
Rules for Underground Party Work

[leaflet of the CPA — circa March 1920]

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1) DON'T betray Party work and Party workers under any circumstances.

2) DON'T carry or keep with you names and addresses, except in good code.

3) DON'T keep in your rooms openly any incriminating documents or literature.

4) DON'T take any unnecessary risks in Party work.

5) DON'T shirk Party work because of the risk connected with it.

6) DON'T boast of what you have to do or have done for the Party.

7) DON'T divulge your membership in the Party without necessity.

8) DON'T let any spies follow you to appointments or meetings.

9) DON'T lose your nerve in danger.

10) DON'T answer any questions if arrested, either at preliminary hearings or in the court.

1) The unpardonable crime in underground Party work is the betrayal of it or of its workers. To give information about them to the government is equal to outright treason regardless of what means, what tortures may have been used to wrench it from the comrade. DON'T BE A TRAITOR! Make up your mind for that! Let this determination penetrate to the very depths of your unconscious self, so that it would stand up under any influence, under any tortures. There is no condemnation, no punishment strong enough for a

traitor.

2) To be caught with plainly written names and addresses of comrades or Party workers and places is very nearly the same as betraying them to the government; at least in effect it is the same. Such names and addresses should never, not for a moment, be plainly written out. They should not be written out in full at all. Carry in your memory as much as you can, and let your notes be mere "memory aids." And whenever you must write down, write it in good code.

Be sure, however, in all cases, that you have and know the *correct* addresses. It is absolutely wrong to be asking the way to a Party address from passersby or even from the janitor and inhabitants of the very buildings where they are located. It is also very hurtful to make mistakes in Party shipment or mail addresses: through them important mail and shipments not only are lost, but are delivered into the hands of the government; Party shipping methods are disclosed; the correct addresses are spoiled; and to cap it all, it may be the means through which the real addressee may be arrested. *Always*, when giving or taking or using Party addresses, look *twice*, to be sure that there are no mistakes.

Write in good code whatever you *must* write down. A code for numbers is very easy to use at all times. Make up a word of 10 letters, or 2 words of 5 each (but note that will make sense, as then

they are easy to decipher); take such as “verga dsihw” (no letter to be used twice), and then use “v” for 1, “e” for 2, “r” for 3, and so forth, “w” for 0.

For Party mail and shipments *indirect* addresses should be used whenever possible.

An organizer, through whose *negligence* Party names and addresses fall into the hands of the government is little better than a traitor.

3) Keep your rooms “clean.” A little care in this respect may save you in case of accidental arrest or search on suspicion. Especially keep clean of any *quantities* of our papers, leaflets, or literature that would show that you are participating in the distribution of them. They cannot do very much for your reading revolutionary literature, but they will surely tuck you in for distributing it. And then, why should you risk being known as a Communist to all those who *happen* to come to your rooms — unknown “friends,” peddlers, collectors, etc.?

4) Not only for your own sake, but for the sake of the Party, for preserving yourself as a Party worker, you should avoid all *unnecessary* risks. Be very careful in distributing our literature, or conducting our agitation and propaganda in the shops and unions.

Be still more careful if you are entrusted with responsible positions in the Party organization.

You can imagine how it would hurt our organization work if a District Organizer, or any comrade from the Central Departments were arrested. For these comrades it would be absolutely foolish to take the risk of distributing literature from house to house, for example. They should not be seen one with the other, or even in groups of more than 2, at all. If any one of them may be under suspicion of being an important Party worker, why should he give the spies an opportunity to place their suspicions on the others?

The more important one’s position in the

Party, the more he is looked for, the greater is his risk, and the greater should be his carefulness and precautions.

5) He is not a coward who, working for the Party, is very cautious and careful. The test is in the work — is he doing it or not? Is he willing to take the *unavoidable* risk that is connected with all underground Party work — or is he trying, under one pretext or another, to avoid all risk to himself by keeping away from Party work altogether? If a comrade does his share of Party work, he is a better worker for doing it with the least possible risk. If he *does not* do his share, he is a coward and a deserter regardless of anything else, regardless of his loud talking and boasting of his courage.

The rule is: *Party work must be done* — with the least possible risk; without risk, if possible — *but it must be done*.

6) Boasting is foolish in general, but boasting of your work for the Party, thereby incurring absolutely unnecessary risks for yourself and for the Party work, is positively criminal. What you know, or what you have been entrusted to do of Party work, nobody else should know, except those who have a Party business to know it — *nobody else*, not even the best comrade, not even your wife or husband or sweetheart.

And be careful you are not overheard by others when you have to talk Party business.

7) Party work, Party agitation and propaganda — even the collection of Party funds from outsiders and the getting of new members for the Party, can be and should be carried on *without divulging one’s membership* in the Party. It is sufficient to say, in some cases, that you endorse and support the Party; in others, that you have connections with Party members. Only when you bring a new member up to the probationary group you have to show him that you are a member your-

self.

That through your activities you should be known as a “red” in your shop or union is all right; that is too general an attribute to be made the basis for prosecutions and punishment; but you should not be known as a *member* of the Communist Party.

8) Every one of us knows that thousands of spies are on the job every day in every city bent upon ferreting out our members, our meetings and working places — but how many of us take this in consideration and see that they are not being followed when going to an appointment, to a meeting, or even to a working place of ours?! Especially those comrades who are more or less under suspicion, or even have been out, arrested, and indicted.

Do you know what that they are sometimes let out on purpose, like a bait, for the spies to watch their steps, to follow them, and so to discover our workers and our addresses?!

This does not mean that they should keep away from all Party work. It only means that they should be especially careful and circumspect.

Do you know that, in order to keep track of our work, they will open up our letters, photograph or copy them, and then send them through to us nicely closed again? They do not hold them up altogether, you see, because that would stop the sending of those letters, that would put the comrades on their guard.

Do not beget a false sense of security because for some length of time no arrests are made and no raids; it may be the calm before the storm. They may simply be gathering more and more information, getting hold of more and more of our organization threads, in order to swoop down upon us suddenly and try to break them all, try to paralyze us again, as they did in the January raids. They will never do quite that again — but if our comrades are not very careful *all the time*, we may suffer great injuries all the same.

9) Presence of mind, control, calmness, and preparation for emergencies count much in underground Party work. When going to it, you should always think in advance of those incriminating situations that are likely to arise, and prepare yourself for them — how to avoid them — how to get out of them, if unavoidable.

Be sure you have no unnecessary incriminatory notes of things with you, or in your rooms, when you go to underground Party work. *Always* have a good answer ready for a sudden “What are you doing or looking for here?” — “Where are you going?” — “From where?”

Prepare yourself for accidental risks. Think of them in advance, and impress upon yourself that you will be calm and not lose your nerve when suddenly confronted with them. Calmness and good composure will many times save you where confusion and fear would have exposed you.

Hide, or throw away, or destroy, as far as possible, any material evidence when you see that you will be caught. Of course, you must not do that lightly — you must not do that at the slightest provocation. Before doing that be sure it is not a false alarm.

AVOID ARREST BY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS.

10) If you are arrested, however; that is, if they have sufficient evidence, or sufficient grounds for suspicion, that you are a Communist, and therefore, as a deathly enemy of the present order, subject to suppression and imprisonment, law or no law — but first to be made use of in getting hold of other Communists, in destroying the whole organization, if possible — first to be questioned and grilled, to be pumped for various information, to be put through the Third Degree — then the only correct thing to do, the best thing in the circumstances, is *absolute refusal to answer any questions*. (Ask for a lawyer. You have the right for that. And you have the right to refuse to answer questions, whatever that may help you.)

This course of action has been proved best by the experiences of our Russian comrades in their long years of difficult underground struggle against tsarism. They have put their findings into a little booklet, *How to Act at Hearings*, and their unequivocal conclusion and advice is this: "DON'T ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS!"

Whether you answer them with the idea of trying to extricate yourself, to explain away all suspicions, so that they should let you go; or whether you answer them with the idea of confessing your own part and trying to shield other comrades; or trying to influence, to convert, so to say, the spies and prosecutors — the result is always against the interests of our Party. Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, seeing it or not, you *will* yield some information to them, if you answer their questions. Mere confirmation of information that they show they already possess may be of great help to them in checking up the reports of their stool pigeons and spies, and in confronting other comrades, at hearings or in court, with your testimony as a proof of their claims.

Do not believe them, however, when they tell you that other comrades are confessing and giving them this and that information. That is only one of their many tricks and ruses, by which they

will try to get you to begin to answer their questions. Also remember that they have their spies and stool pigeons in all jails. Don't give your confidence to a "jail-mate" unless you are quite sure that he may be trusted.

As to the idea that we can make any propaganda through the courtroom — it is impossible. The judge will frustrate your efforts to give a clear exposition of your ideas, and will confuse and provoke you. The press (even the Socialist press) will distort and misrepresent your utterances, or simply ignore them. As to agitation and propaganda through our own papers and leaflets, it can be carried on just the same when you don't answer any questions as when you do — and perhaps even better.

Bear in mind the appalling danger of betraying your comrades, betraying the party — unconsciously, against your will, but opening them up to the attacks of our enemies just the same — IF YOU ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS, and you will resolve NOT TO ANSWER THEM, if arrested, just the same as you are determined NOT TO BE A TRAITOR.

Central Executive Committee,
COMMUNIST PARTY OF AMERICA.

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