

“The internationalist alliance is the progressive and revolutionary response to the government’s shift to the right”

Interview with Gabi Gärtner, September 2016

The *Rote Fahne* spoke with Gabi Gärtner. The 38-year old toolmaker from Solingen is a member of the secretariat of the central committee of the MLPD. Together with Peter Weispfenning (48) she is heading the negotiations for the MLPD in the new alliance. The lawyer from Herne is also a member of the central committee.

Rote Fahne: The MLPD has been working in a new alliance for several months now. What is it about?

Gabi Gärtner: This alliance is the progressive, democratic and revolutionary response to the Merkel government’s pronounced shift to the right and a fascization of the state apparatus.

In this situation our **central attention** must be directed to uniting the revolutionary, anti-fascist, internationalist and class-militant potential of the movements of the women, environmentalists and the rebellious youth under the leadership of the working class against this tendency. The societal polarization has not only fueled right-wing sentiments, but has also given rise to an ongoing progressive **change of mood among the masses**. In the last weeks this change became evident again in the strikes of 9000 steelworkers, more than 300,000 participants in the anti-TTIP/CETA demonstrations and growing mass protests of refugees against residence requirements.

However, the **left-wing and revolutionary pole in Germany is still too much divided**. We estimate that at the moment at least 100,000 people belong to the revolutionary potential in Germany. Millions of people are **searching for societal alternatives**. But many have never heard of the MLPD because of the systematically practiced anti-communist policy of social isolation by the media and organs of the state. So it is about a close **cooperation in the spirit of proletarian internationalism against the government’s shift to the right**.

How has the alliance developed so far?

On the basis of partly many years of cooperation there have been three meetings so far where the core of the **alliance** has developed. These are in particular: AGİF, Almanya Göçmen İşçiler Federasyonu – Federation of Working-Class Migrants in Germany; ATİF, Almanya Türkiyeli İşçiler Federasyonu – Federation of Workers from Turkey in Germany; ADHF, Almanya Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu – Federation for Democratic Rights in Germany; PFLP, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; Komala/KP Iran – Komala/Communist Party Iran; PYD Rojava, Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat – Democratic Union Party Rojava; MLPD, REBELL, Left-wing Forum Radevormwald and many individuals from the working-class and union movement, the militant women’s movement, the environmental movement and the rebellious youth movement. Also representatives from the anti-fascist and internationalist work and artists. To some

extent members of other parties as well. This is a promising intensive beginning, which has to be further **consolidated**. Up till now the alliance has agreed on key aspects of cooperation, principles and the joint candidacy for the federal elections 2017. We have also issued first militant leaflets together. In the polarized debate shortly after the establishment of a fascist dictatorship in Turkey, we proved ourselves in practice with a joint militant demonstration in Cologne.

In many countries like Turkey, Spain and Greece such alliances were developed in the last years. The **federal elections are not the purpose but a good occasion** to build up such an alliance, which by no means only has significance in day to day politics. In elections, however, people are especially politicized and you have more possibilities to appear in public. We agree with Lenin, who called it "*childish*" to refrain from participating in elections as long as "*parliamentarianism in Germany is not yet politically obsolete.*" At the same time he stressed that you have to understand how to "*create a new, uncustomary, non-opportunist, and non-careerist parliamentarianism*"¹.

Because electoral alliances are not possible according to German electoral law, the alliance decided to run on an open list of the MLPD. In contrast to earlier elections in which we could also count on the solidarity and support of different progressive people and organizations, this time we are aiming at a cooperation on equal footing. Most of all, we want our lists to have a representative composition of people from international solidarity work, progressive refugee policy, the anti-fascist and anti-racist struggle, the struggle for peace, freedom and socialism, from the class-militant direction of the working-class movement, the struggle for the liberation of women, as well as the militant youth movement. Those who vote for this alliance list do not only vote for the MLPD, but for a whole direction. It sees itself as a real left-wing societal alternative in the different areas. It is about building up the foundations of a future united front policy.

The MLPD already registered the candidacy on behalf of the alliance at the federal election commissioner in August. Now the objective is to mobilize broadly among the rank and file and to win many fellow campaigners for the alliance. That is what the electoral congress on the 2nd October in Berlin stands for, to which several hundred delegates are expected.

You said the alliance is a response to the government's shift to the right and the increasing societal polarization. How has this situation developed lately and what is to be expected?

The proneness to crisis of the imperialist world system has further increased. One material reason is the **extremely instable situation of the global**

1 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, "'Left-Wing' Communism: an Infantile Disorder": "Should We Participate in Bourgeois Parliaments" and "Several Conclusions"

economy. We are facing a worldwide fluctuating stagnation in the imperialist world economy, where at the same time the harbingers of a new world economic and financial crisis are growing. The environmental crisis is increasing unbridled. Wars and political crises are further destabilizing bourgeois society. In the meantime the crisis of bourgeois refugee policy is bringing the whole party landscape into confusion. The EU is in a deep crisis and NATO is completely divided regarding the wars in Ukraine and Syria.

All of this has led to a deep political and social insecurity among the masses – an international phenomenon.

Although the effects of the world economic and financial crisis from 2008 to 2014 were still compensated best in Germany, the dissatisfaction with the government is high. The grand coalition of Angela Merkel and Sigmar Gabriel is slithering more and more into a latent political crisis, putting the real possibility of a dissolution of the grand coalition on the agenda. This became especially obvious in the last two state elections. After Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Berlin showed the third situation where even a grand coalition was no longer possible. For years grand coalitions have been regarded as the last way to certainly achieve a formation of government in the parliamentary system in Germany. It is parliamentary crisis-management. But if even this tool is less and less possible because the so-called major political parties are increasingly losing the support of their voters, it will lead to a general destabilization of the society. The coalition of the federal government of CDU/CSU and SPD is in a completely disastrous state. CDU as well as SPD have obtained historically poor election results. At the same time the reactionary, racist and proto-fascist AfD succeeded in bringing some of the former non-voters who had not seen any sense in elections anymore to the ballot box again. However, the potential among the nonvoters is not only comprising right-wing but also left-wing voters. It is our task to mobilize this progressive voter-potential and to activate these people politically. Everyone who is searching for a societal alternative left of the parliamentary parties in the German Bundestag has to be able to find it. We are showing profile and facing up to the polarization in our society. We are using it for a political attack on the solely ruling international supermonopolies and the government's shift to the right.

We are attacking the entire spectrum of the reactionary policy of solely ruling international finance capital and its representatives in Germany: the increased exploitation and the shifting of the burdens of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working class, the fascization of the state apparatus, the furthering of ultra-reactionary and fascist forces, the destructive environmental policy, the reactionary family and women's policy, the strangulation of small and middle-scale farmers by food monopolies or the repressive refugee policy.

But the alliance is not only standing for an opposite pole. It stands for the achievements in the struggle for a new quality of proletarian internationalism (as proven in the Solidarity Pact with the Kurdish liberation movement), the offensive struggle of the working class, the rebellious struggle for the future of the youth etc.

Of which significance will the election congress on 2 October be?

At the alliance meeting on 23 July it was unanimously decided to carry out an election congress on 2 October. It is supposed to be the starting point for the alliance to **take shape** at the grassroots level. After the previous meetings have been visited mainly by delegations or representatives of participating organizations, the election congress will be the first larger public mass meeting. Only when the alliance embraces the masses will it become a real alternative.

We will also pass the principles of the alliance and the election manifesto there.

Furthermore the congress will discuss first basic orientations regarding the joint candidates. In addition the coordinating group has proposed to install an **“alliance council”**. It is supposed to consist of the supporting organizations and individuals and take implementation decisions between alliance meetings and congresses.

The election congress is of great significance to unify the further tasks and to bring forward a societal claim accordingly. **Whoever is looking for us must be able to find us as a societal alternative!** At the demonstrations on 17 September against TTIP and CETA hundreds of people showed interest in this alliance. There is a growing potential: So far the parliamentary Left in Berlin is scarcely able to assert itself in this social polarization and to present a real societal alternative.

In the coming weeks those participating in the alliance will be nominating the candidates for the 16 state lists and as many direct candidates as possible. Then the campaign for ten thousands of supporting signatures will follow. In its essence it must serve to build up this broad alliance among the masses. Therefore **local and regional** organizational forms are necessary for which our election initiatives in the past were a good experience.

The desire for the “unification of all left forces” can be heard again and again – what do you say to this concept?

The petty-bourgeois Left, including the Left Party, will certainly not be the main opponent of our tactical offensive. We are open to all members of the Left Party, the DKP (German Communist Party) or other Leftists who want to collaborate on the foundation of struggle. However, it must be clearly pointed out that the leadership and broad sections of the Left Party are pursuing a reformist and purely parliamentary approach. The Left Party justifiably criticizes single injustices – and then appeals to illusions of a “social market economy” or a “welfare state”. Actually these fundamental fictions belong in the dustbin of capitalism. It is an expression of the latent political crisis that the traditional bourgeois parties hardly try to spread these fundamental fictions anymore, because meanwhile they have a stale after-taste for the masses. Why should a left party of all things now work to polish up these models and spread new illusions in the system? We do not want to breathe new life into capitalism, but to form a real societal alternative. This is the essential difference between the “Left” and the internationalist alliance.

The alternative to the current policy cannot be a coalition with the SPD and the Greens, as it has meanwhile been announced by the Left Party's election campaign manager Matthias Höhn in the draft for their election campaign strategy. With that the Left Party will end the same way as SYRIZA in Greece. SYRIZA meanwhile is totally absorbed in implementing the requirements of the formerly despised Troika consisting of IMF, World Bank and EU against the masses.

Isn't there the danger of the participating organizations losing their independence with so much alliance work?

Of course in such an alliance there must be **enough room for all participants** to maintain and develop their own identity. This is why the MLPD will also carry out an independent tactical offensive for genuine socialism and against modern anti-communism. Its guideline is "Radically left, revolutionary, for genuine socialism!" At the same time we will actively promote building up the alliance and conducting its election campaign. We will also encourage the other organizations to develop independent work with their special profile.

For the MLPD the tactical offensive combines with the theoretical and practical process of self-transformation in **the criticism-self-criticism-campaign**. With that the MLPD has fought through a new quality of proletarian internationalism and the environmental work as the second most important fighting line. We see it as an essential task of the MLPD to take over responsibility for the fundamental social solution of the issues of humankind and to promote genuine socialism. It embraces all progressive ideas and achievements and also learns from errors of the past.

This is precisely the new social role of the MLPD – to be more and more in the position to do that. We win over the workers for the path of the working-class offensive in the unity of the social and ecological question. We realize a proletarian refugee policy, strengthen the achievements of the new quality of proletarian internationalism and the revolutionary world organization ICOR. We promote the rebellion of the youth and strengthen the building of *Rebell* to become a mass youth league and the children's organization *Red Foxes*. **To embed genuine socialism as a societal alternative** is part of this entire work. This is why one of our most important documents in the tactical offensive – along with the present election program – will be our **updated party program**: We want to distribute tens of thousands of copies. It is the program of the Marxist-Leninist party for the current stage of class struggle. With it we want to win over many new, mainly younger people to join our organized struggle. An essential benchmark for the success of this tactical offensive will be whether we will succeed in getting **many people away from their political passivity towards organized activity**. So our election campaign will significantly differ from the propaganda battle of the bourgeois parties which only makes people dizzy with television spots, talk shows and election material. We will participate in demonstrations, activities and the activities of the masses and in this way anchor the special character of this internationalist alliance.

It is important that our members understand how to perform **all practical activities in close connection with the strengthening of the alliance** in the coming time. This was not yet the case everywhere at the demonstrations of recent weeks.

We Marxist-Leninists connect our rank-and-file work among the masses with the **struggle of world outlook** against the fundamental fictions of the capitalist system – on the basis of a sound criticism of capitalism and convincing for the communist ideology of freedom. We have to provide clarity that all central problems of capitalist society are inherent to the system, that imperialism has to be abolished and socialism has to be built to solve all important issues of humankind. That also means to help the masses to cope with modern anti-communism, which keeps them away from this societal alternative like a dam. Therefore we will also use the anniversary “100 years October Revolution” and the ICOR campaign next year. After all, this revolution demonstrated how a proletarian revolution and building socialism became possible even in an economically very underdeveloped country.

So the **dialectics between the independent work of the MLPD on one hand and the full responsibility for building the alliance on the other hand** will be the lifeblood of the tactical offensive and at the same time the basic new requirement. It is only natural that such a new task will be accompanied by a great process of learning and self-transformation. Schematism lacking ideas, fearful conservatism, a sectarian attitude against alliance partners, but also opportunist adjustment or the blurring of distinctions between the MLPD and the alliance have to be overcome. I am convinced that this will succeed very well.

We wish this forward-looking project much success!