

## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŐTIRMA MAKALESİ

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# COMMUNISM PROPAGANDA IN SOVIET ARMENIA

(SOVYET ERMENİSTAN'INDA KOMÜNİZM PROPAGANDASI)

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**Abstract:** *The Soviet Union brought communist regimes to power in the socialist republics affiliated to it and spread communist propaganda to ensure that the people embraced these regimes. The Soviet administration used discourses that glorified the ideology of communism through the mass media it dominated, and in this way, it aimed for the peoples of the Soviet Union to embrace communism and implement the decisions taken by the regime without question. The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was also one of the Soviet socialist republics of the Soviet Union where communist propaganda was implemented. The Soviet Union made effective use of various mass media for propaganda in the ASSR. One type of mass media used was propaganda posters. Propaganda posters in this study directly reflect the features of Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory. For this*

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*reason, the examination of the posters containing the communist propaganda is important in terms of revealing the Soviet Union's propaganda in the ASSR. Thus, this study aims to explain which messages the Soviet Union used in the communist propaganda in the ASSR through the visual and written indicators on the posters. For this purpose, the posters that include communist propaganda in the ASSR are analyzed using the semiotics method in the light of the semiotic concepts of the linguist Karl Bühler. How Soviet propaganda presented communist ideology in the ASSR and how it established a link between the Armenian people and communism are examined in the posters. In the light of the findings obtained in the study, it is revealed that the messages that communism played a leading role in the construction of contemporary and prosperous Armenia, and at the same time, that the Armenian people were loyal to the communist ideology are given in the posters. In this way, this study concludes that Soviet propaganda tried to legitimize the decisions taken by the communist regime in the ASSR in the Armenian public opinion.*

**Keywords:** *Propaganda, Communism, Armenia, Soviet Union, Ideology*

**Öz:** *Sovyetler Birliği, kendisine bağlı sosyalist cumhuriyetlerde komünist rejimleri iktidara getirmiş ve iktidara getirdiği bu rejimlerin halk tarafından benimsenmesini sağlamak için komünizm propagandasına yönelmiştir. Sovyet yönetimi, egemen olduğu kitle iletişim araçları üzerinden komünist ideolojisini yücelten söylemlere yer vermiş, bu şekilde Sovyetler Birliği halklarının komünizmin sahiplenmesini ve rejimin aldığı kararların Sovyetler Birliği halkı tarafından sorgulanmadan uygulanmasını amaçlamıştır. Ermenistan Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti (ESSC) de, Sovyetler Birliği'nin komünizm propagandasının uygulandığı Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetleri'nden biri olmuştur. Sovyetler Birliği, ESSC'de propaganda yaparken çeşitli kitle iletişim araçlarından etkin bir şekilde yararlanmıştır. Bu kitle iletişim araçlarından biri de propaganda posterleri olmuştur. İncelenen propaganda posterleri, Sovyet Totaliter Medya Kuramı özelliklerini de doğrudan yansıtmaktadır. Bu nedenle ESSC'deki komünizm propagandasını içeren posterlerin incelenmesi, Sovyetler Birliği'nin ESSC'deki komünizm propagandasının ortaya koyulması bakımından önem taşımaktadır. Böylece çalışmada propaganda posterlerinde yer alan görsel ve yazılı göstergeler üzerinden Sovyetler Birliği'nin ESSC'de komünizm propagandasında hangi mesajlara yer verdiğinin açıklanması amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla ESSC'deki komünizm propagandasına yer veren posterler, dilbilimci Karl Bühler'in göstergebilim kavramları ışığında göstergebilim yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Posterlerde Sovyet propagandasının ESSC'deki komünizm ideolojini ne şekilde sunduğu ve Ermeni halkı ve komünizm arasında nasıl bir bağ kurduğu incelenmiştir. Çalışmada elde edilen bulgular ışığında posterler üzerinden komünizmin,*

*çağdaş ve refah içinde bir Ermenistan'ın inşasında öncü rol oynadığı ve aynı zamanda Ermeni halkının komünizme bağlı olduğu mesajlarının verildiği ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bu şekilde çalışmada Sovyet propagandasının, ESSC'de komünist rejiminin aldığı kararları Ermeni kamuoyunda meşrulaştırmaya çalıştığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Propaganda, Komünizm, Ermenistan, Sovyetler Birliği, İdeoloji*

## Introduction

After the 1917 October Revolution, the communist administration in Russia assumed power and efforts were made to make the Russian people adopt the communist ideology throughout the country. The Russian Civil War between the Red Army and the White Army also became a struggle for the survival of communism in Russia. After the Russian Civil War ended with the victory of the Red Army, communism came to the fore as the dominant ideology in Russia. When the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – USSR) was founded on 30 December 1922, an attempt was made to make the communist ideology prevail not only in Russia but also in other states forming the union. In this way, it was aimed to bring the Soviet Union together within the framework of a single ideology. In the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), a part of the Soviet Union, those in power tried to legitimize the communist regime in the Armenian public opinion and to implement the political decisions taken in the country. At this stage, propaganda promoting communist ideology was carried in the ASSR to convince the Armenian people to embrace communism.

The purpose of the propaganda system and mass media used by the Soviet Union in Armenia was to contribute to the continuity and success of the communist system. As a softened version of the authoritarian systems<sup>1</sup> applied in the 20th century, after the 1917 October Revolution, this situation was organized in line with the principles of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin. The hegemonic structuring that emerged in the mass media is called the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory<sup>2</sup>.

According to the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory, mass media (newspapers, radio broadcasts, posters, books, etc.) acts as an organ of the state and every element transmitted to the public is used as a propaganda tool of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The aim of the theory<sup>3</sup> is to reconcile the masses outside the CPSU's views by including discourses that glorify the communist ideology, and to reach a Marxist classless society ideology by dissolving them in the general mass. Therefore, this study is also important in terms of showing how the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory works.

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1 Mehmet Sezai Türk, "Katılımcı Demokratik Medya Kuramı Çerçevesinde Yeni Medyayı Anlamak." *ICT Media Dergisi*, Issue 75 (2016): 58.

2 Fredrick S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

3 Metin Işık, "İletişim Sistemleri-Siyasal Sistem İlişkileri Bağlamında İletişim Alanının Düzenlenmesi ve Medya-Devlet İlişkilerinin Değerlendirilmesi." *Selçuk İletişim* 2, Issue 2 (2002): 27.

This study aims to shed light on the propaganda of the communist ideology in the Soviet Union by revealing the communist propaganda carried out in the ASSR. For this purpose, the propaganda posters used for communist propaganda in the ASSR are examined using the semiotics method. The study tries to explain how communism was presented to the Armenian people through the visual and written indicators on the posters. In the light of the findings obtained in the study, the study aims to answer the following questions:

- What messages were given to the Armenian people in the communist propaganda carried out in the ASSR?
- What kind of a connection was established between the communist ideology and the Armenian people in the propaganda carried out in the ASSR?

The findings obtained in the study are important in terms of shedding light on the history of the ASSR and the communist propaganda of the Soviet Union. In this respect, it is aimed that the present study will be a resource for researchers who study Armenian politics, history, and propaganda in general.

### 1. An Overview of Communist Rule in Armenia

At the beginning of the 20th century, Armenia was located on the borders of the Russian Empire. After the October Revolution in 1917, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) was formed in 1918 with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In the same year, the Democratic Republic of Armenia (DRA) was established independently of the TDFR. The republic came to an end with the occupation of Yerevan by the Red Army in 1920. Then, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was established on 2 December 1920. With the establishment of the Soviet Union on 30 December 1922, the ASSR became one of the Soviet socialist countries that formed the union.

Communism came to the fore as the dominant ideology in the ASSR and the Armenian Communist Party was influential in the political arena in the country. Opposition to the Communist regime was tried to be prevented with the ASSR under the influence of communist ideology. At this stage, the Soviet Union considered the Armenian nationalists as a threat to communism. The Soviet Union targeted Armenian nationalists as “anti-Communists” and aimed to liquidate the nationalists within the administration. In addition, a strict police control was established to gain influence throughout society and

increase the power of the central authority<sup>4</sup>. In this process, communist ideology strengthened its effectiveness in ASSR.

During the Second World War, German armies attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941<sup>5</sup>. During the war, the ASSR provided significant support to the Red Army, which fought against the German army. While Nazi Germany left the Second World War with defeat, the Soviet Union became one of the two superpowers of the world together with the United States. During the Cold War, the ASSR constituted a part of the Eastern Bloc, as it was a republic that formed the Soviet Union.

Armenia declared its independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union, which entered the process of disintegration towards the end of the 1980s. Thus, the ASSR was dismantled, and the Republic of Armenia was established in its place.

## 2. Communism Propaganda of the Soviet Union During the Cold War

During the Second World War, part of the territory of the Soviet Union was occupied by Nazi Germany. As a result of the war, the Soviet Union succeeded in defeating the German army and influencing Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. Communist regimes were established in the Eastern Bloc countries under the influence of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Soviet Union entered an intense competition in the fields of politics, military, economy, and technology against the Western Bloc countries, where the US was at the forefront during the Cold War that started after the Second World War. In this process, the Soviet administration tried to maintain its influence in the Eastern Bloc countries as well as remain in competition with the Western Bloc countries. In this process, the Soviet Union carried out communism propaganda to ensure the continuation of communist regimes in both the Soviet socialist republics and the Eastern Bloc countries. While communism was glorified by the propaganda of the Soviet Union<sup>6</sup>, capitalism was harshly criticized. Soviet propaganda specifically targeted the US, and the US government was presented to the masses as an important threat to in opposition to communism.

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4 Sadık Çalışkan and Mehmet Barış Yılmaz, "The cult of leadership construction of Vladimir Lenin through propaganda posters in media in Armenia Soviet Socialist Republic," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 65 (2020): 81.

5 Elif Hatun Kılıçbeyli, "Red Army Propaganda in The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic: An Investigation on Posters," *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 43 (2021): 117.

6 Süleyman Şahan, "The Criticism of the Radio Broadcasting of the West Block on Caricatures of the Soviet Union," *TRT Akademi* 5, Issue 9 (2020): 275.

The essential aspect in the communist lifestyle of the Soviet Union was the consciousness of “us”. Unlike the capitalist lifestyle, it was necessary to bring socialism and communism to the fore, to spread communist propaganda and to have it take root ideologically. An understanding of “they” was created in the communist lifestyle, where anti-Westernism was justified by pointing to the perils of capitalism and imperialism and anti-Nazism was explained in the context of fascism<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the dominance of the state over the media in the Soviet Union also led to the effective presentation of communist propaganda to the masses. In this whole process, various mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, cinema, and posters played an important role in the communist lifestyle in the Soviet Union.

During the Second World War, the Soviet Union had heavily turned to communist propaganda, and the struggle of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany came to the fore as the struggle for the survival of communism against Nazism. The US intervention in Korea and Vietnam during the Cold War was also harshly criticized, and Soviet propaganda sided with the communist regimes there during this process. Apart from this, propaganda promoting communism was made within the framework of the five-year plans of the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup>. The Soviet Union tried to mobilize the people of the Soviet Union within the framework of communism during these five-year plans.

During the Cold War, the Eastern Bloc countries and the Soviet socialist republics were continuously subjected to anti-communist propaganda by the US. The aim was to end the domination of the Soviet Union in the Eastern Bloc countries. For this purpose, Radio Free Europe (RFE) was established with the support of the US government to broadcast alternative views to the Eastern Bloc in opposition to the radio broadcasts of the Soviet Union. As such, RFE’s main purpose to make anti-communist radio broadcasts to the Eastern Bloc countries and to ignite anti-Soviet sentiment among the Eastern Bloc peoples. After its establishment, RFE’s radio broadcasts emerged as an important threat to the Soviet Union<sup>9</sup>. Despite its efforts, the Soviet Union failed to prevent the broadcasts of the RFE, leading to the continuation of anti-communist propaganda in the Eastern Bloc countries. Looking deeper into the Cold War rhetoric, it was apparent that the US was not in truth trying to “save” the Eastern Bloc countries, but rather trying to weaken its Soviet adversary.

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7 Koray Sevindi, *Sovyet Propaganda Animasyonları* (İstanbul: Urzeni Yayınevi, 2021), 285.

8 Tuğba Baytimur, Caner Çakı, and Ferit Arda Arıca, “The Propaganda in Armenia of The Five-Year Development Plans Implemented in The Soviet Union,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 42 (2020): 97.

9 Hakan Aşkan and Aytuğ Mermer Üzümlü, “The Examination on the Short Film “The Towers of Truth” Regarding Free European Radio in the Cold War,” *Anadolu Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2, Issue 1 (2020): 72.

### 3. The Academic Studies in the Field of Ideology and Propaganda

Propaganda is the deliberate or official dissemination of often false and exaggerated information, especially by ideological groups, to influence public opinion<sup>10</sup>. Propaganda aims to ensure the interests of certain individuals, institutions, or communities unilaterally by trying to reach emotional processes and the subconscious rather than reasoning<sup>11</sup>. Various academic studies have been conducted on propaganda and ideology. These studies include:

- Bolsover: Soviet ideology and propaganda<sup>12</sup>;
- Cassinelli: Ideology, totalitarianism, and propaganda<sup>13</sup>;
- Eckhardt: Political ideologies and war propaganda<sup>14</sup>;
- Splichal ve Ferligoj: Ideology in international propaganda<sup>15</sup>;
- Peirce: Propaganda and ideology in late Roman art<sup>16</sup>;
- MacLennan: Propaganda, reality, and ideology<sup>17</sup>;
- Shagan: Ideology, propaganda, and English responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641<sup>18</sup>;
- Lee and Pang: Public spaces, propaganda, and ideology<sup>19</sup>;
- Payne: Ideology, terrorism, and propaganda<sup>20</sup>;

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10 Fatma Geçikli, "Propaganda; From Past to Present." *Istanbul University Faculty of Communication Journal*, Issue 9 (1999): 265.

11 Fatmanur Altun, "Propaganda from Conventional Media to New Media: Continuity and Change." *Mevzu - Journal of Social Sciences*, Issue 7 (2022): 9.

12 George H. Bolsover, "Soviet ideology and propaganda," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 24, Issue 2 (1948): 170-180.

13 C.W. Cassinelli, "Totalitarianism, Ideology, and Propaganda," *The Journal of Politics* 22, Issue 1 (1960): 68-95.

14 William Eckhardt, "War propaganda, welfare values, and political ideologies," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 9, Issue 3 (1965): 345-358.

15 Slavko Splichal and Anuška Ferligoj, "Ideology in International Propaganda: A Clustering Approach for Content Analysis Data," in *Sociometric Research*, ed. Willem E. Saris and Irmtraud N. Gallhofer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 69-89.

16 Philip Peirce, "The Arch of Constantine: Propaganda and ideology in late Roman art," *Art History* 12, Issue 4 (1989): 387-418.

17 Gary MacLennan, "Truth, propaganda, ideology, power and the media teacher," *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine* 94, (1993): 22-28.

18 Ethan Howard Shagan, "Constructing discord: ideology, propaganda, and English responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641," *Journal of British Studies* 36, Issue 1 (1997): 4-34.

19 Dongchoon Lee and Chaehong Pang, "Shakespeare in China: Ideology, the People, and Propaganda," *Shakespeare Review* 41, Issue 2 (2005): 321-341.

20 Kenneth Payne, "Winning the battle of ideas: Propaganda, ideology, and terror," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, Issue 2 (2009): 109-128.

- Eatwell: Propaganda, ideology, violence and the rise of fascism<sup>21</sup>;
- May González: Ideology and propaganda in the press<sup>22</sup>;
- Kershaw: The rise of the Nazi party, ideology, and propaganda<sup>23</sup>;
- Min: Ideology, propaganda, and democracy<sup>24</sup>;
- Gheorghîță: Ideology, music, and propaganda<sup>25</sup>;
- Hanh et al.: Ho Chi Minh's ideas on public propaganda<sup>26</sup>.

There are many studies conducted on Soviet propaganda and ideology as well. These include:

- Luehrmann: Soviet propaganda and ideology<sup>27</sup>;
- Mini: Propaganda and ideology in Soviet cinema<sup>28</sup>;
- Gavrilova and Bogolyubov: The theoretical and practical interaction between legal ideology and legal propaganda in Soviet society<sup>29</sup>;
- Gülada: Propaganda posters in the Soviet Union<sup>30</sup>.

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21 Roger Eatwell, "Ideology, propaganda, violence and the rise of fascism," *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 165-185.

22 Ángel Omar May González, "Propaganda and ideology in the press: The case of the Rojo Amanecer in Campeche, 1921-1924," *Signos históricos* 14, Issue 27 (2012): 64-103.

23 Ian Kershaw, "Ideology, propaganda, and the rise of the Nazi party," in *The Nazi Machtergreifung (RLE Nazi Germany & Holocaust)*, ed. Peter D. Stachura (Routledge, 2014), 176-195.

24 John B. Min, "Propaganda, ideology, and democracy: A review of Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*," *The Good Society* 24, Issue 2 (2015): 210-217.

25 Nicolae Gheorghîță, "Military Music between Use and Abuse: Music, Ideology and Propaganda in the Music of the Romanian Popular Army," *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest* 7, Issue 28 (2016): 323-337.

26 Lai Thi Ngoc Hanh, Dinh Tran Ngoc Huy, and Dinh Thi Hien, "Ho Chi Minh Ideologies on Public Propaganda and Organization," *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 11, Issue 5 (2021): 2711-2718.

27 Sonja Luehrmann, "The modernity of manual reproduction: Soviet propaganda and the creative life of ideology," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, Issue 3 (2011): 363-388.

28 Panayiota Mini, "Striving for the maximum appeal: ideology and propaganda in the Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s," in *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Politics*, eds. Yannis Tzioumakis and Claire Molloy (London: Routledge, 2016): 183-196.

29 Anzhelika V. Gavrilova and Egor A. Bogolyubov, "Theoretical and practical interaction between legal ideology and legal propaganda in the Soviet society," *RUDN Journal of Law* 22, Issue 3 (2018): 346-369.

30 Mehmet Ozan Gülada, "The presentation in posters of the propaganda against espionage of the Soviet Union in the Second World War," *Journal of Civilization and Society (JCISO)* 3, Issue 1 (2019): 49-68.

There are still many aspects left to be discovered about propaganda in the Soviet Union in general and Soviet Armenia in specific, and this study aims to play its part by making a contribution to the literature by focusing on communist propaganda.

#### 4. Method

In the study, the propaganda posters containing communist propaganda in the ASSR were accessed from the digital archive of the University of California library<sup>31</sup>. The images in the archive are presented within the scope of the “International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)”, which emerged as a result of the agreement between the UCLA Library and the National Library of Armenia (NLA) to protect archival materials of importance for Armenian history and culture. The project’s website states that “IDEP collections represent significant content that was used during political movements, but that is ephemeral in nature and likely to be lost without proactive curation”<sup>32</sup>. In the literature, it can be seen that IDEP project has played an important role by providing relevant images for the study of subjects such as election propaganda in communist Armenia<sup>33</sup>.

A total of 616 contents related to the ASSR were accessed in the digital archive, and 6 propaganda posters that directly included communist propaganda were determined as the sample of the study by using the purposeful sampling method within the reached content. Purposeful sampling<sup>34</sup> enabled in-depth research by selecting information-rich images depending on the purpose of the study.

In the study, propaganda posters were examined using semiotics as one of the qualitative research methods. The Organon Model of the German linguist Karl Bühler was used to reveal the propaganda messages given in the posters and also to explain the thoughts, attitudes or behaviors that were intended to be formed in the Armenian people through the propaganda messages given. Propaganda posters were analyzed through the expression function, representation function, and conative (or appeal) function in Bühler’s model.

31 “The Soviet Armenia Propaganda Posters,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/collection=Soviet+Armenian+Posters>.

32 “About,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library*, accessed June 3, 2022, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/about>.

33 Metin Işık, Mustafa Karaca and Caner Çakı, “The election propaganda in Armenia under the rule of the communist party of Armenia,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 44 (2021): 53-82.

34 Şener Büyüköztürk, Ebru Kılıç Çakmak, Özcan Erkan Akgün, Şirin Karadeniz and Funda Demirel, *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2018), 92.

The expression function is the use of signs to convey a certain meaning. The representation function is the message given over the indicators. The appeal function is the state of mind intended to be created through the message given over the indicators<sup>35</sup>. Each of these concepts, which are included as three functions of language in the Organon Model, has its own semantic function and defines a specific area of linguistic phenomena<sup>36</sup>.

### 5. Findings and Analysis

In this part of the study, six posters about the communist propaganda in ASSR will be semiotically analyzed.

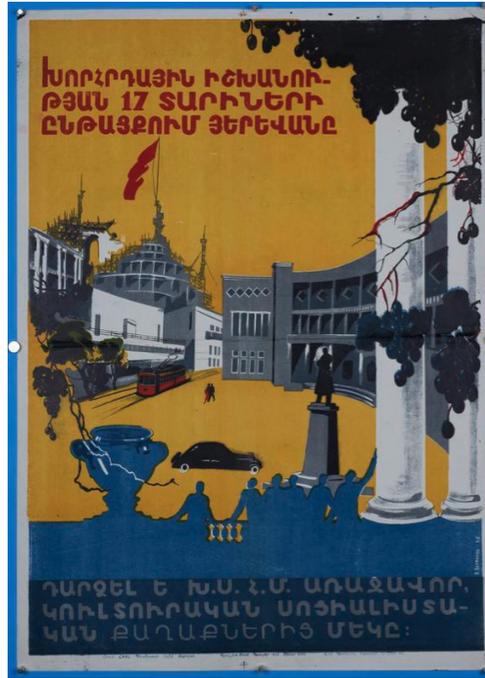
#### 5.1. The First Poster – “The reconstruction of Yerevan at the beginning of the century”

The first poster was prepared by Vasily Avetiki Vardanyan in 1938. The poster reads “Yerevan, during the 17 years of Soviet authority (*Խորհրդային իշխանության 17 տարիների ընթացքում Յերևանը*)”. When examined in terms of its expression function, the propaganda poster includes a statue, a car, a tram, and a construction site with a red flag flying in a square. Grapes adorn edges of the poster. The poster depicts a group of people looking at the square from a balcony.

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35 Ebru Gülbuğ Erol, “The Publishing in Nazi Germany, The Construction of Anti-Semitist Discourses Spread by the Nazism Ideology and the Use of Books for the Purpose of Propaganda,” *Türk Kütüphaneciliği* 34, Issue 4 (2020): 702.

36 Karl Bühler, *Theory of Language: The representational function of language*, translated by Donald Fraser Goodwin in collaboration with Achim Eschbach (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), 39.



Poster 1. The First Poster<sup>37</sup>

When analyzed in terms of the representation function, the red flag in the propaganda poster is used as the symbol of Armenia's communist ideology and the communist regime. When the visual indicators on the propaganda poster are handled through the written indicator on the poster, the message is given that Armenia has become a modern country under communism. In the poster, the people on the balcony are used as the visual metaphor of the Armenian people. Through the visual indicators, the perception is formed that the Armenian people live in a modern and prosperous country.

When examined in terms of conative function, the poster gives the message that Armenia is a modern and prosperous country with the dominance of communist ideology in Armenia, therefore forming the perception that the Armenian people should support the communist regime in Armenia for the continuation of the current order. In this way, the poster aims to glorify the communist regime in the Armenian public opinion and to strengthen the support of the Armenian people for the regime.

37 "Yerevan, during the 17 years of Soviet authority," *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – *UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:98>

<b>Expression Function</b>	A statue, a car, a tram, and a construction site with a red flag flying in a square
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that communist ideology forms a modern and prosperous Armenia
<b>Conative Function</b>	The Armenian people should support the communist regime for a modern and prosperous Armenia

**Table 1.** The First Poster

### 5.2. The Second Poster – “The Soviet youth is guided by party slogans”

The second poster was prepared by Khachatur Hovhannesi Gyulamiryan in 1958. The poster reads “We are ruled by the Party (*Պարտիան է մեզ առաջնորդում*)”. The poster has the title “The Soviet youth is guided by party slogans (*Սովետական երիտասարդությունը առաջնորդվում է պարտիայի լոզունգներով*)”. When analyzed in terms of expression, the propaganda poster depicts a young man holding a red flag.



**Poster 2.** The Second Poster<sup>38</sup>

38 “We are led by the party,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:137>

When examined in terms of its representational function, the young man in the propaganda poster is used as the visual metaphor of the Armenian people. The red flag on the poster symbolizes the ideology of communism and the communist regime in the ASSR. With the man in the poster holding the red flag, the message is given that the Armenian people have adopted the ideology of communism and supported the communist regime.

When analyzed in terms of conative function, it is revealed that the poster utilizes the “bandwagon effect propaganda”. This type of propaganda gives the message that people in general are connected to a certain thought or ideology. This message attempts to form the perception that the propagandized idea or ideology is a dominant view in society. Through this perception, this type of propaganda aims for the people to adopt a certain thought or ideology and to marginalize and eliminate criticisms that may arise against such thought or ideology. The poster tries to legitimize communist ideology in the ASSR by forming the perception that a significant part of the Armenian people have adopted communism.

<b>Expression Function</b>	A young man holding a red flag
<b>Representation Function</b>	The opinion that the Armenian people support the communist regime in the ASSR
<b>Conative Function</b>	Forming the image of strong popular support for the communist regime in Armenia

**Table 2.** The Second Poster

### **5.3. The Third Poster – “At the Soviet capitol, achievements of the sixth plan are summarized”**

The third poster was prepared by Hrachyia Senekerim Vardanyan in 1958. The poster reads “For the sake of the socialist fatherland’s power (*Հանուն սոցիալիստական հայրենիքի հզորության*)”. When examined in terms of its expression function, a satellite and a space shuttle, both with red stars, are depicted on the propaganda poster. The Kremlin representation is featured in the background of the poster.



Poster 3. The Third Poster<sup>39</sup>

When analyzed in terms of the representation function, the image of the Kremlin is used as a visual metaphor of the Soviet Union administration, and the satellite and space shuttle are used as a metonym for the groundbreaking and ambitious space program of the Soviet Union.

When examined in terms of conative function, it is revealed that the Soviet Union's space race with the United States is the subject of the propaganda poster. At the time the poster was published, the Soviet Union had succeeded in sending spacecrafts into space and achieved a significant advantage over the US in the space race. The Soviet Union used this success in the space race as a propaganda tool to portray communism itself as a source of success. The poster examined in the study aims to form a positive perception towards the communist regime in the ASSR through the success of the Soviet Union in the space race. At this stage, the poster tries to form a connection between communism and technological development in the Armenian public opinion by giving the message that the Soviet Union is more successful in terms of technology than the Western Bloc countries.

39 "For the sake of the socialist fatherland's power;" *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – *UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:173>

<b>Expression Function</b>	A spacecraft and a satellite with a red star
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that the ASSR was technologically empowered under the ideology of communism
<b>Conative Function</b>	For the technological development in the ASSR to continue, the Armenian people should support the communist regime

**Table 3.** The Third Poster

#### 5.4. The Fourth Poster – “The young contribute to new developments in communism”

The fourth propaganda poster was prepared by M. Mandakuni in 1959. The poster reads “Glory to the builders of communism (*Փառք կոմունիզմի կառուցողներին*)”. The poster has the title “The young contribute to new developments in communism (*Երիտասարդությունը գնում է կոմունիզմի նոր զարգացումներին*)”. When analyzed in terms of the expression function, the propaganda poster features a young woman holding a ribbon in the colors of the Armenian flag with one hand and pointing to the electricity pole and production facility behind her with the other.



**Poster 4.** The Fourth Poster<sup>40</sup>

40 “Glory to the builders of communism,” International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:101>

When it is examined in terms of its representational function, it is revealed that the young woman on the poster with ribbons in the colors of the Armenian flag in her hand is used as the visual metaphor of the Armenian people. The electricity pole and the production facility, which the woman in the poster points with one hand, are used as metonyms of the production facilities in ASSR.

When analyzed in terms of conative function, the poster tries to form the perception that communism was the basis of the development in the ASSR. As a matter of fact, communist ideology is directly referred to through the written indicator on the poster. In the poster, by establishing a link between the economic development in the ASSR and communism, an attempt is made for the Armenian people to develop a positive perception about communism due to the economic development in Armenia.

<b>Expression Function</b>	A young woman holding a ribbon with the colors of the Armenian flag
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that the ASSR developed economically under the ideology of communism
<b>Conative Function</b>	For the ASSR to continue its economic development, the Armenian people should support the Communist regime

Table 4. The Fourth Poster

### 5.5. The Fifth Poster – “Vladimir Ilyich Lenin’s portrait”

The fifth poster was prepared by Vladimir Arkadi Beglaryan in 1965. The poster reads “All nations will make their way towards socialism... (*все нации придут к социализму...*)”. When examined in terms of expression, only Lenin’s confident face is included in the poster.



Poster 5. The Fifth Poster<sup>41</sup>

When analyzed in terms of the representation function, Lenin is featured as a symbol of communist ideology in the poster. Through the written indicator on the poster, the message is given that the communism is effective not only in the Soviet Union, but also in other countries.

When examined in terms of conative function, the poster refers to the propaganda involving Lenin's cult of personality. Soviet propaganda tried to build the cult of Lenin by presenting him as a loved and respected leader in Soviet society. On the other hand, the Soviet propaganda identified Lenin with the ideology of communism and aimed to make the people of the Soviet Union adopt the various policies of the communist regime through the love and devotion to Lenin. By emphasizing Lenin as a glorious leader who adopted communism and influenced the whole world, an attempt is made to form loyalty to the communism in the Armenian public opinion through Lenin's cult of personality.

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41 "All nations will make their way towards socialism..." *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – *UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021.  
<https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:200>

<b>Expression Function</b>	Lenin’s face
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that the ideology of communism continues to spread throughout the world
<b>Conative Function</b>	The continuation of the Armenian people’s commitment to communism based on the idea that the ideology of communism is adopted in various countries of the world

Table 5. The Fifth Propaganda Poster

**5.6. The Sixth Poster – “A portrait of Lenin and the 1920 -1970 period showing an increase in electrical output”**

The sixth and last poster was prepared by Sergei Aveti Arutchyan in 1970. The poster reads: “Lenin: ‘To the Communists of Armenia... Begin the large-scale work of electrification.’ (Հայաստանի կոմունիստներին... Սկսել էլեկտրոֆիկացման խոշոր աշխատանքներ Լենին)”. When analyzed in terms of expression, the image of a proud and assuring Lenin is depicted on the left of the propaganda poster, and a large lamppost on a hill on the right.



Poster 6. The Sixth Poster<sup>42</sup>

42 “Lenin: To the Communists of Armenia... Begin the large-scale work of electrification,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – UCLA Library, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:190>

When examined in terms of its representational function, Lenin symbolizes the ideology of communism in the propaganda poster. The lamppost in the poster represents electricity generation in ASSR. The increase in electricity generation in ASSR is emphasized through the written indicator on the poster.

When analyzed in terms of conative function, it is revealed that the poster refers to the cult of personality of Lenin, just like the fifth poster examined within the scope of the study. By referring to the “communists of Armenia” in the poster, a direct call is made to people who adopted the ideology of communism in Armenia. At this stage, the link between Lenin and the communism is brought to the fore, through Lenin’s emphasis on Armenians who adopted the ideology of communism. Thus, it can be stated that a positive perception towards communism was tried to be formed in the Armenian public opinion based on the value that Lenin attributed to the ideology of communism.

<b>Expression Function</b>	The image of Lenin
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that electricity production continues in the ASSR with the communist regime
<b>Conative Function</b>	For the energy production in the ASSR to continue, the Armenian people should support the communist regime

**Table 6.** The Sixth Poster

## Conclusion

In the propaganda posters examined in the study, it is revealed that Marxist propaganda messages were given in the context of politics, economy, and technology in accordance with the basic functioning of the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory to make the Armenian people in the ASSR adopt communist ideology. In this process, the perception that communism played an important role in the economic development of the ASSR was formed, and the message was given that the Armenian people should support the communist regime for the economic development in Armenia to continue. On the other hand, technological developments in the Soviet Union were also attributed to communism, and another perception was tried to be formed that the Soviet Union became a modern and prosperous country under the communist regime. In addition, it can be said that an attempt was made for the Armenians in ASSR to adopt the communist ideology by making use of Lenin’s cult of personality in the propaganda posters. It can be stated that a sympathy for the regime was

tried to be formed in the Armenian public opinion through the cult of Lenin built in the ASSR in this process.

It is revealed that the posters tried to form the idea that the Armenian people adopted the communist ideology and supported the communist regime by making use of the bandwagon effect propaganda. In this way, it can be argued that Soviet propaganda tried to legitimize the communism in the Soviet Union and to eliminate any opposition to the regime by marginalizing alternative views. In addition, posters can be interpreted as a pressure tool designed to convince the people of the correctness of communist ideology. However, if attempts at convincing did not work, dissenting individuals would surely be faced with the full force of the repressive Soviet state apparatus. In other words, the communist regime had a highly repressive state apparatus that did not tolerate dissent or alternative views to the state ideology. This situation is also important in terms of showing the functioning of the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory.

It can be stated that it was important for the Soviet propaganda to try to make the Armenian people adopt the communist ideology, especially by emphasizing the technological developments in the Soviet Union. Emphasizing the successes achieved in the competition between the Western and the Eastern Blocs in various fields through the domination of ideological discourses during the Cold War can be considered as effective propaganda materials. It can be said that the Armenian people could develop a positive perception towards communist ideology by buying into the image that the Soviet Union was superior to the Western Bloc in economic and technological spheres through utilization of communism.

As a result, it can be stated that the tendency of the Soviet Union to propagate the communist ideology in the ASSR could have played an important role in preventing opposition that could have risen against the regime in the Armenian society in the future. As a matter of fact, the intervention of the Soviet Union in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 led to the questioning of loyalty to the ideology of communism in the Eastern Bloc countries and Soviet socialist countries in general. In this respect, it can be argued that communist propaganda played a certain role in preventing possible anti-communist uprisings in these countries.

This study tried to shed light on the communist propaganda of the Soviet Union in the Soviet socialist republics through the example of ASSR. It can be argued that future studies will provide a more comprehensive presentation of communist propaganda in the Soviet Union by examining the various aspects of such propaganda in different Soviet socialist republics in the context of Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory.

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