

Every Activist is a Propagandist
A Beginning Course in Propaganda

This essay is a beginning course for activists of national democratic organizations. Its objective is to show the importance of propaganda in the understanding, moving, and organizing of the masses. Being presented here are a number of foundational concepts and principles in propaganda, and the different types and intentions of propaganda. In the final part are examples of different types of propaganda that show which ones are effective and which are not.

INTRODUCTION

The word propaganda comes from the Latin language --- **“propagare”** ---- which means *to propagate, to make common*.

Except, this was given a bad meaning from reactionaries to discredit our propaganda. “That’s just propaganda” has become synonymous to twisting, confusing, misleading or hiding of the truth, *Black propaganda*, as others have said. The principle of black propaganda is antithetical. Our propaganda begins with the truth, in the real conditions of the masses, and in their legitimate interests.

Propaganda is the work and that which is being done by all our comrades or activists.

This is not the work of some experts. All have the capacity to do propaganda.

“When we speak, we are doing propaganda. When we write, or creating a visual, we are doing propaganda. When we perform, showing a video, singing, reciting a poem, painting, etc., we are doing propaganda. When we advance a stand or a position on issues, in whatever form or manner, this is propaganda.”

But this is not simple dispensing. Our propaganda has a trajectory with a political line--- national democracy with a socialist perspective. This is the path of change to free the Filipino masses from semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.

Most important of all is the political line. This sets the direction of our propaganda. This is the support and structural outline for us to analyze correctly the issues and needs of the masses. Without this there is no reason for us to do propaganda. More seriously, if our line is incorrect, we will misdirect the masses, they will be confused, troubled and divided. We do not intend our propaganda to serve the enemies of the masses. Therefore, the line is still the determining factor in our propaganda.

1 THREE ELEMENTS OF PROPAGANDA

To be able to do propaganda, there should be (1) a propagandist, (2) an issue or a message, and (3) a target audience.

THE PROPAGANDIST

Every activist is a propagandist. Because of this, each has the responsibility to seriously hit the line and the program of national democracy. Let us be educational and analytical in theory and practice. How can we actually fight the deception, trickery, sabotaging from the enemy if we do not have the knowledge. How can we teach the masses the overall responsibility of activism if we ourselves are already confused.

Related to this, we need a serious rooting of the masses, especially the propagandists for the petit bourgeois or intellectuals. How can we set the national democratic line on the issue of the masses if we do not know who they are. How can we be trained and be effective if our propaganda cannot understand the masses. That is why we need to be involved with the masses. Let us assess their situation. Let us study the history of their struggle. Let us understand their tactical and strategical demands.

Therefore, the content and the form of our propaganda will truly mirror their conditions and aspirations. Not abstract or unreal. Not passive but active. Not compliant but feisty.

THE ISSUE OR MESSAGE

Because the crisis in Philippine society has become gravely acute the masses have a multitude of issues. Their experiences have also been dire as victims of exploitation and oppression; although their history and experiences are rich in struggle.

That is why we will never run out of materials for propaganda. Those who say there are no issues with the masses know nothing about them. **The work of the propagandist is to bring the issue of the masses based on their experience, pave it with analysis, and to express it in popular and fitting form, and to return to them in a way that they better the rotten system.**

But it will also require that our propaganda is alert. Let us grab every hot issue of the masses especially at times when their thinking and feelings are more open. It is natural that their interest will wane over past or stale issues, except when our propaganda is really good that it can truly provoke.

What is also needed is a more regular and more frequent propaganda that have different kinds of appearance or form that appeal to the masses. Largely what prevails among the masses are the reactionaries' belief and culture. The wall is still thick that

which we are going to crumble away. But with the great number of our activists, with the size and breath of the mass movement, our propaganda will serve as a strong counter-wave to the point that this will be the one on top.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Every single propaganda of ours serves a particular section of the masses or audience (listeners). If we say that this is for the majority, there is still this target audience every time one comes out.

We need to particularize and get to know this because it is to them that we speak to, write to, present to. How do they speak. How do they think. What is their situation in life. What is the level of their knowledge. What is their take on an issue, etc. If we do not know the target audience it is akin to being inherent to darkness. We get past our target and our propaganda is wasted.

If the target is known, our thinking is also clear on how to create the propaganda. We can specify the right issue that will be addressed, the purpose of the propaganda, the points to be emphasized, and the arguments that will be aligned. Along with this we are able to fit the style in the content. Will it be Agit-prop, primer, story, brochure, poem, house-to-house, video, radio, TV, etc.

It can be said that we were able to hit our target audience when the masses respond to our propaganda in different ways. Whether we know it or not, they are also now among us in spreading this.

2 THE PRINCIPLES OF PROPAGANDA

We outline below some of the basic principles that are important to guide activists who want to learn about doing propaganda.

PURPOSEFUL CAUSE

From the very beginning we possess this as propagandist. We are the propagandists of the masses, we are on their side, we know to whom our propagandas are for. This is for the masses of society, especially the common worker, farmer, and the lower rungs of the petit bourgeoisie, who are seriously experiencing crisis of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial system. We are not like the bourgeois or liberals exhibiting neutrality. We are united with the people in their march towards a national freedom and democracy.

Our attitude to the masses is clear, as well to our allies and the enemies. Open the eyes of the masses and praise their struggle. Support allies if they are one with the masses and

give notice if their stand is becoming (mabuway) insecure. Expose and separate the enemy of the people.

MASS LINE

From the masses, towards the masses. Our propaganda mirrors the real situation, the needs and desires of the masses. In the course of societal change, we believe that the citizens are the true arbiters. That is why we bring their issues, championing their voices in society, exalting their fight, drumming their needs, honoring the wide and tight solidarity of the people.

MATCHING CONTENT AND STYLE

Which is more valuable, the content or the style? Both are valuable, and should match. However excellent our propaganda if the content is wrong remains to be wrong. But however valuable the content but cannot be understood and/or is not favored by the masses the propaganda will not have appeal. In order to be effective the content and the style of our propaganda should always be matching.

But of the two, foremost is still content, and only secondary is style. Be sure first that the content is correct, stands on very solid foundation, and most importantly, correctly delivering the political line. And then later establish the ways of presenting. If the style is excellent, it will effectively spread the propaganda; if not, this will also not be accepted or favored by the masses.

A blade that is dull will not be able to slice. That is the same with our propaganda if short of sharpness and edge. A propaganda that does not have the quality is weak in its appeal, however progressive or revolutionary its content. We do not want a propaganda whose line is wrong, and we regret a propaganda that has the right line but lacking in style or art.

MILITANT STYLE

There are many ways to show the militancy of a propaganda. This is not always brought about every time with the style of anger or of shouting. There are times when the style of anger is fitting, and at others the style of calm. But each possesses that of a fighting spirit. What is important is our propaganda does not lead or is not limited to showing just the bitterness, suffering and grief of the masses, that the masses know more than the common propagandist; it is more valuable to become complimenting or critical, and to show the masses what they can do to change the situation, to be free from exploitation and oppression, to break the rotten system and to create one that is new.

Related to this, let us give importance the positive experiences of the masses especially in their struggle, in lifting up their dignity, their desire to unite and to fight, the lessons and victories gained.

AGIT-PROP

We bring out agit-prop in needed times to mobilize the masses for the urgent and concrete actions. The form of agitation is short and quick, easily understood and easily supported by the masses. The agit-prop is valuable so that this is quick to reach a multitude of the masses and bring to them urgent announcements and stand on particular issues. This is short and quick because it is understood that the masses are already satiated with the issue and the only need is to be united for action.

Unique are other types of propaganda that could be deeper, complimentary or comprehensive as it relates to an issue like primers, forum or seminar that is also called an ed-prop. If there is an immediate propaganda like the agit-prop, there are also the more regular like the newspaper, discussion, or town meeting.

TRUE LINE

True line is our line in the propaganda. So the saying "that's just a prop line" should not be in our vocabulary. This means that our propaganda is not real, a misleading of data, disguising, unaligned from the truth, exaggerated or boastful just to get the attention of the masses. There are the practices of reactionaries, not of revolutionaries.

We do not differentiate propaganda from truth. We do not sow (naghahasik) misinformation or lies. Our propaganda leans upon concrete foundations and legitimate interests of citizens. It's different if it were just errors in data; this can be considered a weakness. But there is no intention from us to cheat or mislead.

3 DIFFERENT FORMS OF PROPAGANDA

In our propaganda we are catching the thoughts and feelings of the masses. Meaning, we take as much as possible their full views, hearing, and perspective. If we have the attention of the masses, we already attained half of the victory of our propaganda. This means that the form and methods we used to attract their attention are also fitting. That is why it is important that we study every form of the propaganda so we can identify the effectiveness of each, or the combination with other forms.

VERBAL

This is perhaps the easiest for us, and the most common, like the conversation of two people, speaking at a meeting or assembly, for house-to-house, or room-to-room.

If the propagandist is in front of the masses, bringing forth the propaganda is therefore direct. We immediately get to know if we are being understood or accepted by the masses, or if they are convinced or not because their reactions are immediately seen. There is also the urgency that the idea is uncommon in other forms of the propaganda. Only, there is also the limitation in the time and attention that the masses will give that is why as much as possible our explanations are short and direct to the point.

It is here where training should occur to the most number of our activists. It is to our great advantage that we have a large number of activists and thus we should also have plenty of propagandists. What is now just needed is to be used to delivering our message in a simple manner and not complicated, direct to the point and not beating around the bush, using language of the masses instead of language that is alien to them.

How an activist carries one's self in front of the masses is also part of doing propaganda. That is why we need to be respectful and humble, teaching and not dictating. In short, setting a good example.

WRITTEN

Better than the verbal form, written propaganda have twice the effectivity to reach a number of the masses. In just one statement thousands will immediately receive it. The statement does not change precisely because it is written; the message is permanent, other than it can be revisited and could be passed around. That is why we are careful with the written propaganda. Just one mistake equates to thousands.

However, written propaganda is also limited for the masses who have the ability to read. Firstly, it should be clear that what is written is readable and easy to the eyes. The presentation should be compelling or enticing. It should be sensitive to the appropriate type, illustration, ink, color, and size of the paper.

Only then that attention should turn to its content. This is where the simple, alive, and easy style in writing or drawing enters. Examples of these are brochures, primers, streamers, placard, newspaper, od/op.

AUDIO-VISUAL

In enticing the attention of the masses, audio visual is more effective than verbal or written propaganda. We can also increase the number of its audience in the same manner as the written propaganda in the form of CDs. Only that this form has greater quality or standard. If it's the eyes the written propaganda is catching and the ears from the verbal, here it becomes both the eyes and the ears. Not only is the propaganda being heard or seen by

the masses but it is moving and being put to life right in front of them. That is why this form is more effective and easily understood by the masses.

Only this form is expensive and needs the help of experts. It needs equipment and technical experience along with its production and its showing.

Examples of this are movies, documentaries, power point presentations, slideshow presentations, etc.

ART AND CULTURE

There are different forms of art and culture that is also being used as a form of propaganda. It is to our great advantage that the masses are familiar with this form and they also enjoy it.

In reality this has a greater ability to entice the very participation of the masses. Not only are they the target audience but they get attracted to even become the *performer*. That is why it is valuable to use and promote the use of these forms especially at local factories, communities, schools.

Some of these are presentations on stage or streets, songs and dances, Santacruzans, penitence, jingles, paintings, sculptures, etc.

4 THE MEDIUM OF PROPAGANDA

The medium of propaganda is in the use of various equipment or technology to bring to the masses our propaganda. This can be used at times when the propagandist is not directly facing the masses, or at opportunities that we wish to reach the masses not directly within our scope.

The medium of our propaganda can be divided into two: the *old media* and the *new media*.

The old media consists of radios, TV and newspapers which are run by the big capitalists of the country, like the Lopezes, Pangilinans, Elizaldes, Prietos, Duavits, etc. Their scope is wide and extensive, from Aparri to Jolo. There are already those that reach other countries like America, Asia, and the Middle East because of cable TV (for example, TFC).

It is our objective to have the old media as the medium of our propaganda so we can bring to the wider public the stand on issues of the national democratic movement. This can be achieved by directly or indirectly depending on the intensity of the issue or interest to the public.

We are covered by the media because we become hot topic in public, or at a minimum, we become news. Coming off this we strive that the issues be talked about in public through their different programs or sections.

Most homes in the Philippines have radios and/or tv. Newspapers, especially tabloids are also all over. But in having the most reach the radio is still ahead. And in influencing the masses television leads. However way behind are the newspapers but are valuable because they follow the opinion makers of the nation.

Meanwhile it is also relatively quick to do propaganda with the new form of media like the internet and cellphones. In the internet we are now able to enter social networking sites like Facebook, blogs, websites, possibly through our organizations or as individuals.

But not all homes have a computer, especially internet. In our society where the majority are laborers at farmers who we want to stir and mobilize, the reach of the internet or the new media is only very small. Their trust in the old media is still bigger. New media also needs knowledge in technology.

On the other hand, it is approximated that 20 million have cellphones in the Philippines, and we are known as the "text capital of the world". We are also not behind on twitter.

But there is a limitation to the length of propaganda that can also be texted on cellphones and the number it can send to at one moment. There is also payment made for every text so this is also one limitation. But it is quick and extensively used for short messages or announcements.

Whether old or new form, we can still make this serve our propaganda. We are not rejecting it instead are studying these in earnest, and striving to overcome the limitations.

Nevertheless we still need to be alert to the control of the ruling class in the old and the new forms of technology. Only a few families are controlling the old media in the country.

In the meantime, the imperialists also have the control over satellites that transmit information in the internet. They are also the ones in control of the large internet servers, hosts, domains [the URL of websites] etc. However things are, they are still in control of the software that are being used to have access to the internet. It is also the ruling class that have the power to control what comprises the internet and the access here of the masses. What this means, anytime our propaganda becomes a threat to the ruling class, it is easy to enforce censorship or cut our access to the media.

That is why we will continue trusting the mass movement. We need to create and start an *alternative media* that is free and not in the scope of control from the ruling class. That is why we continue the initiative to give out different forms and medium of our propaganda--- whether these are handouts, od/op, videos, films, songs, dances, theatre, etc. while there are spaces to enter social networking sites and continue using old media.

This is a struggle to depend on one's self and to avoid using media that is controlled by the ruling class. From Luzon to Mindanao we need to develop, widen and enrich our alternative media.

5 **EXAMPLES**

Outlined below are examples of different forms of our propaganda. Based on the points that have been laid out at the beginning, decide which are right or wrong, which are effective or not.

(Show samples)

Examples of Using Propaganda

- In the use of text we can use gsm modem to send out to those using cellphones what we want to message.
- On radio we can text brigade and phone call for announcements of our propaganda.
- We can use "perydikit" for factories, offices, schools at other venues for propaganda.

Note: This course can be given out as pamphlet (along with samples with annotations), and CD (like an instructional material, complete with voice over and visuals)