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## THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

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## ILLEGALITY AND CLASS RELATIONS

The following material on illegality is based on the experience of workers' revolutionary parties all over the globe. Specifically, material has been obtained from the parties of India, Latin America, the United States, Russia, Germany, France, and others.

It is freely acknowledged that we owe a great debt to these parties who by their experience have shown us the best known road to revolution in the United States.

It would be a deadly mistake to IMITATE the illegal methods of any of these parties. For the Czarist Okhrana was relatively primitive and inefficient compared to the German Gestapo. And the American FBI has learned considerably from both. The revolutionists in America have yet to learn from the experience of these other countries. This work strives to avoid imitation in working methods. It strives to fit these rules to American conditions which are different from those in Russia or Germany, and not fit conditions to rules applicable elsewhere. This is our concrete application of Marxism to the United States. We are fighting American imperialism with the latest and best known class methods. We shall change these methods as the situation changes, if necessary from day to day. We shall be prepared in advance politically and organizationally for any change. We must learn the ART OF ILLEGAL WORK.

Our comrades will be given the enormous class advantage of being trained in revolutionary work so that no sudden change of illegal methods will surprise them, and so that they will know how to function even if temporarily separated from the organization.

Illegal work is hard, exacting, seemingly impossible at times. Remember: There is nothing a Bolshevik cannot do. The greatest class honor for a Bolshevik is to do his revolutionary duty at the most dangerous post.

Under total war of imperialism, there can be no serious struggle let alone victory of the revolutionary party - the proletariat's basic instrument for destruction of the capitalist class and the capitalist state - without illegal organization.

One of the basic rules of Marxian party organization is that a part of the party apparatus is illegal at all times. The essential core of the party, the professional revolutionists, are

in this apparatus. The only aim in life of men and women in the illegal apparatus is to work for the revolution. They are ready for any personal sacrifice demanded by the Party. They pledge unreserved obedience to the Party, and accept unity of aim. There can be no serious illegal work if comrades do not place the revolutionary goal before all other needs and desires.

Under imperialism no serious revolutionary worker questions the necessity for illegal organization. We are not the peaceful, legal socialists who DISSOLVE their organization when police repression begins. Refusal to prepare illegal organization in advance is tantamount to liquidation of the political organization. To maintain its very existence the revolutionary organization must seize on every kind of organizational device to maintain and extend its power. The history of working class parties shows illegal organization to be a basic element of Marxian party organization.

This is developed carefully in revolutionary literature, particularly the works of Lenin, the master of party organization, strategy, and tactics. In the years of reaction from 1907 to 1917, Lenin fought all attempts to dissolve the illegal organization as yielding to the influence of disintegration. "Only by creating and strengthening the illegal Party organization, can the Party be brought on to the high road of its development." Thus the illegal organization is pictured as fundamental to further development of the entire Party organization.

In "Conference of the Sections of R.S.D.L.F. (Bolsheviks) Abroad," March 15, 1915, Lenin writes of the five first steps towards transforming the imperialist war into civil war. Step three is "creation of an illegal organization whenever the governments and the bourgeoisie abolish constitutional liberties by introducing war emergency laws."

In "Collapse of the Second International," written in the summer of 1915, Lenin states: "Pure legalism, the legalism and nothing but legalism of the 'European' parties, has become obsolete, and as a result of the development of capitalism in the pre-imperialist stage has become the foundation stone for a bourgeois labor policy." He shows the close interworking of legal and illegal means, using the example of the workers' Duma Deputy Muranov who conducted himself in a revolutionary manner in his trial by using his parliamentary position to agitate and organize workers during the war. Muranov "proved in practice that, besides MINISTERIAL parliamentarism...there can be ILLEGAL AND REVOLUTIONARY parliamentarism."

"Notes On The Question of The Tasks of Our Delegates At The Hague" written Dec. 4, 1922, states: "It must be explained to the people...how helpless the ordinary workers' organizations are in the face of war..." Therefore, explain at the Hague that "The only possible method of combating war, viz., the preservation and formation of illegal organizations in which all revolutionaries taking part in the war shall carry on PROLONGED work against the war."

Note well that Lenin says illegal organization is "THE ONLY POSSIBLE METHOD OF COMBATING WAR" and to "CARRY ON PROLONGED WORK against the war." This does not exclude other forms of revolutionary organization and mass action, but without the illegal organization to defend the party against police repression and weld the mass movement into one huge wave of mass action, the revolution cannot succeed.

"Tasks of the Third International - Ramsay MacDonald on the Third International," July 14, 1919, shows: "legal work must be combined with ILLEGAL work...There is not a single country in the world, even the most advanced and 'freest' of the bourgeois republics, in which bourgeois terror does not reign, where freedom to carry on agitation for the Socialist revolution, to carry on propaganda and organizational work in this direction, are not prohibited. The party which under the rule of the bourgeoisie has not admitted this to this day and does not carry on systematic all-sided, ILLEGAL work in spite of the laws of the bourgeois parliaments is a party of traitors and scoundrels, which deceives the people by the verbal recognition of revolution.

Thus illegal organization is pictured as basic to all party organization. Without it a party under imperialism is not revolutionary at all.

This is elaborated in the "21 Conditions of Admission to the Communist International," written by Lenin. Condition number 12 is: "In all countries even the freest, 'legal' and 'peaceful' in the sense that the class struggle is least acute in them, the time has fully matured when it is absolutely necessary for every Communist Party systematically to combine legal with illegal work, legal with illegal organization...Illegal work is particularly necessary in the army, the navy, the police."

Here Lenin strikes at the real nature of bourgeois legality, which we consider below. It is important to remember that even before the outbreak of the second world war, certain BASIC

types of party work as in the army, navy, and police, had to be of necessity ILLEGAL. In developing the principled structural basis of the world revolutionary party, the revolutionists had to make illegal organization a basic essential for admission.

In "Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder" May 12, 1920, Lenin states: "In many countries, including the most advanced, the bourgeoisie is undoubtedly now sending, and will continue to send, agents-provocateurs into the Communist Party. One method of combatting this peril is the skillful coordination of legal and illegal work." This was in direct answer to those ultra-lefts who denied the necessity for illegal work in Germany 1920. Lenin showed that it was necessary AT LEAST to combat police agents, and for the other reasons also.

These quotations establish the enormous importance Lenin and the Bolsheviks attached to illegal organization: 1-without illegal organization, the organization is not revolutionary; 2-it is only method of combatting war for prolonged period; 3-must be coordinated with legal work; 4-necessary for work in armed forces; 5-necessary to combat police agents.

The party as an all-sided organization has therefore by its very nature to have an illegal apparatus. This does not mean the entire party organization is illegal, or that the entire party work is illegal. Far from it. Illegality as a social phenomenon arises from the relation of class forces. Legality is a very poor term, as is illegality, though illegality is more exact in its description. Actually capitalism never legalizes the revolutionary party. Legality does not mean capitalism permits the revolutionary party legally, i.e., by law, to organize for its overthrow. Legality means that the relation of class forces is such that the party and the class can exercise class rights without immediate, open repression by the capitalist state. This legal stage is a result usually of proletarian class strength which the bourgeoisie cannot crush. In the United States today it would be a veritable impossibility to crush the larger political organizations in the proletariat, like the Communist party, though smaller left groups can be made illegal.

Semi-legality is a stage of sharper class relations where the capitalist state is strong enough to severely limit workers' exercising of their rights, as in the South.

Illegality is a stage of acute class relations where the state is so much more powerful than the workers' class force that the state is able to curtail and in some cases deny all exercising of workers' rights. The struggle goes underground.

But even in illegality many legal means are available, and are used. Many rights though curtailed cannot be kept from the workers. For example, the right to strike is now practically treason according to the government, yet workers daily go out on strike, completely ignoring the prohibiting of this right. Remember Lenin's words that even in the freest bourgeois republics there are always very severe restrictions on workers' rights. For example, in all bourgeois countries, there is a severe restriction on the right to free press, radio, movies, speech against the government.

From this standpoint, it is politically incorrect to say the revolutionary party is legal in the United States. It is correct to say class relations are such that the workers' pressure forces the capitalist state to allow a greater degree of rights to be "legally" exercised in the United States than in many other countries. This attests to the enormous power of this tremendously large working class. This exact characterization of "legality" and illegality is a necessity, as the whole attitude of revolutionists toward capitalist legality is that the movement is illegal, and is striving not to become legal, but to smash all capitalist obstacles to its final goal.

It is necessary to learn from the many years of experience of the workers' parties, most especially the Bolshevik party which devoted 40 per cent of its time to illegal work. It is well to note that the other 60 per cent of its work was legal. Legal means are nearly always available, except for extremely short periods, or under unusual repressive conditions. Illegality is no pure form of revolutionary organization. The party uses legal and illegal means, and strives constantly to gain more and more legal means by mass actions against capitalist repression. The three stages of functioning of the revolutionary organization under capitalism are: legality, semi-legality, illegality. Each of these may exist in combination with the others. Even under illegality as generally understood, a majority percentage of party work will be legal or semi-legal. Semi-legality is a transitory stage from legality to total illegality. or vice versa. The distinction is by no means academic, but is based on the Marxian concept of using illegality as a phase of the struggle to destroy the entire capitalist legal structure - the state. The strategical working out of this theory of revolutionary mass action is to broaden the struggle beyond the restrictions of capitalist law.

Illegality from the practical standpoint is a technical device or mechanism for defending the organization against repression, and for maintaining the CONTINUITY of its work. This is the

applied essence of illegality. When the capitalist state makes it no longer possible to function in the old way, and thereby smashes the continuity of the old way of work, an illegal mechanism has to be used to reestablish the continuity of the work in a NEW WAY, under the new conditions. If work is unplanned, haphazard, spasmodic, it is a sign of degeneration. Without organizational and political continuity, no revolutionary party is possible. That is the class reason for illegal organization.

It is from that standpoint that the necessity for illegality is determined. The party prepares for illegality even under legality. It does not become semi-legal or illegal voluntarily, but only when forced into the underground by the overpowering class force of the bourgeoisie in relation to that of the workers. When the workers' mass actions rise high, the capitalist state is forced to permit legal functioning. The party immediately broadens its work and emerges from the underground, though the essential illegal structure continues where needed. Naturally, after the seizure of power, the illegal apparatus is used for different purposes in the victorious revolutionary state than in states where victorious revolution has not yet been achieved. The process is: first, the party fights against all efforts to drive it into illegality. Secondly, in illegality, the party utilizes every available legal means, and strives to break out of illegality. Thirdly, the party succeeds in smashing all legality - that is, the capitalist state power.

All Europe is under the heel of Fascism, and the movement is underground. Even in Russia the struggle for revolution against Stalinism is an illegal one. The class relations in the United States as a whole are now reaching the stage of open repression of political organizations representing the interests of the working class. In Latin America the movement has been underground for many years. This develops from American imperialism's financial control of most of Latin America. The South, company towns, criminal syndicalist laws in many states, reactionary areas (New Jersey; Harlan County, and reactionary areas in many cities) sections where unionism has not taken a firm hold, strike situations, army, navy, and police - all demand illegal work as well as legal work.

The history of American labor is replete with examples of organizations which functioned underground. The old Knights of Labor, pre-cursors of the A.F. of L. were illegal for 10 years of their existence. So were the Molly Maguires. Singularly enough the "Know Nothing" party in the United States, though not a revolutionary party, utilized a cardinal principle of illegality,

which is to know nothing of other members' activity, and in answer to police interrogation to know nothing. The parties in the first world war which came out against the war on a revolutionary basis were forced underground.

Each day of imperialist war narrows the legal activity as the government increases its hold on the workers. The capitalists are not strong enough to take all workers' rights away at once. This is the end, not the beginning of the process. When all rights are prohibited we will have a totalitarian capitalist dictatorship (fascist, militarist, or both). In the process of driving the entire movement underground and weakening all workers' organizations, the capitalists concentrate their attention against the revolutionists. They are able to obtain the assistance of their various agents in the ranks of the workers to help point out and repress the revolutionists. It is necessary to guard against betrayal by Stalinists and other elements within the proletariat, contrary to 1914-1918 when the denunciation did not come from the ranks of the workers.

Once the party is driven underground this does not mean a story-book romantic life of conspiracy begins. Illegality means hard day to day work, just like at any other time, plus illegal organization, methods, rules. This is a new FORM of activity, the manner in which to serve the class under the condition of repression.

In essence, the term "underground" is completely misleading. It belongs to past history if it is not entirely a figment of the imagination of fiction writers. Hidden vaults, the faint candle light, trap doors, sinister plotters, false beards are all very well in the movies. In the sober reality of the class struggle against imperialist war the revolutionist will not get very far with such mechanisms. A prosaic office in a large office building is much to be preferred and much safer than a romantic dungeon. Not that cellars and attics are completely outmoded. No. But they cannot be the main type of meeting place, printing place, illegal work cannot be based there. We will have to remind members over and over again that this is the epoch of wars and revolutions, and new methods are necessary for this epoch.

In everyday work an unrelenting struggle is carried on against the attitude and tendency to regard illegal activity in a glamorous light, which so often leads to a totally false evaluation of the difficulties of the illegal struggle and to a romantic conception of the fight against the superior police

forces. Filled with fictional conceptions, at the beginning adventure-hungry young workers, attracted by the romance of clandestine activity and the adventurous appeal of the fight with the police, stream into the illegal organization. They do not hold out. Only those with the deepest revolutionary convictions and Marxian understanding, whose conviction of the world historic mission of the proletariat is deeper than a passing fancy, and whose determination to hold out in the struggle is based on Marxian science and not merely on love for adventure and the mania for conspiracy, can survive in the deadly illegal struggle. To win in the struggle against the police, they will have to know revolutionary communism thoroughly in order to be able to scientifically consider every step they take. On this indestructible foundation they will be able to think through all actions carefully. Every action will be disciplined. Only in that manner will the terrible illegal struggle develop a cadre which will combine the highest revolutionary science and moral courage with the most sober appraisal of their own class strength and the strength of the enemy. Our primary concern is to prepare ourselves politically and organizationally for a long, hard struggle, demanding self-denial and sacrifice.

In illegality the INDIVIDUAL MEMBER DISAPPEARS as a known revolutionist whom the reactionaries can label. The party apparatus disappears too, and is replaced by the illegal apparatus. Externally the organization is disguised to such an extent that it seems as if the organization had disappeared from the face of the earth. Visible party organization is withdrawn to the underground and made invisible. Thus if illegality has been carried out properly, it is extremely difficult to get at the illegal apparatus, to obtain inside information, to learn its plans, and forestall its actions. The party gives visible signs of existence by the commission of actions, so organized that police intervention comes too late. The party ACTIVITY DOES NOT DISAPPEAR, but continues at the same or at an increased pace.

Not everybody can do illegal work. Many are lost to the party for that type of work, e.g. prominent trade unionists, men with large families, workers in certain carefully guarded occupations, suspected people in some cases, soldiers in some cases. But if they cannot be used directly in the illegal organization, they can be used in all sorts of legal work, in buffer organizations, front groups, as sympathizers, contact men, their homes can be used - as aids to the illegal organization.

This brings up the basic question of who can do illegal work, which was the central point of Lenin's conception of the party: the professional revolutionists. Much maligned, viciously slandered in the years of reaction after the defeat of the world revolution, the professional revolutionists in the present struggle against the war are of necessity the backbone of the illegal organization. It is they who devote their entire lives to the movement. This is no easy task. The development of cadres by the few professional revolutionists who are capable of aiding this development is a tremendous problem facing the entire left wing movement. But no other road forward exists. With the U.S. rapidly approaching the political level of Europe, the need for the professional revolutionists will be felt more and more. Without them no illegal organization can possibly survive.

A cadre organization can include only a relatively small circle, because its demands on its members are very great. It has to be highly centralized, and encompasses a group not too large to be personally controlled. At the same time it has to extend its contacts over the entire country and develop its technical and illegal methods. The members of this organization have not only to be completely devoted, loyal and ready to do anything their work demands but these professional revolutionists also have to be many sided individuals. There is the need for ability and talent in handling people. In addition to a broad knowledge of revolutionary politics they have to be able to deal with many special problems. The underground organization has to train the leaders of the coming revolution in the approaching crucial struggles.

In so doing the illegal organization develops a new kind of leadership which can win the confidence of the underground cadres. In every new basic phase in the development of the movement, natural selection among the party members produces a staff of leaders adapted to the existing conditions. Historically this staff of leaders usually fails as soon as it is faced with a new and different stage of development involving changed conditions of struggle and different responsibilities. This is especially true of those large mass movements which have been defeated. There is a big problem of the older leaders and men exiled from Europe or torn from the class struggle in the Americas and placed in jail. From the history of revolutions, political emigrations and exiles have produced great leaders. Russia's Lenin and Trotsky spent many years in exile. But they were representatives of young, rising movements, not of the political groups that had been in power and failed.

Also the exiles of the past, like the White Russians after 1917, the same Trotsky after 1927, have been unable to return to leadership of the movement. It is only in rare cases that the leaders for the reawakening come from the ranks of those who had been once beaten into political oblivion.

The legal mass party fighting on open ground needs orators to move the masses, writers to influence them, organizers to unite them, industrious parliamentarians to rouse them, administrators to train them in unions and other mass organizations. But the illegal organization made up of small cadres has entirely different needs: men with iron nerves, tough enough to hold out under the continual threat of the police; men and women who combine the capacity for heroic self-sacrifice with the self-discipline which illegal tactics require; organizers who can master the technique of creating small invisible cells, leaders who have that special sensitivity which makes them recognize and use the mass process of disillusionment with the war and the state which is invisible to the less experienced eye. Thus, the illegal organization needs a different type of leader from the legal organization. Here is the crowning proof of Lenin's theory of the professional revolutionists as the central core of the organization. (See also material on "professional agents" as opposed to professional revolutionists in material on safeguarding the illegal organization from the police).

Legally and illegally the revolutionary organization influences the mass by an anti-capitalist, pro-revolutionary orientation. The FORM of activity changes in illegality. A revolutionist who had contact with the mass in legality, and falls into isolation in illegality, and attempts to justify this isolation because of the dangerous situation, has in reality changed his whole position and orientation to the worst kind of demoralized sectarianism.

We must stay with the masses, bind ourselves to them, never act in isolation from the masses - EXCEPT IN ILLEGAL WORK. The class strength of capitalism which forces the revolutionary organization underground also prevents us from telling the masses our illegal organization and illegal methods. Do not be afraid of the fact that police power forces us to keep all illegal work secret from the police and from the masses. This very secrecy from the mass is our best means of winning over the mass under imperialism. For only with illegal work can we survive, and the mass will turn for leadership to those who have shown they know how to organize the ALL-SIDED STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CAPITALIST STATE. The illegal

organization is our chief means of maintaining leadership of the mass, even though the mass may be temporarily dormant, defeated. The revolutionary organization does not wait for the mass to move, never tail-ends the mass. It strives to accelerate that mass movement, not to "contemplate the posterior of the proletariat." Otherwise the party is not the vanguard of the struggle.

It is more difficult to keep mass contact in illegality than in legality. At the same time no revolutionary party has ever seized power without long illegal training. It is in the trying period of illegality that the revolutionist is most thoroughly trained, the weak ones are weeded out, the connection with the mass is cemented. Then the mass will come to us. Varied forms of activity will have overcome the isolation, and the revolutionist will have the confidence of the mass.

Dozens of tiny isolated anti-war groups of various degrees of organization exist thruout the country. They are looking for guidance. These political workers wish to be in touch with the illegal revolutionary organization. There are questions they cannot answer alone, problems they cannot solve alone. They want information. They want to send their own reports on for the use of thers. They want discussions and advice on theoretical issues, the real nature of the imperialist war, the phenomenon of Fascism, the prospects of revolution. They want clarification about the meaning of the governments war moves and policies. They want literature. They want to know what is going on in other parts of the country and abroad. They need assistance in illegal methods and technical devices for their work. It is important they should know of arrests of people with whom they have some contact. They wish to be warned of spies. Most important they have to have the feeling that they are not alone, that the little or much activity they conduct is a part of a movement. They need constant and living proof that there is an underground movement. They wish to learn from the mistakes of the past so that they can help build a new movement. They want to work with the illegal organization.

To answer all these needs is the task of the illegal organization. Under the war dictatorship, the task is to bring together the best qualified parts of the loose, unorganized forces that conduct anti-war activity. The organization has to try to furnish leadership for this loose movement. It may never do this fully, but the extent to which it succeeds is the measure of its effectiveness, the justifi-

cation for its existence. In the ebb and flow of the class struggle, these loose anti-war circles and groups appear and disappear. The task of the illegal organization is to furnish continuity. Whatever happens the organization must continue. Continuity is maintained at all cost.

No illegal organization can maintain itself on its own strength alone, nor ever could. It depends on financial help from outside. Its needs buffer groups, legal organization, sympathizers, close interconnections with the mass organizations. The illegal organization is the backbone of the anti-war opposition, its potential leadership. But the ebb and flow of mass activity influences the determining of the degree of activity and the stability of the illegal organization. The attitude of the broad masses toward the war and the state will fluctuate, but will move steadily to the left.

In other words, illegal organizations cannot exist in a vacuum even if reduced to tiny groups of most carefully selected people. They have to move with a larger group of workers sympathetic to their aims. There is the closest relation between illegal anti-war organization and the strength of anti-war opposition. Opposition against the war dictatorship is in many cases not an organized opposition. The state is able to prevent the workers from joining together in a large powerful opposition organization. But the general opposition will exist and embrace all shades of activity, from mere grumbling at home to belonging to the illegal organization. The illegal organization is able to use the church in prisons, in the army, and in illegal work under certain circumstances. Cooperation between the underground and oppositional intellectual groupings is sometimes possible. The weakest contacts are with the farmers, with whom it is essential to establish regular cooperation. This is also true of the petty bourgeois, which has been bitterly disappointed by the war, and in a short time will be so disillusioned as to provide a mass breeding ground for the growth of fascist movements in the country. What of the youth trained in war thinking? The colleges and high schools are given over to direct training for the war. This problem is related to the enormous question of who is to carry on the work in the future. The underground has to reach the youth with its slogans, its organization. Many youth are in the factories today, others are in the army.

In the general analysis of the organized struggle against a terrorist apparatus like the Gestapo or FBI, the most difficult problem is to determine the limits of the activity

of the illegal organization. Illegal fighters usually make mistakes in having too much activity as well as in the direction of passivity. During the first years of Hitler domination, most mistakes were in too much activity. Mass distribution, mass contacts with other organizations, are replaced by limited personal contact, and limited distribution on the basis of personal contact. Similarly with unions, meetings, work in other mass workers' organizations.

Another general problem is the attitude toward individual action. In illegality, individual terrorism is excluded, with the exception of extreme cases endangering the illegal organization, as in the work of spies or traitors. Mass terror within the framework of a rising revolutionary wave is another matter. Individual terror is only an expression of desperation which leads to disruption of the ranks of the revolutionists and not to the weakening of the state. Sabotage can be effective only when practised on a mass scale. Gains from isolated individual acts of sabotage are not worth the sacrifices, and breed the illusion that individual action can solve social problems. News of a successful individual act of sabotage is by no means encouraging or inspiring since it is always accompanied by news that many people have been arrested. Mass action is basic: strikes, demonstrations, mutinies, slowdowns. Terrorism and sabotage are entirely subordinate to mass action.

One of the key problems underlying every move in illegality is: are the heroic sacrifices in illegal work in proportion to the ends achieved? IS IT WORTH IT? Is the risk involved in a given action worth the possible gain? The experience of the workers' movement is that no sacrifice in the class struggle against capitalism is in vain. No worker who falls in the struggle against capitalism dies in vain. We learn from these sacrifices, from our defeats, our dead. Our task is to unite isolated centers of resistance, organize mass resistance against the imperialist war. Naturally, this task cannot be fulfilled if the most determined fighters are in jail or dead. One of the key aims of this entire work on illegality is to make crystal clear how best to save the lives of our members in this struggle. Basically this is the question of the entire role of the illegal organization. To survive at all, revolutionists have to be organized. Under total imperialist war this can mean only illegal organization as the base of activity. Thus the movement can maintain organizational continuity, and the sacrifices will be compensated for by the continuous living interconnection with the great working masses. No matter what happens, the organization itself must survive, even at the cost of uncounted victims.



Illegal work requires, above all else, renunciation - renouncing regular meetings with friends, renouncing places of entertainment formerly frequented, renouncing use of the telephone, even of the mails for any purpose that is not completely "innocent," renouncing so many little comforts of life. To make up one's mind to accept these renunciations may not be too difficult, but to remember the decision constantly is a hard job. Carelessness, desire for comfort, forgetfulness - the police know all too well how to put such human weaknesses to work for their own purposes.