

MARXIST-LENINIST PERSPECTIVES ON PROPAGANDA WORK WITH YOUTH UNIONS IN PROTECTING THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION TODAY

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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the important role of propaganda work in the success or failure of the revolutionary movement and the leadership of the Communist Party, the classical theorists of Marxism-Leninism have outlined comprehensive points on this field of work. These insights are crucial for the Youth Union in implementing propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation in the current period. Therefore, studying the Marxist-Leninist perspectives on propaganda work is not only theoretically significant but also possesses profound practical value, especially in the context of increasingly sophisticated schemes and tactics by hostile forces aiming at various targets, including youth members.

Keywords: Propaganda work; Ideological foundation; Vietnamese Communist Youth Union; Marxism-Leninism; Hồ Chí Minh Thought; Youth organizations; Ideological protection; Revolutionary movement; Propaganda principles; Organizational training; Vietnamese Party's ideology; Practical solutions; Young generation engagement; Lenin's theories; Marx and Engels works; Contemporary context; Propaganda strategies; Propaganda effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Marxist-Leninist Perspectives on Propaganda Work

Firstly, on the role of propaganda work:

To begin with, it must be affirmed that the basis for the classical theorists of Marxism-Leninism to present their views on the role of propaganda work stems from the guiding role of theory and ideology in the revolutionary movement. According to this, Karl Marx asserted: "The weapon of criticism obviously cannot replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force, but theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses."¹ Further concretizing Marx's view on the role of theory in the revolutionary movement, V.I. Lenin stated: "Only a party guided by an advanced theory can fulfill the role of vanguard fighter."² Based on this foundation, the role of propaganda work according to the Marxist-Leninist perspective is reflected in the following basic contents:

First, propaganda work brings theory to the masses: This can be seen as one of the most important roles of propaganda work, being one of the three components of the Communist Party's ideological work. Through propaganda work, the content of theory is disseminated and spread to the masses, gaining wide acceptance among the vast majority of the people.

Second, propaganda work strengthens and consolidates the leadership of the Communist Party: V.I. Lenin once said, "The first task of any political party with responsibilities for the future is to

¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1995), Complete Works, Volume 1, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 580.

² V.I. Lenin (1975), Complete Works, Volume 6, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 32.

convince the majority of the people of the correctness of its program and strategy.”³ Such “convincing” is difficult to achieve without the role of propaganda work. By disseminating and spreading the scientific and revolutionary content of theory, the masses not only know and understand the theory but also form a belief and support for the Communist Party's program and strategy. This is a crucial condition for the Party to effectively perform its leadership role.

Third, propaganda work promotes and awakens the masses' self-awareness and participation in the cause of building socialism and communism: From understanding and believing in the theory, program, and strategy of the Communist Party, through propaganda work, the masses grasp the Party's guiding viewpoints as well as their own role and position in the revolutionary cause. Consequently, they are ready to dedicate and sacrifice themselves for the great victory of the revolution: “The masses must participate themselves... they must understand why they must fight, why they must shed blood and sacrifice their lives.”⁴

Secondly, on the goals of propaganda work:

The most important goal of propaganda work is to establish a scientific and revolutionary worldview and methodology for the masses, thereby creating unity in perception and action. According to V.I. Lenin, propaganda work “makes people see all manifestations of the autocratic regime's activity, the class nature of that regime, the necessity of overthrowing it, and makes people understand that it is impossible to fight successfully for the workers' cause without winning political freedom, without democratizing the political and social system.”⁵ In other words, through propaganda work, the level of consciousness among the masses is significantly raised, meeting the demands set by the revolution: “Raising the consciousness of the masses, now and at any time, is the foundation and main content of all our work.”⁶

Thirdly, on some principles of conducting propaganda work:

Propaganda work needs to be carried out through content and methods suitable to practical reality. V.I. Lenin emphasized: “...use concrete, vivid examples taken from all spheres of life to educate the masses.”⁷ Thus, with Lenin's guidance, the content and methods of propaganda need to be relatable, truthful, and derived from every “corner” of life. This will directly determine the effectiveness of the propaganda work.

There must be a combination of propaganda work and agitation work. Through agitation, the content that needs to be propagated will penetrate more deeply and quickly into the masses: “We will achieve everything necessary, we will overcome all the obstacles left by the old regime, obstacles that we cannot overcome all at once. We need to re-educate the masses; only propaganda

³ V.I. Lenin (2006), Complete Works, Volume 36, Truth Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 208.

⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (2004), Complete Works, Volume 22, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 775.

⁵ V.I. Lenin (1975), Complete Works, Volume 2, Progress Publishers, p. 559-560.

⁶ V.I. Lenin (1975), Complete Works, Volume 13, Progress Publishers, p. 472.

⁷ V.I. Lenin (2005), Complete Works, Volume 37, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 109.

and agitation can accomplish this."⁸ Thus, the combination of propaganda and agitation will create a tremendous strength, capable of bringing many glorious victories for the revolution.

The role of the press and publishing in conducting propaganda work must be recognized and promoted. This can be considered one of the most important topics that the classical theorists of Marxism-Leninism discussed in many aspects. First, Karl Marx clarified the political nature of the press, affirming that a completely non-political newspaper does not exist: "It is impossible to entirely abandon politics. All newspapers advocating the abandonment of politics are also engaging in politics. The issue is how to do politics and what kind of politics to do."⁹ Besides discussing this characteristic of the press, Marx also particularly emphasized the role of publishing in propaganda and education of the masses, especially in terms of spiritual life: "Publishing is a powerful lever of culture and the spiritual education of the people."¹⁰ Later, based on summarizing revolutionary practice, Lenin further developed Marx's viewpoint, directly linking the press with propaganda work: "The press is the initial battlefield from which the Party will conduct its struggle with its opponents using appropriate weapons. The daily newspaper is an irreplaceable tool for propagating and agitating the masses"¹¹; "What we need first and foremost is a newspaper—without it, systematic, principled, and comprehensive propaganda and agitation cannot be carried out."¹²

2. YOUTH UNION'S PROPAGANDA WORK TO PROTECT THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION TODAY - AN APPROACH FROM THE MARXIST-LENINIST PERSPECTIVE

Firstly, on recognizing the role of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation: The Youth Union deeply understands the role of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation, especially on digital platforms and social media, and considers this the most important "front" in the current period: "The Youth Union has issued numerous directives, implemented, and concretized the Party's viewpoints on revolutionary ideals education for its members and youth on a periodic and annual basis, such as: Action Program implementing Directive No. 42-CT/TW dated March 24, 2015, of the Party Central Secretariat on 'Strengthening the Party's leadership over the education of revolutionary ideals, ethics, and cultural lifestyles for the young generation, 2015-2030' (Directive 42); Plan to implement Directive No. 05-CT/TW of the Politburo on 'Continuing to promote learning and following Ho Chi Minh's ideology, morality, and style' (Directive 05) among Youth Union members; 4 projects, resolutions, and conclusions on revolutionary ideals education among officers, members, and youth for the periods 2012-2017

⁸ Quoted in: Nguyễn Thị Mai Nga (2022), "Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh's Thought on Propaganda Work", Journal of Prosecution, Issue 15, p. 12.

⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (2004), Complete Works, Volume 17, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 551.

¹⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1982), Selected Works, Volume 13, Truth Publishing House, p. 182.

¹¹ V.I. Lenin (1979), Complete Works, Volume 8, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 245.

¹² V.I. Lenin (2005), Complete Works, Volume 5, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 10.

and 2018-2022”¹³; “Clearly recognizing the role and responsibility as ‘the reliable reserve force of the Party, regularly supplementing young forces for the Party, succeeding the glorious revolutionary cause of the Party and President Ho Chi Minh,’ the Central Committee of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union has always clearly identified the task of firmly protecting the Party’s ideological foundation, fighting against wrong and hostile views as a fundamental work content, the top important task, and a voluntary, regular activity of each Youth Union organization, officer, member, and youth.”¹⁴ Faced with the situation of hostile forces intensifying their sabotage and targeting youth, the Central Committee of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union has effectively implemented practical plans and programs to enhance the “immunity” of Youth Union members in particular, and officers and the public in general, against malicious information and hostile rhetoric, especially in cyberspace. The Youth Union perceives the propaganda work to protect the Party’s ideological foundation (especially in cyberspace) as extremely important, contributing to the thorough understanding and implementation of the viewpoint of linking “building” with “combating” in the work of building the Youth Union and the Youth Union’s participation in building the Party: “The Central Committee of the Youth Union has proactively built and advised the government to approve the program ‘Education of revolutionary ideals, ethics, and cultural lifestyles for youth, teenagers, and children in cyberspace for the period 2022-2030’.”¹⁵

Through the propaganda work to protect the Party’s ideological foundation carried out by the Youth Union, the contents of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh’s thought, the Party’s viewpoints, guidelines, and policies (including Resolution No. 35-NQ/TW on ‘Strengthening the protection of the Party’s ideological foundation, fighting against wrong and hostile views in the new situation,’ issued by the Politburo, 12th term, on October 22, 2018), as well as state policies and laws have deeply penetrated the Youth Union members, contributing to the formation of a self-conscious, proactive, and positive awareness of protecting the Party’s ideological foundation among the young generation of Vietnam today.

However, a segment of Youth Union officers still does not fully recognize the importance of protecting the Party’s ideological foundation in general, and the role of propaganda work in protecting the Party’s ideological foundation in particular: “A segment of Youth Union officers does not fully understand the significance and importance of protecting the Party’s ideological foundation, fighting against wrong and hostile views, and even considers it the job of the Party and functional agencies at the macro level.”¹⁶ This is one of the issues that need to be thoroughly and meticulously researched to propose appropriate and effective solutions.

¹³ Nguyễn Anh Tuấn (2019), “Promoting the Role of the Youth Union in Criticizing and Combating Wrong and Hostile Views”, Journal of Propaganda.

¹⁴ Nguyễn Minh Triết (2023), “The Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union Promotes Its Vanguard Role in Protecting the Party’s Ideological Foundation”, Journal of People’s Defense.

¹⁵ Nguyễn Minh Triết (2023), “The Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union Promotes Its Vanguard Role in Protecting the Party’s Ideological Foundation”, Journal of People’s Defense.

¹⁶ Nguyễn Anh Tuấn (2019), “Promoting the Role of the Youth Union in Criticizing and Combating Wrong and Hostile Views”, Journal of Propaganda.

Secondly, on understanding the objectives of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation: Through propaganda efforts, the Youth Union aims to equip its members with knowledge, develop skills, and shape attitudes through diverse, dynamic, and rich activities. Specifically:

- Knowledge: The Youth Union seeks to provide its members with fundamental and in-depth knowledge about Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, the Party's policies and guidelines, and the state's laws; knowledge about history and national traditions, among others. For instance: "The contest on understanding Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought, 'Light Illuminates the Path,' has attracted nearly 900,000 participants from 4,027 schools across 67 provincial and city youth unions, and from Vietnamese students abroad over its three editions. The contest 'Pride of Vietnam,' which explores national history and culture, has seen the participation of 898,464 students from nearly 3,000 high schools and vocational training centers across 63 provinces and cities. The contest '90 Years of the Communist Party of Vietnam' attracted 691,356 participants from 67 provincial and city youth unions, as well as Vietnamese youth and students abroad, with nearly 1,000 participants being Vietnamese youth and students studying and living overseas. The contest '90 Years of Glorious Tradition of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union' drew over 3.7 million participants; the contest 'Uncle Ho with Children, Children with Uncle Ho' involved more than 4 million children in three formats: writing, drawing, and online contests."¹⁷ These activities are highly practical and beneficial, helping Youth Union members gain knowledge while creating vibrant and healthy "playgrounds" that significantly contribute to the effective realization of the objectives of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation.

- Skills: Through propaganda work, the Youth Union aims to develop the skills to identify and counteract distorted, false, and hostile rhetoric, protecting the Party's ideological foundation among youth in general and Youth Union propaganda officers in particular. For example, the Youth Union at various levels has "Organized meetings on 'hot' issues targeted by hostile forces to promptly orient information for youth; provided official information channels for youth to search for and study information; created forums for youth to discuss and dialogue on economic, political, and social issues..."¹⁸; "Regularly monitored the ideological situation and social opinion and guided public opinion among youth through social opinion cadres, opinion survey networks, direct dialogues, and the application of information technology and social media. Each Youth Union level established a system of social opinion collaborators from various sectors and groups to promptly capture youth information on current concerns; promptly provided official information to build resistance against malicious information spread by hostile forces."¹⁹

- Attitudes: Through propaganda work, the Youth Union aims to instill and strengthen the absolute trust of its members in Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, and the Party's and state's directives and decisions.

¹⁷ Nguyễn Thái An (2021), "Promoting the Role of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union in Protecting the Party's Ideological Foundation", Journal of Propaganda.

¹⁸ Nguyễn Thái An (2021), "Promoting the Role of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union in Protecting the Party's Ideological Foundation", Journal of Propaganda.

¹⁹ Nguyễn Thái An (2021), "Promoting the Role of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union in Protecting the Party's Ideological Foundation", Journal of Propaganda.

However, some Youth Union organizations and officers still do not fully understand the objectives of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation, leading to ineffective implementation of its basic goals: "The understanding of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought among many youths remains inadequate and limited; awareness of the plots and tactics of hostile forces is not comprehensive or deep. The fight against false and hostile views among youth organizations is not regular or continuous, and is often reactive rather than proactive; the provision of official information to youth is not timely or sufficient; many articles refuting hostile views lack scientific, theoretical persuasion and combativeness."²⁰ This situation needs to be minimized and resolved quickly and thoroughly in the coming time, especially as hostile forces are increasing their subversive activities and using sophisticated tactics targeting youth.

Thirdly, on thoroughly understanding the principles of conducting propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation:

- Content and methods of conducting propaganda work: Over the years, especially since the implementation of Resolution No. 35-NQ/TW on "Strengthening the protection of the Party's ideological foundation, combating wrong and hostile views in the new situation" issued by the Politburo of the 12th Party Central Committee on October 22, 2018, Youth Union organizations at various levels have actively propagated and spread the contents of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, the Party's guidelines and policies, and the state's laws through various forms and methods. These include knowledge competitions, Youth Union meetings, political activities, and the Young Theorists Clubs, among others, and have achieved notable results: "Besides traditional methods, some new approaches have been effectively applied by Youth Union levels, especially propaganda and education activities via digital platforms. Notable examples include the development of an online political education portal for youth, organizing online conferences for studying political theories, and disseminating the Party's resolutions and policies; organizing online competitions to learn about Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, the Communist Party of Vietnam, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, and national history and traditions, attracting a large number of Youth Union members and young people; creating modern, concise, and varied media products suitable for youth (infographics, motion graphics, short films) to propagate the Party's resolutions, conclusions, policies, and the state's laws. Additionally, Youth Union levels have established and developed the Young Theorists Clubs, providing a platform for Youth Union members and young people interested in theoretical studies. As a result, political education activities have become more accessible and engaging to the youth, leading to increased participation."²¹

So, focusing on content and continuously innovating the forms and methods of propaganda has been thoroughly implemented by Youth Union organizations, yielding decisive, effective results suitable to the practical situation over recent years. This is considered one of the most important factors determining the effectiveness and success of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation.

²⁰ Phạm Tuyên (2022), "Promoting the Role of Youth Organizations in Protecting the Party's Ideological Foundation", Journal of Propaganda.

²¹ Nguyễn Thái An (2021), "Promoting the Role of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union in Protecting the Party's Ideological Foundation", Journal of Propaganda.

- **Combining propaganda and motivational work:** Youth Union organizations have thoroughly understood and effectively implemented this principle in recent times, achieving significant results that need to be further promoted: “Since 2018, the Central Secretariat of the Youth Union launched the campaign 'One Good News Every Day, One Beautiful Story Every Week' on social media. Over three years, nearly 4 million good news and beautiful stories have been posted nationwide. Additionally, the campaign 'Building the Image of Vietnamese Youth in the New Era' continues to be promoted, building and spreading the core values of youth across localities and units. Youth Union levels have excelled in identifying, nurturing, and honoring exemplary individuals. Many outstanding young people in various fields have been identified from grassroots levels; honored at district, provincial, and central levels. Currently, the Youth Union, Youth Associations, and Teams have extensive activities to recognize and award prizes across various youth groups. Recently, practical activities have been implemented to support, connect, and enhance the role of exemplary individuals after recognition, mobilizing celebrities and respected individuals to guide and educate young people.”²² With the skillful combination of propaganda and motivational work, the content of propaganda activities penetrates deeper and faster into each Youth Union member, achieving a widespread and powerful effect.

Despite these achievements, propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation through media tools still has many shortcomings: articles and reports are sometimes not updated promptly to counteract the activities of hostile forces; the content and quality of some media products do not meet the requirements, lack thorough censorship, and do not receive serious investment in time, effort, and intellect; propaganda work on cyberspace remains confused, slowly innovated, and unable to attract the attention of all Youth Union members; some Youth Union organizations have not made efforts to deepen propaganda work, still being formalistic and superficial.

From the Marxist-Leninist perspective on propaganda work, the Youth Union's efforts to protect the Party's ideological foundation in the current period have achieved significant results but also face some limitations. Therefore, to further improve the quality of this work in the future, several recommendations are necessary in various aspects.

3. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE YOUTH UNION TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PROPAGANDA WORK IN PROTECTING THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION TODAY

First, regarding the awareness of the role of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation:

- Youth Union organizations at all levels and each Youth Union cadre should continuously study and update the Party and Youth Union documents related to propaganda work, protecting the Party's ideological foundation, and combating wrong and hostile views. This aims to clearly understand and further specify the role of propaganda work from the perspective of the Youth Union's current activities.

- Further deepen the understanding of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought to fully and profoundly grasp the importance of this work. Concurrently, it is necessary to consider

²² Nguyễn Thái An (2021), “Promoting the Role of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union in Protecting the Party's Ideological Foundation”, Journal of Propaganda.

the current context to identify the factors affecting the perception and implementation of propaganda work (including both objective and subjective factors).

- Youth Union organizations at all levels should pay particular attention to the changes in the awareness of Youth Union members and young people to evaluate the perception and implementation of the role of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation.

Second, regarding the understanding of the objectives of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation:

- Youth Union organizations at all levels should regularly organize training classes and workshops to enhance the knowledge and skills for protecting the Party's ideological foundation and combating wrong and hostile views for all Youth Union cadres, especially those directly involved in propaganda work. Through these activities, cadres will increasingly understand the objectives of this work more clearly.

- Youth Union organizations at all levels should continuously base their objectives on the current context and practical situation to add suitable objectives (knowledge, skills, attitudes) and orient the implementation of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation in the current period.

- Youth Union organizations at all levels should select suitable cadres for implementing this work based on the objectives of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation, meeting the current stage's requirements.

- When determining the objectives of propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation, Youth Union organizations at all levels should base their objectives on the relationship between these objectives and other factors of this work to identify corresponding and appropriate goals.

Third, regarding thoroughly understanding the principles of conducting propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation:

- The content of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation must be thoroughly and meticulously researched to suit Youth Union members and young people in particular and other societal groups in general. Additionally, this content needs to be close, practical, and attract the attention of the younger generation. As mentioned, the content of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation primarily revolves around Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, the Party's guidelines, policies, and the state's laws. Therefore, when propagating to Youth Union members and young people, these contents need to be researched and designed to connect with real issues that the younger generation is concerned about, directly addressing the doubts, concerns, and questions of each Youth Union member and young person. If this is achieved, the content of propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation will deeply and quickly spread among the youth; (2) the methods of conducting propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation need continuous innovation and creativity, modernity, and alignment with the trends and tastes of the youth. It can be said that the methods and forms of conducting propaganda work are among the factors determining the level of reception by Youth Union members and young people. The methods and forms of propaganda need to be diverse and rich in various genres to attract the interest of the younger generation, reducing or eliminating their exposure to harmful, distorted, and incorrect information; (3) the *Young Theorists Club* model needs to continue to be maintained and expanded. Additionally, practical summaries should be conducted to draw experiences and propose innovations in the

methods and activities of the club if necessary, aiming to achieve the highest efficiency in the propaganda work of protecting the Party's ideological foundation.

It can be said that applying Marxist-Leninist viewpoints in propaganda work for the Youth Union to protect the Party's ideological foundation plays a very significant and important role in the success of the revolutionary movement. Marxist classics have presented many valuable points, addressing many aspects of propaganda work. These viewpoints have both theoretical significance and retain their practical value for the Youth Union in carrying out propaganda work to protect the Party's ideological foundation in the current period. These are crucial orientations for Youth Union organizations at all levels to study, thoroughly understand, and implement effective propaganda work in protecting the Party's ideological foundation in the current period.

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