

50 Years Theoretical Organ *REVOLUTIONÄRER WEG*

The *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag) editorial staff spoke with Stefan Engel about one half century of the theoretical organ *Revolutionärer Weg* (Revolutionary Way) and its significance:



Rote Fahne News: Last year you celebrated 50 years of revolutionary work. This year, 50 years have passed since the first issue of *Revolutionärer Weg* (RW). Is there any connection between these two anniversaries?

Stefan Engel: When I entered the revolutionary movement in 1968 at the age of 14, it was still very strongly marked by the petty-bourgeois pupils and student movement. There was great ideological-political confusion. As regards organization, a great division of forces developed because many students had turned toward Marxism-Leninism, but, based on their petty-bourgeois claim to leadership, often founded organizations which claimed to be the Marxist-Leninist vanguard.

During that time, in 1969, the first issue of the theoretical organ appeared, entitled, *Three Programs – Three Documents of Revisionism and Opportunism*. Among us young comrades, this book established the principle that before you build up a new revolutionary party, you first have to clarify what happened to the old revolutionary vanguard, the KPD. Issue 1 of the revolutionary organ proved that the KPD had undergone revisionist degeneration and so had lost its revolutionary character. This was the only foundation on which it was correct to undertake the reconstruction of a Marxist-Leninist working-class party in Germany. Everything else would have meant a split.

The theoretical organ RW was unique in the ML movement at that time.

Before he became a member of the KPD/ML, which had been founded at the end of 1968, Willi Dickhut insisted upon a theoretical organ for party building. Willi Dickhut proceeded from Lenin's guiding principle: Without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary movement. He was of the opinion that the construction of a new Marxist-Leninist party also requires a **new ideological-political foundation**. Consequently, an editorial collective was founded under his leadership in the KPD/ML in 1969. Other Marxist-Leninist organizations had not recognized the necessity of a new ideological-political line and mostly had a dogmatic orientation. They attempted to mechanically transfer the theory and practice of the old communist movement to today's movements and so increasingly isolated themselves from the broad masses. Without such an ideological-political line, the reconstruction of a Marxist-Leninist party had to fail.

What was distinctive about the theoretical organ RW?

Willi Dickhut criticized the tendency in the old Marxist-Leninist movement toward a dogmatic understanding of Marxism-Leninism as book knowledge and, at the same time, the tendency to belittle the dialectical-materialist method and the ideological struggle. He also criticized a separation of ideology and politics, which led to the separation of theory and practice in the revolutionary movement in the end, and developed the concept of the **ideological-political line**. That means to establish the unity of Marxist-Leninist theory and revolutionary practice with the conscious application of the dialectical method.

What is the importance of the theoretical organ RW for party building?

The theoretical organ was the most important guideline for the successful preparation of the founding of the party in the year 1982. By then, 21 issues of the theoretical organ had appeared in which Marxism-Leninism had been comprehensively concretized, extended and developed further for the concrete conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany. Every issue dealt with a certain problem which was in the focus, and all of them together form a system for the practical solution of the tasks.

At first it was about finding the correct way to build the party. From the very beginning, the **struggle over the mode of thinking** played a decisive role in this. Willi Dickhut especially emphasized the conscious application of the dialectical method as the decisive conclusion from the degeneration of the old communist movement.

With the book, *The Restoration of Capitalism in the Soviet Union* (RW Nos. 7-9), the theoretical organ made an important appraisal of the content and method of the restoration of capitalism in the once bulwark of communism. Without such an appraisal it would be impossible to win the masses for a new upswing of the struggle for socialism. Willi Dickhut based this on Mao Zedong's fundamental criticism of the revisionist degeneration of the CPSU and conducted numerous independent analyses with authentic documents from the Soviet Union. Not by chance did this book first attain international importance; it was first translated and distributed in Turkey.

Willi Dickhut's most important work was his analysis, *State-Monopoly Capitalism in the Federal Republic of Germany* (RW Nos. 16-19). State-monopoly capitalism changed the concrete essence of imperialism. Especially the new German imperialism developing in the FRG after the 2nd World War made it difficult for the masses to see through the class character of the societal system. Willi Dickhut succeeded in exposing and exactly qualifying the essence of the imperialist class society in the FRG in the economic, political and ideological spheres.

With RW Nos. 11/12, *Trade Unions and Class Struggle*, a manual for Marxist-Leninist factory and trade-union work was created to guide the work on the party's main line of struggle. This book was an important foundation for winning working-class cadres in the first phase of party building, as well as for initiating and leading struggles of the working class. This book still has fundamental significance today.

With RW Nos. 20/21, *Strategy and Tactics in the Class Struggle*, a dialectical concept of Marxist-Leninist strategy and tactics was developed along with concrete guidance for the revolutionary practical work of party building.

With the 21 issues of the theoretical organ the line of the party was fully worked out and so an important prerequisite was established for the founding of the party.

But this was not the only prerequisite?

A further prerequisite was to develop a sufficient number of leading working-class cadres. For this reason, in the first phase of party building the party concentrated on the main line of struggle, the factory and trade-union work.

A further prerequisite was to advance party building in all of West Germany. These prerequisites were fulfilled in 1982, exactly at the time when the petty-bourgeois ML movement in Germany had largely been liquidated, had become absorbed into the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois party landscape or had ended in resignation. And so the founding of the MLPD reflected a new phase in the Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement in Germany.

After the death of Willi Dickhut in 1992 you took over the leadership of the theoretical organ. The ideological-political line had been worked out comprehensively until the founding of the party, so was there actually much left to do?

Especially in the 1990s, the situation had changed dramatically. The internationalization of production led the economic basis of imperialism to a mainly internationalized production. This means that the monopolized production functioned first and foremost on the international markets, in an international division of labor, and broke through the national framework comprehensively. That also changed the conditions for the class struggle. We analyzed the reorganization of international production in RW Nos. 29-31, which was distributed internationally under the title, *Twilight of the Gods – Götterdämmerung over the “New World Order”*.

In order to draw conclusions from these changes in the economic basis of imperialism, we wrote RW Nos. 32-34 on the strategy and tactics of the international socialist revolution, also issued for the public as *Dawn of the International Socialist Revolution*. Both books were an important concretization, extension and further development of our ideological-political line and dealt with the changed situation in class struggle and party building.

In the course of our work on RW 32-34 we came upon the problem of the environmental crisis, which had dramatically intensified in the preceding decades. We worked out RW No. 35, *Class Struggle and the Struggle for the Unity of Humanity and Nature*. It put forward the thesis that we are steering toward a global environmental catastrophe at an accelerated pace because of a new law-governed development of imperialist economics and politics. Thus the saving of the natural environment coincides with the tasks of the international socialist revolution and extends the class struggle with an important line of struggle.

A significant change took place with the 5th Party Congress, when we placed the party on the foundation of the proletarian mode of thinking

For this we worked out RW No. 26 in 1995, in which we comprehensively analyzed the problem of the mode of thinking in the working-class movement. Today this problem has such fundamental importance that it profoundly influences or even decides over party building, the class struggle and the preparation of the international revolution. In the future, socialism, too, can only be developed on the foundation of the proletarian mode of thinking.

Following the publication of this book, there were vehement discussions in the organization, which also led to the loss of a number of cadres. However, in the end, party work was extended to new spheres and the MLPD could strengthen considerably.

Such a new sphere of work was Marxist-Leninist work among women. RW Nos. 27/28, *Class Struggle and the Struggle for the Liberation of Women*, dealt with this. In this RW, for the first time the

strategy and tactics in the struggle over the mode of thinking among the broad masses was concretized and further developed, which was especially of universal significance for the interrelationship between the party and the non-party-affiliated self-run organizations of the masses.

Well, it is not enough to do the theoretical work, the RWs must also be put into practice.

Whereas in the first phase of party building – also starting from the then Central Leadership of the KABD – there were still major problems in working with the system of *Revolutionärer Weg* systematically, we drew groundbreaking conclusions from this after the founding of the party. When new issues of the theoretical organ were published, study movements were established. In addition, we initiated a movement to learn the conscious application of the dialectical method to all problems of party building and class struggle, which has continued from 1997 to the present day. They belong to the main fields of a criticism and self-criticism movement which consciously accompanies and advances party building. During this time, the party and its members strongly consolidated their ideological and political level. The party has become very stable, which made it able to face the new challenges of the class struggle. In the meantime, the MLPD is increasingly succeeding in breaking through the isolation imposed by monopolies and state and gradually attaining mass influence. Such a development is based not only on the general crisis-proneness of the social system, but also on the developed ability to make use of all problems of the system to have a consciousness-building impact on the masses and to systematically build up the party.

Today there is also great interest in the system of our theoretical organ in the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement. Many books are now translated into several languages and are distributed and studied in almost 50 countries around the world. This is of fundamental significance for the process of ideological-political unification in the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement. The union of the revolutionary parties in the world in the ICOR, in the revolutionary practice, has enormously strengthened this process of ideological-political unification, and the theoretical organ gained international significance.

But the RW is first and foremost the theoretical organ of the MLPD and not of ICOR. How is this to be understood?

Of course the system *Revolutionärer Weg* is first and foremost our ideological-political line. But there is still relatively little creative theoretical work being done in the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement. Our system of the theoretical organ is an important stimulus also for other parties to do theoretical work. In addition, there are many universally valid insights in these RWs that are also of relevance to the international class struggle. This part of the work will even increase in the future. However, it is also necessary that we increasingly take up the international experiences in class struggle and the international analyses of other Marxist-Leninist parties and integrate them into the RWs.

What are the tasks of the *Revolutionärer Weg* editorial team for the future?

For the near future we have set ourselves the task of dealing with the ideological foundations of the crisis-prone nature of the imperialist world system. This includes the criticism of the bourgeois natural sciences, religion, etc., all of which are in a deep crisis. At the same time, however, we must also draw positive conclusions, which we have summarized in **the doctrine of the mode of thinking**. This book will take a little longer because it requires very comprehensive knowledge and analyses.

One part of it is the work on *Biographical Reflections on Stalin*. With the crisis of bourgeois ideology, the Stalin question has become a central ideological debate. The “Stalinism” slander is supposed to keep the workers’ movement away from genuine socialism. We want to critically appreciate the life achievement of Stalin on the basis of our ideological-political line and from the point of view of today’s struggle over the mode of thinking. This naturally also includes the sober and differentiated evaluation of some of his mistakes and weaknesses.

We also have to deal with the emergence of new-imperialist countries on the basis of the reorganization of international production, since this has caused serious upheavals in the imperialist world system. We have already issued various publications on this subject. But it will certainly also be necessary to take this up in an issue of the theoretical organ. Today this question is discussed internationally and is of great significance at a time when fascism, reaction and the intensification of the general danger of war are increasing and, at the same time, a progressive change of mood among the masses has arisen. It is necessary to answer this question profoundly; otherwise new, dangerous splits may arise in the international revolutionary and working-class movement.

In the medium term we must critically examine the strategies and tactics of the revolutionary parties in the most important countries of the world, because the international class struggle relates to the connection to these countries.

But for all this it is also necessary that, in the medium term, we initiate and carry out a **generation change for the theoretical work**. In so doing, we are fulfilling Willi Dickhut’s mission: “*Theoretical work requires a comprehensive study of Marxism-Leninism combined with a treasure chest of practical experience. It must be creative in order to guide the party’s practice in the right direction. Comrades, in this sense, become theoreticians of the working class.*” (Documents of the Second Party Congress of the MLPD, p. 330, German edition) Almost 50 comrades are working on the new issue of the theoretical organ. Many of them are younger comrades who are participating in theoretical work for the first time in their lives. The elaboration of this issue of the *Revolutionärer Weg* will be a real school of theoretical work.

After stepping back as party chairman in 2017, you are now concentrating more on heading the *Revolutionärer Weg* editorial staff and have so set new priorities for your work. Does this mean that we must attach more importance to theoretical work?

Definitely! Above all, it is necessary to solve complicated theoretical questions for which we must make full use of the party’s existing potential. At the same time, we have to carry out a process of generation change in theoretical work, which requires a lot of training and education. This presupposes that especially the younger and newly organized comrades do not only study single issues of the RW, but **systematically, critically and self-critically acquire a deep understanding of the entire ideological-political line of the MLPD**.

At the same time I have to support the new party leadership in the process of its familiarization, which above all includes its leadership in ideological-political work. The Central Committee is responsible for leading the theoretical work. Its main task is to determine and further develop the ideological-political line of the MLPD. Learning this is a process that takes years. This is not easy and, due to inexperience, can also be accompanied by setbacks. Especially in the ideological-political field mistakes have to be avoided at all costs, because this concerns the revolutionary character of the MLPD. That is why my future function as head of the *Revolutionärer Weg* editorial staff certainly is the right focus of my work.

Thank you very much for the interview!