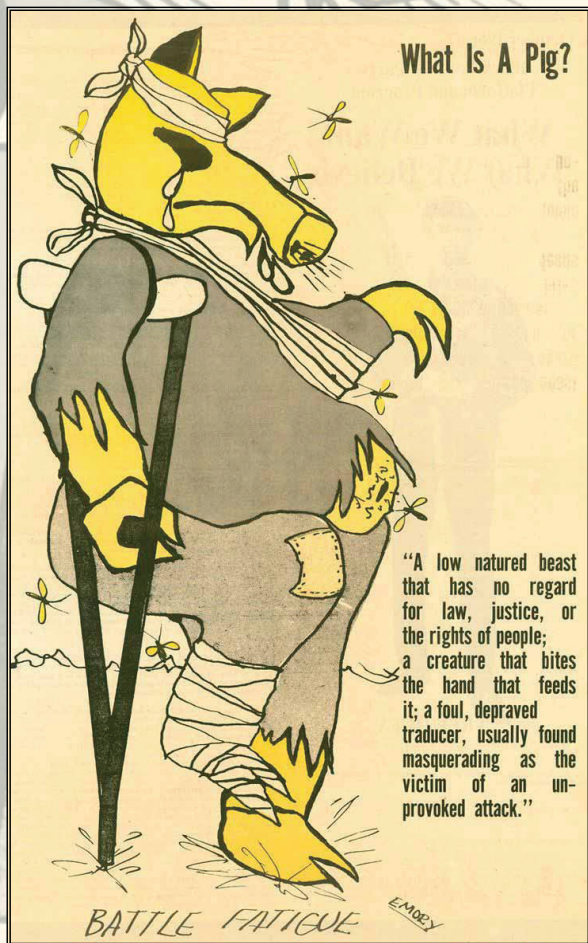


# DRAWING BLOOD

A GUIDE TO COMMUNIST AGITATION

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2021



BY THE

ORGANIZATION OF  
COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARIES (US)

During his struggle with the economists (those Marxists who restricted their political work to struggles over the immediate conditions of exploitation at the factory), Lenin, in his seminal work *What Is to Be Done?*, wrote:

A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organization of *comprehensive* political exposure. *In no way* except by means of such exposures *can* the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity.

This manual will serve as a political and technical guide to communist *agitation*. Agitation is the process by which communists systematically lay bare the instances of oppression and exploitation that the masses face on a daily basis and point to their source in the system of capitalism-imperialism. Communists distinguish agitation from *propaganda*, the latter being a lengthier examination of an issue or question in an all-around way, paying attention to the history as well as the motion and development of a contradiction. (This communist definition of propaganda differs from the more general and usually negative usage of the term propaganda as any political text or art that aims to persuade or manipulate its audience.)

Agitation can take the form of an announcement at a concert or in a classroom, a brief article, a street corner rap, a conversation, slogans on a banner or a wall, or a social media post (though communist use of social media for agitation purposes should never be confused with or come off like performative wokeness). Agitation is an essential means by which to bring the masses to the conclusion that we need a revolution to end the injustices they suffer under this system, and get them organized for that revolution.

## WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF GOOD AGITATION?

Good agitation requires exposure, specificity, and often calls people to action (implicitly or explicitly). Our exposure must sharply explain the particular outrage or injustice in the starkest possible

terms; we call this *drawing blood*. Here's an example:

Imagine going to a wedding, celebrating with friends and loved ones, hearing a buzz overhead, and suddenly most of the people you hold dearest in the world have been cut in half and fucking incinerated. A few moments later, when someone arrives to provide you with urgent medical aid, there's another buzzing, and you and the person who came to offer you aid are cut down in the same horrifying manner. These double-tap drone strikes were an explicit policy of Barack Obama, carried out in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and other countries, and justified in the name of the so-called War on Terror. What these drone strikes and the trail of dead they've left behind show us is that it's US imperialism that inflicts the most terror on people all over the world.

The exposure should stop decent people in their tracks and make them gasp. In this example, we've taken the general condition (imperialism and its warfare abroad) and concentrated it into in a particular instance (double-tap drone strikes). The beginning of the *Manifesto of the Organization of Communist Revolutionaries* is one concentrated expression of drawing blood, and is something worth reviewing before speaking or writing agitation.

Communist agitation has to say things to people that they've felt inside of them for a long time but never dared to say out loud or never had the words to articulate. Bourgeois hegemony means that a lot of the horror of the system is concealed or excused as part of everyday life, and this concealment is constantly reinforced by the ideological state apparatus. Our agitation needs to pierce the veil of normalcy. Think of Malcolm X in his speech *The Ballot or the Bullet*: "No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million Black people who are victims of Americanism."

Our agitation needs to be in language that the masses can relate to. In *Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing*, Mao Zedong told the story of a comrade who painted a Communist Party slogan on a wall using Chinese characters from ancient scholarship that couldn't be read by everyday Chinese peasants and workers. Mao said about this comrade that "perhaps he had taken a vow that the common people should

not read [the slogans]; it is difficult to explain otherwise.” While different people and agitation teams will develop their own personal style, universally we must reject academic, activist, leftist, and post-modernist jargon. This also means using the mass line and the four-step method (which revolutionaries should live and breathe) to learn how our language is being received by the people. For example, in formal documents we should insist on the precise communist terms “white supremacy” and “national oppression.” In agitating about the oppression of Black people, we can use the more common term “racism” to describe the systematic ways that Black people are oppressed by the system.

One measure of the success of our agitation is its ability to call people into action. If we’re carrying out good exposures, we’ll be able to organize people into the class struggle, carrying out what Malcolm X said in an interview with Marlene Nadle, excerpted in *Malcolm X Speaks*: “You have to wake the people up first, then you’ll get action.” This can mean organizing people on the spot, as in this hypothetical example:

The police just killed yet another unarmed Black man. They claimed he robbed food from the corner store, chased him into an alleyway, and then shot him ten times. Witnesses say they shot him in the back, and he had no weapon. This is just one more way this system has done Black people dirty for the last 400 years. It only stops when we stand up and make it stop. So let’s get everybody in this neighborhood together and march right now on the police station and demand that the killer cops get the punishment they deserve.

Besides organizing resistance on the spot, successful agitation can also mean collecting contact information, raising funds, and setting up follow-up meetings.

## HOW TO ENSURE THAT OUR AGITATION IS EFFECTIVE

The *Manifesto of the Organization of Communist Revolutionaries* states: “Within and around mass organizations and struggles, com-



munists must carry out consistent agitation and propaganda to expose exactly how the capitalist-imperialist system is at the root of the problems and injustices the masses face, propagate communist ideology and internationalism, and recruit the most advanced among the masses as communist cadre.” Comrades should struggle and practice to avoid being formulaic in agitation, and bring to life the nature of the injustices, the system that is responsible for them, and the need for revolution. Often, this involves walking back and forth between the general, universal point and the more particular, specific exposure. Here are a couple hypothetical examples of what we mean:

Right now the 'rona virus is spreading among workers at the \_\_\_\_ chicken processing plant. Already three workers have died from the virus. The plant owners failed to provide masks to the workers, threatened to fire people if they didn't come to work because they were sick, and had them working right next to each other. They wouldn't even let them take bathroom breaks to wash their hands! To the owners of the \_\_\_\_ plant, who made \_\_\_\_ dollars in profit last year, the workers are worth less than the chicken carcasses they process. The owners provide no health insurance for them. And when these workers fall sick, since many of them are undocumented, there is no financial assistance coming from the government for them. We still have no idea how many workers are sick from this virus, as the government has only administered 30 tests for the over 1,000 people who work at the \_\_\_\_ plant. This is how capitalism-imperialism in the US operates: it relies on immigrants to keep this country running, it exploits them in the most difficult and dangerous jobs, it subjects them to ICE raids, detention, and deportation, and then, when these immigrant workers fall sick, it leaves them to die.

The new state law, \_\_\_\_, imposes Christian fundamentalist morality on all women and makes it much more difficult to get an abortion. It forces women to get the consent of the father before they can get an abortion, treating women's bodies as the property of men. It imposes a three-day waiting period from a woman's first appointment at the clinic to her abortion procedure, which places an extra burden especially on low-income and impoverished women. And it imposes absurd and unnecessary restrictions on women's clinics, forcing them to have ad-

mitting privileges at a hospital in order to perform abortions. There are only three abortion clinics in this state right now, and only one will be able to stay open under the new law. Already many women have to travel three hours to get to the nearest clinic. These Christian fundamentalists have no right to impose their medieval mentality on women. They talk all day about life, but they've murdered three abortion doctors in this state and they haven't raised any protest about the 27 Black people killed by police in this state in the last two years. It's time we created a militant resistance that insists on access to abortion without apology and refuses to allow archaic fundamentalist preachers and politicians to impose their patriarchy on us.

Agitation like this can bring people to an initial understanding of the system behind these injustices, but propaganda is necessary to deepen that understanding. Therefore, comrades should make a point to carry OCR literature and have copies of *kites* for sale whenever we go out amongst the masses so that we're always ready to follow our agitation up with the distribution of communist propaganda.

As stated above, communists should live and breathe the mass line, the four-step method, and criticism and self-criticism. This means that agitation teams should be rigorously summing up our agitation in the course of an "outing" in addition to at the end of the outing. Pay attention to the tactical aspects (we should be on a different corner, the rap is a little long compared to how fast people are walking, etc.) in addition to the strategic aspects. Comrades should pay particular attention to the advanced, intermediate, and backward sentiments of the masses we speak to, accurately assess if are orienting towards the most advanced, and work to incorporate the advanced sentiments into the agitation and exposure (in other words, apply the mass line). We shouldn't be afraid to challenge people on the spot, calling on the advanced to get organized and challenging the views of the backwards while keeping our exposure focused on the system and its rulers.

\* \* \*

Our agitation is often our first contact with the advanced masses.

Our exposures of the system need to draw blood, speak to people's deepest love for humanity and hate for the system, use language that the masses can understand, bring people into the class struggle, and inspire people with the possibility of revolution. Through repeated contact with communist agitation and propaganda, we can begin to train the masses in proletarian class-consciousness and revolutionary activity, to echo Lenin's formulation. All cadre should challenge themselves to become more skillful agitators, regardless of assignment, and carry out compelling agitation among the masses every chance we get, including during the course of conversations. As we grow, we should develop specialists in agitation. Agitation teams should submit timely, thorough reports, and leadership should pay attention to particularly successful agitation and popularize it among our ranks and to advanced masses.

#### APPENDIX I: DUMB LEFTIST BULLSHIT, OR COMMUNIST AGITATION?

Above we have discussed the principles that separate communist exposure and agitation from the kind of dumb leftist bullshit that floods the internet and activist movements. Here, we'll discuss a hypothetical example to help comrades understand the distinction:

A public college has invited a well-known former general to guest lecture on campus for a semester. With just outrage, a student organization launches protests and reaches out to the media, with the main slogan "the general is a war criminal" repeated ad nauseam. While perhaps effective in rallying the suburban members of Amnesty International who already know something about US war crimes, this slogan fails to rally the broad layers of students and others who could be won to oppose the general's appointment as guest lecturer. It fails to expose the brutal nature of the war the general oversaw with specific facts, instead attempting to rely on sloganeering and bourgeois legality (the US military, without question, commits war crimes regularly and on a grand scale). And it doesn't point out the responsibility of the students to join the fight. In sum, it is a form of agitation whose aim seems to be to give the membership of the student organization a pat on the back for agreeing with it rather than convincing the broad masses of students of its truth.

By contrast, communist agitation should take an opportunity like this to clearly oppose the general, sharply expose the empire, and call on the students themselves to take up the fight:

What is this general's expertise? It's in torture, like in Mosul, where he oversaw the rounding up, detention, and brutal beating of young men at random. What are we supposed to learn from this general? Slaughter of whole families like his drone strikes did during the Afghanistan surge? This general lied about how many Iraqis were dying during Bush, he lied to the media that the Afghan war was about to end during Obama, and he even lied about his extramarital affair. These butchers want to use this campus to give their permanent war an intellectual justification and enshrine war criminals, and the university administration has gone right along with them. Students who don't want to be complicit with this empire and its crimes against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan need to stand up and oppose this general's appointment.

## APPENDIX 2: AGITATION TEAMS

While exposure and agitation should flow through many opportunities to reach the masses, including everyday conversations, one important organized form is agitation teams. These teams may project communist politics openly or be part of communist-led mass organizations. While each instance has different particularities, the following is a method applicable to densely populated proletarian neighborhoods, transit hubs, college campuses, outside high schools, large protests, and crowds outside of concerts—basically anywhere there are large crowds of people.

Wherever the geographic location, an agitation team should gather beforehand for a *brief* orientation. The team leader should unite team members around objectives, agitation points, who we expect the advanced to be in the area (“this is near a center where South Asian college students hang out”; “this is a transit hub a lot of Black and Caribbean immigrant proletarian women use to get to their jobs”), and any security concerns. Agitation teams can and should experiment with the most effective way to deploy their forces, but here we can lay

out the basic roles needed for an effective agitation team:

- A team leader who sets the overall tone and politics, makes quick decisions during the course of the team's activity (including necessary adjustments in agitation and team functioning in order to successfully reach the masses), keeps track of quantitative figures (propaganda distributed, contacts gathered, money raised, etc.) both in the course of agitation and during final count, leads the summation meeting afterwards, and trains other team members in communist methods of leadership.
- An agitator who delivers the agitation boldly and loudly and, when appropriate, responds to the responses of the masses.
- A security person who pays attention to the overall surroundings and watches out and gets in the way of hostile people and the police who come to disrupt or attack the agitation. Usually this security person will stay in close physical proximity to the agitator and also talk to advanced masses who approach the agitator to talk so that the agitator can continue agitating. Particularly among larger crowds or in hostile environments, the agitator needs someone to act as their security guard.
- Propaganda distributors (two or more) who pass out whatever printed material the team is distributing, strategically positioned to get this material in the masses' hands as they first come into hearing distance of the agitator.
- "Catchers" (two or more), strategically positioned where the masses have already received the propaganda material and heard the agitation, who identify people who were inspired by the agitation and talk to them, get their contact information, and collect donations. They may set up a propaganda table to attract the advanced, gather crowds, and facilitate conversation.

This division of labor presumes a large team of at least seven people and an opportunity to reach large numbers of people. It can be modified for smaller teams and for reaching smaller crowds. Members of the team can play multiple roles (the agitator might also be the



team leader, or the propaganda distributor might also be the security person), and can rotate in and out of different roles (except for the team leader, who should be clearly designated). And it can be adapted for different settings (for example, a team moving from one subway car to another).

Agitation teams should also make use of compelling visuals, such as banners with agitational slogans, poster displays with visual exposure (for example, pictures of the results of a US drone strike or an instance of police murder), and outfits that project revolutionary discipline, style, and the right kind and amount of swagger (but not arrogance). Artistic expressions, such as live music performance, can also be incorporated into agitation teams when appropriate and can be effective in creating a strong attractive force to the agitation (for example, an agitator working in coordination with a drummer is dope).

As a principle of basic respect and revolutionary seriousness, all team members and most definitely the team leader should be on time, politically and physically prepared, and bring all necessary materials. One excellent form of revolutionary discipline that also encourages “ready for the future...” physical fitness is for team members who are late to run laps. The team leader sets the overall political line; all team members have a responsibility in carrying out and accurately summing up the experience.

### SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

*Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965).

*Manifesto of the Organization of Communist Revolutionaries* (US) [2020], particularly the opening section, “Who Are the Greatest Criminals in the World?”, available at [www.ocrev.org](http://www.ocrev.org).

Mao Zedong, *Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing* [1942].