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# The Nucleus in America: A Secret Memo on Party Organization from the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the Central Executive Committee of the WPA, July 11, 1923. †

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 164, ll. 11-16.

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**SECRET**

The advance guard of the American proletariat is at the crossroads. The American Communist Party has been dissolved, and the best elements of the American working class are joining the Workers Party. We recognize the value of the open Workers Party for the work among the masses, but American comrades would be greatly mistaken if they cherished the illusion that henceforward they will be in a position to carry on their work unhindered exclusively in a legal organization. It is extremely possible that rapacious and sanguinary American capitalism will adopt every measure to prevent the American working class from organizing a powerful, mass, open Workers Party. And if in spite of all opposition it succeeds in organizing such a party, American capital will exert every effort to smash it and force it underground. The American working class must always be prepared for such an eventuality. Nevertheless, it must never surrender a single legal position without a struggle, *no matter what sacrifices are involved*. It must build its organization in such a way that it will be best adapted to such a struggle,

that it will be impossible for the first attack of reaction to destroy it, and that should the Party be driven underground, it can function without any great delay or effort. For this purpose the following measures are necessary:—

### **The Formation of Nuclei in the Factories.**

It is essential to construct an organization that is adapted not only for elections as was the case with the socialist parties of the Second International, but primarily for the mass struggle of the proletariat. The organization must, therefore, be built upon an industrial, and not a territorial basis. The lowest party unit should be the nucleus, to which shall belong all communists employed in a single factory. Communists not working in factories should be assigned to a factory nucleus. The nucleus to which they shall be assigned shall be decided by the competent party committee. These nuclei are in close contact with the life of the workers, react quickly to all questions affecting the working masses, and thereby secure influence among the working masses.

The nucleus should include *communists of all languages*, and a poor knowledge of English

†- This untitled, undated, and unsigned memo is the translation of a Russian-language original (with handwritten amendments) in the same archival *delo, listy* 28-32. The original includes a deleted section headed "Membership of the Leading Organs" specifying a 2 year minimum time length of party membership (*partstazh*) for members of the WPA's Central Executive Committee, among other details. The Russian document is hand-dated "11/VII.23" at the top and includes the Russian notation "In 2 copies to America."

should be no disqualification or excuse. Many immigrants for years and years fail to master the English language simply because they are separated from American life and English-speaking organizations. This unfailingly results in a waste of energy, loose organization, etc.

In every factory where there are *at least* three communists a nucleus should be formed. If there are less than three communists, they should unite with communists working in neighboring factories of the same industry to form a common nucleus. If there are a large number of communists in a factory they should be organized in groups of five or ten. Isolated members (workers) should be assigned to the nearest factory nucleus (preferably in the same industry) and should work permanently in that nucleus. Every nucleus should have its secretary, who shall maintain contact with the higher party organ.

Such nuclei, should the necessity arise, can easily pass over to an illegal footing and continue their work underground.

However, in view of the fact that the territorial form of organization has hitherto prevailed exclusively in America, and that it would not be easy to pass over to a factory form of organization at once, and further, in America workers often live in a different district, and even in a different town, from that in which they work, and that the workers' life has not developed around the factories, the territorial form of organization must also be recognized as permissible. Nevertheless a continued effort must be made to organize nuclei in the factories and to transfer the center of gravity of the work to the factory and the trade union.

### **Leading Party Committees.**

In order that the leaders should be as reliable and experienced as possible, very young, inexperienced, and especially little-known comrades should not be allowed on leading party committees.

### **Work in the Trade Unions.**

Special attention must be devoted to work in the trade unions, which in America are the largest organizations of the working class. Every worker or salaried person who is a member of the Workers Party must *unconditionally* be a member of his appropriate trade union and a member of the [Trade Union] Educational League. Members of the Workers Party both in the trade unions and the League must form their fractions and submit to the discipline of that fraction.

The communist fractions in the trade unions and in the League must unconditionally subordinate themselves to the instructions of the leading party committees.

### **Language Sections.**

The division of the organization according to languages considerably hinders the work of American communists. It is absolutely essential at all costs to supersede the language structure and to draw immigrants into the general American work, whether in the Party, the trade unions, or other workers' organizations. Special attention must be paid to work among the genuine American workers.

Language sections should be set up only for the purpose of agitation and propaganda. They should be organized on a territorial basis and attached to the general party territorial divisions (district and local), and should have their bureaus (central, district, and local), which should be elected at conferences and approved by the competent party committees, to which they should be attached and under which they should work. The party record of members of the language sectional bureaus should be the same as in the case of members of party committees (exceptions should be made only in the case of language sections that have only recently entered the Party). Members of the language section must not only be members

of their language branch, which is *only for propaganda purposes*, but of a *Party branch composed of comrades of all languages which conducts the political work of the Party*.

### Utilization of Legal Facilities.

In order to secure closer contact with the masses and to draw them into the struggle connected with their everyday needs, it is necessary to make use of every legal opportunity for communist activities. It is necessary to create a basis in all forms of legal organizations (educational, sport, mutual benefit, cooperative, etc.) which could be made use of should the party be compelled, if only temporarily, to become an illegal body. Communist fractions should be formed within all these bodies, under the direction of which communists should conduct their work.

### The Press.

Well-edited daily papers in all languages should be set up. To secure the best possible publications, their supply services should as far as possible be *centralized* — common press and advertisement bureau, etc. Party publishing houses in all languages should be organized, and a common publishing house in English established, and non-party workers be attracted to participate in them.

However, while utilizing a legal press as fully as possible, and fighting to maintain it, it must never be forgotten that a moment may come in America when a legal press alone will not be sufficient. For this reason it is necessary to maintain some method of issuing certain publications illegally.

For the distribution of literature, especially

illegal literature, the system of couriers must be adopted. Couriers should be chosen from the oldest and best-trying comrades.

### International Prisoners Aid. †

International Prisoners Aid is especially necessary in connection with the persecution to which communists and all revolutionary workers are subject to in America. It must, however, be centralized and be made truly international, which it has not hitherto been. The American Prisoners Aid, especially at the present time when industry is reviving, might afford considerable assistance not only to American comrades languishing in prison, but to those of other countries also. It must be placed in close contact with the International Aid for Political Prisoners, whose headquarters are at Moscow.

### Secret Organization. ‡

American comrades are suffering greatly owing to the lack of conspiratorial method. Sometimes documents which might easily fall into the hands of the police are signed both by legal workers and by illegal workers whom the police are seeking. Sometimes secret documents are sent quite openly to the Central Committee of the Communist International. Often a complete absence of conspiratorial method is observed in the selection of responsible and technical underground workers, etc. This threatens complete destruction of the party, if most radical steps are not adopted, even to the extent of removing comrades most responsible in this respect from responsible party work, and even exclusion from the party.

†- The Russian original reads "Red Aid."

‡- The Russian original reads "Conspiracy."

***Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.***  
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