

Stefan Engel

Introductory Speech of the 2nd World Conference of the ICOR

Dear comrades,

on behalf of the ICC I welcome you cordially to the 2nd World Conference of the ICOR.

I welcome the altogether 47 delegates from 28 member countries.

A warm welcome also to the guests from Sri Lanka from two organizations which are seeking membership in the ICOR and whom we have invited as guests .

It is a great honor for us to welcome you to our conference.

Furthermore I welcome the 58 helpers from altogether nine organizations who have prepared this conference excellently during the past days – a truly internationalist achievement.

Dear comrades,

Before we start our work, I will read out the names of the comrades who have passed away.

These are:

- comrade **Vladimir Spasov**, chairman of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Bulgaria
- comrade **Katja Ivanova**, board member of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Bulgaria
- comrade **Joseph Roney**, founding member of the New Communist Party of Haiti (Marxist-Leninist), Haiti
- comrade **Kamal El Hassani**, member of the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist Proletarian Line, Morocco
- comrade **Nouredine Abdelouhabe** member of the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist Proletarian Line, Morocco
- comrade **Nar Bahadur Karmacharya**, founding member of the Communist Party of Nepal – today NCP (Mashal), Nepal, and CPN(Unified), Nepal
- comrade **Parviz Vaez-Zade**, member of Ranjbaran, Iran
- comrade **Mahvash Jasemi**, member of Ranjbaran, Iran
- comrade **Tarane Lotfalian**, member of Ranjbaran, Iran
- comrade **Zia Nasiri**, member of Ranjbaran, Iran

- comrade **Annie Maasbommel**, member of Red Dawn, the Netherlands
- comrade **Magda Maasbommel**, member of Red Dawn, the Netherlands
- comrade **Sashel Sassi**, member of PPSR-WATAD, Tunisia
- comrade **Yilmaz Selcuk**, member of MLKP, Turkey / North Kurdistan
- comrade **Yasemin Ciftci**, member of MLKP, Turkey / North Kurdistan
- comrade **Serkan Tosun**, member of MLKP, Turkey / North Kurdistan

Especially I would like to note comrade Shobane Mpiake, chairman of the CPSA(ML) South Africa, one of the initiators from the very start for bringing about the ICOR.

We also commemorate the victims who have lost their lives in the struggle for freedom, democracy and socialism.

I request you to rise from your seats for a minute of commemoration.

Thank you!

Dear comrades,

the coming together of this 2nd World Conference is in no way a matter of course.

The first hurdle is, of course, to understand the importance of the 2nd World Conference of ICOR and to do everything for a participation in it. Quite a number cancelled their attendance, because they had to stay at home for different reasons.

Every time also the few forces and financial resources are an important hindrance for traveling to the ICOR conferences.

The main obstacles, however, come from the bureaucratic harassment of the class enemy which also this time again have made it impossible in various ways for some delegates to enter the country.

It is all the more important that this 2nd World Conference has come about with the necessary readiness for the vote.

Let us remember the Founding Conference at which we first had to overcome some doubts about the prospects of this historically new pioneering project, in order to venture *“67 years after the dissolution of the Third International ... the step towards a new international organization of the revolutionary proletariat and all the oppressed masses fighting for their liberation”*.

Today we are facing the task to take stock of this project soberly after a building phase of more than three years.

Let us begin with the political challenges under which this tender shoot of ICOR had to assert its place in the world:

First:

A general background for the political development and the development of class struggle on the international scale was the effect of the **world economic crisis** which began in 2008 and is lasting until today.

There were many new phenomena and aspects in the course of this crisis which did not make it easy for our member organizations to always see things clearly. And certainly many more analyses and discussions are still required in order to get an all-round picture of this world economic crisis and world financial crisis.

First there was the mutual **interrelation of the world economic and financial crisis** which in none of the previous world economic crises had appeared so markedly.

Then there was the **international crisis management** which was supported by all 20 G-8 countries at the beginning, but which was increasingly crumbling in the course of the crisis.

There has been the **method of cheap money** for the monopoly banks lasting until today, which has fueled speculation internationally and **on the average increased state debt by 30 percent internationally compared to the pre-crisis level.**

Second:

And last but not least, there was the fact of a **divided world economy**. An ambivalent development started which was confusing at first.

As of 2009 much capital flowed to the so-called BRICS states, the MIST states and other more developed neocolonial dependent countries, while the old imperialist countries still remained in a deep crisis or slid more deeply into crisis.

With the relaxation of monetary policy a reverse trend has set in since 2012:

The trillions of US dollars are flowing back to the old imperialist countries today – in anticipation of participating in new maximum profits in view of the forecast economic revival.

Nevertheless, a **significant change of the world economic development** occurred to which we must direct our attention:

Thus the BRICS states have gained a 61.4 percent share in the **world steel production**.

In 2000 this share was still at 29.5 percent.

In the **worldwide automotive production** the BRICS and MIST states together had a 46.6 percent share in 2012.

In the year 2000 this was only 17.5 percent.

With that the old imperialist states were surpassed by 43.4 percent. Today, also the largest automotive manufacturer in Germany, VW, produces more cars in China than in Germany.

World shipbuilding, today, focuses on China, South Korea and Japan by 92 percent.

Ship scrapping focuses on Bangladesh (which is world leader in scrapping by 33.8 percent), India and Pakistan by 70 percent.

So the central **axis of the world industrial production** has clearly shifted from the Transatlantic to the Asian-Pacific region.

Already in the year 2011 the Asian-Pacific region has left the USA/EU region far behind with a gross value added of 7,380 billion US dollars compared to 6,439 billion US dollars (USA/EU).

That will have political consequences. That will shift the forces and must have consequences for our strategy and tactics.

However, the old imperialist countries continue to dominate the economic and political centers of power. Production has shifted, but the political centers of power continue to be mainly in the EU, the USA and Japan.

In the year 2012 still 262 of the 500 largest super-monopolies of the world had their headquarters in the USA and Europe and only 181 in Asia/Pacific. But during the last years they have caught up a lot, more than doubling their share.

More and more countries have emerged from the world economic crisis or have got into a recovery, mainly countries from the EU and the USA. That indicates the world economic crisis coming to an end.

Third:

In light of the world economic and financial crisis a worldwide wave of **struggles for democracy and freedom** has developed starting from Tunisia.

Since then, almost half of the countries of the world have been affected by uprisings and mass movements for freedom and democracy. In many of these countries there was at least one change of government, even if the countries had been seemingly relatively stable.

This struggle expresses a spontaneous destabilization of the old imperialist order, at first just objectively.

This constitutes an important precondition for the **development of a revolutionary world crisis**, in which it will be possible to attack the old imperialist world system and enforce a new social order.

For Marxist-Leninists the struggle for freedom and democracy is always linked to the struggle for socialism. In this we differ from many of these movements which exist today.

Due to the weakness of the revolutionary parties and organizations the struggle for freedom and democracy, however, was connected with petty-bourgeois, partly religious fundamentalist and openly reactionary positions in most of the countries as in Ukraine or Thailand. In the meantime, reactionary forces also make use of this. They make use of these movements for reactionary wheelings and dealings.

Fourth:

In Fukushima one of the worst MCAs in a nuclear power station occurred in 2011 triggering a **worldwide nuclear energy crisis**. So the fourth MCA, and at the same time the most comprehensive, happened of all things in Japan with the allegedly safest nuclear power plants of the world.

In many countries the will of the majority of the masses turned against nuclear energy.

In various imperialist countries of Europe like Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Austria the governments were forced to say good bye to nuclear energy.

The first international political campaign of ICOR contributed considerably to the elucidation against the so-called peaceful and military use of nuclear energy among the masses, and in several countries the ICOR organizations were an active core in the

anti-nuclear movement. Japan also took part in this campaign with the largest collection of signatures (more than 10 million) for a declaration which closely followed our declaration. In Japan the picture has changed very much. Today three quarters of the population in Japan are opposed to nuclear energy. So far the government has not dared to bring the 56 nuclear power stations that were shut down back into operation. These are important successes.

Fifth:

In recent years extreme weather conditions and regional environmental catastrophes on land, in water and in the air have been aggravating.

Life and limb of hundreds of thousands of people have been threatened. Never have there been so many fatalities because of such catastrophes.

Super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) was the dramatic climax of this threatening development.

With an unprecedented wind speed it destroyed a complete city with 180,000 inhabitants in the Philippines and left behind 6,000 to 8,000 dead and missing persons. So far this has been a singular incident, but a foretaste of the threatening global environmental catastrophe.

Environmental awareness is generally aroused today. No politician, no trade union, no government dares not to speak about the environment.

Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that the environmental problematic is being underestimated, a fact that has not yet been overcome, also in the international revolutionary and working-class movement.

Fortunately, the environmental issue has become an integral part of the revolutionary rank-and-file work among the masses for the first time in many member organizations also thanks to the ICOR campaign. In many organizations this issue had not been addressed so far. We also do not agree in everything, but we have begun to reflect that revolutionary work does not only include the social issue. We must also do something so that humankind does not decline in the environmental catastrophe.

The main problem is today that within the framework of the global environmental crisis there is the tendency of destroying the existential foundations of human life.

It is of fundamental importance that the international revolutionary parties and organizations take the lead in the struggle against a threatening global environmental catastrophe and make this a part of the strategy and tactics of the democratic respectively socialist revolution.

Sixth:

In light of the world economic and financial crisis the **struggle for new markets and spheres of influence between the imperialists** has intensified as well.

The general danger of war has been growing significantly.

This was the case with the NATO bombing of Libya, with the Syria crisis, where contradictions between NATO and the Shanghai group arose, as well as with the conflict between Japan and the People's Republic of China over some islands in the South China Sea.

A present example is the Ukraine where on the one hand the EU is striving to win the Ukraine market for the EU and to integrate the country into the political and military organization of NATO. This is an important starting point of the conflict.

In this the US and EU imperialists had no scruples about even collaborating with the most reactionary and fascist forces in Ukraine.

At the same time Putin used this fact in a demagogic way to push his policy of annexing Crimea, which had already begun in the conflict with Georgia.

The inter-imperialist contradictions are a serious matter evoking the serious danger of a new world war 100 years after the beginning of the 1st World War.

It is all the more important that here ICOR takes action against any imperialist aggression and violation of the right of nations of self-determination, and organizes international workers' solidarity.

There are discussions on which imperialism is the worse one. That can be important for tactics. But in principle, it is beyond question that we must oppose every kind of imperialism.

Seventh:

The focus of the development of the international working-class movement was, at the beginning of the world economic and financial crisis, still in Southern Europe, where massive mass strikes and mass demonstrations took place, starting from Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. They by far exceeded everything that had happened since the Second World War regarding extent and rigor of class struggles in Europe.

Later class struggle in Europe shifted more to the Balkan countries, to Bulgaria, Romania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Important international workers' strikes were the independent mass strike of the platinum workers in South Africa in August 2012, which was answered by a bloody massacre of the ANC government killing 38 miners. And this massacre is also being justified by the ANC and the revisionist party in government. Up to today, strike leaders are still being arrested and put in jail.

As reaction 100,000 miners in South Africa went on strike for solidarity with the workers.

In Latin America the struggles of the miners in Peru, Chile or Colombia are in the focus of attention as well.

In Colombia the struggle of the miners is more and more connected with the struggle for the protection of the natural environment in shoulder-to-shoulder stance with the indigenous population resisting land eviction.

Important strikes also took place in the People's Republic of China, among which especially the strike at Foxconn has to be emphasized, one of the biggest electronics manufacturers of the world. The largest plant has 400 000 workers. Electronics are produced there on orders by concerns from all over the world.

In India an independent two-day political mass strike against the labor market laws took place in February 2013, in spite of the strike being banned, in which 120 million workers and employees participated. Here our ICOR organizations also cooperated excellently and gave impulses, for the first time together with trade unions and their umbrella organizations.

Important struggles also occurred in Brazil or Turkey, which expressed an awakening of the workers' and people's struggles in these countries. We are still going to hear about them. They belong to the MIST and BRICS countries which have advanced a bit economically. The struggle was initiated over seemingly minor issues: In Brazil it was about the rising bus fares and in Turkey about the preservation of trees in Gezi Park.

The ICOR succeeded in becoming more anchored in the working-class movement.

In almost all countries revolutionary working class organizations are participating in the May Day activities.

With the successful 1st International Miners' Conference in Peru an important step was achieved towards the coordination of the militant miners' movement on an international scale.

Also with the 7th International Automotive Workers' Counsel in Munich in 2012 and the preparation of an international Dockworkers Exchange of Experience in 2015 important steps have been taken to coordinate the national workers' struggles internationally.

Eighth:

With the first World Women's Conference in Venezuela an important process of the independent mobilization and organization of the **international coordination and cooperation of the militant movement of the rank-and-file women began**. So the conference was not organized by any NGOs or governmental organizations, but by the rank-and-file.

It can be noticed in many countries that these international activities have also been inspiring for the women's movement in the individual countries and helped to bring about an upswing there.

In many countries it is reported that the joint days of struggle for the liberation of women on 8 March as well as for the struggle against violence against women on 25 November have become important international events with much attention from the public. These are important successes in the last years which are connected to our work, not only, but also. Because activists have their home within the ICOR.

At the same time the starting position for the next World Women's Conference has improved, which will take place in Kathmandu in 2016.

Ninth:

The struggle for the right of peoples and nations for self-determination was supported in particular in the ICOR Rojava campaign, where an exemplary struggle for freedom and democracy against the various reactionary currents in Syria has been conducted.

Regarding all the crisis-proneness of the imperialist world system **proletarian revolution remains the main tendency in the world**.

Dear comrades,

these political tasks could be used effectively for building the ICOR organizations.

Nevertheless, the report of the ICC has stated that the ICOR building is still at the beginning and that we have to better learn to deal properly with our principles in practice. It is not easy to build something new.

It was in particular very important to learn to implement correctly the ICOR idea during a joint political practice.

On the one hand there is a common political platform for ICOR, a minimum platform, on the other hand there are, however, also different views, as well as tactical differences of opinion and also different political priorities in the individual countries.

To organize properly the unity and struggle of opposites was one of the most important requirements for the international coordination and cooperation of the joint political practice.

It is of greatest importance that we succeeded in consolidating our **ICOR structures at the continental level**. Today we have four Continental Coordinating Committees, in Asia, America, Europe and since half a year ago in Africa. Australia is still missing, but we are also working at it.

For an integration of a cross-border practice will rather succeed at a continental level.

Here it is better possible to compensate between stronger and weaker organizations. We must also learn to master these dialectics. There are not many large organizations within ICOR. Especially in Europe we have many small organizations. Here the larger organizations have a special responsibility. You should not only aim at strengthening your own organization. The ICOR idea is an international idea.

At the same time it became apparent that the whole work is depending on the solution of the cadre and financial question.

Regarding the cadre question it is about assigning more forces in the ICOR organizations to the work in ICOR.

A big part of the central work of ICOR today is still resting on a few shoulders.

Most of the organizations also dispose of only few financial means, what is partly attributable to the objective conditions, but partly also to the status of party building in these countries.

Nevertheless the first international donation activity in the ICOR campaign relieved in a certain way the financial situation.

However, it could not yet solve sustainably the financial problems of ICOR.

Therefore a systematic financial policy of all ICOR organizations is necessary above all, in order to finance the current tasks and make them possible at all.

A great trump card of our organizational construction is the **financial independence** which ICOR applies to its own organizations, but also to all activities being supported by ICOR.

Without financial independence no ideological-political and organizational independence! We cannot make ourselves dependent, also not within the organization. We cannot get used to the finances being provided just by certain countries, which then you do not want to criticize any more, because they gave the money. This is an important problem. But we have also advanced. The question of finances and cadres has also developed further.

These lessons from the revisionist degeneration of many parties of the old communist movement have to be defended and developed.

But we also have to be clear in our own minds that we have to strengthen much more the mutual support in party building besides the political tasks.

This refers to the activities for the immediate support of certain parties and organizations, as well as to political activities as was the case in the Rojava campaign. It is absolutely clear. We cannot leave the Kurdish organizations and the Kurdish people alone. In the Spanish civil war the international brigades were formed. That was an exemplary struggle of the very idea of international working-class solidarity and of the ICOR.

We have also to be well aware that ICOR is depending on the **strengthening of its member organizations** and recruiting new member organizations for ICOR.

It is welcome that after the 2nd World Conference the **first international seminar of ICOR on the theoretical work** of the individual member organizations has been agreed.

There is much interest in it.

This shows that in particular the cooperation in questions of ideological-political party building has to play a greater role in the future.

The work of ICOR requires a **new quality of proletarian internationalism in theory and practice**.

It is just a big difference whether one practices international solidarity as single organization or whether one is also a member of an international organization which has certain rights and duties and acts as organization. As Marx said: The new quality of proletarian internationalism is a qualitative leap. That requires a leap in consciousness as well.

This qualitative leap in proletarian internationalism has to be realized **consciously** in all organizations and will have its corresponding ideological-political and practical consequences.

The evaluation how this qualitative leap has been tackled since the founding of ICOR is surely an essential subject of the discussion of this 2nd World Conference.

Dear comrades,

of course, the International Coordinating Committee elected at the 1st World Conference could make some important experiences, which have to be evaluated at the 2nd World Conference in order to draw corresponding conclusions for the further development of the work.

The ICOR has grown significantly since its founding by 12,5%. Further organizations are interested in becoming members.

A big part of the activity of the ICC had to be focused on reaching unity on the principles of ICOR in theory and practice and give practical meaning to them.

The 2nd World Conference has the task to receive the report of the first elected ICC, to elect a new ICC and to assign it with new tasks for implementation.

The ICOR is an **organization of practical cooperation** of different and independent revolutionary parties and organizations.

The 2nd World Conference will undoubtedly contribute to the further ideological-political unification which is necessary to enhance the effectiveness and attraction of ICOR.

The **common ideological-political platform** will be further developed step by step. We need much patience for that. It is no problem, if matters cannot be clarified immediately. It is also not the case that certain organizations cannot learn anything any more. Everybody must learn. Whoever is most open-minded, will be able to do the best job.

Therefore the method of the 28 adopted resolutions was an important one which has to be further developed systematically also after the Second World Conference.

The 2nd World Conference will only solve its tasks, if it is based on a **democratic culture of debate** starting from mutual respect, equal rights, democratic own initiative and the idea of the unity of the international revolutionary working-class movement.

At this point on behalf of the International Coordinating Committee I would like to thank all comrades who ideological-politically, organizationally and financially have made this world meeting possible with utmost selfless commitment.

The 2nd World Conference of ICOR is opened.