

# “Expand the revolutionary potential with the offensive”

Interview with Stefan Engel, Party Chairman of the MLPD

August 13, 2013

***The MLPD is participating in the federal elections. In what situation is this taking place and what are the goals?***

For five years we have been experiencing the deepest on-going world economic and financial crisis in the history of capitalism. Nearly every week mass demonstrations, mass strikes or even mass uprisings are taking place in some part of the world. The transition to a global environmental catastrophe with drastic consequences for the lives of the broad masses of people is also highly apparent.

In this situation the percentage of people who no longer feel themselves to be represented by the ruling political system of capitalism and who are therefore looking for a fundamental alternative is rising. This also goes for Germany, even if the contradictions are not breaking out as openly as in other countries.

The major bourgeois parties CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Party/Christian/Social Party) and SPD (Social Democratic Party) have lost 40 percent of their membership since the beginning of the 1990s, the FDP (Liberal Democratic Party) even 65 percent. Only 42 percent – in East Germany 30 percent – of all eligible voters voted for the two major bourgeois parties at the last federal elections in 2009. According to opinion polls, the proportion of those who actually no longer want to vote for a bourgeois party any more is continuously rising to 40 to 50 percent of all eligible voters. Among them are 30 to 40 percent non-voters, as well as about 10 percent who can imagine voting for a small party which is not represented in the federal parliament.

The cliché that this great potential is largely unpolitical has been disproved by a survey of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation *“Non-voters are quite politically interested and well-informed.”*(1):

However, not voting does not solve any problem. These people have to get out of the political dead end of a purely **negative and passive** criticism. The growing fundamental criticism of capitalism has to obtain a **positive and active** perspective: for a radically left, revolutionary and genuine socialist alternative! Our offensive for genuine socialism and against modern anticommunism is aimed at that!

***The participation in the federal elections is always a special effort for the MLPD. Is it worth it?***

We are not fooling ourselves: The bourgeois parliamentary elections are a method by which international finance capital, also in Germany, wants to disguise its dictatorship over the state, economy and society under the guise of allegedly free elections. For that it has set up considerable hurdles against the parliamentary work of revolutionary forces.

We have already overcome the **first hurdle** with bravura: As the only left party which had to collect signatures, we are standing for election in all 16 federal states with *Land* lists and in 41 constituencies with direct candidates. With 43,000 signatures we collected more than the necessary about 40,000 signatures and these were confirmed. In about half a million single conversations in thousands of activities and at information stands we could make many different and concrete experiences. They enable us to sharpen our arguments and improve

our ability to convince people.

The **second hurdle** was the federal election committee on 5<sup>th</sup> July. There the MLPD was admitted this time without substantial complaints, so also confirming the status of the MLPD as a party.

The **third hurdle** is the **financial privilege** of the established parties through tax funding with the record sum of 150 million euros last year. We, in contrast, are financing our election campaign solely through donations and the voluntary initiative of the masses.

The **forth hurdle** is the **undemocratic five percent clause**: With about 80,000 votes we actually would have to get one electoral mandate. It shows great disrespect for the will of the voters that all votes under 5 percent are transferred to those parties that already have a seat in parliament.

The **fifth hurdle** are the so-called “graded equal opportunities”. This means that in many cities and communities we are allowed to hang up only a fraction of the posters that parties represented in the federal parliament can.

The **sixth hurdle** is the **media manipulation up to a media boycott**. Public service broadcasting is controlled by the parliamentary parties. They have seats in the administration and television councils and determine the guidelines of federal reporting. While on TV we have to put up with the leading heads of CDU, CSU, SPD and FDP, Greens and Left Party for hours every day, a general contribution is just being prepared about “other parties”, which will be broadcast, like last time, at 11 o'clock in the evening. This way the dictate of the bourgeois opinion leadership is being maintained.

Nevertheless **it would be a political stupidity not to make use of this democratic right to participate in elections**. In election times the masses are especially politicized. Even with our few election spots on TV and radio we reach millions of people. Our trump card, however, remains the street and personal talks. I'd like to see anyone else to do that! We will reach tens of thousands of people at our information stands, as well as rallies and actions at factories, vocational schools, training workshops or in residential areas.

**The slogan “radically left, revolutionary – for genuine socialism” is a pointed, almost provocative confrontation with capitalism. Doesn't this scare people off?**

On the contrary! The other parties are actually focusing on issues of the day. A fundamental calling into question of capitalist society is not even supposed to come. We also have concrete arguments and answers to concrete questions. However, our election campaign aims at a **fundamental decision on direction and perspective** on the part of the many people who are looking for a social alternative and at the urgently necessary strengthening of the party.

Let us take the **issue of wages**: Even the CDU, CSU, FDP, SPD and the Greens are unable to avoid this subject in view of the fact that real wages have been falling for almost 20 years, the massive intensification of exploitation, eight million people in the low-wage sector, the scandals over the wages of agency workers or company contracts. In the meantime, all of them are demanding minimum wages in different forms and at different rates. We also fight against the overexploitation by means of the lowest wages, for instance by the parity of agency workers with regular workers. But that does not mean that the capitalist system of the exploitation of the labor power of the workers is abolished. Every worker knows from his own experience: after every wage dispute the capitalists succeed in reversing the achievements of the workers.

The essence of capitalist exploitation will remain as long as the capitalists own the means of production and have political power.

By the way, not only the workers in the low-wage sector are being exploited! The 29 biggest German groups of companies, which belong to the 500 biggest international supermonopolies, had an average annual turnover per employee of about 342,000 euros. If we assume annual gross earnings of 30,000 euros per employee, these supermonopolies have squeezed 310,000 euros exceeding the paid wage out of every employee in 2012. The workers in the international supermonopolies are thus in particular in the focus of exploitation. Should we come to terms with this enormous exploitation? Radical changes have to be directed against the relations of exploitation themselves! *“Down with the wage system!”* - this was already the revolutionary slogan of Karl Marx. Only in genuine socialism will this exploitation of humankind by humankind be abolished. This is the spirit in which we are fighting for every concrete improvement; we have convincing demands – and demonstrate in every one of these justified concerns why today you have to be radically left, revolutionary and for genuine socialism!

### ***How is your relationship to the Left Party in this offensive?***

For more than ten years we have been observing a trend to the left worldwide and also in Germany. The Left Party is the spontaneous result and beneficiary of this trend to the left up to now – not its cause as it likes to maintain. In this trend to the left there are two main directions: **a radically left revolutionary direction and a left-reformist direction**. In the German party scene the first direction is embodied mainly by the MLPD. The second direction is talking about “democratic socialism” - as if there also were an undemocratic socialism! It spreads the illusion that it is possible to tame capitalism through radical-democratic, social and ecological reforms. This is being sold to people as “democratic socialism”. The main carrier of this direction which wants to maintain capitalism is the Left Party. Even though many members of the Left Party may be sincere in that: objectively this party serves to channel the trend to the left and the awakening class consciousness into a bourgeois-parliamentary framework which is acceptable to those in power. The top election campaigner of the Left Party, Gregor Gysi, got the platform for that in an extensive “summer interview” of ZDF (Second German TV channel) on 28<sup>th</sup> July, to put the voters in the mood for a possible coalition with the SPD and the Greens. An excellent step towards “democratic socialism”: Steinbrück, Trittin and Gysi as parliamentary caretakers of the dictatorship of the monopolies! The fact that that he has so dropped essential demands of the election program adopted by the rank and file shows the direction they are taking. All the more: the MLPD is committed to a real societal alternative in this election campaign!

### ***This time the federal elections are taking place in a situation of a negative economic development. Does this have consequences?***

In fact the world economic and financial crisis that broke out in 2008 has **undergone a negative development again since the fall of 2011**, despite extensive worldwide economic and finance-policy measures. Most of the imperialist countries have not yet reached the **level prior to the crisis** regarding their economic power. Some countries, mainly in Southern Europe or Great Britain, have fallen far behind that. In the euro zone industrial production in May was 1.3 percent below the previous year. In Germany industrial production also fell by 1.9 percent in the first quarter of 2013 and by 0.9 percent in May 2013. The BRICS states – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – have abandoned their role as **outlet for the worldwide overproduction** after a temporary boom between 2009 and 2011.

With trillions of state subsidies and cheap money from the central banks the imperialists have

been trying in vain to boost the economy again in a lasting way.

The state subsidies for international finance capital only increase the **state debt** up to now. Radical cuts in social services and wages, as well as job cuts, mainly in the completely over-indebted countries, slow down public as well as mass consumption. This leads to a deepening of the crisis. The galloping state debt has the tendency to promote inflation, which is presently prevented only with difficulty by the low interest policies and the bad economic development. However, we all experience rising energy and especially food prices.

The cheap capital from the central banks is fueling the stock market – but, at the same time, this leads to new and even bigger **speculative bubbles**, which at some point of time will burst again with a loud bang.

The chronic overaccumulation deepens not only the overproduction crisis: With its compulsion to destroy capital the **international structural crisis** is accelerating as well: huge capacities have been built up in many branches in a speculative way during the last years which are now collapsing: the German **solar industry** has been ruined to a large degree by the Chinese competition. This is a catastrophe for federal states like Brandenburg or Saxony-Anhalt. In the **automobile sector** there is fierce worldwide competition. The registration of new cars fell in Germany in May by 10 percent, export by 5 percent and production by 4 percent. The intensified competition forces the European auto industry to reorganize. The international automobile monopolies are already aiming at shutting down 16 European auto plants.

The automobile crisis also has repercussions in the **steel sector**: The steel plants have been extended worldwide to a raw steel capacity of 2.2 billion tons according to a OECD survey – exceeding by far the production of 1.548 billion tons in 2012. Thyssen/Krupp is already negotiating on abandoning steel production and is announcing ever far-reaching plans of job cuts.

The industrial giant Siemens is also in difficulties and fired Peter Löscher, who had been their shining light.

The downward economic trend also has repercussions in the **logistics sector**: The German railway is considering the introduction of short-time work in freight traffic. In the first quarter of 2013, freight volume dropped by 10 percent.

Most of the industrial enterprises have halted recruitment. Agency workers are being dismissed gradually and temporary contracts not renewed. The practice of not giving regular jobs to most of the trainees after completing training is continuing to grow. First closures and dismissals signal a qualitative leap which, however, will first become noticeable after the elections.

The enormously intensified competitive struggle is shifting the balance in the world economy and politics at a rapid rate. The share of the international supermonopolies from the EU among the worldwide 500 biggest supermonopolies fell to 97 in 2012 – 26 fewer than in the year 2007. The number of German supermonopolies has fallen from 37 in 2007 to 29 in 2012. China in contrast has gained 60 new international supermonopolies in the same period of time.

***In the development of class conflicts in Germany the struggle for the Opel plant in Bochum is undoubtedly the focal point ...***

That's true! General Motors has already enforced a **concrete change of tactics with regard**

**to the workforce**, while in general the policy of the monopolies and the government of dampening class conflicts is still prevailing. Obviously the workforce of Bochum is supposed to be punished for the fact that it became a model for the working-class movement in its independent seven-day strike in 2004 against the plant closure. "Fight like at Opel" became a common slogan in many strikes.

With the vote in March 2013, 76.1 percent of the workforce declared that they would not let themselves be blackmailed, nor would they accept wage cuts, the breach of wage contracts nor the announced plant closure. This shows the high fighting morale and a **developing class independence** of the Opel workers. In close connection with the systematic work among the rank and file of the MLPD and the class-militant colleagues, the workforce of Opel is succeeding more and more in coping with the diverse variants of the petty-bourgeois reformist mode of thinking like the stalling tactics of the arbitration board. New leaders of the workers are emerging, who are ready to take on responsibility and who do not let themselves be intimidated by threats and reprisals. Every week bigger or smaller and independently organized meetings are taking place, partly in connection with short work stoppages. Even though the majority of the workforce already repeatedly voted in favor of a strike, the triggering of an independent strike is very complicated. A simple repetition of the independent strike of 2004 will not occur.

While the left reformists have declared themselves to be against the open policy of class collaboration of the leadership of the Metal Workers Union and the central works council, it showed little readiness up to now to take up the necessary hard class conflict with the world enterprise General Motors. With wicked anticommunist attacks on the class-militant direction they are diverting attention from their own backing-off. The class-militant and revolutionary workers are facing enormous demands.

Only through a **whole system of the systematic work among the rank and file within and outside of the factory** is such an industrial action possible today. New forms of organization are also emerging like the *ueberparteilich* (above party lines) women's committee "Basta" or the solidarity circle. Even before the beginning of the strike they are collecting money and so becoming part of the nationwide organized preparations to have this strike become the cause of all workers.

As a revolutionary working-class party we give active support nationwide for the proposal "**One hourly wage for the strike fund at Opel!**" and put our know-how and organizational power to the disposal for the preparation, initiation and leading of the strike. A part of this is to help the workers with our offensive for genuine socialism and against modern anticommunism to cope with the petty-bourgeois-anticommunist mode of thinking, which expresses itself mainly in uncertainties and confused reservations against cooperation. It is also essential to strengthen the factory groups of the MLPD.

Because a decisive strengthening of the MLPD is the precondition for the transition to the workers' offensive on a broad front. The **relationship between the working class and the MLPD becomes the focus of the conflict on the road to the workers' offensive!** The struggle of the Opel workforce is the cause of the entire working class, because this is a preliminary battle of the challenges facing all workers in Germany!

***Bankruptcies of state budgets and municipal budgets are threatening ever more openly. What can we expect to happen?***

It is a **worldwide characteristic of the current world economic and financial crisis** that international finance capital is restructuring **at the expense of the national budgets**. The EU

member states have invested a total of 4.5 trillion euros so far to "rescue banks". This has increased the public debt from 7.3 to 11 trillion euros since 2007 – before the crisis arose. Since that the chronic threat of **state bankruptcy** is threatening a growing number of states all over the world. In the meantime, public debt in Germany has officially surpassed 2.2 trillion euros, too. This is 82 percent of the current gross national product. This quota would increase sharply, even if only one part of the arduously established EU bailout packages would be implemented.

Public procurement, subsidies, guarantees and investments, mainly in infrastructure, are an indispensable precondition for maintaining the competitiveness of international finance capital today. This is why they want to continue to redistribute the national budget to their benefit. The restructuring of the public debt is mainly shifted onto the communities, where the masses are affected in the most direct way. The majority of the communities in North Rhine-Westphalia are already so indebted that they largely belong to the banks. Streets and buildings fall into disrepair and social achievements are being drastically cut. Federal and Land governments are shifting tasks to the communities more and more – without saying where the money is coming from. The Chapter 9 bankruptcy of the US-city of Detroit indicates the direction in which things are heading here, too.

The bourgeois politicians have been reacting to the public debt for some time by robbing the **social insurances**, too, or reducing their contributions. The consequences are to be borne by the mass of the insured people: by raising their own contribution to health care, massively falling real pensions to a net level of about 43 percent in the year 2030, etc. The result will be growing poverty among the elderly – especially single parents, women, migrants and the already more than 6 million Hartz-IV recipients.

***But is this not actually regrettable, but without alternative, as chancellor Merkel stresses all the time?***

Nonsense! Of course there are alternatives! To overcome **public debt**, however, requires fundamentally different power relations. It was completely justified that the newly emerged socialist states immediately turned down all liabilities owed to the imperialist creditors after the socialist revolution in Russia 1917 and the revolution in China in 1949. As long as these countries were socialist, they built up balanced national budgets by the initiative of the masses within the framework of a planned development of economy and society. There was no speculation, no inflation and no public debt (2). The costs of the social insurances were financed only by the turnover of the industry. All social benefits were thus free of charge for the population. The masses only had to pay low taxes, if at all. Today, the material conditions for such a socialist society exist more than ever.

***Egypt, Turkey, Brazil, Bulgaria – uprisings are obviously increasing in the world ...***

We had analyzed a „*process of cross-border revolutionary ferment in the Mediterranean area*“ in 2011. One year later, we had to analyze soberly at our Ninth Party Congress that the movement of uprisings had reached an impasse for the time being. But only half a year later, mass uprisings developed again in different countries of the world: Egypt, Turkey, Brazil, Bulgaria, Tunisia etc. The issues are labor and women's rights, against hunger and for democracy and freedom. Comparatively small incidents often trigger the mass movement – like the planned demolition of the Gezi Park in Istanbul or an increase in transportation fares in Brazil. Similar to the fountains of the geysers, the hot gushers, the long accumulated energy suddenly breaks through eruptively. Increasingly, those struggling do not only want single reforms or to overthrow a government. Their struggle is objectively more and more directed against the system. Their struggles reflect a very fast process of reflection among the masses. The system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking with its reformist illusions is wearing out. In Egypt, the attempt of the ruling powers, with the help of imperialists from the US and the EU, to prevent a further revolutionarization with bourgeois-parliamentary illusions or the reactionary

ideology of the "moderate Muslim brothers", miserably failed after only one year. A similar development is currently beginning in Tunisia.

The fact that open political crises are breaking out more and more often worldwide, shows how **the potential of a revolutionary world crisis is being built up further**. We as Marxist-Leninists have a positive attitude towards revolutions and uprisings, do not fear them like those in power or bemoan them like the reformists. They are just, tackle this evil at its roots and might lead to truly sustainable social changes! The orientation toward the preparation of the international socialist revolution will become a particular feature of our election campaign.

***Is this what was meant by the "new quality of proletarian internationalism" towards which the Ninth Party Congress of the MLPD orientated?***

The MLPD has made some important progress and gained success in its internationalist work. Most important was the participation in the **founding of ICOR** (International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations) in 2010. Today, it already has 45 members from 32 countries. It consolidated as a whole with the formation and start of the work of the continental coordination. Most of all, an impressive relation of trust was built among the members. The MLPD has successfully made the ICOR known in Germany with a year-long campaign and reached excellent donations of 607,222.86 euros. 10 percent of which were handed over to ICOR.

ICOR and ILPS (International League of People's Struggle) called for resistance under the slogans "Shutdown all nuclear power plants!" and "Ban and destroy all nuclear weapons!" and developed a year-long worldwide campaign, as well as a collection of signatures in some countries. It was the first common environmental activity of the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement.

A big step forward and model for the worldwide coordination within the working-class movement was the **1st International Miners' Conference with 500 representatives from 25 nations**, which was successfully conducted in Peru in March 2013. Altogether, almost 50 countries were involved in the preparation process. The international miners' coordination was founded unanimously. This is a big step on the way to unite the militant and class-militant miners of the world.

But if we are speaking about a "new quality of the proletarian internationalism", there is more at stake. We must give the highest priority to the **development of an internationalist consciousness among the masses** and in particular among the international industrial proletariat and the youth.

A pronounced petty-bourgeois internationalist tendency is opposing that, which has appeared internationally in each of previous projects in a certain way. At the World Women's Conference or the International Miners' Conference, for instance, a tendency of some protagonists to separate the work from the rank-and-file work among the masses actually had to be wrestled down.

In our election campaign it will be important to penetrate the **internationalist work closely with our systematic rank-and-file work**.

***Was the Federal Government's "turnaround" in energy policy only a ploy?***

At first, after the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima and the mass protests against nuclear power plants, the Merkel/Roesler administration had no other choice than to withdraw its bill on increasing the operating lifetime of nuclear power plants. With that it created the impression of having great care for the environment. When, however, the conversion to alternative energies advanced much faster than planned, mainly because of the initiative of the masses, the energy monopolies intervened. They already feared this limitation of their markets and profits. The former CDU Minister for the Environment Norbert Roettgen was replaced by Peter Altmaier

and the turnaround in energy policy was thwarted. Meanwhile you can not only speak of a “rollback”, but of an intensification. Thus the German coal-fired power plants were allowed to emit even 4 percent more CO2 in 2012 than in the year before.

The consumer price of electricity is systematically pushed up mainly by the EEG levy (renewable energies act) to guarantee maximum profits for the energy monopolies and to turn public opinion against renewable energies. Large electricity-intensive sectors, however, were subsidized by extremely cheap electricity of 4 cent per kilowatt hour.

Another scandal is the EU demand, also under Energy Commissioner Guenther Oettinger (CDU), to extend **nuclear power** in Europe again and to even subsidize this by the state. Meanwhile the worldwide capitalist mode of production and the preservation of the natural foundations of human life are opposed to each other irreconcilably. In order to save the environment capitalism has to be overcome.

***The environmental work has gained great significance for the MLPD. How is the party preparing for this at the moment?***

The Ninth Party Congress resolved to take on environmental work as the second most important fighting line for the preparation of the international socialist revolution.

A struggle is taking place in the MLPD, but also among the masses, over the **necessary new quality and strategic change of the environmental movement**. A number of new environmental party groups have been founded and the environmental and political profile of the MLPD has been improved and developed. The “Strategy Conference of the Environmental Movement” on Whit Monday in Schwerte with 320 participants, among them many representatives of important environmental initiatives and alliances, was certainly successful. A founding process for the environmental union and for recruiting at least 5,000 initiators until the founding congress in autumn 2014 was adopted. However, the need for a totally **new quality of the environmental movement to stop this already beginning catastrophe** is undoubtedly still being seriously underestimated.

***The MLPD describes the solution of the social and the environmental issue as its trademark. How are we supposed to understand that?***

For us the social issue is not limited to socio-political reforms. It has two basic aspects for us: **Exploitation through wage labor in the enterprises and double exploitation and oppression of the masses of women by the bourgeois state and family system**. Today this social issue, as well as the environmental issue, can only be solved in socialism! Meanwhile the environmental crisis is connected by law to the capitalist mode of production. That implies the danger of the destruction of the natural foundations of all (human) life, in case imperialism can continue to rage. The **social issue and the environmental issue** become identical in the necessary revolutionary overthrow of imperialism. Today they can only be solved in unity and interrelation with each other.

The international industrial proletariat is the decisive force to overthrow international finance capital and thus to solve the social as well as the environmental issue.

Those being threatened by the environmental catastrophe have developed to become the **largest group of all oppressed people**. Our slogan “**Workers of all countries and all oppressed, unite!**” aims at creating a force superior to imperialism. The conventional environmental movement is strongly characterized by reacting to particularly drastic developments. It denounces, is competent and develops militant activities from case to case. With that, however, it is not capable of braving the danger of the global environmental catastrophe!

To develop a superior force is not conceivable without permanent organized activity – without overcoming anticommunist and anti-worker reservations, national limitation, worship of



spontaneity and trust in the learning ability of the ruling powers. This is a far-reaching process of self-transformation in view of the 40 years of molding of the environmental movement, which is also reflected in the debates within our party.

***Are such far-reaching debates over the self-transformation of the party only taking place in the field of environmental politics ?***

No! The decisions of the Ninth Party Congress gave far-reaching impulses for the self-transformation of all fields of party work on the background of the highly complicated situation in the world. In face of the grown responsibility of the MLPD, this **surmounts the dimensions of all previous party congresses!**

Just take our factory and trade-union work, which is a recognized quality feature of the MLPD. But the necessary new quality of factory and trade-union work by far surmounts what we have worked out and fought through as a foundation of our work in *Revolutionary Way* No. 11 and 12 "Trade Unions and Class Struggle". In the meantime a whole range of new characteristics of the work on the main line of struggle have come up. These have to be realized, tested and fought through in a hard struggle against a petty-bourgeois stamp. In fact, the term "factory and trade-union work" in itself is too limited in the meantime!

The necessity of concrete strategy and tactics in the struggle over the mode of thinking or the challenges arising from the internationalization of the class struggle belong to these new characteristic features. The social question can not be limited to the system of wage labor alone, but embraces the entire range of production and reproduction of human life. This means that you must understand the living conditions of the workers and their families and the struggle for the liberation of women as a part of the social question. The struggle to save the environment from the profit economy inalienably belongs to the unspectacular system of rank-and-file work in the factories and trade-unions!

Nowadays the main work to lead a strike must already be done before it is launched. The factory groups must be strengthened, new forms of organization in the cooperation above party lines with the workers – like the editing staffs of the factory or corporation newspapers – must be built up with perseverance. Above all, the creative initiative in the positive trade-union work or in the numerous factory functions of trust which have developed in the meantime must never be neglected. This is a great deal of work and we are having lively and creative debates about that.

***How far has the theoretical work of the central committee with the Revolutionary Way No. 35 „Class Struggle and the Struggle for the Unity of Humanity and Nature“ developed?***

The work is taking its planned course, this month we will already present a first provisional draft of the manuscript. If nothing more important interferes, the central committee will be able to decide on the publication of this number of the theoretical organ by the end of 2013. It will contain a number of fundamental insights and analyses, which will help us to come to grips with the underestimation of the environmental question. We first had to go back to Marx and Engels as far as the **world outlook** is concerned. We had to completely grasp the fundamental findings about the unity of humanity and nature which were quite buried in the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement and apply them to the new situation. **Politically** we had to advance with our analyses on the development of the global environmental crisis. We have already arrived at the incisive result that we are no longer at the beginning of the transformation to a global environmental catastrophe, but are already right in the middle of it. Four factors caused us to speak of a beginning transformation to the global environmental catastrophe since the 1990s: the greenhouse effect, the growing ozone hole, the accelerated destruction of the tropical rain forests and the drastic increase of regional environmental catastrophes. They have developed further at an accelerated speed.

On the other hand, new factors of the environmental crisis have come up, which in their combination bring about a new quality: the acidification, pollution and warming of the oceans; the destruction of regional ecological systems and the resulting extinction of species; the ruinous exploitation of fossil raw materials, as well as the waste of energy which goes so far as to exhaust the natural resources and, in the end, poison the natural environment and fill it with wastes – for example with millions of tons of radioactive nuclear waste.

This development urgently demands taking the strategic decisions of the Ninth Party Congress of the MLPD seriously and overcoming any hesitation in putting them into practice.

***How do you evaluate the gigantic surveillance of the masses which has been revealed and the growing militarization and danger of war?***

The task of the intelligence services is to recognize a revolutionary movement as early as possible and to nip it in the bud. When it is about proceeding against the increasing criticism of the masses and their beginning resistance, then the intelligence services of all the imperialist powers are united and cooperate closely. Therefore it is pure hypocrisy that the current government – and Chancellor Merkel in the lead – gives the appearance of being unknowing when confronted with the disclosed surveillance affair and the cooperation of all the intelligence services. And it is the same hypocrisy when the opposition of the SPD and the Greens now play the role of being the indignant ones. Because this cooperation of the intelligence services has been functioning for decades and was intensified once more under the „red-green“ government following 11th September 2001.

A piquant story which became known is the important parallel between this surveillance scandal and the drone scandal around the Euro-Hawk: The Euro-Hawk is foremostly a drone for surveillance. And the encryption equipment and software for the calls on mobile phones which were surveyed were delivered exactly by the NSA! Aside from the surveillance of mass struggles, drones can also perform targeted killing. The Merkel government adheres to buying war drones, which are especially suited for combating uprisings and for liquidating revolutionaries at home and abroad. That this unscrupulous federal government policy of war and combating uprisings has been partly unveiled, in spite of all attempts to cover it up and that it is now in the pillory – that is the true political explosiveness of this drone scandal. Those who only point out the hundreds of millions of wasted money, like the bourgeois opposition does, divert attention from this political core. In courageous people like Edward Snowden, worldwide demonstrations against the mass surveillance and also in successes like the release of Gustl Mollath from psychiatric detention as a result of a struggle you can see the determination of the masses to resist the reactionary decadent oppression.

***The offensive is also aimed against modern anti-communism . What does this mean?***

There are still two great barriers against a mass turn towards socialism:

The first one are the experiences with the restoration of capitalism in the former socialist countries and the degeneration of the former communist parties. The anti-communist propaganda falsely attributes this betrayal of socialism to the idea of socialism itself. So many people hold the view: „Socialism is a good idea, but it actually did not function anywhere.“ Therefore the decisive condition to gain new esteem for socialism on a mass scale again is to spread the lessons which we have drawn from the restoration of capitalism about the decisive role of the control of the mode of thinking in the party, the economy and state in an offensive way.

The second barrier is **modern anti-communism** as real „state terror of world outlook“ on behalf of our capitalist state. It appears to be critical towards capitalism, but actually spreads thousands of reservations, semi-truths and lies in order to scare away the masses. The entire

media bombard the masses with reservations and with the anti-communist principles of many mass organizations. **It is functioning mainly as a subtle influence of the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking.** This makes the discussion about it especially complicated. Because often the people themselves do not make it a point of discussion – they do not regard themselves as being anti-communist. But the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking functions via subtle fears, not to cooperate with Marxist-Leninists too closely: You could end up getting some problems; perhaps part of the slander of the office for the protection of the constitution is actually true. Or you really do not know what you are getting involved in and so on.

Treating this correctly will be an important issue of our offensive. To draw a clear line by polarizing against modern anti-communism makes it easier for the masses to come to grips with the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking. You have to treat the fears and cares of people openly, convincingly and with solidarity and feeling.

We must unveil the class character of modern anti-communism in this process and attack it self-confidently and in an offensive way. The polarization against modern anti-communism must be very closely connected with an **intensive persuasion work**. Therefore a **regular offensive in selling our literature** is important to give a foundation to the growing interest. And our series of events about the classics of Marxism-Leninism will contribute to that. By the way, it will be launched next week in the „Horster Mitte“ in Gelsenkirchen.

### ***You attach great value to the work of your voter action groups. Why is that?***

We conduct an election campaign to mobilize the people **to become new politicians themselves, together with us.** The voter action groups have an outstanding importance to achieve that aim. While in the last elections they were an instrument to organize the elections, the complete election campaign of the MLPD is now being organized via the voter action groups. Naturally this increases the demands on participating in the initiatives – but it also makes the work more interesting. At the moment there are 61 voter action groups with about 3000 members. Following the experiences of the last election we assume that this number will increase considerably during the election campaign. Everybody has the chance to actively get to know our candidates, our party with its system of rank-and-file work, our goals, our mode of work and, last but not least, our cooperation in solidarity and our culture of celebrations. Everyone can make a contribution. At the same time, the basis for anti-communist reservations is removed or, let us say, they can be clarified in an open way if necessary. Each voter action group is connected with fundamental discussions about central questions of the class struggle and the election campaign. There people can learn to think and act in an organized, conscious and planned way. Our special goal is to have 20 percent young people participating.

### ***Which role does the youth work play in that?***

We address our offensive for genuine socialism especially to young people and children to become active and organize themselves in REBELL and Red Foxes. Young people worldwide are rebelling against the drastic impacts of the world economic and financial crisis. It is about winning and educating them as practical avant-garde of the preparation of the international revolution. It is important that the voter action groups make the youth work to their cause, even if it is not that easy. Few young people are working with us in a really organized and permanent way yet. On the one hand, this is certainly a social phenomenon, too, which we have to tackle. On the other hand, it is also a challenge to the party to overcome any detachment, but also opportunism and sectarianism towards the youth.

**In connection with the new quality of proletarian internationalism and as rebellious actor of the struggle against modern anticommunism, our youth league REBELL has gained attraction** during the last months. We need to further develop these features in the offensive and show how good we are!

Whoever wants to meet the needs of young people should not pamper them! Instead we must challenge them to do political work by themselves, to thoroughly educate them for it and help them to cope with the petty-bourgeois antiauthoritarian mode of thinking. This is also one of the most essential self-transformation processes of our party work.

**To expand the revolutionary potentials** – in Germany and internationally – that is the **declared aim of our offensive** in connection with the federal elections. This primarily includes the **strengthening of our party and our youth league. The struggle for every vote** comes to the center of attention now. Given the manipulative bourgeois election modus, the vote for the MLPD in the elections only has relative importance for the election outcome. It has, however, a high significance as an important feature for the development of the consciousness of the masses, as every vote for the MLPD is a conscious approval of a **revolutionary socialist way out** and for the support of the MLPD and its candidates. That will surely – sooner or later – also be expressed in the strengthening of the revolutionary forces and an upswing of the transition to a working-class offensive on a broad front.

***We wish you a lot of success and many thanks for the interview!***

(1) Manfred Güllner, “Non-voters in Germany” - a study for the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, 17 June 2013

(2) see e.g. “The first quarter of a century of the new China” Peking 1975, p.60 ff.