

The MLPD fights its role through in society as a whole in moving times

Interview with Gabi Fechtner, Chairwoman of the MLPD, October 2019

The *Rote Fahne* editors spoke with the chairwoman of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD), Gabi Fechtner, about current developments in the starting situation and in the class struggle and how the MLPD is securing its role in society as a whole in these moving times.



Why do we suddenly hear about activities of the MLPD almost every week in the bourgeois mass media?

That is actually something new and is due to objective and subjective factors. Objectively the crisis-proneness of the imperialist world system is intensifying on all fronts. The crisis of confidence in bourgeois politics is deepening. The MLPD is increasingly perceived by friends and foes as a **serious or even formative actor** in more and more focal points. **This takes place in the midst of a vehement societal polarization.** An **anticapitalist tendency** within the progressive change of mood is developing in the working class and among the broad masses. This is also a result of decades of consciousness-building systematic rank-and-file work of the MLPD. The ruling powers counter this with an offensive of modern anticommunism, state repression, and the upgrading of proto-fascist and fascist forces. This development has led to a **culmination in the development of the significance of the MLPD for society as a whole.** Focal points are the *Fridays for Future* movement, the struggle of the miners against the scorched earth politics of the mining company RAG, the initiative for a worthy memorial celebration for Ernst Thälmann in the struggle against anticommunism, proletarian refugee policy, the antifascist struggle, for example, against the fascist Björn Höcke (AfD) or against the NPD, the formative role in the international campaign “*Hands off Rojava!*” or our tactical offensive for the state elections in Thuringia. **In the societal polarization the MLPD is the clear, revolutionary, class-militant and resolutely ecological pole which now cannot be overlooked.**

The accelerated transition to a global environmental catastrophe, to a new world economic crisis, various structural crises, the crisis of bourgeois ideology, the crisis of the bourgeois family system, the rightward development of the government and bourgeois parties and the crisis of confidence in bourgeois politics – for more and more people, all of this puts the question of a societal alternative on the agenda. The state-supporting behavior of the Left Party, their ignorance of the environmental issue for years, and their weak support within the working-class movement **make way for revolutionary politics on the left side.** Of course, this has not escaped the bourgeois media’s attention. **The MLPD has done its homework in this situation.** With its system *Revolutionärer Weg* (Revolutionary Way), for 50 years it has been giving **theoretically** profound and convincing answers from the viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism to the whole range of societal issues. With a power of

conviction and its innate authenticity it has also fought its way **in practice** to attain a new role in society better and better – against all anticommunist state repression. You can see this increased social influence in various factors. For example, press coverage of the MLPD has reached about five million readers within the past three months alone.¹ Clicks to *Rote Fahne News* (rf-news.de) have constantly increased by 25 percent per month since 2018. Compared to 2010 they have tripled. Access has also considerably risen to the website of the organ *Revolutionärer Weg* (www.revolutionaerer-weg.de). In the third quarter of 2019 we sold almost three times more books of the series *Revolutionärer Weg* “than usual” in an average quarter without new publications from this series. Since the Tenth Party Congress we have won 17 percent new members and built up a number of new one-or-two-man groups or full party groups. **Culmination** – that means a decisive battle: Will the MLPD succeed in fighting through a role in society as a whole against increasing anticommunist slander and repression? This would signify a sustainable breakthrough against the relative isolation in which the ruling powers have brought us in the past decades by systematically denying our existence.

What signal comes from the worldwide day of strike and struggle against the threatening environmental catastrophe on 20 September 2019 for the development of the progressive change of mood among the masses?

This development marks a new climax in the progressive change of mood. In Germany alone, 1.4 million people took to the streets on 20 September. With a total of 3.91 million participants in working-class and popular struggles up till now in the year 2019, the progressive change of mood already encompasses more people than in the entire years 2017, 2018 or even 2004. That was the year of the Monday demonstration movement and the corporate-wide strikes, with a total of 3.8 million participants. Participation is not far below the long-time high of 4.3 million in 2015, when the progressive change of mood awakened. It is conspicuous that **criticism of capitalism is increasingly making way** especially in the environmental movement, and that those mainly responsible, the international monopolies, are increasingly being targeted. Awakening environmental consciousness is making progress on a broad front to become a **developing environmental consciousness**.

With the *Fridays for Future* movement the **youth became the practical vanguard in the progressive change of mood**. The movement did not let itself be appeased by quickly-taken government decisions and did not let its criticism be silenced. On the contrary! The MLPD is more and more recognized as a **representative** of resolute and **radical environmental protection** and of the **struggle for societal change** against the profit economy. We raised the point that environmental destruction in capitalism meanwhile is inherent in the system and that the solution of the environmental *and* the social question must form a unity. That has entered into the environmental movement. On 20 September we were already dealing with a **struggle critical of society**. This all has positive effects on the development of consciousness among the masses. On 20 September the MLPD took part in 100 actions together with its youth league *Rebell* and other allies of the Internationalist Alliance and was even formative in some. We organized attractive, militant, colorful and cultured blocks with open microphones and did consciousness-raising work with our environmental policy positions. We had thousands of conversations, won hundreds of new contacts and interested people; plus many buyers for the book *Catastrophe Alert! What is To Be Done Against the Willful Destruction of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?* from the series *Revolutionärer Weg*. Our factory groups mobilized – often the only ones active – numerous worker delegations from large industrial factories.

This give new impetus to the unity of working-class movement and environmental movement and the struggle for a full legal right to strike in all matters.

However, the working class as a whole is not yet taking the lead in the environmental protests. At the FFF demonstrations, as in the trade unions as well, a real struggle over the direction is waging. The union Verdi, as well as the IG Metall and others, are increasingly dealing with the environmental question in reaction to the massively awakened environmental consciousness. That various trade-union functionaries, as for example the chairman of the IGBCE (mining, construction, chemical, energy sectors), Michael Vassiliadis, stoop to attacking the environmental protests is overt service provider politics on behalf of industry. All the more important are the still few, but increasing and **significant independent and militant actions of workforces**, like those of the miners, of Siemens workers in Berlin or smaller workforces of auto suppliers. The **FFF movement is, of course, not uniform, and a developed struggle between the proletarian and petty-bourgeois modes of thinking is taking place within it**. We must invest still **more in consciousness-raising work!** Only then will the anticapitalist tendency with a growing openness for the socialist perspective become stronger in the spontaneous and therefore still unstable movement.

Are these developments in Germany something exceptional – or how do you evaluate the international trend?

The **international character** of the protests from 20 to 27 September was remarkable – with 6,383 actions in 170 countries and at least **seven million people at these protests**. The revolutionary world organization ICOR² took influence on this with the orientation toward an international resistance front to save the environment from the profit system. Internationally the polarization in society is continuing to develop, as well as the progressive change of mood. In various regions mass struggles erupted, some even similar to uprisings.

349 struggles and strikes in July 2019 alone in the new-imperialist Iran, where the struggle for work, peace and bread is increasingly being led by the working class. An explosive uprising in Iraq with the youth as the practical vanguard. Further important mass struggles in Sudan, Egypt, Algeria – and every Friday mass demonstrations in Gaza against the imperialist policy of Israel. In Peru a nationwide strike of the miners took place under the influence of the International Miners Conference. Economic demands for a framework employment agreement were raised in unity with ecological questions.

In this situation the well-targeted international activity of MLPD and ICOR contributes significantly to **great progress in cross-border cooperation and coordination**. The talks between ICOR and ILPS³ on the building of a worldwide anti-imperialist united front have advanced considerably. On 28 and 29 September, the fourth Middle East Conference of the ICOR met for the first time in the region itself. Organizations of the ICOR, together with relevant forces from the region like the Kurds and Palestinians, discussed controversially, but in a spirit of solidarity, the evaluation of the explosive situation, but also conclusions for closer cooperation in future in the Middle East. Great progress has been made in the preparations for the 2nd International Automotive Workers' Conference in February 2020 in South Africa, which workers' delegations in various countries are already preparing.

Does this fit together – to speak about successes while, at the same time, fierce attacks are being made against the MLPD?

The greatest successes are fought through against the greatest hostilities. And the other way around: the hostilities occur precisely because of our real successes and our potential successes. September 20 became a clear **defeat** for the **Merkel/Scholz government** and the **bourgeois parties**. They, and the Greens, had tried from the very beginning to direct the FFF movement toward their policies, to orient it toward the completely unbinding and insufficient Paris Climate Treaty. Representatives of bourgeois parties disguise themselves as NGO functionaries with the aim of taking the lead in the movement. Bourgeois NGOs “generously” financed the central material for 20 September, the content of which, of course, also was subject to their control.

This “promotion” of the FFF movement aims at preventing environmental consciousness developing to a higher level to become a part of the class struggle and the preparation of the international revolution. But this plan could only have functioned if the MLPD had been eliminated from the movement.

Liquidationism in society as a whole, which has been raging for about a year and a half, was mobilized again nationwide for this purpose. This is a **new kind of liquidationism**, not of the kind within the party, such as we have defeated in the history of our party. It is directed at the growing unity of the Marxist-Leninist Party with the masses, the various mass movements, and the self-run organizations of the masses. Simultaneously in most cities and towns, exactly the same hypocritical slogans were spread: “no parties, no flags”. This clearly aims in particular against the MLPD, because with their daily presence in the media the SPD, the Greens or the Left Party have no need to appear with flags and banners. Also in unison, capitalism criticism and a perspective of societal change was declared to be “unwelcome” by these forces, and the attempt was made to exclude the MLPD and the youth league *Rebell* from the “Orga” (organization) groups. These attacks included the whole span of illegal bans of party flags, defamation, and attempts to create an anticommunist pogrom mood. And finally even physical violence and direct cooperation with the state apparatus. It is revealing that these sorts of people, who appear in the guise of defenders of bourgeois democracy, vehemently attack the bourgeois-democratic rights and freedoms of the MLPD and others. The political inexperience of the mostly very young FFF activists is veritably being misused for this shabby behavior. The main perpetrators of the dirty work for the ruling powers were state-supporting, pseudo-unaffiliated NGOs, which rely on “Anti-German” or anarchist thugs, for example in the cities of Bochum, Dortmund, Rostock or Erfurt. These then often worked – truly “anti”-German and anarchist – directly together with the police. Against us. Most of these persons had never before been seen at a demonstration for the environment.

This all miserably failed on 20 September. In the interest of the entire movement we insisted on our democratic rights and freedoms. We put the dictatorial behavior of the self-acclaimed “Orga” teams in the wrong. We massively exposed the political goal of liquidationism, challenged the dividers, and we named and name persons. In the struggle against this destructive direction we are continuing to develop our attractive culture at demonstrations and discussions and our convincing arguments, with great resonance. We will not leave any of these attacks unanswered.

Is it not strange that the MLPD, which wants to overcome this society through revolution, insists upon bourgeois constitutional law or the laws on assembly?

On the contrary, this is only consistent! The former chairman of the Communist Party of Germany, (KPD), Max Reimann, as a member of the Parliamentary Council, stated the position of the communists in 1949 well when the constitution was passed. After he had declared that the KPD did not approve the constitution because it meant the division of Germany and perpetuated capitalist private ownership, he stated, “Within the course of implementing their anti-people policies, the legislators will be breaking their own constitution. However, we communists will be defending those few democratic rights anchored in the constitution against the authors of the constitution.”⁴ This is our guideline for today, too.

The fundamental right of free speech, of assembly, of coalition, with special rights for political parties on an antifascist basis, were fought through by the working-class movement in 100 years of struggle and were anchored in the constitution as a lesson from Hitlerite fascism. It cannot be accepted that various representative of NGOs and others arrogate to themselves a “monopoly” on social movements like FFF and take decisions in preparation groups arbitrarily thrown together with just a few handpicked persons, which disregard fundamental rights. Members of the Green Party, appearing as “Parents for Future”, or other bourgeois functionaries are screaming that “the young people do not want the MLPD”. At the same time, it is exactly these young people who in their great numbers are extremely open and interested in the positions of the MLPD, as well as in organizing in *Rebell*. Not by chance did 80,000 flyers of the MLPD, “*Fly the flag for active resistance*”, find interested readers on a single day. These people lead a holy crusade against supposed “Stalinism”, while their own mentality is despotic and repressive.

Thought through to the end, this behavior leads to what an ultra-reactionary majority passed as a “Resolution of the European Parliament” on 19 September 2019: This resolution refers to the ban of communist symbols and organizations in various Eastern European countries. In total falsification of history it equates fascism with “Stalinism” and accordingly demands drastic measures – against communists!

Whoever takes action against the free speech of Marxist-Leninists, against the right of coalition and against flags of the MLPD today has no place in a progressive movement. Our great success was, however, only possible because we **acted** offensively instead of **reacting**. Because we did not shrink back cowardly or roll up our flags abjectly, as various opportunists did. The entire party put this into practice outstandingly well on 20 September – and this is a guideline for the MLPD for further growing into its role in society as a whole!

On 20 September the so-called climate package of the Federal Government was also agreed. It doesn't seem to meet with much enthusiasm among the people?

That is still a very polite way of putting it. Even the broadest circles of bourgeois environmental researchers speak of a fiasco, failure and catastrophe. The whole so-called climate package is a **provocation against the working-class, youth and environmental movements and the broad masses**. Chancellor Merkel's justification that politics is “what is feasible” clearly shows the class character of supposedly ideology-free pragmatism. In plain language, it is only a question of what is “feasible” for a government that sees itself as a service provider to the international monopolies: and that is by no means environmental protection at the expense of their profits! The capitalist industry will even be relieved by the new government package, for example through reduction of the German Renewable Energy Act (EEG) levy and extensive subsidies to car manufacturers and Bahn AG (German Railways). The other side of the coin is the **complete shifting of the burdens of the environmental crisis onto the broad masses**. Only a small fraction of

the estimated 54 billion euros flows back to the masses in the form of an increased commuter allowance for traveling distances of 21 kilometers and more, or the reduction of VAT on rail journeys. The masses are to be turned against further environmental protection measures in this way. The CO2 tax fleeces them, while the capitalists can shift everything onto the backs of the consumers through the prices. By these measures, at the same time not a single gram less CO2 will be emitted. From the point of view of environmental policy, Merkel's "feasible" approach consists in **willfully continuing on the path to the global environmental catastrophe – and then blaming the masses for it**. Even for the **Greens**, who have benefited the most from the environmental movement to date, being green always stops where the profit logic of the corporations would be affected. At the same time, we have seen a **dramatic intensification of the global environmental crisis** in recent months. At the end of September, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that the warming of air and water was taking place much faster than expected. The various main features of the transition to the global environmental catastrophe are interacting in disastrous ways. They threaten to exceed irreversible "tipping points". **This is clearly the time for a catastrophe alert!** The measures must also correspond to this. And what is the government doing? It weakens its own totally inadequate climate package even further. In this struggle, the environmental groups of the MLPD must take the lead. Their task is to unfold the struggle for the necessary immediate action program – as a school of struggle for a socialist society, with the paradigm of the unity of humanity and nature. It would be opportunistic to leave the concrete environmental struggles to the petty-bourgeois environmental movement and thus foment illusions that capitalism can be shaped ecologically. **The strengthening of the environmental groups of the MLPD is an essential prerequisite for the further development of environmental awareness – with the perspective of a society-changing character of the environmental movement.**

Despite all the agreement, there were also individual voices as to whether the MLPD must necessarily appear with its flags and symbols?

Fighting this battle is a necessary learning process. We know from all historical developments that before and in qualitative leaps to larger societal changes, culminations have to be fought out and liquidationist currents occur. The justification, indeed the necessity of this confrontation, applies even if not all people directly understand or support it – if a part is deterred, intimidated, influenced by modern anticommunism, or even can be incited. Just as there is no socialism without revolution against capitalism, there is also no socialist consciousness without prior worldview battles against modern anticommunism. Let us remember how, in the 1980s and 1990s, the MLPD was insulted, assaulted, pushed out of demos, and had its book stands destroyed, especially by people from the then still strong German Communist Party (DKP). The reason was the fundamental criticism of the MLPD and its predecessor organizations of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, of the revisionism in the German Democratic Republic or in China. That was still minority opinion at the time. Today everyone will agree that this criticism was as indispensable as it was far-sighted in order to achieve a new upswing in the struggle for socialism. If we wage this struggle correctly today, the young people will emerge from this conflict tempered and more conscious. Hesitation in action against liquidationist forces only gives them leeway and has something to do with seeing liquidators as "part of the movement". No, they are not!

The forces that drive this splitting and their worldview backgrounds must be examined more closely. The FFF Summer Congress in Dortmund in July was organized by Campact.

One Christoph Bautz has been managing director of Campact since its foundation in 2004, having previously been the founder of Attac Germany. He was trained for these tasks in his work for the US internet platform "MoveOn.org". This in turn is financed, *inter alia*, with 1.46 million dollars from the financial magnate George Soros. Soros was a student of the "philosopher" Karl Popper with his philosophy of new positivism. He claimed that capitalism was an "open society" that had to be resolutely "protected" from its "enemies". By this he means above all the communists. This society is thus "open" to all that is capitalist – but "closed" to criticism of capitalism. No one can tell me that this concept corresponds to what the masses of young people want and need today. That is why it is important to uncover the ideological content that is supposed to keep the youth in leading strings here. The Heinrich Böll Foundation of Alliance 90/The Greens organizes – quite unselfishly, of course – for FFF activists training courses on "forms of civil protest", partly directly supported by the State Center for Civic Education.⁵ In the past, the state-supporting NGOs were already instruments of the rulers' system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking – the system of demoralization, disorganization and disorientation. They are now increasingly turning into **instruments for the open oppression of revolutionaries and Marxist-Leninists.**

The latest stratagem of modern anticommunism is the abstruse accusation that we are "anti-Semites". For decades we have fought against every form of racism, including, of course, anti-Semitism. So far no one has ever been able to provide even halfway serious proof to us of anything that was anti-Semitic – because we are not. It is simply an anticommunist fake news campaign that relies on people's lack of knowledge. Often our support of the BDS campaign in solidarity with the Palestinians is cited as "proof". This campaign is directed, for example, against international corporations doing imperialist business in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. For instance, against the French company AXA, which has stakes in five banks that invest in the illegal Israeli settlements⁶ in Palestinian areas. AXA also invests in the largest Israeli arms company, Elbit, whose drones in turn equip the Frontex mission in the Mediterranean. Anyone who defames and opposes such a campaign can explain why he or she wants to protect such imperialist crimes.

This movement has as little to do with anti-Semitism as the progressive protests against the fascist Turkish president Erdoğan have to do with Islamophobia.

Understanding all this will ultimately help the people to better grasp the reactionary nature of modern anticommunism. Everyone must be aware: Those who **aggressively spread and try to enforce modern anticommunism in the social movements objectively strengthen forces such as the AfD and their openly aggressive anticommunism.** For with supposedly "left" crown witnesses, anticommunism and an aggressive mood against the MLPD are made socially acceptable. This is taken to extremes with the openly aggressive anticommunism and repressive proto-fascist or even fascist methods of AfD or NPD against the MLPD. All this requires from us, and from every democratically minded individual, **to support and continue the offensive against liquidationism.** It is necessary to beat this liquidationism in all social movements and trade unions, to publicly discredit its leaders and their secret service wire-pullers in the background.

Where does the nervousness of the rulers come from? As far as economic development is concerned, the bourgeois side is currently showing a lot of worried faces. What is going on?

We have come to the conclusion that a **new world economic crisis has already started**. This already began in the second half of 2018. During this period, the fluctuating stagnation that prevailed until then had passed its zenith. Industrial production and investments had moved with fluctuations up and down along an average line during this period. Now there has been a qualitative change: Industrial production has since declined significantly in some of the imperialist centers, while growth rates have fallen considerably in others. The trend has been clearly negative for many months now. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also sounded the alarm over what it calls a “synchronous slowdown” in 90 percent of all countries.⁷ Since November 2018 there has been an absolute decline in industrial production in the Eurozone and the EU. In the second half of 2018, first new-imperialist countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Turkey had already fallen into an open economic crisis. In June 2019, industrial production in the entire OECD was down 0.5 percent compared to the previous year. In the EU, the decline in industrial production in the second quarter of 2019 was 0.5 percent compared with the same quarter of the previous year. The decline in industrial production in Japan has lasted since June 2018. The global auto industry is caught up in the maelstrom of crisis. In June, the CAR Institute of the University of Duisburg-Essen forecast a worldwide decline in car sales of more than four million vehicles, from 83.7 to 79.5 million, for the full year 2019. In May 2019, sales in China, the most important sales market, fell by 16.4 percent year-on-year for the eleventh time in succession.

Remarkably, **Germany, the flagship of the EU economy to date, has been particularly hard hit by the crisis**. Since August 2018, industrial production in Germany has been falling in absolute terms compared with the previous year. Capacity utilization fell from 87.8 percent in July 2018 to 83.9 percent in July 2019. Exports also fell significantly in individual months. Industrial orders are falling sharply. In August 2019 by 6.7 percent year-on-year. Particularly drastic are the declines in orders in the mechanical engineering sector, where in August 2019 orders to German companies fell by 17 percent compared to the previous year.

In the USA, industrial production growth rates are falling, and in August 2019 they were only 0.4 percent up on the prior-year period. In 2018 they had risen by around 4 percent year-on-year in all quarters. In China, the gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter of 2019 rose by only 6.2 percent compared with the same period of the previous year, and the Chinese economy is at its weakest since 1992.⁸

Growth rates for **gross domestic product** have been falling internationally since the second quarter of 2018, in the EU since the fourth quarter of 2017. However, the one-sided view of gross domestic product distorts real economic development. Among the “services” included in GDP are shares of industrial production, but there are also many sectors that have little to do with the production of material goods. For some time now, according to international agreements, arms expenditures, money laundering, cigarette smuggling and prostitution, exuberant speculation, drugs and extensive pension payments have also been counted as new social value. This **highlights the decadence of the imperialist world system**.

The **immediate trigger** of the world economic crisis was the **trade war** which started from the USA. In the last six months, more goods and services have been subject to customs duties than ever before. The value of the goods concerned is put at 421 billion euros. This has serious negative effects on world trade as a whole, which fell by 2.8 percent in the first half of 2019 compared to the first half of 2018. This has a particular impact on the Achilles’ heel of countries with heavily export-dependent economies, such as Germany.

The general background to the new global economic crisis lies in the intensified **chronic overaccumulation of capital** and the unprecedented cumulative effects of three different, interpenetrating **structural crises**: Since the beginning of the 1990s, an international structural crisis based on the reorganization of the international capitalist mode of production has been taking effect. Added to this is the structural crisis caused by the conversion of the automotive industry to e-mobility, and the structural crisis based on the comprehensive digitization of the entire production process. It has a universal impact on production, trade, communication, and society as a whole. In 2018, the profits of the international supermonopolies amounted to 2.2 trillion US dollars, 262 percent more than in 2008. After the global economic and financial crisis of 2008-2014, they were thus able to increase their maximum profits considerably at the cost of the other monopolies, the nonmonopoly bourgeoisie, society as a whole, and the exploitation of humans and nature. However, these exploding profits could be invested for maximum profit to a lesser and lesser extent in view of the relative contraction of the markets. This caused massive growth of speculative capital. In June 2019, stock market capitalization, i.e. the market value of the stock corporations listed on the world's stock exchanges, was 83.3 trillion US dollars. By comparison, the figure was 60.7 trillion in October 2007, the highest value in the time before the outbreak of the financial crisis. Business journals are already warning of a "real estate or stock bubble".

But the crisis downturn is not as abrupt this time as it was last time, in 2008 – is it?

So far, **internationally coordinated crisis management** has actually meant that the crisis downturn has **not** been **as abrupt** as it was in the last overproduction crisis. However, industrial production in Germany has fallen back to the level of 2016. The abrupt global downturn in 2008, which continued with increased force at the beginning of 2009, was mainly caused by the **outbreak of the global financial crisis** and its trigger, the collapse of Lehman Brothers. In no time at all this financial crisis seized the heart of the capitalist banking sector and abruptly cut global financial flows in 2008. This triggered an extreme, simultaneous, deep global slump in industrial production. With the policy of cheap money, the acquisition of government and corporate bonds by the central banks, comprehensive state-monopoly support actions for major banks, new bank regulation rules, and huge sums of money for bank stabilization, the rulers have so far prevented such an abrupt development. To this end, the internationally coordinated crisis management, which began in 2008 for the first time, was continued with various modifications. But even that did not produce any real upturn. The "self-supporting upswing" much invoked by Chancellor Merkel proved, as we predicted, to be a phantom of the wishful thinking of bourgeois political economists. Imperialist world domination is on the drip of this international crisis management, which is a dangerous game with fire. The European Central Bank (ECB) alone has assumed 2.65 trillion euros of bond debt since 2015. If these debts of 2.65 trillion euros now on the balance sheet of the ECB are roughly added to the official national debt of the euro zone at the end of 2018, which amounted to 9.86 trillion euros, then the actual national debt of the euro zone amounts to 12.51 trillion euros. At some point, however, the **relative limit of the national debt will become an absolute one**. This will have prompt repercussions: from galloping inflation to state crises such as those we experienced in Greece or Argentina in 2010. In addition, corporate debt has risen dramatically. The IMF fears that if the crisis continues, corporate loans worth 19 trillion dollars will be "at risk", and considers the risk to be greater than at the outbreak of the last global economic and financial crisis.⁹ Due to the inflated national debt and the essentially uninterrupted low or negative interest rates, crisis management has fewer and fewer

adjustment screws that can be turned further. In general, it is being further undermined by intensified inter-imperialist rivalry. A repetition of the internationally coordinated crisis management in the manner of the last crisis, after 2008, is hardly conceivable today for economic and political reasons.

The government claims that they have everything under control – and that the working class and the broad masses have nothing to worry about?

Of course this propaganda has a purpose! It is foreseeable that the ruling monopolies and the government will **go over** from **attempts at a compensative policy of crisis management**, a policy which they have pursued for many years, to a policy of more and more direct, open and all-round **shifting of the crisis burdens** onto the backs of the masses. More and more industrial enterprises, but also banks, are announcing the destruction of jobs and are openly threatening to carry out **dismissals for “operating reasons.”** The mining company Ruhrkohle AG has already done so. This breach of a taboo will be followed by others. The number of short-time workers is growing considerably; tens of thousands of agency workers have already been “canceled.” This will intensify the class contradictions especially in the **large-scale industrial enterprises**. To date, important militant actions have taken place against such planned or already implemented mass layoffs: for instance at Ford in Brazil, India, and the UK; at General Motors in the USA, Canada, and Korea, also at Hyundai in Algeria. In Brazil, Korea, and the Czech Republic auto workers have played a leading role in the mass struggles against the government. After the state elections in Thuringia we shall put emphasis on strengthening our forces at and in large enterprises, especially those of the international industrial proletariat, and in the trade unions.

We will see new attacks against the social achievements of the masses. The monopoly association BDI has already called for a new crisis program amounting to 400 billion euros, to be squeezed out of society as a whole. This program will also affect families, and especially women, who are expected to “cushion” the impact of these crisis burdens on the individual family as the smallest economic unit. I am sure that this problem will be an issue in Erfurt from 1 to 3 November at the Women’s Political Counsel. This is the most significant, self-organized congress of the militant women’s movement in Germany.

According to the perverse logic of those in power, this current situation leaves no scope for serious measures against the global environmental crisis, which will further intensify against this backdrop. There is a tendency that latent **political crises** will deepen, that they **break out openly more often and become deeper**. International rivalry will sharpen and further undermine the viability of the international forms of organization of solely ruling international finance capital. The **general preparation for war** will be pushed further and can also grow into an acute danger of war. We can currently see this in the attack on Rojava by the fascist Turkish regime of Erdoğan in breach of international law. All social contradictions are culminating. At the moment, as a rule, this does not yet happen in an uncontrolled or abrupt way. In Germany this is accompanied even by smaller partial concessions to the masses. We also are aware that chancellor Angela Merkel is a master in pacifying the masses with small concessions especially in a situation of crisis. But the **imperialist world system’s general proneness to crisis** will intensify further and will inevitably assume an **open character** at a certain point. This general crisis proneness is increasingly coming into conflict with the further developing **material preparation of the united socialist states of the world**, another factor that drives the masses into opposition to capitalism more and more. They see more clearly what would in fact be possible – and

to what extent capitalism prevents the progress of science and technology from benefiting all of society, humanity, and nature.

The **social polarization will intensify further**: between the rightward development of the government and the bourgeois parties on the one hand and the progressive change of mood among the masses on the other. It is remarkable that meanwhile this **rightward development has suffered some setbacks internationally**. For example, the downfall of the ultra-reactionary Italian Minister of the Interior, Salvini, or of the Austrian Kurz/Strache government; the considerable problems of US President Trump, of the Turkish President Erdoğan, and of the British Prime Minister Johnson. There are also increasing contradictions in the camp of those in power, considering that the phone call with the Ukrainian President Zelensky was revealed by an agent of the CIA. There is apparently a controversy going on among those in power over their choice of tactics. Those parts of international finance capital dependent on the functioning of world trade are no longer so willing to put up with the protectionist measures of Donald Trump.

We know from experience that, in times of economic crisis, the search for an individual way out grows spontaneously in the beginning, also the concern for one's own job. It is in situations like this that ultrareactionary and proto-fascist or openly fascist forces make every effort to corrode, with their demagogy, the proletarian class consciousness, the environmental consciousness or internationalist consciousness. Intensified inter-imperialist rivalry will continue to fuel the social chauvinism spread by those in power. In short: as Marxist-Leninists, we are faced with the task to **analyze, qualify and carry through this unfolded struggle over the mode of thinking very thoroughly and in a discriminating way**. It is necessary to **develop further**, systematically and **in depth**, our strategy and tactics in the class struggle and our strategy and tactics in the struggle over the mode of thinking of the masses.

What has come over the domestic intelligence agency that it is “reassessing” the MLPD?

Quite some time ago, those in power prompted their secret service agencies to warn about what they call “dissolution of the boundaries of [alleged] extremism”¹⁰ in the middle of society. In their opinion, today this is the biggest threat to the capitalist system. Nothing else is formulated in their jargon here but that the Marxist-Leninists are gaining mass influence. After a conference of the interior ministers of the German states in June 2019, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (the domestic intelligence agency) in its annual report literally “reassessed” the MLPD. They raised our estimated number of members by almost 60 percent from 1,800 to 2,800. **They are particularly worried about our ideological-political clarity**. The intelligence agency's report warns of the “potential” of our “extensive analyses”, by which we would be able, “as intellectual instigators, ... to inspire ideologically” other forces¹¹. Since May 2018 we have observed that a **concrete change of tactics has been initiated against the MLPD and is taking further shape**. Thus the Higher Regional Court of Jena decided that there shall be no criminal investigations based on the charges which Stefan Engel had pressed against Horst Seehofer, the Federal Minister of the Interior, Hans-Georg Maassen, the former president of the intelligence agency, and police officer Dirk Löther. The last mentioned was the head of operations responsible for the attacks on the Rebellious Music Festival and the MLPD during Whitsun last year. It is a scandal that the state apparatus is allowed to declare a revolutionary like Stefan Engel, who has been the chairman of the MLPD for 37 years and is now the head of our theoretical organ *Revolutionärer Weg*, to be a “dangerous person” –

just like that – and their arbitrary, illegal action is exempt from punishment. Stefan Engel, however, is to be deprived of all legal opportunities to defend himself. Also in regard to other trials and bans, it is conspicuous that especially Stefan Engel has been in the focus of attacks by the state and the secret services. For instance, according to a court ruling he explicitly was not allowed to speak at the Memorial Site in Buchenwald because he wanted to make references to today. Only after strong disputes and an outright surge of protests could the MLPD's commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Ernst Thälmann's murder be pushed through. Initially, it was prohibited on the basis of an openly anticommunist justification. On the other hand, this open anticommunist argumentation, previously often hidden behind formal excuses, enables us to deal with it openly and on a mass scale, which in this case was done very successfully.

Moreover, there have been a growing number of fascist death threats, or even attacks, against leading representatives of the MLPD, above all Monika Gärtner-Engel. But there were also death threats against Stefan Engel, Lisa Gärtner and myself, threats to "annihilate" us "completely" and "destroy the Bolshevik" ideology. This means that the activities of different actors are interconnected; they have the common goal to drive the MLPD more into isolation again, to fight, intimidate and ultimately liquidate it. So far, however, all these measures are backfiring. In Germany, those in power still mainly rely on their **system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking as main method of government** – with its core of modern anticommunism. Of course, they are aware that this method continues to be their strongest bastion. But its effect is declining more and more; the people are coping more and more successfully with modern anticommunism.

Hasn't the MLPD resolved to do a little too much at the moment – on top of all the other things, to concentrate its energy now on Thuringia as well?

Not at all, it fits in well to continue these confrontations in the state elections in Thuringia – since they are a focal point of the political events as another "test election" on which all eyes are focused. From the beginning we designed this election campaign for the entire party as a school of systematic party building. This is now being extended into a **school of the struggle for the MLPD's role in society at large** in the fight against anticommunist repression. This state election campaign is taking place in a situation characterized by a vehement societal polarization. Here the crisis of confidence in the whole bourgeois politics is especially pronounced. The monopolies insist that eastern Germany be permanently kept a low-wage region. The suggestions are increasing even to expand special economic zones marked by a particular lack of rights, abandonment of collective agreements, and fewer social rights and environmental requirements. Last week the monopolies provokingly broke off the collective bargaining for the 35-hour workweek with full wage compensation. The MLPD is the only party that consistently advocates worker unity in east and west, which earns us many points. However, 18 parties are running for office at the same time, and among the masses there is still **considerable confusion as to what is left, right, or "social", and what is bourgeois or protofascist demagogy**. The Internationalist List/MLPD contributes its cumulative expertise, its new politicians. The MLPD is using the **election campaign for an offensive for genuine socialism and against modern anticommunism**.

Benjamin Immanuel-Hoff, head of the State Chancellery of Minister-President Bodo Ramelow from the Left Party and one of the wire-pullers of the ban on commemoration activities in Buchenwald, recently complained in the big-bourgeois newspaper *FAZ* about

the insufficient appreciation of the rulers for the Left Party. He said it is the Left Party's important contribution "that east Germans were integrated into society because ... today's 'Left' understands itself as a socialist party **within** this society".¹² This arrival in capitalism has significantly contributed to plunge the Left Party itself increasingly into crisis.

The AfD, by the way, also does not, under any circumstances, want to overcome the capitalist system. They are running for election in Thuringia with the fascist Björn Höcke as top candidate – as bulwark of anticommunism. The AfD's national spokesman Alexander Gauland explained in August, in the *FAZ*, that he is, of course, strictly **against** every "revolution", even if his party claims to be for it on posters. He and his AfD are "bourgeois through and through". Hoping for further bourgeois recognition, here for once he has spoken the truth. The AfD only wants to steer the protest into racist, nationalist and ultra-reactionary channels.

The antifascist struggle and the antifascist construction work are an important focus in the election campaign in Thuringia. **Radically left, revolutionary, and for genuine socialism** – that is the MLPD's unique attribute in these elections.

This must be made clear and emphasized still more in the fight against the perfidious social proto-fascist and social-fascist demagoguery of Höcke and Co., but also of the NPD. The AfD's self-portrayal as "protest party" definitely has an impact on a part of the masses with low class consciousness. A party of the monopolies and big landowners is plying its dirty trade here, and that we must completely expose. Even if these demagogues are especially loud: It's a misjudgment to think that they dominate the mood of the people. The majority of the people are antifascist, but we must provide them, as well as the people that are influenced by the AfD, with better arguments. **The mass struggle over the mode of thinking in order to tear this demagoguery to pieces with completely convincing arguments is now the main task in order to nip this in the bud!**

Of course, many people again will **vote tactically**. In order to prevent the AfD or the CDU from becoming the strongest force or to knock "the bigwigs" down a peg or two. We criticize this in a comradely manner: One must vote by conviction and do the right thing, instead of resigning oneself to the role of pawn in the bourgeois party haggling. We will definitely **fight for every vote** – and sustainably advance party building. Before we took up this work, we were present as organization in only three locations in Thuringia. Now it is already 16. In total we are already engaged in election campaign activities in 30 towns. During the last weeks of the election campaign the **fight for every vote** must be made an even stronger focus of attention!

Is there any time left at all for theoretical work?

We **interpenetrate practical and theoretical work very closely**, qualifying the new phenomena and essential changes in this work. Under the leadership of Stefan Engel, the editorial staff of *Revolutionärer Weg* is working intensively on volume 36 of the series, "The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology." In our party, theoretical work has never been a detached debate of academics. It refers to the problems that have to be resolved in the party and among the masses. In consciousness-raising construction work we have to work still better and more intensively with our organ *Revolutionärer Weg*. Stefan Engel discussed this extensively in his interview with *Rote Fahne*, No. 15, 2019. Right now we must **bring to bear** especially the **weapon of scientific, proletarian polemics**. What we hear from other parties is either appeasement blurring the class contradictions, vile demagoguery, or general complaints about the world situation (which they themselves are responsible for).

What distinguishes us is that we speak openly at all times, we name names, we polarize and give **profound, straightforward and positive answers** to the questions of our time, always from the position of the working class. Especially in this complicated situation, when many people are confused, polemics is indispensable: to see clearly and disseminate clarity; to find one's bearing and be able to provide orientation, and start fighting with perspective, self-confidence and optimism. This is true in particular among the **youth**; Marxist-Leninist ideas are still least rooted there, but the potential is the greatest. The debate over world outlooks will help young people to avoid becoming a plaything of the spontaneous development – to become instead independently thinking and acting, revolutionary young persons.

The general crisis of the imperialist system implies a **deep crisis of bourgeois ideology**, with all its varieties like pragmatism, positivism, skepticism or negativism. With *Revolutionärer Weg*, No. 36, we will give clear direction to an ideological offensive among the masses to comprehensively tear apart not only modern anticommunism, but also the openly aggressive anticommunism. This includes the strengthening of the proletarian world outlook, and its creative further development. Another aspect is to **expose state-monopoly capitalism's alleged "freedom from ideology" as fundamental fiction**. This alleged "freedom from ideology" is a new weapon to defend bourgeois ideology tooth and nail. Their "freedom" ends exactly when the proletarian ideology, Marxism-Leninism, becomes dangerous for them.

It is possible that this phase will take several years until we have fully fought our role through in society as a whole. This is a **great process of self-transformation in our criticism and self-criticism campaign**, for which the MLPD is **currently fighting brilliantly**. This means we can look forward to eventful times!

Thank you for this interview!

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- 1 This only reflects the circulation of print newspapers containing articles; online articles are not included.
- 2 International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations
- 3 International League of Peoples' Struggle
- 4 *Neues Deutschland* of 13 September 1951, our translation
- 5 Website of Heinrich Böll Foundation
- 6 These settlements already have been termed illegal in UN resolutions.
- 7 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) of 9 October 2019
- 8 Zeit.de, 15 July 2019
- 9 FAZ of 9 October 2019
- 10 FAZ of 26 August 2019
- 11 Verfassungsschutzbericht (report of federal domestic intelligence agency) 2018, p. 135
- 12 FAZ of 17 September 2019