

NATIONAL LIBERATION AND PROPAGANDA

Effective propaganda work must be based on a clear grasp of the following four points:

1. the definition and role of propaganda in our struggle for national liberation.
2. the various forms of propaganda and the their relative effectiveness.
3. the type(s) of content most worthy of emphasis in revolutionary propaganda.
4. possible steps for implementation of revolutionary propaganda.

Each of these topics will be discussed separately in the following paragraphs.

DEFINITION AND ROLE OF PROPAGANDA

Propaganda simply means information and ideas that are consciously spread. The dissemination of information and ideas is propaganda, regardless of who does the dissemination, whether the information is true or not, or what the ideas are. The New York Times is propaganda no less than is Muhammad Speaks or the Black Liberation Army's statement "The War of the Flea". We can see that the New York Times, and the "legitimate" media in general, is simply the enemy's propaganda apparatus--- if only from observing the consistent and blatant racism in the coverage of news. The point is emphasized here because effective revolutionary propaganda work requires that we combat the impact of the oppressor's propaganda, which includes television, bill boards, newspapers, magazines, radio, the public schools, comic books, and virtually all information to which we are exposed. Even that which we get from our family and community has probably passed through one of the oppressor's mechanisms listed above. By understanding the near total extent to which we are immersed in our enemy's information and thought patterns (and consequently his life-style), we can see the enormity of the task before us.

Brother Kwame Nkrumah has identified two "different but essential functions" of revolutionary propaganda. They are: (1) to subvert the enemy; (2) to awaken and mobilize our people. Given the degree to which we have been "americanized" (psychologically if not materially), and the reality that military action does not yet seem to be the most stable or popularly embraced aspect of our struggle, the separation of these two functions---even for purposes of analysis---is somewhat premature. Effective subversion of the enemy can only begin with the awakening and mobilization of our people. In attempting to awaken and mobilize our people we must see that the distance we have to travel is not simply from a "neutral" position to a revolutionary position. We must realistically consider the tremendous impact of 354 years of psychological oppression systematic and so intense that a southern senator once boasted before the U.S. Congress that "we have succeeded in extinguishing every avenue by which light might enter the mind of the slave".

While the great majority of our people recognize the reality of our oppression, we do not always recognize the extent to which we've internalized certain aspects of its rationale. One such aspect is economic hierarchy, which is the structural basis of our oppression. This idea will be returned to, but the point of emphasis here is that revolutionary propaganda must address itself not only to the daily changes in conditions and events which affect us, but also to the basic assumptions and beliefs that together determine our world view. As a result of the propaganda to which we have been ruthlessly subjected, our people have a dangerously distorted understanding of ourselves, our situation, and our capacity to make change. The role of revolutionary propaganda is to correct this understanding. To struggle for positive education in the Black community is in fact to struggle against racism and imperialism.

FORMS OF PROPAGANDA

In discussing forms of propaganda, we must consider both applicable meanings of the term "form": (1) medium, and (2) format. We should constantly experiment to determine the effectiveness of various media, and seek to develop new ones. We must also understand that our conclusions regarding relative effectiveness must guide but not limit the range of our work. Given the enormity and complexity of the communications systems in this country, it is nec-

essary that some level of propaganda work be conducted in each of the following areas:

Print Media includes newspapers, magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, leaflets, etc. The relatively low level of technology required for printed propaganda makes it a particularly useful form in revolutionary situations. Print also allows for great flexibility in its means of dissemination. In other revolutionary situations, the effectiveness of printed propaganda has been greatly inhibited by low literacy rates. But the relatively high reading ability of African people in the United States ensures that literacy will not be the kind of obstacle that it was in the Cuban revolution or is in the Mozambiquan revolution.

Visual Propaganda includes films, video tapes, photography, etc. The major advantage of visual propaganda is that it requires the least effort on the part of its audience. If it is just brought within the eyesight of an observer, the communication of information and/or ideas requires little or no initiative on his part. Photographs can be distributed in much the same way as the printed word, but the production and dissemination of films and video tapes have technological prerequisites that inhibit their use by revolutionaries. However, these difficulties are not insurmountable, quite to the contrary they must be overcome so that we can begin production of films comparable (qualitatively) to "A Luta Continua", about the national oppression and national struggle of African people in the U.S.

Audio Propaganda includes word-of-mouth, speeches, conversations, and interviews,

or recordings of any such communication. Speech is a universal medium within which language forms superficial boundaries. The technology necessary to reproduce the spoken word is within the grasp of African revolutionaries in this country. The major advantage of audio propaganda are: (1) it does not require that the audience take the initiative to read, but only to listen, and (2) it is particularly conducive to educational discussions in group situations.

Propaganda Through Art and Entertainment includes music, drama, dance, poetry, painting, sculpture, cartoons, etc. Both art and entertainment also come through the three previously listed categories (print, visual, and audio) but they are separated here because of the crucial role they (can) play at this time. We must understand that the cultural basis of art and entertainment can make them political regardless of their content. Also, our collective lack of clarity on the need for and nature of revolutionary struggle means that art and entertainment are the most acceptable forms of political propaganda for our people at this time. To prove this point, we need only consider the tremendous negative impact of so-called black films such as Shaft, Superfly, etc.

Commercial Electronic Media (radio and television) should be viewed as a separate category, as they represent an area which we can only hope to infiltrate with limited success, but probably won't control---in any sense or aspect---for some time to come. The enemy carefully controls radio and television because he recognizes their power. Together, they determine the "american view" (to which too many of us subscribe). Further, the level of technology required for television and broad scale radio communication facilitates the ruling class monopoly of the air waves. Any loopholes in this monopoly are filled with the oppressor's laws.

The second meaning of the term "form" has to do with the style and vocabulary we use within any of the above categories. The acceptability of propaganda to its audience is the sole criterion for judging its format. If our people do not respond to propaganda because of its form, then the content is worthless. There are two factors to consider in determining format. Firstly, who is the audience? Youth in public schools? Young working people? College students? Community elders? The community as a whole? It is important to have a clear answer to this question. Secondly, what is the nature of the message we want to communicate? If it is just an announcement, it should be as brief as possible but still answer all relevant questions (who, what, where, when, and why.). However, if our purpose is to explain a particular econ-

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Visual propaganda: A Black man in the U.S. carries a poster of an African liberation fighter made in China.****

NOTE TO OUR READERS

The next article (pages B & C), IMPERIALISM AND THE BLACK MEDIA, has been reprinted from the Black Scholar (Nov. '74). Due to space limitations, it has been edited. However, the last section, starting from the example of Black journalists during the Depression and revolutionary journalists around the world, is intact. We urge our readers to read the original if possible.

The article was written by the National Coordinating Committee of the "Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism".

OF FURTHER INTEREST

THE CONTROL OF MAJOR TELEVISION NETWORKS

ABC: Controlled mainly by the Morgan finance capital group. It owns ABC TV network with 168 affiliates, five television stations and four ABC radio networks with 1,254 affiliates. It is the largest motion picture distribution chain in the U.S., owning over 434 Paramount Theatres. It owns ABC records and publishes several journals. ABC International has controlling interests in 10 foreign companies operating television stations in 26 countries and its ABC World division directly owns 64 foreign television stations.

NBC: Controlled jointly by the Rockefeller and Morgan finance capital groups. RCA owns all of NBC and is one of the 20 largest corporations in the world. RCA produces 1,200 products in more than 60 manufacturing plants. RCA owns NBC television network with 215 affiliates, NBC radio network with 220 radio affiliates, and five television, six AM and FM stations. It also owns Random House, RCA records, and Hertz Rent-a-Car. RCA is also a leading supplier of electronics equipment for the military and police.



CBS: Controlled by the Rockefeller and Morgan finance capital groups. CBS owns CBS TV network with 247 affiliates, CBS radio network with 246 affiliates, five television and 14 radio stations, and Viacom Cable TV. It also owns the largest record company in the world-CBS records-and Fender Guitar, Holt and Dryden publishers, Field and Stream Magazine, Creative Playthings, Memorex. CBS produces commercial films and tapes and CBS Labs has developed special techniques for police surveillance and chemical/bacteriological warfare.



omic, political, or military trend or event, then we should carefully consider the length and vocabulary of the statement and attempt to match them with the habits of our target audience. The question of entertainment is equally important for art and entertainment, which must reflect the ever-changing situation, but retain its cultural basis and promote the national identification of African people in the U.S. Finally, the correct format for any situation can only be determined by knowing the people with whom and for whom you intend to work.

THE CONTENT OF REVOLUTIONARY PROPAGANDA

Even before discussing the specific topic of any piece of propaganda, it is possible to identify the following characteristics as essential:

1. Revolutionary propaganda must emphasize the national character of our situation and promote unity among African people.
2. Revolutionary propaganda must include and emphasize the need for working class leadership of our struggle.
3. Revolutionary propaganda must advocate organized resistance by the masses by any means necessary.
4. Revolutionary propaganda must explain and provide suggested solutions to the concrete problems facing our African nation.
5. Revolutionary propaganda must connect long-range analysis and solutions to the day-to-day reality of our people.
6. Revolutionary propaganda must constantly identify and attempt to isolate our enemies (i.e. racism and imperialism).

In addition to the above characteristics, the following concepts need particular emphasis at this point in our struggle. We must explain that economic hierarchy in general, and capitalism specifically, are the structural basis of our oppression. As we identify these enemies we must endorse some form of socialist economics as the only alternative.

The question is not one of "isms" or some "foreign" model, but simply a matter of recognizing that with respect to economics there are basically two ways to organize a society. We must either endorse economic hierarchy or struggle for its eli-

bloodshed, war is politics with bloodshed." The most meaningful way to support Black Law (Black Law is a set of concepts developed by Black revolutionaries that outline a set of social relationships appropriate for developing revolutionary society. Included are such concepts as: collective decision-making, criticism/self criticism, social relationship between young and old and men and women, etc. The originators of the concept always assumed that these set of concepts, if implemented, would have to be defended militarily because they are in direct conflict with present police order.) and its defenders is to promote the realization that African people, in America and around the world, are at war. In this way, we can relate the inevitability of armed struggle in this country. Most importantly we must make the point that survival is at stake. If African people in this country do not unite, national genocide is our most likely future.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REVOLUTIONARY PROPAGANDA

This section will touch upon two topics. Firstly, a brief list of suggestions in each of the propaganda categories mentioned in the discussion of forms. Secondly, a comment on the implications of undertaking revolutionary propaganda work. Print is a key area of propaganda in which we should attempt to develop maximum self-reliance. A used ditto machine is a good investment and shouldn't be too hard to locate. A mimeograph is one step better. We should cultivate access to Xerox machines through schools, hospitals, and businesses. An offset press is probably too expensive to be worthwhile unless manpower and priorities make it possible to develop a printing operation that will serve other community groups on a non-commercial basis. A commercial printing operation, like any attempt to run a "revolutionary" business in monopoly capitalistic America, will probably be consumed by its inherent contradictions.

Every African community should have a newspaper that it owns and controls. Because a revolutionary political posture may cut advertising and all support from the (Black) business community--to zero, we should be prepared to start with a ser-

group teaching situations. We should take advantage of the films available to us through organizations such as Newsreel and Tri-Continental Films (Berkeley). It should not be difficult to locate a teacher in the community who will borrow projectors and other equipment through her or his school. The ultimate aim in this area of work (as in others) is self-reliance. As always, we should start from the ground and work up. Film production is readily within our grasp if we avoid a "Hollywood" mentality. A Kodak Super-8 movie camera can be purchased for less than twenty dollars. Slide shows accompanied by music or speech (taped or live) are also powerful.

Audio Propaganda consists mainly of recordings of speeches, interviews, conversations, etc. Such recordings are always good for purpose of education and documentation. Cassette tape recorders are readily available in most Black communities. People working in schools and department stores can often provide tapes. Speeches and interviews should also be transcribed and distributed in printed form. Car caravans through the community using portable public address systems are also an effective means of publicizing rallies, demonstrations, etc.

Propaganda through Art and Entertainment should be consolidated around a cultural center in every African community. The range of propaganda work in this area is limited only by our initiative and creativity. The key to effective work through this medium is to develop a core group of people who can synthesize and project the day-to-day realities of our lives and our struggle.

In the commercial electronics media, we will probably remain limited to three tactics: (1) infiltrate production and broadcast organizations at whatever levels possible, (2) manipulate bourgeois news coverage, based on our knowledge of its counter-revolutionary motive, and (3) exploit the political contradictions in the media (e.g., "liberal-conservative"), understanding that these contradictions are clearly secondary to those that pit us against the bourgeois media as a whole.

The ruling class will not sit idly by if revolutionaries can successfully put out the above type of propaganda. All the repressive machinery of the state will be brought to bear on those who attempt to help our people for revolutionary struggle. History has proven this. Johnson said that one of his only two mistakes was not instituting censorship. Under the increasingly fascist Nixon regime, continued with Ford, censorship of even the bourgeois press has become commonplace. Fascism will quickly force all truly revolutionary propaganda underground. The alternative to not going underground when the conditions warrant will be the destruction of the revolutionary propaganda machine.

Therefore, there are three areas where people must scientifically prepare if they wish to engage in revolutionary propaganda:

1. Their propaganda must reach the level where our people will protect it because they realize that the propaganda is vital to their interests.
2. We must be prepared to defend our propaganda and program.
3. We must be able to submerge ourselves among our people as a fish swims in the sea.

CONCLUSION

Lastly, we must be clear on the historical role of propaganda teams. In China, they became an integral part of the Red Army; in Vietnam they were the basis of the National Liberation Army. In the United States, propaganda units will link up with other cadre collectives to form a Black revolutionary party guided by revolutionary science (Marxism-Leninism). Propaganda cadres and organizations should be striving with all other comrades to build such a party. A revolutionary party to coordinate all revolutionary work and lead the people in struggle is the key element missing from our struggle. In the meantime we must diversify and popularize our propaganda work to make it as effective as possible. Revolutionary Propagandists have a key role to play in the Black Liberation struggle. We must bring the message of revolution to our people, subvert the enemy and teach each other the science and practice of revolution. We must be competent if our people are to win.

A LUTA CONTINUA
POPULARIZE REVOLUTIONARY PROPAGANDA
BUILD A BLACK REVOLUTIONARY PARTY



Illustration by Vietnamese artist for a story written by Ho Chi Minh in 1922. The story was written to teach Vietnamese people about the national liberation struggles of Africa.

mination. The concept of socialist revolution must be brought together with the reality of our national oppression and national struggle. Among cadre and advanced activists these two forms should be expanded by using the concepts of dictatorship of the proletariat and war of national liberation. In a struggle where the great majority of our people are working class, the ultimate form of socialism that will guarantee true freedom and power for the workers is the dictatorship of the proletariat. Struggles in which national oppression is the key element, the organizational forms of the national liberation war (National United Front, National Liberation Org., etc) are most appropriate. The separation of these concepts for purpose of "ideological debate" has left each of them incapable of guiding our struggle alone.

We must also explain and support the actions of our brothers and sisters who are struggling the military level. We must clarify the relationship between political and military struggle, making

ies of leaflets, the regular newsletters, and then a newspaper, but only after some degree of stability has been achieved. Among the most important aspects of a revolutionary community publication is its consistency. It is also important that local communities make inputs into progressive Africal publications that receive broader circulation such as The African World and Muhammad Speaks. As printing capacity develops, posters, and then pamphlets can be produced and distributed. Posters should be put up with the intention that they stay long enough to be seen. Use wheat paste or evaporated milk, being careful not to antagonize community residents by "defacing" their property.

In using the bourgeois print media, contacts are the most important thing. We should identify people in key positions and maintain favorable, on-going relations with them. Press conferences should be called only when absolutely necessary. If you call one that is judged "unnewsworthy" by the bourgeois media, you can expect little or no coverage of the next one.