

The MLPD is Growing into a New Role in Society

Rote Fahne Interview with the Chairman of the MLPD, Stefan Engel,
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Greece is dominating the political discussion these days. How are the recent developments in the Greece crisis to be evaluated?

Last weekend, international finance capital, composed of the EU Commission, the governments of the Eurogroup and the IMF, imposed its dictate upon the Greek masses. Plundering and incapacitation were continued, a bit garnished with vague promises so that the masses will accept it. Just a few days earlier Tsipras had got the people's mandate not to accept the shifting of the burdens of the crisis. But in the end, he gave in to the brutal blackmailing:

A considerable worsening of the pension system, an enormous value-added tax increase, deregulation of working and opening hours, massive worsening of the collective bargaining and labor dispute laws, mass dismissals, immense downsizing of the state apparatus; privatization of public institutions amounting to planned 50 billion euros under the umbrella of an EU-controlled trust fund; "relevant" laws require the consent of the Troika...

This package of measures dictated to the Tsipras government actually goes even further than the program rejected by the masses in the referendum one-and-a-half weeks ago by a majority of 61.3 percent.

The consent of the Greek parliament was demanded as a "last proof of confidence" in order to graciously grant Greece a third "relief program".

However, this dictate over Greece has nothing to do with "relief". It is also an attempt to rescue the eurozone by preventing a breakdown of the Greek banks, which would have affected the banking sector in the entire eurozone. Together with this package, the vague promise was made to the Greek government that there would be negotiations over 85 billion euros for the next three years.

This dictate has to be assessed as being primarily politically motivated. They want to teach the Greek people a humiliating lesson after it dared to confront the Troika with its head held high. They want to break the backbones of left-wing politicians who dare "in the name of democracy" to ask the people their opinion, even if it is only in a referendum.

The Tsipras government was forced to go down on its knees before all the euro countries in a scenario of threats to the effect that all economic life in Greece would soon break down: banks were closed, the ECB was threatening to cut emergency loans; the complete money transfer in the buying and selling of goods was disturbed. This exacerbated the already dramatic situation of the population and intensified the pressure. So the Tsipras government accepted a redistribution program, about which a commentator in Greek radio said: "*If the former conservative Samaras government had presented an austerity program like the one of Tsipras, Athens would now be in flames.*"¹

With deceptive guidelines like "reestablish trust", "rebuff the communists in the government", "agree or Grexit" or "no more was possible", the Greek people were driven into feeling that they have no alternatives.

This new, dramatic situation for the Greek people is a result of the miserable failing of all so-called "rescue measures" of the last five years. For five years Greece paid back the bailout loans with profitable interest for IMF and EU. The conditions for interest, redemption of "old debts", repurchasing of state bonds as well as the recapitalization of the Greek banks were so stifling that the national debt continued to grow dramatically.

Greece's debt ratio piled up at the end of 2014 to 317 billion euros or 177.1 percent of the gross domestic product. In 2010 it was at 142.8 percent.

Especially the working class and the broad masses of the Greek people were systematically driven into poverty and misery. In the meantime, one third of all households are living below the poverty line! The tax burden of the masses has increased by 337 percent since 2008. The official unemployment rate has almost quadrupled from 7.3 percent in 2008 to 26.6 percent. More than half of all youth are unemployed. More than three million people no longer have health insurance – 40 percent of the population! Wages and pensions have been cut by around 30 percent since 2009. Infant mortality has risen by one third since 2008; life expectancy sank by two to three years.

Instead of an “economic upswing” as promised by IMF and EU, the economic crisis in Greece deepened. In 2014 industrial production reached a new low of 72.2 percent compared to the highest level before the crisis started in 2008.

Against this background, SYRIZA (“Coalition of the Radical Left”) was elected as the strongest party in Greece in January 2015. In an alliance with an ultra-right-wing organization they took over the government with the slogan, “*Stop the austerity dictate of the Troika.*”

The ruling powers are afraid that this “fever” might spread to some other countries and so rejected the far-reaching demands from Greece for debt refinancing and a debt cut. With outrageous demagogy and a barrage of bourgeois propaganda for several weeks, EU and IMF sought to blackmail the Greek government to make further payments until the end of June and further worsen the social situation of the Greek people. Contrary to the smear campaign in some of the bourgeois mass media such as the *BILD* tabloid, the masses in Greece have not seen one cent of the so-called “relief packages” of more than 240 billion euros. Instead, the German government has collected 360 million euros in interest from Athens since 2010. International monopolies, large German and French banks in particular, but also Greek monopolies, benefited from the loan repayments. It was ensured that the “private debtors” were generally satisfied and the debts shifted to the public sector.

The constant threats of a “Grexit” are not only intended to force the Greek government to further cut pensions and wages and raise the taxes for the masses. They are also intended to dispel the hopes of the masses in EU countries like Italy, Spain and Portugal of putting a stop to the rigorous shifting of the burdens of the crisis. The growing left-wing tendency there makes the ruling powers uneasy.

The EU is on the horns of a dilemma. A national bankruptcy and an exit of Greece from the eurozone would not suit the ruling supermonopolies. It would dry up a rich source of profits and, because of the guarantees, would indeed cost billions of euros from the public purses of the imperialist countries. Most of all, a “Grexit” could foster the radicalization and revolutionization of the masses in Greece and in other European countries. This is the decisive starting point for Chancellor Merkel and the strong powers in the EU in their policy towards Greece. A “Grexit” would have far-reaching economic and power-political consequences and harbors imponderable risks.

All of this is taking place in already instable European surroundings: The EU's share of the world social product dropped from 30 to slightly less than 24 percent from 2008 to 2013. Even one year after the end of the world economic and financial crisis, EU industrial production is still 9 percent lower than the highest levels before the crisis.

As a consequence of the policy of low interest rates and the flush of money from the ECB, the state debt of the EU reached a new peak in 2014 with 87 percent of the gross

domestic product; in the eurozone it is even at 92 percent. Thus the threat of inflation and even national bankruptcies is growing in the whole eurozone and in the EU.

The Greek crisis is actually a euro crisis which is to be solved to the disadvantage of the Greek people, but also of the European population.

What do you think about the policy of the Greek SYRIZA government after the newest so-called "agreement"?

With the clear election victory of SYRIZA, large parts of the Greek masses had withdrawn their trust in the conventional bourgeois parties and set a signal that they are not willing to accept the shifting of the burdens of the crisis onto their backs. This has our unlimited support! We have been taking to the streets in this spirit for 11 years every Monday with the Monday demonstration movement. However, from the very beginning, we had a critical position regarding some illusions spread by the SYRIZA government – as if one could force the international monopolies of Europe, the EU or the euro countries to back down solely through parliamentary elections in a small country like Greece or through referenda. In order to win the struggle against the shifting of the crisis burdens, a cross-border class struggle of the workers and the broad masses has to take place. This is the only way that a superiority over those in power and their conditions can be achieved today! But SYRIZA as a government has neither called up the masses in Greece nor the masses in Europe to lead mass demonstrations and strikes. Most of all, they have created illusions about an allegedly possible reformation of the EU.

The inevitable happened. The tough rejection of a debt cut by the EU powers and the IMF made the dreams of a parliamentary solution come to a quick end. Now Tsipras himself became the victim of the parliamentary illusions he spread. The reformist and revisionist aberrations of SYRIZA have thoroughly failed.

The time has come to draw conclusions out of this. We must organize the masses against the dictatorship of the solely ruling international finance capital. The answer to the search for a fundamental way out is the preparation of the **international socialist revolution!** This fundamental issue must put be into the focus of the discussion about Greece right now! Only then can a revolutionary ferment develop out of the open crisis.

The solidarity with the struggle for democracy and freedom in Rojava currently plays an outstanding role for MLPD. Why is that?

The democratic uprising movement which emerged in 2011, starting in Tunisia via North Africa and the Arab world, was an important international political mass movement for freedom and democracy. What it lacked most was a positive societal perspective. Thus, many of those movements were influenced by Western imperialists, or Islamist fascists were able to make use of the situation for their own good.

Therefore, the democratic revolution in Rojava (West Kurdistan in the north of Syria) was an important torch for the struggle for freedom and democracy and found the unlimited support of ICOR. Democratic self-governance structures were successfully created in the autonomous region of Rojava. That included an army for people's liberation and self-defense, far-reaching women's rights in a traditionally very patriarchally structured society and, not least, a paradigm change in the rebuilding of society on the basis of the unity of humankind and nature.

ICOR agreed on an international Solidarity Pact with the Kurdish liberation movement. It committed itself to a number of solidarity measures, amongst others to the struggle for the recognition of Rojava under international law, the support of reconstruction, the solid-

arity with the Kurdish liberation struggle and, last but not least, the struggle against the repression of the Kurdish movement. At the same time, it is a **pact of reciprocity, a commitment to never leave each other alone in the struggle.**

With the membership of the umbrella organization of the Kurds in Europe (KCD-E) in ICOR, ICOR not only gained an important part of the international revolutionary movement. Vice versa, the Kurdish liberation struggle took its firm position in the international revolutionary and working-class movement.

Obviously, the different reactionary states and Islamist-fascist terror organizations will not just stand by and watch this development. They fought against the building of Rojava from the very beginning. The strongest difficulties for Rojava were caused by the attack of the IS against Kobanê, which the Kurdish population successfully repulsed in the beginning of 2015 in a heroic struggle lasting 130 days.

Now it was the task to **secure the victory** there and, after the military victory, focus in a lasting way on **the reconstruction of Rojava and the realization of the new democratic society.**

In order to support this task, the ICC (International Coordinating Committee) of ICOR decided at the beginning of January 2015 to set up international brigades for the reconstruction of Kobanê. These activities have not only enjoyed large support among the Kurdish population of Europe, but also among the youth and many migrants' organizations. Twice as many brigadists have registered than we initially planned! And vice versa, MLPD and ICOR have become politically interesting for many migrants in this context. The idea of the mutual strengthening of the international revolutionary and working-class movement and the liberation struggle of the Kurdish people is starting to bear fruits.

The solidarity brigades to Kobanê surely are a new activity for the MLPD. What exactly do the brigades do?

The warlike attack of the fascist IS in 2014 destroyed 80 percent of Kobanê: infrastructure, water pipes, sewage channels, houses, streets, schools and hospitals were destroyed and parts of the city were full of mines after the withdrawal of the IS. This is why today many inhabitants of Kobanê are living in refugee centers. The infrastructure has to be restored as soon as possible so that the people will be able to live in Kobanê again. The ICOR with its international solidarity brigades wants to establish a healthcare and social center.

Nearly 150 international brigadists will provide humanitarian assistance on-site over a longer period of time in intervals. They are financing their stay on their own and have often sacrificed their year's vacation. They are not just construction teams, but do complicated development work for and with the population in Kobanê. This is also of greatest moral significance because of their attitude of selfless solidarity. The brigadists do not come with an attitude of knowing and doing everything better. They endeavor from the very beginning to carry out the rebuilding together with the population of Kobanê and to subordinate themselves to its needs and requirements. Their guideline is: *"Serve the people!"* The organized cooperation for mutual benefit is a **learning process for all participants and of long-range significance for the struggle for a liberated society in the whole world.**

The massacre by 90 IS fascists in Kobanê on 25 June caused 234 civilian casualties. Did this endanger the work of the brigades?

Of course, safety went first and the construction work had to be interrupted for several days until the YPG and YPJ units had purged the city of the IS fascists. They obviously had underestimated the safeguarding of the liberated areas after all the successes and

the demands of the offensive. Meanwhile this mistake has been self-critically acknowledged by the military leadership of the YPG and YPJ, and lessons have been drawn. This is not only an important condition for the successful continuation of the brigade work, but also for the return of the temporarily evacuated city population. The ICOR and the MLPD are as proud as the people in Kobanê of having resumed their activities. The administration in Kobanê is paying particular attention to this project, especially because the rebuilding work is being continued with determination after these attacks of the IS fascists. Asya Abdullah, co-chair of the PYD, said: *“There are many organizations helping us: with money, with material. What you are doing is something totally different. You are living and working with us under the conditions under which we live.”*

The brigadist movement embodies a vision. Trade-unionists, people not organized in any party or Marxist-Leninists are broadly joining together without regard for political affiliation; young and old people from 18 to 72; along with many workers also academics, working youth, pupils and students; men and nearly 40 percent women in a joint practical activity for the liberation struggle. Democratic initiative combines with competent, strict leadership and unified discipline. The know-how of the MLPD, which has been acquired over decades, combines with a fast, collective, mutual learning process among the participants, and in particular with the confidence in the victory of the Kurdish friends. Hard work and cultural fraternization, perseverance, courage and selflessness give mutual inspiration. To make it short: here our vision of a cross-border struggle for a socialist society can be felt and grasped!

The fascist “Islamic State” (IS) is relatively tenacious in Iraq and Syria despite the successes of the Kurds and military defeats. How can this be explained?

There are a number of roots and conditions for the emergence of IS fascism. With the reorganization of international production since the beginning of the 1990s the uneven development of the countries has increased extraordinarily. A number of Arab and African states are in a disastrous condition, not least because of the cheap imports of European food as well as the overexploitation and destruction by international monopolies. The wars of the NATO states in the region intensified the chaos. At the same time, countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Dubai or Qatar themselves have developed imperialist claims to power. They have risen into the circle of new-imperialist countries.

The Islamist-fascist organizations have received decisive impetus from these countries and served as a bulwark against the “Arab spring” and the cross-border revolutionary fermentation.

The main interest of new-imperialist Turkey is to put a stop to the Kurds' striving for freedom in Western Kurdistan/Rojava, to overthrow the Assad regime and to expand its own role as a regional power. President Erdogan swore never to permit the creation of a new Kurdish state on the border of Turkey. Until today, a large number of the foreign IS mercenaries come to Syria via Turkey. The Turkish secret service MIT has smuggled weapons across the border, IS fighters are being treated in Turkish hospitals. Oil and gas from the areas conquered by the IS are sold in Turkey. The most extensive plan of the Erdogan government is the creation of a “buffer zone” through an invasion in Northern Syria. This, however, meets with contradictions within NATO.

A hard core of the IS leaders originates from the military leadership of the former Saddam Hussein regime. A dogmatic concept of Islam serves them only to build a broad mass basis among the oppressed and impoverished Muslim masses. They make use of the continued division of the Iraqi people between Sunnis and Shiites which had been practiced by Saddam and continued by the US. The elaborately produced propaganda of the IS demagogically takes advantage of the broad masses' justified hatred of the Amer-

ican occupying forces and the Assad regime and is luring the masses with social-fascist demagogy. This propaganda is also being transported via bourgeois mass media and helps attract reactionary, neglected and blinded or simply inexperienced and “adventurous” young people with the promise of power, money, female slaves and homes, or to win them for cowardly terror attacks.

Northern Syria (Rojava/Western Kurdistan) currently is one of the focal points where the IS is being dealt blows. Elsewhere, however, it is succeeding in extending its influence, as in Libya and other areas of Syria. By the end of March 2015, no fewer than 80,000 to 100,000 gunmen, including about 25,000 mercenaries from more than 100 countries, had joined the IS or other fascist-Islamist groups.² The IS is by far the richest terror group in the world and has considerable financial, military and logistic resources. It should not be overestimated, but also not underestimated.

The struggle against the fascist IS and the victory over it is an important task for developing a higher level of the struggle for democracy and freedom and the revolutionary class struggle.

Can you say that new-imperialist countries are pushing onto the world market and into world policy in a particularly aggressive way?

Definitely yes! New-imperialist countries like Saudi-Arabia and Qatar are adding fuel to the fire of the acute war trouble spots with arms supplies and bombardments in Yemen. Especially China and Russia, which are at the head of the military alliance of the Shanghai group, are striving to close tighter ranks with other aspiring new-imperialist countries. In Ufa, Russia, a BRICS summit took place from 8 to 9 July 2015, attended by the heads of state of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Challenging the worldwide dominance of IMF and the World Bank, they established a development bank of their own with a currency pool of initially 100 billion US dollars.³ This aims at financing projects with which the influence of the old imperialist countries in various regions will be ousted. Meanwhile, China is appearing in the world economy as the biggest international investor.

In the last interview of 17 December 2014, you described the course and preliminary end of the world economic and financial crisis. Are we going to experience an upswing now?

Chancellor Merkel fancied she could make out an economic upturn as early as in the summer of 2011. At that time the industrial production index in Germany temporarily reached 98.7 compared to the highest pre-crisis level. She was wrong. In December 2014 I already pointed out that in its final phase the world economic and financial crisis had already entered an international **fluctuating stagnation**. A fluctuating stagnation means an oscillation of the industrial production around the zero line. This has been confirmed, as the economic development of the OECD states demonstrates.⁴ It was only in 2014 that they again reached the pre-crisis level with 99.9 percent.

The worldwide economic development is very uneven. By the first quarter of 2015, the industrial production in the US had increased by 5.0 percent over the former highest pre-crisis level, whereas the industrial production of Japan is 14.4 index points below the highest pre-crisis level. The international crisis management, with which mainly the imperialist central banks pumped trillions into the money markets, could only keep the chronic overaccumulation of capital in a state of continued tension. At the beginning of the world economic and financial crisis there still had been the possibility to invest surplus capital especially in the BRICS states.⁵ But meanwhile the growth rates there are

also declining. In India growth has slowed down to only 5 percent in the past four years. In China the growth rates of industrial production have fallen to the lowest level in 24 years. If the growth in China declines further, this would have enormous effects on the world economy.

The fluctuating stagnation indicates that the plan has largely failed to trigger “a *self-sustaining upswing*”, as Merkel put it, by flooding the money markets. Today we experience the **failure of bourgeois economics, which objectively calls capitalism in general into question.**

The German economy seems to be developing quite stably?

The German economy is the only one among the big imperialist EU states that has again reached the pre-crisis level of industrial production. France and Great Britain are still more than 10 percent below the pre-crisis level, Italy 25 and Spain even 27 percent.

The development in Germany, too, is not stable at all, however. The German exports to Russia collapsed by 34 percent in the first quarter in relation to the previous year. Also, the growth of German industrial production has declined quarter on quarter since the beginning of 2014 to 0.0 percent in the first quarter of the year 2015. On the other hand, exports established a new record in March with a value of 107.7 billion euros and were 12.5 percent higher than in the previous year.⁶ Without the continuing export strength we would already be dealing with a new fall of the German economy.

The lower euro exchange rate is stimulating German exports. The German economy is, of course, vulnerable due to this export dependency and reacts sensitively to any fluctuations in the world economy.

Chancellor Merkel has been leading government affairs for nearly ten years. She is still sitting relatively firmly in the saddle. Why is that?

Merkel took over the government in 2005 from the Schröder/Fischer administration, which had got into a deep political crisis. With this crisis, the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking as a method of governing introduced by that government had also failed. **Merkel has revived this method, refined and modified it.** She makes concessions even before any far-reaching unfolding of contradictions occurs. That makes her different from Schröder, who was high-handed and too sure of himself and, for example, put all his eggs into one basket by pushing through the Agenda 2010 with the Hartz laws. At the same time, Merkel has put the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking into the center of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking. This was particularly directed against the potential of the MLPD, which had become apparent during the crisis of the Schröder/Fischer government. In connection with the emergence of the Monday demonstration movement and the Opel strike, the relative isolation of the MLPD could be broken overnight. The MLPD turned up in the headlines of the big media and in a very short time could win up to 60 percent new members. Obviously the Merkel government quickly became aware of this danger. Her **modification of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking as a method of government** was taken up by the media and even by the trade union bureaucracy. That has not been without effect on the masses and has temporarily made life pretty hard for us!

How has class consciousness developed?

The transition to the working-class offensive on a broad front, which began in 2004, stopped for the time being after 2005. However, those in power totally failed to achieve their goal of undermining the class consciousness of the workers. It could be consolidated and stabilized, in particular among the industrial proletariat, in connection with the systematic work of the MLPD among the rank and file.

The present **revival of trade-union strikes** is important. According to the latest calculations of the Cologne Institute for Economic Research (IW), collective bargaining disputes in various sectors led to a loss of 500,000 working days in the first half of this year alone. This is three times as many as in the entire year 2014 and the highest level since 1993 (with a loss of 593,000 days). IW also lamented: *“There is a growing aggressiveness of labor struggles in the service sector.”* What they mean by the aggressiveness they find so unpleasant is the **growing politicization and radicalization of the struggles**. In their strikes the **childcare workers and social workers** demanded not only higher wages, but also a higher regard for the work with children and young people. They protested against the disparagement of “women's professions” by continuing low wages. This is not only an expression of a general trade-union consciousness, but also of a **growing women's consciousness!** It was remarkable that even after four weeks, with partly far-reaching consequences for the parents, this strike was still supported by 62 percent of the population.

The **postal workers** as well achieved partial successes in an unlimited four-week strike involving about 18,000 workers of the 83 mail sorting centers nationwide. Especially significant is that the preservation of existing jobs for the postal workers has been pushed through. A striking feature were the offensive elements in the demands, like the one for a reduction in working hours with full wage compensation. The strike also took on political features when the trade unionists took resolute action against the strikebreaker work of civil servants. The **demand for a full legal right to strike in all matters is growing in importance.**

Particularly remarkable was the intrepid strike leadership of the small railway union **GDL**. It defied massive smears of the media and achieved good results: 350 euros lump sum payment, 5.1 percent wage increase in two steps, 400 new jobs, reduction in working hours of one hour to 38 hours per week in 2018. It proved politically important that the GDL gained the concession that the planned “collective bargaining unity act” of the Federal Minister of Labor, Nahles, will not be applied at the railways until 2020. The MLPD consistently supported the railway employees and clearly opposed the bullying against them. At the same time we also had critical discussions with the colleagues: the MLPD stands up for the **unified general labor union** and opposes the fragmentation of the working-class and trade-union movement into individual trade unions, despite the understandable indignation about the right-wing trade union leadership's policy of class collaboration.

At the same time we observe that vigorous action is being taken against class-militant colleagues. At the new Opel/Neovia company in Bochum an attempt was made to prevent by all available means the representation of class-militant colleagues from “Offensiv” in the new works council.

However, despite all difficulties, “Offensiv” is represented in the new works council again after a convincing election campaign full of new ideas. Congratulations!

In the hard coal mining industry a new culmination is looming. What is it about in concrete terms?

After the big miners' strike in 1997 the miners were assured: *"No miner will plunge into an abyss!"* On 24 June this year a new "general social plan" was negotiated. The clause *"no dismissals for operating reasons"* was simply deleted. With that the company, RAG, is preparing mass dismissals in the hard coal mining industry in case the coal price on the world market falls further. This has openly disproved the lie of the socially compatible withdrawal from coal mining.

Time will show whether the miners will put up with the new general social plan. For 15 years they have been put off with lies and false promises, while at the same time important elements of income like the shaft descent bonus, washing bonus, transportation payment and coal allowance were taken away. There are already some important independent initiatives among the miners which indicate **a beginning dissolution of the relative calm in the mines.**

Has the danger of war, in particular in Ukraine, been averted?

In Eastern Ukraine the shooting is still going on, and an armistice actually does not exist. From Russia, soldiers temporarily released from duty are still being deployed to Donetsk and Lugansk as volunteers. On the other side, the NATO is increasing its military presence in Eastern Europe and is constantly carrying out military maneuvers of the naval, air and land forces. Breaking its word, it continues its eastward expansion, which is the starting point of the intensification of the conflict.

All imperialist countries claim they are concerned solely with peace. Then why do they have 15,800 nuclear warheads worldwide? They profusely talk about disarmament, while the USA and Russia are in the act of *"comprehensively modernizing"* their arsenal of nuclear weapons.

A massive arms build-up is taking place today mainly in the Asian region. The USA is extending its military bases in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and in this way has encircled China. The five biggest importers of weapons, India, Saudi Arabia, China, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, are all situated in Asia. China continues the construction of bases in the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal, as well as in Laos and Myanmar.

The unstable system of the rule of imperialism, the intensification of inter-imperialist contradictions, have such an explosive force that people around the globe have to be vigilant and fight for world peace.

The worldwide wave of refugees has given rise to great solidarity, mainly among women and young people. On this scale, isn't this a new phenomenon?

We are actually experiencing a solidarity with refugees in many cities which is unknown up to now. People are indignant about the murderous sealing off of the EU, which has transformed the Mediterranean Sea into a mass grave for tens of thousands of drowned refugees. There are mass debates about the causes of flight and the perspectives.

In the meantime the protests have forced the EU to conduct some coordinated international rescue operations. At the same time, billions of euros have been spent for border protection to seal off the EU. The costs for "fortress Europe" have increased by sixteen times within the last ten years.

The **international refugee crisis** is a dramatic problem for humankind and a sharp indictment of the ruling imperialist world system! About every fifth human being on earth is living in migration in order to be able to survive. More and more regions are becoming uninhabitable because of damage to the environment, wars, fascist terror gangs and fam-

ine. However, those in power cannot and do not have the intention to change anything about the causes of this refugee crisis.

Part of our revolutionary welcome culture for refugees is their protection against fascist and racist attacks, the common struggle for their interests, as well as for their democratic rights and liberties. However, it is also part of this to develop the common struggle in the respective country in solidarity.

A good example is the planned “house of solidarity” in Truckenthal in Thuringia, where a place of encounter is going to be created in cooperation with migrant organizations, parties and refugees from Syria and Iraq. Typically enough, this offer has been turned down up till now by the authorities out of anticommunist motives, even though accommodations for refugees are desperately needed everywhere.

The NSA/BND affair as well as the adopted data retention scheme show a comprehensive system of surveillance of the masses. Where does this lead to?

New details about the surveillance of the population by the imperialist secret services are constantly being disclosed. If Chancellor Angela Merkel had to decide, not even the NSA investigating committee of the German federal parliament, which meets secretly, may learn which terms and search items are used for spying out Internet and telephones. SPD leader Gabriel pressured SPD Minister of Justice Maas to give up his former rejection of data retention. Maas has presented a bill, the core of which, despite all cosmetics, is the almost complete retention of all telecommunications data of all citizens without the least cause.

This comprehensive system of surveillance of the masses is designed to intimidate people and keep them from fighting. Those in power are in particular afraid that the masses will become revolutionized. The Europe-wide raid against the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninists – TKP/ML in April this year, initiated by the German judiciary, shows that the FRG plays a leading role in the persecution of revolutionaries.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the liberation from Hitlerite fascism, some new tones were heard from those in power. How do you evaluate this?

The year 2015 was the year of various 70th anniversaries of the end of the Second World War – in particular the 8th of May – the “day of liberation”. ICOR also declared 8th May to be an international day of struggle against fascism and war. The smashing of Hitlerite fascism as the most barbarous form of the capitalist social system was a victory of the antifascist forces in the world with the mainstay of the then socialist Soviet Union. With 27 million dead it paid the biggest toll worldwide. The Red Army led by Stalin broke the back of Hitlerite fascism. In all countries subjugated by fascism the communists were the leading force in the antifascist resistance, and for decades attempts were made to deny this fact.

In the meantime, 89 percent of the people in Germany regard the 8th of May as the “day of liberation” from Hitlerite fascism. Bourgeois antifascism has to take this into account. Federal President Gauck and Chancellor Merkel denounced fascism in their speeches. Gauck even acknowledged the role of the Red Army. The condemnation of all activities of the Soviet Union under Stalin is increasingly being criticized. However, at the same time, with that they tried to cover up the essence of fascism and the only consistent conclusion: fascism is the most brutal form of rule of imperialism.

The most important activity of the MLPD in this ideological dispute was the initiative of our comrades in Solingen to conduct a campaign for a Willi-Dickhut Street or Place on

the occasion of the 70th anniversary. In the years before and after 1945, Willi Dickhut was the leading antifascist and communist personality in Solingen and later became the pioneer and mentor of the MLPD. The position on Willi Dickhut is also a position on the proletarian historiography of the revolutionary German working-class movement. It is also tantamount to a position against the anticommunism of bourgeois antifascism and the modern anticommunism of the revisionists.

A remarkably broad united action emerged, also starting from the *ueberparteilich* (non-party-affiliated) local election alliance “Solingen aktiv”. At a rally on this 8th of May, representatives and supporters of the MLPD, DKP, Left Party, SPD and youth league *Rebell* spoke. For the first time in the history of Solingen the “*appreciation of Mr. Willi Dickhut*” was on the agenda of a municipal committee and there was a discussion. The Greens and the Left Party enthusiastically approved the motion. The bourgeois media reported. In a statement the municipal archives appreciated “*the importance of Willi Dickhut for the history of the city of Solingen*” mainly directly after the Second World War as “*really outstanding*”, and further wrote: “*His position and his life show one of various possibilities of development of the formerly important communist milieu in Solingen.*” The local DKP (German Communist Party) shabbily rejected any cooperation – apart from a few exceptions – for party-egoistic reasons. What could be more embarrassing?!

The last party congress decided to change the “Rote Fahne” as central organ of the MLPD. What became of this project?

In the last few years it has become more and more obvious that the way in which consciousness is formed, the way workers and the broad masses form their opinions, has changed. Through the method of positivism, quickly “googled” bits of information and enormous short-windedness, in the bourgeois media the great complexity of the social developments worldwide becomes a hard-to-see-through tangle of cover-ups and catastrophic developments – of war, environmental disasters, misery and starvation.

Less than ever do the readers expect to get only more information from the *Rote Fahne*. Well-founded, in-depth analyses showing how things are connected are necessary. What is behind these things? Why is it so? Are there alternatives? What can and must I do?

Apart from our daily online magazine “rote-fahne-news” we have decided to issue a bi-weekly *Rote-Fahne-Magazin* starting in the middle of September. Every issue will treat one main subject comprehensively, dealing with the historical, political and ideological content and context of an issue. The magazine will give persons affected, activists and experts an opportunity to express their views; it will contain documents of self-run organizations, will develop alliance-building work, will work with tables/graphics and will penetrate the subject with our ideological-political line in the system of *Revolutionärer Weg*.

The challenge will be to expound things in greater depth and, at the same time, become more comprehensible – to address “old hands” as well as new readers with the subjects.

As a third aspect of our future *Rote Fahne* system, we are taking steps in the direction of a “*Rote Fahne TV*”. We observe a growing interest in our positions and representatives. Particularly television still strictly refuses to report anything about the MLPD.

We want to win all comrades, friends, colleagues, young people to make an active contribution. We need experts, special editors; text, photo and video correspondents; designers, archivists, advertising agents and much more.

At the 21st climate protection conference in Paris in December a new climate protection agreement is to be adopted. Can we expect a U-turn there in relation to climate protection?

Since the first climate protection conference in 1995 in Berlin, CO₂ emissions have risen by 60 percent worldwide; the emissions of the greenhouse gas methane, by 34 percent, and of laughing gas by 17 percent. The 21st climate protection conference in Paris will also change nothing with regard to the accelerated transformation into a global climate and environmental catastrophe. The boastfully announced climate protection agreement provides for a “*voluntary self-commitment*” of individual countries which – according to the propaganda of imperialist environmentalism – should “*limit global warming to two degrees Celsius*”. The haggling over a “*limitation*” in the imperialist competition is playing with fire. Two degrees centigrade would already mean an irrevocable destruction of the natural foundations of human life for billions of people, a rise in the sea level by several meters and the collapse of entire ecosystems. This alleged limitation is scientifically absurd. Because there are interrelations and tipping points in the development of the climate, which does not develop isolated from other factors of the transformation into the global environmental catastrophe.

The imperialist competition for the domination of the energy market is intensifying. In 2014 more than 50 percent of the output of the newly installed power stations worldwide was related to so-called renewable energies. However, the ecologically harmful use of biomass and waste incineration also are included there.

In Germany the investments in the extension of decentralized solar systems declined by 34 percent in 2014. In comparison, the investments in wind energy have doubled, mainly due to the increased construction of big wind farms under the control of Siemens, Vattenfall etc. At the same time it is planned to adopt a law allowing fracking in Germany. However, this meets with broad resistance. As a result the law could not be passed in the German parliament on the 3rd of July as scheduled. The plan of the Merkel government to pay up to 10 billion euros to the energy monopolies to hold dirty coal-fired power stations as reserve power plants is a provocation.

The Marxist-Leninists will participate in the mass protests and activities in Paris during the climate conference and further promote the strategy debate. The MLPD demands a scientifically founded drop in the emission of greenhouse gases by 90 percent by the year 2030. This can only be pushed through by an international front of resistance with the working-class movement as core and as part of the society-changing struggle.

How are the environmental policies of the MLPD developing?

Almost 15,000 copies of our book *Catastrophe Alert! What Is to Be Done Against the Willful Destruction of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?* meanwhile have been sold. Apart from German it is also available in the three world languages English, Spanish and French. Translation into Turkish, Russian and Farsi has begun. There is great interest and the need to give the environmental issue an appropriate place in the revolutionary movement and to overcome some failures of the past.

The most important basis for the development of the international strategy debate, however, is that we resolutely strengthen the forces for saving the environment from the profit system in our party building in Germany! We have to continue paying special attention to that. In the meantime, in almost all county organizations of our party we have founded environmental groups. This is a novelty in the party landscape in Germany. This is connected with an intense process of learning and self-transformation to interfuse the

solution of the social question with the solution of the environmental question in all fields of our systematic work among the rank and file.

In our environmental work we place the main emphasis on combining the struggle against fracking and toxic waste underground with the struggle against the intended closure of hard coal mining and the destruction of the jobs of the miners.

What do your women comrades report about the preparations for the World Women's Conference?

The militant women's movement of the world today must work together in a coordinated way on a sustained basis and consolidate its organization! This fundamental idea is already becoming reality step by step in the preparations for the World Women's Conference planned for March 2016.

The days of struggle which were decided on at the 1st World Women's Conference in Caracas are already partly being carried out jointly beyond national borders, like the series of solidarity events with the struggle in Kobanê around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2014. In January the European conference of the world women in Athens contributed to the Greek women's groups joining together. Up to then they had been working apart from each other. After the brutal earthquake in Nepal, within two weeks European women collected more than 20,000 euros. In the meantime they are being used for the reconstruction of a school! The "Project Joly" to finance female union organizers of the garment workers in Bangladesh has become an acknowledged part of the women's trade union work in ver.di, the second largest single union in Germany. The federal women's conference of ver.di explicitly supports the 2nd World Women's Conference.

In the face of the great devastation caused by the earthquake, the problem of whether the 2nd World Women's Conference can take place in 2016 in Nepal as planned is actually not yet solved. That will be decided jointly at the next world meeting of the coordinators in September. This notwithstanding, the preparatory work is making further good progress. The first brigadists have already submitted their applications. Promotion is on its way, donations are being collected, tasks distributed and so on. All these important tasks do not depend on the concrete date of the 2nd World Women's Conference!

One highlight will be the big national women's assembly in Kassel on 14 November, where the five German delegates for Nepal will be elected and where another contribution for the "Hymn of the World Women" will be chosen in the second round of the song contest.

The MLPD is participating in the reliable and principled implementation of all the fixed tasks in an alliance with other groups and organizations and contributes its know-how, also from the work within the ICOR.

What is your evaluation of the 17th International Whitsun Youth Meeting?

This time the 17th International Whitsun Youth Meeting in Gelsenkirchen was very closely connected to the international solidarity with the struggle for liberation in Rojava. Several thousand young people, children and adults from all over Germany and many international participants and organizations were moved by the atmosphere of solidarity, the revolutionary enthusiasm and the optimism for the future. In many cities and groupings the diversified program was excellently prepared, be it the demonstration for

future, the soccer tournament, the concerts, discussions, workshops, children's activities, games without borders and, and, and.

More than 1,000 people attended the panel discussion with competent representatives of the Kurdish liberation struggle and the MLPD. Following that, 50 new brigadists applied to participate in the construction of the healthcare center in Kobanê.

In all of this work our youth league *Rebell* is increasingly taking over the role of shaping the youth rebellion. In the panel discussion on the environment with environmental organizations and activists from different directions at the Whitsun Youth Meeting, the *Rebell* showed its increased ability to form alliances, its competence and rebellious self-confidence.

Was the MLPD able to consolidate its strength lately?

Within only a few years the MLPD has developed its work comprehensively in the new challenges in the preparation of the international revolution. We have multiplied our participation in environmental activities and do intensive internationalist rank-and-file work on a local level everywhere. This has made the MLPD more broadly known, more influential, and let it gain a higher esteem among broader sections of the population. We have become more and more successful in breaking through the relative isolation of the MLPD. And lately we have been more and more successful in winning over new forces in connection with the new tasks, too. The applications to join our party have increased recently. Since its congress the youth league *Rebell* was able to found many new groups. And from that we will win more members for the MLPD. We can observe a growing interest of young people in *Rebell*.

However, all in all you cannot say that we have lastingly overcome the stagnation in our membership recruitment yet. One of the main reasons is the anathema of modern anticommunism which is especially aimed at the MLPD. It still leads to some uncertainty among the masses.

We should not underestimate the problem of how to master the new tasks without overtaxing ourselves. We have to put more thought into how to **better concentrate the tasks and forces**. The totality of the work and the agitation and propaganda must be comprehensive; each single unit, especially small organizational units, must at the same time concentrate its work more strongly, following the slogan "*Better fewer, but better*". We must work in such a manner that the party and *Rebell* are strengthened in the work. This means the conscious development of a **higher system of the division and centralization of work**. This way each comrade and each basic unit will have more time for the work in depth, youth work, etc., and most of all, the cadres will develop even better.

At the delegates' meetings of the Land and county organizations there was a critical and self-critical discussion about the rank-and-file work in the neighborhoods.

The most important task of the neighborhood groups is to unfold a systematic rank-and-file work to **attain revolutionary areas of influence mainly in working-class residential areas**.

In spite of great activity, especially in the internationalist rank-and-file work, and positive initiatives by many groups, over the past years manifestations of a dissipation of energies in single political activities and partly also of becoming absorbed with the work in self-run organizations and mass movements have become entrenched in most of the neighborhood groups. As a consequence there was no more systematic work to create

spheres of Marxist-Leninist influence. Since the beginning of this year an important critical and self-critical debate has begun, and there is an intensified struggle to visit people regularly, to sell literature and do comprehensive work.

The neighborhood groups have an important function within the system of the rank-and-file work of the county organization. They are a sort of link of the various sides of the rank-and-file work. If the systematicness of work in the neighborhood is destroyed, this has a negative impact on the entire systematic rank-and-file work in the county organization. This makes it all the more important to make a thorough check of the neighborhood work in the preparation of the party congress.

Active people's resistance is also closely connected to that. Of course, our neighborhood groups must participate in that in accordance with their forces. **Active people's resistance** is an important **expression of a mass consciousness** which goes beyond general discontent. It must be systematically promoted by the neighborhood groups. However, this promotion must not lead to getting lost in spontaneous active people's resistance. The purposeful interpenetration with the system of rank-and-file work of the neighborhood groups must actually be organized.

The MLPD is carrying out a criticism and self-criticism campaign for the preparation of the 10th Party Congress. What progress are you making with it?

Recently the 6th CC plenary session took place. It unanimously passed the **draft report** of the CC to the 10th Party Congress and agreed upon the balance, evaluation and perspective of the work of the Central Committee of the MLPD. We took a lot of time for that. After all, with the report the whole party decides on the ideological-political line and its course in the coming years – in which we are heading to uneasy times. A peculiarity of this report is that it has taken stock of a **longer period of time** – i.e. since 2004. With its conclusions regarding the modification of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking during the Merkel government, the course of the world economic and financial crisis, or the development of new-imperialist countries, the plenary session led to important **new ideological-political insights**.

The plenary session agreed that the **CC has led the party well and with a clear direction in these complicated times**. Most of all, with the further development of the line through *Revolutionärer Weg*, Nos. 32–35, to direct the work toward the international revolution and the struggle against the threatening global environmental catastrophe, it has given a farsighted orientation to the party and the masses.

The **debates about the drafting, discussion and decision about the draft report** were an important **victory in the struggle against the worship of spontaneity**, which has survived for a long time in party work. The worship of spontaneity follows the hectic pressure of daily events and is influenced by modern anticommunism. The petty-bourgeois mode of thinking intrudes into party work this way. In the last instance, this intrusion and encroachment of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking has been the reason for the temporarily intensifying problems in various parts of the CC or in party units. The elaboration of the draft report was a method for the lasting solution of these problems and included every single CC member in the debate. Never before has such an intensive elaboration of the draft report taken place, and the report has reached a high quality of unification of the mode of thinking of the CC.

The draft report gives the organization important insight into the progress of cognition of the CC. And it also helps the members and functionaries of the party to correctly understand the problems before the background of the economic and political developments, and to draw positive conclusions. And therefore it is not exaggerating to say that

with the discussion of the draft report starting in early August, the **criticism and self-criticism-campaign**, too, will be heading **towards a climax**. There will be enough time for a thorough discussion by all the members, for the elaboration of motions for improvement and initiatives, but also for nomination proposals for the members of the future central bodies. This is also an expression of the realization of democratic centralism within the MLPD, where now the development of democratic initiative is in the focus.

What tasks are we facing in the preparation of the 10th Party Congress?

The discussion of the report is not only meant to receive the report of the Central Committee, but will throw a critical and self-critical light on the whole of party work and change it with a perspective toward the future. A special focal point in the preparation of the party congress is definitely to become aware of the system of rank-and-file work again and to consciously implement the extension of this system by *Revolutionärer Weg*, Nos. 32-35.

For strengthening the party it is necessary to comprehensively realize **Marxist-Leninist youth work as the mass tactics of party building**. In the last instance, the strengthening of the MLPD and its future depend on that. This is closely connected with **a change of generations on all party levels** that was begun some time ago and which must be prepared and carried out consciously. In the last instance, the success of the 10th Party Congress will be decided by the fact whether it succeeds in advancing this change of generations. This way the party will change too, will renew itself and maybe also adopt a new quality in one or another question. We are a revolutionary party, the development of which never stands still, and therefore such a self-renewal and change of the party is always a sign of its vitality, its perspective and its maturity.

Thank you for the interview!

Sources:

- 1 *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 10 July 2015
- 2 "Middleeasteye.net", 3 April 2015
- 3 "America21", 6 May 2015
- 4 OECD, Main Economic Indicators
- 5 Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
- 6 Statistisches Bundesamt (German Federal Statistical Office)