




War of Images: Visual Propaganda Efforts of German and British Governments in Turkey during the Second World War

Görüntülerin Savaşı: Alman ve İngiliz Hükümetlerinin İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye'deki Görsel Propaganda Girişimleri

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Abstract: *The Second World War was not only “the war of bombs and bullets” but also of images and words.¹ Even though Turkey did not enter the war until February 1945, Allied and Axis forces tried to influence the Turkish government and society with propaganda and intelligence campaigns. They used radio, cinema, newsreels, propaganda magazines, posters, and pamphlets to persuade Turkish people. Cinema and magazines, in other terms, moving images and still images – photographs – constituted crucial tools of this propaganda. Trying to stay neutral in the war, the Turkish government fought with the “inappropriate” images through strict censorship. However, despite all the obstacles, both sides of the war found Turkish allies to cooperate in order to transmit their messages.*

Keywords: *Turkey in the Second World War, Visual propaganda, Film propaganda, Propaganda magazines, Media censorship*

Öz: *2. Dünya Savaşı sadece bombaların ve kurşunların değil, aynı zamanda görüntülerin ve kelimelerin de savaşıydı. Türkiye her ne kadar Şubat 1945'e kadar savaşın dışında kalmayı tercih etse de, Müttefik ve Mihver Devletleri Türk Hükümeti'ni ve halkını etkilemek için yoğun bir propaganda ve istihbarat faaliyeti yürüttüler. Müttefik ve Mihver Devletleri bu girişimlerinde insanların anlam dünyalarına ulaşmak ve akıllarını çelmek için radyo, sinema, haber filmi, resimli dergiler, posterler ve el ilanlarından yararlandılar. Sinema ve resimli dergiler, yani diğer bir tanımla, duran – fotoğraf – ve hareket eden görüntüler bu propaganda faaliyetlerinin temelini oluşturdu. Türk Hükümeti bir yandan tarafsız kalmaya çalışırken, diğer yandan da “uygunsuz” bulunduğu görüntülerle mücadele etmek için katı bir sansür uyguladı. Fakat Türk hükümetinin koyduğu tüm engellere rağmen, savaşın iki tarafı da mesajlarını kamuoyuna ulaştırmalarına yardımcı olacak işbirlikçiler bulmayı başardılar.*

Anahtar kelimeler: *2. Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye, Görsel propaganda, Film propagandası, Propaganda dergileri, Sansür*

Introduction

The Second World War was not only “the war of bombs and bullets” but also of images and words.² Allied and Axis powers effectively used radio, newsreels, movies, propaganda magazines, posters, and pamphlets to persuade the masses and get

¹ Elliot Aronson and Anthony Pratkanis, *Age of Propaganda: the Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, New York: W. H. Freeman, 1992, p.166.

² Aronson and Pratkanis, 1992, p.166.

Gönderim 15 Ocak 2022
Düzeltilmiş Gönderim 14 Mart 2022
Kabul 16 Mart 2022

Received 15 January 2022
Received in revised form 14 March 2022
Accepted 16 March 2022

their support. As pointed by the British academic Taylor, the Second World War was a total war in the proper sense of the word; together with radio and cinema, “it was unlikely that any square yard of Britain could remain untouched either by the war or by the news about it.”³

The course of the war directly affected the Turkish government’s attitude and foreign politics vis-à-vis the actors in the war. Selim Deringil notes that World War II politics in Turkey can be seen as inconsistent and unprincipled from the outside.⁴ However, the government’s ultimate objective was to stay outside the war, and it ran its relations with belligerent states meticulously. The single-party government constituted his discourse very carefully and controlled every medium of mass communication.

British and German governments “bombed” Turkish citizens with images and words emphasizing their “fair” and “just” cause and strength. Turkish Government allowed foreign propaganda to some extent, but when necessary, took strict precautions to limit such activities. The administration of martial law maintained the right to prevent the publication and import of newspapers, magazines, and books; close down printing houses; and censor the press, mail, and telegrams. The Law on the Press enacted on June 28, 1938, allowed unprecedented government control over the media.

In Turkey, the Second World War piqued people’s curiosity and worried them. Even though the war directly affected economic and social life, people mainly remained unaware of recent developments concerning the war. The public’s sources of information regarding the war were limited. News stories on the War were communicated to the people after being filtered narrowly by the Turkish Government. Behiç Köksal, who was working in the film industry in that period, says:

Between 1942 and 1943, the Second World War continued with violence. The only news we got was what we listened to on the radio... We did not have more details on the war... People wanted to learn the details of the war...⁵

Under such circumstances, cinema was seen as an excellent medium to satisfy people’s curiosity. As emphasized in the editorial of the May 1942 issue of *Yurt ve Dünya* (Homeland and World) magazine, cinema was “one of the most important mediums that connect us with the outer world.”⁶ As the population was going through a challenging period, forgetting about reality and diving into a world of imagination allowed films to reach people’s inner worlds quickly. Cinema was not just “entertainment”; it also informed and formed people’s opinions. Both the Allied and Axis forces tried to benefit from the allure of this art form. As Senator Nye pointed out in 1941:

...When you go to the movies, you go there to be entertained. You are not figuring on listening to a debate about the war. You settle yourself in your seat with your mind wide open. And then the picture starts—goes to work

³ Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.151.

⁴ Selim Deringil, “Hasta Adam’ın Dinç Evlatları,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, 121 (January 2004), p.81.

⁵ İnal Karagözoğlu, *Ankara’da Sinemalar Vardı*, İstanbul: Bileşim Yayınevi, 2004, p.84.

⁶ *Yurt ve Dünya*, 17 (May 1942), p.121.

on you, all done by trained actors, full of drama, cunningly devised, and soft passionate music underscoring it. Before you know where you are, you have actually listened to a speech designed to make you believe that Hitler is going to get you if you don't watch out...⁷

Undoubtedly, art has the purpose of conveying specific political or social messages to manipulate public opinion. Visual arts, especially cinema and photographs, served governments to transmit ideological and political messages. Aside from movies, magazines were an essential medium of propaganda of the period. These magazines mainly were a collage of thousands of images showing the capabilities and strength of the German or British forces and highlighting their military force and human power. As pointed out by Paul Virilio: "There is no war, then, without representation, no sophisticated weaponry, without psychological mystification. Weapons are tools not just for destruction but also for perception."⁸

The following anecdote demonstrates how visual propaganda had become a part of daily life during the war in Turkey:

From 1939 to 1946, they used to hand us *Signal* magazine in every barber-shop. In this magazine, we looked at examples of German war art which struck in our subconscious. Images resembling paintings depicting the enemy's shattered debris, a German tank, a cannon... or a simple sketch showing that Poland was swept away in twenty-five days. In the presence of these biased images, some people believed we should side with the Germans or remembered our failure in the Great War.⁹

Although the propaganda magazines circulated by the Allied and Axis Powers in Turkey did not offer much Turkish content, they provided powerful visual materials to draw people's attention. Since people were quite interested in the war, they did not ignore material offering the actuality of the war.

Before going into the details of the visual propaganda activities conducted in Turkey, it would be helpful to offer an overview of the propaganda organization of German and British governments in Turkey by the outbreak of the war.

Organization of Allied and Axis Propaganda in Turkey

The fact that Turkey was neutral during the war allowed both sides to propagandize in Turkey. While the British propaganda strategy was fine-tuned, gentle, and attentive, the Germans were oppressive towards the Turkish government, exerting their authority to the point of pushing the bounds of diplomacy in some instances.

When the war began, Germany expedited the reorganization of its activities in Turkey. The German News Bureau (DNB) began propaganda and intelligence activities and used newspaper articles and radio broadcasts to influence the Turkish public.¹⁰ Along with DNB, the German Military Intelligence Service and the Intelligence Agency of the SS (SD) were deployed to Istanbul.

⁷ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnel, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, California: Sage Publications, 2006, p.113.

⁸ Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, London: Verso, 1989, p.8.

⁹ *Komünizm Propagandası II*, p.4. The booklet is in Turkish. The publication date, the name of the publishing house, and the author are not written on the booklet.

¹⁰ Süleyman Seydi, *1939-1945 Zor Yıllar: 2. Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye'de İngiliz-Alman Propaganda ve İstihbarat Savaşı*, Ankara: Asil Yayın Dağıtım, 2006, p.4.

During the war, one indicator of Turkey's strategic significance for Germany was that von Papen, who played a role in Hitler's rise and was the Vice-Chancellor under Hitler, was appointed as ambassador to Ankara. After the Nazis came to power, they initiated a comprehensive reorganization in Turkey.

Near the end of 1942, after the German failures on the Soviet and African fronts, the themes of German propaganda in Turkey began changing. The focus was no longer German victory but the threat that Bolsheviks would decide Turkey's destiny. Glasneck points out that active, fascist propaganda in Turkey between 1940 and 1941 prevented Turkey from fulfilling its obligations to Britain and members of the Balkan Pact. At the same time, it resulted in Turkey being used as the base of propaganda and intelligence in the Near East and Arabia.¹¹

As for Britain, the most crucial objective was to oppose German propaganda. While the Germans were sometimes oppressive or threatening, the British preferred a calm approach through their propaganda activities and fully exploited their contacts and opportunities. The British tried to manufacture a pro-Allied public opinion or prevent public opinion from swinging to the Axis. The British Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Special Operation Executive (SOE) organized propaganda activities in Turkey. Starting in August 1940, the SOE became operational and developed a vast propaganda and intelligence network in Turkey. The SOE managed whispering campaigns among members of parliament and through employees of the Ottoman Bank.¹²

Signal- Hitler's Wartime Picture Magazine

Signal magazine was produced by the *Wehrmacht* (the Armed Forces of Nazi Germany.) Published fortnightly in as many as twenty languages, *Signal* had "the largest sale of any magazine published in Europe" from 1940 to 1945 with a peak of 2,5 million circulations in 1943.¹³ *Signal* was available in German, English, Italian, French, and Greek in Turkey. The Turkish edition of *Signal* came out in 1941.¹⁴ Before 1941, there were no Turkish summaries or captions in *Signal*; however, pictures were used so effectively that anyone who scanned its pages would be enticed.

Signal was distributed in public spaces where many would have access, like barber-shops. The magazine satisfied the people's curiosity about the war to some extent. Ads for *Signal* appeared in nationalist publications of the period, such as *Çınaraltı* magazine, announcing that interviews and pictures depicting all stages of the war would be in the new issue of *Signal*.¹⁵ A thousand cameramen equipped with the most modern Agfa-Gevaert color cameras worked for the editors of *Signal*.¹⁶ As John Kuroski indicates, color photographs of the Second World War offered "a certain vital sense of the here-and-now" and reminded people that "the subjects captured were real people just like us."¹⁷ The power of the German War industry and the success of its air force were continuously presented on the pages of the

¹¹ Johannes Glasneck, *Türkiye'de Faşist Alman Propagandası*, trans. Arif Gelen, Ankara: Onur Yayınları, 1970, p.48-49.

¹² Seydi, *1939- 1945 Zor Yıllar*, p.6.

¹³ L. Mayer, *Signal: Hitler's Wartime Picture Magazine*, London: Bison Publishing Company, 1976, p.1.

¹⁴ Mayer, *Signal*, p.3.

¹⁵ *Çınaraltı*, 65, December 19, 1942, end cover.

¹⁶ Mayer, *Signal*, p.2.

¹⁷ John Kuroski, "Rarely Seen Color Photos of World War II That Truly Bring History to Life" Accessed on 10 January 2021, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/world-war-2-in-color>.

magazine. Mayer emphasizes that “the image *Signal* hoped to create was that of Germany as the great benefactor of European peoples and civilizations.”¹⁸

In this period, news from *Signal* featured heavily in the Turkish press. In September 1940, the Director General of the Press Sarper¹⁹ notified the Prime Ministry that some even strove to ban the magazine. Sarper openly defined the magazine as “the German propaganda magazine *Signal*.” On September 27, 1940, Reşat Feyzi wrote an article entitled “Secret Poison” in *Son Telgraf* newspaper. Feyzi explained that “this nicely-printed masterpiece of journalism and propaganda was published in Berlin and used to spread Nazi ideas.” He added he saw many people reading *Signal* magazine on the ferry and tram. According to Feyzi, those who followed *Signal* were innocently looking at a nice photo, reading an article on fashion, or enjoying a story. However, they were unknowingly breathing in “the secret poison” between the lines of *Signal*.²⁰

Foto Magazin: The Most Popular Magazine in Turkey Turning into a British Propaganda Magazine

In August 1939’ issue of *Ayın Tarihi*, Abidin Daver was not hiding his sympathy for the British and explaining that during a gathering he attended at Ayaspaşa, he saw the British and Turkish navies anchored “side by side, in line, as though they were parts of the same fleet” and that these navies were the protectors of the peace.²¹

At the beginning of the war, the British were content with the pro-British attitude of the Turkish press. A few months into the war – when Germans began distributing punctilious and visually stimulating newspapers and magazines – the British became worried. Despite wartime monetary and transportation problems, the British decided to procure and sell low-price magazines such as *The Illustrated London* and *The Times* in Turkey. However, it was not easy to transport these magazines due to war conditions.²² Therefore, the British found a practical solution by collaborating with a Turkish publisher.

An unheard-of example of British wartime propaganda in Turkey is *Foto Magazin*, published by Süreyya Bükey, who owned Foto Süreyya, one of Istanbul’s established photography studios. The first issue was published on May 1, 1938. The magazine positioned itself as an art and “tabloid” magazine. Its content was popular rather than political. In the first years of the magazine, authors like Sadri Ertem, Nizamettin Nazif, Selim Sırrı Tarcan, Suad Derviş, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, Cevat Şakir, Nurullah Ataç, and Yahya Kemal coming from a wide array of backgrounds wrote on women, history, health, childcare, sports, cinema, and fashion. Articles were all embellished with vivid photographs taken by *Foto Süreyya*. In January 1939, in an advertisement published in *Cumhuriyet*, *Foto Magazin* identified itself as the most popular magazine in Turkey. It was 90 pages long in a 16.5 by 24-centimeter format and sold for 25 piasters. However, after the issue 24 of 108 pages,

¹⁸ Mayer, *Signal*, p.1.

¹⁹ The Directorate General of the Press was the responsible state body for propaganda during the single-party regime.

²⁰ PRTDSA, CDGT, Box no:232 Folder no:561 Row no:17, p.1-2.

²¹ Abidin Daver, “İngiliz Dostluğu ve Türk Donanması,” *Ayın Tarihi*, 69, Ankara: Basın Genel Direktörlüğü, August 1939, p.82-83.

²² Seydi, *1939- 1945 Zor Yıllar*, p.191-194.

which was published in May 1940, there was a change. The July 1940 issue was only 24 pages in a 24 by 31 centimeters format and sold for ten piasters.

Figure 1. *Foto Magazin*, no. 5, September 1, 1938

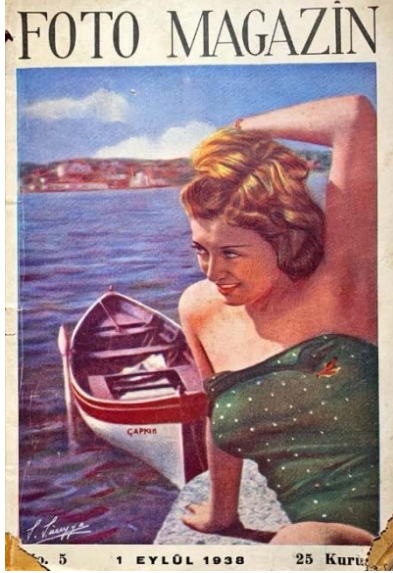
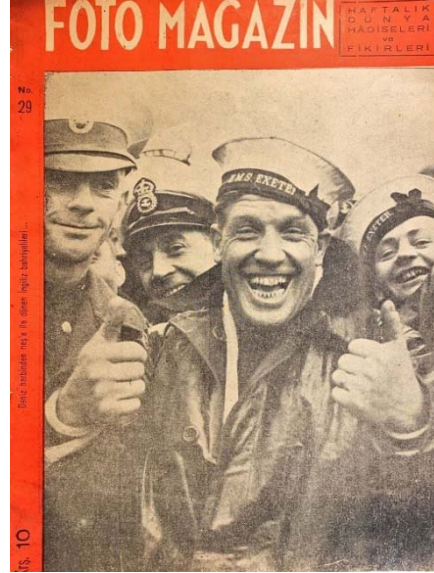


Figure 2. *Foto Magazin*, no. 29, June 9, 1941



This new format was the same as those other propaganda magazines such as *Signal*, *Parade*, *Réalité*. The new ads did not define *Foto Magazin* as a tabloid; it was a magazine that published news and pictures of the war and global realities. The manager was no longer Süreyya Bükey, but R. Kalenderoğlu, and it was not bi-monthly, but weekly. The “most popular magazine in Turkey” thus turned into a British propaganda magazine.

How did one of the most popular magazines of the time turn into a British propaganda magazine? The answer is closely related to the story of the magazine’s owner, Süreyya Bükey. Bükey was born in 1895 in Istanbul and graduated from Galatasaray High School and the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* (Faculty of Political Science). Bükey had a significant network of school friends, the Republican elite. Cevdet Kerim İncedayı, a notable member of the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, hereafter RPP.), was a close friend. Bükey preferred business to politics. but benefited from his reliable network. Bükey’s first venture was a slipper factory; additionally, he opened a photography shop in Çiçek Pasajı in 1924. In 1928, Bükey opened Foto Süreyya Photography Studio at 509 İstiklal Avenue, near Tünel Square. From 1936-1938, most of Atatürk’s portraits were shot in the Foto Süreyya studio. Bükey’s son, Orhan Bükey claims that 90 percent of Atatürk portraits in state offices are credited to Foto Süreyya. Appearing on the Foto Süreyya’s window display was almost a certain and immediate forerunner for those who were expected to rise in politics in general, and in the government specifically.²³

According to Orhan Bükey, nobody dared to publish an Allied propaganda magazine in Turkey during the Second World War. The reason for this reservation was to be on the safe side in case of German occupation. However, Süreyya Bükey had the tenacity, connections, and privilege to do it. Foto Süreyya had its own printing

²³ Interview with Orhan Bükey, Son of Süreyya Bükey (Istanbul, February 11, 2016)

house in Cağaloğlu.²⁴ With the outbreak of the war, Süreyya Bükey bargained with the British government to turn the *Foto Magazin* into a periodical of British propaganda. R. Kalenderoğlu, a close friend and business partner of Bükey, became the magazine's owner. In this way, the British secured one of the country's most popular magazines. The magazine's pages were mainly filled with photos of politicians of the Allied forces, the American navy, the British air fleet, imprisoned Axis soldiers, and the British homefront. The Turkish army and Turkish soldiers were also recurring subjects.

Ownership of the magazine shifted to Turan Ramazanoğlu in February 1941 and to Cihat Baban in the second half of 1941,²⁵ both of whom were close to Süreyya Bükey. The magazine's last issue is estimated to have been published in August 1943; its publication was restricted after this date. Turkish authorities had banned the production and circulation of propaganda materials in the Turkish language by foreigners in Turkey by 1941.²⁶ It seems Süreyya Bükey had some privilege and started to publish another periodical called *Ufuk Weekly Political Magazine*, which would last until 1945.²⁷ Süreyya Bükey also printed the French *Realité* magazine in Turkey towards the war's end.

Another British propaganda magazine circulated in Turkey was *Cephe* (Front.)²⁸ Though not indicated on the copyright page, the magazine was a venture of the Foreign Office of the British Government. The first issue was published on January 15, 1943. It was issued until 1947. The magazine was published in Cairo, Britain's second most crucial base after London.

When first distributed, *Cephe* experienced some obstacles. The British pointed out the privileges Germans were enjoying, and with the initiative of Selim Sarper, *Cephe* was allowed to publish with a Turkish name and captions in Turkish. However, this permission did not last long. In September 1943, import of foreign publications in Turkish was banned, upon which *Cephe* continued being published as *Vanguard*.²⁹

As the name suggests, *Cephe* provided news from the British fronts in the Second World War. In the magazine, the war efforts of the United Kingdom, pictures from various fronts, war investments, and women's contributions to the war were conveyed through qualitative and quantitative information. Many photos were captioned in Turkish, which was helpful before the magazine was fully published in Turkish in 1945. Aside from news of the war, reports on Turkey were featured. Institutions such as the People's Houses, Village Institutes, the Karabük Iron and Steel Factory, the Port of Mersin, and the Kayseri Cotton Mill were praised as prominent achievements of the Republic. The magazine highlighted the relation between Britain and Turkey through news stories like the meeting of Churchill and İnönü in Adana and the opening of the new pier of İskenderun Harbour built by

²⁴ Interview with Orhan Bükey, Son of Süreyya Bükey (Istanbul, February 11, 2016)

²⁵ Baban was 30 years old at the time. Later he became the editor-in-chief in *Yeni Sabah* and *Cumhuriyet* newspapers and owner and lead author for *Tasvir* newspaper. In 1946, Baban entered parliament as a member of the DP.

²⁶ Seydi, *1939- 1945 Zor Yıllar*, p.193.

²⁷ Interview with Orhan Bükey, Son of Süreyya Bükey (Istanbul, February 11, 2016).

²⁸ The magazine was published biweekly and consisted of 24 pages.

²⁹ Seydi, *1939- 1945 Zor Yıllar*, p.199.

the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation.³⁰

Film Propaganda: Entertainment or Persuasion?

Trotsky once said that cinema would “take place of religion and vodka.”³¹ Cinema was seen as “the great eye-opener for the masses” and an educational weapon at the beginning of the 20th Century.³² The power of persuasion of the medium was understood quickly after the first public demonstration of the Lumière Brothers on 28 December 1895 in Paris.³³ Cinema was the dominant mass media until the coming of television.³⁴

Despite obstacles related to the imposition of martial law, Allied and Axis powers managed to share films that furthered their causes with the Turkish public. Black-outs affected movie theaters after martial law was declared in Istanbul, Kırklareli, Edirne, Tekirdağ, Dardanelles, and Kocaeli on November 20, 1940. Due to the blackouts, screening hours were changed.³⁵ At this moment, news spread of a film screening on the war. Though there was little information on the film, the Ulus Movie Theater in Ankara was invaded by a flock of curious citizens excited to see the movie. However, the film was a ten-minute newsreel by the French Pathé Film Company, and the audience got angry. The newsreel was insufficient to satisfy their curiosity, and they ransacked the building. The theater owner tried to explain that he was also deceived, but he could not convince the crowd and was forced to return the ticket fees.³⁶

Before the Second World War, the screening of newsreels was a regular practice before screening foreign films in Turkish movie theaters. Many memoirs mention that newsreels under the name of “World News” were screened before foreign films. Newsreels were the “only source of moving-image photographic journalism available in the world until the arrival of the television.”³⁷ Pathé News, Paramount News, The March of Time, Fox Movietone News, and Universal Newsreel were pioneer companies producing newsreel. During the period in question, the newsreels distributed in Turkey mainly were Paramount and Fox. It should be noted that in 1930 there was a quota on foreign films in Turkey; however, educational and scientific films and newsreels were not included.³⁸

Even though newsreels were made to inform the viewer of the events and circumstances of the day, they were the most political of genres. The well-known Soviet documentarian and newsreel director, Dziga Vertov, used newsreels to ensure the continuity of the revolution and mobilize social change for the masses with his realistic cinema approach.³⁹

³⁰ *Cephe*, 21, October 29, 1945, p.3.

³¹ Oliver Thomson, *Easily Led: A History of Propaganda*, United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing, 1999, p.39.

³² Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russian and Nazi Germany*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1998, p.35.

³³ Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality*, London: Continuum, 1999, p.1.

³⁴ Reeves, 1999, p.4.

³⁵ Mustafa Gökmen, *Başlangıçtan 1950'ye kadar Türk Sinema Tarihi ve Eski İstanbul Sinemaları*, İstanbul: Denetim Ajans Basımevi, 1989, p.149.

³⁶ Karagözoğlu, 2004, p.84.

³⁷ Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911-1967*, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011, p.1.

³⁸ Rifat N. Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years, US Diplomatic Documents on Turkey*, İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2007, p.30-32.

³⁹ Michael Renoy, “Newsreel: Old and New: Towards an Historical Profile”, *Film Quarterly*, 41/1 (1987), p.21.

The single-party enacted a film censorship statute (bylaw 2/11551) in July 1939, and during the Second World War years, state control over this domain increased. Ten clauses of Article 7 of the Review of Films and Scripts regulation banned the following:⁴⁰

1. All scripts, translations of scripts, and screenings of films that propagandize any country,
2. Demean any race or nation,
3. Offend the sentiments of friendly countries and nations,
4. Propagandize religion,
5. Promote political, economic, or social ideologies that are against the national regime,
6. Are against our general upbringing, morals, and national sentiments,
7. Devalue military honor and dignity and propagandize against the military,
8. Are harmful to the defense and security of the nation,
9. Promote the committing of crimes, or
10. Films that could be used as a propaganda tool against Turkey.

During the sensitive period of the Second World War, the government needed to control the content of films that could be political. This is why foreign films were censored, and further vetting was applied to films that foreigners wished to broadcast in Turkey. A pamphlet entitled *Komünizm Propagandası 2* (Communist Propaganda 2) circulated in this period states that cinema's crucial role in wartime propaganda:

We saw films – supposedly love stories – that showed air force or navy maneuvers from beginning to end during wartime. Given these images, the reasonable spectator left the theater with a particular belief; emotionally, on the other hand, they had either feelings of good faith or hate and anger depending on their partisanship.⁴¹

Fritz Hippler⁴², the German filmmaker at the head of the film department in the Propaganda Ministry of Nazi Germany, points out that: “In cinema, more than in the theatre, the spectator must know whom he should hate and whom he should love.”⁴³ Cinema had the power to engage people's emotions and sensibilities.

Archival documents are full of censorship orders of foreign films at this period. On October 31, 1940, the Minister of Internal Affairs wrote to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, informing them that parts of imported English military newsreels would offend the Germans and Italians. Even though the censorship committee edited out the scenes in question, these films were propaganda, and the minister requested permission to ban such films completely. The response of the Prime Minister was affirmative. Even though Turkey was closer to the Allied forces by this point in the war, they did not want to offend Axis forces. Von Papen's

⁴⁰ Turhan Gürkan, “Türk Sinemasının Tepesinde Sallanan Demokles'in Kılıcı: Sansür,” *Türk Sinemasında Sansür*, Ankara: Kitle Yayıncılık, 2000, p.19-20.

⁴¹ *Komünizm Propagandası II*, p.4. The booklet is in Turkish. The publication date, the name of the publishing house, and the author are not written on the booklet.

⁴² Hippler was the director of one of the most virulent anti-Semitic propaganda films, “the Eternal Jew.” Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, p.174.

⁴³ Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, p.175.

continuous pressure on the Turkish government probably factored into this attitude.⁴⁴ Ankara was cornered when Axis forces advanced to the Balkans in March 1941. After June 1941, foreign films were rigorously censored. New regulations banned films of the war fronts or anything regarding the war.

How to Avoid Film Censorship?

During the Second World War, the RPP collaborated with the British Council⁴⁵ on film matters. The British Council's – established in 1934 – purpose was to offer foreign audiences an alternative “democratic” ideology or *the British way of life* in the era of totalitarian states.⁴⁶ Films suggested by the British Council were sent to the People's Houses upon approval of the General Secretariat of the RPP. The British Council asked to distribute movies on its own, and the General Secretariat allowed them to distribute films as long as it was with the knowledge of the Fifth Bureau.⁴⁷ Hence, in 1943, the British Council organized film screenings in many People's Houses.⁴⁸ Most films were cultural films on technical and social issues that did not contain any political message. For instance, B. Lükas, representative of the British Council in Ankara, screened *London Zoo*, *The King of Cotton*, *Healthy People*, *How A Phone Works*, and *Resin* films in People's Houses.⁴⁹

During the shortage of films, Lale Film, a private film company owned by Cemil Filmer, thought that showing military propaganda films of the British Consulate would be a stopgap. The consulate was keen to screen these films. Lale Film chose films and showed them at its theater.⁵⁰ This vexed the Germans who warned Filmer with the direct “greetings” of von Papen. Filmer informed the Germans that it had screened these films for commercial – not propaganda – purposes and asked the German consulate to send its films if they had any. He promised to screen films he deemed appropriate. However, the Germans distrusted Filmer and rented the Ar Film Theater to screen the German propaganda films.⁵¹

As for Germany's efforts, Ambassador von Papen hosted film screenings at the embassy and German clubs and screened *Sieg im Westen* (Victory in the West), the famous propaganda film that depicted the German “war machine.”⁵² A report prepared by the British on the propaganda activities of Germans in Turkey, dated 1942, claims that Necip Erses from *Ses* Movie Theater, *Şark* Movie Theater, *Çemberlitaş* Movie Theater, City Theater, and Sami Konay are among individuals and institutions cooperating with the Germans. *Ses Film* was, in fact, the representative of the German *Universum Film AG*⁵³ (UFA) production company.⁵⁴ Lüks and *Ses*

⁴⁴ PRTDSA, CDGT, Box no:235, Folder no:584, Row no:15, p.1-2.

⁴⁵ Prior to the War, in March 1938, the British Council had suggested a list of sound films to publicize Britain to Turkish citizens better and thus reinforce cultural relations between two countries. PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1208 Folder no:8 Row no:1 p.64.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *British Propaganda*, p.77.

⁴⁷ Fifth Bureau was the responsible office for film propaganda under the General Administrative Council of the RPP by 1937.

⁴⁸ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:212 Folder no:25 Row no:2 p.29-34.

⁴⁹ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1208 Folder no:10 Row no:3 p.11.

⁵⁰ Cemil Filmer, *Hatıralar: Türk Sinemasında 65 Yıl*, İstanbul: Emek Matbaacılık ve İlançılık, 1984, p.179.

⁵¹ Filmer, *Hatıralar*, p.180.

⁵² Glasneck, *Türkiye'de Faşist*, p.29.

⁵³ The UFA was founded in 1917 and became one of the most important supporters of National Socialist propaganda after 1933.

⁵⁴ Giovanni Scognamillo, *Cadde-i Kebir'de Sinema*, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1991, p.26.

Movie Theaters, located in Istanbul, only showed German Films.⁵⁵

Both Allied and Axis powers considered the People's Houses an efficient channel for reaching the Turkish people. On December 16, 1942, a letter sent by H. Türkmen, Undersecretary General of the RPP, to the Eminönü People's House demonstrated the sensibilities regarding the inspection of films during the Second World War. Türkmen had heard that three films, *The Secret of Life*, *The History of Microscope*, and *Berlin Olympics*, were screened at the Eminönü People's House on November 1. He was intrigued as to where the People's House had procured these films and requested an immediate explanation concerning the source of these films. The president of the People's House bragged that they procured these films from Dr. Feridun Frik, the Istanbul representative of Bayer Pharmaceuticals, upon request of medical students. The films were screened following a conference in which students and professors participated. He emphasized that the movies did not contain any malice; the event was worthwhile, and everyone was happy. He added that it was beneficial to screen such culture films to citizens, university students, and schools and that they were planning to organize "culture days" to do so.⁵⁶

What he meant by culture films are educational films. The movie "Berlin Olympics," which was screened along with the other films, was a newsreel on the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Considering that the 1936 Olympics was a pageant of Nazi propaganda, this newsreel was purposefully incorporated into the mix of health-related educational films. Interestingly, in this period, the Bayer company was strongly associated with the Nazis in the Turkish government. Bayer coordinated the advertisements of German companies published in Turkish newspapers, deciding how many ads would be given to which newspapers. Bayer's representative in Turkey, Widmann, allegedly threatened Zekeriya Sertel from *Tan* newspaper to stop advertising as long as the newspaper continued publishing articles against German interests.⁵⁷ Bayer presumably communicated with Nazi authorities on propaganda, and the company's endeavor to screen these films were fueled by Nazi propaganda.

The Eminönü People's House continued causing "incidents." A week later, Türkmen read in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper that a film on soccer was screened at Eminönü People's House. He immediately wrote to the president and asked where and with whose assistance they had procured this film. The president of the People's House clarified that they had acquired the film from the British Council. Türkmen's reply was decisive: films not covered by Article 51 Article of the Regulation on People's Houses may not be screened unless the General Secretariat has sent an official notification to do so. The General Secretariat must first inspect films screened at the People's Houses. If approved, the General Secretariat of the RPP would distribute these to the People's Houses.⁵⁸

In April 1943, the General Secretariat of the RPP sent a letter to the presidents of People's Houses to warn them against foreign films. The letter stated that films were powerful and efficient instruments of propaganda and reminded them that applications to screen films should be directed to the party.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ali Özuyar, "Varlık Vergisi Mağduru Sinemacılar," *Kebikeç*, 27, 2009, p.300.

⁵⁶ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1208, Folder no:8, Row no:1, p.68.

⁵⁷ Seydi, *1939- 1945 Zor Yıllar*, p.53.

⁵⁸ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1208, Folder no:8, Row no:1, p.57.

⁵⁹ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1214, Folder no:32, Row no:1, p.12.

Bayer contacted other People's Houses, as well, for film screenings. In June 1943, the Edirne People's House asked the approval of the General Secretariat of the RPP to screen scientific films provided by Bayer. The General Secretariat allowed the screening of twenty scientific, educational, and amateur films, including *Dental Malformations*, *Fighting Pain*, *The First Medical Plane in Turkey*, and *The Eleventh Berlin Olympics in 1936*.⁶⁰ Bayer's representative in Turkey, *Widmann ve Şeriki* Company, directly contacted the General Secretariat of the RPP and kept it apprised of upcoming films via booklets.⁶¹

On July 5, 1944, a letter sent from the Fifth Bureau to Eighth Bureau noted that various missionary organizations and companies were applying to the People's Houses to screen cultural films. For example, Ses Film Company had sent cultural films to the People's Houses in Eminönü, Kadıköy, Samsun, Zonguldak, and Edirne without the preliminary inspection of the party. Ses Film also wished to distribute fifty-one dubbed films, made by UFA, to the People's Houses. The letter emphasized that though on April 16, 1943, it was announced that no film would be screened in People's Houses unless first inspected by the General Secretariat of the RPP. However, this rule was not strictly enforced.⁶² The People's Houses were eager to screen films procured from outside sources because while they had theaters and projectors, they did not have films to screen.

In February 1944, the General Secretariat of the RPP wrote to all presidents of People's Houses, ordering them to reject all applications to screen films from outside sources.⁶³ The same issue resurfaced in September 1944, almost a year before the war's end. At a joint meeting of the centers responsible for cinema supervision, it was decided that "foreign actuality films and feature films on war could be screened if they were not propaganda films against "our national unity" and were in accord with "our" ethical, social, economic, and political principles."⁶⁴ Turkey's allegiances were clear near the end of the war, and British films on war could then be screened in movie theaters.

Conclusion

The advent of the bomber had dramatically changed the impact of the Second World War on people and cities. The bombing was not only physical; people were bombed with images, slogans, ideologies, and utopias. In this total war, both sides of the war used still and moving images to offer "ideal" imaginaries. These imaginaries aimed to show mighty Britain or Germany equipped with the most modern and technological equipment of the age.

The "peace at home, peace in the World" policy that the Turkish governments had pursued since 1923 continued through the Second World War. The Turkish government tried diligently to protect the balance between the two belligerent camps with no margin of error. This attitude is sometimes described as fickle. For instance, Turkey sold chrome to Germany until May 1944. But, on the other hand, the Turkish government was trying to negotiate in Yenice with the allied states to enter the War on their side in 1943.

⁶⁰ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1213, Folder no:29, Row no:1, p.47-48.

⁶¹ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1212, Folder no:25, Row no:2, p.28.

⁶² PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1214, Folder no:32, Row no:1, p.10- 11.

⁶³ PRTDSA, CRPP, Box no:1213, Folder no:28, Row no:1, p.56.

⁶⁴ PRTDSA, CDGT, Box no:86, Folder no:371, Row no:9, p.1.

The main concern of the ruling class was actually to preserve the existing status quo. The years of the Second World War also coincide with the years of the nation-state building process of the single-party government. The single-party government had its own moral, social, and cultural “sensitivities.” Therefore, it did not allow the circulation of any image or message by the warring states which were opposing to its discourse.

However, despite all the obstacles, both sides of the war found Turkish allies to cooperate. Behind this cooperation, there were two main reasons: ideological closeness and practical needs. When no one dared to publish a propaganda magazine for foreigners, a businessman, Süreyya Bükey, who had organic relations with the state, dared to do this work. Possibly benefiting from the pro-Allied stance of Selim Sarper, Bükey turned the country's most famous magazine into a British propaganda magazine in one night. Bükey had the tenacity, connections, and privilege to do it.

As for the practical needs, the war affected the procurement of foreign films negatively. Film companies that usually imported films from France and Germany had problems finding films. The best example of film shortage was People's Houses. People's Houses had a theater, a film machine, and an audience but no films to show. Regardless of its content, quality, and origin, Bayer's biased film supply offer was irreversibly attractive for them. The state's tendency to control and censor any medium of mass communication was realistic to a certain extent. Both the British and the Germans found ways to transmit their messages to the Turkish public by the most attractive means of the time: cinema and photographs.

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