

Introductory speech for the International Seminar 100th anniversary of the October Revolution

Introductory speech for the International Seminar 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, Stefan Engel, MLPD (Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany, October 27, 2017)

Dear friends, comrades from Germany and other countries, dear participants, helpers and supporters of today's theoretical seminar on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution in Russia in 1917!

I am happy that so far about (...) persons have decided to take part in our seminar.

For quite some time now we have been in a process of societal polarization on an international scale.

On the one hand there is a cross-border progressive swing in the mood of the masses among the working class and among the broad masses, connected with a search for a societal way out.

So we are experiencing a protest movement against US imperialism and the proto-fascist Trump government that already now exceeds the worldwide anti-Vietnam War protests of the 1970s in scope and content.

A new cross-border youth movement critical of society encompasses hundreds of thousands.

The international revolutionary working-class movement is at the beginning of a new upturn.

At the same time we are experiencing a worldwide shift to the right of the imperialist governments.

Lately this has led to an extraordinary increase of mass influence of fascist, racist and ultra-reactionary parties.

In different countries fascists are even part of governments or provide the head of governments.

In Germany in the elections in September, with the AfD (ann. transl.: Alternative for Germany) for the first time a party has become part of the parliament in which also a number of open fascists are members.

With 12.6 percent and 92 Members of Parliament this party has gained a social acceptance in bourgeois society.

You can see it in many talk shows and it gets broad space in the mass media.

Even though the AfD is not yet an openly fascist party, it still plays an important role in preparing fascism. Regarding ideology it represents the national-fascist world outlook already today.

It has been made out to be a protest party by the mass media and thus also could win influence among the workers and poor, oppressed people with its social demagogy.

Quickly the AfD took the lead of the anticommunist “left-wing extremism campaign” of the bourgeois parties and demanded the ban of the MLPD.

The fascists, having denied themselves in Germany for decades, openly appear again and see their chance.

In such a situation it is especially important, not only to lead a struggle against the fascist danger, but also to propagate the perspective of genuine socialism among the masses in an intensified way.

The 100th anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution offers us and the broad masses the opportunity to conduct a broad discussion on the lessons of this event and to get to better know the socialist idea.

To organize such anniversaries is all the more important, as we are in a non-revolutionary situation.

Above all it must serve for **preparing the socialist revolution**.

Those in power have also taken the floor with a campaign of anticommunism and “left-wing extremism” on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution.

The German TV-station ZDF-Info broadcasted a series with the title “*Rise and Fall of Communism*”. Its central idea was “*What remains is the pain over millions of dead people and a shattered dream*”.

By use of extensive authentic historical photo and film material commented by different bourgeois, formerly left historians, the misleading impression of an objective historical assessment without prejudices is created.

With a sophisticated mixture of truths, half-truths and deliberate falsifications the audience is to be led to the conclusion that the Great Proletarian October Revolution was a “*mere myth*” and nothing else but a “*coup for seizing of power by Lenin*” – and that a support of the masses for that did not exist.

Supposedly, the still weak shoots of a liberal democracy under Kerensky were even crushed by the leading Bolsheviks against the majority opinion after the overthrow of the tsar and a “Bolshevik police state” was erected, where any opposition was denounced as counterrevolutionary and destroyed.

In all of this it had allegedly been Trotsky who accomplished the actual work for asserting the political aims of the Bolsheviks, while Lenin had acted fearfully in the background.

We must not underestimate the effect which the millionfold dissemination of such an anticommunist falsification of history leaves among the masses.

Who would ever trust parties aiming at establishing a despotic regime?

If there is one thing those in power, in view of their highly armed apparatus of violence, need not fear, that would be the coup of a petty-bourgeois radical minority which have lost their mind and their grip on reality in their disappointment over the masses.

What they are really afraid of is that the process of ferment which we are experiencing worldwide and which has continued for a longer time will transform into a revolutionization of the masses and into a revolutionary world crisis.

The October Revolution was in fact the takeover of power by the decisive majority of the Russian society, which wrested it from the imperialist feudal tsarist rule in a revolutionary struggle.

The building of socialism was a world historical event of liberation of mankind, which in a unique way implemented the communist striving for freedom.

In only a few days important achievements for the working class and the masses of the poor peasants were realized.

Concerning the family system: the reorganization of the divorce law, the equality of men and women;

concerning the social and economic sphere:

the expropriation of the big enterprises and their transformation into common property,

the expropriation of big landownership and its distribution to the millions of poor peasants, the introduction of the eight-hour day;

in the political sphere: the ban of capital punishment,

smashing of the bourgeois-feudal state apparatus and establishing of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the creation of armed formations of the workers and peasants for the oppression of the exploiters' resistance and for realizing comprehensive rights and liberties for the masses.

That this revolutionary change incurred the bitter hatred of those in power could not be expected otherwise.

Ideologically it consisted in a gigantic anticommunist smear campaign lasting until today.

Militarily up to 14 countries which during the First World War had still fought against each other, attacked the young socialist Russia from outside and tried to help the reactionary white troops of the tsar and the feudal big land owners to seize power again.

This war lasted three years.

To win it was a historical achievement and a test for the young revolutionary society.

As a result it led to the foundation of the Soviet Union in the year 1922.

The construction of socialism proved to be most difficult. Because of the war, for years production was crippled and an economy of scarcity had developed.

For some time many concessions had to be made to small producers and bourgeois elements for stimulating the economy, in order to be able to tackle socialist construction in the true sense.

That was not unproblematic, because the petty-bourgeois element got more social leeway in thinking, feeling and acting.

The young Soviet Union had to assert itself, to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat and develop it further in order to come to grips with the bitter internal and external enemies of socialism, as well as to find methods for realizing broadest democracy for the masses.

That was a gigantic accomplishment under the leadership of Lenin and later on also of Stalin, which because of lacking historical experiences certainly was not without errors and mistakes.

At the same time it was path-breaking for the entire international industrial proletariat, as it created a comprehensible, attractive role model for the liberation struggle of the working class all over the world.

Of course, the subject is also how it was possible that this bulwark of world revolution could be destroyed.

Socialism/communism remains the aim of the revolutionary working-class and people's movement all over the world, also after this historical defeat.

But we must learn from history!

Against this societal backdrop our seminar also cannot be an "event for insiders", no exclusive discussion among functionaries and theoreticians!

Our seminar aims at strengthening the clarity and power of persuasion of our patient and systematic work among the working class and the masses in order to contribute to the development of revolutionary consciousness and create the necessary forms of organizations.

The extraordinarily important composition of the participants of this seminar, which has been convened by the world organization ICOR and jointly prepared, will contribute to this.

I welcome representatives of revolutionary organizations from, on the whole, ... countries.

An important trademark of our seminar is that the fruitful discussion lying ahead of us will draw from the broad involvement of the experiences which our members, the revolutionary workers, women and youth collect every day in their systematic rank-and-file work for the preparation of the international revolution in the struggle against modern anticommunism.

And also that the organizations and individual persons who cooperate with us in solidarity and on equal terms in the International Alliance will bring in their experiences.

In addition there will certainly be many non-party persons interested in the discussion on a liberated society without exploitation and oppression.

I cordially welcome also all of them!

We have to deal concretely with a widespread skepticism and reservations, which are nourished a millionfold among the masses by falsifications of history, defamations and the slander of openly reactionary anticommunism as well as by disguised modern anticommunism.

In order to promote and strengthen the striving of the masses for freedom, democracy and socialism, we have to develop the power of persuasion and the mass appeal of our revolutionary rank-and-file work significantly higher and to help the people to come to grips with the effects of the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking.

When dealing with the lessons of the October Revolution we must learn to distinguish exactly between generally valid truths of the October Revolution, which so-to-speak are valid for the entire period of struggle against imperialism, and the particularities related to time or the special Russian situation and that cannot simply be copied.

All this requires the ability of interfusing the concrete questions of today with the lessons of the October Revolution.

This dialectical process excludes any dogmatic simplification and stereotyped copying of the October Revolution to the current situation and requires an independent dialectical ability to think from all discussants.

Of course you have to know that the October Revolution is also appreciated by the revisionists, opportunists and dogmatists, who downright falsify the lessons of the October Revolution.

The revisionists falsify above all the question of power.

They negate the great importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the strategic goal of a socialist revolution, the necessity to engage in the violent conflict with the ruling imperialist system.

They develop a number of so-called “tactics”, all resulting in subordination to that what is seemingly possible.

Today this opportunism is also expressed in a widespread pragmatism.

This generally underestimates the theoretical aspect of our revolutionary rank-and-file work, only deals with the nearest matter and give priority to the immediate practical benefit.

The dogmatists refuse to believe that the world and also the conditions of class struggle are continuously changing.

That is why they are unable to convincingly answer the concrete and current questions and problems of the masses.

The Second World Conference of the ICOR took the initiative in time to use the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution for intensively dealing with the lessons of the October Revolution and also for spreading them among the masses in an appropriate way.

The International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations as well as some further organizations joined this initiative and are also co-organizers of today's seminar.

It is not easy to organize a seminar with over 1000 people without structuring this discussion in a certain way and also giving it some rules.

First, the most important thing is that we conduct a discussion on an equal basis.

Every seminar participant, no matter which function he holds, which country he belongs to, can only speak for 5 minutes here, the steel worker from Duisburg as well as the women's activist from Bangladesh etc.

It is also part of the proletarian culture of debate to deal respectfully with all contributions to the discussion, to listen and to refer to the arguments of the other discussants, instead of only presenting prepared statements.

Of course an open, critical and self-critical discussion must take place, from which all of us can draw conclusions.

At the same time, of course, we know that such a discussion cannot be concluded at the seminar.

That is why it will mainly be an impetus to continue the discussion, to further question one's own viewpoints, to develop them further and enrich them.

Therefore we suggested to publish a documentation after the seminar which shall make it possible to continue this discussion

within the individual organizations, groups and also among the masses.

We have thought for the seminar to divide the discussion into **six blocks of discussion**, so that there will be a certain structure.

Of course there are always overlaps of these blocks of discussions, but these shall be kept as small as possible.

We especially want to avoid repetitions.

The economy of time, the participation on an equal basis require that all of us jointly keep an eye on the red thread of our discussion and strictly follow the rules of discussion.

For the introduction to each block a prominent comrade or activist of the international, revolutionary working-class movement will introduce the block with a 15-minute contribution.

In his contribution he, of course, presents his personal view, which then is put up for discussion. At the same time it is an opening contribution for the discussion and should provide inspiration, outline the framework of the discussion, and be of help to bring in the contributions for the discussion accordingly.

We have taken three days of time for the seminar and still have relatively little time, especially as we are holding a cultural mass event at the end of the second day in honor of the October Revolution.

Therefore we must work in a disciplined way.

We **begin** with the precondition of every revolution, the **importance of theoretical work**, the concrete analysis of the concrete situation, as Lenin masterfully accomplished it before the October Revolution.

Lenin had acquired Marxism comprehensively, because he could also study and understand the original writings of Marx and Engels in German.

However, he did not apply them in a stereotyped way, but with his scientific analysis understood the transformation of capitalism to imperialism, the changed prerequisites for the proletarian revolution.

It is a markedly dogmatic tendency to assert that imperialism has not further developed during the last 100 years and you only would have to follow the universal truths of the struggle against imperialism without making a concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

This contradiction will certainly play a central role in the first thematic block.

The **second block** is about Lenin pursuing the **strategy of the international socialist revolution**, which he at the same time developed further.

While Marx and Engels still assumed a uniform simultaneous international proletarian revolution, Lenin understood the international revolution as a chain reaction, in terms of time, and regarding its character as different revolutions.

This was based on his analysis of the **uneven development of the capitalist countries**.

These dialectics between the strategy of the international revolution and the diversity of the revolutionary movements and conditions will be decisive in the second block.

The **third block** is about the lessons of the **concrete strategy and tactics of the armed uprising**.

For the first time Lenin developed the different stages of proletarian class struggle contrary to the claim that you can carry out a revolution now and always.

He distinguished between a democratic revolution and the socialist revolution and especially dealt with how you could proceed from the democratic to the socialist revolution.

At the same time he intensively worked at the subjective preconditions for such a revolution.

These consisted especially in winning the decisive majority of the working class and the development of a new-type party which was able and willing to lead the working class and the broad masses in their struggle in those days and ensure the success of the revolution with a flexible tactic.

In the **fourth thematic block** we will deal with the **building of socialism** after the October Revolution.

It had not been planned that at first the Soviet Union would build socialism alone.

Lenin assumed that after the October Revolution the proletarian revolution would also be victorious in Europe.

But for a victorious revolution the revolutionary struggles in Europe had not matured.

In particular, the revolutionaries of the different countries had neglected to build a Marxist-Leninist party in time and to break with the opportunism of the 2nd International.

That is why the Soviet Union was **forced** to build socialism in its own country, for which the preconditions did exist.

Also in this construction of socialism the strategy of the international revolution was pursued, as the Soviet Union understood the building of socialism as bulwark of the world revolution right from the beginning.

That is why Lenin and Stalin organized the **interaction of the construction of socialism** with the work of the Communist International from the outset.

This interrelation is fundamental in order to understand the strategy of the international revolution in building socialism.

Fifth:

The October Revolution could only prevail because the party and the masses came to grips **with opportunism and sectarianism** in this situation.

That is a problem with which we have to struggle still more intensely today, where opportunism as a social system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking incessantly has an impact on the party, the working class, the people's movement and the youth movement through the mass media.

But this struggle against opportunism cannot be reduced to theoretical discussions.

It also requires practical work educating the masses in coming to grips with the different forms of petty-bourgeois reformist, petty-bourgeois dogmatist, petty-bourgeois anti-authoritarian, anarchist mode of thinking.

A big problem today is also the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking, which doubtlessly has deeply penetrated the masses and has raised an important bulwark against the revolutionization of the masses.

In the **sixth thematic block** we then want to draw **conclusions for the revolutionary class struggle. Above all these conclusions have to be related to the subjective factor**, to party-building, the work of the revolutionaries among the broad masses as well as uniting the revolutionaries across national borders.

Now I would like to introduce the presidium assigned by the ICOR and the conveners to lead the seminar.

To the presidium belong: Joly (Bangladesh), K.N. Ramachandran (India), Sidwell (South Africa), Dan (Philippines), Eugenio (Argentina), Stefan Engel (also mention party names – ask!)

[Two who had already confirmed have meanwhile canceled their participation in the seminar for reasons of illness: Jose Maria Sison (Philippines) and Otto Vargas (Argentina).]

I would also like to speak briefly about the tight schedule of this seminar.

Friday

9 a.m. – Introductory speech S.E. and

12.30 p.m. thematic block 1

Break 1.5 h

2 p.m. – 5 p.m. thematic block 2

Thematic block 3 (starting at 5 p.m.)

Saturday

9 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. continuation thematic block 3 (until 11 a.m.)

Thematic block 4 (starting at 11 a.m.)

Break 1.5 h

2 p.m. – 5 p.m. continuation thematic block 4 (until 3 p.m.)

Thematic block 5 (starting at 3 p.m.)

6 p.m. (admission 5 p.m.) International cultural festivity (beginning of the festivity has not been postponed! Therefore the seminar should end at 4:30 p.m. as the latest because of the travel time to the Emscher-Lippe hall)

Sunday

9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. thematic block 5 (until 11 a.m.)

Thematic block 6 (starting at 11 a.m.) 1.5 h

Break 1 h

1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m. continuation thematic block 6

3 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Concluding resolution

Concluding words S.E. (starting at 3 p.m.) 0.5 h

Total meeting time seminar 23 hours

Of course our seminar will also reflect the different contradictions and differences in the views on the October Revolution.

That should not frighten us, as long as we understand how to approach the problems with a proletarian, a dialectical culture of discussion and debate.

The raised questions and contradictions will help and animate us to get more deeply to the bottom of matters and problems and to find further answers and solutions for the theory and practice in the preparation of the international socialist revolution.

In this spirit I open the seminar on the theoretical and practical lessons of the October Revolution and wish full success to all of us.