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MUSIC FOR REVOLUTION.

KEMALIST MUSIC POLITICS PLAYED OVER THE RADIO IN TURKEY

Nation-building is a difficult endeavor. It requires not only territory, people, and state sovereignty, but also an ideologized, unifying national narrative and shared cultural values and practices—in short, a cultural identity. In the case of Turkey, the cultural revolution of the Kemalists aimed to Westernize and modernize the former Ottoman people on Turkish territory, trying to turn them into new 'Turkish' people (Yazici 2014). Depending on the point of view, the Kemalist's aim of Westernization and modernization can be interpreted as either in opposition to conservative Muslim Ottoman culture or as a continuation and intensification of the efforts of reformist forces within the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the distance of reform to revolution lies in the disruptiveness, velocity, and power of the latter and allows for calling the development a revolution as the Kemalists did themselves (Reinkowski 2022: 53–104).

To implement this cultural revolution in the process of nation-building both music and mass media, especially radio, were central. Next to spoken word programs, 'music for revolution' occupied a special place in Kemalist radio politics.

The article focuses on how Kemalist music politics were played over the radio in Turkey, both literally and figuratively. It develops a concise history of Kemalist radio from 1927 to 1950, examining its connection to Kemalist ideology. To achieve this, the text explores the different types of music that were officially promoted and broadcast on the radio, namely Western and Westernized music, and the types of music that were excluded, namely (post-)Ottoman art and folk music genres. The latter are monophonic, *makam*-based genres, often subsumed under the term 'alaturka' in contrast to Western-oriented polyphonic, modern-modes-based genres called 'alafranga.' 'Alaturka' is a transnational music, that primarily consists of Turkish music but also includes elements from Byzantine, Arab, Persian, Balkan, Indian, and other musics.

The article seeks to reevaluate the implementation of Kemalist music policy on the Kemalist state radio by comparing the intended goals with the actual outcomes. In order to accomplish this the Kemalist music discourse will be examined, as particularly apparent in academic literature dealing with *Radyo*, the state radio magazine. Furthermore, pertinent musicological literature and literature from neighboring fields, such as film studies or architecture studies, will be considered as well. A brief comparison with music and radio in Brazil will provide a broader context for the developments in Turkey.

The fundamental academic sources dealing with Kemalist music discourse related to radio are the texts by Murat Ergin (2005), Ayhan Erol (2012), Poyraz Kolluoğlu (2019), and especially Patrick Bartsch's book (2011), which probably is the most comprehensive study on the subject so far.

Furthermore, the works of Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (2010) and Meltem Ahiska (2010) are essential for a more general perspective on Kemalist radio in Turkey. The following chapters are to be considered integral for a concise history of Kemalist radio:

1. The cultural revolution. Opening the frame in which 'music for revolution' took place.
2. A brief comparison with Brazil: parallel developments.
3. The musical ban and its effects. Intentions and conflicts.
4. The return of the 'Other.' Music cannot be stopped.
5. Kemalist radio in the 1940s. Listening to the listeners and unexpected musical waves.
6. Reevaluation of Kemalist radio politics. Failure and success.

1. The Cultural Revolution. Opening the Frame in which 'Music for Revolution' Took Place.

Rejecting most of the Ottoman legacy, the new Turkish Republic created a new denomination for its people: 'the Turkish people.' Reversing the pejorative meaning that 'Turks' and 'Turkish' had in Ottoman times, when the terms were associated with Anatolian peasants and used as an insult for their supposed backwardness, the Kemalist elite and its ideologists, namely Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), promoted Turkish people as something much better: People that had lived on the state territory (that is mostly the Anatolian regions) since pre-Muslim times and were now being prepared for modernity by synthesizing East and West in a process of Westernization.

The old multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural fabric of the Ottoman state did not simply disappear with the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, despite significant earlier efforts at the end of the Ottoman Empire with the Armenian genocide (1915–16) and significant Kemalist efforts such as the Greek-Turkish 'exchange of people' (1923–25). Armed conflicts especially between Kurdish and Alevite communities and Turkish military state forces went on for decades and resulted in military interventions and massacres by state forces like in Dersim (1937–38). Against this backdrop the process of Westernization was realized through a cultural revolution in order to suppress Ottoman pluricultural values and practices. The basic idea was to substitute the Ottoman Muslim cultural fabric with a modern, i.e., Western, one that also drew on pre-Ottoman, i.e., Anatolian, roots.

One could also argue, with a shift in perspective toward political and cultural continuity, that the basic idea was to strengthen and absolutize the Ottoman and late-Ottoman Westernizing reforms, which started in the early 19th century and aimed at a modernization of the Empire. However, the Kemalist cultural revolution consisted of a chain of very fundamental

anti-Ottoman and pro-Western reforms at a very fast pace. They include the abolishment of the Sultanate (1922) and the Caliphate (1924), the abolishment of dervish convents as well as mausoleums (1925), the complete secularization of education (1925), the introduction of the Gregorian calendar (1925), the headgear law against the headgear fez (1925), the adoption of Italian and Swiss law, including a ban on polygamy (1926), the change to Europe's system of time, calendars, and measurements (1926), the change to Latin letters (1928), the surname law (1934), and the change from Friday to Sunday as day of rest (1934).

In the 1920s, the Kemalists had not yet built a cohesive ideology. It was only in the 1930s that they were able to systematize their ideological thoughts and establish the state upon the principles of *milliyetçilik* [nationalism], *lâiklik* [laicism], *cumhuriyetçilik* [republicanism], *halkçılık* [popularity], *inkılâpçılık* [reformism], and *devletçilik* [etatism].

The cultural revolution manifested itself not only in opposition to the Ottoman heritage but also in confrontations with ethnic groups considered as insufficiently Turkish or opposed to integration into the Turkish nation. Therefore, Kemalist music politics devalued Ottoman music genres and attempted to invent a new Turkish national music that could include all citizens. The term used here by the Kemalists in the 1930s was "*iç kolonizasyon*" [interior colonization] (Bozdoğan/Akcan 2012: 37). Kemalist "ideologues made explicit analogies to and expressed their admiration for 'American Missionaries' and the 'civilization bearing colonizers in Africa'" (ibid.: 36). In this sense, interior colonization was a "commitment to the 'colonization of the countryside,'" bringing "a progressive and enlightened state [...] modernity to the 'backward' countryside" (ibid.: 37).

But how to achieve this? Mustafa Kemal was aware of the central role of culture in the process of nation-building and declared music to be a key element of the cultural revolution several times in his presidential speeches.

Kemalist music ideology was basically founded on the writings of Ziya Gökalp. In 1923, Gökalp published his influential *Türkçülüğün Esasları* [Principles of Turkism], which Kemal referred to continuously since 1925 (see Bartsch 2011: 45). Gökalp rejected Ottoman traditions and Ottoman history, which, according to his logic, led to the decay of the Ottoman Empire. The Kemalists adopted much of Gökalp's ideas, especially the devaluation and othering of Ottoman-Arab music genres and the promotion of a synthesis of Western and Eastern elements for a new Turkish national music. According to Gökalp, the Eastern elements should not be related to transnational Ottoman-Arab music genres, but to a nationalized Anatolian folk music.

The Ottoman musicscape consisted of a conglomerate of Arab, Turkish, Persian, and, in the final century of the Empire, Western institutions, which were never linked and had not been connected with Turkish folk culture. In order to eliminate this juxtaposition, Turkish folk culture had to be rediscovered and connected with elements of Western culture (see Bartsch 2011: 39).

These efforts resulted in the collection and construction of *türkü* as Turkish folk songs by state institutions. The collecting started in 1926 and mainly relied on folk songs from Anatolia and neighboring countries. As Ramm puts it: "The rural folk genre experienced a deep transformation after the establishment of the republic, when Kemalist cultural engineering aimed at streamlining folk music in a nationalist sense." *Türküler* were integrated in a "state-controlled repertoire [...] that was purged of religious or non-Turkish elements. The reform also affected instrumentation and introduced the performance of folk songs through a choir on radio" (Ramm 2020: 263). The transformation rendered the folk songs homogenous in content and language, polyphonic, urban, and oriented them toward European classical music. In fact, the Turkification often happened to be a severe deformation of the original multi-ethnic folk songs.

A very important instrument for communicating the cultural revolution to the people and disseminating the new cultural values, including *türkü* as new Turkish folk music, were the nationwide established *Halkevleri* [People's Houses, 1932–1951]. People could get free music lessons there, and both polyphonic music and standardized homophonic folk tunes were performed in concerts (see Bartsch 2011: 44, 52). They also provided an opportunity for many people to listen to the radio. In 1943, Radio Ankara started a complementary program called 'People's Houses, Art and Folklore,' which became an outlet for the presentation of folk music to a larger audience (see Öztürkmen 2012: 309) and developed on community singing with the program *Bir Halk Türküsü Öğreniyoruz* [We learn a folk song] (see Greve 2017: 215). In 1948, Muzafer Sarısözen's *Yurttan Sesler Korosu* [Voices from the Homeland Chorus] "played an important part in the building of a national repertoire, which 'gentrified' folk songs of different regions by turning local dialects into Istanbulite Turkish, translating non-Turkish lyrics, and inventing an orchestra of multiple traditional instruments" (Öztürkmen 2012: 309). The program also monumentalized *türkü* by adding an orchestra and thus building a new, 'reinvented' folk music. And indeed, "it was through programs such as *Yurttan Sesler* [...] that the nation as a whole became aware of the music of localities and regions other than those in which they lived" (Bates 2012: 378).

The *Halkevleri* not only disseminated the new national folk music by radio and community singing but also collected folk songs for the national music archive (see Bartsch 2011: 52). This shows how Kemalist cultural engineering worked towards nation building by entangling *Halkevleri*, music, and radio.

2. A Brief Comparison with Brazil: Parallel Developments.

At this point, a comparison with similar processes in other countries may be helpful. Brazil, in particular, offers some parallel developments in the construction of its 'national' music, which is samba. The publication on *Popular Music in Brazil* offers insights:

“With the rise of [military supported fascist-style dictator] Getúlio Vargas to power in 1930, there was an effort to turn the cultural manifestations of the city of Rio de Janeiro into the symbol of a Brazilian nation. This was when samba gained prominence over other musical genres as the synthesis of Brazilian popular music”

(Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 15).

With Mário de Andrade, an ideologist similar to Ziya Gökalp entered the scene, proposing analogous approaches to achieve similar goals:

“He was the mentor of the so-called ‘nationalist modernism’ movement, whereby the search for a renewal of musical art by erudite composers should involve an immersion in traditional culture as inspiration and material source (rhythms, melodies, forms, timbres) for musical creation. Andrade himself tried to fulfill what he called the ‘Brazilian artist’s mission’ by collecting [...] transcribing, organizing, and mainly writing and teaching about the musical characteristics of what he called ‘Brazilian folk,’ that is, folk music traditions [...]” (ibid.: 16).

To disseminate this new ‘Brazilian folk’—that is, the modern samba as cultural paradigm of a modernist state—radio played a pivotal role. In 1922, and in parallel with European radio, radio began to develop rapidly in Brazil. The Brazilian Rádio Nacional hired composers, arrangers, and singers, becoming the main agent of the music economy from the 1930s onward. Samba from Rio de Janeiro started to play a key role in the radio’s music program, inaugurating a lineage of canonical genres, including bossa nova from the 1950s and MPB (Música Popular Brasileira [Brazilian Popular Music]) from the 1960s (see ibid.: 20–21).

Samba as a folk music-based national style can be seen as a parallel development to the construction of a Turkish national music condensed in the folk music-based *türkü*. And like bossa nova and MPB in relation to samba, *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* of the 1960s can be understood as rooted in *türkü*.

The comparison shows that the musical developments in Turkey belong to a worldwide context of musical nationalism, based on the nationalization of folk music and mostly occurring under dictatorships, whether communist or fascist.

3. The Musical Ban and Its Effects. Intentions and Conflicts.

In Turkey, radio started only five years after the first European stations in the UK and Russia (1922). In 1927, the Türk Telsiz Telefon Şirketi [Turkish Company for Radio Telephone] set up two state-sponsored and controlled radio stations for broadcasting, Radyo İstanbul and Radyo Ankara. With a transmission power of 5 kw and an estimated radius of max. 250 km, they were the most powerful ones in Europe at the time of their opening, and, for a short period, Turkey was a pioneer in mass communication (see Erol 2012: 42, Bartsch 2011: 59–60, 74, Greve 2017: 36–37).

When Turkish radio started, core elements of Gökalp's ideas were already being played over the radio, both in the choice of music allowed and not allowed to be broadcasted. Ottoman religious music was banned in 1925, and Ottoman art and folk music in 1927 (see Bartsch 2011: 43). The verdict was enforced, for example, by closing down public and private institutions for the teaching and practice of these music genres. A further reason why Turkish folk music was banned until 1940 was the fact that it was monophonic, and a repertoire of Westernized polyphonic Turkish folk music had not yet been built (see *ibid.*: 55).

What could be heard on the radio instead was mainly Western classical music and Western popular entertainment genres, 'alaturka' genres of the period like *fasıl/şarkı* [chamber music/art songs] and *gazel* [improvised art songs], which had already been Westernized to a certain extent toward an entertainment music since the second half of the 19th century (see *ibid.*: 34–35), and Turkified Western genres like *kanto* [*canzone* based songs] and *tango*.

In the early 1930s, a Kemalist campaign was launched to oppose the broadcasting policy of the private radio industry. "Critics," as Özbek notes, "fervently accused private radio producers of acting merely as entertainers and commercial disseminators of 'tasteless and fatalist' Turkish art songs, the so-called alaturka music of the period" (Özbek 1997: 11–12).

After making a first public assessment against 'alaturka' music genres in 1928 (see Erol 2012: 46), Mustafa Kemal explicitly addressed music in two of his parliamentary opening speeches in 1934 and 1935. The first one kicked off a musical ban. In the spirit of Gökalp, Kemal proposed:

"The music that people presume to distribute these days is far from having any value to its credit. And this is something we obviously have to admit to ourselves. It is necessary to collect important folk songs and chants expressing high national feelings and thoughts and to edit them as quickly as possible according to the most modern [Western] general musical rules. Only in this way can Turkish national music rise and take its place in universal music" (quote in: Bartsch 2011: 46).

The ban was the result of the Kemalist music ideology aiming to mute music “far from having any value,” i.e., ‘*alaturka*’ genres, and to broadcast music of value, namely Western music. İsmet İnönü, the second president of the Turkish Republic after Kemal, had discovered a collection of records with European music during his service as Ottoman officer in Yemen and had started to hear them over and over again: “I came to the conviction, that our people would also like Western music, if only they would listen to it all the time” (quote in: Reinkowski 2022: 160). However, continuously exposing people to Western or Westernized music on radio did not guarantee a change in musical taste and preferences.

The story of Kemalist radio can be considered one of disappointment. Apart from polyphonic folk songs, which represent an elementary core of Gökalp’s music-political guidelines, the products of Turkish national music endeavors were extremely unpopular. This applies explicitly to the Republican marches and can also be inferred for other Western music forms, such as operas, symphonies, etc., since Western classical music generally failed to resonate with the listeners (see Bartsch 2011: 226). People—including the Kemalists themselves—closed their ears to the majority of the broadcasted music. Or worse, they tuned in to foreign, mostly Arab or Persian radio stations during the ban of ‘*alaturka*’ genres on Turkish radio. This ban lasted from November 1934 until February 1936 in Istanbul and until January 1937 in Ankara (see *ibid.*: 47). Ergin sees a kind of ‘war of waves’ here; he calls the turning off of state-controlled radio “a vivid example of a history of passive resistance to and accommodation of state policies without direct confrontation” (Ergin 2005: 72–73). “Instead,” Ergin continues, “the alternative spaces and the inevitable conflation of these spaces with the Republican public space eventually rendered the cultural projects of the elite ineffective, inapplicable, or sometimes downright ridiculous” (*ibid.*).

As a new Turkish national music had yet to be developed, the ban created another severe problem: “There were not enough trained musicians and technical infrastructure to create and broadcast the so-called modern songs on the radio. A couple of new polyphonic folk tunes were composed by [...] [national composers] during [...] the *allaturca* censorship but they were not enough to fill up the broadcast time” (Kolluoğlu 2019: 85). Kolluoğlu states: “In fact, music followers found these first experimental pieces of music very ‘odd’ and ‘grotesque’” (*ibid.*).

In consequence, people demanded what they wanted: their (post-) Ottoman Arab music genres on foreign radio. The Kemalist radio lost its audience, finally gave in, and lifted the ban. Losing this ‘war of waves,’ the return of the ‘Other’ on radio occurred gradually, as formerly marginalized (post-) Ottoman-Arab music genres resurged in a powerful, incremental manner.

The failure of Kemalist radio politics is remarkable insofar as the listeners were primarily middle- and upper-class people who, due to their

upbringing, may well have been familiar with Western music or, in principle, may have supported the Turkish music revolution. The fact that 'alaturka' genres were nevertheless favored over Western classical music shows how strongly musical traditions were anchored in the population, and suggests that the attachment of people with a less formal education to Turkish music may have been even stronger (see Bartsch 2011: 226–227). The state radio programs, which had favored Western music in a ratio of 3:1 over Turkish music between 1935 and 1940 (see *ibid.*: 238, 243), caused their own failure.

In the years of the musical ban, divergent positions hinted at a deep conflict, even among the Kemalist elite. The conflict was centered around officially promoted music that received little attention, versus banned music that was beloved, heard, and even performed during state events (see Ergin 2005: 70, 74). Kemal embodied these divergent positions in his own person. Due to the complaints about the ban and confronted with his own unwillingness to enjoy Western classical music, combined with his preference for 'alaturka' genres, "he reminded *alaturka* lovers that generations fomenting a revolution should cope with deprivations and sacrifices" (*ibid.*: 70). And indeed, he himself also dedicated his energy to the development of opera libretti (see Bartsch 2011: 45). According to Ergin, this hints at "a problematic process of modernization" where "people were experiencing the Republican elite's personal dilemma between truth and pleasure: receiving a guilty pleasure from low art, while believing in the 'truth' that it was inferior to high arts" (Ergin 2005: 74–75).

Still, what may appear contradictory in Western logics can also be seen as a kind of co-existence, in a less dissonant, more complementary manner. Erol gives a subtly differentiating insight:

The ban "[...] means that traditional Turkish art music was not legitimized by the political elite. The concept of legitimacy does not necessarily mean that certain kinds of activity are forbidden, but simply that some forms of expression are valued more highly than others. In relation to music, legitimacy means that some musical activities will be considered very important and others hardly recognized" (Erol 2012: 44–45).

In fact, the ban was more a muting of 'alaturka' music on air, not its extinction. Ayas makes a similar argument:

"For the Ottoman reformers, Westernization in music was only a showcase that will show the European powers that the Ottoman Empire is part of Europe politically. They had not any concern about changing the tastes or cultural identity of ordinary people or fighting directly against *alaturka*. However, republican reformers started a war against *alaturka*, dismissed it from the official and educational institutions, conducted insulting media campaigns against it and even prohibited *alaturka* broadcast on radio" (Ayas 2018: 100).

Ayas expands on the question of classification by taking the tango wave as an example: "Many popular genres were placed into higher positions in the hierarchy of musical taste simply due to their Western origin. For example, tango music which is in fact the music of poor people in Argentine, was supported by State radios beginning with the early republican period and as a result adopted by Westernized elites and transformed into an elite music in Turkey" (ibid.: 104). The same could be said about the parallel jazz wave. "In other words," as Erol summarizes, "the Turkish elite, in their attempt to defend a genuine Turkish identity between the East and the West, created their own musical 'Others'" (Erol 2012: 46). In this sense, the "music reform was an example of the most important symbolic violence aimed at imposing a particular vision of the state" (ibid.: 40).

However, the logic of classification applied also allowed for the success of the Kemalist music politics: Even if people could not be persuaded to appreciate Western or Turkish opera, they may still be interested in music politics through Western and Turkified tango and jazz, which offer a less lofty but still Western path.

4. The Return of the 'Other.' Music Cannot Be Stopped.

The return of the 'Other' started in 1940. During a parliamentary session, Kemalist music politics were criticized for the first time for neglecting 'alaturka' genres (see Bartsch 2011: 55). In the same year, "the municipal Istanbul Music Academy revived its ensembles for Ottoman-Turkish music [...], which then gave regular concerts, some of which were broadcast over the radio" (Greve 2017: 247–248). Greve goes on: "Although the nationalistic incrimination of Ottoman-Turkish music continued during the 1950s, the newly founded Radio Istanbul included Ottoman-Turkish music in its program" (ibid.: 248). Statistics even show a turnaround in dominance: "In 1962, *divan müzik* [Ottoman palace music] already comprised 26 percent of the programming of Radio Ankara, folk music only nine percent, Western light music 25 percent, and Western classical music 14 percent" (ibid.: 248). Even the rehabilitation of religious Ottoman music followed, starting from 1952, when hymns and recitations were broadcasted (see Bartsch 2011: 158).

A side effect was the emergence of a new discourse on Turkish music in the early 1940s. The head chief of radio, Vedat Nedim Tör, wrote in the *Radyo* issue from March 16, 1943, that it still remained unclear what 'Turkish' music was and should be, and what not. He argued for a music in progress, like 'under construction,' not yet fully defined (see Bartsch 2011: 187–188). Perhaps his stance was the one closest to the truth.

5. Kemalîst Radio in the 1940s. Listening to the Listeners and Unexpected Musical Waves.

Yet, part of the truth was also that tuning in to foreign radio during the ban, especially to Egyptian radio in Cairo, had enormous effects on the resurgence of the 'Other' in Turkey. The Egyptian wave took over with the outbreak of WWII, when the distribution of European films to Turkey stopped. As American films were instead entering the Turkish market via Cairo as distributional hub, Turkish cinemas were also provided with Egyptian films, which included Arabic singers and their music (see Ergin 2005: 72–73). The Turkish government reacted promptly with a ban on Arabic lyrics in Egyptian musical films, but "the response to the ban was to adapt the films by dubbing the lyrics of Arabic songs in Turkish. Close to one-hundred Egyptian movies were shown in this period from 1938 to 1948 and led to the creation of a music industry in which Turkish composers, singers, and orchestras were writing, singing, and playing musical pieces for Egyptian movies in Turkey" (ibid.). The whole development "resulted in a wave of Turkish musical movies imitating Egyptian movies in both musical and narrative aspects" (ibid.). This development finally nourished *Türk sanat müziği* [highly popular Turkish art music], *gazel*, and *arabesk* in the 1950s and 1960s (see ibid.: 78). Martin Stokes resumes: "[w]hat had been intended as a death blow turned out to be the kiss of life" (quoted in Ergin 2005: 73). Or as Ralph Poole puts it: "Accordingly, one can say that it is paradoxically due to the state-controlled music industry—especially restrictions on radio [...]—that Arabesk came into being" (Poole 2022: 241). Here, the Kemalists lost the 'war of waves' again, as undesired genres became part of the 'musicscape' (following up on Appadurai 1996) in Turkey, not only via foreign broadcasting but also with emerging new genres inside Turkey.

But in general, after Kemal's death in 1938, Kemalîst music politics abandoned the hard approach of cultural engineering by force, yet continued the nationalization of radio, which had started in 1936/1937. Following the lifting of the ban, a more liberal attitude towards Turkish music genres emerged under the new president İsmet İnönü (see Bartsch 2011: 246–247). Even an audience feedback system was implemented in the newly founded periodical state magazine *Radyo*, which gave listeners the chance to articulate their demands and critiques through an opinion poll in 1948. The listeners seized their opportunity and showed a high degree of involvement (see ibid.: 212–226). Bartsch's statements on audience feedback generally stem from this very detailed opinion poll and its statistics.

Another wave emerged in the 1940s alongside the above-mentioned Egyptian wave. In 1944, Kemalîst radio policies enhanced airtime for American music genres, giving especially American jazz music more airplay, thus making audible on which side the Turkish government tended to place its bet (see ibid.: 68, 144–145).

Unintentionally, this kicked off a jazz wave:

"A genuine jazz audience truly crystalized in the 1940s. This jazz trend reached to such a point that these enthusiastic fans bombarded the Ankara station with petitions demanding an increase in the 'jazz music hours.' Upon this growing enthusiasm, several jazz and dancing bands were formed both in the İstanbul and the Ankara radio stations. This unbridled enthusiasm [...] surprisingly spread to the small cities in the countryside. [...] Hence, the Cairo radio station was not the only unpredictable element in the Turkish music revolution. I would argue that it generated an uncontrolled enthusiasm for jazz as well" (Kolluoğlu 2019: 86–87).

Kolluoğlu identified another wave in these years, the mandolin wave:

"The Kemalist-nationalist intelligentsia, in the 1930s and 1940s, did not appreciate much the local, non-Muslim folk songs played by the mandolin. [...] The mandolin enthusiasm, I would suggest, was as widespread, uncontrolled and surprising as that of jazz. There were even some music followers desiring to hear mandolin in Turkish folk tunes and Ottoman high-art religious music" (ibid.: 88–89).

In 1945, even a *Mandolinat Takımı* [Mandolin Ensemble] was founded for the radio, which played both Western and Turkish folk music genres (see Bartsch 2011: 118).

Overall, the music genres favored by the audience after the ban did not conform to the idea of a Turkish national music as an opera based on *türkü*. And more difficulties arose:

"the radio officials and responsible authorities announced they were searching for 'talented' and 'educated' musicians in the radio journal. What they meant [...] was that the instrumentalists [had] sufficient knowledge on solfège skills and 'the Western vocal techniques.' [...] In fact, the hiring committee itself was not pleased with the 'quality' of the competitors despite the fact that there were over hundred applicants [...]. The head chief of the radio station, Vedat Nedim Tör describes the quality of competitors with words such as 'misery' and 'heartbreaking.' He complained that not even a single musician in the competition could 'recognize' the musical notation signs, and majority of the vocals sung by using their 'throats making sounds like they were ill'" (Kolluoğlu 2019: 94).

No wonder that the audible outcome of Turkish opera music efforts, for example by Ahmed Adnan Saygun, "were labeled as 'groans' even by the organic intellectual and ruling elites themselves" (ibid.: 96).

Although people were very critical of Turkish opera, the Western music approach was indeed appreciated when applied to arranging popular *türkü* (see Bartsch 2011: 182, 226). Thus, Gökalp's central concept of playing traditional Turkish songs using Western technique was widely accepted by the Turkish audience (see *ibid.*: 219). However, Bartsch makes it clear that the attempts to reform Turkish music did not start with Gökalp and the Kemalists. As early as the 19th century, music in the Ottoman Empire began to be Westernized, especially the *fasıl*, which evolved into entertainment music. The Kemalists took up this development, incorporating it into their ideological system and their cultural revolution. Therefore, the popularity of polyphonized *türkü* played on Western instruments is not necessarily a sign of the successful realization of the Turkish musical revolution but can also be seen as an extension of musical developments in the Ottoman Empire since the 19th century (see *ibid.*: 220, 249). However, the Kemalists' bet on polyphonizing monophonic songs from Turkish folk music using Western musical techniques and instruments, in order to create a polyphonic folk song canon, can be described as successful in terms of the popularity of these songs among the people (see *ibid.*: 226).

With the change in government following the elections in 1950, the Kemalist music revolution came to an end and the liberalization in music politics on radio gained drive. Together with an Americanization in the urban way of life (see Zürcher 2017: 231–232), it was not European classical music that reached radio listeners in the late 1950s, but rather new Western pop music. In the early 1960s, this kicked off Turkish versions of Western pop, called *aranjman* [arrangements], being strongly supported with regular airtime by Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) (see Uyar 2021: 111). Even a Turkish pop music genre of its own followed in the mid 1960s, called *Anadolu pop* [Anatolian pop]. It is a pop genre mainly based on Anatolian folk tunes, yet played with Western pop music instruments. At the same time, in the 1960s, (post-)Ottoman-Arab genres like *Türk sanat müziği*, *fasıl/şarkı*, *gazel*, *kanto*, or other forms of *piyasa müziği* [urban entertainment music, including e.g. belly dance] got mixed with Western pop music. This led to the development of *arabesk* in the late 1960s, a new post-Ottoman genre. Both *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* had their relations to and with Western pop music (see Bartsch 2011: 252). Here, Gökalp's idea of an East-West synthesis in music came to new life—yet in another, unforeseen way: *Arabesk* was not a synthesis of Western classical music with Turkish folk music, but rather a synthesis of different Arab and Persian musics with Western popular music. This development was even discussed at the first music congress, which took place in Ankara in 1988. The unanimous opinion expressed there was that the Kemalist music revolution had failed and that the popular *arabesk* had taken the place originally intended for Turkish national music (see *ibid.*: 57).

But radio policies also came into play unintentionally in the birth of *Anadolu pop*. “In the 1930s the criterion the Ministry of Interior Affairs employed for music broadcasting on the radio [...] was ‘playing songs [*türkü*] that are composed with the application of western technique and played by musicians who have knowledge of western music’” (Ergin 2005: 71). Exactly this criterion was later implemented as mandatory requirement for the highly popular *Altın Mikrofon* [Golden Microphone] pop music contest and complemented with the mandatory requirement of using Western pop music instruments when playing *türkü*. *Altın Mikrofon* then kicked off *Anadolu pop* in 1965 (see Lund 2026/2013: 49).

As the radio audience resisted the officially promoted Western classical music and the new Turkish national music by first turning to Arab radio stations and by later favoring *arabesk*, the evaluation of Kemalist music politics was, for a long time, overshadowed by its high-profile failure to introduce a Turkish national opera and Turkified European classical music.

Nevertheless, in some respects the Kemalist music policies were successful—for example, in establishing the acceptance of certain Western musical structures and elements in combination with popular *türkü*, and in introducing Western genres such as jazz and tango. Indeed, in the 1940s the *Radyo Dans Orkestrası* [Radio Dance Orchestra] of Radio Ankara consisted of two orchestras, the *Radyo Tango Orkestrası* [Radio Tango Orchestra] and the *Radyo Caz Orkestrası* [Radio Jazz Orchestra] (see Bartsch 2011: 115). Jazz and tango were the most popular Western musical genres among listeners, as radio listener feedback statistics show at the end of the 1940s (ibid.: 223). But one should bear in mind, that the Western genres of jazz and tango were also transformed into Anatolian jazz and Anatolian tango in a sort of accordance with the Kemalist doctrine of synthesis (see ibid.: 143). Later, in the 1960s, both music genres, in their Turkified styles, served as blueprints for the development of the even more popular *Anadolu pop* as a kind of Turkified Western pop.

6. Reevaluation of Kemalist Radio Politics. Failure and Success.

In summary: In order to build a new Turkish nation, it was necessary for the Kemalists to develop a new common ground and to forge a Turkified cultural identity. This identity should encompass all ethnicities living within the country's borders regardless of their differences—or abolish those differences.

The process of nation building was achieved through a kind of internal colonization, in which the new Kemalist government also tried to appease (or suppress) the numerous interethnic and interreligious armed conflicts throughout the country.

The strict top-down process of the Kemalist movement in the early years of the Turkish Republic (c. 1920s–1940s) included the devaluation and, for a time, the ban of Ottoman-Arab music genres on radio, as well as a dual approach towards Westernization. This approach on the one hand consisted in the promotion of a newly established Turkish national music using Western classical style for opera as well as for *türkü*, and on the other hand in the dissemination of Western classical and popular music genres through state radio programs.

As the radio audience resisted the Western classical music and the new Turkish opera and instead tuned in to foreign radio stations, Kemalist music politics was considered a failure for a long time. Nonetheless, Kemalist music politics achieved some of its objectives, including the recognition of certain Western musical components in conjunction with popular *türkü* and the introduction of highly regarded Western popular genres such as jazz and tango. These genres were subsequently also transformed into Anatolian jazz and Anatolian tango, adopting the Kemalist idea of synthesis in a new way. Later, in the 1960s, this musical thinking supported the development of the even more popular *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk*.

Music for revolution—a failure in terms of manipulating the masses through top-down radio music politics; a success, however, in terms of directly supporting Western popular genres and indirectly supporting Turkish popular music genres that were appreciated by the masses and Anatolian, respectively 'alaturka' and Western in identity. Another indirect outcome is *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk*, two very popular genres that also acquired the notion of protest music—albeit to different extents—in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Once more, genres for (another) revolution (see Ramm 2020; Söylemez 2022).

However, *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* were not only connected to disruptive revolutionary aspirations but also served to stabilize the political agendas of ruling governments. A comparative look at Brazil might be of interest here as well. In Brazil, it was not a newspaper contest like *Altın Mikrofon* (1965) in Turkey, which gave way to *Anadolu pop*, but rather the TV show *Jovem Guarda* [Young Guard], which promoted the new beat music in Brazil.

Jovem Guarda was also the name of the musical style that originated from this TV show, starting in 1965. The style no longer offered Brazilian-Portuguese versions of international pop songs—a common practice in Brazil since the 1950s and parallel to Turkish *aranjman*, which provided versions of international pop songs in Turkish. Instead, it gave way to a musical movement featuring original songs using Western pop instruments, comparable to *Anadolu pop*. Although *Jovem Guarda*'s romantic ballads were rooted in traditional Brazilian music, the typical pop elements stood out (see Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 33–34).

Jovem Guarda's relationship with the pop music of the United States interested the new Brazilian government, a military dictatorship with ties to the United States—and both the TV show and *Jovem Guarda*'s music were supported by the government (see *ibid.*). Thus, despite the counterculture lexicon and looks, and the use of electric musical instruments, *Jovem Guarda* music was officially supported—just as *Anadolu pop* was revolutionary in terms of music and supported by official newspaper media connected to state powers, as a means of implementing an American way of life in Turkey. In conclusion, it can be said that these musical styles are subject to ambivalent evaluation, a characteristic often associated with pop music in non-Western countries. Like *Jovem Guarda*, *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* were both revolutionary musics challenging an existing system, yet also used to consolidate it.

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