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Europe East and West? USSR and France as Cultural Diplomacy Actors in Occupied Austria, 1945-1955

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Abstract

Looking at a rather unusual French-Soviet comparison, the paper attempts a critique of cultural diplomacy theoretical framework aiming to adapt it to the complexity of cultural phenomena not explained through politically-centred approaches. It argues that cultural prestige, to be attained by inherently cultural means, is no less meaningful for country's standing abroad than promotion of political values. Moreover, political propaganda could jeopardise the very goals it was designed to attain (as with the USSR), and softer cultural power was rightly considered an alternative by some more flexible cultural actors. Its potential ought not to be overestimated, but art for art's sake was a factor in relations between the peoples, and it constituted a common European framework in which France, Russia and Austria (representing Western, Central and Eastern Europe) could converse, stressing both their differences and commonalities.

Key words: cultural diplomacy, France, USSR, Austria

Culture in the Zero Hour?

When the Soviet troops stormed Vienna in April 1945, little would be heard of culture on the outskirts of the yet-to-be-liberated city, safe for some propagandist salvos on both sides. And yet culture came in the heels of the Red Army soldiers, as prominent Soviet artists had been mobilised to support the war touring the fronts. Very quickly it appeared that in Vienna and outside this radiant star of European culture, people were starving for information and – entertainment and culture. Unsurprisingly, the Red Army arriving first, the Soviet Element eagerly seized an opportunity to satiate this demand. The first concerts of incoming Soviet artists took place in July-August; measures were taken to resume the work of the State Opera, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra or the Burgtheater, as Vienna still lay in ruins. Austrian cultural renaissance started.

The second power to bring its culture to Austria was, in fact, not the mighty United States or Great Britain, but France deploying its own musicians in September[i]. This was a triumph of the same order as the Soviet tour, and French theatre, libraries and Institutes were to come.

Of course, the United States and Britain followed suit, as both countries had realised the importance of consistent information policies deploying a superb network of American Houses, seconded by British Council. Meanwhile, classic Russian and Soviet culture lived a life of its own, not always fitting into the procrustean bed of propaganda departments. And in this it came closer to the French counterpart.

Cultural Diplomacy vs Diplomatie Culturelle: Conceptual Encounters

Transnational cultural processes have been a subject of intensive historical inquiry, and their analysis requires considering several methodological points. What methods are better suited to untangle the complex processes taking place during the "exercise" of cultural diplomacy? What is the knowledge to be won from elaborating on comparative cultural diplomacy studies? I alluded to the French and Soviet cultural exports sharing certain traits: why was it? How and in which way did this come about?

Most literature on soft power and cultural diplomacy[ii] traditionally concentrated on those segments on culture that could be more easily conceptualised in political (or information-policy) terms. For instance, music (an area of my particular interest) was often gone by, until jazz diplomacy (Penny von Eschen) and popular culture held its entry in the research. This happened due to the nature of questioning and the general context of US history into which most of classic cultural diplomacy research needs to be placed. Cultural diplomacy was analysed using the ideas and criteria developed by American diplomats and closely linked to promoting American values, advertising American way of life and creating more support and respect for the United States. Some arts were fitter for this purpose than others. More importantly, reactions to cultural diplomacy that would not prove relevant for the initial goal-setting were rather a problem. The main questions always related to the issues of democracy and US political standing, with fewer sensibilities shown, particularly in older day, to an independent point of view of local public. What if jazz audiences did not even think of American democracy *at all* while attending jammin' sessions?

In Europe, cultural-political thinking was somewhat different. France had long dominated the practice and the underlining theorising on *diplomatie culturelle*, and French historiography on cultural diplomacy is very rich[iii] – and remarkably distanced from its Anglo-Saxon counterpart. Here I would single out some of its main points. Culture has been charged with different values – French freedom and democracy were not as central as in America, but it was the splendour of French language and arts, accompanied by French *esprit* and *génie* that were propagated to establish "a

certain idea" of France in the age where French hard power was in decline. More recently, science and technology have gained their place as well, and both policy-makers and researchers have shown more interest in middle- and low-brow popular culture. Surreptitiously, a degree of opposition to the United States transpires through France's actions and theorising, culture being not an extension of value-laden politics, but an instrument of prestige and influence on its own. The state is manifestly present in French thinking – more than in Anglo-American literature increasingly interested in non-state actors. Once again the conceptual framework arises from the perceived national foreign policy needs, and comparison allows for a much wider perspective.

In other countries – notably, in the case of German *auswärtige Kulturpolitik* – there has been an oscillation between the political and the cultural prestige focuses, where both language and political values pack would find their place. China has been a rising power in the field, with ever larger amounts of research conducted on East Asia (PRC, South Korea and Japan). In Russia, culture was first thought as an outgrowth of party state's foreign policy, however with French-style interest in high culture (*kultura,* a notion with strong positive connotations in Russian) and prestige. Following the imperial collapse of 1991, more attention has concentrated on adopting mostly English-language terminology (soft power) to Russian realities and developing up-to-date policies.

I consider that viewing cultural diplomacy as an extension of classical diplomacy is partly misleading, and the perspective of cultural history and adjacent disciplines (communication studies, literary studies, arts history, musicology...) becomes more relevant. Culture is basically too broad and complex a term to avoid multidisciplinarity: the English-language understanding contrasts with French, German and Russian usages (*Kultur, culture/civilisation, kultura*) where it tended to describe aesthetically valuable parts of human creation or behaviour of an educated person, all positively connotated. While concentrating on continental Europe, I need to question the Anglo-American approach not for its inherent validity, but rather for the transferability onto the societies visibly sharing a different notional framework.

That is not to say that the "classic" IR/CD standpoint is an irrelevant one. Cultural diplomacy was in fact often conducted or at least facilitated by foreign offices' personnel with specific expertise in cultural affairs or having an academic or artistic background, some of them (R. Arndt, C. Schneider) delivering valuable contributions to CD studies. The problem remains that the same activities conducted by the United States, France, the USSR or Germany would be assessed according to differing criteria, originating in diplomats' thinking and not in empirical data. Overcoming the national boundaries can be one of the easiest solutions to this problem. In addition, one could be left wondering if a necessary connection between cultural promotion and a certain set of political values would be easily *decoded* by receiving audiences.

Furthermore, as pointed out by recent research on musical diplomacy – to which I adhere methodologically in my own work[iv] –, the notion of power ought to be equally dissociated from cultural diplomacy.[v] In soft power, it is softness that really counts. The all-mighty United States, while taking the commanding position in the western world for military, economic and political reasons, fought and gallantly, though undeservedly, lost its battle on the field of glory of European-style high culture. Public has to be wooed into liking cultural goods, and, just as the popularity of Shostakovich was not, and could not be decreed by a politburo, nor were the outcomes easily predictable. The Coca-Colonization of Europe, the advance of jazz and rock'n'roll, consumption culture or relaxed mores by no means followed a coherent long-term strategy devised in the State Department. Indeed, the conservative diplomatic establishment initially showed a fairly lukewarm support, if not revulsion, for this conquest of Europe, their reservations being overrun by the obvious triumph celebrated by the new American culture (America turning out to be a synonym for modernity, whether American or not). In many instances, particularly with an ideologically driven CD, culture appeared as an enfant terrible of diplomacy, a rather unruly imp for large-scale propaganda planning. And what the public did not like for sure, was bare propaganda: thus the astute French walked the tight rope of cultural promotion without encroaching on the political field. The state socialist regimes mostly failed where they tried to insert a propaganda message, and even the sorts of US cultural diplomacy were far from brilliant in this respect.

Culture in the Service of the Republic: France's *diplomatie culturelle* in Austria

France was the first major European state actor to ponder over the question of harnessing culture for representation purposes. Already the splendid court of Versailles under the Sun King and the dominating position of French culture and language in modern Europe had served as a beacon of cultural *rayonnement*. However, it was following the crushing defeat in the Franco-Prussian war that the nascent Third Republic sought for whatever remedy possible to compensate for this astounding downfall. Since the 1880s, the French state was the first to embark on a programme of financial and organisational support of cultural proliferation abroad. Facing a bold, dynamic German Empire, the French decision-makers were haunted by revanchism at home, the overwhelming German military power, and the need to persuade other countries and their public opinion that France was not to be written off.

The *Alliance Française* was thus called into being, charged with French education and language teaching in Europe, both Americas, and beyond. Nominally independent, it was an instrument of French foreign policy and received grants from the Foreign Ministry. Then, a network of more stable institutions abroad followed, thereby inaugurating the era of *Instituts Français,* the first of them opened in 1900s. French embassies equally dedicated a fair share of their attention to cultural affairs – after all, this was a realm where the German foe was not deemed superior to France, and the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon powers and the English language, though viewed with a watchful eye, was at least

not yet feared.

World War I brought about the demise of Imperial Germany, the break-down of Russia, Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire and a complete reshuffle of the European political map. France undertook considerable efforts to secure its position in Central Europe. An *Institut Français* was opened in Vienna, first as a centre of accommodation and administrative support for incoming French students, but quickly extending its activities on cultural propaganda (the French were not loath to use the word) for Austrians as well. As usual, the major concern of French politics in Austria and the surrounding region was restricted to security questions: the idea of an Anschluss to Germany was clearly assessed as a threat to French interests. In the 1930s, the Institute tried to help to assert a distinct Austrian identity and propagate ideas of Austro-French commonalities, alongside with promoting French culture in the country.

Eugène Susini, then a young academic firstly joining the Institute in the late 30s, became its director in 1938-39 and after the war, clearly saw the inevitable coming and was far from simply entertaining an idea of divorcing Austria from Germany by the means available to the French cultural diplomats. After a temporary closure following the Anschluss, he managed to reach an agreement with the Nazi government to re-open the Institute (accompanied by downgrading the French embassy to a consulate general). However, its activities were severely hampered by the new rulers. The French language was not to be tolerated in schools of Greater Germany, further ceding positions to English, and France's stakes did not stand high with the National-Socialist party apparatus. The Institute's existence wore on without éclat. In 1939 the Institute was finally closed, and the cultural diplomats had to consider saving their lives. In Salzburg, the Marchioness Geneviève Peyrebère de Guilloutet, who had been awarded the Légion d'honneur for her service, had to quit the country hastily. A cultural ice age, descending over Europe, froze most international cultural contacts.

As the French troops entered Vorarlberg in 1945 there were still no detailed plans for future cultural expansion. Nor did the situation look propitious for a large-scale cultural campaign due to war devastations and a dire financial outlook. However, cultural diplomats were as active as ever, realising that the French cultural heritage was the main asset of France here. As a formerly defeated army was almost openly sneered upon by Germans, and the economy was lamed, there was little choice left for the *Direction des Affaires allemandes et autrichiennes* but to unite their effort with the *Direction Générale des Relations Culturelles*.[vi] They set off on a detailed campaign of re-education and democratization of the zones falling into their remit. In Austria,[vii] French policies were very different from Germany,[viii] because their main purpose was to achieve a full and definite separation of Austria from the northern neighbour, declaring the former a *pays ami* and enforcing a vigorous cultural fraternisation and prestige policy.[ix] A considerable propaganda machine was set into motion by the High Commissionary General Béthouart and the Director of the Cultural Division,[x] the aforementioned Eugène Susini. Susini took the lead of the Viennese Institute when a cultural agreement with Austria was signed in 1947 that aimed to assure the permanent French cultural presence here. Money, although short elsewhere, in fact seldom lacked for cultural diplomats (hundreds of thousands of schillings on a special account and assignments from Paris were at Susini's and Besset's disposal[xi]).

Austria was declared un-German and deeply opposed to the “Prussian” militarist spirit. Its culture, imbued with Catholicism and Baroque traditions, was easily tied to the seemingly parallel developments in France – the outspoken conservatism of French establishment in Austria permeated their cultural views. Therefore, it was high culture written large on the agenda, and top quality as well.[xii] Romance influences in Austria offered a fertile ground for such speculations indeed. Austro-French affiliations in political (“victims of the same tyranny”) and cultural history were put to the highest degree, facilitated by a sometimes earnestly convinced, sometimes opportunistic stance of local establishment, strongly marked by new Austrian nationalism, dominating political conservatism and Catholicism in the Tyrol and Vorarlberg, including their cultural life.[xiii] French cultural policies bore a fairly nationalist character as well.[xiv] Thus, the French *ré-education*, *deprussianisation*, and *réorientation* came in handy for both the French element, the Austrian ruling class, and in fact for the Austrian society and other allies. Some bold manoeuvres which Béthouart conducted on the subject of French-Austrian shared history were executed so artfully and crowned with a success to make envious both the Soviets and the Americans. Andreas Hofer, the hero of the Tyrol who had fought the Bavarians and the French, was paid tactful respects. Rare cases of an Austro-French alliance were diligently put to display (such as Emperor Francis-Stephan and French culture at the Schönbrunn court). Although one could but scarcely recognise Austria's past, the clever conduct of French political and cultural propaganda bore its fruit and, undoubtedly, much lessened the tensions between the two peoples.

It was already mentioned that the sort of so many cultural-diplomatic initiative depended on so few. Indeed, the French case is a particularly spectacular one. In Paris, there was little interest in Austria, and the officials in Vienna and Innsbruck enjoyed a large degree of autonomy.[xv] Cultural diplomacy was, of course, a matter of interest for High Commissionary, and Marie-Antoine Béthouart looked about for using his cultural division as a propaganda adjunct.[xvi] However, Susini managed to persuade the Comissionary and his own superiors in Paris that careful distancing between political messages and cultural output be observed. This proved to be a successful strategy.

Furthermore, as very few individuals were charged with *DC*, their personal preferences started to matter. Susini and his Innsbruck counterpart, Maurice Besset who succeeded Marcel Decombis as IF’s director, had developed a taste for contemporary painting, and both Vienna and Innsbruck saw a number of important exhibitions of modern French art. This produced something bordering on a Copernican revolution; a number of ascending Austrian artists, such as Anton Kolig, were greatly influenced by the new French aesthetics. In theatre, there was growing interest for contemporary French drama, exemplified by Anouilh and Sartre. If there was a tension between staging them in original or speedily procuring workable translation, the French plays entered on the Austrian stages (much to the chagrin of the “anti-

formalist" Soviets), Sartre attended by some scandals due to his ideological complexities. All major Austrian universities could obtain a native-speaker lecturer in French, with Susini himself holding lectures on Austrian literature (in German), and on French cultural history as well. He was seconded by Henri Laurent at Graz, Maurice Moyse at the Catholic Academy in Vienna and Peyrebère de Guilloutet at Salzburg.

Indeed, the French went to great length to assure their cultural presence throughout the Austrian territory, notable exception being the Soviet zone. Dealing with Austrians, and with the western allies as well, required some diplomatic skill; this was clearly mastered by the responsible functionaries. The brilliant Marchioness de Guilloutet seemingly managed to maintain contact with everybody in Salzburg.[xvii] Not only did she set up a French class at the University and bring more French literature to the town, but thanks to her France could deploy an impressive array of first-class musicians to the restored Festival of Salzburg. French chamber music and the *Chorale de la Cathédrale de Strasbourg* were celebrated by local critics, a splendid success that unfortunately went unrecorded in the secondary literature (of which there is almost none on music). All provincial capitals except Eisenstadt (deep in the Soviet east) had French circles, and the bilateral *Société France-Autriche* enjoyed steady financial support from the French – accompanied by strict control. The French remained moderately conservative in their repertoire, mostly high-culture (variété was only reluctantly accepted in Susini's headquarters). Some folk art, mostly as dance, was brought to Austria as well, with critics never tired of extolling the affinities between the Alpine regions and celebrating the colourful performances. Characteristically, the French-ness of French art was a favourite topic with local critics. On the other hand, the famous Ballet de Paris came to Vienna. This was a classical transnational group, with a Russian émigré core and schooling, and accomplished French artists. Much to the fury of Communist critics (*Der Abend),* they held high the prestige of Paris and the old Russian school, not bound by Socialist-Realist prescripts. On the whole, French cultural advances massively outweighed its economic or military potential and the diplomats could congratulate themselves with successes ensuring further presence after the end of the occupation regime.

Soviet Cultural Propaganda: Stalin and *Pique Dame*

The USSR also had massive prestige problems and a cultural heritage to capitalise on. For sure, there was no lack of credible military presence, and the Red Army was seen with much more fear than their French colleagues in their old American uniforms. Fear was mixed with hatred, however. Austria had already had a tradition of anti-Slavic stereotypes, strengthened by an idea of a German outpost, a stronghold of European *Kultur* against Slavic barbarism. The First World War, fought under nationalist slogans, was followed by the Communist revolution in Russia. The new Bolshevik state could gather few sympathies outside devout Communist circles. As Stalinist shadow descended upon Russia,[xviii] almost all remaining illusions were gone: barbaric Communism had to be confined to its cage. The so-called Austro-fascist regime, established in Austria in 1934, marked a slant towards political right. After balancing between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the Austrian government drew closer to Hitler, and in a right-wing authoritarian state, both the Russian-ness and the Soviet-ness of Soviet-Russian culture were hardly welcome. A small Austro-Soviet society, founded in the 20s, rapidly declined. 1938 put an end to whatever cultural exchange may have been lingering on between the two countries. The war machine of Nazi propaganda was set in motion immediately, and even the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, despite some Soviet apertures, did not bring about an upsurge in cultural exchange due to almost open German resistance. The State Opera in Vienna still managed to put *Pique Dame* on stage, probably defying the new masters; in the Soviet Union, conversely, a premiere of Wagner's *Wallküre,* after failing to attract German attentions, had to be put off after a few unsuccessful performances.[xix] The precarious peace was followed by the German assault in 1941. As the total racial war proclaimed by Hitler raged on, the embitterment on both sides grew, the Wehrmacht becoming increasingly frustrated with the staunch Soviet resistance, partisan warfare and hardships on the war theatre and at home, and the Soviets being appalled at Nazi atrocities. When the Red Army reached Austria, it was met with feelings very mixed at best. On the one hand, this meant the end of the war and the future return to normalcy, on the other hand, the sworn enemy invaded the country, and quickly the soldiers' behaviour towards the 'liberated' Germans and Austrians (who would rather like to be spared the Soviet liberation[xx]) set off anger and hatred towards these seemingly relentless brutes. Indeed, a number of Soviet GI's, having fresh memories of the German army at their home and traumatised by war, were tempted to see Austrian property, wine or women as their prey. Even the good-will of many officers and Moscow disquiet could do little to avert the mayhem of post-liberation Eastern Austria; often ushered in by Ostarbeiter, assisted by local criminals, and a considerable proportion of Soviet military personnel. This poisoned the relations between most Austrians and the Red Army for good. No cultural offensive launched by the initially audacious and liberal cultural officers could offset the effects of this first encounter, where all the preceding propaganda seemed to come true.

Secondly, the Soviet element did undertake some measures to avert out-and-out famine in their zone, albeit ultimately they could do little and later turned to an outright exploitation of Austrian economy trying to rebuild their own.[xxi] Ironically, it was the Soviet occupying power that brought about rapid democratisation of the Austrian political system, allowing the three democratic parties to constitute a proportional government and the Communist party to be smashed into insignificance at the first free elections in November 1945.

Dealing with this conundrum, what could the cultural-propagandist functionaries bring with them in their luggage? Imperial Russia was not much concerned by a state-sponsored cultural diplomacy, effectively leaving the task to Diaghilev and his committed likes. First World War saw some timid attempts to attract some support of public opinion

in the allied countries.[xxii] Ideology in power would change the logic of foreign cultural engagements.[xxiii] Once the Bolsheviks secured their power, they were faced with the sordid fact of international isolation and an openly hostile attitude of all foreign powers. The new republic was devastated by six years of war, and the Volga famine urged the Communist leadership to ask for help abroad. A temporary Committee of Foreign Help was thus set up charged with launching an information campaign abroad, catching some left-leaning sympathisers, and bringing some help to starving southern Russia. The crisis over, a necessity of maintaining a constant propaganda network was clear to the Bolshevik elite, leading to the establishment of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Abroad, known in the literature with its Russian acronym VOKS.[xxiv]

This Society, formally independent from the government (a disguise not much believed in those days as well), basically had to go where the straightforward Communist propaganda could not, and more subtle means of influence were needed. Choosing between the ideologically motivated tendency to enhance contacts with large-scale working class organisations and movements abroad and a more concentrated work with 'bourgeois intelligentsia', the second direction was opted for. Instead of becoming a mere 3rd Internationale's cultural section, VOKS scaled its activities down to potentially friendly circles of Western intellectuals and, by extension, educated middle class, trying to show the advances of socialist culture and, as it came down well with foreign audiences, the culture of old Russia well respected and preserved by Bolsheviks. However, VOKS officials steadily argued against “bourgeois” pure art and culture, mixing it with regime propaganda.[xxv]

More importantly, they gathered as much scientific and technical know-how as possible[xxvi] offering very little instead; e.g., enormous amounts of books were imported into the Soviet Union. Then, VOKS tried to set about an organised network of propagandist tourism, inviting foreign guests on carefully planned tours through the country. In fact, none of them was quite as converted to the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist faith as was hoped for, and most intellectuals (Andre Gide, Romain Rolland, Lyon Feuchtwanger…) were caught into a terrible dilemma of balancing their complicated feelings about the Soviet realities and the perceived need to counter the rise of fascism.[xxvii]

VOKS also built a network of professional and territorial sections (including one for Middle Europe) and of representations abroad, facilitated by a wave of diplomatic recognitions since the mid-20s, including an office in Vienna. However, Austria was never a country of prime importance for the Soviets, their attention consumed by Germany. A first Austro-Soviet society, mentioned above, was called into being, too, a rather small organisation recruiting its members from the Communist party and some Russophile intelligentsia, two strains not easy to bring under one roof. As Communism was generally unpopular, the Soviet cultural “infiltration” of Austria remained modest. Russian and Soviet art, however, was far from banned from the Alps, and the names of Gorki, Eisenstein, Prokofiev or Shostakovich were well known to the Austrian public. Without inducing many sympathies for state socialism, knowledge of Russian and Soviet culture was not confined to the Communists, setting off the tendency of forming an island of benevolence amidst an ocean of aversion that was continued later.

Arriving in Austria in 1945, the Soviet authorities had to rebuild the cultural landscape almost from scratch. As culture and political propaganda were not separated from each other,[xxviii] the first cultural actors were propaganda officers from the advancing armies, later the Central Group of Troops stationed in Austria and Hungary. The Propaganda Department under Colonel Dubrovitsky took up most of the work related to cultural policy issues. VOKS could step in since 1946-47, firstly from its Moscow headquarters and then sending its own envoy to Vienna (Evgenii Poliakov, a part-time VOKS functionary, was followed by Anatolii Parkaiev and Ivan Vedernikov). Steps were taken to constitute a second Austro-Soviet society immediately,[xxix] and its foundation was announced in June, 1945. A network of information centres, lastly, came about only as late as 1950 (at Karlsplatz, Vienna, and in the Soviet zone), woefully lagging behind the Americans: the confounded and often counter-effective Stalinist bureaucracy did not in fact facilitate the process.

Despite the officially proclaimed centralisation of apparatus' transactions, VOKS' president of the corresponding Middle European section was not the only addressee in Moscow: the Third Department of the Foreign Ministry (Central Europe) supervised all policies in Germany and Austria; Culture Ministry's aviso was needed on a number of proposals to go through; most important matters went up to the Politburo and the Central Committee. And letters took months to circulate even within VOKS.[xxx]

In Austria, the Propaganda Department, the VOKS Representative,[xxxi] the Austro-Soviet society (*Gesellschaft zur Pflege kultureller und wirtschaftlicher Beziehungen zur Sowjetunion, Österreichsich-Sowjetische Gesellschaft - ÖSG*) and sometimes the Communist Party branches (often coinciding with local ÖSG sections) carried Soviet culture to the Austrians. Lastly, Austrian artists would show their own interest in cultural developments abroad following the seven years of forced seclusion; and the Soviet Element did maintain rather close relations, considering the attending pressure from the West which was quick to be mounted, to the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna, headed by the Communist Viktor Matejka, main theatres and opera houses (particularly the leftist *Scala* and *Insel*), and some corresponding individuals.

Cold War mobilised all resources starting from 1947, and cultural diplomacy shrank under the weight of the propaganda state.[xxxii] Some successes, however, were worth noting. Classic Russian heritage was warmly welcome in Austria, pampering the tastes of Austrian public and handily coinciding with the ultra-conservative turn of late Stalinism. Just as in the French case, this was a happy conjunction of rather disparate factors, and the high quality of some of the cultural output (Tchaikovsky came close to reigning supreme among foreign composers, supported by the Soviets as well) assured its acceptance. As radical modernity was safely banned from the USSR, the public taste would not be tried by some audacious twelve-tune experiment, and Shostakovich, who visited Vienna twice, was considered

almost an uncrowned king of contemporary music. Literature and painting faired unequally, the Stalinist grip over them being felt more clearly due to their greater capacity to convey propagandist messages. Differing traditions played their role: Stanislavsky's method was coldly met among the Viennese theatre directors due to their accustomed distanced position towards the Russian reformer. And VOKS representatives, like their French colleagues, did sent local feedback to their superiors, as far as it did not jeopardise their position, for policies to be accustomed accordingly. Gogol, Tolstoy or Chekhov were celebrated, though, and Gorky's artistic qualities were recognised, despite all the unavoidable political reservations. All this constituted part of common European canon, and thus the Russo-Soviet high culture could not be divided from Austria and France, moving in the same semiotic space.[xxxiii] However, a line was constantly drawn between the Austrian and the Slavic/Russian, and national categorisations of this "other" (languor, exotic colourings…) remained characteristic for Austrian newspaper critics throughout the country.

The folk element of the multinational Soviet federation could not be gone by, and again, the mountainous regions fared better. The Georgian ensemble of song and dance triumphed in a series of open-airs (the word had been sadly not invented by then) in 1949, a bit troubled by some now obligatory propagandist interferences. Ethnic Russians were represented by choirs; exotic colours and professional training of these apparently amateur ensembles reaped their harvest among the public. However, it was in the sphere of high culture that Russia, like France, made greatest advances among Austrian connoisseurs – far from working-class public. The whole ideological indoctrination enterprise failed dismally and in fact revealed its tremendous power of nuisance to the cultural propaganda, much superior to what could be observed in the western democracies. It was culture distanced from Stalin that met with approval.

Conclusion

The Soviet and French cases show the need of a broader understanding of what culture meant for international relations. As three different European cultural settings met – though seldom competing – the results can be summed up as following. A common European substance facilitated the reception of both French and Russo-Soviet high culture in Austria. Decent quality of the cultural offer pleased Austrians, feeling themselves respected, as well. Cultural conservatism and elitism was displayed independently by all three sides, providing for a further point of convergence; this was not a mass cultural offensive. Culture, particularly respected high culture, was better received than "harder" spheres of politics, most saliently in the Soviet case. There were still differences, and the French and the Russians were clearly regarded as foreign culture, although now with genuine interest. Political propaganda encroachments, when they did not tune in with Austrians, were resented and did only harm to their original goals of enhancing prestige and winning sympathies. The success of cultural products could not be easily directed from Paris, Moscow, or Washington; local audiences would in fact select what they like. And a well-balanced cultural diplomacy with a properly adjusted goal-setting was fruitful, as it had to take care of actual cultural demand and look into potential local preferences to leave a positive echo.

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Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven:Yale UP, 2007). Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2009). Eiusdem, and Mark C. Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010). Fosler-Lussier, Danielle. "Cultural Diplomacy as Cultural Globalization: The University of Michigan Jazz Band in Latin America." *Journal of the Society for American Music 4.1* (2010): 59-93. *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, edited by Jane F. Fulcher (New York et al.: Oxford UP, 2011). Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "'The World Is Ready to Listen : Symphony Orchestras and the Global Performance of America," *Diplomatic History* 36.1 (2012): 17-28. Mary Einbinder, *Cultural Diplomacy : Harmonizing International Relations Through Music* (MA Thesis. University of New York, 2013). *Music and International History in the Twentieth Century*, edited by J.C.E. Gienow-Hecht (NY; Oxford: Berghahn, 2015).

[v] Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "Introduction: Sonic History, or Why Music Matters in International History," *Music and International History*, 2.

[vi]Barbara Porpaczy, *Frankreich-Österreich 1945-1960: Kulturpolitik und Identität* (Innsbruck; Wien: Studien-Verlag, 2002), 28-29.

[vii]Again, research at Vienna and Innsbruck and in Canada (Dussault) has resulted in a number of dissertations and monographs of outstanding quality, sadly often overseen by cultural history scholars. Some of them, not cited yet: Klaus Eisterer, *Französische Besatzungspolitik: Tirol und Vorarlberg 1945/46* (Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 1991). Thomas Angerer, *Frankreich und die Österreichfrage: historische Grundlagen und Leitlinien 1945-1955* (Univ. Diss., University of Vienna, 1996). *Ein Frühling, dem kein Sommer folgte?: französisch-österreichische Kulturtransfers seit 1945*, edited by Thomas Angerer and Jacques Le Rider (Wien et al.: Böhlau, 1999). Éric Dussault, *La dénazification de l'Autriche par la France: la politique culturelle de la France dans sa zone d'occupation, 1945-1955* (Québec: PU Laval, 2005). *Freiheit und Wiederaufbau: Tirol in den Jahren um den Staatsvertrag. Akten des Symposiums des Tiroler Landesarchivs. Innsbruck, 27. und 28. Mai 2005. Veröffentlichungen des Tiroler Landesarchivs. Band 14. Herausgegeben vom Tiroler Landesarchiv*, edited by Christian Fornwagner and Richard Schober (Innsbruck: Wagner Verlag, 2007). *Bonjour Autriche: Literatur und Kunst in Tirol und Vorarlberg 1945-1955*, edited by Sandra Unterweger et al. Edition Brenner-Formum. Band 5. (Innsbruck et al.: StudienVerlag, 2010.)

[viii]Stefan Vogel, *Frankreich un die alliierte Besatzung in Wien 1945-1955* (Mag. Diss. University of Vienna, 1997), 11.

[ix]Barbara Porpaczy, *Besatzungspolitisches Kalkül oder Beitrag zur Identitätsfindung? Frankreichs kulturelles Engagement in Österreich 1945-1960* (Univ. Diss., University of Innsbruck, 1999), 14.

[x]MAE, AOFAA, Autriche, AUT 190, Rapport de la Division Affaires Culturelles (15 avril 1946).

[xi]A spectacular overview of these expenses provided Barbara Porpaczy (1999: 192-205, 2002: 191-97).

[xii] Porpaczy 2002, 14, 213.

[xiii]Othmar Costa, "Musik in Tirol: Hochkultur," *Handbuch zur neueren Geschichte Tirols. Band 2: Zeitgeschichte. 2. Teil: Wirtschaft und Kultur*, Edited by. Anton Pelinka and Andreas Maislinger (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1993), 277.

[xiv]Lydia Lettner, *Die französische Österreichpolitik von 1943 bis 1946*. (Univ. Diss., University of Salzburg, 1980), 350.

[xv]Porpaczy 1999, 79, 108.

[xvi]Porpaczy 1999, 67.

[xvii]Louis Monicault, French minister (later ambassador) to Vienna was nearly exhilarated about her. MAE, AOFAA, Autriche, Vienne 201, Monicault to Bidault. 09.01.1946. MAE, AOFAA, Autriche, Vienne 201, Note de 10.04.1946.

[xviii]For the purposes of this article, the name will be used for the entire Soviet Union, reflecting the contemporary German-language and general European parlance. In those cases where I refer not to the Federal-Russian republic but to other regions staying under Soviet authority, this will be specified.

[xix]Vladimir A. Nevezhin, "Spetsifika sovetskoi kulturnoi diplomatii v usloviiakh sblizheniia SSSR i Germanii (1939-1941 gg.)," *Probemy rossiiskoi istorii*. Vyp. X (Moscow; Magnitogorsk: UP, 2010), 206.

[xx]Wolfgang Wagner, *Die Besatzungszeit aus sowjetischer Sicht* (Dipl.-Arb., University of Vienna, 1998), 33.

[xxi]Robert Knight, "The Renner Government and Austrian Sovereignty," *Austria 1945-95: Fifty Years of the Second Republic* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 35-36.

[xxii]Alexander V. Golubev, *"...Vzgliad na zemliu obetovannuiu": iz istorii sovetskoi kul'turnoi diplomatii 1920-1930-kh* godov (Moscow: Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2004), 8.

[xxiii]Nigel Gould-Davies,"The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy." *Diplomatic History* 27.2 (2003): 193-214.

[xxiv]Jurii A. Gridnev, "Sozdaniie VOKS. Zadachi i tseli,", *Istoriki razhmyshliayut*. Vypusk 2 (Moscow: MGU, 1999). 285-99. Jean-François Fayet, "La Société pour les échanges culturels entre l'URSS et l'étranger (VOKS)," *Relations Internationales*, 115/automne (2003) : 412-23. Golubev 2004. Maria V. Kovateva, "Puteshestviie Dzh. Stejnbeka v SSSR v 1947 g.: rabota VOKSa i povsednvnost glazami avtora 'Russkogo dnevnika,"' *Istochnikovedcheskiie issledovaniia*. Vyp. 2. (Moscow, 2004), 147-166. Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (New York et al.: Oxford UP, 2012). Jean-François Fayet, "VOKS: The Third Dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy," *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013). Eiusdem, *VOKS. Le laboratoire helvétique* (Geneva: georg éditeur, 2014).

[xxv]Obiasnitelnaiia zapiska k planu podgotovki materialov VOKS dlia zarubezhnykh stran na 1947 god). Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI), fond 17, opis' 128, delo 255, list 167-8.

[xxvi]Golubev 2004: 118.

[xxvii]Golubev 2004: 155.

[xxviii]On the Soviet cultural propaganda in Austria a prodigious amount of excellent literature has been produced. Some of the most important works are: Wilfried Aichinger, *Sowjetische Österreichpolitik, 1943-1945* (Wien: Osterreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte, 1977). Wolfgang Mueller, *Österreichische Zeitung und die Russische Stunde: die Informationspolitik der sowjetischen Besatzungsmacht in Österreich 1945 – 1955* (Dipl-Arb., University of Vienna, 1998). Wolfgang Wagner, *Die Besatzungszeit aus sowjetischer Sicht* (Dipl.-Arb., University of Vienna, 1998). Wolfgang Mueller, *Die sowjetische Besatzung in Osterreich 1945-1955 und ihre politische Mission* (Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2005). Alexander S. Stykalin, "K voprosu ob effektivnosti propagandy sovetskoi kultury za rubezhom v pervyie poslevoiennyie gody (iz opyta propagandy v Avstrii)," *Rossiisko-Avstriiskii almanakh: istoricheskiie i kulturnyie paralleli.* Vyp. 2 (Moscow-Graz-Vienna-Stavropol, 2006), 213-230. Michael Kraus, „*Kultura : Der Einfluss der sowjetischen Besatzung auf die österreichische Kultur 1945-1955* (Univ. Dipl.-Arb. University of Vienna, 2008). Barbara Stelzl-Marx, *Stalins Soldaten in Österreich: die Innensicht der sowjetischen Besatzung 1945-1955* (Wien et al.: Böhlau,

2012).

[xxix]Abschrift der konstituerenden Ausschusssitzung der ÖSG, 2. Juni 1945. State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), fond 5283, opis' 16. delo 8, listy 287-90. M. Koptelov from the Propaganda Department reported on ASC foundation almost ten days later, on June 11th (Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVP RF), fond 800, opis' 25, papka 120. delo 29, list 3).

[xxx]Nekotoryie zamechaniia o rabote VOKS. 10.07.1946. RGASPI, fond 5, opis' 10, delo 83, list 109-10. Its inefficiency was quite rightly stressed by the controlling officials, see: *Akt prijoma-sdachi del po VOKS'u*. July-August 1948. RGASPI, fond 17, opis' 128, delo 463, listy 126-137; *Postanovleniie Soveta Ministrov SSSR 'O meropriiatiiakh po uluchsheniiju raboty VOKS*. RGASPI, fond 17, opis' 128, delo 1196, list 7-19. (Most of VOKS documentation, however, is conserved in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF).) Later historiography joined their opinion.

[xxxi]President Kemenov to Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs Dekanozov, 22.V.1945. AVP RF, fond AV-800, opis' 25, papka 120, delo 29, list 1; A letter from September 4th, 1945. Ibid., list 8. *Spisok Upolnomochennykh VOKS za granitsei*. April 25th, 1947, RGASPI, fond 17, opis' 128, delo 258, list 363.

[xxxii]*Obiasnitelnaiia zapiska k planu raboty po Avstrii na 1947 god*. Head of CED Y. Meleshko. RGASPI, Fond 17, opis' 128, delo 255, list 140.

[xxxiii]St. Vogel rightly points out that their understanding of culture was essentially the same. (Op.cit. 206.)