

A EXAMINATION ON PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES OF THE TODT ORGANIZATION IN ITALY

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ABSTRACT

The Todt Organization (Organization Todt, OT) was founded in 1933 under the leadership of Fritz Todt to gather civilian and military engineering units in Nazi Germany under a single roof. When the Second World War began, the OT became responsible for all the official engineering works in both Germany and the occupied areas. In this study, the propaganda activities carried out by the OT in order to seize the work force in Italy were tried to be put forward in the Second World War. For this purpose, four propaganda posters, which were determined by using the sampling method within the propaganda posters used by the OT, were examined using semiotic analysis method in the qualitative research methods. The propaganda posters determined within the scope of the study were analyzed in the light of the French Linguist Roland Barthes' semiotics concepts. In the findings, it was found that the messages regarding that the welfare of the people would increase and the Allied States would lose the war in a short time when the Italian people worked within the OT were given in posters.

Keywords: *Todt organization, propaganda, italy, poster, semiotics.*

Jel Codes: *D83,D66, J21*

TODT TEŞKİLATI'NIN İTALYA'DA YÜRÜTTÜĞÜ PROPAGANDA FAALİYETLERİNE GENEL BAKIŞ ÖZET

Todt Teşkilatı (Organizasyon Todt, OT), 1933 yılında Nazi Almanyası'ndaki sivil ve askeri mühendislik birimlerini tek çatı altında toplamak amacıyla Fritz Todt liderliğinde kurulmuştur. İkinci Dünya Savaşı başladığında OT, hem Almanya'da hem de işgal edilen bölgelerdeki tüm resmi mühendislik işlerinden sorumlu hale gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda OT'un İtalya'da iş gücü el etmek amacıyla yürüttüğü propaganda faaliyetleri ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla OT tarafından kullanılan propaganda posterleri içerisinden amaçlı örneklem metodu kullanılarak belirlenen dört propaganda posterini nitel araştırma yöntemleri içerisinde yer alan göstergebilimsel analiz metodu kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında belirlenen propaganda posterleri Fransız Dil Bilimci Roland Barthes'ın düz anlam, yananlam ve mit kavramları ışığında analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgularda, İtalyan halkının OT bünyesinde çalışmasının halkın refah düzeyini arttıracak ve Müttefik Devletleri'nin kısa sürede yenileceği mesajlarının posterler üzerinden oluşturulmaya çalışıldığı bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Todt teşkilatı, propaganda, italya, poster, göstergebilim.*

Jel Kodları: *D83,D66, J21*

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Introduction

In World War II, Nazi Germany fought against the Allies on many different fronts. Nazi Germany needed more production in the offensive and defensive operations which it attempted to prevail over the Allies. In this process, a large labor shortage was created in Nazi Germany in response to increasing production needs. As a matter of fact, since the German workers in the factories were sent to the front in order to meet the increasing needs of the soldiers, different labor resources had to be addressed in order to obtain the production needs. The Nazis gave the Todt Organization (OT) the full authority and responsibility for meeting the labor needs. The OT resorted to two sources for the growing need for labor in Nazi Germany; prisoners in concentration camps and people in occupied areas. In particular, the OT asked for the participation of civilians who were under occupation and who sympathized with Nazi Germany. At this stage, it engaged an intensive propaganda. In the study, it was tried to explain how and in what ways posters were used in propaganda activities conducted by OT in World War II using semiotics method.

When the international literature is examined, it is seen that important academic studies about OT have been made. Soo (2007) examined the Spanish workers employed by the OT in the study of "Ambiguities at Work: Spanish Republican Exiles and The Organisation Todt in Occupied Bordeaux". Seidler (1984) analyzed the activities of the OT in World War II in the study of "Das Nationalsozialistische Kraftfahrkorps und die Organisation Todt im Zweiten Weltkrieg". Christopher (2014) explained the history of the OT from its foundation until its collapse in the study of "Organisation Todt From Autobahns to Atlantic Wall: Building the Third Reich". Desquesnes (1992) analyzed the activities of the OT in France in the study of "L'organisation Todt en France (1940-1944)".

The studies done in the field of semiotics in Turkey in general seems to be on the advertising analysis. For example; Arpa (2018) examined public spot ads about job security in the context of fear appeal in study of "The Use of The Fear Appeal Concept In The Public Service Advertisements Regarding The Occupational Safety". Gülada (2018) analyzed public spot ads on traffic accidents in terms of fear appeal in study of "The Use of The Fear Appeal Concept In Public Service Advertising Regarding Traffic Accidents". Gülada and Çakı (2018) examined commercial ads used in the consumption society dimension in study of "The Jil Socks Advertisement Example in Baudrillard's Consumer Society". Tanyeri Mazıcı and Çakı (2018) analyzed the use of authoritarian leaders in public spot ads in the context of fear appeal in study of "The Use of Adolf Hitler In Public Service Advertising In The Context of Fear Appeal".

However, in recent years it is observed that the important studies have been done in Turkey regarding propaganda posters in World War II. Karaca (2018) examined posters used to obtain workforce in the Italian Social Republic (1943-1945) established after the invasion of Italy by Nazi Germany in the study of "The Propaganda Activities of The Italian Social Republic to Obtain The Work Force". The study found that Italian propaganda used posters to encourage the Italian people to work in Germany and to prevent the work of Italian workers in the occupied territories of the Allied States. Çakı (2018) analyzed the ways in which propaganda posters were used in the construction of friend and enemy perception in the Italian Social Republic. In the findings, it was seen that the posters were represented as Nazi Germany, as the savior of Italy and Europe in the study of "The Examination on The Propaganda Posters of The Italian Social Republic in The Influence of The Nazi Germany". Çakı ve Gülada (2018) examined how posters were used in Vichy France (1940-1944) under the control of Nazi Germany in the context of invasion propaganda in the study of "The Occupation Propaganda in The Vichy France".

In the comprehensive literature review of the field, studies have'nt been found that examine the

posters used by OT for propaganda in both national and international studies. So this study is unique in the field.

With the data obtained within the scope of the study, it is tried to put forward the propaganda activities carried out in order to obtain labor force in World War II. As a matter of fact, the study is a precursor of public relations activities carried out by the institutions in order to obtain the labor force in human resources. In this respect, the study will shed light on the history of the campaigns carried out especially for the qualified labor force. With the data in the study, the institutions can see how the masses can be convinced in the campaigns conducted to obtain the labor force. In this way, it is explained what kind of subjects are highlighted in the prepared labor force campaigns. The study is an important resource for all institutions that try to recruit qualified labor force and keep existing qualified personnel.

1. The Relations between Nazi Germany and Italy in World War II

Benito Mussoli, leader of the National Fascist Party, was appointed as prime minister by Italian King III. Vittorio Emanuele in 1922. As soon as Mussolini came to power, he fought intensely for the dominance of Fascism ideology in Italy. Mussolini wanted Italy to reach its borders during the Roman Empire. To this end, an aggressive foreign policy was pursued in the international arena (Mussolini, 2016: 82). Mussolini's aggressive foreign policy led to Italy's isolation in the international arena.

Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party in Germany, came to power in 1933, so Mussolini had a powerful ally in the international arena (Macit, 2007: 45). The ideology of Nazism advocated by Hitler was very similar to Mussolini's Fascism ideology. In the course of time, Mussolini and Hitler started to act jointly in international arena (Passmore, 2014: 85). In 1938, apart from a few issues such as the imposition of Austria by Germany, Nazi Germany and Italy had a generally friendly period in their bilateral relations.

When Nazi Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, the Second World War begun. Britain, France and Poland were on the same front against Nazi Germany. In contrast, Italy preferred to remain neutral rather than supporting Nazi Germany. In 1939, Nazi Germany succeeded in invading Poland. In June 1940, when the German Army won a great victory in France, Italy changed its policy of neutrality and declared war on the Allies on June 10, 1945 (Keegan, 2016: 92). With the inclusion of Italy in the war, the Second World War spread to North Africa. Italy, with support from Nazi Germany, aimed to establish a superiority against the Allies in North Africa and Europe. In contrast, Italy lost all wars against the Allies (Macksey, 2012: 112). In the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union, in which the Italian Army supported Nazi Germany, the supremacy against Soviet troops was not achieved. The Axis Powers had a heavy defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad. Thus, the fate of the war begun to change against the Axis.

Mussolini was arrested by order of The Italian King after the Allied troops occupied the entire North Africa and then moved to Italy via Sicily. The new government, established with the overthrow of Mussolini, decided that Italy declared war against Nazi Germany. Mussolini's arrest led to a radical change in relations between Italy and Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany invaded Italy shortly against Italy's war declaration. At the same time, under Hitler's command, a unit of the German Army rescued Mussolini. With the support of the Nazis, Mussolini established a new Fascist state called the Italian Social Republic in the north of Italy. The state, founded by Mussolini, was fully driven by Nazi Germany. Mussolini continued his rule in support of the Nazis until he was killed by the Communist partisans in April 1945 (Hart, 2015: 936). With the murder of Mussolini, the Italian Social Republic became history.

2. The International Activities of the Todt Organization

The Todt Organization (Organization Todt, OT) was founded in 1933 under the leadership of Fritz Todt as a civilian and military engineering unit in Nazi Germany. Firstly, the OT was designed to assemble the engineering works of Germany in one roof. In the early years of the Nazis' rule, the OT generally served civil engineering work. In the Second World War, after the control of Nazi Germany in a large part of Europe, the OT made a rapid expansion from civil engineering to military engineering (Eberle and Uhl, 2017: 614-615). At the same time, the scope of the OT crossed the borders of Germany and spread across a large part of Europe.

The recognition of the name of the OT both in Germany and in the international arena had been with the Highway Project realized by the Nazis throughout Germany. OT was able to build highways all over Germany in a short time. As a matter of fact, the fact that there were a limited number of highways in Europe in the 1930s caused the highways built by the OT to attract international attention. It led to a large degree decrease in the unemployment in Germany, as OT employed many German workers in its motorway projects. The Highway Project played an important role in the emergence of Germany in the 1929 Economic Depression (Berend, 2011: 136). When Fritz Todt died in a plane crash in 1942, Albert Speer, the chief architect of Hitler, was replaced. Speer was also appointed as the Secretary of the Reich Armament and War Production (Kershaw, 2009: 497). With Speer was appointed as the leader of the OT, the OT became more involved in military engineering.

After the Second World War, the OT began to focus more on military engineering projects. The expansion of the borders of Germany led to that OT became an international engineering unit and needed a growing workforce. In this process, it was the first time in Germany to create the laws of forced labor and to mobilize the working of the German people within the OT. In contrast, the use of manpower in the country for military purposes by The German Army brought about that the manpower needed by the OT couldn't be obtained from Germany. In this stage, OT obtained the manpower it needs from the allied countries and the occupied countries. In this process, OT workers were divided into different categories. Between the years 1940-1942 workers working in the OT department were divided into; Gastarbeitnehmer (guest workers), Militärinternierte (military interiors), Zivilarbeiter (civilian workers), Ostarbeiter (eastern workers) and Hilfswillige (voluntary) (McNab, 2015: 321-322). Over time, when the German army needed military service from the German workers working within the OT, the majority of the workers on behalf of the OT began to be composed of people from occupied countries and prisoners of forced labor.

In 1942, the Nazi administration asked the OT to build a defensive line called the Atlantic Wall in the area from France to Norway. The OT needed a great manpower for the construction of the wall. The OT, on the other hand, undertook the construction of launch platforms for the V-1 and V-2 missiles, which the Nazis believed would change the fate of the war. When it became clear that in 1944 Nazi Germany would lose the war, the OT began to build air defense units to protect the civilian population and military areas in the occupied areas, particularly in Germany. In order to continue production in the Allied bombardment, the OT had built underground factories. In response to the entire bombardment of the Allied Forces, the OT continued to pursue its activities throughout Europe. After the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany on May 7, 1945, all activities were stopped. At the same time, it was declared as an illegal organization, like any other Nazi institution, and it was forbidden to be established again.

3. Method

3. 1. The Aim of Study

The main purpose of the study is to reveal how and in what way OT used propaganda activities

to influence the masses in order to serve the construction and heavy industries in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany.

3. 2. The Importance of Study

The study is important;

- to explain how OT used propaganda posters to obtain workforce,
- to shed light on the propaganda activities carried out in Nazi Germany,
- to be unique in the field.

3. 3. The Universe and Sample of Study

All propaganda posters used by OT during Italy during the Second World War constitute the universe of the study. However, because of the difficulty of reaching all posters, sampling was used in this study. In the scope of the study, four propaganda posters, which were determined by using purposive sampling method, were examined. Other posters were excluded because they were similar in terms of subject and content.

3. 4. The Limitations of Study

The study of the propaganda activities of the OT in Italy only through propaganda posters constitutes the main limitation of the study. In particular, analyzing only four propaganda posters in the study and making generalizations within the framework of the findings are another important limitation of the study. Another limitation of the study is the evaluation in the light of Barthes' semiotic analysis method. In fact, apart from Barthes in the semiotics field, there are the semiotic methods of different experts such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, Algirdas Julien Greimas and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

3. 5. The Questions of Study

Within the scope of the study, the following questions were tried to be answered;

Propaganda posters used by OT during Italy during World War II;

- How were the Italian people convinced to work on behalf of the organization?
- Which propaganda myths were built?

3. 6. The Method of Study

In this study, semiotic analysis method which is included in the qualitative research methods is used. The posters determined within the scope of the study were discussed in terms of the terms of denotation, connotation and myth of French Linguist Roland Barthes.

Indicator means that abstract concepts are brought to the human mind by getting concrete (Çetin and Sönmez, 2015: 199). Semiotics is a discipline that aims to reveal the meanings built through indicators. In the early 20th century, semiotics became science with studies in the field of linguistics. Roland Barthes (1915-1980), a French linguist, took up one of the leading roles in semiotics. Barthes said that semiotics should not be applied only in the field of linguistics, it could include other subjects such as painting, music, photography, and so on. So he explained that semiotic analysis could be done in many different areas (Rifat, 2013: 41).

Barthes stated that semiotics was shaped on two bases, namely denotation and connotation (Barthes, 2016: 85). The denotation refers to the unchanging meanings of everyone. On the other hand, the connotation explain the meaning of the indicators that can change from culture to culture (Sığırcı, 2016: 75). Barthes stated that the connotation was related to the culture and that the interpretation could vary from person to person. In other words, meaning refers to the

thoughts of the person (Barthes, 2015: 39). Barthes also emphasized the notion of myth with the connotation. Myth refers to the stories used by the culture to explain the events around it (Fiske, 2017: 185). He stated that myth was constructed by the sovereign powers and that the mass media were effectively used in this process. According to Barthes, the artificial realities created are intended to be naturalized (Barthes, 2017: 18).

The aim of the study is to explain the propaganda posters of the OT through the concepts that Barthes added to semiotics, rather than elucidating Barthes's semiotic approach. In this respect, detailed information regarding Barthes's semiotics understanding was not provided.

Semiotic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods to reveal the meanings built on posters. In the study, Barthes's semiotic analysis was used to reveal the hidden meanings in propaganda posters. As a matter of fact, the propaganda messages that were intended to be constructed in the propaganda posters can be examined directly with Barthes' myth. On the other hand, the visual and written codes, which were constructed in posters were analyzed with the semiotic analysis method.

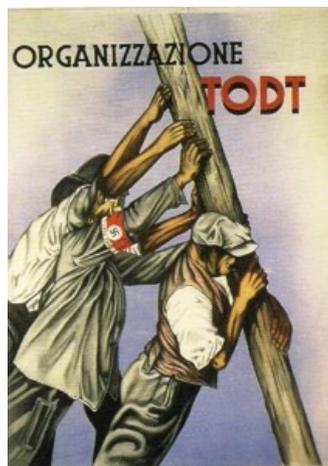
4. Analysis

In this part of the study, propaganda posters on "Workers", "Italians", "Soldiers" and "Factory" were examined using the semiotic analysis.

4. 1. The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Workers"

When the propaganda poster on "Workers" is examined in terms of denotation, it is depicted that three men lift a pole upwards. In visual codes, it is seen that the people who lift the mast upwards are in different ages and are presented in ordinary daily clothes rather than an outfit like workers' overalls. One of the men used in the image had the flag of Nazi Germany. The poster contains the written code of "Organizzazione Todt / Todt Organization".

Picture 1: The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Workers"



Source: Il Giornale di Vicenza, 2018

In the Second World War, people of all ages were included in the OT to obtain the need for workforce in Nazi Germany. Even German women, who he described as a good mother at home of Nazism, were employed in factories. In this process, the Nazis gave the message that people of all ages could serve the exact victory to be won in propaganda activities. When the poster is analyzed in terms of connotation, the effort of the men at different ages to lift the mast together is important in terms of giving the message that Nazi Germany and the masses under its occupation work together for victory. Not using the written codes in the poster allows the transmission of the propaganda message directly through visual codes. The fact that men did

not wear any workers' clothing in visual codes led to the message that people working on behalf of OT were ordinary Italian people. The Nazi flag, on the arm of one of the workers, led to the construction of the propaganda myth that Italian workers believed in the victory of Nazism and were pleased to work for Nazi Germany. Thus, the OT propaganda aimed at encouraging the Italian people to work more willingly within its own factories.

4. 2. The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Italians"

When the propaganda poster on the "Italians" is viewed in terms of denotation, any person's image is not included in the poster, it is seen that there is only the symbol of OT in written codes. Thus it is understood that the masses are asked to focus directly on the OT. The poster includes has the written codes of "Italiani! Date la vostra opera all'Organizzazione Todt per lavori in Italia / Italians! Give your labor to Italy in the Todt Tekilat!".

Picture 2: The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Italians"



Source: Lavoro Forzato, 2018

The issue, which was frequently emphasized in the OT propaganda, was that the employees of the OT reached the economic prosperity. Thus, it was aimed to make the work for the OT attractive for Italian people. When the poster is analyzed in terms of connotation, it is emphasized that the most lucrative work for the Italians will be at the OT with the inviting the Italian people to work directly within the organization. In Italy, where unemployment and economic downturn were present in the Second World War, the OT was shown to be an important business opportunity for the Italian people. As a matter of fact, during the war, Allied States' activities in Italy ended and many Italian citizens lost their jobs. This led to the presentation of the OT by the Nazi propaganda to the Italian people as a way of salvation. It was tried to build a propaganda myth that the Italian people worked in the OT through the written codes in the poster was the best decision. Thus, it is aimed to achieve more manpower needed by OT.

4. 3. The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Soldier"

When the propaganda poster on the "soldier" is examined in terms of denotation, it is seen that there are two different male visuals in the poster. In the visual codes, the first man on the back of the poster is depicted with a rifle, and the second man in front of the picture is depicted in his hand. In the presentation codes, it is seen that the person who has a rifle in his hand struggles with one another and the smoke from the background increases. The poster contains the written codes of "Un solo fronte. Lavoratori venite in Germania / A single front. Workers are coming to Germany".

Picture 3: The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Soldier"



Source: Lavoro Forzato, 2018

In the Second World War, the Italian Army fought against the Allied forces along with the German Army at both the North African Front and at various fronts of the European continent. When the poster is analyzed in terms of connotation, the poster tries to emphasize that the Italian people working for the OT serve at least as much as the Italian soldiers who fought against the Allies on the front. In the visual codes in the poster, the struggle of the Italian soldiers with rifle on the front was kept with the labor of the worker who worked with the excavation in the OT. The Nazi propaganda tried to build a propaganda myth that the work for OT on the visual and written codes in the poster was a struggle against the Allies. With a single front word in written codes, the work at the OT and the fight on the front were collected on a single concept. Thus, Nazi propaganda aimed to show the work for the OT as a service to the country and to provide the Italian people with more willingness and enthusiasm. On the other hand, in writing codes, the Italian people were asked to come directly to Germany and to work for the OT in Germany. In order to convince the Italians to leave their country and come to Germany, it was tried to show that working in the OT is a defense of Italy. The Nazi propaganda intended to convince the Italian people that working in the OT was not only an economic benefit, but also a great service to Italy.

4. 4. The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Factory"

When the propaganda poster on the "factory" is viewed in terms of denotation, it is seen that the poster depicts a man extending his hand and a tail of human society behind him. The places to where people went were showed as factories in visual codes. The man who calls the crowd with his hand is happily reflected in the presentation codes. In the right arm of the man, it is seen that there is a band that carries the colors of the Italian flag. The written code of "Operai in Germania vi troverete bene come. /The workers in Germany will find you as good as I have found!" was used.

Picture 4: The Propaganda Poster regarding "The Factory"



Source: Lavoro Forzato, 2018

During the war, the OT was involved in construction work in various countries. In contrast, Germany was the country in which OT worked most intensively. In the propaganda activities carried out by OT, the Italian people were asked to come to Germany and to work in the OT units in Germany. When the poster is analyzed in terms of connotation, it is seen that the person depicted in the poster and who has an Italian flag on his arm is used to represent the whole Italian people. On the OT propaganda poster, the image of an Italian worker who used to work in the OT units in Germany was shown. In written codes in the poster, the worker explained that he went to Germany and he was very pleased with it, and that the Italian people would be pleased if they worked in the OT units in Germany. The large number of visual codes in the poster led to the construction of the propaganda myth that the Italian people were willing to work in the OT units. Thus, it was shown that working in the OT units in the Italian public was attractive and that the Italian people would go to Germany and work more enthusiastically for the OT.

Result

In the propaganda posters of the OT which was examined within the scope of the study, it was seen that the Italian people were generally encouraged to work in the OT units in Germany. For this purpose, it was observed that work in OT units was encouraged for the Italian people in various ways. The most important of these was the fact that working in the OT units would increase the economic well-being of the Italian people. In the Second World War, the increasing unemployment in Italy and the poor course of the economy were emphasized by the OT propaganda, and it was emphasized that the economic revival of Italy would be possible by working in the OT. The emphasis was placed on economic prosperity in convincing the Italian people to come to Germany and work in the OT units. Another convincing method applied by the OT was that the work in the OT was kept with the defense of the country. The OT propaganda kept the fight against the Allies on fronts by working in the OT units in Germany. It was emphasized that the struggle of the Italian people against the Allies was not only on the front lines but also in economic terms.

It was seen that some propaganda myths were tried to be constructed in order to encourage the Italian people to work in the OT units within the written and visual codes in the poster. The most noteworthy was that the Italian people were willing to work in the OT, the Italian citizens of all ages worked in the OT units, the Italians went to Germany and worked in the OT units would increase the economic well-being. With the propaganda myths built on the propaganda of the OT, it was aimed to encourage more Italian citizens to work in Germany. The posters

show no direct or visual codes that emphasize Nazism ideology or German President Adolf Hitler. Only one poster used an armband evoking Nazi Germany. OT propaganda thus tried to persuade the Italian people without emphasizing Nazism and Hitler, as in Germany, but on issues such as direct economic prosperity and patriotism.

In this study, the propaganda activities carried out by the OT unit in order to obtain the labor force needs in the Second World War were tried to be revealed by using semiotic analysis method. The study is important in terms of being original in the field. In contrast, when the future studies examine the propaganda activities of the OT in different mass media tools such as radio, newspaper, etc. and in different countries, they will contribute to the field.

Future studies need to examine labor force propaganda through more recent examples. Thus, when the competition rapidly rises, it is possible to analyze what kind of propaganda activities are carried out by the public and private institutions to obtain the labor force. On the other hand, it is also important to measure the effects of the propaganda activities used on the masses. From this point of view, the future studies will contribute to the field studies, which measure the impact of propaganda activities used in the context of the labor force on the masses.

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