

The year 1921 was specially important for me from many points of view.

When I entered the German Labour Party I at once took charge of the propaganda, believing this branch to be far the most important for the time being. Just then it was not a matter of pressing necessity to cudgel one's brains over problems of organization. The first necessity was to spread our ideas among as many people as possible. Propaganda should go well ahead of organization and gather together the human material for the latter to work up. I have never been in favour of hasty and pedantic methods of organization, because in most cases the result is merely a piece of dead mechanism and only rarely a living organization. Organization is a thing that derives its existence from organic life, organic evolution. When the same set of ideas have found a lodgement in the minds of a certain number of people they tend of themselves to form a certain degree of order among those people and out of this inner formation something that is very valuable arises. Of course here, as everywhere else, one must take account of those human weaknesses which make men hesitate, especially at the beginning, to submit to the control of a superior mind. If an organization is imposed from above downwards in a mechanical fashion, there is always the danger that some individual may push himself forward who is not known for what he is and who, out of jealousy, will try to hinder abler persons from taking a leading place in the movement. The damage that results from that kind of thing may have fatal consequences, especially in a new movement.

For this reason it is advisable first to propagate and publicly expound the ideas on which the movement is founded. This work of propaganda should continue for a certain time and should be directed from one centre. When the ideas have gradually won over a number of people this human material should be carefully sifted for the purpose of selecting those who have ability in leadership and putting that ability to the test. It will often be found that apparently insignificant persons will nevertheless turn out to be born leaders.

Of course, it is quite a mistake to suppose that those who show a very intelligent grasp of the theory underlying a movement are for that reason qualified to fill responsible positions on the directorate. The contrary is very frequently the case.

Great masters of theory are only very rarely great organizers also. And this is because the greatness of the theorist and founder of a system consists in being able to discover and lay down those laws that are right in the abstract, whereas the organizer must first of all be a man of psychological insight. He must take men as they are, and for that reason he must know them, not having too high or too low an estimate of human nature. He must take account of their weaknesses, their baseness and all the other various characteristics, so as to form something out of them which will be a living organism, endowed with strong powers of resistance, fitted to be the carrier of an idea and strong enough to ensure the triumph of that idea.

But it is still more rare to find a great theorist who is at the same time a great leader. For the latter must be more of an agitator, a truth that will not be readily accepted by many of those who deal with problems only from the scientific standpoint. And yet what I say is only natural. For an agitator who shows himself capable of expounding ideas to the great masses must always be a psychologist, even though he may be only a demagogue. Therefore he will always be a much more capable leader than the contemplative theorist who meditates on his ideas, far from the human throng and the world. For to be a leader means to be able to move the masses. The gift of formulating ideas has nothing whatsoever to do with the capacity for leadership. It would be entirely futile to discuss the question as to which is the more important: the faculty of conceiving ideals and human aims or that of being able to have them put into practice. Here, as so often happens in life, the one would be entirely meaningless without the other. The noblest conceptions of the human understanding remain without purpose or value if the leader cannot move the masses towards them. And, conversely, what would it avail to have all the genius and élan of a leader if the intellectual theorist does not fix the aims for which mankind must struggle. But when the abilities of theorist and organizer and leader are united in the one person, then we have the rarest phenomenon on this earth. And it is that union which produces the great man.

As I have already said, during my first period in the Party I devoted myself to the work of propaganda. I had to succeed in gradually gathering together a small nucleus of men who would accept the new teaching and be inspired by it. And in this way we should provide the human material which subsequently would form the constituent elements of the organization. Thus the goal of the propagandist is nearly always fixed far beyond that of the organizer.

If a movement proposes to overthrow a certain order of things and construct a new one in its place, then the following principles must be clearly understood and must dominate in the ranks of its leadership: Every movement which has gained its human material must first divide this material into two groups: namely, followers and members.

It is the task of the propagandist to recruit the followers and it is the task of the organizer to select the

members.

The follower of a movement is he who understands and accepts its aims; the member is he who fights for them.

The follower is one whom the propaganda has converted to the doctrine of the movement. The member is he who will be charged by the organization to collaborate in winning over new followers from which in turn new members can be formed.

To be a follower needs only the passive recognition of the idea. To be a member means to represent that idea and fight for it. From ten followers one can have scarcely more than two members. To be a follower simply implies that a man has accepted the teaching of the movement; whereas to be a member means that a man has the courage to participate actively in diffusing that teaching in which he has come to believe.

Because of its passive character, the simple effort of believing in a political doctrine is enough for the majority, for the majority of mankind is mentally lazy and timid. To be a member one must be intellectually active, and therefore this applies only to the minority.

Such being the case, the propagandist must seek untiringly to acquire new followers for the movement, whereas the organizer must diligently look out for the best elements among such followers, so that these elements may be transformed into members. The propagandist need not trouble too much about the personal worth of the individual proselytes he has won for the movement. He need not inquire into their abilities, their intelligence or character. From these proselytes, however, the organizer will have to select those individuals who are most capable of actively helping to bring the movement to victory.

The propagandist aims at inducing the whole people to accept his teaching. The organizer includes in his body of membership only those who, on psychological grounds, will not be an impediment to the further diffusion of the doctrines of the movement.

The propagandist inculcates his doctrine among the masses, with the idea of preparing them for the time when this doctrine will triumph, through the body of combatant members which he has formed from those followers who have given proof of the necessary ability and will-power to carry the struggle to victory.

The final triumph of a doctrine will be made all the more easy if the propagandist has effectively converted large bodies of men to the belief in that doctrine and if the organization that actively conducts the fight be exclusive, vigorous and solid.

When the propaganda work has converted a whole people to believe in a doctrine, the organization can turn the results of this into practical effect through the work of a mere handful of men. Propaganda and organization, therefore follower and member, then stand towards one another in a definite mutual relationship. The better the propaganda has worked, the smaller will the organization be. The greater the number of followers, so much the smaller can be the number of members. And conversely. If the propaganda be bad, the organization must be large. And if there be only a small number of followers, the membership must be all the larger – if the movement really counts on being successful.

The first duty of the propagandist is to win over people who can subsequently be taken into the organization. And the first duty of the organization is to select and train men who will be capable of carrying on the propaganda. The second duty of the organization is to disrupt the existing order of things and thus make room for the penetration of the new teaching which it represents, while the duty of the organizer must be to fight for the purpose of securing power, so that the doctrine may finally triumph.

A revolutionary conception of the world and human existence will always achieve decisive success when the new *Weltanschauung* has been taught to a whole people, or subsequently forced upon them if necessary, and when, on the other hand, the central organization, the movement itself, is in the hands of only those few men who are absolutely indispensable to form the nerve-centres of the coming State.

Put in another way, this means that in every great revolutionary movement that is of world importance the idea of this movement must always be spread abroad through the operation of propaganda. The propagandist must never tire in his efforts to make the new ideas clearly understood, inculcating them among others, or at least he must place himself in the position of those others and endeavor to upset their confidence in the convictions they have hitherto held. In order that such propaganda should have backbone to it, it must be based on an organization. The organization chooses its members from among those followers whom the propaganda has won. That organization will become all the more vigorous if the work of propaganda be pushed forward intensively. And the propaganda will work all the better when the organization back of it is vigorous and strong in itself.

Hence the supreme task of the organizer is to see to it that any discord or differences which may arise among the members of the movement will not lead to a split and thereby cramp the work within the movement. Moreover, it is the duty of the organization to see that the fighting spirit of the movement does not flag or die out but that it is

constantly reinvigorated and restrengthened. It is not necessary the number of members should increase indefinitely. Quite the contrary would be better. In view of the fact that only a fraction of humanity has energy and courage, a movement which increases its own organization indefinitely must of necessity one day become plethoric and inactive. Organizations, that is to say, groups of members, which increase their size beyond certain dimensions gradually lose their fighting force and are no longer in form to back up the propagation of a doctrine with aggressive elan and determination.

Now the greater and more revolutionary a doctrine is, so much the more active will be the spirit inspiring its body of members, because the subversive energy of such a doctrine will frighten away the chicken-hearted and small-minded bourgeoisie. In their hearts they may believe in the doctrine but they are afraid to acknowledge their belief openly. By reason of this very fact, however, an organization inspired by a veritable revolutionary idea will attract into the body of its membership only the most active of those believers who have been won for it by its propaganda. It is in this activity on the part of the membership body, guaranteed by the process of natural selection, that we are to seek the prerequisite conditions for the continuation of an active and spirited propaganda and also the victorious struggle for the success of the idea on which the movement is based.

The greatest danger that can threaten a movement is an abnormal increase in the number of its members, owing to its too rapid success. So long as a movement has to carry on a hard and bitter fight, people of weak and fundamentally egotistic temperament will steer very clear of it; but these will try to be accepted as members the moment the party achieves a manifest success in the course of its development.

It is on these grounds that we are to explain why so many movements which were at first successful slowed down before reaching the fulfillment of their purpose and, from an inner weakness which could not otherwise be explained, gave up the struggle and finally disappeared from the field. As a result of the early successes achieved, so many undesirable, unworthy and especially timid individuals became members of the movement that they finally secured the majority and stifled the fighting spirit of the others. These inferior elements then turned the movement to the service of their personal interests and, debasing it to the level of their own miserable heroism, no longer struggled for the triumph of the original idea. The fire of the first fervor died out, the fighting spirit flagged and, as the bourgeois world is accustomed to say very justly in such cases, the party mixed water with its wine.

For this reason it is necessary that a movement should, from the sheer instinct of self-preservation, close its lists to new membership the moment it becomes successful. And any further increase in its organization should be allowed to take place only with the most careful foresight and after a painstaking sifting of those who apply for membership. Only thus will it be possible to keep the kernel of the movement intact and fresh and sound. Care must be taken that the conduct of the movement is maintained exclusively in the hands of this original nucleus. This means that the nucleus must direct the propaganda which aims at securing general recognition for the movement. And the movement itself, when it has secured power in its hands, must carry out all those acts and measures which are necessary in order that its ideas should be finally established in practice.

With those elements that originally made the movement, the organization should occupy all the important positions that have been conquered and from those elements the whole directorate should be formed. This should continue until the maxims and doctrines of the party have become the foundation and policy of the new State. Only then will it be permissible gradually to give the reins into the hands of the Constitution of that State which the spirit of the movement has created. But this usually happens through a process of mutual rivalry, for here it is less a question of human intelligence than of the play and effect of the forces whose development may indeed be foreseen from the start but not perpetually controlled.

All great movements, whether of a political or religious nature, owe their imposing success to the recognition and adoption of those principles. And no durable success is conceivable if these laws are not observed.