

8th International Conference

Contribution of Marxistisch-Leninistische Partei Deutschlands, Germany

Country Report Germany for the 8th International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations

Germany is a leading imperialist country at the stage of development of state-monopoly capitalism and, with regard to economy, the strongest country in the European Union. With more than 82 million inhabitants it is also the most populous country in the EU. 36.5 million persons are gainfully employed. Out of the almost 90 percent wage and salary earners 7.7 million were organized in unions of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) at the end of 2002.

The Marxist-Leninist factory and trade union work among the approximately 6 million blue- and white-collar workers of the large-scale industrial enterprises is the main fighting line of the MLPD. It concentrates 60 percent of its forces on this work.

After 35 years of systematic construction work and a continuous advancement of Marxist-Leninist party building, the MLPD can look back on its highest membership level and greatest mass influence since the Founding Party Congress in 1982. It meanwhile is represented in 450 cities in all the federal states of Germany and in 50 percent of the 500 biggest industrial enterprises. Nonetheless, our work is still limited to about 5 to 10 million people.

The development of class consciousness

The trend is clearly in the direction of the working-class offensive. On November 1, 2003, an independent **mass demonstration against the government with over 100,000 participants in Berlin**, was successfully organized against the will of the reformist trade union leadership, Attac and the PDS ("Party of Democratic Socialism"). The MLPD played a major role in the organizing of this demonstration and, in particular, was able to achieve a mass participation from within the factories.

In this situation, the **2004 collective wage negotiations in the metal industry** increasingly developed into a trial of power between the working class on the one side and the government and monopolies on the other side. The general capitalists' association of the metal industry, "Gesamtmetall", provocatively called for the unpaid extension of weekly working hours to 40 and for a real wage reduction. However, the workers were ready to accept the challenge – to defend the 35-hour week by strike, to assert their wage demands, and to face up to this test of power in struggle. More than 500,000 metalworkers took part in the union warning strikes. In this situation, Gesamtmetall and the leadership of the metalworkers' union backed down in order to defuse the situation. The monopolies had noticed that this trial of power could have unforeseeable consequences for the development of the class struggle.

The intermediate strata begin to move

In Germany a transition to the second stage of class struggle is only possible if the winning of the decisive majority of the working class is combined with **the inclusion of the broad masses in the struggle against the government and monopolies**. Therefore, it is very significant that the petty-bourgeois intermediate strata in the FRG also began to move in 2003/2004 and that the new people's movement is on the upswing. About 3.5 million people took to the streets in protest activities and struggles in Germany in 2003 – more than in the three previous years combined. Different from the mass actions of the 1980s, the new people's movement relates and orients itself to the working class. Thus, a clearly politicized **student movement** encompassing hundreds of thousands of students has emerged. Major sections of it relate to the working class movement, unlike the student movement of a few years ago, which raised purely student demands. In connection with the war on Iraq a peace movement encompassing millions of people developed in Germany which coordinated its activities internationally and in which the MLPD formed the recognized pole for the organizing of active resistance. We see the beginnings of a nationally organized movement of the unemployed and pensioners. Dairy farmers are protesting against the big retail companies and the pressing down of producer prices. There is growing opposition among civil servants and state employees. In recent months tens of thousands of policemen and policewomen have taken part in demonstrations in uniform, which is prohibited in Germany.

Drastic deterioration of the living conditions of the broad masses in Germany

In the wake of the world economic crisis in conjunction with the international structural crisis, the situation of

the masses in Germany has worsened considerably. Germany has fallen behind in international competition, a fact reflected in very low growth rates.

To compensate for Germany's relapse in the international competitive struggle, the Schröder/Fischer government, in collusion with the other EU countries, pursues a crisis program which is coordinated throughout Europe. In Germany this program provides for the drastic reduction of hard-won social benefits and marks a qualitative leap in the dismantling of the social gains of the masses.

In Germany, the real number of unemployed rose from 7.2 million in 2000 to 7.9 million in 2003, i.e., by about 10 percent. If we add the underemployed, then we have a figure of 15.8 million in 2000, which rapidly increased to 19.6 million by 2003 – an increase of 24.1 percent!

Manifestations of general pauperization appear which, until now, we have known mainly from the neocolonially dependent and oppressed countries. 400,000 persons are acutely threatened by homelessness in Germany today. Millions live below the poverty line. Mainly four groups of persons make up these poor: firstly, the unemployed who over lengthy periods are unable to get jobs; secondly, a growing number of pensioners who encounter poverty in old age; thirdly, workers who no longer can live on the wages they earn; and fourthly, the many immigrants who are forced into welfare aid programs and who make up a large section of these poor.

New demands on the class consciousness of the workers

The most important demand on the class consciousness of the working class at present is raised by the expansion of the EU. The ruling circles picture this as a peaceful reunification of divided Europe. In reality it has to do with the **neocolonialist integration of 10 countries exploited and oppressed by imperialism**. To divide up the new markets between the 150 West European supermonopolies, the EU has arranged a 40.8 billion euro investment program according to which each company gets between 37 and 70 percent in state subsidies, tax relief or other benefits if it invests in the new EU countries in the coming years. That is the reason for a number of cases of the relocation of operations from Germany to these countries. But those in rule and the reformist trade union leadership as well divert attention from this neocolonialist policy, claiming that the shifts are occurring mainly because of the cheap wages and the longer working hours. This is designed to force workers in Germany into merciless competition against the workers of these countries and to make them accept the extension of working hours to 40, with no wage compensation, and the massive reduction of wages. However, it is an illusion to think one can prevent the neocolonialist offensive and the relocation of parts of production this way. With wages in proportion to sales averaging 8.5 percent in German industry, even if wages were 50 percent less, the wage portion would decline only by a few percentage points. On the other hand, the state subsidies cut the cost of investment by as much as 70 percent. This all requires a higher consciousness of the working class, which has to cope with a new level of competition and fight together across frontiers.

The MLPD learned to move and lead masses

The Seventh Party Congress of the MLPD held a few weeks ago in Magdeburg took stock of how the MLPD had accomplished the task assigned to it by the Sixth Party Congress "to learn to move and to lead masses". The Political Report of the Central Committee adopted by the Congress states:

*"In Germany, the **MLPD** was able to influence the development of class consciousness in a significant way. Although the Party is still a relatively small force in terms of society as a whole, at **focal points** of the working-class movement, but also of the women's, youth and peace movements, it was able to play a **determining role**. Through the proper concentration of forces and a successful strategy and tactics in the struggle over the mode of thinking of the masses, it managed to establish the superiority of the proletarian mode of thinking in the struggle against the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking. Modern anticommunism had to suffer obvious defeats, and that enabled the MLPD to grow into a new societal role."*

Die MLPD thus has stood important tests in the last few years. The basis for this was that with the elaboration of *Revolutionärer Weg*, Nos. 29-31, "The Reorganization of International Production", by the CC, it had a sure orientation in every situation.

Both the successes and the failures were assessed by the Party Congress as a result of **how party building had been made the leading factor**. The speech of the Party chairman opening the Seventh Congress remarked on this:

"It is the operation of a petty-bourgeois system of the worshipping of spontaneity which in essence stands in the way of determined party building. For this reason, the entire revolutionary vigilance of the leading bodies and members of our Party must be focused on this problem. ...

*So the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking in society opposes the building of the Party into a party of the masses with an **entire system of the worship of spontaneity in party work**. It is a reflection within the Party of this social system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking.*

*Its **basis in world outlook** is the vulgar-materialist illusion that the exacerbation of the situation automatically leads to the development of higher levels of class consciousness and to a consolidation of the proletarian mode of thinking. We German revolutionaries also know from history, from the sorrowful experience of fascism, that there definitely is not just one way. There is also the possibility that the masses err and lose their way, otherwise fascism would not have been able to triumph in Germany.*

*Its **politics** follows the reformist principle of moderating the worst evils and effects of capitalism here and now and losing sight of the strategic tasks of the revolutionary struggle for power.*

*Its **methods** are rule of thumb, hectic activity, proxy politics, a short-winded approach, and disorganization.*

*Its **feelings** are characterized by vacillation between euphoria and panic, the ardent desire for more peace and harmony, and gnawing skepticism towards the Party and the masses and the prospect of revolution.*

*Its **motive** is capitulation before the intensification of the class struggle, and reconciliation with capitalist society.”*

Only in the unity of objective and subjective factors can the party of the masses emerge and mature. The class contradictions will sharpen greatly, but no one can forecast how the class struggle will develop concretely. The MLPD must **be prepared for everything** and **make party building the focus** of its activities.