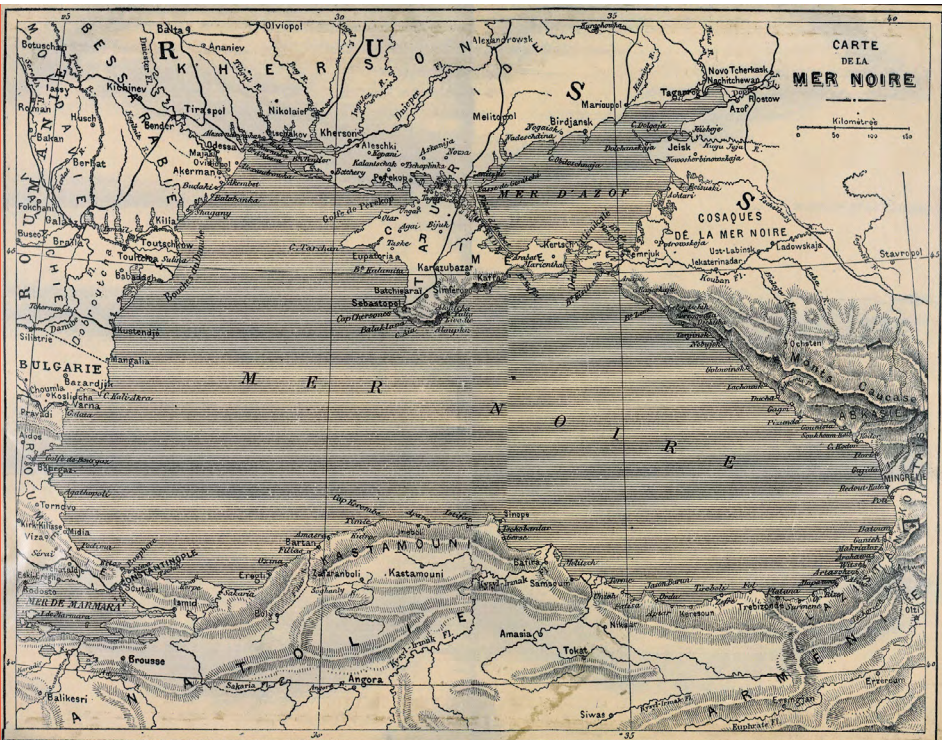


TURKEY-RUSSIA: TWO PERIODS OF RAPPROCHEMENT



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NEIGHB*RS ON THE BLACK SEA SHORE: RUSSIA AND TURKEY

FARUK ALPKAYA



Despite the citing of two country names, it is more fitting that we speak of two geographies upon which various states have been established throughout history. In the period from ancient Greece to the Mongols, the area we now refer to as Russia was the starting point or transit route for nomadic and barbarian raids targeting the Balkans and Anatolia. The relationship between the two geographies was therefore in the beginning mostly one of plunder and war, but this has also been accompanied by peaceful trade relations for which the Black Sea has served as a waterway. For many centuries, Russia was a source of fur and slaves for the Balkans and Anatolia, and especially for Istanbul. Correspondingly, it has been influenced culturally by Anatolia and the Balkans; however, the direction of this flow has also been reversed at times.

One of the turning points in the cultural interaction between the two countries came about as a result of the Eastern Roman Empire adopting Christianity and—by inventing Orthodoxy—converting it into a state religion. When the population living on the Eastern Roman lands became Orthodox, the lands of the country were subject-

ed to Slavic invasions from the west of the Black Sea, and as a result, the Balkan region was largely Slavicized, while Russia became Orthodox. This occurred to such an extent that long after the collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire, Slavic peoples continued to constitute the main group within Orthodox Christianity and carried it beyond being a state religion, imbuing it with a sense of spirit that allows it to still live on today.

We may call the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Russia the precursor states to those that are today known as the Russian Federation and the Turkish Republic. The relationship between these two states has passed through various stages in history. In the first period that stretches from the 1500s to 1648, the Ottomans and Russia were contemporary and similar states, while their direct interaction was limited to trade. The second discernable period in relations between the countries was from 1648 to 1815: The two countries, which began their integration into the capitalist world-economy in 1648, were to compete until 1815, especially over the Balkans and the Black Sea and were to go through similar yet transforming experiences. The rivalry in-



tensified in the period between 1815 and 1918 and the Tsardom of Russia became the archenemy of the Ottoman State. This conflict has left deep traces in Turkey's social memory. In the period from the end of the First World War and that of the Second World War, the relationship between the two countries was one of cautious friendship. From 1945 to 1991, when the USSR collapsed, the two countries made efforts to be good neighbors in a bipolar world. The latest period encompasses the timeframe from 1991 to the present day. While there have sometimes been conflicts during this time, relations between the peoples living in the two areas have developed along with interstate relations and trade.

CONTEMPORANEITY: 1500–1648

Looking at the old world of the 1500s, we can say that the barbarian raids ended with the Mongols, the Ming dynasty in China achieved stability and welfare, the Mughal (Babur) state was established in India, the Safavid dynasty came to power in Iran, and the Anatolia-centered Ottoman Empire was at the height of its power. The rivalry in the Mediterranean between the Venetians

and the Genoese was eased by the rise of the Ottomans; the Spanish Kingdom expanded beyond the Atlantic Ocean in cooperation with the Genoese and laid the foundation of a new historical system, the capitalist world-economy. Capitalism, which initially extended toward the continent of America in the form of plunder and later through long-distance trade, went on to establish a triangle of commerce between two coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. These encompassed Europe, America, and Africa and eventually spread across the entire globe. The gold and silver that poured out of America and into Europe first led to a “price revolution,” which resulted in prices tripling in a century, and with time this high rate of inflation was reflected on to the rest of the world, starting with the neighboring countries. With average temperatures falling by one degree centigrade in the same period, the earth entered a mini “ice age” that shortened the agricultural season and reduced arable land, with the resulting food crisis leading to peasant uprisings. This problem was only overcome with the introduction of new agricultural products from the American continent. The increase in wealth effected a strengthening of absolutist monarchies that emerged in



Western Europe, and Spanish gold became world currency. This first cycle of capitalism came to an end with the Thirty Years' War that took place in the early 1600s; the Treaty of Westphalia signed in 1648 laid the foundations of the modern interstate system. The Dutch took over the banner of hegemony among European states from the Spanish and started the second cycle of the capitalist world-economy.

The Ottomans, who transformed into an empire in 1453 by conquering Istanbul, were enjoying their strongest and most magnificent days in the early 1500s. Within a hundred years they conquered Anatolia, halted first the Ak Koyunlus and then the Safavid state in the east, expanding their lands up to Arabia, Egypt, and North Africa in the south, and finally extending into Central Europe in the west. Meanwhile in the north, they established dominion over the Black Sea coasts. Furthermore, they gained dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean by pushing back the Venetians and the Spanish at sea and began to control the shores of North Africa. In this period of establishing and strengthening the Ottoman Empire, the Grand Principality of Moscow, the precursor

to the Tsardom of Russia, was suffocating under Golden Horde and Tatar oppression. A new era began in the Grand Principality of Moscow with the declaration of Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) as Tsar in 1547; Moscow expanded toward Central Asia by conquering the Kazan and then the Astrakhan khanates.

The first half of the 1600s was a time of stagnation and crisis for both the Ottomans and Russia. The capitalist world-economy developing in Europe started to affect both countries, and the climate crisis led to hunger and peasant uprisings. In the early years of the century, the Ottoman Empire fought harsh but indecisive battles against the Safavid dynasty in the East, and its eastern border only reached relative stability with a treaty made in 1639; while in the West, strong developing kingdoms halted Ottoman progress and even started to force retreats. Similar developments were taking place in Russia: In addition to hunger and peasant uprisings, a Tsardom crisis was to emerge at the beginning of the century. This was resolved in 1613 with the election of Mikhail Romanov as Tsar and while weak and ineffective at first, the House of Romanov would



rule the country until 1917. The main source of Russia's wealth in this period was the sale of furs to Europe. In order to sustain this trade, the Russians went beyond the Ural Mountains and claimed Siberia. The country's move eastward on the basis of the fur and slave trade would only be complete toward the end of the nineteenth century, by which time Russia was on the semiperiphery of capitalism.

MODERNIZATION AND RIVALRY: 1648–1815

In the era of Dutch hegemony, the capitalist world-economy expanded to include nearly all of the globe, connecting cultures, countries, and peoples through long commodity chains and creating a new state model. Capitalist commodity chains extended to the Far East in this period: Dutch, English, and French ships were now sailing the oceans in addition to the Spanish and Portuguese. Ships transporting slaves from Africa to America were returning with cargos of sugar, tobacco, rum, and cotton, and carried spices and silk from India and China. Absolutist monarchies in Europe were building modern centralized states. The first republic, which was to become

capitalism's basic form of state, had also emerged in 1648 with a revolution in the United Kingdom. Finally, the ideology of nationalism, born out of the French Revolution in 1789, with its nation-state model and great faith in progress, was to spread to almost the entire world starting from Western Europe. By the end of the eighteenth century, the number of people and countries that remained outside of the capitalist world-economy had diminished to a negligible level. The period was to end when Napoleon's project of conquering Europe and establishing an empire was rebuffed by the common effort of the other European states; the Concert of Europe was declared at the Vienna Congress that gathered in 1815.

The Tsardom of Russia raised its taxes to recover from the great crisis that took place toward the end of the sixteenth century and tried to establish stability through decrees that transformed peasants into serfs. Serfdom acquired permanent status with a law announced in 1649 when peasants under the control of the church and landowners were tied to the land and began to be bought and sold, even won and lost in gambling. Russia's population was polarized between



nobles and serfs. The only difference between serfs and slaves was that the former could become soldiers—on condition of a lifetime commitment. Peter I (referred to by Russians as “The Great” and the Turks as “The Mad”) became Tsar in 1682 and tried to convert the Russian Tsardom into a modern European state through a series of reforms in the fields of the military, education, and industry, and by founding new institutions. In particular, he set up new industrial facilities to meet the weaponry, clothing, and equipment needs of the army. He ventured to build a new city by draining the swamps where the Baltic Sea and the Neva river meet and in 1712 declared St. Petersburg the capital. He created a new duty regulation in 1724 to protect Russian industry. From an iron importing country at the beginning of the 1700s, by the end of the century Russia had become one of the largest producers of iron in the world. The country’s endless military campaigns also continued after Peter’s death. New lands were acquired one after the other in the Balkans, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, the Baltic coasts, Siberia, and Central Asia. In this period, the Russian Tsardom reached the Pacific Ocean in the east, the Baltic Sea in the west, and the shores of

the Black Sea in the south. This era came to an end with Napoleon’s Moscow excursion of 1812. Having defeated and largely destroyed the French army with the help of the winter, Russia was then to go all the way to Paris and be part of the Concert of Europe by joining the Vienna Congress.

During this period, the Ottoman Empire joined the capitalist world-economy, becoming a semi-peripheral capitalist country. The process took place in the form of a dissolution of the classical land regime, the linking of major port cities to Europe through trade, and the transformation of the hinterlands of these cities into regions that produced for the world markets. The Ottomans, despite being occasionally forced to retreat, had remained an important military power, but with consecutive defeats in a series of wars in the second half of the seventeenth century and the Treaty of Karlowitz signed in 1699, they had to accept defeat for the first time. Previously conquered lands were lost forever. Military defeats were to continue in the eighteenth century; the Treaty of Jassy, signed in 1792 at the end of a five-year war with Russia and Austria, was a testimony to the military collapse. The Ottoman State had sent



ambassadors to European states since the beginning of the 1700s and had tried to closely follow and adapt to developments in Europe. The first such initiative, which was later dubbed the Tulip Period, was interrupted as a result of uprisings that took place in Istanbul. The second attempt at remedying military defeats and competing with modern European armies began in 1789. Led by Sultan Selim III and called the *Nizam-ı Cedid* (New Order), permanent embassies were opened in European countries, specialists were brought from the West for the purposes of military and medical training and the formation of a modern army was attempted. This ended with the uprising of local Ottoman elites (*Ayans*) and the Janissary soldiers in 1808. Meanwhile, further uprisings started to break out in the Ottoman countryside, which was integrated with European capitalism and had its ties with Istanbul weakened. The first nationalist uprising on Ottoman lands occurred in 1804 in Serbia, followed by a similar uprising in Greece. Meanwhile in Egypt, the governor of the region, Mehmet Ali Pasha established his own power by massacring the local elite; becoming one of the greatest rivals to the Ottoman State.

Relations between the Ottoman State and the Russian Tsardom in this period usually took the form of treaties that temporarily halted wars, which ended with Ottoman land losses. The source of the conflict was the Azak Fortress, which was exchanged back and forth between the two countries from 1637 to 1774 when it would ultimately belong to Russia. Russia and the Ottomans confronted each other again between 1677 and 1681 over the issue of Ukraine sovereignty. In 1689, Crimea was the field of conflict. A treaty signed in 1700 ended the conflicts of this period, but the two countries faced off against each other again in 1711 at Prut, and the Ottomans won one of their isolated victories against Russia. Conflicts between the two countries throughout the eighteenth century reached their zenith between 1768 and 1774: the Ottomans were defeated by Russia at the Danube; Crimea was invaded by Russia and the Russian navy that had set out from the Baltic Sea destroyed the Ottoman navy in the Aegean. The war ended in 1774 with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. With this treaty, the north of the Black Sea came under Russia's control, the country acquired the right to open an Orthodox church in Istanbul and in exchange the Ottoman Sultan was recognized as



the Caliph of Crimean Muslims. This arrangement later served as the source for claims that Russian Tsars are the protectors of the Orthodox Church in Turkey and that the Ottoman Sultans were the caliphs of the world's Muslims. Relations between the two countries eased during the Napoleonic period that followed the French Revolution, and with the efforts of the United Kingdom, an Ottoman, Russian, British alliance was formed in 1798 against France.

THE WORLD OF INDUSTRY AND THE FEAR OF MOSCOW: 1815–1918

The French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution that began more or less in the same period determined the new orbit of capitalism. Interstate relations were redesigned with the Vienna Congress and a new world order under the hegemony of the United Kingdom was established: Starting with the United Kingdom, Western European countries began to industrialize, processing the raw materials they gathered from all corners of the world and selling them back to those same countries. In order to sustain this situation, they put an end to the privileges of their

trade monopolies that had semi-public status to clear the way for free trade, and they imposed colonialism or free trade deals on the rest of the world. By the end of the century, the globe was completely divided up between a few Western European states. During this process, first the USA, and in the following years countries like Italy, Germany, and Japan sought to industrialize and expand into new areas by following protectionist policies. Meanwhile, radical ideas that spread from the French Revolution started to meet with “the dangerous classes.” The slaves in Haiti revolted for freedom, women in almost all of the core countries revolted for equality, the people in countries that had a parliament revolted for universal and equal suffrage, and for constitutional government or a republic in countries that did not; movements like feminism, anarchism, utopianism, municipalism, socialism, and nationalism started to spread. A short-lived revolution took place in Europe in 1848 and Marx's conceptualization of communism came to the fore among the radical movements: With the influence of the defeat in 1848, radical currents adopted the strategy of “first capture the state, then transform the world” and started to form lasting institutions



such as political parties and unions. By the end of the century, the resistance of the dangerous classes was to reach semi-periphery and periphery countries; ideas of constitutionalism, the republic, and independence also gained strength in these countries. Capitalism went through another global economic crisis in the 1870s, which affected the entire world. A fresh economic crisis that began in 1912 led two years later to the First World War, which first the European countries, and then other states, committed to. However, not only did this war fail to resolve the disagreements and crises of capitalism, it aggravated them.

The Industrial Revolution reached Russia in the 1830s. With wool and cotton weaving at the forefront, growth accelerated in all traditional industries between 1830 and 1860, but the truly striking advances took place in sugar, iron, and steel production. Businesses were using serfs or paid workers (obroks) as labor. Alexander II abolished the legal institution of serfdom and cleared the way for the creation of human resources that would meet the needs of the developing industry. Railroad construction accelerated during his reign; the iron and steel industry and coal mining

developed in order to meet the needs of the railways. A Western justice system was put in place in 1864 and local administrations were regulated. Industrialization and an increase in agricultural efficiency as a result of abolishing serfdom led to more urbanization in addition to population growth: While total population grew three-fold between 1811 and 1914, the number of people living in cities increased six-fold. The effects of the French Revolution reached Russia with a little more delay: the country played a leading role in suppressing the 1848 uprising. Nevertheless, the idea of revolution did reach the country and gave birth to two competing wings among the Russian intelligentsia: the Westernists and the traditionalists. Meanwhile, a new and great literature was being born in Russia with Gogol. Movements like nihilism and anarchism spread among the intelligentsia in this period, with the organization called the *Narodnaya Volya* (The People's Will) being founded in 1879. This group assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881 but later fell apart as a result of repression. Marxism began to find adherents in Russia from the 1890s onward; the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, of which Lenin was a member, was founded in 1898, later



it split in two: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Russia, a repressive state seen as a bulwark of European reaction, exploded after its defeat in a war with Japan in 1904–1905: As a result of strikes, peasant uprisings, and rebellions by soldiers, the Tsar declared the transition to constitutional monarchy, elections took place and the Imperial Duma was established. A constitution was ratified in 1906. The constitutional monarchy was only able to survive for a short while however and Russia soon returned to its repressive days. When Germany declared war on August 1, 1914, Russia joined the First World War on the side of the Allied powers. As the war that was forecast to be over in a few months dragged on for years, it turned into a total war where not only the armies on the fronts but whole countries confronted each other with their industries and societies, and Russia began to disintegrate. In February 1917, the Tsardom was overthrown and in October that year the Bolsheviks came to power under Lenin's leadership and Russia declared it was pulling out of the war.

The Ottoman State entered the nineteenth century with the palace under pressure from

those who wielded local authority (Ayans). During the reign of Mahmut II, a cautious process of modernization began as a result of rivalry with governors who had already embarked upon modernization in areas where they held power. A purge of the Ayans began in 1808; the Janissary army was disbanded in 1826 and replaced by a modern army. New educational institutions and industrial facilities were opened in order to meet the needs of this army. Meanwhile, a nationalist uprising had begun in Greece and the Ottoman State requested aid from the Governor of Egypt to suppress this uprising: Governor Mehmet Ali Pasha, who had established modern enterprises in the fields of agriculture and industry and who had modernized his army, sent his navy. Upon the destruction of this navy by the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, he demanded compensation from the Ottomans. This demand going unmet turned Egypt into Istanbul's nightmare. The armies of Egypt marched on the center, defeating the Ottoman armies on several occasions. In order to halt Egypt, the Ottoman State first sought refuge with Russia, and was then helped to remove its governor by the United Kingdom. In exchange, the Ottoman State had to sign a trea-



ty in 1838 that granted merchants of the United Kingdom rights to free trade similar to its own citizens; similar treaties were made with other European countries in the following years. With the *Tanzimat Fermanı* (Imperial Edict of Reorganization) that he decreed as he ascended to the throne in 1839, Abdülmecit promised security for individuals and property, honor, fair taxation, mandatory military service, and equality before the law. Despite problems in the implementation of the rights granted by the edict, the bureaucracy that made use of these rights became the real wielder of power between 1839 and 1876. The *Islahat Fermanı* (Ottoman Reform Edict) of 1856 recognized equality for non-Muslim subjects, and the Land Codex of 1859 enshrined the right of private ownership of land. The debts incurred to its allies the United Kingdom and France during the Crimean War became regular in the remaining part of the century. The press also started to develop in this period in the Ottoman State and a group of intellectuals emerged. This group, which at first dissented on the basis of demanding press freedom, later started to demand transition to a constitutional monarchy. The Ottoman State became unable to pay its debts; the

economic crisis of the 1870s made it impossible to incur new debts to pay back existing ones and the State declared bankruptcy in 1875. A palace coup was carried out while the creditor countries were gathered in Istanbul, and Abdülhamit II, who had promised constitutionalism, was made sultan; a constitution was ratified in 1876. The bloody suppression of the Bulgarian uprising that broke out the same year resulted in the Ottoman State being isolated by European states. The *Düyun-u Umumiye* (Public Debt Administration) was founded with an ordinance decreed in 1881 to collect the debts of the Ottoman State. The experiment in constitutionalism did not last long, but modernization continued in areas like education, healthcare, transportation, and communication. These developments expanded the social base of the intellectuals that demanded constitutionalism, and in the centenary of the French Revolution in 1889, a new opposition movement that would be called the Young Turks emerged. This movement was weak in the beginning but in time spread among young military officers and gained strength, ultimately getting the 2nd Constitutional Monarchy declared in 1908 by staging an uprising. A bicameral parliament formed as a



result of elections and appointments made; however, the efforts of the Committee of Unity and Progress (CUP), an organization formed by low ranking military officers that staged the uprising used to control and direct the state and society, led to a counter-uprising in 1909. The CUP suppressed this uprising and over time captured all power, initially working with the organizations of non-Muslim peoples and liberal countries like the United Kingdom and France, but soon reverting to Abdülhamit II's policies of Islamism and cooperation with Germany. The Ottoman State entered the First World War as an ally of Germany with the aim of enlarging the Turkish-Islamic Empire, but faced rapid failure in the Caucasus and Canal excursions. When the Allied powers took action to target the Dardanelles in 1915 to deliver assistance to Russia, the Ottoman State exiled all of the Orthodox (Gregorian) Armenians, first to Urfa and then to the deserts of Syria under the pretext that they were allied with Russia. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians died during this exile due to bad weather, hunger and thirst, epidemic diseases, and attacks by paramilitary forces. The Ottoman State, which was able to remain in the war with Germany's support, with-

drew from the war following Bulgaria's surrender and signed the Armistice of Mondros in 1918.

In the years that followed the Greek War of Independence in 1821, the Ottoman State came to be known as the "Sick Man of Europe," discussed as the "Eastern Question." In 1826, when the Ottoman State rejected the demands of the United Kingdom, France, and Russia for Greece to be granted independence concerning internal affairs, the three countries destroyed the Egyptian and Ottoman combined navy at Navarino. Russia did not stop there and marched on the Ottomans in both the Caucasus and the Balkans, capturing Kars in the east and Edirne in the west, to withdraw later in 1829 upon signing the Treaty of Edirne. Meanwhile, Egypt also rose up against the Ottomans and the Egyptian army entered Anatolia. When the Ottomans lost to the Egyptian forces in 1832 at Konya, they called on Russia for help; the Russian navy and a number of soldiers were already present and the two countries signed the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty in 1833. With this treaty, promises of mutual non-aggression and assistance were made; the Ottomans implicitly agreed to close the Dardanelles to the benefit of the Russians and to refrain



from blocking access for the Russian navy to the Mediterranean. This treaty, which came to be referred to as a case of “a drowning man clutching at a straw” in Turkish textbooks in the 1980s, was met with resistance by the United Kingdom and France; the “Egypt Question” was resolved in 1840 by these countries in the Ottomans favor with their support instead of Russia. Relations between the Ottomans and Europe were to improve after this event and reach a high point during the Crimean War that took place between 1853 and 1856. The Ottoman State had successes in Crimea fighting with the United Kingdom and France against Russia. With the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1856 as a result of this war, the Ottoman State became part of the Concert of Europe, the privileges acquired by Russia from the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca to that of Edirne were abolished and Ottoman sovereignty over the Straits was restored.

The first large population movement between the two countries occurred in the 1860s. Small groups from the Caucasus had previously migrated to Ottoman lands, however, after the Crimean War, Russia demanded that Muslims in the Caucasus either obey the Tsardom or migrate to the

Ottoman areas. Some of the Caucasus Muslims were forced to migrate in 1860 and 1861, while hundreds of thousands of Caucasians were forced into exile in the Ottoman lands between 1863 and 1864, with tens of thousands dying in the process. Russia’s policy of exiling the Caucasus peoples continued in the following years; Caucasians who came to Anatolia filled with a great hatred played a large role in the Muslimization of Anatolia’s demographic structure. The turning point of the wars between the Ottoman State and the Russian Tsardom took place between 1877 and 1878. Following the harsh suppression of the Bulgarian uprising that broke out in 1876, Russia attacked the Ottoman State from the Balkans and the Caucasus, arriving at Erzurum in the east and at the gates of Istanbul in the west. This war, known in Turkish history as the War of ’93 in reference to the Julian calendar, fundamentally changed political life and Muslim perception of Russia in Turkey. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims migrated from the Caucasus and the Balkans to Anatolia in fear of Moscow. Abdülhamit II used the excuse of the war to end constitutional government and power passed from the bureaucracy (Bab-ı Ali) to the Sultan (The Palace). The Otto-



man State and the Tsardom of Russia put an end to the war by signing the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878. However, European states intervened in the situation by gathering a congress in Berlin in the same year and altered relations between Russia and the Ottomans with the Treaty of Berlin. Young people of Turkish origin who grew up and were educated in Russia had started to come to Istanbul after the War of '93. They brought the debates in Russia with them, some becoming the founders and first members of the Young Turks: Yusuf Akçura became the leading player in the birth and development of Turkism current in 1904.

The Tsardom of Russia and the Ottoman State entered into the First World War as part of opposing alliances and fought mostly on the Eastern front. The Ottoman navy which attacked Sevastopol at the beginning of the war failed to destroy Russia's Black Sea forces, while Enver Pascha, who embarked on the Caucasus campaign with ideals of Turanism was forced to return to Istanbul when the eastern front collapsed. In the end, the Russian armies captured a region that extended from Trabzon to Muş. On the other hand, the

Ottoman State stopped the united navy of the Allied powers at the Dardanelles, which was fortified by Germany, denying aid to Russia and accelerating the demise of the Tsardom. The two old states shared a common fate at the end of the war: collapse.

CAUTIOUS FRIENDSHIP: 1918–1945

The First World War revealed the collapse of the nineteenth century world order, but a new order was not yet established. Germany and its allies were defeated, but the United Kingdom exhausted its ability to sustain its hegemony. The first decade that followed the war went by with a longing for prewar conditions; the League of Nations was founded in place of the Concert of Europe, but it did not prove successful. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks who had captured power in Russia were trying to create a new system as an alternative to capitalism. The Great Depression that began with the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929 quickly spread throughout the world. The world economy came to a standstill; all countries were engulfed in unemployment, hunger, and desperation. Over time, the econom-



ic crisis turned into a political crisis: Under such conditions, European democracies surrendered to fascism one by one. Mussolini came to power in Italy, followed by Hitler in Germany, and Franco in Spain. In Latin America, populist dictators were destroying the fragile democracies. In countries where fascism came to power, the principles of the French Revolution whereby people are born free and equal were being violated and human ideals were collapsing. Fascist governments first started to destroy “objectionable” people, political parties, and ethnic and religious groups in their countries. Germany and Italy then each moved to found empires in Europe; Japan did the same in Asia. Italy began occupations on the shores of the Mediterranean, Germany in Central Europe, and Japan in Korea and China. Finally, the Second World War broke out in 1939. Shortly after the war began, countries other than the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics surrendered to Germany or Italy. A large part of the Soviet Union was occupied but remained resistant. The balance shifted when the USA officially joined the war following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. USSR armies repelled the German forces at Stalingrad

in 1943 and the democratic alliance consisting of the USA, UK, and USSR defeated the fascists consisting of Germany, Italy, and Japan in 1945. The USA dropping the atomic bomb on Japan in the last days of the war announced the era of nuclear weapons.

The Bolsheviks who took power in Russia in 1917 changed the name of their party to the Russian Communist Party the following year and, declared the founding of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), withdrawing from the war with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. The RSFSR engaged in social reforms by outlawing land ownership, following which Tsarist generals supported by the United Kingdom launched a civil war. The RSFSR reacted to this by making public the secret treaties made by the Allied powers during the war. The civil war with the Tsarists lasted until 1921. Meanwhile, the 3rd International was founded in 1919; Lenin had changed the last sentence of the Communist Manifesto to “Workers of all countries and oppressed peoples, unite!” and gathered the Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920. The RSFSR, which had followed an economic policy called War Commu-



nism during the civil war era, started to follow a more liberal economic policy (NEP) from 1922 onward, and at the end of the year the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was founded. Following Lenin's death in 1924, a power struggle broke out within the party and by 1927, the General Secretary, Stalin, had eliminated his major opponents and captured power by defending the idea that "socialism in one country" was possible. The same year, the First Five-Year Plan was accepted in place of the NEP, and in 1928 a major industrialization and land collectivization movement was started. While the Great Depression resulted in a shrinking world economy, that of the USSR grew rapidly. With the Second Five-Year Plan accepted in 1933, agriculture was mechanized and the USSR became an industrial country. The United Kingdom and France encouraged Hitler to attack the USSR by signing the Munich Agreement with Germany in 1938; in response to this, the USSR signed a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939 and when Germany attacked Poland, the USSR invaded half of the country. Germany attacked the USSR in 1941 however and quickly captured a significant part of its lands in Europe before turning eastward. The Soviet

Union managed to stop Germany at Stalingrad and from 1943 began to push back. The Red Army entered Berlin in 1945; meanwhile it occupied a large area of Central and Eastern Europe with the help of partisan forces organized by the communist parties in these countries, securing the establishment of people's republics. At the end of the war, the USSR became one of the founders of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power.

The Ottoman State, which emerged from the First World War defeated, was occupied by the Allied powers following the Armistice of Mondros; survivors among the exiled Armenians began to return. The Committee of Union and Progress was dissolved by its leadership, which then fled abroad. Vahdettin, who had ascended to the throne in 1917, shut down the parliament with the support of the British and de facto ended constitutional rule. With these developments, members of the local CUP organizations began gathering local congresses and a group of military officers went into Anatolia to start a new movement. Resistance grew stronger following Greece's invasion of the Aegean region starting with Izmir in the spring of



1919, and in the autumn of the same year, the Association for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia (ADRAR) was founded at a congress gathered in Sivas; communication between Istanbul and Anatolia was severed. As a result, the decision to hold elections was reached at meetings held between ADRAR and the government in Istanbul, and parliament was reconvened in Istanbul in line with these elections. However, with the arrest of certain members of parliament by occupation forces in 1920, the National Assembly decided to go into recess; the de jure occupation in Istanbul was made de facto. In response, the head of ADRAR Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), who was in Ankara at the time, made a call for a parliament to convene in Ankara and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) opened in April 1920. The TBMM ratified a new constitution in 1921, initiated the forming of a regular army and first suppressed forces loyal to Istanbul before waging war against the Armenians in the east and Greece in the west. Having established its sovereignty over Anatolia in 1922, the TBMM, when invited to Lausanne, abolished the Sultanate and chose a Caliph. In 1923, ADRAR became the Republican People's Party (CHP); the Treaty of Lausanne was signed gaining

recognition for the new state and the Republic was declared right away. The Caliphate was abolished in 1924 and a unified education system was realized. Tithes were abolished in 1925 and a secular system of law was introduced in 1926. Turkey had followed liberal economic policies until the Great Depression, but then turned to statism and in 1933 ratified the First Five-Year Industrial Plan. A similar development took place in politics and the single-party regime became institutional in the 1930s. When Atatürk died in 1938, he was succeeded by İsmet İnönü without issue. Turkey followed a policy of active neutrality in the Second World War: on the one hand, the country continued to trade with Germany, on the other, it declared mobilization. İsmet İnönü met with Churchill in early 1943 at Adana and with Roosevelt and Churchill at the end of the year in Cairo, but refused their demands for Turkey to join the war against Germany. Nevertheless, Turkey became part of the United Nations system by declaring war on Germany and Japan in the last days of the conflict.

From the outset the RSFSR established good relations with the movement in Anatolia; it responded to Mustafa Kemal's 1920 call for recog-



nition with a message of friendship in June of that year. The First Congress of the Peoples of the East, convened in September in Baku, was attended by the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) led by Mustafa Suphi, Unionists (CUP) led by Enver Pascha, and a committee representing the TBMM government headed by İbrahim Tali (Öngören). At the Congress the decision was reached to support the Turkish liberation movement. In December of the same year, ambassadors were mutually appointed and finally with the Treaty of Moscow signed in March 1921, the RSFSR recognized the TBMM government and provided economic and military equipment assistance to the TBMM. Aside from Russian subjects of Turkish origin, the two societies came face to face for the first time in history: some of the Russian subjects who fled the Bolshevik regime (White Russians) settled in Istanbul and deeply influenced the daily life of Turkey, as well as its social and cultural climate. Restaurants opened by White Russians who settled in Turkey, such as Muscovit, Rejans, and Turkuaz in Istanbul, and Karpiç in Ankara, became legendary. Conservative groups reacted against women becoming more visible in social life with the influence of White Russians. In

the same period, figures such as Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, Nazım Hikmet, and İsmail Bilen, who had been taken captive by Russia during the war or had gone to Russia willingly and had studied at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV), transformed politics, culture, art, and intellectual life. On the other hand, Trotsky, who stayed in Turkey for a while after losing the power struggle with Stalin, left almost no mark. A Treaty of Friendship was signed between the two countries in 1925; later extended up until 1945 with some changes. Marshall Voroshilov and General Frunze's statues were placed on one side of the Taksim Republic Monument, built in 1928 to commemorate the aid provided during the War of Liberation. Friendship between the two countries was taken a step further with economic relations that developed after the Great Depression of 1929. Prime Minister İsmet İnönü made a trip to the USSR in 1932 and secured an agreement for the provision of eight million dollars' worth of economic and technical aid. Marshall Voroshilov came to Turkey in 1933 to attend the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Republic. With a protocol signed in 1934, a series of factories were set up that would form the



backbone of statist practices and industry in Turkey; however, after the Montreux Convention of 1936, which determined the control of the Straits, the two countries took a cautious stance toward each other. Turkey had inserted a clause into the treaty signed in 1939 with the United Kingdom and France stating it would not enter a war against the USSR; a declaration of non-aggression was also made with the USSR in 1942. Nevertheless, the policy of active neutrality that Turkey pursued during the Second World War, and especially its continuation of selling chrome to Germany and the sighting of German U-boats in the Black Sea, drew the ire of the USSR.

NEIGHBORS IN A BIPOLAR WORLD: 1945–1991

The United Nations system was established in the wake of the Second World War—to create cooperation between states—under the guarantees of the countries that won the war. The task of protecting economic order was given to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB); numerous institutions with expertise linked to the United Nations were formed; older

institutions such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) were brought into the system. From 1945, the world economy achieved high growth rates and welfare became more widespread. Social security systems were created in many countries and large investments were made in the fields of health and education. At the Yalta Conference in 1945, the USA and USSR divided the world; the USA-led NATO was founded in 1949 and the USSR-led Warsaw Pact in 1955, rendering a bipolar vision of a world that rested on a balance of nuclear force. The capitalist West and the socialist Eastern blocs confronted each other for the first time in Korea in 1950. The Berlin Wall, started in 1961, became the symbol of the bipolar world. India, the largest colony of the United Kingdom, gained independence in 1947 and the Chinese Communist Party declared the People’s Republic of China (PRC) by winning a civil war in 1949. In the following years, the colonial order was dismantled, sometimes through peaceful means and sometimes through wars of independence. Ex-colonies that gained their independence initiated the Non-Aligned Movement at the Bandung Conference in 1955 against the USA-led “Capitalist West” and the USSR-led



“Socialist East.” One exception was the USA assuming the task of sustaining the old order in the French colony of Vietnam. Cemal Abdülnasır captured power in Egypt in 1956, and BAAS parties took power in Iraq and Syria, in 1968 and 1970 respectively. Meanwhile a revolution had taken place in the USA’s “backyard,” Cuba, and guerilla movements had sprung up in Latin America. Organizations struggling for independence in Palestine united under the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and launched a new type of guerilla movement. Relations between the two great socialist countries of the world, the USSR and the PRC, started to show strain at the beginning of the 1960s, tensions reaching the point of China declaring the USSR “the primary enemy.” During these years, “Old” Europe was founding the European Economic Community (EEC) under the leadership of Germany and France. The new hegemonic country of the world, the USA on the other hand, was being challenged by the antiracist civil rights movement and the peace movement against the Vietnam War. The socialist Salvador Allende won the election in Chile in 1967 and set upon building a socialist regime. Demonstrations that started in Paris in 1968—

led especially by university students—quickly spread across world, leading to the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia and the Cultural Revolution in China. These uprisings, however, ended almost as quickly as they had begun.

The world entered the 1970s with an economic crisis: A twenty-five year growth period came to an end and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), founded in 1960, hiked oil prices by seventy percent. Further and repeated increases in the price of oil followed the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, which played a large role in deepening the crisis. While the world economy drifted into a recession, the USA severed the connection between the dollar and gold in 1974. By the end of the 1970s, the economic order established in 1945 was close to dysfunctional. In Chile, Salvador Allende was overthrown by a US-backed coup in 1972; however, the following year in Vietnam, the USA accepted defeat and made a peace deal to leave the country. US President Richard Nixon, known for his anticommunist views, visited the People’s Republic of China in 1972 to establish diplomatic relations and then became the first US President to visit the USSR, signing



a treaty that prescribed the limiting of nuclear weapons. Postwar borders in Europe were recognized in 1975 at the Helsinki Summit. The popular movement that began in 1978 in Iran resulted in the overthrow of the regime of the Shah and the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Neo-liberal economic policies that aimed to cut social rights were introduced from 1979 onward with Margaret Thatcher's prime ministry in the United Kingdom. Similar policies were implemented worldwide by neoconservative powers in the following years. The USSR's intervention in Afghanistan that began in 1979 lasted nine years; Afghan mujahideen supported by Western countries and China subjected the USSR units to a heavy defeat and forced them to withdraw completely in 1989. Demonstrations that began in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in 1987 became progressively larger and ultimately brought down the Berlin Wall in 1989. The wall was officially removed in 1990 and the German Federal Republic (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic reunited. In 1991, member states of the USSR declared independence one after the other and the image of a world split in two came to an end.

The USSR had come out of the Second World War as a victor, but with the loss of millions of people; its cities and infrastructure damaged. The first years following the war were taken up with healing and making efforts to catch up with the military power of the USA, now supported by nuclear weapons. The USSR joined the nuclear arms race in 1949 by producing its first atomic bomb. After a period of transition following Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1955. At the twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, the era of Stalin was evaluated as a period in which practices that were contrary to socialism became part of the agenda and Stalin was criticized. Khrushchev then implemented a policy of peaceful coexistence with the capitalist West and visited Western countries. However, the launch of the Sputnik satellite into space by the USSR in 1957 increased tensions between the two camps, and a space race with the USA began. The USSR initially took the lead in this race by sending the first satellite, first animal, and first man into space, but the USA quickly caught up and definitively won the race by landing the first person on the moon in 1969. Mean-



while, relations between Cuba and the USSR strengthened following the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The USSR's attempt to station missiles in Cuba in 1962 caused a crisis between the USA and the USSR; this was resolved by concessions on both sides. Khrushchev was removed from office in 1964 and Brezhnev was elected CPSU General Secretary. Positive developments in the economy took place in the first years of Brezhnev's presidency, supported by rising oil prices in the early 1970s. The USSR developed its relations with the West in the Brezhnev period: agreements were reached with the USA on control of nuclear weapons and with European countries regarding economic, social, and cultural relations. A new constitution was ratified on the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution in 1977, recognizing the USSR as the state of the whole population. Everything appeared to be on track: developments in the fields of education, health, culture, and art were dizzying, however the lack of quality and shortage in consumer goods continued. Responding to a call from the government of Afghanistan, the Soviet Army entered the country in 1979 and a corrosive war began. Government in the USSR also became unstable following Brezhnev's death

in 1982: the head of the KGB, Andropov succeeded Brezhnev, but he died two years later. Chernenko was elected General Secretary of the CPSU and in turn died a year later, succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. During this time an economic crisis had broken out. At its twenty-seventh Congress, the CPSU under Gorbachev's leadership took the decisions to embark on economic and social restructuring (Perestroika) and political openness (Glasnost). The effect of the ongoing war in Afghanistan meant that not only did these decisions fail to solve the problems of the USSR; on the contrary, they caused issues to intensify and surface. Efforts to transition to a decentralized and controlled market economy led to high inflation and losses in production. The process that began with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 triggered the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. This dissolution impacted the USSR as well and demands for independence that started in the Baltic republics spread to other countries. Finally, in 1991, a coup attempt by the KGB and the Soviet Army was repelled, resulting in member republics declaring independence. The USSR was dissolved and the Russian Federation created.



Turkey did not actively join the Second World War, only declaring war in the last minute to be able to join the UN. The country had also decided to become part of the Western bloc, partly due to the demands of the USSR regarding control over the Straits. To this end, it switched from single-party government to a multiparty regime in 1946, softened statist policies and opened its economy to foreign access. The CHP handed over power to the Democratic Party (DP) in the elections of 1950. The same year, the DP sent soldiers to Korea in order to be able to join NATO and Turkey became a NATO member in 1952. Turkey's economy entered a new growth trajectory and welfare increased with resources transferred to agriculture and infrastructure first through the USA's Marshall Plan and later through World Bank funding. However, the DP reproducing the single-party mentality was creating tension in the political field. Families that accumulated capital through agricultural activities transferred their funds into industry and banking in this period, forcing Turkey into a new model of capital accumulation. The economic crisis and political tensions resulted in a group of military officers bringing down the DP government with a coup

on May 27, 1960, and installing the legal constitutional infrastructure for an import substitution industrialization model. Industrialization accelerated in Turkey in the 1960s and a modern working class emerged; new labor unions and political parties were founded; leftist thinking started to spread. This led to the existing parties redefining themselves on a class basis. The USA had stationed nuclear missiles in Turkey in 1961. These were withdrawn from the country with the USA and the USSR reaching a deal during the Cuban Missile Crisis. When conflicts broke out between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus at the end of 1963 and Turkey declared its intention to intervene in the Republic of Cyprus, US President Johnson sent a strong letter of warning to Turkey in 1964. These events created mistrust among Turkey's elites toward the USA. During the era of the Justice Party (AP) that came to power in 1965, Turkey began to diversify its foreign policy and develop its relations with the USSR. The 1968 uprising resonated in Turkey along with an economic crisis that was taking place. The balance of payments problem rendered the application of the import substitution industrialization policy difficult, leading to a political crisis. At this



time, the youth leaders of 1968 had created organizations to carry out armed struggle against “US imperialism and its local collaborators” and had taken action. Using this as an excuse, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) intervened in government on March 12, 1971 and the country went through a repressive interlude. Politics normalized with the elections that took place in 1973. The new leader of the CHP, Bülent Ecevit, formed a coalition government with the Islamist National Salvation Party (MSP) and—following a coup—Turkey made a military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. The USA initiated an embargo against Turkey as a response, deepening the economic problems and creating a new political crisis. Rightwing parties led by the AP formed a coalition they dubbed the Nationalist Front (MC) in 1975. In the era of MC governments, the political crisis became a social crisis and society split between the right and the left. The CHP won the 1977 elections but a new MC government took power when the CHP could not form a parliamentary majority. Wanting to prevent the strengthening of the left in this period, the MC government used the youth organizations of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) against it. Armed attacks between rightwing and

leftwing organizations led to conflicts and even mass killings. On September 12, 1980, the TSK conducted a coup creating a new era of repression. Parties, labor unions, and associations were shut down; the left was completely outlawed, citizens known to be leftist were arrested. This repressive period shrank the left by criminalizing it; the resulting vacuum was filled by political Islam and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which were to engage in bloody actions. After creating a repressive constitutional legal order, the TSK made the decision to hold elections. The Motherland Party (ANAP), which was allowed to enter the elections due to US pressure, won. In the ANAP period, the import substitution model was abandoned, neoliberal and neoconservative policies were put in place: Turkey’s economy was opened up completely to foreign access, state economic enterprises were privatized in ways that mirrored developments internationally. Getting rich quick and displaying wealth became fashionable in the 1980s, the sentiment of social solidarity weakened. This situation led however to its own form of opposition: worker actions that began at the end of the 1980s reached a pinnacle in 1990 and began to shake the power of the ANAP.



The party lost the 1991 elections; a coalition government between the Social Democratic Populist Party replaced the CHP, which was ousted with the September 12 coup; the True Path Party (DYP), founded as a replacement for the AP, took power.

Relations between the USSR and Turkey had become tense as the Second World War was coming to an end: The USSR, stating that conditions had changed after the war and that it was necessary to make a new treaty to reflect this, informed Turkey that it would not renew the 1925 Treaty of Friendship. The request to reregulate the regime of the Straits that followed reawakened the fear of Moscow in Turkey. Broadcasts at this time in USSR member republics also increased Turkey's fears, and eased the country's transition to the Western bloc and against the USSR. In the following years, the fear of Moscow transformed into a fear of communism. Relations between the two countries started to normalize after Stalin's death in 1953: at the time the USSR stated that "it had no land claims against Turkey." Turkey maintained its determination to be part of the Western bloc in the following years, leading to frequent responses from the Soviet Union. Devel-

opments in Syria in 1957 and Iraq in 1958 strained relations between the two countries once more. Meanwhile, the USA's agenda for stationing nuclear missiles in Turkey and its realization in 1960 further increased tensions. These reached a new peak when a USA spy plane that took off from the İncirlik military base was brought down over Soviet Union airspace and its pilot captured. Tension was only eased with the USA's withdrawal of missiles after the Cuban Missile Crisis. From 1953 onward, economic relations between Turkey and Russia began to once again show signs of vitality. In 1957, while political tensions were increasing, İşbank and Soviet institutions signed an agreement to establish glass factories in Turkey. The Minister of Health made a trip to the USSR in 1959, the first ministerial level visit in twenty years. The 1960s began with agreements for technical cooperation, charting a new course with the Turkish Foreign Minister's visit to Moscow in 1964. This was followed up in the next year with the USSR Foreign Minister's visit to Turkey. By declaring that it supported the federation thesis in the wake of the Cyprus crisis in 1965, the USSR sided with Turkey as relations between Turkey and the USA were strained. In the same



year, Turkey's prime minister made an official visit to the USSR and signed an agreement of cultural cooperation. A reciprocal visit by the Soviet prime minister was made the following year. An Economic and Technological Cooperation Treaty was signed in 1967 and the USSR began providing funding for seven large industrial facilities in Turkey. Relations between the two countries continued to develop in the following years: A Declaration of Principles of Good Neighborship was signed in 1972, the Second Economic and Technological Cooperation Treaty in 1975, and a Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation Policy Document in 1978. The process was interrupted by the entry of the Soviet Army into Afghanistan but reached a new level with the natural gas agreement signed between the two governments in 1984: A twenty-five-year deal was made in 1986 between Botaş and SoyuzGaz-Export; from 1988, electric production, industry, and, starting with Ankara, residential heating, switched to the use of natural gas. Increased use of natural gas raised living standards in Turkey.

THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT: 1991 TO TODAY

The Paris Charter, published at the 1990 summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), declared that the unexpected collapse of the Eastern Bloc had put an end to world divisions and that this heralded more hopeful times for the world. Ethnic conflicts and regional wars that spread internationally, quickly smothered these hopes: Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Yugoslavia's descent into civil conflict during its process of disintegration, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, civil war in Somalia, the Chechen issue in the Russian Federation, the Kurdish issue in Turkey. These bloody conflicts demonstrated that the order established after the Second World War no longer functioned. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait resulted in the First Gulf War in 1991: a US-led coalition force ended the occupation. In 2003, the USA attacked Iraq without UN assent and provoked a new situation by invading the country. In 1999, US-led NATO forces bombed the Republic of Serbia that was founded after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The only exception to this trend toward conflict was the transformation of the European Community into the European Union (EU) in 1992; EU countries removed borders;



some switched to a common currency (the Euro) in 2002. Over time, the stability created by the EU became increasingly attractive to other European countries, which either joined the union or applied to do so. After a short period of turbulence, China adapted its statist policies to market conditions under the authoritarian rule of the CCP and began to achieve high growth rates. The world economy continued to grow in the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s, especially with the strong contribution of Asian countries like China, India, Taiwan, and Malaysia, and Latin American countries like Brazil and Argentina. However, the crisis that broke out at the end of 2008 led to global stagnation. The USA and the EU made an attempt to overcome this by pumping vast amounts of money into the market, which only delayed the problems. In the following years, two continental Asian countries that had achieved high growth rates, China and India, began to pull the world economy forward.

The Arab Spring, which began in the last days of 2010, created the hope that democracy would come to Middle-Eastern countries; however, the coming to power of political Islamist movements, and the coups and conflicts that took place after-

ward extinguished this hope. A US-led coalition bombed Libya in 2011, which resulted in the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. The country split in two. Demonstrations that began in Syria in the same year later turned into an armed uprising and the country descended into a bloody civil war. Meanwhile, a radical Islamist organization called Al-Qaeda, which was founded in 1988 during the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan, stamped its mark on the era: This organization, which had organized attacks on US targets in 1992, launched a new wave of violence by hijacking four planes in the USA on September 11, 2001; crashing them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. The bloody attacks of this organization and its offshoots in the USA, the EU, and the rest of the world, continued in the following years. One of the derivative organizations, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), managed to capture a large part of Iraq and Syria following the Arab Spring, and was only defeated in 2018 with substantial involvement by the USA and the Russian Federation. Unilateral military interventions undertaken by the USA in various regions of the world were in time reproduced by the Russian Federation; other countries engaged in similar military initiatives



in proportion to their power. Center-right and social democratic parties hemorrhaged support in elections held in the 2010s in almost every part of the world, and rightwing populist leaders started to gain power. Xenophobia and racism increased; but so did consciousness around environmental and gender equality issues.

In the era of Boris Yeltsin, who had stood against the 1991 coup and led the creation of the Russian Federation, an IMF-recommended program of privatization and transition to a market economy and free trade was implemented. However, the Russian Federation spent the 1990s in economic crisis, dealing with the trauma of transition and the Chechen Civil War. The disintegration of the socialist system led to the plundering of enterprises in the name of privatization, the rise of the mafia, economic shrinkage, and the great majority of the people falling into poverty. New businessmen, dubbed *Oligarchs*, who took over the enterprises, deemed themselves to be above everything. The Chechen civil war was fueling violence in the country and feeding corruption. Yeltsin resigned as president in 1999, replaced by Vladimir Putin. The Russian Federation began to achieve stability.

In the Putin era, the Chechen War ended, the Oligarchs were regulated, and the state and economy were restructured. After a two-term presidency, Putin left his post to Dmitriy Medvedev in 2008 as the constitution required; however, he continued to manage the country behind the curtains and was elected president again in 2012. The Russian Federation maintained its economic stability in this period in part due to the effect of rising oil prices and began to strengthen its armed forces, working toward regaining its stature of the USSR era. It joined the civil war in Syria on the side of the government within this context.

Turkey spent the 1990s amid political instability, economic depression and violence caused by the Kurdish issue. The DYP-SHP Coalition not only failed to achieve stability, it led to new instabilities. The PKK's armed attacks peaked in 1992 and a massacre of Alevis in Sivas in 1993 brought tensions to a new level. Unsolved murders, kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, different security forces coming into conflict with each other and the formation of gangs accelerated the corruption of the state apparatus in the following years. When the Political Islamist Welfare Party gained



first place in the elections that took place against this background of corruption, the TSK intervened in the political process. This initiative, on February 28, 1997, and later referred to as a post-modern coup, aggravated rather than solving Turkey's problems. The economic crisis that lasted throughout the 1990s was brought under control through the management of Kemal Derviş who became a minister of state in 2000. The economy settled down during Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's prime ministry, Erdoğan was leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which came to power after 2002. The Kurdish issue became less volatile in this era, but political argument continued. The TSK and the high judiciary tried to intervene in the process of the election of the president in 2007, but this attempt was rebutted by the AKP emerging from snap elections with a substantial victory, and the passing of a referendum on changing the constitution to allow the people to elect the president directly. A further referendum to change the constitution cemented the AKP's power in 2010. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his party's abandoning of the discourse of democracy and attempting to intervene in the structure of society from 2011 onward, triggered huge protests known as the Gezi Upris-

ing in 2013. The Fethullah Gülen group, which had played a huge role in neutralizing the TSK during its struggle with the AKP, came to the fore after 2010. This group engaged in a power struggle with the AKP at the end of 2013 and three years later attempted to stage a coup through its members in the TSK and the police; however, it did not receive the support it expected from the public and its members were largely purged from the state apparatus. Following a further referendum in 2017, Turkey switched to a presidential system and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the sole arbiter of power.

The 1990s were experienced in the Russian Federation and in Turkey as a decade of chaos and collapse, but this did not stop relations between the two countries and their populations from developing. The basis of these relations was Turkey's purchase of natural gas from the Russian Federation; the relations between the peoples on the other hand developed thanks to trade and tourism. For many years, ex-Eastern Bloc and ex-USSR citizens sold low quality but very cheap goods produced in the USSR in Turkey at marketplaces known as Russian street markets, others preferred selling goods bought from Turkish mar-



kets in their own countries. This practice known as the Shuttle Trade slowly disappeared in the 2000s and was replaced by tourism. Additionally, Turks of Caucasian origin who went to Russia during the Chechen civil war met Salafist currents there and were radicalized. These Turkish political Islamists later moved to Afghanistan and Syria, becoming professional fighters. In the following years, Turkey's southern coasts became the most favored holiday center for tourists from the ex-Soviet Union. In turn, many Turkish citizens went to ex-Soviet Union countries and primarily to the Russian Federation to work as contractors or in trade, tourism, education, or construction, and settled there. These developments led to marriages between citizens of the two countries. In 2012, it was decided that relations between the two countries would be developed and the agreement—mentioned earlier—was made regarding new natural gas pipelines and a nuclear power plant. However, Russia's active intervention in the civil war in Syria in 2015 strained relations again, and Turkey's downing of a Russian plane at the end of the year brought the two countries to the edge of conflagration. Turkey supported Ukraine following its annexation by Russia and claimed

that it had “historical rights” over the region. Russia's harsh attitude ultimately led Turkey to back down and a new period of mutual bargaining began: Turkey purchased weapons from Russia after many years.

Looking at this general picture, we can say that relations between Turkey and Russia always remained secondary until—what we may call pre-capitalist—1648. After this date, relations between the two countries became pivotal, at least for Turkey. In periods where the state was strong in Russia, interstate relations between the two came to the fore and Russia almost always got the better of Turkey. Russia's superiority over Turkey—especially militarily—has been a source of deep anxiety for the Turkish elite and population as a whole throughout history. At times when the state in Russia was weak or at the point of collapse, population movements from Russia to Turkey have taken place, and the arriving immigrants have deeply affected the social and cultural climate. It is also remarkable that during periods of crises of hegemony in the capitalist world, such as existed from 1918 to 1939 and from 1968 to the present, the Turkish political elite turns to



Russia and political and economic relations between the two countries strengthen. Relations between Turkey and Russia continue to fluctuate, to the extent that the world itself is unpredictable.

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**IMPRESSIONS *F TURKEY AND ANKARA IN EUGENE
LANCERAY'S WORK A SUMMER IN ANKARA 1922**

EMINE İNANIR



Travel books that describe the contemporary life and commercial and socio-economic developments in the Ottoman State are more frequently found from the second half of the fifteenth century onward due to the phenomenon of Russian itinerants traveling on the way to pilgrimage.

Trifon Korobeynikov, who upon the request of Tsar Ivan Grozni (Ivan the Terrible), had first visited Istanbul between 1582–1584, came to Istanbul for a second time in 1593–1594 due to emissary duties bestowed upon him. In his work titled *The Travel Book of Merchant Trifon Korobeynikov's Visit to the Holy Lands* (Hojdeniye kuptsa Trifona Korobeynikova po syatiym mestam Vostoka), he described in detail many castles and towns in the Ottoman State. A merchant from Kazan, Vasiliy Gagara, left Moscow in 1634 and traveled to Tbilisi, Yerevan, Ardahan, Kars, Erzurum, Sivas, Kayseri, Aleppo, and Damascus. From there he continued on to Egypt where he remained for three months; returning through Damascus, he traveled to Anatolia, passing through Ankara and Kastamonu to arrive at the Black Sea coast. To share his impressions, “here they produce knitting out of goat wool, they raise goats whose wool is like silk, one can buy this

wool in exchange for four gold pieces” stated the merchant who was the first among Russian itinerants to visit Ankara, in his work titled *The Life and Travel of Vasiliy Yakovleviç Gagara of Kazan* (Jitiye i hojdenie v İerusalim i Egipet kazantsa Vasiliya Yakovleviça Gagariy).¹

The Ottoman Empire and Russia signed an agreement in the year 1700 in the era of Tsar Peter I (1689–1725) that made the crossing of Russian itinerants and merchants over these lands more secure.² Despite the wars being waged at the beginning of the eighteenth century, important works were produced as a result of the travels of Russian itinerants such as Matvey G. Neçayev (1719–1720) and Ioann Lukyanov (1701–1703) to Istanbul.³ Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, Russian society gained the opportunity to learn about Turkey from paintings by artists including Maxim Niki-forovich Vorobyov, Pavel Brullov, Ivan Aivazovsky, and Alexey Bogolyubov who visited the country. Types of people, costumes, and ethnographic details, which reflect a very lively and colorful Eastern way of living were depicted in the works of the aforementioned painters.⁴

EUGENE LANCERAY'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE BLACK SEA TOWNS AND MIDDLE ANATOLIA

Eugene Lanceray (1875–1946), a member of an important art association, *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art), lived in St. Petersburg until the 1917 Revolution and continued his work in Tbilisi at the Academy of Arts between the years 1920–1934. Lanceray acquired his interest and skill in painting, art, and literature in the family environment in which he grew up. Eugene Lanceray, who was the grandson of the painter Nikolay L. Benua and the son of the sculptor Eugene A. Lanceray was educated at the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts (1892–1895) and continued his studies later at the Colarossi and Julian Academies of Painting in Paris. Upon the suggestion of N.D. Romanov, who was employed at the Soviet Embassy in Ankara, and the official diplomatic representative Semyon Aralov, Lanceray departed Tbilisi in May 1922, heading for Ankara. In a letter he wrote to his close relative, the painter Alexandre Nikolayevich Benois, about ten days before starting the journey on May 19, he said, “I suspect life in St. Petersburg to be boring, just as it is here; therefore, I wish at least to not bid farewell to the joys that enliv-

en my eyes” and journeyed to Turkey.⁵

Lanceray kept regular notes as well as sketched pencil drawings throughout the journey, just as he always did. The diary notes from his travels in 1885, 1888, 1889, 1892–1904, 1910, 1914–1915 (his first visit to Turkey), and 1920–1946 have survived to our day. We are able to glean important and comprehensive information about this journey from his Turkish notes, and from his paintings in watercolor, gouache, and drawing ink. Departing from Tbilisi by train on May 30, 1922, Lanceray made his way toward İnebolu on a boat that left Batum on June 3, visiting the Trabzon, Hopa, Rize, and Samsun ports along the way. As a painter, the coast and mountain views grabbed his attention and he immediately produced sketches of these. Additionally, he also described the hazelnut orchards surrounding Trabzon. The boat reached the Samsun port one day after leaving Batum. He stated that they saw a torpedo boat belonging to American armed forces at this port. While in Samsun, the Turkish authorities informed the ship’s captain that a Greek warship was on course from İnebolu to Samsun. The captain of the Russian ship decided to leave



shore. Lanceray and others on board witnessed the Greek warship subjecting Samsun to a barrage of fire, causing a fire to break out inside the city. Their ship reached İnebolu on the fourth day of the journey; Lanceray and his accompanying friend decided to disembark and continue on to Ankara from there. In his notes, the painter recorded the concerns of the people of İnebolu in the face of the arrival of the Greek warship. As his painting and notes dated June 7, 1922 attest, İnebolu's citizens, struck by fear of war, carried their belongings that were stored by the coast inland, and boats and rafts were laid on trailers and removed from the shore.

Lanceray traveled by car to Ankara and his first impressions were positive. He described seeing the people in the country as hopeful despite their great struggle against the occupiers, and he provided very detailed information about the trip:

A happy country, rich and beautiful; residential areas visible along the road we traveled were quite crowded (...) We frequently encountered horse drawn carriages full of

military equipment along the road (...) The red flag embroidered with a half-moon, fastened to a load, was ruffling in the car at the front of the convoy.⁶

They saw many convoys and caravans along the way, however, as the painter stated, "not only was there never anyone who greeted us with angry eyes, screams, sticks, and stones, but on the contrary we encountered open, plain looks, never harboring evil or jealousy."⁷ As we know, Çankırı played the role of an important intermediary center for the transport of people and materials from Istanbul to Ankara via İnebolu, during what has been called the War of Liberation, War of Independence, or the National Struggle. Lanceray's observations regarding this matter in fact emphasize the importance of the road that leads from İnebolu to Ankara. These pieces of information were certainly of great interest to the Soviet Russian Embassy representative Semyon Ivanoviç Aralov, who had just taken up his role.⁸

All the geographic characteristics of Central Anatolia, including Kastamonu, the Ilgaz Mountain passes, the mountains and hills in and around



Çankırı, meadows and camel caravans he saw along the river, are featured in the painter's daily notes. Lanceray, who could not remain unmoved by the scenery he encountered, said: "This is a painting reminiscent of the old times!"⁹

EUGENE LANCERAY'S ANKARA VISIT AND HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE CITY

As we can see from his notes and paintings, Lanceray, who in the first stage of his visit was interested in the historical periods of antiquity, Byzantium and Seljuks, in time was also impressed by rural towns built near meadows and on hills with a different style of architecture, and by houses that had not yet embraced "the European style" and which also displayed a unique architecture.

Lanceray's diary continues with the following words:

History has long moved on in other countries, but around here the pages of history have remained open right in the middle. The many who have passed through these lands; Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Alexander the

Great, Xenophon with his tens of thousands of soldiers (...) Antonius...¹⁰

His first visit to Turkey was in the winter months of 1914–1915, and while the location is not specified, the artist most likely accompanied Russian soldiers during the Sarıkamış Operation.¹¹ It is evident that he prepared for his second visit by gathering a large amount of information about the country. Explaining that Turkish cities had demonstrated an important rise in prominence in the seventeenth century, he thus declared that "There are 3,000 fountains, 200 public baths, 76 mosques, a school for boys with a capacity of 180, and many palaces, pavilions and marketplaces in Ankara."¹²

Lanceray's interest in "past eras" did not last long. As was the case for the locals of Ankara, Lanceray also got used to these sights and with each passing day, the daily life of Ankara started to appear more attractive to him. In the words of the painter, "With the upper floors of its houses bent over its winding streets, its knobbed door handles and its wells hidden under columned gazebos, Ankara has an air about



it that is seemingly left over from the Middle Ages.”¹³ The authentic architecture of traditional Turkish houses had already caught his attention while still at the Trabzon Harbor. (Figure 1)

Because the streets were narrow and cramped (...) the ground floors and balconies of the houses lean over to the street. The situation is the same in the West, but there is a greater attention to symmetry and neatness from the Middle Ages on.¹⁴

In his notes, the artist also underlines that “the workmanship observed in the woodwork, wood carvings, cornices, and ceilings, is excellent.”¹⁵ He describes the aesthetics of the art of calligraphy and the creativeness of calligraphy masters with praiseful words. We are informed about the livelihood of the people of Ankara in this period by Lanceray's notes. He made paintings depicting wool spinning works, saddles prepared for caravan travels, weapon foundries, silver clad sabots, and weaving workshops that he saw at the craftsmen’s bazaar in Ankara. Additionally, he praised the Turkish people’s determi-



Figure 1. E. Lanceray’s work *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliju letom 1922* [A Summer in Ankara 1922] p. 46.

nation to work, stating that “their work continues on Fridays as well.”¹⁶ However, “It is almost impossible to come by appealing knickknacks, ornamented furniture and luxury buildings in this city, which has almost never come under enemy attack since Timur; everything is very plain and inexpensive.”¹⁷ (Figure 2)

Declaring that meetings and discussions did

not take place, that associations and clubs did not exist and that the last cinema was destroyed in a fire, the artist reached the conclusion that “A European-style social life” had not yet reached Ankara.¹⁸ In this city that was seemingly under a spell of village-like silence, what astonished Lanceray were cinema and theater shows taking place as late as ten or eleven o’clock in the evening and ending at midnight. He was also surprised that women did not attend such social activities. It is evident that the warm, plain, and peaceful atmosphere of an Ankara that had still not matched the busy flow of the new age left a strong impression on Lanceray. (Figure 3)

The Symbolist movement that began to spread in Russia in the 1890s, and the influence of its new aesthetic pursuits on Soviet-era literature and art in the first quarter of the twentieth century, led to a silver age in these fields. The influences of Symbolism can be seen in Lanceray’s paintings and in his diaries. The images he frequently used in his descriptions of Ankara being an example of the aforementioned movement.

“The twilight holds a very special beauty in



Figure 2. Lanceray. Craftsmen’s Bazaar in Ankara, 1922.

E. Lanceray’s work *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922* [A Summer in Ankara 1922] p. 46.

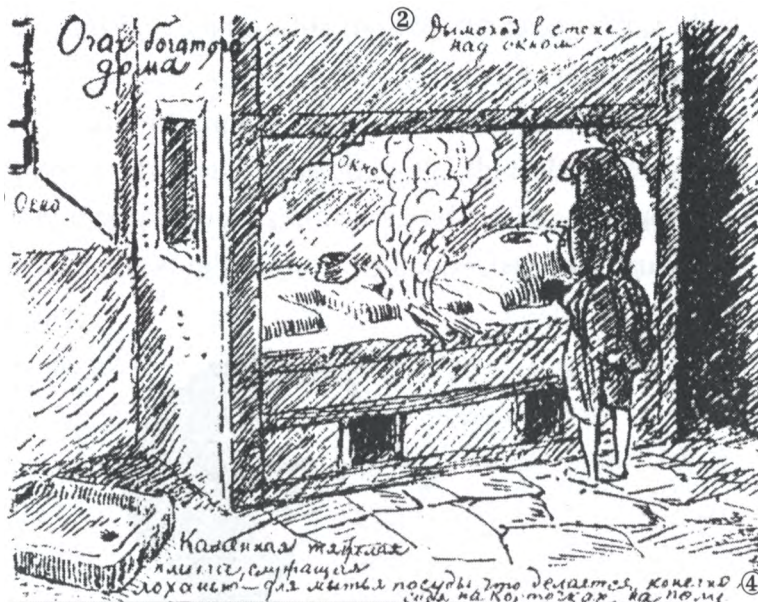


Figure 3. Lanceray. Ankara. Hearth of a Wealthy Home.

E. Lanceray's work *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922* [A Summer in Ankara 1922] p. 34.

this calm country and this quiet city,” says the painter.¹⁹ He continues his descriptions of Ankara with his distinctive language:

The night that falls suddenly, the lights that begin to burn in the windows one after the other, the fresh new charming shadows that

emerge (...) The streets that link up with each other (...) and the crowded teahouses that I come across in an unexpected moment.²⁰

Lanceray uses the sharpest detail to describe the tradition of tea drinking in coffeehouses that he refers to as teahouses in his notes and paintings, as well as the visitors to these places. He also mentions the waterpipe corner and the characteristics of serving Turkish coffee, reaching the following conclusion: “Around these tiny tables in the teahouses, one witnesses the plain and sincere equality of Turkish traditions: the peasant and the pasha sit side by side.”²¹ (Figure 4)

In *A Summer in Ankara 1922* it is interesting to note that in addition to his visits to regions in Ankara, the Black Sea, and Anatolia, Lanceray also wrote down his interviews at the pavilion with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, members of parliament, and Halide Edip Adıvar. In the aforementioned work, the artist describes visiting Mustafa Kemal Pasha at the pavilion with the Soviet Russian Ambassador. He gives detailed information regarding the location and history of the pavilion, informing us that it is sited on a hill outside the



Figure 4. Lanceray. Ankara.

E. Lanceray's work *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliju letom 1922* [A Summer in Ankara 1922] p. 17.

city, that Mustafa Kemal Pasha consigned this pavilion to the army, and that the army used it for their own commanders. He then describes the reception ceremony at the pavilion:

Even though we were still a long distance

from the pavilion, we started coming across cavalry belonging to the Pasha's troop of guardsmen, and soldiers on guard duty (...) The Laz people that Ankara loves and is proud of, they had all dressed in black clothes, had black turbans on their heads and were dressed in wide pocketed leathern military uniforms, they mesmerized everyone with their warrior-style appearance.²²

The aides welcomed the Soviet Russian Ambassador Aralov, and Lanceray, and accompanied them as far as Mustafa Kemal Pasha's office. The guests were offered coffee in the waiting room, where the painter carefully observed the surroundings and cited his impressions:

On the walls were both photographs taken by a camera and painted portraits of the owner of the pavilion; a large map of the Dardanelles strait also featured because Kemal (Pasha) had defended it during World War I.²³

The painter describes Mustafa Kemal Pasha with the following words:



The Pasha was of average height, he was aged about forty-five, dressed in official attire, and his demeanor fully befitted a soldier. He was born in Thessaloniki. A little while later, while drawing his portrait in the yard, I tried to capture a resemblance to the Slavic race; blond, his facial lines were not very pronounced, his eyes however were gray and he had harsh, bold looks.²⁴

As we can see from the artist's words, the admiration he felt for Mustafa Kemal Pasha shattered the prejudices Russians had held against the Turks for centuries. His attempt to find a similarity with the Russians themselves, with the Slavic race, is further part of this admiration. The painter, who analyzed Mustafa Kemal Pasha in every aspect, also mentions his speech skills and points out that he often addressed the peasant folk in parliament: "The owner of Turkish land is the Turkish peasantry."²⁵ Such speeches by Mustafa Kemal Pasha were also important for Soviet power of the time; the same attitude and situation with regard to peasant folk prevailed in Russia. He also states in his notes that the Turkish people approached Mustafa Kemal Pasha with



Figure 5. Lanceray. Mustafa Kemal Pasha and Turkish Soldiers, 1922.

E. Lanceray's work *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922* [A Summer in Ankara 1922] p. 33.

great respect and esteem.

Lanceray often wrote about the National Struggle, while emphasizing that among the most

“important heroes” of the war were peasant women. “They provided important services, rushing aid to the front with ordinary ox carts over very difficult paths,” says the painter.²⁶ Adding to his notes the interview he made with a member of parliament Tunalı Hilmi Bey, the painter also wrote down a memory that Hilmi Bey shared while he was drawing him. Noticing the weapon in Hilmi Bey’s room, Lanceray asked him why he was being so careful. Hilmi Bey told him how close Greek soldiers came to Ankara and about those very tense nights. In one such troubled night, Hilmi Bey had composed a poem describing a battle that would end in victory and sent it to Kemal Pasha. The following day a very important victory was achieved and Mustafa Kemal Pasha gifted the weapon that was now in the room to Hilmi Bey as part of the spoils of war.

Another important meeting took place with Halide Edip Adivar. As Lanceray tells us, he met with her on Aralov’s recommendation, in order to draw “a picture of Halide Hanım, a very important writer who had a European education but is now an advocate of the National Struggle.”²⁷ In his work, Lanceray introduces Halide Hanım as a

novelist who had distanced herself from the traditional literary language heavily laden with Arabic and Farsi speech forms and who used plain Turkish instead. The painter, who tells of the ease with which he was able to communicate with this author, also declares that she in fact held the rank of sergeant in the army. Recounting that Halide Hanım lived with the vice president of parliament, Adnan Bey, in a mansion outside of town, the painter mentions visiting their home. He speaks of a plain interior that nevertheless contained numerous books, miniatures, and paintings. We therefore understand that the painter depicted the interior environment of the home in each work.

As Lanceray points out in his diary, he came across another heroine of the National Struggle at the Russian Embassy building. Referring to this woman as Sergeant Fatma, the painter explains that she came to the embassy with two accompanying soldiers to deliver an invitation to a film in which she was involved. In his work, the artist described and painted Fatma Seher, nicknamed “Kara Fatma” (Black Fatma), one of the most important symbols of the War of Liberation. Lancer-



Figure 6. Lanceray. Halide Edip Adıvar, 1922.

E. Lanceray's work *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922* [A Summer in Ankara 1922] p. 35.

ay also wrote about other interesting visits paid to the embassy. From the earliest days of arriving in Ankara, he had noticed extraordinary guests visiting the building. While he thought these people were no different to Russian peasants “with their hanging loose shirts, caps, long leather

boots, and gallant beards,” we understand that they were in fact Russians living in these lands. One woman caught his attention, with her different clothes that were “in some part appropriate to Russian traditions, in other ways completely Eastern in style.”²⁸ According to Lanceray, researching this “Nekrasov Community” that had remained separated from their home country of Russia since the era of Catherine the Great, for over a hundred years, would be very interesting to an expert of ethnography.²⁹ Noting the changes in the language they spoke, which had taken place over time, the painter shares information about how this Russian community arrived and settled in Turkey:

“They came along the Don river, splitting into two groups. While one group arrived directly, the other at first stayed in Romania, later arriving in Turkey where the two groups reunited. They were first settled on an island near Beyşehir, however, they now live on a flat meadow two hours from Akşehir (...) Their sources of livelihood are wheat, oats, and barley. They have their own lands. Despite having better lives than Turks, they wish to return to Russia. Some of them returned to Russia

in 1914.”³⁰

In the final days of his stay in Ankara, Lanceray visited the Ankara fair and described the folk festivities in detail. We learn from his diary that a fire broke out at the Russian Embassy one August day and that the fire brigade arrived in time to put it out. The painter observes a rise in activity on the front starting from August 26, and witnesses an unusual event on August 27. In his own words, “aeroplans” (airplanes) had arrived from Samsun, which Lanceray declares to have seen for the first time in Ankara, and points out the frequent mentioning of the term “victory” at the time.

With the Great Offensive operation on September 9, 1922, the Turkish army descended on Greek occupied İzmir and liberated the city. As soon as news of the liberation of İzmir reached Ankara, two days of celebrations were organized. Embassy employees attended these celebrations and public entertainments, viewing them from atop special terraces. After the three-month period he spent in Ankara, on September 16, Lanceray embarked upon a return journey in a horse driven “spring cart.” He followed the

same route on the way back. The painter compared the Ilgaz passages with the Caucasus passages, which he knew intimately, and noted the calmness and safety of the passengers. Within a very short period of time however, the mail convoy they were part of was attacked by two bandits dressed in military garb. Mentioning that they came away unscathed, the painter was evidently worried most about his “notebooks that contained his sketches and painted works.”³¹ Spending one week in the month of October in Trabzon, he informs us that he was welcomed there by the Soviet Russian Consul “comrade Trabun.” From Trabzon, he returned to his country, once again by sea route.³²

In the last five or six-page section of his work, titled “Short Notes on the Political and Military Events of the Years 1918–1922 in the History of Contemporary Turkey” (İstoriyi Sovremennoy Turtsiyi), Eugene Lanceray shares the most important pieces of information on the country, and as can be understood from the subheading, provides a summary of the National Struggle years. The four small and three large drawing books consisting of 150 watercolor, gouache, and drawing



ink works that the painter created during his travel to Turkey, were exhibited at the Kremlin Palace just one month after his return on October 6, 1922. In the last days of the same year, the exhibition was also opened in St. Petersburg. Upon the proposal of Vadim Dmitrievich Falileyev (1879–1950), a leading painter of the period, twenty copies of an album of Lanceray’s work were printed by Gosizdat (the state monopoly printer) in 1923, using the technique of color lithography. Sketches from the aforementioned album are exhibited today at the Russian State Museum. The painter had prepared black and white sketches of the same paintings in 1925 and included these in the work that we have been analyzing.

On the first page of Lanceray’s work *A Summer in Ankara 1922*, which is adorned by sixty-two black and white pictures, is a portrait of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. The positioning of this portrait on the first pages of the work is again symbolic. For Russian delegates and intellectuals, the “summer of 1922,” which was as important for Turkey as it was for Ankara, was linked to Atatürk. As a result of the journey he undertook and the work produced, which was recognized

as highly meticulous, Eugene Lanceray earned the title of the first Soviet cultural ambassador to Turkey.

NOTES:

- 1 Anonymous, *Jitiye i hojdeniye Vasiliya Gagariy Pravoslavnyy Palestinskiy sbornik* T. XI. 3 (St. Petersburg: 1891), 38.
- 2 Ioann Lukyanov, *Puteşestviye svyaşçenika Lukyanova* (Moskva: Russkiy arhiv, vip. 3., 1863), 129.
- 3 Hüseyin Kandemir, *Rus Edebiyatında İstanbul* [Istanbul in Russian Literature] (Konya: Çizgi Yayınevi, 2009), 19-33.
- 4 Gönül Uzelli, *XVIII.-XIX. Yüzyıllarda Rus Resim Sanatı* [Russian Art of Painting in the 18th-19th Centuries] (İstanbul: Çantay Yayınlar, 2002), 68-111.
- 5 <http://www.russiskusstvo.ru/books/old/a65/> (last access 02.10. 2017).
- 6 Yevgeni Lanceray, *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922* (Leningrad: Brokgauz-Efron, 1925), 12.
- 7 Lanceray, *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922*, 12.
- 8 Semyon Avralov, *Bir Diplomatin Anıları 1922-1923* [The Memoirs of a Diplomat]. trans. H. Ali Ediz (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2017), 3-11.
- 9 Lanceray, *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anatoliyu letom 1922*, 14.



- 10 Ibid. , 14.
- 11 İlyas Kemaloğlu, *Rusların Gözüyle Türkler* [Turks in Russian Eyes] (İstanbul: Kaktüs Yayınları, 2015), 172-73.
- 12 Lanceray, *Leto v Angore/ Risunki i zametki iz dnevnika poezdki v Anadoliyu letom 1922*, 14.
- 13 Ibid. , 16.
- 14 Ibid. , 26.
- 15 Ibid. , 26.
- 16 Ibid. , 18.
- 17 Ibid. , 18.
- 18 Ibid. , 18.
- 19 Ibid. , 22.
- 20 Ibid. , 22.
- 21 Ibid. , 23.
- 22 Ibid. , 30.
- 23 Ibid. , 30.
- 24 Ibid. , 30.
- 25 Ibid. , 32.
- 26 Ibid. , 33.
- 27 Ibid. , 30.
- 28 Ibid. , 50.
- 29 Ibid. , 50.
- 30 Ibid. , 50-51.
- 31 Ibid. , 64.
- 32 Ibid. , 72.



THE MOSCOW VKHUTEMAS: TRAINING ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS FOR THE NEW SOCIETY

CHRISTINA LODDER



Moscow's Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops—or the *Vysshie Gosudarstvennyye Khudozhestvenno-Tekhnicheskie Masterskie* in Russian—are known, not surprisingly, by their acronym—the Vkhutemas.¹ The school was set up by government decree in December 1920 as a “specialized educational institution for advanced artistic and technical training, created to prepare highly qualified master artists for industry as well as instructors and directors of professional and technical education.”² As the wording of the decree suggests, the school's primary role was not only to train artists and art teachers to fulfill the already established roles that artists performed in society, but also to develop a new type of artist—“a highly qualified master artist for industry”—or what, today, we would call an industrial designer.

The decree was signed by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin as head of the Soviet state, indicating the importance that the regime placed on art and its role in achieving government objectives. Lenin clearly regarded art as a valuable propaganda tool in the battle to win the hearts and minds of the Russian people for socialism. At the same

time, he also considered art to be an important weapon in his fight to improve the quality of industrial production. He and the other Bolsheviks were committed to transforming Russia into a highly industrialized country, as a prelude to developing socialism and producing an environment in which communism could ultimately flourish. Unfortunately, Russia's economy had been destroyed by almost seven years of military conflict (the First World War of 1914–1917, followed by the Civil War 1918–c.1920). By late 1920, the Bolshevik victory in Western Russia was assured, but industrial output was at a tenth of what it had been in 1914. Moreover, Russia had been reduced to a barter economy. To remedy this situation, restore manufacturing, and resuscitate the economy, Lenin launched the New Economic Policy (NEP), allowing small-scale private enterprises to coexist alongside large-scale state-owned heavy industry. The Vkhutemas clearly formed an integral part of this strategy to reindustrialize Russia and achieve socialism. As one official statement stressed, “All the teaching in the Moscow Higher State Artistic Workshops must strictly conform to the contemporary needs of the RSFSR.”³



The establishment of the Vkhutemas also indicated that the Bolsheviks were now taking back control of art and directing it toward their own ideological objectives. The previous reorganization of Moscow's art schools had been viewed as an internal, and, to a certain extent, as a purely artistic and creative matter by the avant-garde artists who ran the Department of Fine Arts within the Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Otdel Izbrazitel'nykh Iskusstv, Narodnyi Komissariat po Proshveshcheniiu*), and consequently, the decree had been signed by David Shterenberg, as head of the department.⁴ In contrast, the establishment of the Vkhutemas was considered to be a matter of national economic and political importance; it had been discussed by the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov – Sovnarkom*), and the ensuing decree was signed by Lenin, as president of Sovnarkom.⁵

The Vkhutemas has been called the Soviet Bauhaus. The two schools inevitably shared a lot in common. Like the Bauhaus, the Vkhutemas was an important center for radical innovation in artistic education during the 1920s, developing a new methodology and revolutionizing the way

in which artists and designers were trained in Russia at the time. Like the Bauhaus, the Vkhutemas also had a complicated history. It had originally been formed on the basis of the First and Second State Free Art Studios (*Gosudarstvennye Svobodnye Khudozhestvennye Masterskie*), which had themselves been set up on the foundation of the pre-revolutionary art schools in Moscow: the Stroganov School of Applied Arts and the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (*Stroganovskoe Khudozhestvenno-promyshlennoe Uchilishche and Moskovskoe Uchilishche Zhivopisi, Vayaniia i Zodchestva*).⁶ During its existence, the Vkhutemas went through several changes and adjustments. In 1927 it was reorganized and renamed the Higher Artistic and Technical Institute (*Vysshyi Khudozhestvenno-Tekhnicheskii Institut – Vkhutein*). Three years later, in early May 1930, students and staff were informed that at the end of the then current academic year, the school would cease to exist, and the various faculties would be absorbed into specialist institutes.⁷

As befitted a revolutionary school, the Vkhutemas rejected the principles and teaching methods developed by the Imperial Academy on



the basis of the scheme of study used by the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. For painters, that process had usually involved;

1. Drawing from engravings,
2. Drawing from plaster casts from the antique,
3. Painting copies of the old masters,
4. Finally, allowing students to paint from live models.⁸

The *Vkhutemas* replaced this long, drawn-out process with programs based on the formal and technical innovations of the *avant-garde* in painting, sculpture, and architecture. These creative figures had themselves rebelled against the artistic rules of the Academy. As soon as they were able to, they abolished the old art school system. That opportunity came with the Revolution and the fact that during the Civil War, which lasted in Western Russia from 1918 until late 1920, *avant-garde* artists ran artistic affairs, including the art schools. As a result, the old structure of art education was abandoned, and artists embarked

upon the exciting venture of creating the kind of art school that was appropriate to the new age and the new art.

This did not immediately lead to the *Vkhutemas*—but to the State Free Art Studios, which were set up in 1918 on the premises of the old art schools throughout the country—in Moscow, Petrograd, Kazan, and elsewhere.⁹ These new studios proclaimed and practiced the ideal of complete freedom in artistic education and provided only the loosest pedagogical structure. The studios were open to everyone, without any entrance examination and irrespective of their previous education.¹⁰ Students were free to choose what they studied, how they studied and with whom. They could move from studio to studio in order to find the style of teaching that suited them best. If they so desired, they could even work in a studio without a supervisor. In the words of one public announcement, “the studios give the students the opportunity of developing their individuality in whatever direction they wish.”¹¹

The plurality of approaches was enormous and an essential element of the new attitude to-



ward art education. The government announcement stressed that “All artistic trends are accommodated within the school” and that “All artists have the right to present themselves as candidates for supervising a studio.”¹² At one extreme, there were figurative artists like Abram Arkhipov, who produced colorful paintings of ordinary people, particularly peasant women.¹³ At the other end of the spectrum, there was abstraction, represented by Kazimir Malevich’s Suprematist canvases of colored geometric forms against white grounds, Wassily Kandinsky’s swirling compositions, and Vladimir Tatlin’s constructions built up from ordinary materials in space.¹⁴ In between, there were artists who embraced a Cubist or Cézannist idiom, like Ilia Mashkov.¹⁵

Most of these artists promoted their own stylistic approaches, encouraging their students to emulate their work. Some staff, however, tried to inculcate a more objective approach to artistic creation. Mashkov, for instance, taught his students to exploit and identify different styles of depicting reality. He presented his students with a still life, which they had to first paint naturalistically, then in a pointillist style, and finally in

Mashkov’s own neo-Cézannist style.¹⁶ Malevich adopted a similar approach. He taught his students about Van Gogh, Cézanne, Cubism, Futurism, and Suprematism.¹⁷ Kandinsky used a comparable method in order to encourage his students to acquire “an objective knowledge” of artistic form and experience the inner freedom of an artist.¹⁸ Teaching them about the relativity of styles represented an enormous advance toward inculcating an understanding of the role that specific artistic elements, as well as the artist’s intuition, played in the creative process.

Not surprisingly, however, this individualistic and rather anarchistic phase of art education was ultimately found to be untenable. In 1921, the director of the Vkhutemas, Efim Ravdel observed, “It became evident that the Renaissance ideal of the free studios didn’t suit us. ... The single basis for the objective study of art was lost. The students only mastered the individual methods of the teachers.”¹⁹ Moreover, the profound changes in the social and political situation of Soviet Russia were beginning to make an impact. Ravdel concluded that “a year of revolutionary life has forced us to understand that the artist is not



an embellisher of life, but a serious molder of social consciousness and a responsible organizer of the whole of our everyday life.”²⁰ This realization that art education should be organized along new principles in accordance with the country’s present structure and contemporary needs was also embodied in a student resolution of June 1920.²¹

Accordingly, the Vkhutemas was set up in December 1920 to introduce a more disciplined approach. Now, instead of accepting anyone, only students who had completed their secondary education or had received some preparation in the Rabfak (*Rabochii Fakul'tet—The Workers' Faculty*) were admitted. All students then had to study on the Basic Course before they were allowed to specialize in one of the faculties: Painting, Graphics, Textiles, Sculpture, Ceramics, Woodwork, Metalwork, and Architecture.²²

THE BASIC COURSE

The Basic Course was fundamental to the Vkhutemas’s pedagogical program. It was introduced to systematize and develop an objective approach to artistic elements and act as a universal

underpinning for creative work in all the arts. For a very brief time at the beginning, it was taught within each faculty, but was soon taught as a distinctive element of the overall program. The Basic Course enshrined the notion of the unity of the arts and gave students a general introduction to the elements of art, which was relevant for all the faculties. It was inspired by pre-revolutionary avant-garde artistic theory and practice. In particular, it built on the conclusions that were embodied in a general statement that summed up avant-garde thinking about the nature of artistic culture. This statement was published in 1919:

material—surface, texture [*faktura*], elasticity, density, weight, and other properties of material.

color—saturation, strength, relationship to light, purity, transparency, independence, and other qualities.

space—volume, depth, dimension, and other properties of space.

time (movement)—in its spatial expression and in connection with color, material, composition,



etc.

form—as a result of the interaction of material, color, space, and, in its distinctive form, composition.

technique [*tekhnika*]—painting, mosaic, reliefs of various kinds, sculpture, masonry, and other artistic techniques.²³

The identification of the various elements integral to artistic culture (as presented in this statement) afforded some general guidelines in formulating the Basic Course. Even so, these definitions left considerable room for debate and refinement as staff tackled the difficult task of determining precisely how these principles could be employed most effectively in formulating specific teaching programs to support and promote the Vkhutemas’s mission of producing designers. Hence, the structure of the Basic Course was constantly changing. Liubov Popova once said that the programs were altered every week.²⁴ This may have been an exaggeration, but it is very difficult to establish precisely what was being taught when—and, indeed, how it was being taught.

Whatever the precise adjustments, the aim of the Basic Course remained consistent throughout the existence of the Vkhutemas/Vkhutein: it was to give “the new student the knowledge and skills of artistic mastery [*masterstvo*], being general to all the fine arts, and the basis for the new art of synthesis.”²⁵

One of the earliest documents concerning the nature of the initial disciplines in the Painting Faculty is a small volume of prints produced anonymously by the students themselves (Figure 1). In fact, the drawings were by Anastasiia Akhtyrko and the rather cheeky verses were written by Galina Chichagova.²⁶ The design of the cover is based entirely on the words of the title (Disciplines Vkhutemas—Дисциплины Вхутемас) and “the year 20” (God 20—Год 20).²⁷ Translated into solid and skeletal forms, the words and numbers are layered in alternating diagonals against a light ground, creating a sense of space and dynamism. Even though the prints are missing for some of the disciplines, the surviving images and verses provide an illuminating and light-hearted idea of the different approaches to the basic vocabulary of art. In contrast to the cover, the prints are essentially





Figure 1. *Vkhutemas Distsipliny god 1920* [The Vkhutemas Disciplines Year 1920] (Moscow, 1920). Cover by Anastasiia Akhtyrko. VKhUTEMAS Collection, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (950052).

figurative. The drawing is economic: a few thin lines deftly delineate the various figures and even manage to suggest their characters. The images are evidence of Akhtyrko's talent for caricature but, along with the verses, they also suggest that Vkhutemas students were a lively, enthusiastic and independent group of young people, who did not suffer fools gladly and did not treat their teachers with excessive respect. Indeed, the collection evokes the atmosphere of informality and comradeship that characterized the school throughout most of its existence.

The volume is dated 1920, but was probably produced sometime in the first half of 1921, because the verses refer to Constructivism—an approach and term that only really emerged with any clarity in spring 1921.²⁸ At this point, there were eight disciplines:

Discipline No. 1: The Maximum Revelation of Color, taught by Liubov Popova and Aleksandr Vesnin.

Discipline No. 2: The Revelation of Form through Color, taught by Aleksandr Osmerkin.



Discipline No. 3: Color in Space, taught by Alexandra Exter.

Discipline No. 4: Color on the Plane, taught by Ivan Kliun.

Discipline No. 5: Construction, taught by Aleksandr Rodchenko.

Discipline No. 6: Simultaneity of Form and Color on the Plane, taught by Aleksandr Drevin.

Discipline No. 7: Volume in Space, taught by Nadezhda Udaltsova.

Discipline No. 8: The Particularities of Color as it relates to Abstract Compositions, taught by Vladimir Baranov-Rossiné.²⁹

As this list makes clear, all these artists were essentially painters, although both Kliun and Rodchenko had produced constructed sculptures. They, along with Popova, Exter, and Vesnin, were the most committed to abstraction. Drevin and his wife Udaltsova (who had experimented extensively with Cubism) were begin-

ning to turn away from abstraction to develop a more figurative style, while Baranov-Rossiné concentrated on exploring the musical associations of color. In contrast to these innovative artists, Osmerkin was a rather conventional painter, who worked in a Cézannian idiom and approached color not as an independent element, but as the property of a specific object.

The drawings and verses capture the essential traits—personal as well as artistic—of the various teachers. For instance, in respect to Popova and Vesnin, Chichagova wrote: “The Left Front is now rich. Vesnin and Popova are our soldiers” (Figure 2). The image, however, seems to belie the positive qualities of this assertion. Popova is shown elegantly dressed in fashionable furs (which are hardly proletarian) and the exaggerated dome of Vesnin’s head conveys the idea of a middle-class intellectual rather than a worker. Although Vesnin primarily worked as an architect and actually taught in the Architecture Faculty alongside his teaching on the Basic Course, he, like Popova, was also producing abstract paintings at this time. Inevitably, the students were far more critical of Osmerkin; although they did not comment on his art, they pilloried his attachment to



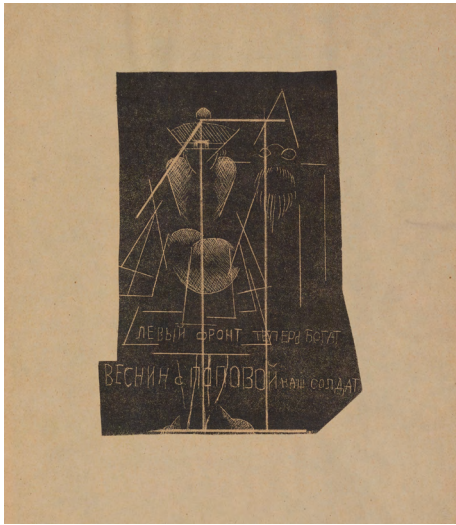


Figure 2. Aleksandr Vesnin and Liubov Popova as depicted in *Vkhutemas Distsipliny god 1920* [The Vkhutemas Disciplines Year 1920] (Moscow, 1920). Drawings by Anastasiia Akhtyrko; verses by Olga Chichagova. VKHUTEMAS Collection, 1920–1929, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (950052).

alcohol: “A. Osmerkin comes running and rattles a bottle, he measures form through color, drowning the disciplines.” In contrast, it was precisely his creative allegiances that the students criticized in their verses about Kliun. A long-time friend of Malevich, he had been associated with Cubism before developing a style based on Suprematism. The verses focus

on the eclectic nature of his production, drawing attention to his rather problematic relationship to both Suprematism and Constructivism, and indicating his rather flexible attitude toward artistic styles and principles, “Kliun struggles along but works away, am I not a brother to the textile worker, I feed on Constructivism and Malevich’s square.”

Discipline No. 5, Construction, was taught by Rodchenko, who, by early 1921, was beginning to create three-dimensional constructions. Prior to this, he had been producing a series of paintings concerning the line and had also explored different qualities of pictorial texture or *faktura*. In May 1921, he showed a series of hanging constructions based on Euclidean geometric forms—including the circle mentioned in the verse, which reads: “Maestro Rodchenko decided that the problem lies in the circle. What will happen to us now—friends help.” Rodchenko was bald and his cap was an established feature of his appearance. While Rodchenko was firmly attached to the emerging aesthetic of Constructivism, both Drevin and Udaltsova were beginning to return to a more figurative idiom. The verses stress this development: “Your lines have destroyed the

whole of Cubism Nadia, and Constructivism has destroyed Picasso's textures [*faktura*]." Nevertheless, Chichagova was perhaps most scathing in her verse about Baranov-Rossiné, which reads: "Baranov-Rossiné decided to change the culture of looking and for this, he came from Paris to the Vkhutemas." The implication is that he could have saved himself the journey and that he had nothing to give to the students or the art world.

The disciplines taught by these artists provided an introduction to the elements of artistic form as related to painting, possessing little relationship to any creative activity involving work in three dimensions, such as sculpture, architecture, ceramics, woodwork, or metalwork. Vkhutemas staff soon realized that they had to create an integrated Basic Course, which would incorporate material relevant for all the faculties. By 1922, the disciplines taught on this new integrated Basic Course had been reduced to four:

1. Color Construction, taught by Liubov Popova and Aleksandr Vesnin.
2. Spatial Construction, taught by Niko-

lai Dokuchaev, Vladimir Krinskii, and Nikolai Ladovskii.

3. Graphic Construction, taught by Aleksandr Rodchenko, Viktor Kiselev, and Ivan Efimov.

4. Volumetric Construction, taught by Anton Lavinskii.³⁰

This structure also changed, and by 1925 the Basic Course had been reduced to three distinct areas of study, which were now more closely related to the practice of painting, sculpture, and architecture:

1. Plane and Color—absorbed the disciplines relating to painting and graphics.

2. Volume and Space—embraced all the disciplines that related to sculpture and volumetric construction.

3. Space and Volume—included the architectural disciplines which had been incorporated into spatial construction.³¹



Between them, these areas of study embraced the basic visual elements of all the different specializations. There were, of course, subsequent minor adjustments, including the reinstatement of graphics as a separate focus of study.³² Nevertheless, in all essentials, this remained more or less the structure of the Basic Course throughout the existence of the Vkhutemas/Vkhutein. In theory, all students had to study these three areas whatever their future specialization. In practice, however, this didn't always happen, especially in the early years.

The Discipline of Plane and Color absorbed the earlier disciplines that had related to painting. In addition to learning about the science of color (optics and chemistry) and the nature of pigments, students studied the properties of color, explored how various colors could be combined, and examined the different kinds of pictorial textures that could be produced by working both colored pigments and other materials, and the way color could change in relation to different textures. Students looked at the inter-relationship of form and color and the way that color interacts with volume and space on the plane or

alters the viewer's perception of the surfaces of a volume. The students produced figure paintings exploring these ideas, but also responded to numerous exercises that focused on specific aspects of color, such as drawing six pairs of



Figure 3. Photograph of a display of exercises in color by students on the Basic Course, mid 1920s. Private collection.

complementary colors; painting the lightness of three colors; and depicting Wilhelm Ostwald's single-tone triangle (Figure 3).³³

A similarly rigorous approach was adopt-



ed in teaching the Discipline of Graphics, with students studying the essentials of drawing: the point, the line, and the plane. Initial exercises focused on drawing a still life, first using tones, then outlines, and finally creating an independent linear construction. Subsequently, students confronted more complex and abstract exercises, such as creating a linear composition using one form of different sizes and proportions.

The Volume and Space Discipline was taught by Anton Lavinskii, Boris Korolev, and Aleksei Babichev.³⁴ Students might have begun with exercises such as transforming a still life composition or a living model into a cubist construction, but most of their time would have been spent on dealing with abstract tasks, such as “Construct a composition of intersecting simple geometric forms” or “Construct a dynamic composition with emphasis on the vertical axis.” The students’ responses to “Construct a three-dimensional form from simple geometric volumes” indicate the variety, invention, and originality that were fostered. Most responses emphasized density while a few explored the contrast between mass and weightlessness (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Unknown students, responses to the exercise “Construct a three-dimensional form from simple geometric volumes,” 1920s. Photograph reproduced in S.O. Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie gosudarstvennye khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskie masterskie* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Lad'ya, 2000), vol.1, p. 230.

Inevitably, there were affinities and a certain overlap between the exercises conducted when studying volume and those undertaken when the emphasis was on space. In the Space and Volume Discipline, student assignments included “Create volumetric forms expressing weight and mass,” and “Create the form of a large closed volume (Parallelepiped),” and “Construct spatial depth—as an architectonic composition using angular planes.”³⁵ An ability to manipulate space became even more central to some of the more advanced exercises, such as that which required students



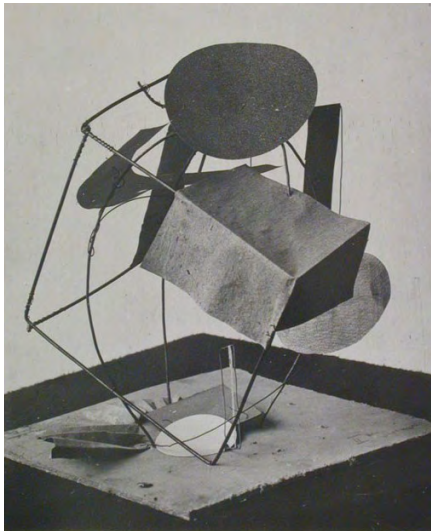


Figure 5. Unknown student, response to the exercise “Construct a cubic form based on combining mass and space,” 1920s. Photograph reproduced in S.O. Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie gosudarstvennye khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskie masterskie* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Lad’ya, 2000), vol.1, p. 304.

to “Construct a cubic form based on combining mass and space” (Figure 5). In one student response to this exercise, the form is integral to the entire structure. In contrast, in response to the exercise “Construct spatial depth—as an architectonic composition using angular planes,” students frequently created forms that created mul-

iple interactions with the surrounding spatial environment.

THE PAINTING FACULTY

The Basic Course embodied avant-garde values, and most of the teachers had experimented with abstraction in sculpture and painting or were committed to developing new approaches to architecture. This was not, however, true of all the other faculties, in which the teachers and programs often pursued and promoted more traditional approaches. This is particularly evident in the Painting Faculty where more moderate innovation reigned under the supervision of artists like David Shterenberg and Ilia Mashkov, who played with form and space in works that were essentially figurative.³⁶ From the mid-1920s onward, their work became more illustrative, and Mashkov actually embraced an emphatically descriptive idiom along with the explicitly ideological content of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia, the organization that spearheaded the approach that came to be officially enshrined as Socialist Realism.



In emulation of their teachers, and guided by them, the students similarly employed a certain number of innovative techniques alongside figurative elements. Yurii Pimenov, for instance, who graduated in 1925, produced paintings like *Increase Heavy Industry* in which he combined different views of various elements of the factory building and the smelting process into a single image where the main focus is on the workers themselves, their physical prowess, and their contribution to the manufacturing enterprise (Figure 6).³⁷ In describing a contemporary industrial project, this painting represents a positive response to the regime's demands for a figurative art that would promote and win support for their policies, such as industrialization. Yet the way in which the painting is constructed is fairly inventive, defying the rules of perspective and academic realism.

THE GRAPHICS FACULTY

Like the Painting Faculty, the Graphics Faculty represented a similar mixture of innovation and tradition. Students were taught various printing techniques alongside drawing and typography, in relation to book design, book illustration, poster

design and production. One of the main teachers was the graphic artist Vladimir Favorskii, whose work possessed a strong element of decoration and elegance, and who exerted a powerful influence on the students.³⁸ The skills that the students acquired were applied to various tasks, especially to the production of propaganda posters and illustrations for journals and journal covers. *At the Local Club* by Aleksandr Deineka, for instance, highlights the various activities promoted in the



Figure 6. Yurii Pimenov, *Increase Heavy Industry*, 1927, oil on canvas, 260 x 212 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

new workers' clubs, which were set up in order to create the physically and ideologically robust, intellectually strong new Soviet person—sport, edu-

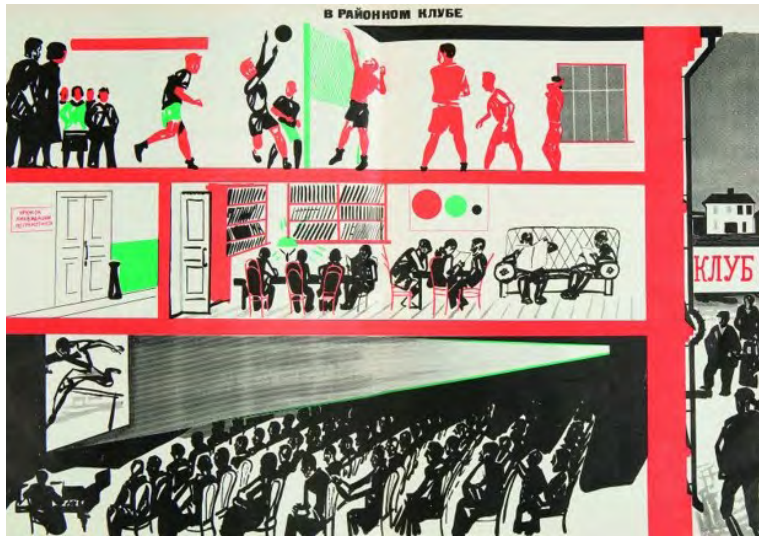


Figure 7. Aleksandr Deineka, *At the Local Club*, magazine illustration, 1927. Private collection.

cation/literacy, and ideologically sound entertainment through films (Figure 7).³⁹

From the beginning, poster production had played an important role in the Faculty's activities. With the implementation of the Collectivization of Agriculture and the inauguration of the First Five-

Year Plan in 1928, this activity intensified. Gustav Klutsis, who taught color on the Basic Course, produced numerous examples.⁴⁰ His striking use of black and red and the way he used photomontage created effective posters, and inspired other artists to manipulate time and space on the flat sheet of the paper. Graduates such as Deineka emulated this approach, though often painting the figures, rather than using photographs (Figure 8). Such posters suggest that, to a large extent, the Graphics Faculty



Figure 8. Aleksandr Deineka, *We will Mechanize the Donbass*, 1930, poster, chromolithograph, 101 x 82 cm. Private collection.

responded positively and productively to fulfilling the political and artistic objectives of the Party.

THE SCULPTURE FACULTY

The trend toward a modified form of experimentation also characterized the teaching and work of the Sculpture Faculty. Boris Korolev was one of the main teachers in the first half of the decade.⁴¹ In 1918, he had been responsible for designing the monument to the philosopher and anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, as part of Lenin's Plan of Monumental Propaganda. For this project, Korolev had employed massive abstract volumes within an overall Cubist idiom, rather like his monument to Karl Marx and his completely abstract monument to Dostoevsky. Korolev also produced sculptures in a more figurative style, and by the late 1920s was working almost exclusively in this idiom. His experience in having designed and built monuments informed his teaching and seems to have inspired his students. From the beginning, students seem to have worked from a live model, producing figurative sculptures, in which detail is less the focus than the general shaping of the form

(Figure 9). Not surprisingly, students produced models for monuments celebrating appropriate, ideologically correct Soviet figures and events. In this way, they fulfilled the demand



Figure 9. Photograph of Boris Korolev's studio in the Sculpture Faculty of the Vkhutemas, c. 1920. VKHUTEMAS Collection, 1920-1929, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (950052).

for an art that would serve the new state and help foster a new type of social consciousness among the masses of the population.



THE TEXTILE FACULTY

From the beginning, the Textile Faculty was closely linked with industry.⁴² Students received a firm grounding in the art and technology of textile production, preparing them for working in actual factories during their placements. Oskar Griun, who had worked in the textile industry, was responsible for teaching the production processes to the students.⁴³ His own designs tended to be figurative and simply replaced the flowers of pre-revolutionary designs with modern objects, such as electric light bulbs. Initially the faculty had included printing, weaving, and embroidery, but embroidery was soon abandoned, and Lyudmila Maiakovskaia joined the faculty to introduce the technique of air-brushed forms, using abstract shapes.⁴⁴ There was, however, only limited contact with the main figures in innovative textile design at this time: Liubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova, who both worked for the First State Textile Printing Works in Moscow.⁴⁵ They produced designs based on manipulating simple geometric forms and using one or two colors. Popova taught on the Basic Course until her death in 1924; Stepanova only

worked in the Textile Faculty for a year.

Inevitably, the students' work tended toward a more traditional direction. Although some of the designs were abstract, most of them used saturated colors, bold outlines, and a strict economy of color and form. Industri-

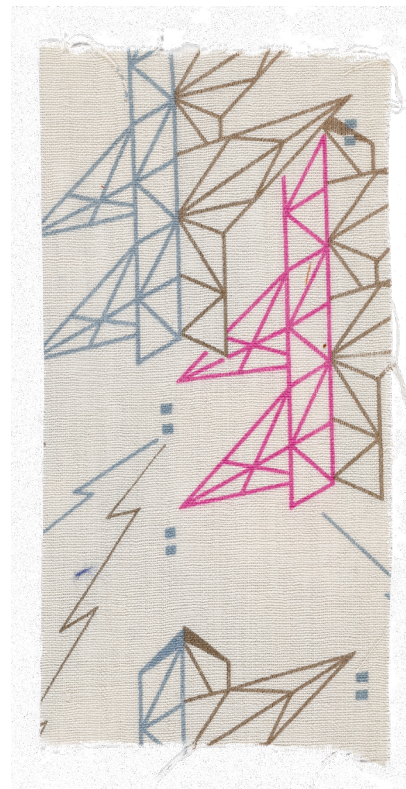


Figure 10. Unknown student, *Pylons*, 1928–1930, cotton print, manufactured by the Three Hills Textile Mill. VKhUTEMAS Collection, 1920–1929, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (950052).



al motifs abounded (airplanes, tractors, factories, and forms of transportation) reflecting the industrial ethos of socialism and the workers' state (Figure 10). Independently of their teachers, the students in the Faculty were responsible for developing the notion of agitational textiles. Liya Raitser's *Mechanization* is typical of the genre, but also constituted its swan song (Figure 11).⁴⁶ Raitser produced it in 1933, after graduating, specifically for the exhibition of the *Workers' and Peasants' Red Army*.⁴⁷ Highly colorful and boldly descriptive, the design employs the organizational principles of more traditional fabrics, but possesses a strong ideological resonance and a distinctly military flavor. It depicts huge tanks, airplanes, lorries (full of soldiers holding guns), and a wheel-like gearing mechanism, placed like a sun above and behind these items, representing perhaps "the god of mechanization."⁴⁸ Although agitational textiles flourished during the years 1927–1933, they eventually became less popular; ultimately nobody wanted to be turned into "a traveling picture gallery."⁴⁹

By 1930, the Textile Faculty had succeeded

in producing a new type of professional textile designer—one who possessed a mastery of both the aesthetic and technical aspects of fabric production. It had trained one hundred and elev-



Figure 11. Liya Raitser, *Mechanization of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army*, 1933, cotton print. Illustrated in Tatiana Strizhenova, *Soviet Costume and Textiles 1917–1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), p. 197.

en “artist technologists,”⁵⁰ and had established the position of the professional textile designer within the industry, replacing the former reliance on technical draughtsmen and foreign patterns.

THE CERAMICS FACULTY

Like many of the faculties, the teaching and products of the Ceramics Faculty also represented a mixture of innovation and tradition. In the later 1920s, Vladimir Tatlin joined the staff and inspired students to adopt his organic approach to form. Tatlin’s nursing vessel, for instance, which was based on the form of the human breast, acted as the basis for Aleksei Sotnikov’s series of nursing vessels that could be used to feed babies in the numerous Soviet orphanages (Figure 12).⁵¹ The First World War and the Civil War, along with chaos produced by famine, political, and social disruption, had produced a vast number of orphans.

Students also produced figurines for domestic and foreign consumption. These were often given to delegates and important visitors as well



Figure 12. Aleksei Sotnikov, Drinking vessels for babies, 1930-1931, designed under the supervision of Vladimir Tatlin. Photograph courtesy Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul.

as being sold to the few tourists who ventured to Russia and in shops abroad. In 1922, for instance, the faculty produced a large number of designs for delegates to the Third Congress of the Communist International (the Comintern) held in Moscow that summer.

THE WOOD AND METALWORK FACULTY

While modernist and Constructivist ideals



did not permeate the entire Vkhutemas, they were very evident in the Wood and Metalwork Faculties, which by 1926 had been combined and were known as Dermetfak (Derevoobdelochnyi fakul'tet and Metalloobrabatyvayushchii fakul'tet). Initially, both faculties, inherited from the Stroganov school, had been firmly focused on the crafts and decorative arts—wood engraving, carpentry, jewelry, and enameling.

This changed dramatically in 1922 when Rodchenko joined the Metfak and in 1923 when Lavinskii joined the Derfak. Both implemented Constructivist approaches, directing the teaching toward utility and industry, training designers who could produce furniture and fittings for mass manufacture and organize interiors for everything from clubs to train compartments. Accordingly, students now studied subjects such as the technology of materials, production techniques, the principles of mass production, economics, and accounting, alongside artistic disciplines.

The results were items such as the Rural Reading Room (*izba chital'naia*), complete with appropri-

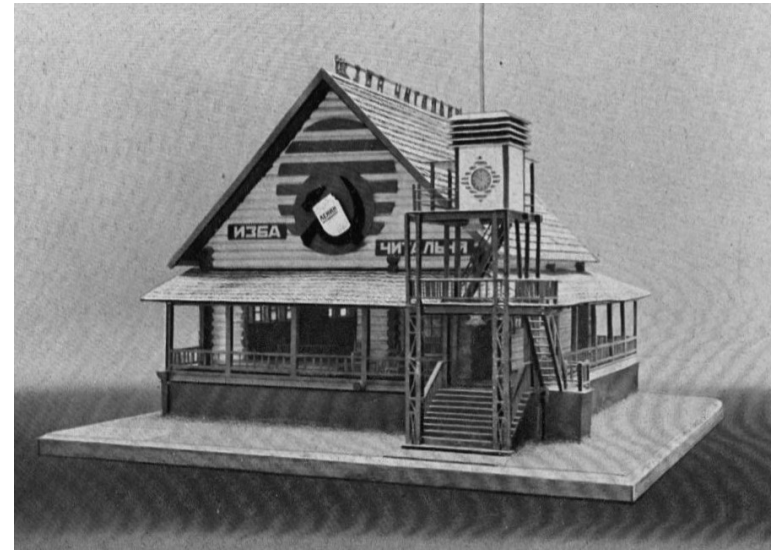


Figure 13. Model of the Rural Reading Room, 1925, constructed by the students of the Woodwork Faculty, under the supervision of Anton Lavinskii and the architect Sergei Chernyshov, as shown in Paris at the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* and illustrated in the *Union des Républiques Soviétistes Socialistes. Catalogue* (Paris, 1925).

ate fittings, and Rodchenko's Workers' Club, both of which were exhibited at the 1925 International Exhibition of Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris, alongside a wide range of other items produced by the students (Figs. 13 & 14).⁵² In par-





Figure 14. The Workers' Club, 1925, designed by Aleksandr Rodchenko and shown in Paris, at the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*. Photograph courtesy of the Rodchenko-Stepanova Archive, Moscow.

particular, the emphasis on function, and the use of skeletal forms, geometric elements, standardized components, and space-saving solutions, presented a radical contrast to some of the more luxurious and decorative exhibits.

The acute housing shortage in Moscow and in

other Soviet cities meant that space was at a premium. In response, students designed prototypes for furniture that could collapse or perform several functions, such as Morozov's table of 1926 that could also act as a desk and draughtsman table, and Zemlianitsyn's collapsing chair (1927–1928), which was produced under El Lissitzky's guidance, who had joined the faculty in 1926.⁵³ Having lived in the West for several years, he was fully versed in the work of the Bauhaus and German designers. Under his direction, in 1928, the students also helped devise an interior for a two-person apartment in a communal house (Narkomfin building). In contrast to Lissitzky and Rodchenko's emphasis on technology, Vladimir Tatlin who joined the teaching staff in 1927, proposed a more organic approach to materials, which is epitomized by Rogozhin's curvilinear design for a chair.

In all their designs, Demetfak's staff and students tackled the difficult problem of designing workable solutions to the actual problems and needs faced by the contemporary Soviet citizen. Their designs epitomized Constructivist objectives. Strictly utilitarian, space-saving, and econom-



ic in terms of materials and production requirements, the designs were also severely geometric, lacking all decoration, and conceived in terms of efficiently performing an object's function with no regard for traditional notions of beauty or comfort. Not surprisingly perhaps, these radical designs did not find favor with the population, who sought solidity, comfort, and more conventional decoration, especially as the economic situation improved toward the end of the 1920s.

THE ARCHITECTURE FACULTY

Of all the faculties, the Architecture Faculty is probably the most well-known, not only because all of Russia's leading avant-garde architects taught there, but also because its students produced some of the most innovative and visionary designs for buildings produced in the 1920s.⁵⁴ Yet it did not represent a unified entity. Members of staff promoted their own approaches, so teaching and practice were highly diverse. On the one hand, there were more traditional figures like Aleksei Shchusev whose work ranged from historicist Russian Revival to Neoclassicism, via a brief flirtation with Constructivism, and Ivan

Zholtovkii,⁵⁵ who tried “to foist the principles of the Italian Renaissance and outdated fifteenth- and sixteenth-century forms onto contemporary Soviet architecture.”⁵⁶ On the other, there were modernists of various persuasions: Constructivists like Aleksandr Vesnin and Moisei Ginzburg,⁵⁷ the Rationalist Nikolai Ladovskii, and less doctrinaire innovators like Ivan Golosov⁵⁸ and Konstantin Melnikov.⁵⁹ Conflict was inevitable. In 1922, the faculty was officially divided into academic and innovative architecture. Yet the innovators were far from cohesive, with the Rationalists and the Constructivists vying for influence, while Melnikov and Golosov operated relatively independently.

Despite these tensions, Ladovskii's psychoanalytical or psychotechnical method, which governed the teaching of Space on the Basic Course and his own teaching of architecture, exerted a unifying influence. He focused on the psychological impact of geometric forms, encouraging students to study the various effects produced by experimenting with mass and stability; mass and balance; open and closed spaces; different types of construction; dynamism; rhythm; and horizontal and vertical



proportions. The ultimate aim was to produce “a scientific statement of architectural principles on the basis of rationalist aesthetics.”⁶⁰ In 1928, one of his students, Georgii Krutikov, produced the *Flying City* as his graduation project. Encapsulating the utopian spirit of the times and conceived to deal with unsustainable global population growth, it provided a series of different structures designed for living in space as well as a capsule enabling people to travel to the Earth for work or to other residential structures (Figure 15).

Equally committed to the vision of a new world, the Constructivists developed the functional method of design and explored ways in which the building could act as a social condenser, actively promoting the new society and a new form of social consciousness. The functional method entailed taking into consideration the social and industrial situation, while producing a detailed analysis of the building’s purpose in order to establish a series of functional spaces. These would then provide the essential massing of the design, to be built in accordance with the latest technology.⁶¹ The Narkomfin Building by Ginzburg and Ignatii Milinis (built 1928–1932)

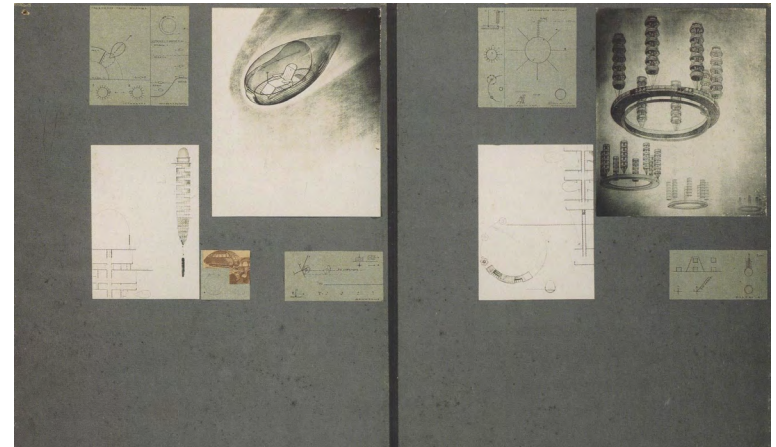


Figure 15. Georgii Krutikov, *The Flying City*, 1928, sheets prepared for his diploma presentation. State Shchusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow.

epitomizes this approach. With its use of pilotis, free plan, free façade, ribbon windows, and roof garden, it incorporated many of Le Corbusier’s ideas, but presented them within a building that was organized according to strictly functional principles and epitomized a new concept of collective housing.

In 1927, Vesnin’s student, Ivan Leonidov, produced the Lenin Institute of Librarianship as his diploma project.⁶² His intention was “To answer the needs of contemporary life through the max-



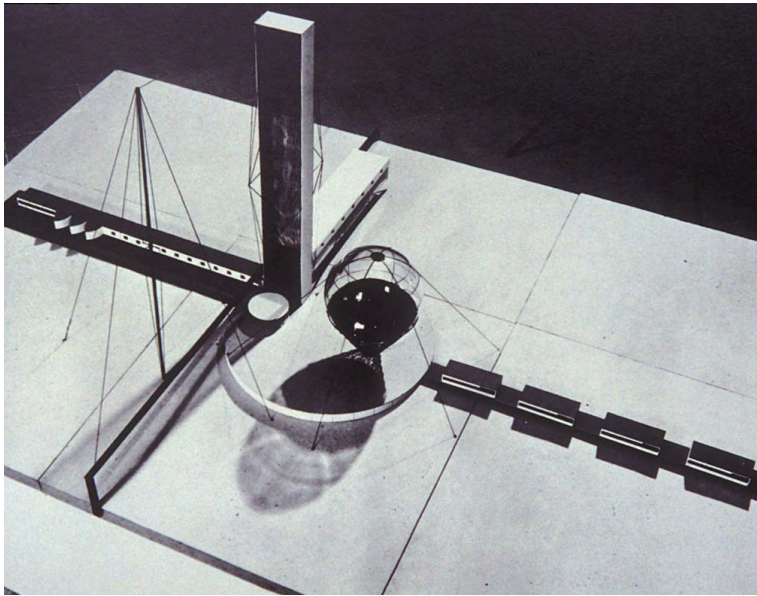


Figure 16. Ivan Leonidov, *The Lenin Institute of Librarianship*, 1927. Photograph of the Model courtesy Andrei Leonidov, as reproduced in Andrei Gozak and Andrei Leonidov, *Ivan Leonidov: The Complete Works* (London: Academy Editions, 1988), p. 125.

imum use of the possibilities of technology.”⁶³ In accordance with the functional method, he determined the spaces required, but he gave the resulting volumes a powerful aesthetic expression, by housing each component of the design in a different geometric form and joining them together in an elegant asymmetrical composition (Figure 16).

Fifteen million books were to be stored in the vertical stacks (the strong vertical structure) and mechanically delivered to 500-1,000 readers in the five reading rooms. A glazed sphere was to house an auditorium, which could accommodate up to 4,000 people, while also acting as a science theater and a planetarium. Committed to the latest technology, Leonidov intended to link the complex on the Lenin Hills (now Sparrow Hills) to Moscow by means of an elevated tramway and to communicate the information generated by the Institute to the wider world by means of a radio station.⁶⁴

The innovative and visionary qualities of the designs produced by both the Rationalist and Constructivist students are testimony to the Vkhutemas as an institution that fostered the originality and creativity of its students. Yet it was precisely the impracticality of such projects within the context of the Soviet Union in the 1920s that produced virulent criticism of the school and its approach. Formalism and Leonidovism (*Leonidovshchina*) became accusations (redolent with counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet overtones) that were directed at avant-garde designs, the Architecture Faculty,

its staff, and the school as a whole. Ultimately, such accusations tarnished the school's reputation and led to its closure.

THE WIDER IMPACT

The types of exercises devised for the Basic Course underpinned the intensive experimentation with design and the fine arts that was conducted at the Vkhutemas during the 1920s. By the time it closed in 1930, the school had fostered numerous talents and had produced many notable projects of imagination and utility. Architectural designs were illustrated and discussed in the various Soviet publications, such as *Contemporary Architecture (Sovremennaiia arkhitektura)* and *Soviet Architecture (Sovetskaia arkhitektura)*. The 1927 *Exhibition of Contemporary Architecture* showcased works conceived and developed at the Vkhutemas. During the subsequent decade, these innovative designs gave way to buildings produced in a variety of more traditionally decorative and rhetorical idioms, which are loosely categorized as Socialist Realist.⁶⁵

Of course, after Stalin's death, younger artists and designers began to re-establish links with Russia's avant-garde past and learnt about the Vkhutemas. They found that many of the principles established at the school remained within the curriculum, although now subordinated to more figurative concerns or harnessed to more traditional concepts concerning style and decoration.⁶⁶

How far knowledge about the pedagogical principles and the achievements of the Vkhutemas circulated beyond the borders of the Soviet Union is open to question. Although the school is far less well known than its German counterpart today, it may have been more widely known in the 1920s. At that time, knowledge about the school and its teaching seems to have circulated in Germany, mainly because many Russian artists, including innovative figures like Kandinsky and Lissitzky, had moved to Berlin following the end of the Civil War in 1921 and the opening of Russia's borders for the first time since 1914. These artists brought with them a knowledge and experience of the reforms in art education and the new school. For instance, Lissitzky talked about the Vkhutemas in a 1922 lecture to his Ger-



man colleagues in Berlin, describing the school's teaching and praising its workshops as "the firm strongholds and future hope of the new company of artists."⁶⁷ Reinforcing his account, some of the Vkhutemas's products seem to have been on display at the *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung*, which opened in Berlin on October 18, 1922.⁶⁸ Certainly, Bauhaus students and staff were aware of their Soviet colleagues and we know that there was some exchange of information and personnel.⁶⁹ How far this developed and to what extent knowledge and interaction with the Vkhutemas spread to other countries has not yet been established.

It is possible that other European art schools had made contact with the Vkhutemas, especially after the latter's impressive contribution to the Soviet display at the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris. The exhibition had attracted creative figures from around the world and had given the wider artistic community the first opportunity to acquire a more detailed knowledge of Russia's revolutionary culture and view the latest products of Russian design. The exhibits included highly acclaimed items

by teachers at the Vkhutemas, notably, the Soviet Pavilion designed by Konstantin Melnikov (who taught in the Architecture Faculty), the Workers' Club by Aleksandr Rodchenko (who taught on the Basic Course and in the Metalwork Faculty), and the Rural Reading Room, which was designed and built by the students in the Woodwork Faculty under the guidance of Anton Lavinskii (Figs. 13 & 14). All of these had received medals. Other student works were also on display.⁷⁰ One whole room in the Grand Palais was devoted to the work of the Vkhutemas, and included exercises in color, space, and volume, executed by students.⁷¹ Two panels in the separate Architecture display had also shown student projects. Moreover, the official Soviet publications devoted quite a lot of attention to the issue of educating artists for the new society and had supplied brief histories of the Vkhutemas, outlining its structure and teaching programs.⁷² Petr Kogan,⁷³ who was head of the Soviet Committee for the exhibition, mentioned the Vkhutemas in his succinct introduction to the catalogue, stressing the school's revolutionary credentials and the role that it had to play in the tasks confronting the Soviet state, emphasizing the fact that "revolutionary consciousness has influenced our methods of



training artists.”⁷⁴ The two official publications also reproduced examples of students’ work.⁷⁵

Although the Vkhutemas does not seem to have received any mention in the exhibition reviews, the inclusion of student work in the 1922 and 1925 exhibitions, alongside work by teachers at the school, provided the Vkhutemas with some international exposure. Moreover, given the Soviet Union’s role as a beacon for radical aspirations and revolutionary movements throughout the globe during the 1920s, it might be safe to assume that, like the Bauhaus, the Vkhutemas would have attracted some attention from radical artists, architects, and aspiring designers from far beyond the borders of Europe and the Soviet Union.

Certainly, in the light of the current volume concerning relations between Russia and Turkey, it is quite possible that creative figures from Turkey were among those artists and designers who became interested in the Vkhutemas. It is equally possible that information about the school circulated among radical figures in Istanbul or Ankara. Such information might have formed an aspect of the cultural contacts between Turkey and

the USSR during the 1920s. In 1924, for instance, Genrikh Liudvig, an architect, theorist, and engineer who developed a kind of “Symbolist Functionalism” influenced by Constructivism, submitted a design for the Soviet Embassy in Ankara, and two years later designed Kemal Pasha’s summer palace at Čeflik.⁷⁶ Although not involved with the Vkhutemas, he was based in Moscow and versed in the latest ideas. His association with Turkey’s president suggests that his contact with the country and its culture was not insignificant. Likewise, among those Russian émigrés who settled in Turkey or moved to the country en route for other lands during the 1920s, there might have been creative figures and others who had some knowledge of the Vkhutemas, which they imparted to the host nation.⁷⁷ This, like many other issues concerning the Vkhutemas, remains to be explored in more depth.

NOTES:

- 1 For a detailed study of the Vkhutemas, see Selim Khan-Magomedov, *Vkhutemas: Moscow 1920–1930* (Paris: Éditions du Regard, 1990), 2 vols; and the more extensive, Russian version of this book, Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie gosudarstvennye khudozhestvenno-tekhicheskie masterskie*



(Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Lad'ia, 2000), 2 vols; see also, Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 109-144.

- 2 "Dekret Soveta Narodnykh komissarov o Moskovskikh Vysshikh Gosudarstvennykh Khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskikh Masterskikh" [The Decree of the Council of People's Commissars concerning the Moscow State Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops], *Izvestiia VTsIK* (December 25, 1920). Lenin signed the decree on December 18, 1920 (see Russian State Archives for Literature and Art); reprinted in *Postranstvo Vkhutemas: Nasledie. Traditsii. Novatsii* (Moscow: Moskovskii Arkhitekturnyi Institut and Moskovskaia Gosudarstvennaya Khudozhestvenno-promyshlennaya Akademiia im. S. G. Stroganova, 2010), 178; and in Khan-Magomedov *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 341.
- 3 "Polozhenie o Gosudarstvennykh Moskovskikh Vysshikh Khudozhestvennykh Masterskikh" [The Structure of the State Moscow Higher Artistic Workshops], 1920, typescript, RGALI, fond 681, opis' 2, edinitsa khraneniia 25, list 110; reprinted in Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 341-343; quote p. 343.
- 4 "Postanovlenie Narodnogo Komissariata po Proshvshcheniiu" [Decree of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment], *Izvestiia VsIK*, no. 193 (457), (September 7, 1918); reprinted in Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 331. David Petrovich Shterenberg (1881-1948) taught in the Painting Faculty (1920-1930).
- 5 "Dekret Soveta Narodnykh komissarov o Moskovskikh Vysshikh Gosudarstvennykh Khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskikh Masterskikh." 2, 331. The studios opened on October 1, 1918.
- 7 See *Borba za kadry. Gazeta studentov i rabotnikov Vysshego Khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskogo instituta* [The Fight for Personnel. The Newspaper of the Students and Workers of the Higher Artistic and Technical Institute] (Moscow), no. 8 (May 1930).
- 8 See N. Dmitrieva, *Moskovskoe uchilishche zhivopisi, vaianiia i zodchestva* [Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture] (Moscow 1959); and E. N. Shul'gina, "Stroganovskoe uchilishche" [The Stroganov School] in Z. N. Bykov, *Moskovskoe vysshee khudozhestvenno-promyshlennoe uchilishche (byvshee Stroganovskoe) 1825 - 1965* [The Moscow Higher Artistic and Industrial School (the former Stroganov School) 1825-1965] (Moscow, 1965), 11-36.
- 9 "Postanovlenie Narodnogo Komissariata po Prosvshcheniiu" [Decree of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment], *Izvestiia VTsIK*, no. 193 (457) (September 7, 1918); signed September 5, 1918; reprinted in Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 331.
- 10 "Instruktsiia priema uchasshchikhsia v Svobodnye Gosudarstvennye Khudozhestvennye Masterskie," [Regulations for Admitting Students to the State Free Art Studios], *Izvestiia VTsIK*, no. 193 (457) (September 7, 1918); reprinted in Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 331.
- 11 "Komissariat Narodnogo Prosvshcheniia Otdel Izobrazitel'nykh Iskusstv," Poster for the First State Free Art Studios, 1918; reprinted in Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 333.
- 12 "Instruktsiia vyborov rukovoditelei Svobodnykh Gosudarstvennykh Khudozhestvennykh Masterskikh" [Regulations for the Election of Supervisors at the State Free Art Studios], *Izvestiia VTsIK*, no. 193 (457) (September 7, 1918);

- reprinted in Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 331.
- 13 Abram Efimovich Arkhipov (1862–1930) taught at the State Free Art Studios (1918–1920) and at the Vkhutemas (1922–1924).
- 14 Kazimir Severinovich Malevich (1879–1935) taught at the State Free Art Studios (1918–1919).
Vasilii Vasil'evich Kandinskii (1866–1944) taught at the Second State Free Art Studios (1918–1920) and taught easel painting in the Painting Faculty of the Vkhutemas (1920–1921).
Vladimir Evgafovich Tatlin (1885–1953) taught at the State Free Art Studios (1918–1919) and subsequently taught the Culture of Materials in the Dermetfak and the Ceramics Faculty of the Vkhutein (1927–1930).
- 15 Il'ia Ivanovich Mashkov (1881–1944) taught at the State Free Art Studios (1918–1920) and then in the Painting Faculty of the Vkhutemas (1920–1926).
- 16 A. Goncharov, "VKHUTEMAS," *Tvorchestvo*, no. 4 (1967): 15–16.
- 17 Kazimir Malevich, "An Introduction to the Theory of the Additional Element in Painting," in K. S. Malevich, *The World as Non-Objectivity: Unpublished Writings 1922–1925*, ed. Troels Andersen, trans. Xenia Glowacki-Prus (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1976), 171–172.
- 18 V. Kandinskii, "Masterskaia Kandinskogo. Tezisy prepodavaniia" [Kandinsky's Studio: Teaching Proposals], RGALI, fond 680, opis' 1, edinitsa khraneniya 845, list 351–352; English translation by Christina Lodder, in Gail Harrison Roman and Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, eds. *The Avant-Garde Frontier: Russia Meets the West 1910–1930* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1992), 238–240.
- 19 E. Ravdel, "Otchet" [Report], 1920, typescript, RGALI, fond 681, opis' 2, edinitsa khraneniia, 47, list 37.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 See RGALI, fond 681, opis' 2, edinitsa khraneniya 25, list 23.
- 22 The number of faculties fluctuated slightly. In 1926, for instance, the Metalwork and Woodworking Faculties were combined to form Dermetfak.
- 23 "Polozhenie Otdela izobrazitel'nyh iskusstv i khudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti NKP po voprosu 'o khudozhestvennoi kul'ture'" [The Position of the Department of Fine Arts and Artistic Production within the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment "Concerning Artistic Culture"], *Iskusstvo kommuny*, no. 11 (February 16, 1919), 4.
- 24 Liubov' Popova, untitled ms, private archive. Liubov' Sergeevna Popova (1889–1924), taught Color on the Basic Course (1920–1924).
- 25 "Osnovnoe Otdelenie" [The Basic Course], RGALI, fond 681, opis' 2, edinitsa khraneniia 160, list 8.
- 26 See "Zapis' besedys, G. D. Chichagovoi" [Transcript of a Conversation with Galina. D. Chichagova], 1970, typescript, private archive, Moscow, 1.
Anastasiia Ivanovna Akhtyrko (1902–1967) entered the State Free Studios in 1918 and graduated from the Vkhutemas in 1924.
The sisters Galina Dmitrievna Chichagova (1891–1966) and Olga Dmitrievna Chichagova (1886–1958) had studied at the Stroganov School of Applied Arts (1911–1917), worked at Proletkul't and then entered the Vkhutemas in 1920. They completed the Basic Course and entered the Graphics Faculty, but did not graduate, beginning to work on designing



- children's books in 1922–1923.
- 27 *Vkhutemas Distsipliny god 1920* [*The Vkhutemas Disciplines Year 1920*] (Moscow, 1920).
- 28 The Working Group of Constructivists was formally organized in March 1921. See Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, chapter 2.
- 29 Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Vesnin (1883–1959) taught on the Basic Course and in the Architecture Faculty (1921–1930).
- Aleksandr Aleksandovich Osmerkin (1892–1953) taught on the Basic Course and in the Faculty of Painting (1920–1930).
- Alexandra Exter (Anna Aleksandrovna Ekster (1884–1949) taught on the Basic Course (1920–1921).
- Ivan Vasil'evich Kliun (1873–1943) taught on the Basic Course (1920–1921).
- Aleksandr Mikhailovich Rodchenko (1891–1956) taught on the Basic Course (1920–1923), and Construction (*Konstruirovaniie*) in the Metalwork Faculty/Dermetfak (1922–1930).
- Aleksandr Davidovich Drevin (1889–1938) taught on the Basic Course and in the Painting Faculty (1920–1930).
- Nadezhda Andreevna Udal'tsova (1886–1961) taught on the Basic Course and in the Painting and the Textile Faculties (1920–1930).
- Vladimir Davidovich Baranov-Rossiné (Shulim-Vol'f Baranov, 1888–1944) taught on the Basic Course and in the Painting Faculty (1920–1921).
- 30 "Raspisanie osnovogo otdeleniia" [Timetable for the Basic Course], July 4, 1922, typescript, RGALI, fond 681, opis' 2, edinitsa khraneniia 48, list 34.
- Nikolai Vasil'evich Dokuchaev (1891–1944) taught on the Basic Course and in the Architecture Faculty (1920–1930).
- Vladimir Fedorovich Krinskii (1890–1971) taught on the Basic Course and in the Architecture Faculty (1920–1930).
- Nikolai Aleksandrovich Ladovskii (1881–1941) taught on the Basic Course and in the Architecture Faculty (1920–1930).
- Ivan Semenonovich Efimov (1878–1959) taught on the Basic Course and in the Sculpture Faculty (1920–1930).
- Anton Mikhailovich Lavinskii (1893–1968) taught on the Basic Course and in the Sculpture Faculty (1920–1923) and then in the Woodworking Faculty (1923–1926).
- 31 "Dokladnaia zpiska pravleniia VkhUTEMASa v glavprofobr ob osnovakh postreoeniia VkhUTEMASa kak VUZa" [Memorandum from the Vkhutemas Board to the Chief Administration for Professional Training, Concerning the Structure of the Vkhutemas as an Institution of Higher Education], 1923, typescript, RGALI, fond 681, opis' 2, edinitsa khraneniya 65, list 203-4.
- 32 "Polozhenie o Moskovskikh Gosudarstvennykh Vysshikh Khudozhestvenno-Tekhnicheskikh Masterskikh." See note 3.
- 33 The work of Wilhelm Ostwald was very well known in Russia and highly influential. He was a fluent Russian speaker, and between 1888 and 1913, he published around thirty titles in Russian. See Charlotte Douglas, "Energetic Abstraction: Ostwald, Bogdanov and Russian Post-Revolutionary Art," in Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalrymple Henderson, eds. *From Energy to Information. Representation in Science, Technology, Art and Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 76-94, 383-387, see especially 77.
- 34 Boris Danilovich Korolev (1884–1963) taught in the Sculp-



- ture Faculty (1920–1924).
- Aleksei Vasil'evich Babichev (1887–1963) taught in the Sculpture Faculty (1920–1924) and Rabfak (1920–1930).
- 35 For more details concerning the history and content of the Basic Course and reproductions of various exercises, see Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 1, 151–331.
- 36 David Petrovich Shterenberg (1881–1948) taught in the Painting Faculty (1920–1930) and simultaneously taught Composition in the Sculpture and Textile Faculties (1925–1926).
- Il'ia Ivanovich Mashkov (1881–1944) taught in the Painting Faculty (1920–1929).
- 37 Iurii Ivanovich Pimenov (1903–1977) studied in the Painting and Graphics Faculties (1920–1925).
- 38 Vladimir Andreevich Favorskii (1886–1964) was responsible for the Graphics Discipline on the Basic Course and taught the Theory of Composition and Drawing in the Graphics Faculty (1920–1930). He was also Rector of the Vkhutemas (1923–1926).
- 39 Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka (1899–1969) studied in the Graphics Faculty (1920–1925) with Favorskii and Ignatii Nivinskii.
- Ignatii Ignatevich Nivinskii (1881–1933) taught in the Graphics Faculty (1921–1930).
- 40 Gustav Gustavovich Klutsis (Gustavs Klucis, 1895–1938) taught the Discipline of Color on the Basic Course and in the Graphics, Architecture, Woodwork and Metalwork Faculties (1924–1930).
- 41 Boris Danilovich Korolev (1884–1963) taught in the Sculpture Faculty (1920–1924).
- 42 See Christina Lodder, “Textiles for Revolutionary Russia: Training Textile Designers at the Moscow VKhUTEMAS,” *West 86th: Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2018): 139–159.
- 43 Oskar Petrovich Griun (1874–1935) taught in the Textile Faculty (1920–1930).
- 44 Liudmila Vladimirovna Maiakovskaia (1884–1972) taught in the Textile Faculty (c. 1925–1930).
- 45 Varvara Fedorovna Stepanova (1894–1958) taught in the Textile Faculty (1924–1925).
- 46 This textile has been titled variously. Strizhenova called it *Mechanization of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army* and described it as a cotton print. See Tatiana Strizhenova, *Soviet Costume and Textiles 1917–1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 197. Khan-Magomedov titled it the *Mechanization of Agriculture*, stating that it was printed satin and was intended for the collar and decorative strips on a traditional Russian man's shirt (Khan-Magomedov, *Vysshie*, vol. 2, 171).
- Liia Iakovlevna Raitser (1902–1988) studied at the Vkhutemas (1924–1930).
- 47 Strizhenova, *Soviet Costume and Textiles*, 197.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 G. Rylkin, “Speredni tractor – zadi kombain” [A Tractor in Front – A Combine Harvester Behind], *Pravda* (September 6, 1933); cited in Strizhenova, *Soviet Costume and Textiles*, 199.
- 50 These figures are given in N. P. Beschastnov, “Moskovskaia shkola tekstil'nogo avangarda” [The Moscow School of the Textile Avant-Garde] in *Revoliutsiia v iskusstve i novat-*



sii v khudozhestvennom obrazovanii. *Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii / Revolution in Art and Innovation in Art Education: Materials of the International Scientific Conference* (Moscow: Moskovskaia Gosudarstvennaia Akademiya imeni S. G. Stroganova, 2017), 261, n. 1.

51 Aleksei Georgievich Sotnikov (1904–1989) studied in the Ceramics Faculty (1928–1930).

52 The Rural Reading Room (*izba chital'naya*) was built by the students under the direction of Anton Lavinskii and Sergei Chernyshov.

Sergei Egorovich Chernyshov (1881–1963) taught a course on Light Wooden Architecture in the Woodwork Faculty and the course Architectural Design in the Architecture Faculty (1920–1930).

53 El Lissitzky (Lazar' Markovich Lisitskii, 1890–1941) taught Monumental Painting in the Painting Faculty (1921) and later a course on Interior Equipment (Furniture) in the Wood and Metalwork Faculty (1926–1930).

54 For a fairly comprehensive selection of the Faculty's works, see *WChUTEMAS: Ein russisches Labor der Moderne Architekturentwürfe 1920–1930* (Berlin: Martin-Gropius-Bau; Moscow: Shchusev State Museum of Architecture, 2014).

55 Aleksei Viktorovich Shchusev (1873–1949) taught at the Stroganov School of Applied Arts (1913–1918), the Second State Free Art Studios (1918–1920), and in the Architecture Faculty at the Vkhutemas (1920–1924).

Ivan Vladislavovich Zholtovskii (1867–1959) taught Architecture at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture at the Second State Free Art Studios, and finally at the Vkhutemas (1920–1923).

56 A. Vesnin, "Kak ne nado stroit," *Sovremennaia arkhitektu-*

ra, no. 2, (1928): 43.

57 Moisei Iakovlevich Ginzburg (1892–1946) taught the History of Architecture and the Theory of Architectural Composition in the Architecture Faculty (1922–1930).

58 Il'ia Aleksandrovich Golosov (1883–1945) taught in the Architecture Faculty (1920–1930). He became associated with Constructivism but focused on exploring the approach's stylistic possibilities and the use of expressive form.

59 Konstantin Stepanovich Mel'nikov (1890–1974) taught in the Architecture Faculty (1920–1924 and 1927–1928).

60 See N. Ladovskii, "Psikhotekhnicheskaya laboratoriya. V poryadke postanovki voprosa," *Izvestiia ASNOVA*, no. 1, (March 29, 1926): 7; English translation, "The Psychotechnical Laboratory of Architecture: Posing the Problem," in Catherine Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde Theories of Art, Architecture and the City* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 98. See also, N. Ladovskii, "Osnovy postroeniia teorii arkhitektury. Pod znakom ratsionalisticheskoi estetiki," *Izvestiia ASNOVA*, no. 1, (March 29, 1926): 3-6; English translation, "Foundations for Building a theory of Architecture (Under the Banner of Rationalist Aesthetics)," in Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde Theories*, 178-179.

61 See M. Ginzburg, "Konstruktivizm kak method laboratornoi i pedagogicheskoi raboty" [Constructivism as a Method for Laboratory and Pedagogical Work], *Sovremennaia arkhitektura*, no. 6 (1926):160-166. For a diagrammatic resumé, see Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde Theories*, 121.

62 Ivan Il'ich Leonidov (1902–1959) studied in the Architecture Faculty, graduated in 1927 and subsequently taught in the Architecture Faculty (1927–1930).

63 See I. I. Leonidov, "Institut Lenina" [Lenin Institute],



- Sovremennaiia arkhitektura*, no. 4-5 (1927): 120.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 See Christina Lodder, "The Ghost in the Machine: The Modernist Architectural Utopia under Stalin," in Christina Lodder, Maria Kokkori and Maria Mileeva, eds. *Utopian Reality: Reconstructing Culture in Revolutionary Russia and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 169-192.
- 66 Alina Abramova published the first articles about the Vkhutemas in the 1960s. See A. Abramova, "Oдна iz pervykh" [One of the First], *Dekorativnoe iskusstva*, no. 9 (1963); and "Nasledie VKhUTEMASa" [The Legacy of the Vkhutemas], *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo*, no. 4 (1964): 8-12.
- 67 El Lissitzky, "New Russian Art: A Lecture," 1922; English translation in Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, trans. Helene Aldwinckle (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 339.
- 68 Christina Lodder, "Exporting the Revolution in Art Education: The Moscow Vkhutemas and the German Bauhaus," in Silvia Burini, eds. *Translations and Dialogues: The Reception of Russian Art Abroad* (Salerno: Europa Orientalis, University of Salerno Press, 2019), 115-128.
- 69 See Christina Lodder, "The Vkhutemas and the Bauhaus," in Harrison Roman and Hagelstein Marquardt, *The Avant-Garde Frontier*, 196-240.
- 70 See *Union des Républiques Sovietistes Socialistes*. Catalogue (Paris: Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, 1925).
- 71 Ibid., 77.
- 72 See D. Arkine [David Arkin], "L'Enseignement Supérieur des Beaux-Arts à Moscou," in *L'Art Décoratif et Industriel de l'URSS* (Moscow, 1925), 86-89; and D. Sterenberg [David Shterenberg], "Vkhoutémass: Ateliers d'Enseignement supérieur de l'art et de la technique, à Moscou," in *Union des Républiques Soviétistes Socialistes*. Catalogue, 75-76.
- 73 Petr Semenovitch Kogan (1872-1932) was President of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (Gosudarstvennaya Akademiya Khudozhestvennykh Nauk) and head of the Committee Organizing the Paris Exhibition.
- 74 P. S. Kogan, "Preface," *Union des Républiques Soviétistes Socialistes*. Catalogue, 11-14.
- 75 The catalogue illustrated students' designs of a display for the State Publishing house, Gosidzat (177), a lithograph (178), the model of a rural reading room (*izba-chital'naya*) (179), and the model of a construction. The book illustrated a rhythmic composition (*L'Art Décoratif et Industriel de l'URSS*, 85).
- 76 See Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture: The Search for new Solutions in the 1920s and 1930s*, eds. Catherine Cooke, trans. Alexander Lieven (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 197-198.
- Genrikh Mavrikevich Liudvig (1893-1973), German by nationality, architect and engineer, he moved to Russia in 1918, graduated from Moscow's Higher Technical College, and joined the Communist Party.
- 77 Around 200,000 Russians moved to Turkey in the early 1920s, although many had left by the end of the decade. Most of these were Pro-Tsarist White Russians, but there were some creative and artistic figures. See Karl Schlögel, *Der grosse Exodus: Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917-1941* (Munich 1994); and Vasilii Shul'gin, *1921 god* [The Year 1921] (Moscow: Kuchkove pole, 2018).



**• TURKISH REVOLUTIONARY
FIGURATION IN THE SOVIET UNION***

ÖZGE KARAGÖZ



Newsreel footage of the *Exhibition of Turkish Painting Today* (*Bugünkü Türk Resim Sergisi*, or *Vystavka sovremennoi tyretskoi zhivopisi*), which opened on December 31, 1935 in Moscow, captures the moment when what was considered to be revolutionary in Turkey ceased to be understood as such in the Soviet Union.¹ Produced by the Soviets and later shared with Turkish officials, this newsreel shows İbrahim Çallı, a Turkish painter and a key member of the exhibition's organizing committee, and L. Cherniavskii, the deputy chairman of the Soviet All-Union Society for Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries (*Vsesoiuznoe obschestvo kul'turnoi svyazi s zagranitsei*, VOKS hereafter), engaging in a pleasant conversation (Figure 1).² While both men look content, Çallı seems particularly cheerful with a broad, proud smile. As the following shot reveals, they stand in front of a monumentally scaled reclining female nude (Figures 2 and 3), painted by none other than Çallı. With a wry expression on her face and cheeks flushed, the nude shyly gazes toward the side, away from the viewer, while covering her breasts with her hands and leaving her pubic hair exposed. The next shot opens to an anonymous Soviet couple, chatting as they



Figure 1. Still from the newsreel footage of the *Exhibition of Turkish Painting Today in Moscow*. RGAKFD, Krasnogorsk.

look off-screen (Figure 4). According to the narrative logic of the montage, they too look at this painting: the man with an enthusiastic smile and the woman with a suspicious glance. Eliciting a spectrum of responses ranging from Çallı's plain sense of gratification and the Soviet woman's enigmatic hesitation, the display of this female nude in Moscow brings to light divergent Soviet and Turkish ideas about revolutionary figura-



Figure 2. Still from the newsreel footage of the *Exhibition of Turkish Painting Today in Moscow*. RGAKFD, Krasnogorsk.

tion.³ By revolutionary figuration, I mean figurative art intended to communicate revolutionary ideals to a mass audience often through legible and affirmative images.⁴

This contact between Turkish painting and Soviet audiences was underwritten by the revolutionary Kemalist and Bolshevik states.⁵ Taking



Figure 3. İbrahim Çallı, *Reclining Female Nude*, date unknown. Oil on canvas, 100 x 135 cm. Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum, Istanbul.

place at the All-Russian Artists Cooperative (Vsekokhudozhnik), this exhibition was organized by a joint Soviet-Turkish committee consisting of high-ranking statesmen and art administrators, some of whom were painters in their own right. VOKS was largely responsible, as Soviet archival sources indicate, for installing the exhibition and hosting a Turkish delegation in Moscow as well as



Figure 4. Still from the newsreel footage of the *Exhibition of Turkish Painting Today in Moscow*. RGAKFD, Krasnogorsk.

in Leningrad and Kiev, the other cities to which the exhibition also traveled.⁶ The involvement of the two states in the exhibition attests to its diplomatic importance, which is also evidenced by the attendance of senior politicians at its openings in each city. Present at the Moscow opening, for instance, were Marshal Semyon Budyonny, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Max-

im Litvinov, and the Turkish chargé d'affaires, Nurettin Pınar. Flanked by two Turkish flags, a large portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's foremost revolutionary leader and first president, oversaw the exhibition space from its central location (Figure 5). When Çallı introduced the exhibition at the Moscow opening, he stood in front of this portrait that he had painted. Although politically and ideologically determined, the exhibition nevertheless sparked an exchange about revolutionary figuration that relied to a large extent on effortless legibility, which was facilitated by shared ideas about what such art should be, as well as mutual aspects of the revolutions of the two countries. This exchange, however, was not without its discord.

Instrumental in facilitating the exhibition was an international politics of “friendship” (*druzhiba*, or *dostluk*) between the Bolshevik and Kemalist states, however ideologically distinct they were.⁷ The socialist Revolution of Soviet Russia and the nationalist, republican Revolution of Turkey—dating back to 1917 and 1923, respectively—banded together around a common anti-imperialist political agenda that prompted



Figure 5. Still from the newsreel footage of the *Exhibition of Turkish Painting Today in Moscow*. RGAKFD, Krasnogorsk.

the Bolshevik-Kemalist rapprochement in the first place, when the Bolsheviks, having seized power after the Russian Revolution, gave military and financial assistance to the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923).⁸ The Kemalist and Bolshevik states differed primarily in their ideological positions and religious policies, and communism constituted the major point of friction between them. Although Kemalist Turkey

resembled Soviet Russia in its central economic planning and the paucity of private enterprise, it was not socialist, nor did it overtly suppress religion as did the Bolsheviks.⁹ The Kemalist leadership, moreover, was wary of communist activities within its borders from the early 1920s onward. In 1925, for instance, the Kemalist government banned the Turkish Communist Party, which was supported politically and financially by Moscow. Atatürk saw communism as a threat to “the peace and unity of the Turkish people,” as he wrote in a letter dated September 14, 1920 to Ali Fuat, his fellow commander in the War of Independence.¹⁰ The marginalization of Turkish communists, however, did not endanger the relationship between the two states. As early as the 1920s, the Bolshevik leadership had a sober view of the established place of religion and the virtual impossibility of a communist revolution in Turkey.¹¹ When the Turkish exhibition opened in Moscow, the two countries were at the height of their political rapprochement, having renewed in 1935 the Treaty of Friendship they initially signed in 1921.

The ambiguous hesitation of the Soviet wom-

an in the newsreel signals how Çallı's female nude complicated contemporaneous Soviet notions of revolutionary art, because this picture partakes at once of the aesthetics of the bourgeois female nude, the politics of revolutionary figuration, and the economics of socialist art. Politically, the Turkish female nude participated in the revolutionary figuration of its time by bespeaking the newfound artistic freedom that its production and public display conveyed about the Turkish Revolution. Yet the painting does not put forward an explicitly revolutionary aesthetic, although it refrains from depicting a highly sexualized female body in the manner of most bourgeois Western European female nudes. Çallı's claim for his female nude to be part of revolutionary figuration was not as easily legible to its Soviet audiences as were the politics of battle and genre paintings visualizing the Turkish Revolution and its reforms, paintings that shared a thematic and stylistic affinity to Socialist Realism, the increasingly dominant, contemporaneous Soviet proposition of revolutionary figuration. From the Soviet perspective, this female nude must have looked aesthetically closer to bourgeois art than to Socialist

Realism, which advocated an easily accessible presentation of a socio-historical context and a socialist pretext for the portrayal of figures. For the Soviets, the painting might even have appeared to be reactionary in its depiction of a decontextualized female nude, although I would suggest that this decontextualization as an aesthetic operation gestures toward a process of repositioning the female nude in revolutionary Turkey. Although the painting resembles the bourgeois nude of the capitalist world, it was not produced, like most art in early Republican Turkey, for private visual consumption as nudes were in Western Europe, nor was it exchanged entirely as a capitalist commodity. In the near absence of a private art market, it was produced with state funding and circulated widely in state-organized exhibitions as part of didactic cultural programs of the young Turkish Republic. More than any other painting in the exhibition, the female nude reveals a crucial point of difference between Turkish and Soviet discourses about what constituted revolutionary art, which was colored by the two countries' distinct art historical and cultural heritages, national and international political



positionalities, and economic systems.

On the Shared Ground of Revolutionary Subject Matter

Paintings of revolutionary history and everyday life provided a major overlap between Soviet and Turkish expectations of what realist representation was meant to communicate to its audiences. Şeref Akdik's *Literacy Lesson* (*Okuma Yazma Kursu*, or *Alphabet Reform* as Igor Grabar called it; 1930) (Figure 6) stood out as a painting of the “new Turkey”; most of the exhibition's Soviet critics discussed it, and, aside from the newsreel, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* and *Vecherniaia Moskva* reproduced it.¹² In the preeminent Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, for instance, the influential painter, critic, and art administrator Igor Grabar hailed this picture as one of “the successful solutions” to large-scale narrative paintings:

In front of a classroom blackboard, two women are diligently writing with chalk the characters of the new Latin alphabet, which replaced the Arabic one. In the foreground sit three more women, one with a child



Figure 6. Şeref Akdik, *Literacy Lesson*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 180 x 150 cm. Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum, Istanbul.

in her arms. All figures have their backs turned to the spectator, but this compositional flaw is hardly felt, as the whole scene is true to life [*zhiznennost' i pravdivost'*]. The motley outfits are well-coordinated and give the spectator the impression of a fully gathered color spectrum.¹³

These two sentences exceed any others that Grabar

offered for other paintings he reviewed, which he described briefly, if at all, while introducing landscapes and still lifes by mere mentions of genre. This scene of learning refers to the Latinization of the Arabic alphabet in 1928—a notable reform of the Turkish Revolution implemented as part of wide-ranging cultural, political, and economic changes following its successfully-fought War of Independence and the proclamation of the Republic in 1923. The Alphabet Revolution (*Harf Devrimi*, as it was often called) was carried out alongside a massive literacy campaign in 1928, another prominent reform that extended the means of education to rural women as well—an aspect of the subject matter the painting conveys by the clothes and the headscarves of adult female students.¹⁴ In its depiction of this newfound opportunity, this painting echoes the widespread rhetoric of the Turkish Revolution in support of women’s emancipation, as one of its most celebrated reforms was the ascription of equal rights to women, including the right to vote introduced in a new civil code in 1926. This painting not only celebrates this revolutionary moment but, by including a young child, it also gestures toward a more promising future; as the only figure not focused on the blackboard, the child gazes beyond the canvas, toward the future.

Grabar’s detailed description of the subject matter reflects the extent to which it figures prominently in his overall judgment of the painting. The “true to life” quality of the scene, in particular, served as a critical criterion for Grabar, even compensating for what he deemed the painting’s compositional flaw: the positioning of the figures with their backs to the viewer. His detailed description and endorsement of the subject matter attest to its communicability to him and other Soviet audiences. This is not surprising: After all, the Bolsheviks also launched an extensive literacy campaign following their Revolution and as part of their project of “building socialism,” while advocating for women’s emancipation through newfound educational opportunities, which they extended to women in the Eastern Soviet Republics, such as Uzbekistan.¹⁵ For the Soviet viewers, the traditionally dressed women in Akdik’s painting must have evoked Uzbek women whom the Bolsheviks prided themselves for liberating from their so-called backwardness and whose celebratory images of emancipation circulated in the Soviet visual culture.¹⁶

As the major Socialist Realist criteria, revolutionary subject matter and its corollary, “com-



prehensibility for the broad masses,” increasingly dominated the Soviet art discourse of the mid-1930s.¹⁷ In a crucial early instance of the articulation of Socialist Realism, a move from formalist concerns to Soviet (i.e., revolutionary) subject matter was praised as a sign of “a healthy development” by the organizers of the 1932 Leningrad iteration of *15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR (Khudozhniki RSFSR za 15 let)*, a seminal official retrospective showcasing Soviet art after the October Revolution of 1917.¹⁸ Formalism was soon perceived as derogatory in official Soviet art discourse, notably with the 1933 publication of the influential art critic Osip Beskin’s seminal treatise titled *Formalism in painting (Formalizm v zhivopisi)*.¹⁹ Grabar was not only well-informed about these debates, but as a key figure in the official Bolshevik art establishment, he also participated in them actively.²⁰ As Grabar’s stress on revolutionary subject matter in *Literacy Lesson* shows, he could conveniently apply Socialist Realist criteria to Turkish revolutionary figuration.

Not surprisingly, the Kemalist and Bolshevik states largely agreed on the aesthetic criteria by which to judge revolutionary art. The

official Turkish art discourse similarly emphasized revolutionary subject matter, as exemplified by the contemporaneous Turkish reception of Akdik’s painting. In fact, the painter himself drew attention to the evidentiary nature of his picture when discussing it with İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, a prominent intellectual who was involved with Turkish educational reforms. As reported retrospectively in a book by the art historian Gültekin Elibal, Akdik told Baltacıoğlu that he encountered this scene by chance one night through a slightly open door at the Gazi Educational Institute (Gazi Terbiye Enstitüsü), a higher education teacher training institute of the early Republican era, where the painter then taught.²¹ That evening the painter learned for the first time about his wife’s evening literacy classes offered to the school’s female janitors, whom she instructed entirely on her own initiative. In a slight departure from Grabar’s narrative focus, the painter’s description emphasized the solidarity of the women who belong to different social backgrounds and classes, although Akdik and Grabar both ultimately praised the painting for the evidentiary quality of its subject matter. Baltacıoğlu was not the only member of Turkey’s

ruling elite interested in this painting; it also garnered Atatürk's endorsement. As the painter recounted to Elibal, when Atatürk encountered the picture in the 1933 *Exhibition of the Reforms (İnkılap Sergisi)*, he spent some time in front of it, telling his associates how much he enjoyed it and asking if they had acquired it.²²

The Irresistible Appeal of Battle Paintings

As the newsreel documents, the exhibition included numerous centrally installed and monumentally scaled battle paintings, the number of which must have seemed excessive to the Turkish reviewer Nadir Nadi, who complained about it as the exhibition's "sole flaw."²³ As a subset of revolutionary figuration, battle paintings figured prominently in the newsreel and the Soviet print media, garnering wide Soviet praise. Although initially produced to celebrate the Turkish Revolution, battle paintings maintained their affirmative function in Moscow through their ability to extend their endorsement to the Russian Revolution.

The Soviet critic A. Bassekhes's treatment of

Çallı's *Trikoupis Surrendering His Sword (Trikopis'in Kılıç Teslimi, or Greek Prisoners as Bassekhes called it)* (Figure 7) presents an instance in which Turkish revolutionary figuration celebrated the Russian Revolution by implication. Reviewing the painting in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* through an oblique comparison with Çallı's other battle painting, *Zeybeks at the War of Independence (Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Zeybekler, or National Partisan Forces as Bassekhes called it)* (Figure 8), Bassekhes wrote:



Figure 7. İbrahim Çallı, *Trikoupis Surrendering His Sword*, date unknown. Oil on canvas, 207 x 305 cm. Atatürk Museum, Istanbul.



Figure 8. İbrahim Çallı, *Zeybeks at the War of Independence*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 154 x 186 cm. State Museum of Painting and Sculpture Museum, Ankara.

İbrahim Çallı is a master of confident, realistic brushwork. He is at his most ornamental in his great canvas *National Partisan Forces*. In *Greek Prisoners*, the artist takes on a less showy motif, an almost generic interpretation of the epoch, and represents it with the sharpness and keen observation of an eyewitness and active participant in the historical events.²⁴

Bassekhes's exclusive emphasis on the subject matter of *Trikoupis Surrendering His Sword* contrasts starkly with his praise of *Zeybeks at the War of Independence* solely for its formal qualities—a contrast echoing the unequal attention these works received in the Soviet media. While a photographic reproduction of the latter accompanied this review and two others in *Izvestiia* and the *Journal de Moscou*, the former was not reproduced anywhere, including on the newsreel. Bassekhes's glossing over the formal qualities of *Trikoupis Surrendering His Sword* was likely because of its rough execution. The soldiers' faces are sketchily depicted only with a few lines to delineate facial features, rendering the painting underdeveloped as though Çallı was pressed for time. For instance, the Turkish commanders on the far right have almost identical faces, and Trikoupi's face is uncannily mirrored by that of the Greek commander behind him. Despite the painting's formal shortcomings, however, Bassekhes must have still felt compelled to write about it.

Given the exhibition's strong diplomatic overtones, the historical event depicted in *Trikoupis Surrendering His Sword* likely gave Bassekhes

reason to highlight it. The painting depicts a sun-drenched scene from a defining military victory for the Turkish Revolution during the final phases of the War of Independence. Organized by high-ranking Ottoman military commanders and fought by the peoples of Anatolia, this war was forged against the Allies (Italy, France, Britain, and Greece) to thwart their partition of the Ottoman territories after the Empire's defeat in the First World War. At the center of the composition are Atatürk, a prominent leader of the war mobilizing both the irregular militia and former Ottoman soldiers, and Nikolaos Trikoupis, a Greek military commander. Depicted in profile as he surrenders his sword, Trikoupis bows his head in front of Atatürk, like the three other Greek commanders behind him. In the background stands a row of Turkish cavalymen, blocking the horizon and creating a sense of enclosure that dramatizes the Greek capture. The defeat of the Greek troops was important not only for the Turkish independence struggle but also for the Bolsheviks. In their desire to move toward inland Asia Minor, the Greek forces received the support of the Allies, the British especially. Fearing that the Greek capture of Anatolia would pose a danger to the

Bolshevik-controlled territories from the South, the Bolsheviks gave military and financial assistance to the Turkish nationalist resistance to dispel the potential British threat.²⁵ As a historical record of Bolshevik-Kemalist “friendship,” this painting likely thematized for the Soviets their critical implication in Turkey’s revolutionary history. As such, the picture at once celebrated a pivotal military victory of the Turkish Revolution and, albeit implicitly, the Bolshevik support for international anti-imperialist struggles.

Bassekhes first undermined the painting by saying nothing about its formal qualities and characterizing it as “an almost generic interpretation of the epoch,” then moved to ultimately praise it for the acuity of the painter’s gaze into history. When he wrote that the painting functioned not only as “an eyewitness” but also as an “active participant” in history, he took as his criterion the painter’s perceptiveness in representing history and his subsequent ability to participate in the Turkish Revolution. This idea of the painter as a revolutionary agent evokes the Socialist Realist criteria articulated in 1933 by the official par-



ty line in the context of the aforementioned *15 Years* exhibition. Mikhail Arkadiev, the vice-chairman of the exhibition committee and the head of the arts section of the Commissariat for Enlightenment, wrote in the accompanying catalogue, “The artist not only depicts our socialist construction truthfully but also takes an active part in it himself.”²⁶ Like Grabar’s reliance on the criterion of the truthful depiction of revolutionary subject matter in critiquing *Literacy Lesson*, Basseskhes conveniently applied another key Socialist Realist criterion in reviewing *Trikoupis Surrendering His Sword*. Such easy applicability of Socialist Realist criteria for battle and genre paintings of the Turkish Revolution facilitated their legibility for the Soviets, while also affirming the international relevance of the dominant Soviet aesthetic discourse.

In the Uncomfortable Presence of Religion

While battle and genre paintings allowed effortless communication between, and mutual affirmation of, the Turkish and Russian revolutions, religious-themed paintings brought to light fissures between them. These fissures were not read-

ily conspicuous but nevertheless detectable. While Turkish painters, critics, and officials did not necessarily consider religious-themed paintings to be revolutionary within the Turkish context (of which we do not have evidence), for the exhibition in the Soviet Union, its Turkish commissioners Çallı and Cimcoz probably embraced them pragmatically to represent the Turkish Revolution. Although Turkish officials often embraced staunch secularist policies against religious groups at home, Çallı and Cimcoz might have decided to include religious-themed paintings in this international exhibition to demonstrate to the Soviets the specificity of the Turkish Revolution, which preserved the practice of religion, albeit in a strictly secularist framework. Since the Turkish authorities were wary of communism, and particularly its suppression of religion, they may have wanted to underline the enduring role of religion in the country.

The majority of the exhibition’s Soviet critics remained noticeably silent about paintings depicting religious subjects, while they frequently wrote about those with unquestionably revolutionary themes, often by praising their choice of subject matter, though not necessarily their ex-



ecution. Similarly, the newsreel omits mosque paintings, suggesting that these pictures were hung at a peripheral location in the exhibition space. Grabar and Olga Bubnova were the only Soviet critics who noted the mosque paintings, but they did so by glossing over their subject matter. Grabar's review of Şevket Dağ's (1876–1944) mosque interior, for instance, registers the equivocality of his judgment:

Absent in Çallı's works are the old-fashioned echoes of Gérôme that are present in Şevket Dağ's mosque interiors, skillfully and delicately depicted, but somewhat dry with regard to the overall painting.²⁷

Pitting Dağ against Çallı, Grabar criticized the overall dryness of Dağ's painting and its "old-fashioned echoes" of the famous French Orientalist Jean-Léon Gérôme, while pointing to the quality of drawing as the painting's only feature worthy of praise, as per the critic's principal realist criterion.²⁸ Grabar's Gérôme comparison remains key to deciphering his laconic critique and inevitably raises the following question: By Gérôme's "old-fashioned echoes," might Grabar

have been referring to the painter's Orientalism? This is not unlikely given Grabar's familiarity with French art, as disclosed by his reference in the same review to the Paris Salon of 1910, as well as by his reviews of European art for Russian art magazines around the turn of the twentieth century.²⁹ The difference between Dağ's and Gérôme's depictions of religious scenes, however, complicates this possibility.

As an exemplar of Dağ's mosque paintings, *Interior* (Figure 9) depicts a space organized by a simple linear perspectival scheme, while Gérôme structures the space in *Prayer in the Mosque* (1871) (Figure 10) with a more elaborate linear perspective that yields a nearly abyssal depth to the background.³⁰ Whereas Gérôme deploys a realist style with a photographic-like rendering of detail, Dağ's brushstrokes are impressionistic and thick; instead of a photographic smoothness, they impart thick texture to the canvas, rendering the picture heavy, subjective, and man-made. Gérôme depicts about two dozen praying figures from a relatively close distance, Dağ, on the other hand, portrays a single faraway figure who appears dwarfed by the surrounding architecture.



Figure 9. Şevket Dağ, *Interior, Hagia Sophia*, date unknown. Oil on canvas, 76 x 63.5 cm. Arkas Holding Collection, Izmir.

The mosque in Dağ's painting is underpopulated and the painter's position more detached, due to the distance and the almost voyeuristic perspective from which the scene is captured. The thick impasto and diverse colors that render the wall panels and floor rugs in Dağ's work further prioritize the space of the mosque over the act of praying inside it. Gérôme, in contrast, solicits the viewer's attention to the prayer, with the elabo-

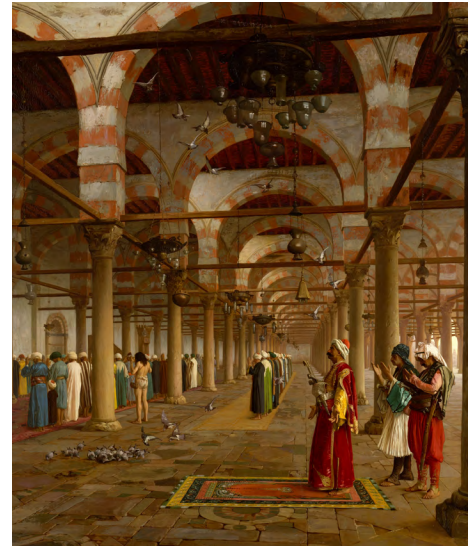


Figure 10. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Prayer in the Mosque*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 88.9 x 74.9 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

rate renderings of the figures, the close distance from which they are depicted, and the dynamism injected into this otherwise quiet scene by a half-clad boy surrounded by pigeons.

As Linda Nochlin's seminal analysis has shown, the key ingredients of Gérôme's Orientalism are the overall photographic detail laying a false claim to objective representation, the

absence of references to contemporary life as though the Orient was located in an unchanging past, and the inclusion of half-naked figures eroticizing his depictions.³¹ Dağ's *Interior*, however, mostly refrains from such representational choices, with its thick and painterly brushstrokes and distinctive emphasis on architecture. Given the formal groundlessness of Grabar's comparison, he likely evoked Gérôme to talk more broadly about the subject matter often attributed to the Orient, such as mosques. Even harder to decipher is Grabar's comment about the overall dryness of Dağ's painting, because it is not clear whether he located it in the painting's subject matter or its formal qualities. This remark might as well be an oblique placeholder for his disapproval of the painting. The ambiguity of this remark, along with the critic's minimal interpretive emphasis on the subject matter, suggests that he restrained himself from fully divulging his likely unfavorable opinion about the painting.

When Bubnova wrote that “[i]n the small realist paintings of Şevket [Dağ], who enjoys painting mosque interiors, we find scenes of the old Turkey,” she similarly showed a detached engage-

ment with the subject matter in religious-themed pictures.³² In a few words, she treated the subject matter as a mere descriptor, while also ignoring the praying figures included in the scene. More importantly, she relegated the scene to the “old Turkey,” as though religious practice had ended altogether with the Revolution. Although Dağ came of age as an artist and spent most of his life under Ottoman rule, and thus might be seen as a representative of the “old Turkey,” it would be wrong to say that such religious scenes vanished in the “new Turkey.” Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Kemalists did not completely suppress the public practice of religion, although they effectively divested religious institutions of their political power. Further, Bubnova construed the depiction of religious themes as the painter's individual preference, thereby marginalizing them from Turkish painting at large.

Likely less surprising for the Bolshevik leaders attending the exhibition, mosque paintings might have startled Soviet art critics and audiences alike, who were less familiar with the Turkish Revolution and not accustomed to encountering such paintings in Soviet art exhibitions. As Grabar's and

Bubnova's avoidance of religious subject matter indicates, these paintings likely posed a challenge to the Soviet critics, obliging them to carefully calculate their public responses. While they did not openly denounce mosque paintings due to their subject matter, nor simply ignore them as did other Soviet critics, Grabar's and Bubnova's strategies of ambiguity and reframing, respectively, helped them distance their critiques from what these pictures depict. Beyond contradicting the rhetoric of friendship under which this exhibition operated, explicit criticism of religious-themed paintings would have alienated the Turkish visitors.

In the Silent Presence of the Female Nude

What do we make of the contrast between Çallı's broad, proud smile and the anonymous Soviet woman's hesitant glance at the female nude (Figure 3), the contrast with which I opened this essay? To unpack this contrast, I will compare the meaning of the female nude in Turkish and Russian revolutionary discourses.

Çallı's speech at the Moscow opening suggests that in Turkey this genre had a revolution-

ary import in its own right. As Çallı would report in a brief magazine article he published upon his return from the Soviet Union, his introductory remarks to his Soviet audiences included the following historical context:

I am a child of a conservative period, which saw the covering of Greek sculptures with loincloths. Not a long time has passed since that era when paintings were deemed to commit a religiously forbidden act [*haram işlemek*]. That bigotry has been overcome now in the twelve years of the Republican era, and the opportunity to work freely in the field of fine arts has emerged.³³

As Çallı's reference to Greek sculptures implies, the painting and sculpture in question here are those that imitate how things appear in real life, a mode of representation acquired from Western Europe, and the association of painting with heresy alludes to such representations of the human body, which remained mostly controversial in the dominant practice of Islam. By "the covering of Greek sculptures with loincloths," he referred more specifically to the nude. Çallı thereby cast the country's

Muslim background as an impediment to the nude genre, dramatizing the difference between the late Ottoman and early Republican eras, similar to the Kemalist revolutionary rhetoric. By declaring that the Turkish Republic overruled this impediment, he situated the nude centrally within the country's revolutionary history.

A brief consideration of Turkey's art historical context clarifies Çallı's claim. When mimetic easel painting began in Turkey in the mid-nineteenth century, painters worked primarily in landscape and still life genres.³⁴ It took them longer to depict the human body because of the difficulty of mastering its three-dimensional renderings, and, more importantly, due to the restrictions on the use of live models, especially female and unclad ones. When Turkey's first official school to teach easel painting, the Academy of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi) was founded in 1883, it did not offer the chance to study human anatomy from a naked model, let alone a female one—an opportunity that only those who studied art in Western Europe would have. Students at the Istanbul Academy would learn human anatomy first by drawing from

plaster sculptures, and only later from half-clad models of the same sex. The painter and art historian Celal Esad, who studied at the Academy in the early 1890s, explained this practice with the limitations of Ottoman mores that made it impossible to find a model to pose naked.³⁵ For similar reasons, it was not until 1922 that nudes were displayed publicly.³⁶ Indeed, as the art historian Ahu Antmen has observed, nudes proliferated in the early Republican era, while they were few and not exhibited publicly during the late Ottoman era.³⁷ By evoking this local art historical context, Çallı proposed that the female nude signified the very freedom not only to paint a nude from a live model but also to exhibit it publicly, including in state-organized exhibitions.³⁸ At the time of the Moscow exhibition, for instance, Çallı's female nude was already included in the art collection of the central Ankara branch of the People's Houses (Halkevleri), a state cultural organization, and in 1937, this picture would be shown in the opening exhibition of the Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum (Resim ve Heykel Müzesi).³⁹

When considered aesthetically, however, Çallı's political claim about the nude genre is hard



to locate in his picture because it does not look much different from a female nude of bourgeois art. Although the painting clearly departs from academic nudes of Western Europe with its impressionistic brushstrokes and visibly outlined figure, Çallı's female nude nevertheless exists solely as an object to be looked at, like her bourgeois counterparts. Unlike the example of Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863), one of the most well-known assaults on the bourgeois female nude, Çallı's model does not confront the onlooker's gaze. Nor does she forcefully assert control of her sexuality, as *Olympia* does by placing her hands on her pubic area.⁴⁰ Although Çallı's nude's averted eyes add some resistance to the male gaze, they do not cancel the visual availability of her body. Contrary to a sense of shyness that her backward glance and tightly clasped hands on her breasts convey, her torso faces the viewer with a hint of suggestiveness.

It is less the model's pose than Çallı's overall painterly choices that suggest a serious aesthetic reorientation of the female nude. Firstly, the painting deploys styles incongruous with each other: While the figure is for the most part ren-

dered carefully, the divan and the background are painted sketchily in broad, visible brushstrokes. The depiction of the figure is more or less complete (more or less because her feet and hands are rendered cursorily), the divan, on the other hand, looks unfinished. Note, in particular, the bottom left corner of the canvas. The strangeness of the space where the sitter is portrayed, moreover, shows the figure as out-of-place. The flat green background leaves it unclear where she is, although it is evident that this space exists only for her depiction. Finally, the folded surface of what seems to be animal fur below the nude's knees dramatizes the composition. With the unclear movement of fabrics of various textures and colors on which the sitter rests, the lower right part of the painting distracts attention from the centrally placed figure. Located in the middle of this convoluted space, the female nude appears undercut by the painter's formal preoccupations that gradually deflect attention from her. With the downward curve of her lips and her body turned at once toward and away from the viewer, she looks uncomfortable being stripped bare and captured in this space, a discomfort that the confusing depiction of fabrics

only amplifies. Although this painting clearly partakes of the bourgeois female nude, in its rendering of the space it performs a decontextualizing operation.⁴¹ In choosing not to deploy a socially and historically identifiable setting as a background, Çallı seems to have experimented with how and where to depict the female nude.

We do not know how the Soviet public and critics responded to this picture and Çallı's political framing of it as revolutionary art for that matter; when it came to this painting, the Soviet critics remained conspicuously silent. In contrast to its lengthy appearance in the newsreel, Soviet reviews make no mention of it. The only direct Soviet response to the picture remains anecdotal: As Çallı reported in an interview in a national Turkish newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, Grabar made an aesthetic remark about it, praising Çallı for his "innate" painterly ability to create such a skin tone for the figure.⁴² We do not know if Grabar made additional remarks about the painting. If Grabar had criticized it, Çallı might have omitted his criticism by selectively reporting Grabar's response, a strategy the Turkish press seems to have followed.⁴³

Çallı's report appears accurate, however, in light of Grabar's recorded response to Dağ's mosque interior, which, as we have seen, was equally elusive.

As for the newsreel, it is not a particularly reliable source to gauge the female nude's Soviet reception because, due to the nature of the video medium, it is impossible to assume a one-to-one correspondence between the paintings to which Soviet audiences are shown as reacting and the paintings to which they actually responded. By arranging a shot of a painting that is out of sequence with that of a viewer, the Soviet editor of the footage might have easily arranged the viewers as contemplating a painting that they did not spend much time with. Such a mismatch is precisely the case with the newsreel's presentation of Çallı and Cherniavskii as chatting in front of the female nude. A close inspection of the still capturing the two men (Figure 1) contradicts the newsreel's narrative, disclosing that the female nude was in fact hung to their side, instead of on the wall they were facing. Rather than completely negating Çallı's proud smile while showing his female nude to Cherniavskii, this narrative inconsistency be-

tween the single shot and the moving image demonstrates that the newsreel's Soviet editor wanted to emphasize the painting by editing the footage accordingly.

The newsreel further poses the problem of whose view its montage wanted to accommodate. This question is particularly pertinent because the newsreel includes intertitles only in Turkish, which were clearly added in Soviet Russia as the Russian original is the same as its copy in Turkey. Since the Soviets shared the newsreel with the Turkish officials and there is no version, to the best of my knowledge, with Russian intertitles, the newsreel's Soviet editor might have wanted to accommodate the Turkish delegation's view of the exhibition. The VOKS officials who carefully observed the opinions and behaviors of their Turkish guests would, of course, not fail to note their narratives of the exhibition.⁴⁴ As the newsreel often shows Çallı in the middle of heated conversations with Cherniavskii or other Soviet visitors, the painter presumably had significant influence in shaping the exhibition's Turkish narrative communicated in the Soviet Union. Thus Çallı might have played an indirect part in what

the newsreel shows, and the lengthy appearance of his female nude might be more of a reflection of his enthusiasm about it than that of his Soviet interlocutors. Çallı might have even prompted Cherniavskii to pay attention to the picture by leading him in front of it, although at a different moment than the one seen in the newsreel. Considering its intended audience, the newsreel should be seen less as a document of the Soviet response to the exhibition than as a record of the Soviet-Turkish interaction, one that is imprecise all the same.

Although the Soviet critical reaction to Çallı's female nude remains undocumented, the status of its genre in the dominant Soviet art discourse suggests that this reaction might not have been as enthusiastic as Çallı's. In contrast to the genre's revolutionary import in Turkey, it often carried reactionary meanings in Soviet Russia, where the female nude was not a particularly socialist subject. Understood as an emblem of capitalism, objectified nakedness was seen as offensive to women and morally inappropriate.⁴⁵ Soviet critics believed that the female nude of the European artistic tradition presented an objectified view of

women, which contradicted Bolshevik feminism and its advocacy of women's political, intellectual, and social equality with men. Following the Russian Revolution, Soviet law ascribed legal equality to women in election, family, and marriage, while also giving them the right to abortion. Beyond the legal code, Bolshevik feminism advocated, widely and publicly through textual and visual media, women's empowerment in the workplace and home, as well as in public and intellectual life, even though this did not necessarily translate to the actual experiences of Soviet women.⁴⁶ The female nude thus remained a controversial genre in Soviet art as well as in visual culture more broadly. Unusual in exhibitions in the mid-1930s, this genre was permissible only under socialist pretexts.

A rare example of the prominent Soviet painter Aleksandr Deineka's female nudes from the early 1930s—*Mother* and *The Ball Game* of 1932, and *Bathing Girl* of 1933—for instance, presents what Soviet critics deemed “lyrical” (*liricheskii*) images of the new socialist woman as mother, athlete, or collective-farm worker. Set against the background of such socialist themes, Deineka's female nudes

mobilize, as Christina Kiaer has argued, “emotion as a social force, and for the social value of communicated emotion” by transforming private emotions into social ones, without jettisoning a more dominant Socialist Realist method of analytical comprehension of the reality.⁴⁷ Contemporaneous Soviet critics saw Deineka's nudes not as sexualized representations of female nudity but as chaste, which Kiaer has attributed to the fragmented and scaled-up renderings of the body.⁴⁸ To Soviet critics, Deineka's pictures thus differed from the erotically charged female nudes of bourgeois art that existed only for private visual pleasure. The Soviet understanding of the genre must have obscured the legibility of its revolutionary meaning for Turkish painters.

Although the female nude and religious-themed paintings were both contentious in Soviet Russia, no Soviet critic publicly commented on the former, while two Soviet critics, as we have seen, rose to the challenge of covering the latter. Unlike religious-themed paintings that generated an equivocal response, the female nude was met with silence in art criticism. This difference might be because it was impossible for religious practice ever to be considered a socialist subject mat-

ter. Public endorsement of religious themes was simply unacceptable in Soviet Russia. The female nude, on the other hand, might have been harder to judge because, despite the genre's contentious status, Deineka's female nudes demonstrate that there were a few instances in which this genre could be publicly endorsed. Unlike Deineka's female nudes with their socialist pretext, however, Çalli's painting does not offer the slightest socio-historical context, as the model reclines on a divan solely for the viewer's gaze.

Çalli's female nude must have been particularly difficult to position critically because of the manifold and, seemingly contradictory, claims that it makes. While the painting participates politically in the Turkish Revolution and aesthetically in bourgeois art, it gestures toward socialist art in its economics of production and display. In the mid-1930s, Turkish art was not yet an entirely capitalist commodity. As in Soviet Russia, Turkey had virtually no private art market, not because of a socialist economy but because there were simply not enough collectors to support one.⁴⁹ Both Turkish and Soviet art relied on state-funded production and exhibition structures. Like their Soviet colleagues, Turk-

ish artists mostly supported themselves financially by producing for state commissions and selling their works to governmental institutions, while also teaching at public schools.⁵⁰ Incorporated into Turkey's officially endorsed artistic canon in the 1930s, the Turkish female nude contrasts with that of Western European bourgeois art, which was mainly marketed to private patrons. Soviet audiences might have understood this distinctive status of the Turkish female nude as neither a socialist nor a capitalist object, and this difference might be why they did not publicly rebuke it. The Turkish officials, after all, communicated well the economic conditions under which Turkish art was produced. For instance, in a short introductory text about the exhibition located at VOKS archives—penned by Turkish authorities in French and later translated into Russian presumably by the Soviets—the Turkish officials underlined that “the leaders and governmental organizations [of Turkey] held the first place” as the patron of painting.⁵¹ Although Çalli's female nude was clearly beyond the officially accepted limits of this genre in Soviet art, its economic status not being an object of private consumption might have facilitated its Soviet acceptance.

The chaste appearance of Çallı's female nude, conveyed by the model's pose, might have further contributed to it being acceptable to the Soviet critics and officials. Had Çallı exhibited one of his more erotically charged female nudes instead of the Moscow one, the Soviet critics would have been more likely to criticize it.⁵² An earlier, more suggestive female nude (Figure 11), for instance, contrasts starkly with his chaste Moscow nude. With her eyes closed and face turned away from the viewer, this earlier nude appears lost in a moment of pleasure, or its anticipation, seemingly unaware of the beholder's gaze.

The Soviet critics' silence about the female nude, then, is not the same as a lack of response. The very inclusion of this painting in the Soviet-produced newsreel and in this particular narrative sequence registers a reaction, albeit vague, rather than a mere dismissal. As the newsreel documents, moreover, the Soviet authorities installed the female nude centrally in the exhibition space, close to paintings that the Soviet critics widely endorsed as revolutionary. The female nude's prominent location indicates that the Soviets did not merely relegate it to the background, as was the fate

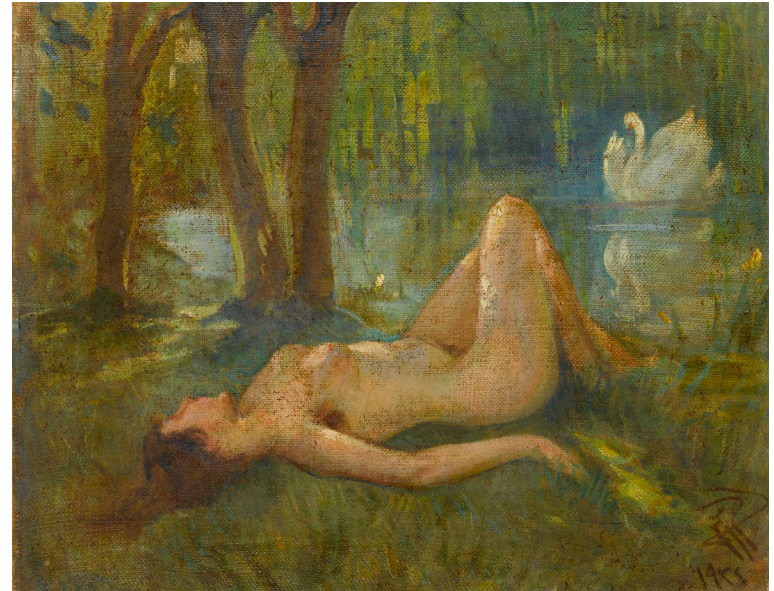


Figure 11. İbrahim Çallı, *Woman and Swan*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 cm. Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul.

of religious-themed paintings that seem to have been installed peripherally. Nor did this response take the form of public condemnation or scandal in Soviet artistic circles, of which there is no evidence. Given the rarity of female nudes in Soviet art exhibitions, the Soviet woman's suspicious glance in the newsreel possibly indicates her surprise at

encountering this picture and the subsequent difficulty of orienting it critically. Çallı's proud smile, on the other hand, likely shows his embrace of the female nude as a revolutionary genre. The Soviet critics' unanimous silence about this picture, then, registers how it complicated the contemporaneous Soviet conceptions of revolutionary figuration.

In resisting easy endorsement or dismissal, the Turkish female nude was able to elicit a wider spectrum of responses from its Soviet audiences. Because Çallı, as the painting's producer and one of the co-commissioners of the exhibition, made a proposition about the genre's revolutionary import in Turkey, the painting actively put forward a different idea of what revolutionary art could be. To the extent that Çallı's female nude prompted its Soviet viewers to rethink their assumptions about revolutionary figuration and what a revolution could enable artists to do, this painting might have even functioned critically. Although scholars have argued, not unjustifiably, that both Bolshevik and Kemalist political projects of the second quarter of the twentieth century ideologically circumscribed art, this essay has pointed toward the counterbalancing role of the international politics of revolution-

ary friendship against such ideological limitations, facilitating an exchange about contrasting understandings of revolutionary figuration. In the interstices between national and international politics, Turkish artists could negotiate their unexpected practice of revolutionary art beyond the horizons of their Soviet contemporaries.

NOTES:

- * I am grateful to Christina Kiaer and the late Robert Bird for their encouragement and support for this research from the moment that I stumbled on this topic, and to Hannah Feldman for her incisive commentary on this work. My heartfelt thanks are also to numerous other mentors—S. Hollis Clayson and Ann Gunter, especially—and colleagues at Northwestern who shared their valuable comments and questions with me as I developed this essay. I dedicate this essay to the late Sasha Novozhenova, whose friendship I miss deeply.
- 1 The exhibition displayed approximately eighty paintings by about thirty artists spanning three generations. Although it included a considerable number of paintings about the Turkish Revolution, the exhibition did not revolve exclusively around this theme. As the title states, its aim was to provide “a general idea about Turkish painting” [*Türk resmi hakkında umumî bir fikir*], in the words of İbrahim Çallı, one of the exhibition's Turkish co-commissioners alongside the Turkish deputy Salâh Cimcoz. See İbrahim Çallı, “Sovyet Rusya'dan birkaç intiba” [A few impressions



from Soviet Russia], *Kültür Haftası*, March 25, 1936; translations from Turkish and French are my own. Because this essay focuses on paintings around which a Soviet-Turkish conversation of revolutionary art unfolded, other paintings—such as still lifes, most portraiture, and landscapes—remain outside of the scope of this analysis.

- 2 Titled *SSSR i Turtsiia [USSR and Turkey]*, this newsreel was released in 1936 and is located at the Russian State Archives of Film and Photographic Documents, Krasnogorsk [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov, RGA-KFD], fond 3682; I would like to thank Elena Kolikova of RGAKFD for granting me access to it. I first became aware of this newsreel through the archives of the Turkish State Television [Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu, TRT]. As Turkish archival sources indicate, the Soviets sent a copy of this newsreel to Turkish officials: A letter dated June 8, 1936 from the General Secretariat of the Republican People's Party [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP; the political party then in power] to Karahan, the Soviet ambassador to Turkey, extends "friendly and fraternal" [dostane ve kardaşça] sentiments of gratitude to the Soviets for the copy of the newsreel they sent to the CHP; fond 490-1-0-0, box 2017, folder 24, Prime Ministry's Republican Archives (Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, BCA).
- 3 Although Turkish-Soviet artistic exchanges of the mid-1930s constitute a rich subject for analyzing the flow of ideas between non-Western contexts, no in-depth examination of this topic exists in English or Turkish language sources. Drawing on rarely used Turkish and Soviet archival sources, I offer an initial analysis of one milestone in these exchanges. For broader views on Soviet and Turkish exhibitions in Turkey and the USSR, respectively, and some propositions regarding the links between Soviet Socialist Realism and Turkish revolutionary figuration, see Cemren Altan, "Populism and Peasant Iconography: Turk-

ish Painting in the 1930s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 4 (2005): 547-60; and Duygu Köksal, "Art and Power in Turkey: Culture, Aesthetics and Nationalism During the Single Party Era," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 31 (October 2004): 91-119.

- 4 In resorting to this term not widely used in art history, I seek to group figurations of the Turkish Revolution into one category so as to facilitate their dialogue with Soviet Socialist Realism, which I conceive as a particular subset of revolutionary figuration. My understanding of this term is inspired by scholarship on Socialist Realism that demonstrates its difference from the bourgeois concept of art as developed in Western Europe; see, for instance, Ekaterina Degot, "Curating the Incurable: One Curator's Experience with Soviet Art," in *Socialist Realisms: Soviet Painting 1920-1970* (Milan: Skira, 2012) 209-14; and Christina Kiaer, "Fairy-Tales of the Proletariat, or, Is Socialist Realism Kitsch?," in *Socialist Realisms*, 183-89. For scholarly accounts of what I call Turkish revolutionary figuration, see Martina Becker, "Congeries beyond Categories: Approaching the Complex Actuality of Art Practices in the Early Turkish Republic," *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 70, no. 4 (2017): 1019-1049; Sibel Bozdoğan, "Aesthetics of Progress: Imagining an Industrial Nation," in *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 106-52; and Wendy M. K. Shaw, "Art for a New Nation," in *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 157-78.
- 5 As demonstrated by a series of correspondence from early 1935 between the CHP General Secretary Recep Peker and CHP Istanbul deputy Cemal Tunca, the Party authorities became aware of an exhibition invitation by VOKS extended to "Group D" (D Grubu). A member of "Group D," Abidin Dino,



- who was living in the Soviet Union at the time and working as a set designer for LenFilm, facilitated this invitation. Disapproving of an exhibition abroad being planned independently by artists without any state involvement, CHP subsequently took control of its organization; fond 490-1-0-0, box 2017, folder 24, BCA.
- 6 As indicated by the December 30, 1935 report of K. Burmeister—the VOKS employee who accompanied the members of the Turkish delegation during their entire stay in the USSR—VOKS organized the hanging of the paintings as well as the repair of damage they incurred during their shipment from Turkey; fond 5283, box 4, folder 196, State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosu darstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, GARF). After the Soviet Union, the exhibition also traveled to Bucharest, Romania.
- 7 For a detailed historical account of Turkish-Soviet political relations in this period, see Bülent Gökay, “The Inter-war Years,” in *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920–1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 36–47. For an analysis of the Soviet rhetoric of friendship, with Westerners in particular, see Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 8 For a historical account of this early phase of the Kemalist-Bolshevik rapprochement, see Şükrü Hanioglu, “Muslim Communism? The Turkish War of Independence,” in *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 86–128.
- 9 For a recent account of the economic policies of the young Turkish Republic, see Şevket Pamuk, “From Empire to Nation-State,” in *Uneven Centuries: Economic Development of Turkey since 1820* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 2018), 156–183.
- 10 In 1929, Atatürk would go as far as to equate communism with treason; cited in Gökay, “The Opening Acts,” in *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920–1991*, 25.
- 11 For instance, in 1921, Pavlowitch, a prominent Bolshevik and the foremost Soviet expert on Turkey stated: “[T]he Turkish people, due to historical reasons of allegiance to religion, cannot at this moment accept the communist program;” cited in Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920–1991*, 11.
- 12 Bor, “Khudozhniki novoi Turtsii [Artists of the new Turkey],” *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, December 28, 1935; A. S. H., “Vystavka Turetskoi zhivopisi [The Exhibition of Turkish Art],” *Vechniaia Moskva*, December 23, 1935. I am grateful to Max Gordon for his translation of Bor and Bassekhes, and to Andrei Nesterov for those of the remaining Russian-language reviews that I reference in this essay.
- 13 Igor Grabar, “Vystavka sovremennoi Turetskoi zhivopisi [The Exhibition of contemporary Turkish fine arts],” *Prauda*, January 5, 1936.
- 14 On the Alphabet Revolution, see Geoffrey Lewis, “The New Alphabet,” in *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27–39.
- 15 For a detailed historical account of the vast adult literacy campaign the Bolsheviks implemented in the 1920s and ‘30s, see I. V. Gluschenko, “The Soviet Educational Project: The Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the 1920s–1930s,” *Russian Social Science Review* 57, no. 5 (2016): 378–414.
- 16 L. Snezhinkaia’s 1935 film *Tajixon Shadieva*, for instance, narrates the story of an Uzbek woman’s liberation and education during the Soviet era.
- 17 This formulation is from the Soviet art critic Nikolai

- Bukharin's review of the 1933 Moscow iteration of the 15 Years exhibition in *Izvestiia*, the second most prominent Soviet newspaper after *Pravda*. Cited in Masha Chlenova, "Staging Soviet Art: 15 Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic, 1932-1933," *October* (Winter 2014): 54. A critical moment in the formulation of Socialist Realism, the Central Committee decree of April 23, 1932, disbanded all artistic organizations to unify them under the newly-founded Union of Soviet Artists, effectively structuring the economic and administrative organization of visual arts. Although the decree did not provide explicit criteria for Socialist Realism, the Bolshevik leadership was clear about the acceptable subjects fit for it.
- 18 Chlenova, "Staging Soviet Art," 38-55.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 46.
- 20 For example, Grabar served on the organizing committee of the aforementioned 15 Years exhibition.
- 21 See Elibal, "Atatürk Döneminde Resim ve Heykel" [Painting and sculpture in the Atatürk period], in *Atatürk ve Resim Heykel* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1973), 119.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 119, 121. Although this anecdote does not detail why this painting earned Atatürk's praise, the similarity between the scene of adult education in *Literacy Lesson* and in numerous iconic photojournalistic photographs of the nationwide literacy campaign of 1928 provides some insight. Such photographs depict Atatürk giving writing lessons to illiterate adults in makeshift classrooms, which earned him the status of "the headteacher" (*başöğretmen*). Atatürk's endorsement was likely due to the painting's interpretation of a popular photojournalistic trope about this campaign.
- 23 Nadi, "Türk Ressamları Sergisi" [The exhibition of Turkish painters], *Cumhuriyet*, April 3, 1936.
- 24 Bassekhes, "Zhivopistsy novoi Turtsii [Painters of the new Turkey]," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, January 1, 1936.
- 25 Samuel J. Hirst, "Transnational Anti-Imperialism and the National Forces: Soviet Diplomacy and Turkey, 1920-1923," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 2 (August 28, 2013): 216.
- 26 Mikhail P. Arkadiev, "Smotr Sovetskogo izo-iskusstva," in *Khudozhniki RSFSR za let (1917-1932)* (Moscow, 1933), xv; cited in Jørn Guldberg, "Socialist Realism as Institutional Practice: Observations on the Interpretation of the Works of Art of the Stalin Period," in *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, ed. Hans Günther, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 149.
- 27 Grabar, "Vystavka sovremennoi Turetskoi zhivopisi [Exhibition of contemporary Turkish fine arts]."
- 28 *Ibid.*; earlier in the same review, for instance, Grabar praised the exhibition as follows: "The vast majority of the exhibited paintings have one positive feature in common: a decisive departure from a lack of focus and abstract stylization."
- 29 Ilia Dorontchenkov, ed., *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art: 1890s to Mid-1930s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- 30 We do not know precisely which two mosque interiors Dağ showed in the exhibition, but from Yunus Nadi's review we know that one included "a preacher praying at a mosque corner;" Yunus Nadi, "Türk ressamları sergisi" [The exhibition of Turkish painters].
- 31 Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient" [1983], in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 33-59.
- 32 Olga Bubnova, "Une Exposition de Peinture Turc à Moscou"

- [An exhibition of Turkish painting in Moscow], *Journal de Moscou*, December 31, 1935.
- 33 İbrahim Çallı, "Sovyet Rusya'dan bir kaç intiba," *Kültür Haftası*, March 25, 1936.
- 34 For an account of this period, see Shaw, *Ottoman Painting*.
- 35 Students would get around this problem by bringing in day laborers from the street, such as porters or street vendors, to make studies of their naked torsos and heads; cited in Ahu Antmen, "Modern ve mahrem: Osmanlı resminde çıplak beden" [The modern and the private: the nude in Ottoman painting], in *Kimlikli bedenler: sanat, kimlik, cinsiyet* [Bodies with identities: art, identity, gender] (Istanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2013), 25.
- 36 The first time nudes were exhibited publicly was in the fourth iteration of the *Galatasaray Painting Exhibition (Dördüncü Galatasaray resim sergisi)*; see Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu, ed., *Galatasaray sergileri: 1916-1951* [Galatasaray exhibitions: 1916-1951] (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 38.
- 37 Ahu Antmen, "Üryan, Çıplak, Nü: Türk Resminde bir Modernleşme Öyküsü – Bare, Naked, Nude: A Story of Modernization in Turkish Painting," in *Üryan, Çıplak, Nü: Türk Resminde bir Modernleşme Öyküsü – Bare, Naked, Nude: A Story of Modernization in Turkish Painting*, eds. Tania Bahar and Begüm Akkoyunlu Ersöz (Istanbul: Pera Museum Publications, 2015), 17. Exhibition Catalogue.
- 38 The female nude was similarly central to modernization debates in other Muslim societies. For discussions of the nude as a sign of modernity or a tool for modernization in the Middle East, see Octavian Esanu, ed., *Art, Awakening, and Modernity in the Middle East: The Arab Nude* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
- 39 For an account of the People's Houses, see Sefa Şimsek, "'People's Houses' as a Nationwide Project for Ideological Mobilization in Early Republican Turkey 1," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 71-91; and on this opening exhibition, see, Tomur Atagök et al., *Serginin sergisi: İstanbul Resim ve Heykel Müzesi, 1937 açılış koleksiyonu/ Exhibition's exhibition: İstanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum, 1937 opening collection* (Istanbul: Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2009).
- 40 For a seminal analysis of Manet's Olympia, see T. J. Clark, "Olympia's Choice," in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 79-146. Although scholars have since contested Clark on various fronts, his reading of Olympia's pose remains persuasive.
- 41 I would even argue that this female nude by Çallı is a modernist painting. This is not simply because of the flatness—that well-known modernist device—of the green background. I argue so because the painter's overall strategy of decontextualization and the incongruity of styles, deployed in depicting the space and the sitter, present the whole artistic enterprise of representing a female nude as a self-consciously staged and an effectively incomplete project.
- 42 Nadi, "Türk ressamaları sergisi" [The exhibition of Turkish painters].
- 43 See, for instance, Yunus Nadi, "Türk ressamlığı dost Rusya'da takdirler kazandı" [Turkish painting gained appreciation in friendly Russia], *Cumhuriyet*, February 13, 1936.
- 44 As the guide and translator of the Turkish delegation, Burmeister sent extensive, classified reports to her superior at VOKS on a daily basis. These reports document thoroughly and consistently how each of the Turkish guests responded to the sites to which they were taken in the Soviet Union; fond 5283, box 4, folder 196, GARF. On the Soviet scrutiny of their foreign visitors, see Sheila

- Fitzpatrick, "Foreigners Observed: Moscow Visitors in the 1930s under the Gaze of Their Soviet Guides," *Russian History* 35, no. 1-2 (2008): 215–34. Among the evidence that Fitzpatrick mobilizes are Burmeister's reports on this exhibition's Turkish delegation.
- 45 Christina Kiaer, "Anti-Objectification" (April 4), in *Revolution Every Day: A Calendar*, ed. Robert Bird, Kiaer and Zachary Cahill (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2017).
- 46 For concise accounts of Bolshevik feminism, see Kiaer, "Feminist Revolution" (January 6), and "The New Everyday Life" (January 12), in *Revolution Every Day: A Calendar*. On the increasing marginalization of women artists in the Soviet art system from the mid-1930s onward, see Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (1998): 133–173; and Kiaer, "The Women's Exhibition" (December 15), in *Revolution Every Day*.
- 47 Christina Kiaer, "Lyrical Socialist Realism," *October* 147 (January 2014): 60, 76.
- 48 Kiaer, "Lyrical Socialist Realism," 70–71.
- 49 Turkey's first private galleries opened in the 1950s. For a recent account of this moment, see Sarah-Neel Smith, "Art, Democracy, and the Culture of Dissent in 1950s Turkey" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2015).
- 50 Unlike in Soviet Russia, however, where artists often received contracts to produce art with specific themes, state patronage in Kemalist Turkey was less structured, although the themes Turkish state bodies tended to acquire likely affected artistic production. For a detailed account of the material conditions of the Soviet art system, see Galina Yankovskaya, "The Economic Dimensions of Art in the Stalinist Era: Artists' Cooperatives in the Grip of Ideology and the Plan," trans. Rebecca Mitchell, *Slavic Review* 65, no. 4 (2006): 769–91. On the Turkish case, see Elibal, "Atatürk Döneminde Resim ve Heykel," [Painting and sculpture in the Atatürk era], 60–61.
- 51 What seems to be the French original of the text, written on the CHP General Secretariat letterhead, and its Russian translation are both located at VOKS archives; fond 5283, box 4, folder 196, GARF.
- 52 We do not know if Çallı chose to exhibit this more chaste nude in Moscow because he was aware of the unsympathetic Soviet attitude toward this genre.

TURKEY AND RUSSIA RELATIONS

BERA MADRA



My point of departure will be at a micro level; I will describe to you what Turkish-Russian relations mean to me personally. Let me first quote a phrase often attributed to Lenin, “A lie told often enough becomes the truth.” I am pleased to find that we are beginning to talk about truth in reaction to post-truth, which at the present moment dominates global politics, the economy, culture, and daily life. I am convinced that in this symposium many facts we don’t yet know about will be unearthed, and those we have already forgotten about will resurface.

I would like to begin this discussion, which dissects the cultural relations between Turkey and Russia, with some memories from my childhood and youth, as well as with my professional involvement in contemporary art exhibitions and other activities for three decades.

Everything in my memory from my birth in 1942 up until 1990 during the Cold War, when Soviet Russia and communism constituted an ideological dilemma on which the world was divided, has links to Turkey’s twentieth-century political and social relations. My grandparents had their

family roots in Crimea and Georgia; they were immigrants during the era of the Ottoman Empire. As a child I listened to the dramatic stories of my ancestors and I was aware of the geographical and cultural presence of Russia.

I was also aware of the adversity of Russia’s political presence. One of my earliest memories is related to my nanny, an Armenian woman from Şebinkarahisar, an Anatolian city with an Armenian population, whose daughter was abducted during the deportation and was possibly living somewhere in Soviet Russia. One day early in the 1950s we received a letter from Armenia delivered by the Turkish Intelligence Agency, suspiciously asking my father why he was receiving a letter from Soviet Russia. My nanny could never meet with her daughter; she could not travel to Russia and her daughter could not travel to Turkey, owing to the restrictions.

My mother’s mother was born in Trebizond at the turn of the nineteenth century. As a young girl, she told us how—at the age of eighteen—she had to leave her hometown when Russia invaded the Black Sea Coast of Anatolia in 1915. She and



her family became refugees. They were able to return in 1918, only to find that all their assets were lost or destroyed.

A close friend of my mother's father who was one of the key figures during the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and modernism was Fuat Carım, a renowned ambassador. He was assigned as consul to Moscow and the Kazan region in 1922; two years later he married a Russian theater actress. She was welcomed by my family. Russian culture and words became familiar to us.

During the war of independence there was a strong collaboration with Russia. My husband's father, Sezai Ömer, was an olive oil merchant and through his commercial network he provided weapons from Russia to Mustafa Kemal.

My mother's father, Hüsni Çakır, who was an MP and Minister of Finance and later Minister of Defense from 1940 to 1950, represented, with his colleagues, the left wing in all the governments he was active in. Leftist politics and communism were always subjects for discussion in our house.

Last but not least, Mihri Belli, the most active and famous leader of the Communist Movement of Turkey, was a close friend of my father; they studied together in Robert College. When Mihri Belli was serving a long-term prison sentence—there is a long list of people imprisoned for their communist activities during that period—I was quite aware that he was defending an ideology that would never be accepted in Turkey.

Despite all these realities, the familiarity and the affinity, I knew that Soviet Russia was a forbidden land; I was taught that communism was a dangerous ideology.

Historical facts are undeniable however; today, when we reflect on the historical relationship with Russia, we have to face the fact that Lenin was a noble ally of Mustafa Kemal and tried to include Turkey in his revolutionary adventure. In a photograph showing the May Day rally in Moscow in 1919, we are able to observe the names of countries such as Turkey, Egypt, India, and China on many banners, inscribed in a futuristic typeface.¹

The revolution was not imported by Turkey, but the utopia of Soviet modernism, of the nation state and the social economy, was undoubtedly a model for the foundation of the Republic of Turkey.

At the risk of sounding clichéd, we need to talk about two people here: the first is the Russian and Soviet writer Maksim Gorki (1868–1936) (Aleksey Maksimoviç Peşkov), founder of Socialist Realism, who visited Istanbul in 1933 with the Russian Ambassador Suriç and ASS Agency (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) members, covering Taksim Square, Sultanahmet, Ayasofya, Süleymaniye Mosque, Aya İrini Church, and Edirnekapı. The second is Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary, Marxist theorist, and Soviet politician, who lived in exile in Büyükkada. His house, now completely ruined, is privately owned. It became a center of attraction during the 14th Istanbul Biennial when the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev presented it as an exotic showcase.

I think the attitude and feeling of Turkish society toward Soviet Russia and later Russia is under the spell of this controversial past and we

should face the fact that political relations and institutions have never supported any significant exchange of artistic, cultural, and creative productions during the years of reconciliation.

At the level of high art however, there is the Armenian Russian painter Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky, born in Feodosia (Crimea), with his orientalist landscapes. Aivazovsky visited İstanbul in 1845 with Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaievich who was invited by Sultan Abdülmecit.

Between 1845 and 1890, Aivazovsky came to İstanbul eight times. Abdülmecit, Abdülaziz, and Abdülhamit supported him as a palace painter, so thirty of his paintings are in the Topkapı and Dolmabahçe Palaces.

The first important documentary about the foundation of the Republic of Turkey was made by Russians in 1933, at the 10th anniversary of the Foundation of Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk invited the famous Soviet filmmakers V. Yutkeviç, A. Zahri, and L. Arnştam to make a documentary about the Turkish War of Independence. Two writers, Reşat Nuri and Yakup Kadri, co-oper-

ated in writing the script for this documentary. Atatürk's speech was fully documented in the film.

Following this cultural exchange, in 1934 the first accurate art exhibition in Russia presented the paintings of the Group D artists. After his documentary film, Yutkeviç organized this exhibition of the modernist avant-garde Group D (artists Zeki Faik İzer, Nurullah Berk, Elif Naci, Cemal Tollu, Abidin Dino, and Zühtü Müridoğlu) in Moscow and Leningrad. The exhibitions continued until 1937. Abidin Dino was also invited by Yutkeviç to work in Len Fil Studio and even designed stage decoration for Stanislavski.

After the Second World War, Turkey forgot about its collaboration with Russia during the founding years of the Republic and turned toward the USA, submitting to the schismatic conditions of the Cold War. We find no noteworthy cultural or artistic relations or exchange after this point. However, we have to mention here the exile of the romantic communist poet Nazım Hikmet, who studied in Moscow (1922–1924) and after many years in prison as a political dissident, left Turkey

in 1951 and lived in Moscow until he died in 1963. His grave in the Moscow Novodevichy cemetery is frequently visited by politicians, writers, and academicians.

During the 1980s, when communism became a more affordable ideology due to the winds of globalization, Russia slowly became a favorite neighbor again. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the so-called “luggage-trade” and discovery of Antalya as the sunny holiday resort for middle class Russians, the country adopted the agenda of the consumer society, extending its consumption-oriented relations to mixed marriages. And let's not forget the implementation of the Blue Stream Pipeline (signed in to effect in 1997), which cements the dependency of Turkey on Russia forever.

All these developments still did not trigger the emergence of any cultural relationship however; even in the 2000s, artistic exchange remains insufficient and unsustainable. Yes, it's true that after 2000, books by famous Turkish writers such as Orhan Pamuk were published in Russia. A pop singer, Mustafa Sandal, became famous, and numerous academicians started to participate in conferences

and forums. I regret to say however, that this still constitutes an inconsistent, incoherent, and disjointed relationship.

My professional adventure with the socialist world started during the 1st and 2nd Istanbul Biennials (in 1987 and 1989); however, this did not involve Moscow. We could only invite artists from Poland and Yugoslavia. In the 3rd Istanbul Biennial (1992), curator Vasıf Kortun invited the renowned curator and art critic Viktor Misiano, who presented a group exhibition with prominent contemporary artists, among them Andrei Filipov, Dimitri Gutov, Konstantin Zvezdochetov, and Vadim Fiškin.

My direct contact with Russia was made through Olga Sviblova's surprise visit to Istanbul. She is now the founder and director of the Moscow Photography and Media Museum. In 1990 when she coincidentally visited my gallery in Nişantaşı, I asked her to give an informal conference about the active art scene in Moscow. She lectured on the development of conceptual art from the 1970s onward and the works of dissident artists such as Ilya Kabakov and the Moscow Conceptualists.

I set foot in the post-Cold War cityscape of East Berlin in 1991 and experienced the mysterious life of a divided city. East Berlin at that time reflected the serious and cold environment of Soviet ideology; the streets were still quite haunted and extremely nostalgic. Organized by René Block, then director of IFA (International Radio Exhibition), I curated a show titled *İskele* with Sabine Vogel in Berlin, presenting contemporary artists from Turkey (Serhat Kiraz, Ayşe Erkmen, Gülsün Karamustafa, Füsün Onur, Adem Yılmaz, and Hale Tenger) for the first time in Germany. The venue was a small official building on Friedrichstrasse.

My second visit to a former socialist country took place when Anda Rottenberg was curating the *Unknown Europe* exhibition (1991) in Kraków, the first official exhibition covering the Soviet art universe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. I invited Selim Birsel to the show; Vasıf Kortun invited Hale Tenger. The Polish culture and art scene played an important role in uniting the artists, art critics and curators from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Soviet Russia; it was a reconciliation. We were able to learn about the dissident activities going on in all of those coun-



tries.

From 2002 on, I was continuously involved in exhibitions and conferences realized mostly in Balkan and South Caucasus countries. One of my most memorable participations was through an invitation to the “Contemporary Art Network” at the Ars Aevi 10th Anniversary, Sarajevo Forum (1992–2002), that took place with curators and art critics from the Balkans, Italy, and even the USA (Alexander Adamovic, Daniel Buren, Bruno Cora, Marino Cortese, Anna Detheridge, Kim Levin, Beral Madra, Ālija Simic, and Igor Zabel). In October 2003, another conference was organized by the art NGO at Caravanseerai in Tbilisi. There were participants from Georgia, France, Greece, Montenegro, and Turkey. In September 2008, I was invited to join an exhibition to be realized in Bahcesaray, Crimea. Curators and artists from Turkey, Greece, Russia, and Ukraine, representing the historical population of Crimea, were hosted in Bahcesaray and realized in-situ works within the buildings and park of the Bahcesaray Palace, a small replica of the Topkapı Palace. The curators were Maria Tsantsanoglou (Greece), Beral Madra (Turkey), Olga Lopuhova (Russia), Oleg Bayshev (Ukraine); the artists were

Aleksandr Gnilitzky, Maksim Mamsikov, Aleksandr Roitburd, Oleg Tistol (Ukraine), Nikos Alexiou, Elie Chrysidou, Babis Venetopoulos, Richard Whitlock (Greece), Melih Gōrgūn, Sıtkı Kōsemen, Murat Morova, Nazlı Eda Noyan (Turkey), Nikita Alexeev, Vadim Zakharov, Konstantin Zvezdochetov, Andrei Filippov (Russia), and special guest artist Haralampi G. Oroschakoff (Germany). In 2010, I was invited to the Fifth All-Russian Contemporary Visual Art Competition INNOVATION in Moscow. The best art works and projects for 2009 were acknowledged by a jury and advisory committee (Olesya Turkina, Iosif Bakstein, Marie-Laure Bernadac, Kestutis Kuzinas, Beral Madra, Peter Noever, Alisa Prudnikov). In November 2012, I curated Aidan Salakhova’s solo exhibition in the Moscow Museum of Modern Art with the title *Fascinans and Tremendum*. It was my honor to curate this exhibition as I believed that Salakhova’s socio-political and cultural position between Russia and Azerbaijan, Christianity and Islam, and Soviet modernism and the global adoption of visual art within relational aesthetics, was an essential conceptual background for a new beginning of artistic exchange between Turkey and Russia.

In 2013, I was invited by Gala Tebieva, the



founder and director of the Alanica Contemporary Art Symposium of Vladikavkaz in South Ossetia to curate the exhibition *Sensible Action* at the Fine Art Museum, Vladikavkaz. There were artists from Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Russia: Dilara Akay (Turkey), Sophia Cherkezishvili (Georgia), Ivan Egelski (Russia), Alaadin Garunov (Dagestan), Aikaterini Gegisian (United Kingdom), Tembolat Gugkaev (North Ossetia-Alania), Khaled Hafez (Egypt), Dejan Kaludjerovic (Austria/Serbia), Stas Kharin (North Ossetia-Alania), Taus Makhacheva (Dagestan), Natalia Mali (Dagestan), Marko Markovic (Croatia), the Mediterranean Carpet Project by Michelangelo Pistoletto, realized by Emanuella Baldi and Filippo Fabrica) (Italy), Damir Muratov (Russia), Ferhat Özgür (Turkey), Rivka Rinn (Germany/Israel), Sabina Shikhlinskaya (Azerbaijan), Johannes Vogl (Germany), and Kazbek Tedeev (North Ossetia-Alania).

Since 2014, I have had the opportunity to present the works of renowned artists from Russia, such as Nikita Alexeev, Alaadin Garunov, Damir Muratov, and Ivan Egelskii in solo and group exhibitions at the Kuad Gallery in Istanbul and the Çanakkale Biennial.

My main reason for getting involved with cultural activities and exhibitions was to pursue the possibility of creating a sustainable exchange between historically, traditionally, and culturally connected countries. Political relations between Turkey and Russia, as well as the rest of the post-socialist countries were still too distanced and needed to be reestablished. The globalization systems and their apparatuses did not yet tie the intellectuals, theoreticians and artists together as much as was needed. Throughout the twentieth century, when all of the countries surrounding Turkey were going through modernism and post-colonialism, the benefits of a fresh and reciprocal communication and collaboration went unrealized. I was convinced that contemporary art exchange was the best way to rectify this inefficiency. I hope that this conference may be another point of departure for intensive future collaborations.

NOTES:

- 1 See, Mehmet Perinçek, *Atatürk'ün Sovyetlerle Görüşmeleri (Sovyet Arşiv Belgeleriyle)*[Ataturk's Meetings with the Soviets (With Soviet Archival Documents)] (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2014). For the photo: <https://books.openedition.org/iheid/6470?lang=en> (last access 15.02.2021)



COMMUTING NOTES

LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV



Recorded by Alan McSmallsey

NOTE 1:

In the 1980s I spent a lot of time outside of Bulgaria. I lived in New York from December 1980 until October 1983 with my family and had some degree of involvement with the local art scene. Of course, I was a nobody then, staying on a B2 tourist visa, but I had an eye for information, knowledge, and experience, and a mind hungry for the same. Later, I spent almost all of 1986 in New York, this time working odd jobs in order to help support my family. At that time, I would also travel to cities in Western Europe on my way from NYC to Sofia and back again. I was making use of the opportunity provided by the passport and the visa that I held. By all means, that was an extreme privilege at the time for anybody from behind the Iron Curtain! Nevertheless, following a couple of extensions to my permit to stay in the USA as a tourist, I received the following comment from the clerk at the INS in downtown NYC in January 1982 when I went to ask for a fresh renewal: “Young man,” she said, “You are no longer a tourist in this country! You live here. You can ei-

ther stay or go—that’s ok, but you have to make up your f...g mind!” After that incident I started sending my visa extension applications by mail. Somehow it all worked out.

I was privileged compared to other artists from my generation for whom it was all but impossible to travel abroad. In the 1990s I started spending time in the States for my own projects; in 1991, 1993, 1995, and so on. Thus NYC became the first art scene I had serious personal and artistic backgrounding in that mattered in the international context. Later in the 1990s I started traveling around for various projects, but this first experience was by far the most important for my education and development. Everything I learned there somehow made it into my work in Sofia. At first as an art critic and lecturer, then as a curator and then after 1990–1991 as an artist myself. In 1983, when I came back to Sofia for the first time, I didn't have anybody I could talk to about what I had seen and learned. For obvious reasons my colleagues didn't have the same opportunities or the level of awareness about the art world “at large.” And besides, for a period of time I was considered to be “an ideological diversion” though I



did not have real problems associated with that. I guess I have to take some credit, as well as a lot of responsibility, for linking things together in Sofia, things that may have been instrumental in bootstrapping the contemporary art scene and debate in 1984–1985. That’s simply because I was an informed and vocal “ideological diversion.” However, this needs to be explained in more detail.

NOTE 2:

I think that the most important thing I brought back to Sofia in 1983 was not only the information that was shared in public and private lectures, but also the basic know-how about the workings of the international art world, and above all—the ability to connect “here” to “there,” even though that was initially a mostly mental, wishful connection rather than a reality. I had some connections, or at least people I knew to some extent; for instance, there was Dan Cameron, whom I have known since 1982–1983, whose first curated show was *Extended Sensibilities: Homosexual Presence in Contemporary Art*. He did that for the New Museum in New York as a guest curator. There were many artists,

critics and so on who were involved. I guess what I brought with me, and could relay to whoever was interested, was the ability to create an atmosphere that communicated “this Sofia, right here, is just as much a part of the world as any other location and we are standing at the center of it.” I guess I was able to build up the notion that we are indeed located within a larger context. That NYC, Berlin, or London, are within reach provided that an artist takes into account not only that “I, here, am different” but also that “they, there, are different,” and that both “I” and “them” in this formulation have the same right to be different. And that has to be acknowledged but not ever taken for granted. I wanted so very much to bring more meaning and a wider context into the art-related debate that some people used to say about me back then; “Yes, well, Luchezar misses NYC so much that he wants to make the situation here similar to the one there so that he can feel comfortable...” I couldn’t object to that. This went on for two or three years. But I felt alone because, for instance, no one at that time knew what the word curator actually meant, let alone was a curator. All I can say in response is that we have to make our situation interesting for ourselves, and then maybe it will also become in-



teresting for others.

NOTE 3:

I think things started to change for me toward the end of 1986. Nedko Solakov (*Note: LB, 27.09.2019*), had just come back from his studies in Belgium and he contacted me. We were in the same class at the National Art Academy but were never in close contact before. All of a sudden I had somebody I could talk to, who had also seen a lot and who understood. Needless to say, this also meant shared priorities and criteria. As I said, from 1984 I had the ambition to relate my own artistic context to the world art scene, as well as to introduce more of the language of contemporary art, visual content, and awareness of art production, to Sofia. By 1987 I was no longer alone because other artists and curators like Kiril Prashkov, Iara Boubnova, and Philip Zidarov were developing independent projects that were very much individual curatorial initiatives linked to collective artistic enthusiasm and a strong will to change. On the other hand, at the end of 1987–1988 I found another mini-context in Sofia and that came out of the so-called Synthesis circle

of multidisciplinary intellectuals like Vladislav Todorov, Ivaylo Dichev, Alexander Kiossev, Ivan Krastev, and others with whom we engaged in a debate about the philosophy of power, postmodernism, late socialism and so on. That was my theoretical context and little by little the two contexts started to merge together, at least for me.

NOTE 4:

I think that by 1988–1989 I was very consciously building context in terms of art and theory, although I didn't actually exhibit anything in Bulgaria before November 11, 1989 (funnily enough, the most significant date marking the beginning of the transition period in Bulgaria is November 10, 1989, when the then dictator Todor Zhivkov was forced to resign and “all hell broke loose” in the country). *11.11.1989* was the title of a group exhibition of contemporary art that opened on that date in the city of Blagoevgrad. It was my first ever participation in an exhibition in Bulgaria and significantly, my works from this show were stolen. I used this fact to proclaim the coming of a new age with new rules and definitions where stealing an art work, I claimed, was



a legitimate act of collecting art. Maybe I jinxed myself a bit by saying that.

Of course, by that time the whole scene had gained self-confidence with several truly contemporary art exhibitions, the most significant being *The City?*, work by the group of the same name. That was in June 1988 and although all of the ex-members of that group (which ended its existence in 1991) are active today, Nedko is the only one dedicated to contemporary art (this is so obvious that it is weird to even mention it).

NOTE 5:

I was writing a lot around 1988–1989, holding seminars and so on. I even wrote a lengthy aesthetic treatise titled “The Crisis of Art-Knowledge: Notes toward an Aesthetic of Manipulation,” which attempted to justify the move from an ideologically preconditioned art practice to art production as an individual artistic responsibility based on significant gestures of transgression (with the whole world in mind.) However, at the time I didn’t seriously think of myself as an art critic or theoretician (although other people

would strongly disagree with that), but rather as a context builder through text and interpretation. The working metaphor and objective for context building was for me the drive “to turn a defect into effect,” to convert all the liabilities of a provincial and isolated art scene into an asset on the international level, to convert the lack of a consistent modernist tradition into a space of freedom for experimentation, the lack of supportive art institutions and basic infrastructure for contemporary art into a chance to develop personal strength, self-reliability, collective involvement, and initiative (as in “nobody will do it unless you do it yourself...”). And it was to promote the basic rule of ethics that you should never ever complain about things that are lacking or feel that you are owed anything by the grand art world out there (like quotas of national representation in large exhibitions, for instance). But above all else, it was to establish actual functional contact with the larger world at any cost. How to do that? Well, not that I was very good at it in practice but I knew the basics; like if you want to receive letters and information, you should send out letters and information yourself, even if you come over as arrogant, pushy, and overly committed. Or to



meet every and any art person from abroad who comes to Sofia for whatever reason, and to show them what you are doing, to explain, to have them meet and interact with the other artists and curators as well, so that they learn that something is indeed going on there and that there are serious and interesting artists working there. (*Amazingly we, the people who chose to be based in Sofia after 1989, are today once again in the same situation—isolation of the scene, conservative to authoritarian tendencies in society, finger-pointing and name-calling and demonizing all those artists and curators interested in working in Bulgaria as a place open to the world and a place that is part of it... Note: LB, 27 09 2019*)

In 1990 and for a few years after that, life became easier of course, because Eastern Europe started attracting attention as a new terra incognita for the international art world. On the other hand, I was neither the only one, nor the best at doing all of these things. But the cost in terms of investment of time, money, and energy; the sacrifice in terms of time away from family life and so on, was enormous. The first thing one accepts in such a situation is that your work and time as

an artist is equally split between creative work on the one hand, and career building, communication, project and application development, promotion etc., on the other. And it's all equally important and equally a form of work, with a capital "W." (By the way, nowadays I think that even when I am resting, I am actually working on the regeneration of my artistic wellbeing, peace of mind, soul, and body...)

NOTE 6:

In the early 1990s I was making art, curating, writing. I was building a context. It all started to work and produce results mainly because there were other like-minded artists, curators, and writers in Sofia. It all started making sense and clicking together both locally and internationally. For instance, from 1988 until 1992, my main subjects for writing that was building context were Christo, Nedko, and myself, with occasional texts about Lyuben Kostov, Georgi Rouzhev, and later Kiril Prashkov. For the same reason I still occasionally write about much younger artists. All of these were equally important subjects to me, and I was using them to prove that what we were doing was



part of world art due to the merits of the work and its concerns, and therefore worthy of exposure, attention, and success. The point to be proven was that Sofia was already linked up with the world: the connections were just within our reach as long as we made the effort to open up, forget our deficiencies, build up our self-esteem and confidence, produce accordingly and professionally, and reach out and try to grab a hold of them. Of course, this meant proving it to ourselves just as much as to the world out there. (Which hasn't always been either easy or successful...)

For instance, a typical gesture of “smirking” at the status quo and identifying with something outside of my own immediate context was (together with eleven other friends and artists from Sofia) to compose and send a letter to our compatriot, the world-renowned artist, Christo. I had known him and his partner and co-author Jeanne-Claude since 1981 when I had met them in NYC for the first time. Anyway, this was on December 24, 1989. In this letter we not only congratulated him on his namesake day, Christmas 1989, but also invited him to come back over here and “wrap up” the whole of Bulgaria, thus making it possible to sym-

bolically consign into oblivion the totalitarian past of the last four or five decades of the country's history. He did not come... He still hasn't... He probably will not, ever... There are many reasons for this but it's too long to explain. However, this letter or gesture served its purpose—there was an uproar in the press: “How dare you? Who the hell are *you* to suggest such things?” And so on. But what followed was an avalanche of articles about Christo. Mostly superficial texts but they really started an open debate about who we are (BG artists), if it is really possible to make it in the big real world of international art, whether it has to do with talent alone or if it is also ambition, hard work, good and aggressive management, career inventiveness, significant and even grand ideas, promotion, and so on... In a word, does an artist only need to draw or paint well or do they have to think hard too? (In many ways, this debate is far from over in Sofia even to this day in September 2019.)

There was still a need to debate visual quality and impact, relevant ideas and strategies, platforms for creation and production of art, the involvement of a larger community of people (preferably both “inside” and “outside” of the home



community), and so many other things that compose the spectrum of contemporary art and its function in today's world and life.

NOTE 7:

The two key moments for me were in 1991. In the spring of 1991 in Kraków, Anda Rottenberg curated an exhibition titled *Europe Unknown*. I sort of curated the Bulgarian participation (Nedko) and both of us met a lot of people of our age who had come from all over Europe. I am still in touch with some of them. One person I met was Vasif Kortun from Istanbul and that's why later on he invited me to curate the participation of Bulgarian artists for his Istanbul Biennial in the fall of 1992. There was also a small AICA (International Association of Art Critics) conference in Kraków and I somehow worked into my statement fragments of what I had been writing about at the time. It had to do with Christo. Thus came the second important moment in the fall of 1991 when Kim Levin, the New York art critic, invited me to the AICA congress in Santa Monica, California. This event was synchronized with Christo's Umbrellas project for California and Japan and I was actually invited to deliver a paper on Christo. I am

proud to report that the paper in question brought me the distinct pleasure of my first fifteen minutes of fame (à la Andy Warhol), with a standing ovation when I finished reading, with a Los Angeles Times interview and a car ride up to the Umbrellas, courtesy of the same publication.

NOTE 8:

As for my curating, that was mostly between 1989-1992, until the Istanbul Biennial in the fall of 1992. I had curated context-building shows such as *End of Quotation* (1990), which referred to the ending of the previous type of society and argued for a new form of art making. The Istanbul Biennial in 1992 however, was my most important exhibition and it would actually turn out to be my last curatorial project for many years, until I returned to such work in 1999 and 2001. It was important in many respects. First, as proof of the success of a strategy of "infiltration" based on using every little chance one gets in order to "widen" the entrance into the international art world. In this case that was the chance to meet and work with Vasif. Second, the decisive point indeed, when the Sofia scene actually broke through into the international art scene with the



three artists who presented at the Biennial (Lyuben Kostov, Georgi Ruzhev, and Nedko Solakov), with the text published in the catalogue, the incredibly positive reviews in the international art press, and so on. It was also to be the beginning of the international careers of nearly all of us. Of course, this was the result of the development of the scene in Sofia as a whole.

But above all else, for me personally and I hope for the scene in Sofia as well, that successful biennial participation had been important because it provided space and gave courage for the development of a group of curators and artists and their ways of working that later led to the establishment of ICA-Sofia (Institute of Contemporary Art). And that was mainly because of Iara Boubnova's involvement. Iara was not only the vital link to the Moscow art scene in the 1980s and early 1990s, she was also an influential art critic and curator in Sofia. By her own admission, her ambition increased during our work on and because of Istanbul 1992. At this point we all saw for real that yes, it was indeed possible to live and work in Sofia and still be part of the much larger art world outside. Not only that, but we saw that it was also possible to successfully engage with

this larger world, which is one and the same in the end. I had asked Iara to be my assistant curator in Istanbul 1992 and when the show finally happened, it was she who had to “deal” with the real art world and the realities of the Istanbul Biennial production and with Vasif Kortun, the artistic director of the Biennial. All of that proved to be invaluable experience but more importantly—it was the beginning of a process by which contemporary art in Bulgaria started to find its logical external context, networks, and agenda.

The funny thing is that after Istanbul 1992 not only was there a group of professional and self-confident people in Sofia ready to “do it again,” later on, we were able to work both as a group and individually in ways that would have been impossible had it not been for this very encouraging and successful Biennial. So many projects have taken place whether involving all of us together or each of us individually since that time. Yet I remember this project with such a fresh and clear feeling of satisfaction, like I do very few other things. The point is that we encouraged each other in very positive ways.

NOTE 9:



As for my artistic career. I have told you, Alan, that I did not actually start in a serious way until the end of 1990, although I have used many ideas that I had come up with before that moment. In some cases, others used these ideas before I made them public, which was a mistake on my part. Some still do it now. Anyhow, I feel lucky that I was able to reach the decision to work only as an artist relatively early. That was in October 1990, after I returned from the “high point” of my career as a theoretician. The funny thing is that the “glorious” end to my theoretical career is linked to the just as glorious beginning of my artistic career. That’s not so strange because my personal artistic strategy was also about turning a defect into an effect and at that time, I was using shocking and strange subject matter combined with recognizable visual vocabulary and techniques.

At the end of October 1990, I came back from a two-week course on Postmodern Philosophy, in Dubrovnik (ex-Yugoslavia) where, funnily enough, I had been co-director of the course together with Frederic Jameson, Susan Buck-Morss, and Valeri Podoroga. We were there with Vladislav Todorov, Ivaylo Dichev, and Ivan Krastev

from the Sofia theoretical scene. By the way, that was also the point of decisive contact with the Ljubljana context (theory, through Slavoj Zizek) and the Moscow context (again theory, through Mikhail Ryklin, Valeri Podoroga, and many others). Moscow however, is a different case. Because of Iara and Kiril, as early as 1985 and the time of perestroika we knew a lot about what was going on in Moscow artistically. In the field of theory, the connection dates back to 1988 when Mikhail Riklyn came to Bulgaria for a seminar. The point is, that by 1990 and Dubrovnik we were no longer looking up to Moscow for anything at all, and after Istanbul 1992, certainly not artistically.

Anyhow, after Dubrovnik in October 1990 I decided that I had finished with theory and excessive context building (I can admit now that it involved over-interpretation of other artists’ works and shamelessly building them up for the sake of the strength of the context). I still did curating and now I am once again doing a bit of that. But at the end of October 1990, I decided that I would dedicate 100% of my time to producing art, which I though also meant that I had come to be an artist. The first important public result of this decision was a solo exhi-



bition at the ifa-Galerie Berlin between October and December 1992, with a catalogue and so on. I wrote the text for Nedko's catalogue with the same gallery and when Barbara Barsch, the curator and director of IFA-Berlin, came to take the text, she visited my studio, saw my works and decided to invite me for a solo exhibition. I was so happy! After that I stopped curating for many years. It was becoming too much for me with making art and writing as well as curating. What happened was that on one day in October 1992 I had the opening of the exhibition in Berlin and on the very next day there was the opening of the Istanbul Biennial 1992. I barely made it there by taking a Mitfahrzentrale car in the middle of the night. Then, after a horrible car trip across half of Germany from Berlin to Munich airport, I took the plane to Istanbul, arriving twenty minutes into the opening ceremony of the Biennial, to find out that we had a huge success on our hands. "My" artists and assistant curator hated me for having deserted them at such an important moment for the selfish reason of attending the opening of my own exhibition in Berlin.

NOTE 10:

It was such a long time ago, Alan. However, these NOTE(s) should give you an idea why I, and people like me in Sofia, have a certain status within the art scene there. This is not really institutionalized power because there are no significant institutions functioning here anyway. If there is an individual or group power position in the art scene in Sofia, as in the case with the ICA, or single individuals, it's based on the so-called "power of the text, the presence, and the reputation" rather than power because of position within an institution, with all the decision-making privileges, funding possibilities, etc. This kind of power I am talking about is based on a certain standing within the art world outside of Bulgaria and that's probably the only kind of institutionalization I can see in this case. Maybe this is for the best, because after years of practice, the art scene developed a variety of such pockets of individual or group "power" that cover the area of activity typical of an independent NGO or similar organization and its members. And now there are quite a number of such small groups of artists and curators in Sofia and Bulgaria. These still make up the actual functioning infrastructure of the scene. It's an infrastructure that is in constant need of



funding but it's also very flexible, efficient, and competitive. And it's much easier and rewarding to work and function in such an environment. Of course, it would be nice if some years down the road, the state would dare to build an adequate museum of contemporary art or whatever under such a label. I do not believe it will, but what can one do, wait for some miracle to happen?

NOTE 11:

I feel I am a commuter now (*Less so in 2019 and a lot more so than 2001–2002 but still... Note: LB, 27 09 2019*), you know, living in one place and working in a different place. A commuter is usually somebody who drives or takes the train to go to work each day and comes back home in the evening. Usually, home and work are very distant from each other. Home is where you don't work, at least not publicly. Work is where you commit to performing your publicly visible functions with societal use value.

So, I live in Sofia. I also work here but in a publicly non-visible way because I rarely exhibit in Sofia. I also rarely earn income in Sofia

through my artistic work. As far as the art world and contemporary art practice go, I am commuting for work on a regular basis. But each time it is a different place that I go to in order to exhibit. It could be Zurich, Frankfurt, Belgrade, or Tirana. It doesn't actually matter where. I like working in Skopje a lot, for instance. Places where I work are everywhere and Sofia is one of them. (*Things have changed since 2002, of course... Note: LB, 27 09 2019*)

The funny thing is that even if I do something in Sofia, like a presentation or an exhibition, it still feels like I am commuting. Half-jokingly, I am now even asking for my travel expenses for the round-trip bus ticket from my home in Sofia to the place where I am giving a lecture or exhibiting a work, also in Sofia, to be covered by the organizers. What can I say, maybe it's professional deformation or it's just the fact that the difficulties of making a living as an artist have become "second nature"—one is always asking for reimbursements.

NOTE 12:

I have become very much interested in money



in the last two or three years. Well yes, in the sense of a day to day matter of survival too. But more importantly, in the relation between money and art. How do they relate? Why do people or institutions choose to spend or to not spend money on art? What kinds of spending are there (markets and symbolic exchange in the field of art, artists, and works), and why? Why is it that art and artists that travel always means so much money is spent for no visible reason except some form of communication? How is art money generated? How and why is it spent in certain ways?

For instance, if you look at the budget for a large international exhibition you will notice that the smallest amount is usually allocated for the artists, and 99% of the time there is nothing like an honorarium or fee for the participating artists who are either creating a new work for the specific event, or loaning an existing one. So, why are we willing to work for nothing, not even for peanuts? It appears that artists are exploited mainly on the basis of our vanity. It seems to be a commonly accepted basis of negotiating with artists that it is satisfaction and benefit enough for them to show their work. Public exposure massages the artistic

ego in a powerful way, and the organizers of events are great masters in exploiting this “soft spot” in the tender artistic soul, personality, and sense of self-esteem and vanity. Why? It’s not like artists are not working when they are exhibiting, right? The same comparison can be made between teaching and exhibiting. One is usually paid for a public lecture (or for a lecture in an educational institution), but this is rarely the case for showing a work in an exhibition that is by definition more public than a lecture. And here, by “more public” I mean that an art show is potentially more educational or entertaining for the general public than a single lecture. So, what does artists’ vanity have to do with that? They are abusing our vanity in order to play games in public with the public.

One possible conclusion I have drawn is that money is rarely given in exchange for art or to artists! It is usually an exchange for something else, and that has to do with playing games in the public domain, for whatever reason and with whatever purpose in mind. *(Or at least it looked that way back in the 1990s. Note: LB, 27 09 2019)*



NOTE 13:

Have I satisfied your curiosity, Alan? I hope so... Let's go out then and have Shopska and Rakia.



**90S: GÜLSÜN KARAMUSOFA,
VASIF KURTUN, AND HALE TENGER
IN CONVERSATION**



Onur Yıldız: Our research project focuses on understanding the nature of the contact between Turkey and Russia in the field of culture and arts in the twentieth century. It has to be pointed out that the research was not limited to the current borders of these countries, because both had areas of influence that went far beyond these borders throughout the twentieth century. The contacts developed as a result of the political and diplomatic rapprochement between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Republic of Turkey following Turkey's founding in 1923. This led to visits by cultural and artistic figures, common creations, and other forms of collaboration. The defining feature of this contact was that it was promoted by the states and that it was managed by official institutions and representatives. The Second World War and Cold War period that followed, however, was a time of rupture as the two countries were in opposing political camps. The political distancing in this period caused dialogue in the fields of culture and arts to drop to a minimum. Later, the process of economic liberalization and opening up to international markets that accompanied the decomposition of the Soviet Union after 1989, was echoed by similar processes in Turkey. While these similarities created particularly compa-

able contexts in terms of opportunities and problems in the field of culture and arts, the absence of a rapprochement promoted by the states led to the emergence of dialogue and collaborations carried out through citizen initiatives. As curators and artists, Gülsün Karamustafa, Vasif Kortun, and Hale Tenger, you have lived through this process; you experienced the transformation that can be deemed a kind of “internationalization” at times, through collaborations and adjacency with individuals from the ex-Soviet geography. This process can be said to have begun for individuals from both areas primarily through a relationship of “representation.” Artists at first came to be seen as representatives on international platforms of the contexts out of which they emerged. Only later did a form of relationship develop, which transcended that of representation and recognized the artist's autonomous existence. As witnesses to this process, what can you tell us about internationalization and the experiences of artists from Turkey and Russia in this process?

Vasif Kortun: The situation that you mention began at the end of the 1990s and continued well into the early 2000s. Before that, we may cite the exhibition *İskele: Türkische Kunst Heute*¹ that took

place in Germany in 1994. Relations between Germany and Turkey at that time can be seen both as a part of this process and be considered separately, as a specific phenomenon within the scope of the activities of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), which is an institution of cultural diplomacy. Let us also remember the *İskorpit*² exhibition that was also realized in Germany in 1998. In Berlin, the presentation took place at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, an institution of cultural exchange, a remnant of the Cold War. People did not have the luxury of rejecting invitations from abroad that had a “representational” perspective. It was all there was and part of opening up to the world. At that moment, “nation exhibitions,” institutionalized as such, were for artists who knew each other and enjoyed working together. *A Foreigner is A Traveller*³ that Gülsün and Hale and I were part of, was realized through such personal relations.

Hale Tenger: Actually, the same can be said about the other exhibitions in the period. When it comes to such personal relations, it is also essential to remember René Block’s visit to Turkey, the talk he gave at Mimar Sinan University, and the interest he showed in the artistic production in

those days. Connections that developed through him also played an important role.

Gülsün Karamustafa: René Block had come to Istanbul for the first time in 1991 within the framework of Joseph Beuys activities as the invitee of the International Association of Art, which was active at the time. He was on a panel at Mimar Sinan University. I remember Hüseyin Alptekin and Sarkis were also members of the panel. He was aware of the artistic activities in Turkey, the *In Memory of Joseph Beuys: Another Art, Joint Exhibition*⁴ that had opened in Izmir in 1986 to commemorate Joseph Beuys and the *A Cross Section of Avant-garde Turkish Art* exhibitions. He maintained his connections afterward.

VK: Along with René Block came funding. Commissioning works with public funds, and sometimes acquiring them along the line, both added to his power and constituted an ethical ambivalence, however. If it weren’t for René, a chapter in the art of Turkey would neither have been possible nor would it have been preserved.

HT: I agree that the works of a certain peri-

od were able to be preserved and even produced in the first place, thanks to René Block. The bit about commissioning artists with public funding does not apply to me, because at the shows he put together in Germany in the period, he always exhibited works I had produced earlier. I had produced the work titled *Decent Deathwatch: Bosnia-Herzegovina*, which was at *İskele* in 1994, for the exhibition at the Library of Women's Works in 1993. I had made *The School of Sikimden Aşşa Kasımpaşa* (The School of I don't give a fuck anymore) that was part of the *İskorpit* Berlin 1998 and Karlsruhe 1999 exhibitions for Gallery Nev's 7 Young Artists exhibition at the Atatürk Cultural Center in 1990. René Block's purchase of this work on the other hand was in 1999. After nine years of not even being able to change my workshop due to the size of the work and no one interested in buying my works, René's inclusion of this piece in his collection amounted to crucial financial and moral support for me. Despite him having purchased *I Know People Like This II* in 2007, that I had produced for the 3rd Istanbul Biennial in 1992, the work stayed at my workshop until 2018, and we never even signed a piece of paper. I was even jokingly suggesting that he should fi-

nally get around to taking the artwork from my workshop or that it was going to be a mess for the ones left behind when we die. That is to say, René both preserved my works and ended up returning to Turkey when the two works in question were finally purchased by Arter, which is a very meaningful outcome from my perspective. An exhibition called *Suddenly, The Turks* had taken place in Paris in 1995, between the *İskorpit* and *İskele* exhibitions in Germany. The group show part took place at Le Parvi, Spadem. Elvan Alpay and I had solo exhibitions in two adjacent galleries of the Galerie Le Monde de l'Art. It was an odd show due to its title, which we didn't know about. It had a foldable invitation card that revealed a Turkish flag when opened. The exhibition was named and the invitation card was made without consulting with us. It was a sort of *fait accompli*.

GK: The name of the exhibition was changed. We had agreed to the title *Suddenly, The Turks* when they had informed us about it. With the intervention of the consulate there, however, it became *Suddenly, The Turkish Artists*. The previous title, which alluded to the Europeans' fear of the Ottomans, was changed.

HT: However, the printed material for the exhibition had been prepared before that change, which ended up being perfunctory. When we were traveling for the exhibition with Elvan Alpay, I got through passport control with no issues, Elvan however got stuck; she was answering questions and I was observing her from a short distance when she retrieved the invitation card for the exhibition from her bag. Before I could gesture to warn her, the situation became more serious as the poster was fully unrolled. They took Elvan away for questioning. That's when we understood the weight of the phrase "Suddenly, The Turks" in France. There was an intention and a trend at the time, with or without government support, to present a different cultural aspect of Turkey to places in Europe, especially with a high Turkish worker population, as was the case in Germany.

VK: There was an implicit distinction between "desirable" and "undesirable Turks." The "desirables" were being invited from Turkey. The host organizations had this preconception that an exhibition of artists from Turkey would make the Gastarbeiter attend their museums. They thought of it as a good deed but it was simply a gesture.

HT: Yes, there was such a distinction. There was an intention to promote what may be called desirable Turks and their culture, leaving out people who had migrated there from their villages. While it may appear well-intentioned at first, it was a typical colonial perspective because they were approached as contained, and packaged programs that were abandoned right after with no follow-up. There were even highly strange examples of this, such as taking us—meaning artists from Turkey—to Turkish restaurants with kebabs and belly dancers.

GK: Another aspect of this was that the Turks living in the cities where we had our exhibitions were approaching us to say, "What are you doing here? We've already established a culture here. We have our painters and artists." I came across this reaction many times.

VK: The practices of the earlier generation of artists who had emigrated to Europe in the 1970s were different from yours. They had been ghettoized. Prominent art institutions did not accept them, and they were constrained to modest, peripheral spaces. Artists from Turkey having exhi-



bitions at important institutions created discord. This tension subsided as younger artists, German(y) born artists such as Nasan Tur and Nevin Aladağ began to take part in these projects.

To return to the issue of Turkey's art scene concerning post-socialist Russia and Eastern Europe, we need to remember Anda Rottenberg. She organized the *Europe Unknown* exhibition in Kraków in 1991. I met Anda through Beral Madra at *Expanding Internationalism: A Conference on International Exhibitions* that took place in Venice.⁵ We also had the opportunity to meet many people dealing with similar issues at the *Europe Unknown* exhibition. Discussions with neighbors from Southeast Europe and Russia began during that time.⁶ It is how collaborations that were to last many years with authors, art historians, and curators such as Viktor Misiano from Russia, Calin Dan from Romania, Luchezar Boyadjev from Bulgaria, and Katalyn Neray from Hungary, started. These were informal, unofficial relationships; we had not much else to hold on to. Our concerns were not dissimilar. These new subjects were from geographies with long-shared histories and common words. Relegated to Europe's

margins, even the power relations in their artistic and cultural contexts were similar. The opportunity to speak face to face for the first time was profoundly important. Different responses to everyday situations constituted an exciting pattern among those involved.

GK: What were our concerns? That's what we need to think about.

VK: You need certain materials to be an "artist," such as paint and canvas. For example, in Bulgaria, if you were not a member of the artists' organization, you did not have access to materials. On the other hand, some artists build their economy on a different foundation by not using traditional materials to begin with, and work with often easy to find non-conventional street materials in their practice. At the same time, this is a sign of distancing themselves from tradition, masculinity, and practices of power. The situation in Turkey was not so different; there may not have been artists' unions organized under the state, but the selection of materials and tools of articulation had a clear message. It was a dialogue with high modernism and conflict with it. We can

even imagine Hale studying ceramics for her BFA in that context, and it is very prominent in your practice Gülsün. Back in 1989, Vahap Avşar had already deconstructed images of the founding myths of the Republic. He would summon Richard Prince's Marlboro Man series and provide a subtle satire of the Atatürk statues of his mentor Cengiz Çekil. However, the more critical reference was the artist group Komar and Melamid's paintings of Stalinist Socialist Realism. We experienced the deconstruction of the Early Republican image rhetoric at the beginning of the 1990s, like the old eastern bloc countries.

HT: My training in ceramics was a complete coincidence. I realized I could not perform a desk job after studying computer science at Boğaziçi University and found myself at the Fine Arts Academy Ceramics Department in a hurry, without knowing much about art. I understood that ceramics were not for me, but they didn't tolerate the use of any different materials in those days. I recall that they failed Sarkis Paçacı even though he had what I thought was a brilliant project. They did not agree with the kinds of materials and means of expression he used.

GK: There was another shortcoming. After years of isolation, there was an opportunity to squeeze through a tiny, narrow opening and find oneself amid other situations outside Turkey. My experience was different. For example, I met a group of arts people from Munich after the 3rd Istanbul Biennial. There were three women curators concerned with postcolonialism, working on an issue that had only recently begun to be discussed in art. They invited me to the exhibition titled *Outburst of Signs*. I came across Marion von Osten there, and through her I met the Zurich-based Shedhalle group and Ursula Biemann. I had both an institutional and non-institutional practice with them for a long time. I was invited to Peter Weibel's exhibition called *Inclusion/Exclusion: Art in the Age of Postcolonialism and Global Migration* (1997). At the same time, I was also working on a critical work with this alternative group. My obsession at the time was to cross the border first. The substance of the exhibition did not matter. I wanted to be part of it and live the experience. I was bent on going beyond my boundaries. And I benefited a lot from this attitude, many doors opened up thanks to it, and many artists walked similar paths in that period.

HT: The 1st Manifesta was organized in 1996. Ayşe Erkmen and I were invited very late, at the last minute. This was because they had debated for a long time whether Turkey was part of Europe or not. On the other hand, artists from places like Israel and Russia were invited months earlier. While their participation in Europe's Biennial did not pose a question, Turkey's participation was a matter of debate. The work titled *Cross Section*, which I produced for the biennial, came out as a response to this situation. I was invited to the "Migration" themed section of the biennial anyhow. Artists from the Eastern Bloc and Turkey discovered their routes following these invitations, but there were different repercussions for these two separate geographies. Boundaries that sometimes applied to those of us from Turkey were not always put in place against those from the Eastern Bloc. The lack of support for culture in Turkey and our introvertedness may have played a part in this, but the role of history cannot be underestimated either. On the other hand, internationalization is very new to us. It began with the 3rd Istanbul Biennial and actually this is a very short time ago.

VK: A Dutch lady approached me at the open-

ing of the *A Foreigner is A Traveller* in February 1993. She said that they wanted to make a Europe-wide exhibition and they were considering me as one of the curators. It turned out to be Hedwig Fijen from Manifesta. We had some further written exchanges. In 1994 however, all communication stopped. I had moved to New York. I wrote to her again to remind her that they had told me I would be invited and wondered where we were. I received a letter from Hedwig stating that according to the Dutch Foreign Ministry, Turkey is not part of Europe; therefore, artists and curators cannot take part in the exhibition. I sent a letter to the curators of the exhibition. Among them were Viktor Misiano, Rosa Martinez, the late Katalyn Neray, whom I loved very much, and René Block, who had come up with the brand name "Manifesta." I asked them how it is that the Dutch Foreign Ministry decides who could participate in a European exhibition. All of them responded. René said that they would go to Turkey and the Biennial, despite the institution not having such an intention from the get-go. They had no option but to consider artists from Turkey. Another country mentioned in the letter which "was not" in Europe was Bosnia-Herzegovina. Sarajevo



was still under siege, and Dutch soldiers were to sit idly by as more than 8,000 Bosnians were to be murdered in July 1995. I published a text about this.⁷

OY: When this process called internationalization is generally defined as non-Western actors coming into the fold of the network of relations in the West, the discussion usually focuses on the transformation of non-Western subjects and their acquisition of new identities. However, your experiences demonstrate that this period was a process of transformation, learning, and redefinition for Western subjects and institutions as well.

HT: There was an encounter of sorts and every encounter is two-sided.

VK: The West delivers back to you like a sermon what it has learned from you in the first place. Because it always already knows.

GK: I believe the most extreme case was the experience of the exhibition *Call me Istanbul is my Name*(2004)⁸ organized at the ZKM. What met us there were mosques, the star and crescent, pot-

belly-shaped teacups, and space to drink tea sitting on the carpeted floor.

HT: In the same way, we were subjected to belly dancers at various places we were invited to for the exhibition.

GK: All the time! There was a belly dancer animation at *Call me Istanbul*. It was displayed behind Vahap Avşar's work.

VK: There was a belly dancer at the opening of the *A Foreigner is A Traveller*. I remember being annoyed by it.

HT: We were taken to a restaurant following the opening of the New Museum exhibition in New York, and a belly dancer appeared at that restaurant too. Despite it being a group exhibition with three artists, Teresita Fernandez, Nedko Solakov, and I, at the same time as Carolee Schneemann's exhibition.

GK: Even if you were the only artist from Turkey at an exhibition, they would always take you right to the Turkish restaurant in the evening. A



mush they call an hors d'oeuvre plate is put before you along with a glass of raki. I never understood this.

VK: I experienced examples of the opposite as well. I was at a conference called *Beyond Enlargement: Opening Eastwards, Closing Southwards* in Toledo in 2003. There were numerous attendees from the Middle East. The organizers served pork and wine.

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VK: There were also spaces in early 1990 that influenced us a lot. “The Russian Bazaars” for example.

HT: Factories were closed down following the Soviet Union’s disintegration and they were not able to pay the workers their wages. Factory workers or their relatives who became unemployed would have goods produced at the factory instead of salaries. They would bring these products to Istanbul in suitcases and sell or barter them. They

were bringing products like shoes, bottle openers, vodka, and caviar. There were many occasions in that period when vodka and caviar—which sometimes turned out to have gone bad—accompanied our chats with Vasif and Hüseyin (Alptekin). My work titled *World Cracker* was just one of those walnut cracker devices in the shape of an alligator that I had found and bought at one of those markets; an alligator biting down with all its might to crush the globe which was actually the end of a keychain that I had placed in its jaws.

GK: It happened just like Hale described. Trade began as soon as the wall came down in 1989. It cannot even be called trade. People from the ex-Eastern Bloc were bringing in whatever they had; their dowries, rings, underwear, etc. Beyazıt Square, for example, became a bazaar from end to end. People were selling everything they had. In exchange, they were purchasing jeans and carrying them in their suitcases to their home countries to trade. I also visited the Black Sea region during that period. People from countries like Georgia and Azerbaijan were coming to this region. Very cheap and very high-quality goods were changing hands in the bazaars. I



launched a project in 1998 under these conditions. It was a performance to be repeated five times. It began in Zurich and then I brought it to an exhibition in the south of France. There was another display at Rennes later on, followed by shows in Brugge and Hannover. I would put myself in the shoes of a woman involved in the trade, taking goods in a suitcase across borders. The real drama was the fact that the cross-border trade was being carried out by women and children, and sometimes when there was a need for money, women would prostitute themselves, if only for a night. They would in turn put the money back into trade. I, too, filled my suitcase with goods equivalent to a hundred dollars as if it was made in return for sex and took it through customs. I took this suitcase to the institutions where I held exhibitions and displayed it on a counter in the exhibition space. I sold all the products in the valise, keeping only the items' polaroids, and each time I donated the money I made from the sales to a women's association. I was asked to repeat this performance for the last time in Berlin in 2006. I kept the suitcase and the unsold goods from the previous performance, and these later became part of a collection along with the pola-

roids. I took the chance to talk about this issue everywhere I went in relation to this performance. This led to another project called *Hotel Room*. I was sad about the lives of these women. They would usually arrive with their children. Their children would wait for their mothers in hotel rooms. We realized a photography project with one woman and one child actor in a hotel room. For four hours, I asked that actress and the child to act whichever way they wanted to. We recorded many images of their presence in the space. We selected seventy-two shots from these images. The work that emerged captured that feeling of dolefulness. Finally, *Stairway* came out of this theme, which probed the phenomenon of temporary migration. It was based on images of children who earned their living by making music on the streets. One of the most important projects developed on this subject was *Projekt Migration* (2005-2006) in Cologne. It included an extensive exhibition and discussion programs. I made a seventeen minute film called *Unawarded Performances* about Moldavian women working in the homes of older people in Turkey. That was a very pertinent issue at the time. I showed this film recently in Timisoara, Romania as part of the

Biennial program and got a very different reaction. There were a number of young Moldovans among the audience who had not lived through the period. They became very tense after watching the film and revealed that they were not aware of such a past. I had to retell the story to them; that such a period did indeed exist. There was also an old gentleman in the audience who had been involved in the Istanbul-Bucharest shuttle trade. He told his story too. That sums up my relationship to the course of things that I followed closely, which still has witnesses.

OY: If we go beyond the experiences of artists from Turkey abroad, the bearing of those who came to Turkey upon the production of art is also significant. Hale Tenger's *Decent Deathwatch: Bosnia-Herzegovina*, is one of the works exploring the issue of Bosnian immigrants for example. In such situations, you seem to have come across the mentality of some Europeans that restricts artists from Turkey to only pursuing issues related to the country. How should we think about the copresence of works of art that address difficulties faced by other peoples, and social and political issues specific to Turkey, in your practices,

primarily through the theme of migration?

HT: Right after exhibiting *Decent Deathwatch: Bosnia-Herzegovina* at the Library of Women's Works in Istanbul, I was invited to the 3rd International Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Congress that took place in Ankara. A woman participating from Germany berated me in a tactless manner for being interested in Bosnia and not the Kurdish issue. We were confronted by such categorizations locally as well. Those on the left found it inappropriate that I was interested in the Bosnian war because this issue was in the conservatives' area of interest. Meanwhile, some conservatives came to see my work who, upon seeing my appearance, were surprised that I was interested in this topic. We were subjected to Westerners scolding us and their "I know everything better than you do" attitude. For example, the reporter who came to interview me insisted on moving the discussion to Turkey's political atmosphere instead of talking about the exhibition with me while *Never Never Land* was on display at Mannheimer Kunstverein in 2001. I remember telling him "I did not come here as a representative of Turkey's Foreign Ministry."

GK: This happened to me too. I had to struggle with this issue quite a bit during my exhibition that recently opened in Germany. You are specifically asked to talk about politics while saying, “there is an exhibition here and let’s talk about that.” The last exhibition I opened in a small gallery in Greece called *A Peculiar Song*, was focused on the issue of Istanbul and minorities and was quite political. It was mentioned in many media outlets. On the other hand, a reporter whom I had devoted a lot of time to informed me that their editor rejected the interview I gave for not being political enough. This was because I hadn’t talked about current politics.

VK: They treat the person not as an individual but as a sample. This sampling took place for years, yet we never experienced this in Eastern Europe. Just as the bazaars of the migrants and itinerants were the place of inspiration and source of material for your works, they were places of learning for me. Let us also remember their place in Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin’s practice. The Eastern European, ex-Soviet universe is important in many of his works and one of the last places he went to in 2007 was Mongolia. Hüseyin be-

came the artist who scanned this universe most deeply, and perceived it as a system of knowledge in terms of material, subject, focus, expression of dignity, and in every other sense.

Discussions with colleagues there helped us appreciate another sort of awareness. Witnessing the circulation of people and goods allowed us to perceive another kind of knowledge. There were buses every hour that left the Bucharest train station for Istanbul and back, from temporary, clandestine stops in Istanbul. Remember the 1995 Istanbul Biennial that all three of you participated in and the small ships leaving the port right in front of the venue to Costanza and Odessa? These were the first generation of the broke that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviets. Their dignity did not go unnoticed.

GK: The most tragic point of my project is the part concerning the female body. This is because the mafia later got involved with a process, which in the beginning, was run by women themselves. The *Hotel Room* is very touching in this sense, because it expresses the earlier period.

VK: We used to talk about these subjects back then with Calin Dan and Luchezar Boyadijev quite a bit. We would speak of what Turks thought of Bulgarians and what Romanians thought about Turks. We even thought about a project around how these countries depicted their “permanent others” in primary school. Later on, however, came institutionalization. The art circulation and directions of the contemporary art world shifted with the establishment of the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts (SCCA). Funds began to flow into Eastern Europe; Turkey received none because it was not part of that world.

Meanwhile, the East set course toward Europe. Even the solidarity among the Eastern countries waned. Two different Eastern Europes began to emerge; one near and one far. The Yugoslav wars and the European Union accession processes also play a role here. We traveled to the São Paulo Biennial with Hale in 1994. Hale was representing Turkey. The government, the Foreign Ministry’s Cultural Department, gave no support. I stayed for free at a hotel that the SCCA used. Hale carried the main elements of the work to Brazil in her suitcase.

HT: True, we received no support. I managed to cover the travel and hotel costs thanks to the artist’s fee I had received from my residency at Alfred University before the Sao Paulo Biennial. I even remember carrying sand in wheelbarrows with Vasif; we were doing everything ourselves because we didn’t have money. There was also a last-minute issue that popped up during the set up of the exhibition, which we did not foresee. All our friends, including the Bulgarian team of artists and their curator, helped us rebuild a ceiling at midnight. That was a gesture I could not forget.

GK: The next example of artists from the Balkans and Turkey crossing paths were the Balkan exhibitions. These were titled *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (2003), *Blood and Honey* (2003), and there was also *In Search of Balkania*, which was curated by Roger Conover, Eda Cufer, and Peter Weibel in 2002.

HT: Even further in the past, we came together at the 3rd Cetinje Biennial in Montenegro (1997), organized by Prince Nikoia Petrović Njegos. Luchezar Boyadijev, Nedko Solakov, and Bülent Şangar are the names I can remember.



GK: The relations established through René Block were sustained after the Balkan exhibitions. We made efforts to maintain our communications as well. Thanks to these connections, invitations would pop up unexpectedly. I have a similar, ongoing relationship with the Croatian group WHW, which began this way.

VK: While the “Balkan Exhibitions” in Western Europe were going on, especially within the context of EU expansion, in 2003, I tried to steer a different course toward a different question. That was; the connection between the Balkans and the Middle East. At Platform, we had organized a conference titled *South...east...mediterranean...eu-rope* within the context of *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (2003). René Block and Natasa Ilic of WHW, along with Suzana Milevska, Jack Persekian, Shkelzen Maliqi, Luchezar Boyadjiev, Eleni Laperi Koci, Migjen Kelmendi, Lejla Hodzic, Christine Tohme, Mai Abu ElDahab, Katerina Gregos, and Boris Buden were all part of it. We convened South Eastern European and the South Eastern Mediterranean geographies from Palestine to Kosovo and from Greece to Lebanon, for the first time in history.

- 1 *İskele: Türkische Kunst Heute*, Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 1994.
- 2 *İskorpit: Aktuelle kunst aus Istanbul = İstanbul'dan güncel sanat = Recent art from Istanbul*, Berlin: Berliner Kulturveranstaltungs-GmbH, 1998. The exhibition opened at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, and after traveled to Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe.
- 3 *A Foreigner Is A Traveller*, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Netherlands, 1993.
- 4 *In Memory of Joseph Beuys: Another Art*, Joint Exhibition, German Cultural Center, Izmir, 1986.
- 5 “Expanding Internationalism: A Conference on International Exhibitions” was realized by Arts International, which is the USA’s federal institution that is supported by Pew Charitable Trusts and the Rockefeller Foundation and is responsible for the Venice, Sydney, and São Paulo biennials. Among participating speakers from North America, Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, and Southeast Asia, was Beral Madra, in addition to other experts like Guy Brett, Aracy A. Amaral, Marina Grzinic, Gerardo Mosquera, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Paulo Herkenhoff, Jean-Hubert Martin, and Bernice Murphy. Access the conference catalogue file here: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/34020797/expanding-internationalism-a-conference-on-mary-jane-jacob>.
- 6 “Europe Unknown / Europa nieznaną,” Kraków: Pałac Sztuki; Kraków Society of Friends of Fine Arts, WKS Wawel (Military Sports Club), May 21–June 30, 1991, t.ly/M3x20.
- 7 Vasif Kortun, “The Other Side of the Water,” *ACME Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1994.

8 <https://zkm.de/en/event/2004/04/call-me-istanbul-is-my-name>.



90s: Gülsün Karamustafa, Vasif Kortun,
and Hale Tenger in Conversation

SALT026-TURKEY-RUSSIA: TWO PERIODS OF RAPPROCHEMENT-150

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