

The change of mood in 2015 and the 10th Party Congress of the MLPD

It has already become a tradition that the *Rote Fahne* publishes an interview with the party chairman, Stefan Engel, at the end of the year. This year as well he makes an in-depth analysis of the new developments and changes in world events, giving convincing answers to all essential societal questions of the time. He points out how the MLPD and its youth league *Rebell* are growing into a new role in society in interaction with the change of mood among the masses – and which challenges and tasks they face in connection with the 10th Party Congress of the MLPD in 2016.

Rote Fahne: The refugee question is obviously the dominating topic. What is your opinion on that?

Stefan Engel: We are presently experiencing the biggest wave of refugees since the Second World War. In 2014, 13.9 million people were forced to flee from their countries, four times as many as in 2010. Altogether 60 million people are refugees today. Even though two thirds of them are fleeing within their respective countries, there still remain 20 million people who flee into other countries.

The gigantic wave of refugees has been continuing for some years. New is that this year more and more refugees are reaching Europe and putting the European governments in a state of shock. For many years the refugee policy of the EU has aimed at preventing the refugees from entering the territory of the EU at all. And so since the year 2000 the Mediterranean Sea has become a mass grave for 25,000 refugees. The reactionary refugee policy of the EU stops at nothing. However, for some time, this policy of isolation has ceased to function.

Every day thousands of people are entering European territory, especially via the Mediterranean states Italy and Greece, claiming their human right to be recognized as refugees or asylum seekers.

Most of these refugees have come to Germany. This has led to a crisis of bourgeois refugee policy. In September alone, a quarter of a million refugees arrived in Germany. In 2015, so far more than one million refugees have been registered.

The bourgeois parties and governments were not prepared for such a great number of refugees. Merkel could no longer continue the former refugee policy of the federal government if she wanted to avoid getting into open opposition to the masses. And so a real polarization took place within society. The MLPD has taken side with those people who defend the right of the refugees or asylum seekers and resolutely fight against every kind of ultra-reactionary and fascist discrimination.

In a time in which those in power restrict the right of asylum more and more and violate the UN Refugee Convention, the Marxist-Leninists prove to be the most resolute defenders of the refugees. The international revolutionary working-class movement declares its solidarity with the ever growing masses of oppressed people in the world.

For some people Angela Merkel seems to be on the left side in this polarization. What do you think about that?

Superficially it might seem that Merkel belongs to the defenders of the refugees. After all, in August 2015 in a humanitarian gesture she paved the way to Germany for thousands of refugees, so picking a quarrel with the ultra-reactionary members of her own party and

government. With the term “welcome culture” she gave the impression that the refugees in Germany would be getting unrestricted solidarity.

At the same time, her government is responsible for the fact that all through the years a rigorous policy of walling up the EU against refugees was carried out. Merkel hypocritically stresses that you have to combat the causes of the wave of refugees. However, this is hypocrisy if simultaneously she offers three billion euros to the Turkish government to limit the flood of refugees into the EU. Turkey is part of the problem and of the causes of the present wave of refugees, especially from Iraq and Syria. The government of Erdogan has been supporting and tolerating the fascist “IS” directly or indirectly for years, secretly hoping that this would help it keep the Kurds in check. Whoever really wants to do something against the causes of the wave of refugees has to fight against the imperialist world system that, with its crises, creates new situations every day in which people can no longer exist or live in dignity, and then flee from their countries.

In order to solve the crisis of the bourgeois refugee policy, those in power are taking inhumane measures. They are closing the external borders of the EU again, restricting the rights of the asylum seekers and deporting an ever larger part of the refugees.

This already starts with the distinction between political or war refugees and so-called “economic refugees”, which is totally far-fetched. According to the federal government an “economic refugee” is anyone who comes from a “secure state of origin”. All the countries of the Balkans are called “secure states of origin”, even though large-scale poverty partly threatens the existence of people there and large ethnic groups like Sinti and Roma have been persecuted and oppressed for years. This is also being considered for Afghanistan and Pakistan, where naked terror rules in various regions. Even Turkey is to be treated as a “secure state of origin” in the future, even though the democratic opposition against the ruler Erdogan is being suppressed and persecuted by means of terrorist force. It is shameful the way so-called “economic refugees” practically are branded as criminals who supposedly abuse the right of asylum and the right to flee.

Even those refugees who are recognized here are first denied the right to work, and their social and political rights are curtailed. Thus a growing part of the refugees are denied the right for two years to have their families join them. Fact, however, is that the families can often only afford the flight of a single family member to escape the inhumane war situation, misery and terror in Syria or Iraq. While the federal government pretends that nothing is more sacred than the family, it shamefully separates the families of the refugees and condemns women and children to further live under inhuman conditions.

At the same time, state assistance for the refugees is being reduced more and more. In future a large part of the assistance is to be granted only in the form of food stamps. These food stamps restrict the right of the refugees and asylum seekers to organize their lives themselves. This is an outrageous patronizing which has nothing to do with democratic rights and liberties. It is mainly about providing for the refugees as cheaply as possible and at the lowest level. At the border-crossing points it can be experienced again and again that the people are undernourished, without medical care and partly exposed to the worst conditions, freezing in the winter cold. We cannot accept that Merkel's “welcome culture” is praised to the skies in the media as a progressive refugee policy, only because there are even more reactionary proposals from the CSU and AfD to deal with the refugee problem. Not only the open smear campaigns or discrimination against asylum seekers or refugees are racist, but also this treatment by the federal government.

Of course, we also know that the bourgeois policy of integration only pursues the specific interests of the German monopolies. They want to keep a small part of these refugees and asylum seekers in the country as a cheap labor force and get rid of the rest at little cost. They want to keep the people who have become politicized by war in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan in check from the start, so that they do not unite with the revolutionary working-class movement here in Germany and become a “threat” to so-called stability. Under the big slogan of adaptation, the refugees and asylum seekers are forbidden to become politically active to a great extent and required to subjugate themselves to the constitution. We demand for these

people unrestricted democratic rights and liberties and equality in dignity with the people here in this country. Presently the refugees constitute the big mass of the oppressed in the world. They deserve all our solidarity. “Workers of all countries, unite!” and “Workers of all countries and all oppressed, unite!”

Merkel has fully supported all the tightened laws against refugees and asylum seekers and even demanded an EU border police in order to be better able to seal off the external borders of the EU.

How will the crisis of bourgeois refugee policy further develop in your opinion?

The powers that be will not be able to “solve” the problem of the streams of refugees, not even with an intensified inhumane and degrading oppression of these people. You cannot stop the streams of refugees simply by decree. All variations of keeping them out of Germany at the same time aggravate the humanitarian plight at their intermediate stops. This inevitably reveals the class antagonism and reactionary character of imperialism and leads to an intensification of the social polarization in all of Europe. Thus ultra-right-wingers, racists and neofascists are forming up and even gaining influence in elections, as in France, Poland or Austria. On the other hand, progressive people, antifascists, democrats and internationalists are forming up against this inhumane refugee policy.

However, this polarization is exactly what does not go well with the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking as governmental method under Merkel. For ten years Merkel has been trying to undermine every polarization by means of skillful concessions to developing or already existing mass movements. Now she can no longer prevent this polarization. The masses are being politicized by the societal polarization. Even if the reactionary current is increasingly attracting a number of people temporarily, to a certain extent we are observing a lessening of the effect of modern anticommunism among the masses and a greater readiness to cooperate with the MLPD. This applies in particular to its proletarian-internationalist refugee policy. With the brigades of ICOR in Kobanê for the construction of a health-care center and the fact and method of how we are building an accommodation for refugees of a special kind in the “House of Solidarity” in Truckenthal/Thuringia, the MLPD has gained great esteem. Many people whom we did not know before support these projects in various ways. The MLPD takes a courageous stand against fascists and ultra-reactionaries as well, and with convincing arguments. The MLPD is growing into a new societal role in connection with this polarization.

At the same time the polarization will systematically undermine the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking of the Merkel government. However, with that the **Merkel era will also come to an end**. The MLPD is not afraid of an intensification of the class contradictions. However, it is very interested in seeing that this polarization does not lead to a division of the working class and among the broad masses. We stand up for the unity of the working class and for international solidarity. More important than ever is that we understand the working class as an international class and not let us be divided for nationalist, ethnic or religious reasons. The persuasion work among the broad masses is growing in importance.

Up to now we have distributed 65,000 copies of our brochure entitled “Bourgeois refugee policy in crisis – 10 arguments of the MLPD” among the masses and are presently working on an updated and revised new edition.

Do you really assume that the Merkel era is coming to an end?

If Angela Merkel does not gain control of this societal polarization, she will no longer be interesting for the ruling powers. On the other hand, you have to say that up to now the monopolies are clearly backing Merkel and are not interested in a further polarization of society at the moment. Within the CDU/CSU, but within the SPD as well, things are going haywire. The ministers Schaeuble and de Maizière have publicly criticized Merkel. They accuse her of opening the gates for the streams of refugees to Germany with her “welcome culture”. The CSU has even put up an ultimatum for the end of the year to reduce the numbers of refugees

dramatically, otherwise the borders to Germany would have to be closed.

The SPD and the Greens could not gain from this internal wearing down of the CDU/CSU, because basically they support these reactionary politics of deterrence, discrimination and oppression of the refugees and have helped in passing it in essential parts. Although you can hear various critical voices from the Left Party, many of their leaders loudly praise Merkel's refugee policies. Progressive people will be searching more intensively for a fundamental alternative.

In this situation it is **important that the MLPD can be recognized as a societal alternative**. The relative political isolation has already clearly lost effect in the last weeks. On the other hand, the MLPD is still unknown to many people. Various media are reporting in the meantime about our groundbreaking ICOR projects in Kobanê and Truckenthal. Among many migrants, the MLPD has become a first address for realizing their concerns. Especially among the rank and file of the Kurdish population here in Germany, the MLPD has won high esteem. Especially in *Rebell*, but in the MLPD as well, more people with a migration background have become organized lately. The sphere of influence of the MLPD has grown considerably.

All this promises **new possibilities** for the year 2016, but also **new responsibilities** for the MLPD.

Lately terrorist attacks have also been increasing outside the countries Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The ruling powers use this to issue a call for a general "war against IS terror". How is this to be evaluated?

The "Islamic State" is by far the richest, biggest and most brutal fascist terrorist group in the world. The rapid development of such religious-fascist groups of a new kind like Al-Qaeda, "Islamic State", Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab is a new phenomenon. They have their socio-economic roots in an alliance of religious-feudalist power structures with the most reactionary forces of the national bourgeoisie.

The leadership of the "IS" has emerged from secret service people and military leaders of the former ruler of Iraq, Saddam Hussein. And they are a product of the failure of the imperialist occupation of Iraq by the USA. Out of 25 leaders of the "IS" 17 were imprisoned in the Camp Bucca of the USA in Southern Iraq. They have formed an alliance with religious-feudal rulers from Qatar and Saudi Arabia in order to launch a military campaign against Western imperialism – supposedly motivated by religion. However, their political goals have nothing at all to do with religion or anti-imperialism. The religion only serves as the reactionary camouflage for their aggressive goals – it is pure demagoguery. The political core of this movement is **a new kind of fascism**, which is especially aimed against the revolutionary working-class movement, the militant women's movement and any kind of societal progress. It does that with a brutality that can hardly be surpassed for inhumanity – in order to spread fear and terror.

With their social-fascist demagoguery they could attract many dissatisfied young people – from Europe as well – and recruit them for their troops in the last years. All these terrorist groups would not be able to survive if they were not supported financially, politically and militarily by decisive forces in the background. In the case of the "Islamic State" these are most of all forces from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey as well, who want to deploy the "IS" for their own interests in the struggle for the re-division of spheres of influence in the Middle East.

That the terror is being carried into more and more countries has its reason – more and more of these mercenaries are returning to their countries and with their terror are conducting outright relief attacks for the war of terror in Syria and Iraq.

We criticize the hypocritical avowals of the bourgeois governments in the struggle against the "IS" because they lack any kind of self-criticism about the reasons behind the IS terror. They conceal that the starting point was the war started by the Western imperialists under the leadership of the USA over the spheres of influence in the Middle East. And now for the imperialists it is still only about securing their regions of influence. With the war of the "IS" the new-imperialist countries Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar basically put up the claim for domination in the Middle East. This is a frontal attack on the EU, USA and Russia, which have

exploited and oppressed this region for a whole century with many different methods. In the meantime, NATO as well as China and Russia have intervened militarily in the conflict in Iraq and Syria. That has led to the general danger of a third world war clearly growing.

The German federal government and parliament have voted to deploy 1,200 soldiers in the war region of Iraq and Syria. This is a signal that the German federal government does not want to be missing in this struggle over spheres of influence. This way the German federal government itself creates new sources for the continuing and increasing wave of refugees.

In reality the “anti-terror struggle” of the imperialist governments of Europe only provides a justification for the intensified intervention for domination in the Middle East. At the same time, the democratic rights and liberties in the EU are being restricted. France has declared a state of emergency for months, and at the same time banned the planned international protests on the occasion of the UN climate conference. We are witnessing an intensified sensitization among the masses against this fascization of the state apparatus. Especially in the year 2015 there were many protests against the restriction of democratic rights and liberties and against surveillance through the secret services.

We firmly oppose sending the German federal army to Syria and reject the so-called struggle against the “IS” by the imperialists as pure hypocrisy. We support the struggle for freedom and democracy as it is put into practice by the Kurdish struggle for liberation together with other peoples and ethnic groups in Rojava, which is done without any imperialist ambition and is committed only to the values of democracy, freedom and national autonomy and independence.

The peoples in the Middle East must liberate themselves! This is only possible if the imperialists of all shades are driven out of the region.

The MLPD has committed itself for some time now especially to the liberation struggle of the Kurds. Why?

From the very beginning the MLPD and the ICOR as well have shown solidarity with the movement of uprisings for freedom and democracy which took place in 2011 in the Arab countries. Many of these struggles ended up in a blind alley because the subjective preconditions for a revolutionary transformation had not matured yet. The development in Rojava is a big exception. There the chaos of the civil war in Syria was used in 2012 for a democratic revolution to achieve an autonomous, democratic self-administration. The struggle for freedom and democracy is an important starting point for the international socialist revolution. Following the failed attempt of the fascist “IS” in autumn 2014 to conquer Kobanê and to hit the heart of the democratic revolution of Rojava, the task was to secure the victory and to proceed with the democratic revolution. The ICOR declared its readiness to make a contribution for the reconstruction of the destroyed city of Kobanê. The decision to build a health-care center in a district of Kobanê with international brigades was the key element of the solidarity pact with the liberation struggle of the Kurdish people. Especially in Germany and among many progressive people this idea was taken up enthusiastically. Instead of the planned 70 international brigade volunteers, a total of 177 brigadists from ten countries participated in this important reconstruction project. They did this with a high socialist consciousness – unselfishly, self-financed and together with workers in Kobanê. In Germany almost half a million euros in material and money were collected as donations. Combined with the labor input, the health-care center will have an estimated value of almost 1.5 million euros. The self-administration organs of Rojava and Kobanê regard the project and the selfless and courageous work of the brigadists as a decisive contribution to the reconstruction of Kobanê. The ICOR has anchored itself firmly in the hearts of the population there. The idea of joining together the revolutionary forces in the world against imperialist exploitation and oppression and for democracy, freedom and socialism has gained great attraction with the project. Within a few months an inspiring and successful initiative at a focal point of the world development was successfully taken up and put into practice in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. This has brought us respect and esteem not only in Kurdistan, but in Germany and internationally

as well, even among petty-bourgeois forces. With this project we have really done something to solve the causes of the refugee problem. While at the beginning of the construction work only a few thousand inhabitants had stayed in the region of Kobanê because of the war situation, 170,000 people have returned since then to the Canton Kobanê to reconstruct and to continue with their democratic revolution. Following the massacre of June 25 by IS fascists, which especially was aimed at the reconstruction of Kobanê, all the NGOs left the country, while the ICOR brigades remained. This made a deep impression on people's consciousness: *"The ICOR brigadists are the only ones who stayed."*

The German federal government as well as the Turkish government have actively fought against this humanitarian aid. For example, it was not possible to transport the tools (eight tons) – collected among the masses in Germany for the reconstruction – via Turkey. A humanitarian corridor is being prevented up to this day. The crossing of the border by the brigadists via Iraq to Rojava became more and more problematic. The brigade members were held up for as many as four weeks before they could enter Rojava. One main reason was obviously the influence of the foreign ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany: with the threadbare reason that German citizens should not travel to such a dangerous region, they used their influence so that the border guards did not allow the brigade members to cross. In the meantime it became known that they secretly spread the infamous rumor that the MLPD was using the project to organize ideological and military training in Rojava. Objectively seen, this means raising the accusation of supporting a terrorist association, like it already has been done against many activists of ATIK or even of Nav-Dem. This shabby behavior shows what really can be said about the supposedly peaceful foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany. They do not aim at solving the refugee problem and fighting against the causes of flight, as they like to claim. They only want to realize their power-political goals in Syria and Iraq. Part of this is the alliance with Turkey, which does not want to allow an autonomous Kurdish state Rojava to come into existence on its southern border under any circumstances. And the German government up to now stubbornly rejects taking up diplomatic relations with Rojava. The so-called unselfish aid with weapons for the Peshmerga in Iraq was apparently given only on the condition that the German federal government is allowed to massively interfere in the Kurdish relations in Northern Iraq. In the meantime the MLPD has filed suit against the foreign ministry because of failure to give assistance. This also aims at showing the public what to think of the so-called peaceful foreign policy and its supposed commitment to democracy and freedom under Merkel and Steinmeier.

The MLPD supports the liberation struggle of the Kurds. But in the past it has also had a critical discussion about the goals and methods of the Kurdish liberation struggle. Has the MLPD changed its position in this regard?

In such a historic situation we cannot put the differences of opinion about the perspectives of the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people in the foreground. Marx, too, first had differences of opinion in 1871 with the hasty armed uprising of the French revolutionaries. However, when the workers of Paris founded the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels were at the forefront of solidarity. We always have to keep in mind that a critical discussion among revolutionaries must never lead to a loss of solidarity. If we did so, we would be directly playing the game of the counterrevolutionaries. It is decisive that by the practical work done in the solidarity pact, the Kurdish struggle for liberation becomes a part of the preparation of the international socialist revolution and of the coordination and cooperation of the international revolutionary working-class movement. At the same time, the ICOR organizations have shown their unrestricted solidarity with the Kurdish liberation struggle. This helped the Kurdish people, and the spirit of the ICOR became revolutionary practice.

What is the content of the MLPD's Marxist-Leninist refugee policy?

The MLPD is guided by proletarian internationalism. This means that we not only lead the

class struggle in our own country, but want to combine this class struggle with the international liberation struggle of the working class, the oppressed peoples, the women and all those who are oppressed, to form an inseparable unity. This also characterizes Marxist-Leninist refugee policy. We not only support the justified concerns of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany, but with the “House of Solidarity” we want to give an example how refugees and asylum seekers can continue to live according to their democratic achievements in an honorable way. Therefore we especially address refugees from Rojava who want to return to Rojava again. In the “House of Solidarity” democratic structures of self-administration are planned, in which the refugees themselves become active supporters of the refugee accommodation. The so-called integration on a bourgeois basis demands unconditional subordination to the concerns and interests of the capitalist German Federal Republic by the refugees and asylum seekers, while Marxist-Leninist refugee policy wants to express the interests of the refugees and asylum seekers themselves. They should be part of the progressive, democratic, antifascist and also the revolutionary movement and be able to continue living their struggle for freedom and democracy. Of course, it is a pilot project which must first gather experience. Through today, hundreds of voluntary supporters have already participated in the construction of the facility, have made the 50 or so huts weather-proof for the winter and have also started to renovate the big building with about 50 apartments for taking up the refugees. All in all, the facility can take up to 300 refugees. The promise of the state government that the first refugees will be coming to the facility in the new year is an important success for this progressive project.

After the construction of the health-care center in Rojava is finished, the completion of the “House of Solidarity” and the development of a democratic refugee life in Truckenthal will be put into the focus of our refugee policy. All of us will learn from this project and it will open windows to the world.

Once more the MLPD proves that we courageously take a position in the middle of societal focal points and are a party of practical deeds. While some petty-bourgeois forces are shocked by the many attacks against refugee homes in eastern Germany, we are building a new refugee home in the middle of Thuringia! While some people do not dare to enter the polarized debate among the masses, we have achieved that, in the meantime, 1,100 people from the surrounding area have given their signatures in support of the “House of Solidarity”. While bourgeois politicians talk a lot about refugee policy, hundreds of our members, friends and the *Rebells* go to Kobanê or Truckenthal to selflessly participate in the building work under often adverse and harsh conditions. This is MLPD live, and we can be proud of that!

In the year 2015 there were already 817 criminal acts against refugees and 68 cases of arson against dwellings. From the very beginning we must develop the highest vigilance against such attacks, while up to now the state apparatus has done very little to solve such fascist attacks or to prevent them. We will reject any attempt at discrimination, hate-mongering or even fascist attacks and prevent them. We demand rigorous prosecution of the culprits and the banning of all fascist organizations and their propaganda!

You have stated that the general crisis proneness of imperialism is the starting point of the present refugee wave in the world. A decisive basis for a relative stabilization of imperialism would be a functioning of the world economy following the end of the world economic and financial crisis. How is this developing?

The industrial production of the OECD countries – among them the G7 – has weakened in tendency since the middle of the year 2014. The 500 biggest international supermonopolies together had growth in revenues of only 0.5 percent in 2014. Among the bourgeois economists uncertainty about the further world economic development is spreading.

While in the USA a sustained slight recovery has developed, the EU countries are swaying in their growth around the zero line. Especially in the new-imperialist BRICS and MIST countries the growth rates have strongly declined or even a backward movement has taken place, as in Brazil, Russia or South Africa. Especially the end of the astronomic growth in China has caused the world economy to stutter. The international fluctuating stagnation has already

brought forth a host of factors which can lead to a new world economic and financial crisis.

The struggle over the narrowing markets is growing noticeably. With their financial and monetary policies the various imperialist countries feverishly take measures to stimulate their economy again and to increase their competitive capacity on the world market. Several times the Japanese yen and the Chinese yuan have already been devaluated. And the devaluation of the euro compared to the dollar and the decline of the oil price are regarded as a welcome economic boost to the shaken European economy.

2015 is facing a new record of announced mergers and acquisitions. In November the volume already reached US\$ 4.2 trillion. This international concentration and centralization is the attempt to counteract the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This is connected to a gigantic annihilation of capital, which is rigorously passed onto the backs of the workers and salaried employees. This international structural crisis is the pacemaker for a new world economic and financial crisis.

The German economy seems to be remaining astonishingly stable?

The German monopolies increased their exports in the first nine months by 6.0 percent, to the USA even by 21 percent to 85 billion euros. This means that the USA took over the position of France as main export country for German commodities.¹

On the other hand, the high dependency of the German economy on exports is also its Achilles heel. Every major political and economic crisis in the world rebounds on the German economy. So for instance the Ukraine crisis has had very lasting effects on business with Russia and Ukraine. And the weakness in growth in China has resulted in a decline in exports in Germany. A new economic and financial crisis would mean that especially Germany would fall into a deep abyss with comprehensive consequences for the broad masses. Then the monopolies will not shrink back from conducting large-scale mass dismissals. And they cannot be expected to show as much consideration again for the “class peace” as in the last crisis. The financial resources of the state budgets are too restricted for that.

An expression of an intensified competitive struggle is the scandal with manipulated exhaust values at VW, which has developed into a real crisis for the VW corporation.

As the largest car producer in the world, the Volkswagen Group belongs to the top echelon of solely ruling international finance capital. It runs 119 production facilities in 31 countries. With almost 600,000 employees and sales revenues of 202 billion euros it takes eighth position among the 500 biggest supermonopolies. Not only does 20 percent of the VW Group belong to the state, but it is merged with the state through a thousand connections. The chancellor always has an open ear for the chairman of the board of management. The scandal has shaken an international power center of solely ruling finance capital. Only the first signs of the repercussions for the corporation, the German federal government and the German economy can be seen, and they are being systematically trivialized.

The right-wing union leadership of the Metal Workers Union plays a big role in that. One day after the manipulations were revealed in September, Berthold Huber, acting chairman of the supervisory board at the time, met the media. Before anything had been investigated, he already knew that the former chairman of the board of management, Winterkorn, did not know anything about the whole affair. In the meantime it has become clear how long the heads of the corporation, the state organs, the EU and management had known about this breathtaking deception of the public – or had even organized it systematically. It is not out of the question that the heads of the works council and the Metal Workers Union members on the supervisory board also were involved in the deception. Therefore the whole thing is not only a crisis of an international top monopoly, but of the politics of class collaboration as well. The MLPD will do everything it can so that they do not succeed in sweeping this monstrous crime by VW under the carpet and pushing it out of the headlines. Most of all, the environmental damage caused here is immense. Millions of cars with higher exhaust values make a considerable contribution

to intensifying the greenhouse effect and impairing the health of the population.

The Paris climate conference has just ended. Was it able to fulfill the high expectations in the light of the threatening climate and environmental catastrophe?

The ruling powers sing their own praises – they speak of a “marvel”, a “big step for humanity” and a “historical agreement”. In reality, the treaty is an extremely non-binding declaration of intent to limit climate warming to 2 degrees Celsius, “if possible” 1.5 degrees. The whole Paris conference was staged as a hollow, sentimental, calculated propaganda show of imperialist environmentalism. This is meant to cover up the fact that solely ruling international finance capital and the imperialist countries are not willing to take the necessary measures against the threatening environmental catastrophe. In addition, the treaty will not become effective before 2020. Until then all countries can still arbitrarily continue their climate damaging politics. Everything that comes later is based on voluntary declarations of intent. It can neither be demanded nor is there an international institution monitoring the implementation of the treaty, nor are there any sanctions if it is not adhered to. This kind of self-obligation already failed with the 1998 Kyoto Protocol. The consequence was not, as planned, five percent less greenhouse gases, but instead 60 percent more that were emitted into the air until 2013. The main aim of this Paris event was probably to lull the masses and the environmental movement, which is forming again, into a false sense of security. Exactly the opposite is needed if we want to prevent the accelerated transition to a global environmental catastrophe.

Our delegation at the world climate village in Montreuil near Paris met with a lot of interest with its contribution to the strategic debate, the book *Catastrophe Alert! What is To Be Done Against the Willful Destruction of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?* The discussions were mainly about the question of power, what does the dictatorship of international finance capital mean, or why do many people only search for solutions within the frame of the capitalist system, although they are only really possible within socialism/communism. The climax of our environmental action weeks was the ICOR day of environmental struggle on December 5, 2015, where we participated within the framework of broad unities of action in many cities.

What effect does this situation have on the development of class consciousness and the workers' struggles?

There were 2,201,410 trade union strike days from January through October 2015. In 2014 there were 412,860 days. That means that in 2015 we have the **highest number of trade union strike days since 1992** with 1.5 million participants. This is an expression of an awakening trade union consciousness and a developing class consciousness. The ver.di (services union) and IG Metall (metal workers' union) congresses also reflected this grown class consciousness. Two motions were passed at the IG Metall congress which demanded the rehabilitation of colleagues who were affected by the “Radikalenerlass” (Radicals Decree) and were thus also directed against the incompatibility rulings that are still maintained exclusively against the MLPD by the leadership of IG Metall. At the ver.di federal congress an ad-hoc motion for the humanitarian corridor to Kobanê was passed unanimously, along with another motion in support of the World Women's Conference of grassroots women.

The more than 10,000 signatures for a petition on the “trade union conscience” initiated by Daimler workers from Sindelfingen also express that the signatories want militant trade unions and are no longer willing to condone the co-management practiced by the right-wing trade union leadership.

Of special significance is the great influence of the grown women's consciousness on the strikes in the education sector. This strike was explicitly conducted not only for wages, but also to combat the disregard for women's labor power, immanent to capitalism. In this way the **trade union struggle interpenetrated very closely with the militant women's movement**. Class consciousness is developing in the general context of different issues like women's consciousness, environmental consciousness, internationalist and anti-fascist consciousness,

as well as proletarian class consciousness. This interaction also is the foundation for the **change of mood which began and has grown in 2015**. Along with the trade union struggles this is mostly manifested in the **increasing initiative and activity of the masses**. The still prevailing **general discontent of the masses is more and more beginning to change into active resistance**. Also the **politicization of the youth** and their clear orientation to the left must be taken note of. Without this change of mood it would be inconceivable for the MLPD to grow into a new societal role. The beginning change of mood in turn will initiate an essential change in the development of class consciousness. Intensive work by the MLPD is necessary to advance this development and to overcome existing shortcomings. Thus, there have been only twelve independent strikes with 5,930 participants so far this year (in 2014 we had 25 with 22,030 participants). It is of great importance that we exactly observe, understand and specifically influence such developments in the consciousness of the masses, instead of failing to spot such new phenomena and essential changes due to involvement in all sorts of activities.

The first International Automotive Workers' Conference took place in Sindelfingen at the end of October. What do you think about its results?

With a participation of about 600 – mostly active – automotive workers from 21 countries, the **first International Automotive Workers' Conference** was an important event to set the course for the consolidation of a key part of the international industrial proletariat.

After the miners in 2013, it also succeeded in creating an international organizational form for coordinating and developing the international class struggle to a higher level. Now it will be important to fill this organizational form with content and also to promote the internationalist spirit in the struggles of the working class. Without the dialectical unity of national and international class struggle, the struggles of the working class will hardly be successful today.

How are workers' struggles developing internationally?

Significant is the growing number of workers' struggles, especially in strategically important centers of capitalist production. One striking aspect is that relevant struggles are taking place in particular in the new-imperialist countries. In **Brazil** a strike movement in various plants of VW, GM, Volvo, Ford and Daimler has been developing since the beginning of the year. In **India** more than half a million miners were on strike in January, among other things for the 35-hour workweek with full wage compensation. They also formed the core troop of the second general strike in September with more than 150 million people against the incumbent reactionary Modi government. Thirteen trade unions and the four union umbrella organizations had called for the strike. This was an important political signal against the division of working-class and trade-union unity. In **South Africa** there has been a wave of mass strikes until today since the massacre of 34 miners in Marikana in 2012 by the ANC government. In 2014 the platinum workers again went on strike; lasting five months, it was the longest strike in South Africa's history. In 2013 nearly all automotive plants (VW, Ford, BMW, Toyota and Daimler) stood still during a strike across the corporations. In 2014, for four weeks the biggest metal worker strike took place with 220,000 participants in 1,200 plants. Here the workers are taking stock of their negative experiences with the interaction between the government party ANC, the right-wing trade union leadership and international monopolies. Also in Turkey and China there were important workers' strikes.

In all of these struggles a growing self-confidence of the workers appears and finds expression in democratic and radical forms of strike.

The international crisis management seems to be in a crisis, not only in the environmental issue?

The international imperialist crisis management, which saved international finance capital in

2008, has gotten into a crisis itself, one from which it has not yet recovered, since the euro crisis in 2010:

- With a new cash injection of 86 billion euros in July this year, the Greece crisis, which had been going on for five years, has merely been postponed but not solved. The EU together with its crisis management authorities like the European Council, European Commission, EU Parliament and ECB are not only increasingly despised – as in Greece – but also hopelessly at odds since the refugee crisis.
- The millennium goals which the UN boastfully announced in 2000 to overcome poverty, starvation, epidemics etc. largely went unachieved in target year 2015.
- The World Climate Conference in Paris documents a repeated failure of the imperialist powers to effectively counter the threatening environmental catastrophe.
- The crisis of the bourgeois refugee policy has led to an **open EU crisis**. Until now it has not been possible to take unified decisions to cope with this refugee crisis. Against this background it is a real option that the EU in its present form could fall apart. This would, however, be a considerable setback for German imperialism in its international competition, and that is why the Merkel government does everything to avoid such a disintegration of the EU.

The Afghanistan campaign against “terrorism” led by NATO has failed miserably. This increasing failure of imperialist crisis management to solve the fundamental problems of humankind is an essential source of the change of mood among the masses.

In March 2016 the second World Women's Conference will be taking place in Kathmandu, Nepal. What importance does the MLPD attach to this event?

At first it has to be clarified whether this conference can take place at all at the planned location and on the scheduled date. The blockade by India has created a serious power, water and food supply crisis for the population. If this blockade by India, which must be rejected as massive interference in the internal affairs of Nepal, cannot be broken through successfully, it would be very difficult to carry out this conference in the planned form. This is why it is an important task of the women's movement to put up a political fight against this imperialist blockade policy of India, which basically is directed against the decision for a democratic constitution.

In Germany a delegates' conference has taken place in the meantime at which the five delegates from Germany were elected. The development of the militant women's movement in Germany has experienced a significant upswing in the past 20 years. It more and more also embraces broader masses and includes larger mass organizations like trade unions and other alliances. This still is not yet the broad mass of the population, but an enormous advance considering that the women's movement in Germany was more or less at a low at the beginning of the 1990s. The activities of the militant women's movement in Germany have given important support in the preparation of this World Women's Conference. They have also been sources of inspiration, have contributed to the financial support of this great meeting, and many women actively participated. Monika Gärtner-Engel is highly respected in the international militant women's movement. I assume that many activists will find their way to Nepal to exchange views with the militant women's movement of the world. The international consolidation of the women's movement also is of such great importance because it was achieved without the influence of NGOs controlled by the ruling powers. It was a real militant initiative of the grassroots women and should remain so.

Could the MLPD benefit from the change of mood?

The MLPD is developing positively. It contributes noticeably to forming the consciousness of the masses. At the moment it is becoming aware of the new opportunities and challenges arising. The preparation, conduct and evaluation of the 10th Party Congress is characterized by a process of achieving a leap in this awareness.

The **preparation, conduct and evaluation of the 10th Party Congress** is the **decisive method of the criticism and self-criticism movement**, which is connected to a very significant process of self-transformation. At the moment the discussion of the draft report of the CC is being finished by the members with a large number of proposed amendments. This discussion was also connected to changing our work. Especially the system of rank-and-file work has benefited from that, which temporarily threatened to fall apart into single elements due to the many activities. Also in the work among the youth as mass tactics of party building, manifold new initiatives and insights have developed, which are also reflected in a positive membership development mainly in the youth league. In the discussion of our report we could achieve important progress in understanding Merkel's governmental system. She adopted the method of government from the former Red-Green administration and has imbued it with increased modern anti-communism. It is very important to understand this new method of the parliamentary system because it actually had the effect that the transition to the working-class offensive was stopped for the time being and class consciousness stagnated. Meanwhile this **modified system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking of the Merkel government is on the edge of an open crisis**. In this context it is important that we comprehend the new tasks in the new societal role of the MLPD. The second part of the preparation of the Party Congress will also help in this. The Central Committee has submitted to the organization a revised version of the party program adopted in 1999. Friends of the party can also participate in this discussion. It includes the whole progress of understanding made in recent years with the publication of our theoretical organ *Revolutionärer Weg*, Nos. 29 to 35. With this program the unique characteristic of the MLPD is described comprehensively, and it will become much clearer what actually constitutes the MLPD as a "party of a new type".

In the preparation of the Party Congress we are experiencing a close collaboration between the Central Committee and the party's rank-and-file. So we are in a comfortable situation when you look at other parties like the CDU or the SPD, which tremble before party congresses. Of course, this should not lead to complacency. But it is an incentive for us to put the 10th Party Congress into the focus of our work in the next year.

Dealing with the draft report and the draft of the revised party program are surely the core of the preparation of the 10th Party Congress, along with the cadre proposals for the central bodies. But it is not reduced to that. It is about understanding the preparation of the Party Congress as a unity of **theory, practice and method**. With a **concrete analysis** of the concrete situation at the level of the doctrine of the mode of thinking, we particularly have to register the new manifestations and essential changes in the objective and subjective developments precisely. Otherwise we will not be able to act in the right way. And it is necessary to fully grasp the tasks arising from this and to comprehensively think through the **creative conclusions** for the strategy and tactics in class struggle, party-building and the preparation of the international revolution, as well as the strategy and tactics in the struggle over the mode of thinking of the masses. So it is about understanding and realizing the preparation, conduct and evaluation of the 10th Party Congress as a **conscious application of the dialectical method** at the level of the doctrine of the mode of thinking and systemic thinking.

I am firmly convinced that the 10th Party Congress will **give rise** to a significant **leap in consciousness within the MLPD** and will be a good starting point for a new tactical offensive for socialism.

In the past 40 years the MLPD has also developed as an opposite pole to modern revisionism, which had its sad climax in the decline of the GDR and the Soviet Union. Is the struggle against modern revisionism now a thing of the past?

Modern revisionism still has its supporters, but today these supporters have great problems finding their way. Just now we are witness of a macabre discussion within the DKP (German Communist Party). At the beginning of November the DKP Party Congress passed a motion of the leading body in which the DKP is called a "Marxist-Leninist" party. This is something new,

as the founding of the DKP in 1968 was explicitly connected to the abandonment of this Marxist-Leninist claim. Accordingly there were more than one third dissenting votes, and the former DKP chairman Stehr criticized this resolution because it would be an unnecessary pretext to disband the DKP. What miserable cowardice! On the other hand, it is the late admission that our accusation of revisionism of the DKP is totally correct. Until now they have purposely rejected a Marxist-Leninist character in order to become a part of bourgeois parliamentarism in Germany. But the decision of the DKP to call themselves a Marxist-Leninist party again is misleading, as the content of their positions is still shaped by the revision of Marxism-Leninism. This is why the debate has to be continued by all means in order to make this difference clear. Although meanwhile the DKP relativizes its criticism of Stalin and Mao Zedong, in its strategy it still talks about a vague “revolutionary break”, with an illusionary anti-monopolist democracy as a transitional form, instead of a socialist revolution. In the future it will still be necessary to deal with the DKP ideologically-politically. On the other hand, we have repeatedly made offers to the DKP to cooperate in rank-and-file work on the foundation of struggle. Already today, there are various fields in which members of the DKP and the MLPD stand shoulder to shoulder. This is particularly true for the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle and the struggle for peace. Also in the factories and in the trade unions or in the environmental movement there are various common points of departure. We do not make the ideological-political agreement with the MLPD a prerequisite for practical cooperation on the foundation of the struggle around issues of the day in Germany. But we will also continue to discuss the harmful role of revisionism in the working class. In our proposals for amendments to our party program we have suggested not to mention the DKP anymore, because it is more about the various nuances of revisionism we have to cope with. And the outstanding importance of the DKP as an obstacle to Marxist-Leninist party-building is no longer valid.

Many comrades have asked us how the “Rote Fahne” was converted to a magazine in the midst of the diversified party work which the MLPD is doing at present. Was the burden justified and how do you view the interim result?

We cannot grow into a new societal role without adapting the means, methods and instruments of party work to this new societal role. We need an agitation and propaganda of a new type in which also the new conditions, forms and habits of awareness-raising are taken into account. With the conversion of the *Rote Fahne* to a magazine we wanted to create a positive example for such an agitation and propaganda. It is not only the question of the magazine having a different appearance, but it is also that it is being created in a different context and will be distributed differently. Meanwhile we have many special editors and are also cooperating with people without party affiliation who want to contribute to the magazine. As for the distribution of the magazine, it can also be used for a longer time as a thematic issue because it does not have a short-term political character. This will also lead to changes in the sale of the *Rote Fahne*. We will not only offer the current issue, but at the same time different recent thematic issues to underline the diversity of party work. In addition, with its new form the *Rote Fahne* leaps more to the eye and has become interesting for certain methods like newsstand sale. The *Rote Fahne* magazine is seen as positive within the MLPD, as well as by the *Rote Fahne* readers or previous non-readers. The objection to it was marginal, while at the same time we could win a number of new subscribers and activists for collaboration. It is important that the organization deals with the *Rote Fahne* magazine with more awareness and improves its participation in the magazine and its distribution.

At the turn of last year you talked about the necessity to strengthen the MLPD. You stated that, of course, the Marxist-Leninist work among youth should be an important driving force for this strengthening. What is your balance of the year on that?

We can draw a positive balance against the background that a new political spirit of optimism can be observed among the youth. In the Shell study of 2015 Professor Albert summarizes

that the youth has become more venturesome, that it wants to be creative, is getting more and more interested in social issues, is dealing more and more with politics and with what is going on in the world. We observe the same. The increasing activities of the masses are also identical with a growing activity of young people to stand up for their future interests. Especially in international solidarity, in the struggle to defend democratic rights and liberties and in the struggle to save the natural environment the youth is at the forefront. That includes the practical solidarity with the refugees in the struggle against the reactionary asylum laws and the attacks of fascists and racists of all kinds. For us it is not just about doing any kind of work among youth, but about organizing the rebellion of youth so that it will become a decisive reservoir for accelerated Marxist-Leninist party-building. This is what we mean with mass tactics of party-building. This year we succeeded in founding 15 new groups of *Rebell* and *Red Foxes*, strengthening further groups and advancing into new societal sectors. Also the membership development of the *Rebell* is positive with plus 10 percent. The *Rebell* is following through on the intention of its 12th Youth League Congress to comprehensively strengthen *Rebell* and MLPD. I am also happy to be able to welcome some Rebels as new members of the MLPD! The *Rebell* has actively cooperated in the brigades in Kobanê and in Truckenthal and has developed many activities for that. It is important that we direct greatest attention to this development of *Rebell* and fulfill our responsibility in our ideological-political educational work, in the practical cooperation and in close solidarity. Without a strong youth league we will not succeed in carrying out a sustainable generation change in the next ten years. With its life-school of the proletarian mode of thinking, the *Rebell* has consolidated its substance and is getting more attractive for the rebellious youth. We have to continue on this path, and it should also become a determining feature for the year 2016. I welcome the idea that the music festival in Truckenthal at Whitsun 2016 will mainly be a solidarity concert for an internationalist asylum and refugee policy and against fascism and racism. This will be one of the next highlights of our revolutionary work among youth.

The MLPD has ambitious plans for 2016. Above all, the 10th Party Congress will be taking place!

The preparation, conduct and evaluation of the 10th Party Congress will be the most important task in 2016. Of course, this does not happen in a vacuum, but takes place in close practical connection with the self-transformation of the party and the active participation in the most important social developments. The party must learn to grow into its new societal role. This also is the decisive benchmark for its change. It must launch an offensive in world outlook and use the crisis of bourgeois ideology to spread Marxism-Leninism among the masses. The crisis of bourgeois ideology means that a crucial bonding force for the social system is increasingly diminishing. Who still talks today about a “social state”, a “social market economy”, a “crisis-free capitalism” etc.? On the other hand, pragmatism, so-called absence of ideology are en vogue, meaning nothing else than not really committing oneself anymore and only reacting to the system's crises. In contrast the MLPD has a very clear vision of the future. It wants a society without exploitation and oppression in which the entire scientific, technical and also cultural progress can unfold, free from capitalist gagging and in the interest of humanity. It is becoming more and more important to propagate these significant unique features of the MLPD among the masses. This is why we are making efforts to do philosophical educational work on the core of Marxism-Leninism with our films against modern anti-communism, on Karl Marx or Lenin. Unfortunately, too little use still is made of these means, and they are pushed aside too quickly in face of the manifold activities. But we have to be aware that a real self-transformation in the consciousness of the masses, a real qualitative leap will only be possible if people develop a positive attitude toward Marxism-Leninism and genuine socialism. One secret of the positive development of the MLPD lies in its theoretical work with the system of *Revolutionärer Weg*, with which the burning questions of the times are treated with foresight.

The 10th Party Congress will surely meet with particular interest among our international

friends who got to know us in the ICOR work. More and more of them want to participate in our experience in party-building and cooperate with the MLPD on an equal footing. In this respect the Party Congress is meant to be an event of the international revolutionary working-class movement and the ICOR, too. The generation change that we have been promoting systematically for some time will play an important role. Politics and also party work have become more complex and require a lot of training and experience, which nobody can gain overnight. We will need quite a number of new forces and cadres to be able to cope with our tasks in international class struggle and in the preparation of the international socialist revolution. This is why the generation change also involves an expansion of our base in the various functions of party work. It is important to boldly encourage young comrades and give them responsibility. A false cautiousness because mistakes may happen does not take us any further. We must make use of the enthusiasm, the confidence and the drive of the youth and anchor our party work in the hearts of a much bigger mass of workers, women, young people, migrants, environmentalists and anti-fascists.

I am looking forward to this 10th Party Congress because it is already foreseeable now that it will solve its task of the criticism and self-criticism campaign successfully and change the MLPD in a positive way.

In the year 2016 we will also already start with the preparation of important projects for 2017. For example, in connection with the federal elections in 2017 we will be striving for a broader alliance with internationalist and revolutionary organizations, mainly among migrants. 2017 will mark the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, and the ICOR will be using this for an international campaign on the lessons from the experiences in socialist revolution and socialist construction.

In conclusion I formally want to thank all comrades, sympathizers, friends, alliance partners and business partners for the work carried out, the cooperation and the great solidarity in 2015. The MLPD lives from these varied initiatives, the selfless efforts and the tireless commitment of many. I hope that the stream of those who work together with us in our great work for the future will be even broader in 2016. We have a scientifically based vision – the united socialist states of the world, a world in which exploitation and oppression of humans by humans will end, the unity of humanity and nature can unfold, in which wars, poverty and the destruction of the environment will belong to the past. I wish all readers of the *Rote Fahne* well-earned, restful holidays and a happy new year.

Thank you for the interview!