- 1 Erel Tellal, “Sovyetlerle İlişkiler”, ed. Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası*, S. 2, 1919-1980, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2019, p. 173-174.
 - 2 Tünay Aras, *Erken Dönem Türkiye SSCB İlişkilerinde Kültürel Faaliyetlerin Rolü (1923-1935)*, Unpublished master thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul, 2021, p. 45.
 - 3 Çağatay Benhür, “Stalin Dönemi Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri”, *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, S. 15, 2004, p. 326.
 - 4 Tünay Aras, “Erken Dönem Türkiye SSCB İlişkilerinde Kültürel Faaliyetlerin Rolü (1923-1935)”, p. 41.
 - 5 Çağatay Benhür, “1920’li Yıllarda Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri: Kronolojik Bir Çalışma”, *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, S. 24, 2008, p. 277-313.
 - 6 “Türk Sovyet Dostluğu”, *Ulus*, 12 Kasım 1935, p. 2.

Both the USSR and Türkiye established a common identity on their revolutionist and populist qualities and took great care to celebrate each other's special days via both telegrams and messages published in newspapers that announced friendship and intimacy. By virtue of the Tenth Anniversary celebrations of the Republic of Türkiye, Soviet newspapers, especially *Izvestia*, published editorial articles to make an outline of the ten-year activities of the Republic of Türkiye and mentioned the achievements as education, industry, culture and art in various fields⁷. Turkish newspapers, on the other hand, published articles that spoke of Soviet-Turkish friendship on special days such as Labour Day on May 1 and the anniversaries of 1917 October Revolution which were enthusiastically celebrated in Moscow every year⁸. Moreover, parties were held at the embassy building in Ankara on the anniversaries of the foundation of the Soviet Union where many members of parliament, diplomats and journalists partook and gave friendship messages to the USSR⁹.

In their earlier periods, the USSR and the Republic of Türkiye engaged in a cultural interaction with each other which coincides with the 1930s. Both countries intended to further their political and economic relations with these events and actually obtained the chance to get to know each other more closely. The cultural events fall within the scope of cultural diplomacy owing to its role in the international relations.

Cultural Diplomacy: The Instance of the USSR-Türkiye

The insufficiency of conventional diplomacy in the maintenance of the international relations especially after the World War II was compensated with the engagement of and intensive application to alternative foreign policy tools such as public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and propaganda¹⁰. Knowing the significance of cultural events, the political powers wished to control this sphere in line with their goals so as to influence both their own and foreign citizens. As one of the most important elements that help a nation grab attention of other nations, culture was promoted through cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy, a means of public diplomacy, is one of the soft power methods employed without posing a military or economic threat against a target country. Having coined the concept, Joseph Nye defines soft power in his book "Soft Power" as "*the*

7 "Dost Sovyetler Birliğinin Büyük Başları Bugün Geliyorlar", 27 Ekim 1933, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, p. 1-3; "Cumhuriyetimizin Onuncu Yıl Dönümünü Cihan Nasıl Karşılıyor?", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 31 Ekim 1933, p. 2.

8 "Moskova'da 1 Mayıs Şenlikleri", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 3 Mayıs 1934, p. 2; "Moskova'da Yıldönümü Merasimi", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 8 Ekim 1934, p. 1-2; Falih Rıfık Atay, "Sovyetler Bayramı". *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 7 Ekim 1934, p. 1, 5; Falih Rıfık Atay, "Türk Sovyet Dostluğu 15 Yaşında", *Ulus*, 16 Mart 1936, p. 1.

9 "Sovyet Bayramı", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 8 Ekim 1934, p. 1.

10 Tünay Aras, "Erken Dönem Türkiye SSCB İlişkilerinde Kültürel Faaliyetlerin Rolü (1923-1935)", p. 15.

ability to shape the preferences of others” and emphasizes that soft power consists of political values, culture and foreign policy. Nye suggests two types of cultures: superior culture which involves literature, art and education that address the elites, and popular culture which is based on entertainment¹¹.

With cultural diplomacy, it is possible to benefit from all cultural tools of a nation such as cinema, dance, music, painting, sculpture, exhibitions, language training programs, scientific, educational and artistic exchanges, translation of national and popular activities, all cultural programs and expressions. The use of a certain tool is determined by knowing a target audience well¹². Cultural diplomacy does not only address a target group of people nationwide but also aims to create a long-lasting effect on the public through individual relations established with personages who lead a society such as political leaders, intellectuals and artists. However, not all international cultural relations can be evaluated as part of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy gains validity when a cultural sphere is used by a state or official bodies in accordance with certain goals¹³. Cultural diplomacy is one of the methods employed by governments in order to influence other countries in the international arena and to gain legitimacy at the international level so that they can develop political relations¹⁴. The communication and dialog achieved with cultural diplomacy ensure reciprocal respect and trust as well as the adoption of new ideas and methods¹⁵.

Having acquired the power in 1917 after the revolution by the Bolsheviks, the Soviets experienced difficulties in maintaining their relations with capitalist countries. At the end of 1923 when the hopes of spreading the socialist revolution first to Europe and then to the whole world shattered, the Communist Party sought out the ways of recovering from isolation in the international arena. Although the Soviets took their time to build diplomatic relations, their political isolation significantly weakened towards the mid-1920s despite no state in the world approved the idea of a new socialist country. During this process that witnessed the recognition of the Soviets by the Western

11 Joseph Samuel Nye, *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, p. 5-11.

12 Hakan David Rodirik, *Rusya'nın Kültürel Diplomasi Çalışmaları: Castell'in Kültürel Nod Kavramı Üzerinden Rusya'nın Kültürel Diplomasi Uygulamaları ve Ruskiy Mir Örneği*, Unpublished Master Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul, 2019, p. 11-12.

13 Simon Mark, “A Greater Role For Cultural Diplomacy”, *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, eds. Ingrid d’Hooghe & Ellen Huijgh, Cligendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2009, p. 14-18.

14 Aslı Yağmurlu, “Kültürel Diplomasi: Kuram ve Pratikteki Çerçevesi”, *Selçuk İletişim*, C.12, S. 2, 2019, p. 1184.

15 Fırat Purtaş, “Türk Dış Politikasının Yükselen Değeri: Kültürel Diplomasi”, *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, C. 7, S. 13, 2013, p. 2.

countries, intercultural dialog appeared as a promising path to ensure contact with other countries¹⁶.

Emerged in the 1930s in Soviet Russia, cultural diplomacy initially reminded propaganda since it characterized the policy of the USSR. Beyond strengthening the reputation of the country, the motivation behind the emergence of cultural diplomacy was completely different in effect. Among other tools, cultural diplomacy also became a necessity in line with the need for foreign technologies and engineering personnel as a result of industrialization¹⁷. In the following years, the USSR would focus on various goals of cultural diplomacy which allow, such as, improving the country's reputation through cultural elements (e.g. art, science, education and know-how), establish partnerships, reinforce relations, ensure sociocultural cooperation, and protect and enhance national interests. Deeming it necessary to benefit from the advantages of "public diplomacy" in the international politics, the USSR executed it through the party organs and various public institutions with a separate mission defined for each¹⁸.

The perception of both countries that considered the use of such spheres necessary as a requirement of new political regimes in the early 1920s in accordance with their ideologies and the development of cultural and artistic activities¹⁹ gained momentum in the 1930s and resulted in a consolidated cooperation. In this period, no agreement or a written document was concluded to organize the cultural domains or create a cultural cooperation between the two countries. However, it is thought that the Turkish committee, which was led by İsmet İnönü and visited Moscow in 1932, dwelt seriously on this subject and brought cultural cooperation to the agenda during the meetings with the Soviet officials. Furthermore, an inter-ministerial committee created in 1936 would attempt to expand the cultural relations with the Soviets²⁰.

The Soviets used culture and art in line with two main goals, which were to emplace socialism at home and to spread the ideology abroad by developing cultural relations

16 Grigori Aleksandroviç Zaharov, "Naçal'nıy Etap Deyatel'nosti Leningradskogo Otdeleniya Vsesoyuznogo Obşçestva Kul'turnoy Svyazi s Zagranitsey (1954–1955 Godı)", *Nauçno-Tehniçeskiye Vedomosti Spbgpu, Gumanitarnıye i Obşçestvenniye Nauki*, 8/1, 2017, p. 11-18.

17 Yelena Vladimirovna Vasilenko, "Kul'turnaya Diplomatiya Kak Instrument "Myagkoy Sılı" Gosudarstva" *Perspektivi*, 2016, p. 67.

18 Grigori Aleksandroviç Zaharov, "Naçal'nıy Etap Deyatel'nosti Leningradskogo Otdeleniya Vsesoyuznogo Obşçestva Kul'turnoy Svyazi s Zagranitsey (1954–1955 Godı)", p. 10.

19 Oğuz Erdur, "Türk-Sovyet Kültürel İlişkilerinde Muhsin Ertuğrul", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, C. 16, S. 61, 2019, p. 67.

20 Dimitır Vandov, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Sovyet İlişkileri*, Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, p. 253.

with foreign countries²¹. The aftermath of the October Revolution witnessed long governmental efforts to help masses benefit from literature, theatre, music and, in general, fine arts. The government controlled all the fields of art and adopted the ideology of an art revolution²². The themes and the formal language to be used by the artists, who came together to serve the state and the party, when producing a work of art were determined according to the party's principles. Starting with the early 1930s, there were attempts to produce works according to the "Social Realist" sense of art dictated by the Communist Party, and to guide the public through art²³. In other words, here the government wanted to institutionalize all branches of art by linking them to an ideology through the socialist realism movement. The creation of Gosizdat, which would control all publishing works and gather them in a single center with the intention of spreading social culture based on Marxist ideology through art, is an example of this institutionalization²⁴.

As of the foundation of the republican regime, Türkiye desired to make use of the power of art in the creation of a new nation and a modern society. Secluded from being only an aesthetic question, art assumed a determinative role in the appropriation of revolutions and the improvement of the society's level of culture²⁵. The motive behind it was to strengthen the relations with other states while helping the republican regime and ideology to gain legitimacy and create a positive image abroad. Ranging from theatre to opera, music, cinema, exhibitions and publications, these cultural and art events played an effective role in the consolidation of the political, social and economic relations between the USSR and Türkiye and the initiation of the required steps. These events made it possible for the officers as well as the intellectuals and artists of both countries to get to know each other more closely and exchange opinions as to their respective countries and nations.

There were quite a number of reciprocal or mutual events organized. Among these were the joint work carried out by Soviet painter Kirichenko and İbrahim Çallı in 1930

21 Yalçın Lüleci, "Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Sovyetler Birliği Arasındaki Sanatsal İlişkiler: "Ankara: Türkiye'nin Kalbi" Belgeseli Örneği", *İnsan&İnsan*, S. 2, 2014, p. 40-61.

22 "Sovyet Rusya'da Sanat Çalışmaları", *Ulus*, 9 Aralık 1937, p. 7.

23 Yalçın Lüleci, "Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Sovyetler Birliği Arasındaki Sanatsal İlişkiler: "Ankara: Türkiye'nin Kalbi" Belgeseli Örneği", p. 42.

24 Badegül Can Emir, "20. Yüzyıl Rus Edebiyatında Politik Müdahale", *I. Uluslararası Dil, Sanat ve İktidar Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*, Giresun Üniversitesi Yayınları, Giresun, 2018, p. 58.

25 Nilüfer Öndin, *Cumhuriyet'in Kültür Politikası ve Sanat*, İnsancıl Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 69; Suna Aydın Altay, *Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Kültür ve Sanat Yaşamında Ankara İmgesi* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2021, p. 43.

at the Fine Arts Academy of Istanbul, the shooting of the movie “Ankara: the Heart of Türkiye” by Sergei Yutkevitch and Lev Arnshtam in 1933²⁶ and its screening in the biggest movie theatre of Moscow on 2 May 1934²⁷, the donation of various agricultural and hunting artefacts of the Altai Turks to the Ethnography Museum of Türkiye by the Ethnography and Anthropology Institute of Leningrad Academy of Sciences²⁸ the 1930 and 1933 visits of two Turkish education committees paid upon the invitation of Soviet Educational Commissariat in order to examine educational and cultural institutions in the USSR²⁹, the visit of Maxim Gorky to Istanbul in May 1933³⁰, the participation of two Russian intellectuals, Samilovich and Mesfinkal, in the Second Turkish Linguistic Assembly held in Istanbul in 1934³¹, the exchange between the two countries of books, newspapers and journals relating to various fields³², the participation of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Falih Rıfkı Atay in the Moscow Literature Congress on 17 August 1934 which hosted various renowned authors from the world of literature (such as T. Dreiser, Andre Malraux and Y. R. Bloch)³³, the visit of three Soviet medical professors (Danisevski, Luray and Burdenkoyu) paid to the Sixth National Medical Assembly at the Ankara Medical Congress upon the invitation by Turkish Ministry of Health³⁴, the Soviet painting exhibition held in Ankara and Istanbul in 1935 and the return Turkish painting exhibition held in Moscow next year³⁵, the 1937 Pushkin concerts and conferences held in Ankara Community Centre (*Ankara Halkevi*) and the Music Teachers’ School as well as the radio broadcasts on the centenary of the writer’s death³⁶, and the Soviet Books and Artistic Photography Exhibition organized by the Soviet Embassy at Ankara Community Centre³⁷.

26 Yalçın Lülecı, “Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Sovyetler Birliđi Arasındaki Sanatsal İlişkiler: “Ankara: Türkiye’nin Kalbi” Belgeseli Örneđi”, p. 44-50.

27 “Türkiyenin Kalbi Ankara”, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 3 Mayıs 1934, p. 1.

28 “Sovyet İlimler Akademisininin Müzemize Armađanı”, 22 Aralık 1933, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, p. 1-4.

29 Mahad Sofiev Mahmudođlu, “Sovyet Kültürünün Türkiye Üzerindeki Olumlu Etkileri”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, VIII/48, 1997, p. 30-38.

30 Dimitır Vandov, Atatürk Dönemi Türk Sovyet İlişkileri, p. 261.

31 “İki Rus Bilgini İstanbulda”, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 5 Ağustos 1934, p. 1.

32 “Türk-Sovyet Kültür Münasebetleri”, *Ulus*, 10 Kasım 1936, p. 2; Mahad Sofiev Mahmudođlu, “Sovyet Kültürünün Türkiye Üzerindeki Olumlu Etkileri”, p. 32.

33 Burhan Asaf, “Moskova Edebiyat Kongresinde Türk Tezi”, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 6 Eylül 1934, p.1

34 “Üç Sovyet Profesörü Geliyor”, *Ulus*, 3 Ekim 1935, p. 3; Sovyet Profesörlerinin Konferansları, *Ulus*, 15 Ekim 1935, p. 3.

35 “Moskovada Türk Resim Sergisi”, *Ulus*, 8 Ocak 1936, p. 6.

36 “Puşkin’in Yıldönümü”, *Ulus*, 11 Şubat 1937, p. 4.

37 “Sovyet Kitap ve Artistik Fotoğraf Sergisi”, *Ulus*, 31 Mayıs 1939, p. 8.

In the Soviet Union, many fields of art (such as sports, cinema, painting, sculpture, photography, music, theatre and literature) were treated as part of the foreign policy. In this sense, VOKS, an abbreviated form of “*Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Svyazi s Zagranitsey*”, was established on 8 August 1925 to build and develop scientific and cultural ties between the USSR and foreign institutions, public organizations and culture labourers. VOKS was not intended only as a tool of propaganda but was also an association that encouraged dialog with visitors who desired to experience the developing Soviet society and potentially take part in its creation. Containing departments that engage in scientific, technical and cultural activities as well as book exchanges, exhibitions and acceptance of foreigner representatives, VOKS ensured a multi-dimensional cooperation between the USSR and other countries for cultural, scientific and educational ends. Keeping in touch with many countries in the early stages of its foundation, VOKS promoted the USSR throughout the world and maintained a positive image in the international arena³⁸.

Among the founding members of the organization were the People's Foreign Affairs Commissariat, USSR Academy of Sciences, All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS), RSFSR People's Commissariat for Education, Academy of Arts, Revolution Museum, All-Union Book Chamber as well as other institutions and the leading representatives from the worlds of science and culture³⁹. While the delegates of foreign associations and the leading scientists and intellectuals arrived in the USSR upon its invitation, VOKS also took initiatives to send scientists, musicians and theatre companies as well as representatives of education, science and art. VOKS ensured a reciprocal cultural diplomacy between the USSR and other countries and organized various cultural events in various platforms both at home and abroad. The visits hosted by VOKS aimed to introduce the social, technological and cultural advances in the USSR and to conclude reciprocal cooperations⁴⁰.

Culture provided a secure resort knowing that communist propaganda could cause a backlash in a period when the USSR was isolated from the Western world, and Soviet Russia employed the organization to introduce its socioeconomic and cultural structure and the lifestyle to Türkiye rather than the ideology⁴¹. Known as “the Cultural Relations

38 Alla Leoridovna Verchenko, “Vsesoyuznoye Obshchestvo Kul'turnoy Svyazi S Zagranitsey İ Stanovleniye Sovetsko-Kitayskih Kul'turnih Svyazey V 1920-E Godi”, *Vostochnaya Aziya: Fakti İ Analitika*, 1, 2023, p. 8.

39 O Rossotrudničestve, (Çevrimiçi), <https://rs.gov.ru/>, 26 Ocak 2017.

40 Ville Laamanen, “Voks, Cultural Diplomacy and The Shadow of The Lubianka: Olavi Paavolainen's 1939 Visit to The Soviet Union”, *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 52/4, 2017, p. 1025.

41 Tünay Aras, “Erken Dönem Türkiye SSCB İlişkilerinde Kültürel Faaliyetlerin Rolü (1923-1935)”, p. 132.

of Union Societies with Foreign Countries” (*Umum İttifak Toplumunun Yabancı Ülkelerle Kültürel İlişkileri*) in Türkiye, VOKS helped the invitation of and close contacts with politicians and elites. VOKS mediated the organization of countless exhibitions, screenings, concerts and theatre performances especially in Ankara, the capital of the Republic of Türkiye, and became one of the important building blocks of the Turkish-Soviet cultural relations and the associated cooperation particularly in the 1930s⁴².

VOKS undertook various moves such as the communication with and invitation of Muhsin Ertuğrul, Turkish stage and movie director, to Moscow within a short time after its foundation so as to develop the cultural relations with Türkiye in theatre and cinema⁴³, the visit of a Turkish Education Committee to the USSR in June and July 1930 so as to study the Soviet education system, the invitation of N. Ya. Marr and R.L. Samoilvich in March 1933 upon the request of Mustafa Kemal so that they would carry out Turcology studies⁴⁴, the expedition of a Turkish committee involving art historian Burhan Toprak to the fifteenth anniversary festival of Soviet cinema which hosted various countries and was celebrated in Moscow on 20 February 1935 and the art museum, theatre and opera visits held thereunder, the acceptance of Turkish teachers visiting Moscow with the participation of Alexandr Arosev in a banquet given in their honour in September 1936⁴⁵, and the invitation of a Turkish committee to the agriculture exhibition organized by Soviet Russia in 1939⁴⁶.

That these reciprocal visits played a role in the reinforcement of Turkish-Soviet relations was emphasized in both the statements of state officials and newspapers. For example, Yaşar Nabi Nayır⁴⁷, remarked that international interaction in culture and art bore great significance in the cultural progress and convergence of nations as well as the establishment of eternal peace, and that intellectuals and artists played a great role for their maintenance. Therefore, intellectuals and artists from different nations should cooperate and introduce the results of their studies to each other.

42 Gonca Yıldırım, “Kültürel Diplomasi ve Uluslararası Halkla İlişkiler Çerçevesinde Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Türk Kültürü ve Sanatının Uluslararası Alanda Tanıtımı”, *Aydın İnsan ve Toplum Dergisi*, C. 2, S. 4, 2016, p. 243, 247.

43 Tünay Aras, “Erken Dönem Türkiye SSCB İlişkilerinde Kültürel Faaliyetlerin Rolü (1923-1935)”, p. 117-119.

44 Raşid Tacibayev, *Kızıl Meydan'dan Taksim'e*, Truva Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p. 96.

45 “Muallimlerimizin Sovyet Rusyadaki Tetkik Seyahatleri”, *Ulus*, 19 Eylül 1936, p. 3.

46 “Moskovadaki Heyetimiz Şerefine Kabul Resmî”, *Ulus*, 22 Ekim 1939, p. 1; Burhan Toprak, “Arsulusal Birinci Sovyet Sinema Festivali”, *Ulus*, 20 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

47 Yaşar Nabi Nayır, “Kültürel Münasebetlerin Değeri”, *Ulus*, 17 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

“Music” in Cultural Diplomacy

Music is one of the most influential cultural diplomacy tools used for reflecting the cultural values of societies and accordingly influencing a target country. Following the declaration of the republican regime, Türkiye attached a special importance to music policies as part of the creation of national identity and culture⁴⁸. Together with intensive efforts in music studies, Türkiye endeavoured to transform Turkish music as an internationally-accepted genre and help Turkish society adopt polyphonic music. Studies on folk music gained speed especially in mid-1930s⁴⁹.

The initial years of the Soviet power also meant a demanding process in terms of the birth of a new musical culture. Despite the state intervention and oppressive policy in culture and arts, one of the priorities of the government was to realize a cultural revolution in the country while the other was to carry out events that would fulfil the need for intelligentsia and specialists in various fields including music. In addition to enacted laws, legislations and regulations, newly-opened educational institutions were also a part of the vigorous efforts to create and improve musical culture⁵⁰.

Music functioned as the most important step in the cultural and art relations between Türkiye and the USSR. Formed with the attempts by VOKS in the 1920s, cooperation in music, the most efficient component of culture and arts, gained momentum in the 1930s. While VOKS sent the compositions of renowned Soviet musicians to Türkiye many times, Turkish composers also offered their own works to their Soviet colleagues for evaluation⁵¹. As an effective communication tool of the period, radio played an essential role in the improvement and spread of music. This ensured the communication of music events to society. The concert program delivered by Moscow State Theatre with the initiatives of VOKS on the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Türkiye was also broadcasted in Türkiye through radio⁵².

In 1933, Yusuf Ziya Bey, director of Istanbul Conservatory, proposed an exchange of musical literature owing to his contacts with Soviet music authorities and institutions. The authorities of Turkish music schools requested books, programs and other materials

48 Özgür Balkılıç, *Cumhuriyet, Halk ve Müzik*, Tan Yayınları, Ankara, 2009, p. 106.

49 Seda Bayındır Uluskan, *Atatürk'ün Sosyal ve Kültürel Politikaları*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara, 2017, p. 299-368.

50 Lyudmila Valeryevna Tolmatskaya, *Gosudarstvennaya Politika SSSR v Oblasti Muzikal'noy Kul'turi v 20-e - 30-e gg. XX v.* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), Moskva: Rossiiski Universitet Drujbi Narodov, 2002, p. 4-5.

51 Raşid Tacibayev, *Kızıl Meydan'dan Taksim'e...*, p. 209.

52 Raşid Tacibayev, *Kızıl Meydan'dan Taksim'e...*, p. 205.

from Soviet countries and, in particular, from Azerbaijan. Again, in 1933, Moscow Conservatory submitted its education plans and programs for music and concert events to Ankara and Istanbul conservatories⁵³. Cultural interaction achieved expansion to a great extent owing to the visits paid by the leading musicians of both countries. These travels for giving concerts played an efficient part in the introduction of visiting country's musical culture and gaining insight as to host country's music. In 1933, Dmitri Smirnov, renowned Russian opera singer, was invited by Turkish government and gave a highly-acclaimed concert at Istanbul French Theatre⁵⁴. On 19 February 1934 was the radio broadcast of "Contemporary Turkish Music Night" which was played by Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Ekrem Zeki Bey and Cemal Reşit Rey together with Soviet composers⁵⁵.

Having travelled to Moscow in response to the invitation by VOKS so as to closely analyse the developments in music and fine art activities, Zeki Bey, director of Ankara Conservatory, and Ekrem Zeki Bey, his son and a violinist, performed their first concert at Moscow Radio Theatre on 16 April 1934. The concert drew great attention from people and hosted the Turkish ambassador, the representatives of the Foreign Affairs Commissariat, the President of VOKS, Turkstroï⁵⁶ officers, Turkish students and the press⁵⁷. The next day, Zeki Bey and Ekrem Zeki Bey gave the second concert in Moscow with the attendance of many Turkish and Soviet guests⁵⁸. The musicians then perform a third and a highly-praised symphonic concert at the Red Army House which was conducted by Zeki Bey⁵⁹.

In Moscow, VOKS hosted two special events for Turkish musicians: one was reserved for Soviet composers and musicians while the other served as a farewell concert and was sung by Soviet solo singers and conducted by Ekrem Bey. Aiming to familiarize composers and musicians with each other, the events drew many composers and music-lovers from all the segments of the Soviet society young and old alike. The event was scene to discussions on Turkish music and also hosted Professor Ippolitov-Ivanov, the famous composer who had long efforts to apply modern methods to Oriental music and whose "Caucasian Suite" was included in the repertoire of the Turkish

53 Mahad Sofiev Mahmudoğlu, "Sovyet Kültürünün Türkiye Üzerindeki Olumlu Etkileri", p. 36.

54 Dimitir Vandov, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Sovyet İlişkileri*..., p. 264.

55 Seda Bayındır Uluskan, *Atatürk'ün Sosyal ve Kültürel Politikaları*..., p. 381; Raşid Tacibayev, *Kızıl Meydan'dan Taksim'e*..., p. 206.

56 "Turkstroï" was the name of a trust that was established in Russia in 1934 in order to carry out commercial relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the USSR (see Semiz, Y. & Toplu, G., 2019, p. 29-59).

57 "Musikişinaslarımız Moskova'da", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 17 Nisan 1934, p. 1.

58 "Moskova Konserleri", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 21 Nisan 1934, p. 5.

59 "Musikişinaslarımız Konserlerine Devam Ediyorlar", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 24 Nisan 1934, p. 2.

Presidential Philharmonic Orchestra (CFO). The works and collections of the musicians that dwelt on national music were reviewed after the concert of the Soviet composers. The other event held in the VOKS halls, on the other hand, was the second assembly with composers and virtuosos and involved a farewell concert where all the Turks in Moscow were invited to. The audience had a pleasant time with the performance of Soviet musicians and the violin recital by Ekrem Bey⁶⁰. The Odessa concert by Turkish musicians was also given in the VOKS halls. The night was marked by the performances of young Russian pianists and opera singers as well as the violin recital by Ekrem Bey. After the event in Moscow, composers, virtuosos and music authorities celebrated the joy of coming together once more. Following the concert, Zeki Bey made a speech on Turkish music and remarked his sincere thanks to the authorities who allowed the opportunity to see the development of Soviet art and especially the importance attached to music with the invitation by VOKS⁶¹. VOKS presented to Turkish musicians a collection of the works of Soviet composers carrying their signatures. On 27 April 1934, Zeki Bey and Ekrem Zeki Bey set out to Türkiye from Moscow after accompanied to the station by all the Turkish embassy officers led by Ambassador Ragıp Bey, and Soviet artists⁶².

Zeki Bey⁶³ related to his observations in *Hakimiyeti Milliye* newspaper with regard to the Moscow journey with his son, and mentioned the shown interest as well as his satisfaction in meeting with Soviet musicians He also drew attention to the high level of musical knowledge, that music was offered to the whole public rather than being restricted to an elite group and that the state provided all kinds of support to promote it⁶⁴.

As of the early 1930s, many parts of Anatolia, particularly Ankara and Istanbul, became destinations frequented by foreign art groups with many balls, concerts and music festivals being organized⁶⁵. The visits to cultural events held by VOKS were not limited only with state officials and the public concerts and festivals. Foreign guests were accepted and sent off intimately pursuant to diplomacy, and excursions and entertainment programs were organized during their stay. In 1934, violinist D. F. Oistrakh, pianist Guinsbourg, singer M. Kiritchek, Leningrad's leading female opera singer Mme. Preobrajenskaia and accompanist M. Grinberg went to Türkiye in order to

60 Zeki., "Sanat Bahisleri: Moskova Musiki Seyahatinin İntibaları", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 17 Mayıs 1934, p. 5.

61 Zeki., "Sanat Bahisleri: Moskova Musiki Seyahatının İntibaları", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 18 Mayıs 1934, p. 5.

62 "Musikişinaslarımız Geliyor", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 28 Nisan 1934, p. 3.

63 Zeki., "Sanat Bahisleri: Moskova Musiki Seyahatının İntibaları", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 16 Mayıs 1934, p. 5.

64 Zeki., "Sanat Bahisleri: Moskova Musiki Seyahatinin İntibaları", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 17 Mayıs 1934, p. 5.

65 Seda Bayındır Uluskan, *Atatürk'ün Sosyal ve Kültürel Politikaları...*, p. 379.

give three concerts in Ankara and Istanbul in aid of Turkish Red Crescent, formerly known as *Hilal-i Ahmer* before 1935⁶⁶.

M. Kemal Atatürk's speech⁶⁷ at the parliamentary assembly of 1 September 1934 indicating that folk songs and melodies should be compiled and reworked according to the rules of contemporary music sparked the preparations for later revolution in music in Türkiye. Although, in 1935, Atatürk requested of Soviet Official L. M. Karahan to send two musicians to Türkiye as guides and directors, these Soviet music trainers didn't go to Türkiye. Nevertheless, a committee consisting of the composers and musicians of VOKS Radio and the USSR Grand Theatre broadcasted concerts special to Türkiye and sent records of Soviet songs. Towards the end of 1934, VOKS aired two radio concerts especially for Türkiye⁶⁸.

In mid-April of 1935, a crowded group of musicians including those from the USSR State Academy Ballet and Theatre and Leningrad S. M. Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre visited Türkiye to give concerts that addressed everyone from state officials to public. Among the musicians were M.P. Maksakova, V.V. Barsova, P.M. Nartsov and A.S. Pirogov as well as ballets N.M. Dudinskaya, A.M. Messerer, violinist D.F. Oistrakh, pianist L.N. Oborin, conductor and composer L.P. Steinberg, composer D.D. Shostakovich and concert-meister M.I. Saharov⁶⁹. In honour of the artists that were to go to Türkiye, a banquet was given at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow with the participation of Education Commissariat M. Bubnov, Assistant Foreign Affairs Commissariat N. Krestinsky and various other diplomats as well as theatre and movie actors and musicians. Taking the scene to make a speech, Ambassador Vasıf Çınar remarked that the musicians would be welcomed and appreciated in Ankara and that Turkish-Soviet friendship would be reinforced. In his warm response, Soviet official N. Krestinsky suggested that each of his fellow citizens would feel at home in Türkiye and made a toast for the health of Atatürk. In a letter addressed to Turkish Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Çınar stated that the committee bound to Türkiye consisted of the most important Soviet artists and that it would be to the benefit of Türkiye if the necessary hospitality and intimacy were shown⁷⁰. Arkanov head of the Soviet committee of artists, explained the purpose of their visit and said the following on behalf of his country: "We

66 "Sovyet Sanatkarları", *Hakimiyeti Milliye*. 21 Nisan 1934, p. 3.

67 Utkan Kocatürk, *Atatürk'ün Fikir ve Düşünceleri...*, p. 132-133.

68 Raşid Tacibayev, *Kızıl Meydan'dan Taksim'e...*, p. 207.

69 "Sovyet Artistleri Bugün Geliyorlar", *Ulus*, 14 Nisan 1935, p. 2.

70 *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA)*, Fon Kodu: 571 Yer No: 35962/141904/11, (Ankara'ya gelen Sovyet Artistler Heyeti için düzenlenen ziyafet)

came to Türkiye to show the Soviet art. This group consists of the best artists of our country. The initial goal we wish to get from this journey is to introduce Soviet art in Türkiye while the second is to help Türkiye, a friendly country, about art and music. We are deeply moved for being sent as messengers to Türkiye by our government”⁷¹.

In the morning of April 14, the Soviet artists were welcomed at the station by the Ministry of Culture, the Community Centre, the Ambassador of the USSR, the leading representatives of the embassy and journalists. Having visited B. Abidin Özmen, Minister of Culture, before noon, Arkanov called upon the Music Teachers’ School and Ankara Community Centre. The ballet dancers who visited the Community Centre, on the other hand, closely examined the centre and the concert hall. The dancers rehearsed until the day of the concert⁷². A great banquet was given in honour of the guest artists at the Soviet Embassy in the evening of their arrival in Ankara. Attended by Prime Minister İnönü, ministers, parliament members, recognized intellectuals, the musical performance of the Soviet artists was strongly acclaimed by the participants⁷³.

In the evening of April 17, the Soviet musicians gave their first concert for public at Ankara Community Centre. The concert hall accommodated a great crowd as President M. Kemal Atatürk and Prime Minister İsmet İnönü were among the audience who came to see the musicians. Following the chants of Turkish and Soviet national anthems, the Turkish Presidential Philharmonic Orchestra (CFO) played a part from the “Ruslan and Lyudmila” opera by Glinka, one of the leading composers of Russian national music, and “Turkmen Suite” by Shakhter, renowned Soviet composer, as directed by Soviet composer L. P. Steinberg⁷⁴. Concerning “Turkmen Suite” by Shakhter, painter Celal Esad Arseven said: “This piece put us into the atmosphere of Asian lands. It made us yearn for a yet-to-born Turkish music. The melodies of the violins perfumed with the flowers of Turkmen plateaus reminded us of Turkmen girls with golden pendants on their necks and boys playing with their silver weapons when suddenly a wind instrument was heard as if heralding the silence of steppes and made me dream of a shepherd herding his sheep. After that point, all the instruments in the orchestra were emanating different sounds. It was not music but a painting”⁷⁵.

71 “Sovyet Artistleri Bugün Geliyorlar”, *Ulus*, 14 Nisan 1935, p. 2.

72 “Sovyet Artistleri Dün Ankara’ya Geldiler”, *Ulus*, 15 Nisan 1935, p. 1-3.

73 “Rus Artistleri”, *Ulus*, 16 Nisan 1935, p. 1-2.

74 “Dün Akşamki Büyük Konser”, *Ulus*, 18 Nisan 1935, p. 1-2.

75 Celal Esad Arseven, “Sovyet Artistlerinin Konseri”, *Ulus*, 19 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

Having assumed the conduct of CFO and contributed Western European compositions and Russian and Soviet symphonic music to the repertoire of the orchestra, L. P. Steinberg announced that he was honoured to be given the chance of introducing European symphonic tradition to CFO⁷⁶. As the concerts of the Soviet musicians went on, Ankara Community Centre hosted an exhibition demonstrating the historical processes, current affairs and the mode of operation of Grand Moscow Theatre. Comprising of around 300 images, the exhibition showed the stage photographs of both Turkish and great Soviet artists at the Grand Theatre in different costumes⁷⁷.

In the evening of April 18, the Soviet artists performed their art after attending the ball organized by Turkish Education Association in the Community Centre halls⁷⁸. Adorned with flowers, the halls accommodated many guests during the event which was described as one of the most joyous and crowded balls of the season. The guests further rejoiced as President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk attended the ball after midnight. Here, Atatürk invited the Soviet artists at his table and conveyed his appreciation⁷⁹. Among the Soviet musicians, pianist Lev Oborin and composer Shostakovich gave a piano concert on April 19 at the Music Teachers' School. On 20 April, the *Ulus* newspaper published the news "Last Night's Concert by Soviet Artists" (*Sovyet Artistlerinin Dünkü Konseri*) with the drawings by Saip Tuna depicting the musicians⁸⁰. Performed in the evening of April 20 in the hall of Ankara Community Centre, the fifth concert of the same musicians was reserved only for the military officers. During the performance, Arkanov took the stage and expressed their happiness for they had a chance to give a concert in Türkiye, a friendly nation⁸¹. On April 21, pianist L. N. Oborin, composer D.D. Shostakovich and violinist D.F. Oistrakh gave a concert at the Music Teachers' School. That same night, a banquet was organized at the Marmara Mansion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in honour of the musicians⁸². In the evening of April 24, the musicians performed another concert at the Community Centre Hall for its members. The performance started with the pieces led by L. P. Steinberg, the CFO conductor, and concluded in a storm of applause⁸³.

76 Aleksandr Kolesnikov, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk-Rus İlişkileri*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayın Matbaacılık, Ankara, 2010, p. 88.

77 "Sovyet Tiyatro Sergisi", *Ulus*, 19 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

78 "Türk Maarif Cemiyeti Balosu", *Ulus*, 17 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

79 "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün Türk Maarif Cemiyeti Balosunda Sovyet Konuklarla Görüşmesi", *Ulus*, 20 Nisan 1935, p. 1.

80 "Sovyet Artistlerinin Dünkü Konseri", *Ulus*, 20 Nisan 1935, p. 5.

81 "Sovyet Artistleri Dün Gece Ordu İçin Konser Verdiler", *Ulus*, 21 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

82 "Sovyet Artistlerinin Dünkü Konseri", *Ulus*, 22 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

83 "Sovyet Artistlerinin Dünkü Konseri", *Ulus*, 25 Nisan 1935, p. 5.

In the last evening of April, a tea party was launched for the Soviet artists who visited Ankara and stayed there about a fortnight. During the meeting that hosted the Minister of Culture, the Soviet Ambassador and various renowned figures from the circle of art, various folk dances from Aydın, İzmir, Konya and Ankara regions were performed and Erzurum and Köroğlu plays were staged. The *zeibek* dance played by boys and girls drew particular attention. Following the performances, the representatives of both countries made a reciprocal speech of gratitude⁸⁴. Having given 15 concerts in Ankara⁸⁵, the Soviet musicians proceeded to İzmir on May 1 for the same purpose and were welcomed by the notable people of the city. On May 4, a lunch was organized for the acclaimed musicians at the İzmir Municipality City Club where Turkish and Soviet flags adorned the building. During his speech, the Mayor of İzmir pointed out that both revolutionary nations were of sister countries, the Soviets showed the greatest attention to the Turkish nation during a period when Atatürk guided Turkish culture, life and musical revolution, and the epitome for this was the visits paid to the country. He also expressed his gratitude for the musicians for their efforts to familiarize both nations through an important tool like music⁸⁶. After giving 3 concerts in İzmir⁸⁷, the musicians moved to İstanbul on May 8 on board the *Dumlupınar* ferry. In İstanbul, they were able to perform their concerts and travel to historical and touristic sites where the representatives of the municipality, the Community Centre, the conservatory and the Child Welfare Agency, welcomed them⁸⁸.

On 11 May 1935 at the Perapalas Hotel, M. Kemal Atatürk presented thirteen gold tobacco boxes to the musicians while Prime Minister İsmet İnönü sent three silver frames as a gift to female musicians⁸⁹. The Soviet musicians, on the other hand, donated around two hundred music sheets to Ankara Community Centre before leaving for İzmir on May 1⁹⁰. After returning from Türkiye, the musicians gave a performance at the Grand Moscow Theatre where they also sang Turkish songs. Turkish Ambassador Vasif Çınar and distinguished officials from the embassy and the Foreign Affairs Commissariat were present at the concert as well as the press. Arkanov, leader of the committee of Soviet musicians, made a speech and emphasized the intimate and sympathetic

84 “Sovyet Artistleri”, *Ulus*, 1 Mayıs 1935, p. 1-3.

85 Dimitir Vandov, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Sovyet İlişkileri...*, p. 266.

86 “Sovyet Artistleri İzmirde”, *Ulus*, 5 Mayıs 1935, p. 2.

87 Dimitir Vandov, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Sovyet İlişkileri...*, p. 266.

88 “Sovyet Artistleri İstanbulda”, *Ulus*, 8 Mayıs 1935, s. 2; “Sovyet Artistlerin Konseri”, *Ulus*, 13 Mayıs 1935, p. 2.

89 *BCA*, Fon Kodu: 30-10-0-0, Yer No: 248-680-11-431, (Sovyet artistlerine verilmek üzere Atatürk tarafından hediye edilen 13 altın tütün tabakası ile 3 gümüş çerçevenin takdim edildiği)

90 “Sovyet Artistleri”, *Ulus*, 1 Mayıs 1935, p. 1-3.

hospitality shown throughout their stay in Türkiye. In response, Turkish Ambassador Çınar mentioned the admiration of Turkish people towards Soviet musicians and thanked for the visit of such important artists. Following the concert, a banquet was given where the representatives of both countries had an opportunity to come together⁹¹. In December 1935, Moscow Comintern, one of the most powerful radio stations in the USSR, broadcasted the Carmen opera performed by Maksakova, an opera artist who played Carmen the preceding year in Ankara. The performance included Turkish explanations with regard to the opera and musicians between the acts and received positive criticisms. On this opportunity, Şükrü Kaya, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, conveyed his gratitude to Zekai Apaydın, Turkish Ambassador in Moscow⁹².

In the evening of 12 April 1936, the Soviet musicians who visited Türkiye the previous year gave a concert for Türkiye at the Moscow Radio⁹³. A previously established radio system at Cağaloğlu Community Centre in Istanbul was employed for the public to listen to the concert⁹⁴. In the summer of 1936, a Turkish committee went to Moscow for a music festival. This committee included composer Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Cemal Reşit Rey, pianist Ferhunde and Halil Bedi Yönetken, the leader of Ankara Community Centre Choir⁹⁵. In February 1937, a concert was given at the Music Teachers' School with a radio broadcast on the centenary of Pushkin's death. The same month witnessed a second concert that comprised of Pushkin's works composed by Soviet musicians. While this concert was aired on radio, H. Ali Yücel, a Member of Parliament from Izmir, gave a conference on account of the concert⁹⁶.

The Turkish press reflected the positive atmosphere under the headlines such as "Friendly Soviet Artists", "Soviet-Turkish Friendship", "Greetings to Our Great Friends", "Our Soviet Guests", "and Farewell by Our Friends" and "A New Performance by the Turkish-Soviet Friendship". Another positive effect the press created was to provide information and improve the attendance of public in the events. *Ulus*, one of the most-widely circulated Turkish newspapers of the period, featured articles owing to the

91 "Türk-Sovyet Dostluğunun Yeni Bir Gösterisi", *Ulus*, 30 Mayıs 1935, p.1; *BCA*, Fon Kodu: 571, Yer No: 35962/141904/2, (Türkiye'ye gelip konser veren Rus artistleri)

92 "Moskova Operası", *Ulus*, 9 Aralık 1935, p. 1-2.

93 "Memleketimize Gelen Sovyet Artistlerinin Vereceği Konser", *Ulus*, 4 Mart 1936, p. 2; Seda Bayındır Uluskan, *Atatürk'ün Sosyal ve Kültürel Politikaları...*, p. 383.

94 Serhat Batur, *Atatürk Döneminde Devletçilik Modelinin Uygulanması Evresinde Türk ve Sovyetler Birliği İlişkileri (1934-1938)* (Unpublished master thesis), İstanbul Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, İstanbul, 2008, p. 99.

95 Raşid Tacibayev, *Kızıl Meydan'dan Taksim'e...*, p. 209.

96 Arzu Boy, *İki Savaş Arası Basında Türk-Rus İlişkileri*, Fenomen Yayıncılık, Ankara, 2020, p. 222.

1935 visits of the Soviet musicians that introduced Soviet art and called attention to the significance and possible advantages of these visits for both countries. With regard to the 1935 visits of the Soviet musicians, Kazım Nami Duru⁹⁷ said that the Soviet music which had emerged around a hundred and fifty years ago acquired a unique and national quality after the examples from the most cultivated nations that lived in the USSR were reinterpreted with the western methods. He also claimed that Türkiye had much to learn from the friendly nation's art as the former was in an attempt to create a national art, and suggested that many of the nations in the USSR were affiliated with Türkiye in terms of both race and culture and that especially their music bore the traces of Turkish culture. Yaşar Nabi Nayır⁹⁸, on the other hand, remarked that the visit to Türkiye by the committee consisting of the most renowned Soviet musicians, ballet dancers and singers carried a deeper meaning than an ordinary art event, and expressed his wishes for the continuation of these attempts with the other neighbouring countries. In another article, the author wrote a critique about the conductorship of CFO and asserted that the orchestra proved a meticulous work and improved its quality under the leadership of L. P. Steinberg, one of the Soviet musicians who came to Türkiye to give a concert in 1935, Therefore, an orchestra would require conductors and leaders who would assemble and organize musicians and would prevent them from wasting their energy. Defending that a strengthened team under the guidance of a skilled conductor would help CFO play a great role in the new musical revolution of Türkiye, the author suggested that CFO should focus more on folklore studies and perform national compositions by harmonizing folk music as in the USSR as well as the Balkan and other neighbouring countries⁹⁹.

The news "Musical Life in the Soviet Union" described the great changes the October Revolution caused in Russian music and discussed the developments in musical life in the wake of the revolution. In this sense, the greatest change occurred in the audience profile. The report pointed out that the public in former Russia had been deprived of also music as had been the case with all the spheres of cultural life. Therefore, the first mission of the revolution became to help the majority of people benefit from music which had been previously kept away from the public and appealed to a limited class. In consequence, salon music was abandoned whereas forgotten and lesser-known classical pieces regained popularity. The state approached music according to a plan after the revolution and founded many concert unions. Opera, in particular,

97 Kazım Nami Duru, "Rus Arı Üzerine", *Ulus*, 17 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

98 Yaşar Nabi Nayır, "Kültürel Münasebetlerin Değeri", *Ulus*, 17 Nisan 1935, p. 3.

99 Yaşar Nabi Nayır, "Filarmonik Orkestramız", *Ulus*, 22 Nisan 1935, p. 4.

played the most efficient role in the development and popularity of music among the public. The short conferences and program descriptions before concerts illuminated the people and ensured a stronger tie between the stage and the audience¹⁰⁰. Another article referred to the steps to enhance the musical culture and improve the love for music among the Soviet people. This primarily required the training of new composers and expanding the number of active musicians. Although the number of composers ranged from 20 to 30 before the revolution, post-revolutionary Moscow and Leningrad alone were home to 300 members of the Union of Soviet Composers¹⁰¹.

On 21 April 1935, the *Ulus* newspaper published an interview with Oistrakh, a violinist from the committee that gave a concert in Türkiye. Having left his mark despite being at the age of 27, Oistrakh said the following with regard to music in Soviet Russia¹⁰²: "...First of all, we removed the principle that music is for the elite. Concerts, on the other hand, cannot be restricted to conservatory. Concerts are given all the time and to the widest groups of people at the military, factory and student clubs. A great importance is attached to expand the love of and interest in music among the public. The results of these attempts acquired within a short time are self-evident. It has been observed that the general level of music is continuously escalating. The public takes pleasure in deeper and more quality works and require that such works are included in the programs". Concerning the Soviet concerts in Türkiye, Journalist Zeki Mesud also mentioned the important role of cultural activities in reinforcing political ties and of the cultural convergences that would take place at the international level. Referring to the art environment in Soviet Russia, he asserted that art had been a luxury before the revolution and that both theatre and music had only served to the needs of the court and aristocracy while ordinary people could only have limited access to them. Drawing a comparison between Türkiye and pre- and post-revolutionary Russia with regard to approach towards art, he claimed that both countries relied on populism so as to achieve their goals¹⁰³.

Conclusion

Cultural attempts have proved effective in ensuring intimacy and maintained relations in which political attempts mostly remain unsuccessful. The Turkish-Soviet

100 "Sovyetler Birliğinde Musiki Hayatı", 16 Nisan 1935, *Ulus*, p. 5.

101 "Sovyet Kompozitörleri" 18 Nisan 1935, *Ulus*, p. 4.

102 "Sovyet Artistleri Dün Gece Ordu İçin Konser Verdiler", 21 Nisan 1935, *Ulus*, p. 3.

103 Zeki Mesud Alsan, "Dost Artistler", *Ulus*, 18 Nisan 1935, p. 1-3.

relations witnessed a wide range of cultural events in the 1930s and 1940s with regard, among others, to cinema, painting, literature, theatre and publication. The intensive interaction in music, on the other hand, was of particular importance. Ensured with the endeavours of bureaucrats, this convergence had repercussions in the social sphere and evoked positive impressions among the audience. The reciprocal visits during this process received a considerable attention from the administrations and people of host countries. The top officials of host countries walked guest officials and accompanying people the industrial and educational institutions as well as the historical and cultural places. This allowed them to get to know the institutions, economy, culture and art of respective destination countries better. Banquets and balls were held in the evenings in honour of guests where representatives of both countries gave address with friendship messages. Similarly, musicians travelled to perform concerts and got the opportunity to examine the developments in music, conservatory studies, museum and exhibitions and to meet with the administrators of music schools and notable personages from the world of music.

During this period, the USSR tried to have Türkiye adopt communist propaganda using cultural relations, a form of soft power, since they were unable to openly advocate it so as not to cause reactions. Having appeared as an internationally isolated country for long years, the USSR thus achieved to introduce its developing aspects, lifestyle and culture. The cultural activities carried out through VOKS after its establishment in 1925 played a significant role in the improvement of cultural diplomacy between the two countries and also influenced the strengthening of political and economic relations. Following the declaration of the republican regime, Türkiye refrained from conflicts in foreign relations and pursued a peaceful policy. The country enhanced the reformist movements in order to consolidate the new regime and sought to benefit from more advanced countries. The USSR was among the countries that responded to Türkiye's requests for help in education, science and culture. In addition to individual contacts due to the lack of an institution like VOKS in Türkiye, the two sides also communicated officially through state agencies to carry out events. The exchange in music between the USSR and Türkiye in a period when musical reforms had already started greatly contributed to the improvement of musical culture and to the discussions in art circles in Türkiye. Especially the arrival of the crowded group of Soviet musicians in 1935 attracted attention as a big cultural event and led to various articles underlining the amicable terms in the Turkish-Soviet relations.

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