

Make this the Decade
of the Working Class
- Statement of the Manitoba Regional Committee
on the Occasion of New Year 2010

Since the time of V.I. Lenin and the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the objective conditions have been ripe for socialist revolution. Lenin provided the theoretical basis for this conclusion in “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism”. The main objective factor for revolution is the general crisis of capitalism that has existed to one extent or another since the early twentieth century and, particularly since the 1917 Russian Revolution. That crisis is based on the perpetual overabundance of commodities in the capitalist market – a perpetual overproduction crisis. The 1917 removal of one sixth of the world’s population from the capitalist market exacerbated that crisis, as did the post-1945 removal of most of Eastern

Commentary

The Failure of Copenhagen is the Failure of
Capitalism

The UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen ended not only in failure, but in chaos. Despite the most brutal bullying of the smaller countries by the big powers and attempts to impose a back room deal on the delegates, no agreement was reached and no plan was adopted for further attempts to reach one. The message to the world’s people was that they either accept the dictate of the big powers or get used to a hotter, drier world. Of course, the “deal” reached by the big powers had nothing to do with reducing global

Europe and China from those markets. While the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in 1989-92 and the return of China to a full-blown capitalist economy during the 1990s created a temporary respite for the capitalist system, by then the underlying overproduction crisis had become so severe that the resulting “boom” lasted less than a decade.

It does not take any great analysis to see that the objective conditions for revolution are far more advanced than they were even in 1917. At that time the crisis was largely confined to the advanced capitalist countries, while now virtually the entire world has been dragged into both the general crisis of capitalism, as well as the specific economic crisis that

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warming and everything to do with reaping super profits from the looming crisis.

For its part, the Canadian government played a despicable role in Copenhagen, being the most vocal representatives of the oil monopolies and launching the most attacks on the smaller countries. Harper and Prentice played the “bad cops” to the Obama and Clinton “good cops”. They made sure that no agreement could be reached which would impact in any way on the profits of the oil cartels.

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hit in 2008. The unfettered expansion of capitalist production has created a climate crisis that has the potential to destroy much of human civilization. The world's peoples are drowning in a tsunami of debt. If ever the times cried out for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system it is now.

However, for a revolutionary anti-capitalist movement to emerge requires not just that objective conditions exist, but that the subjective conditions – the understanding by the working class of the necessity for revolution and the instruments to accomplish it – also exist. During most of the past century the subjective conditions have lagged behind the objective conditions and it can be said with absolute certainty that such is the case at present.

At the same time, there is also a dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective conditions. Therefore, the deepening crisis of capitalism will give rise to both a deeper understanding of the necessity for revolution and the establishment of the organizations and institutions required to make it a reality. Conversely, an advance in the subjective conditions will exacerbate the crisis of capitalism and create conditions for the development of a revolutionary crisis.

One of the problems that exists in Canada is that there is a general absence of revolutionary organization on any front. There is no revolutionary party to develop the strategy and tactics of revolution. There are no revolutionary trade unions to demonstrate to workers the connection between the day-to-day economic struggles and the necessity for revolutionary change. There are no revolutionary organizations to lead the struggle for democracy and peace in a manner that deepens the crisis of the capitalist system. In other words, every aspect of a revolutionary movement has to be built from the bottom up. If we view this problem in a mechanical manner the sheer magnitude of the problem can easily overwhelm and discourage us. Many give up hope that there will be revolution in their lifetime and reconcile themselves to working for some “realistic and achievable” reforms within the capitalist system, with the aim of ameliorating the suffering of the working class and the poor.

The irony of the situation is that reform of the capitalist system is a possibility only during those periods when revolutionary change is an imminent threat. Why would the capitalists and their state grant any reforms to the working class and people during periods when they can do whatever they want without fear of the consequences. While it may still be possible to exploit some temporary contradictions within the ruling class to extract some minor concessions, even those possibilities are minimal during periods of economic crisis, such as we are experiencing today. Therefore, those who despair of ever seeing revolution and who turn to working for reforms are doomed to have their hopes dashed on the objective realities of capitalism.

This does not mean that everyone must abandon what they are doing and “organize revolution”. Rather, what it means is that, no matter how difficult the task may appear, there is no alternative to preparing for revolution. None of the work being carried out for reforms – much of it very positive in its own right – will bear fruit in the absence of a revolutionary movement. People come to revolutionary conclusions in their own way and based on their own experience. To suggest to anyone that they should drop everything they are doing and devote their lives to revolution is counter-productive.

The real issue is that those who have already arrived at the conclusion that revolution is necessary, those who have given up any illusions about the possibility for reform within the capitalist system, should start figuring out how to rebuild a revolutionary movement in this country. We have to start discussing what kind of revolutionary organization/party that we need and what needs to be done to start the process of building such an organization. We have to begin discussing what kind of trade unions Canadian workers need and how we should go about building such trade unions. And we need to begin discussing how to coalesce all of the struggles of the people for democratic and human rights into a broad struggle for popular democracy, with the understanding that those rights can only be guaranteed under socialism. Those three tasks are the most urgent tasks in terms of preparing subjective conditions for revolution in Canada and, of the three,

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the task of building a revolutionary organization or party is crucial to the success of the other two. Therefore, there is some urgency that this problem be taken up for solution.

An old proverb states that it is better to light a single small candle than to curse the darkness and this is a lesson that must be taken to heart by all those who recognize the necessity for revolution and socialism. We do not get to choose the circumstances that confront us in life. What exists independent of our will. The only choice that we have is whether to accept to live with what has been given to us or work to change it. A small group of people determined to change the situation can have an enormous impact on how the objective and subjective situations are transformed. Work is transformative – it transforms both the world and the worker. Nothing else in the human experience can be said to do so.

Revolution comes in waves that ebb and flow with a period of 30 to 50 years. There was an upsurge in revolutionary activities in the 1870s and another during the First World War. The Second World War gave rise to another upsurge in the revolutionary movement which lasted, in one form or another, into the 1960s and 1970s. Revolution went into retreat in the 1980s and has remained in retreat for the past 30 years. The period of retreat of revolution corresponds to the rise of neo-liberalism on a world scale and the two phenomena are closely connected in a dialectical way – the ebbing of revolution opened a space for the rise of neo-liberalism and the rise of neo-liberalism pushed revolution further into retreat. However, there are few who would disagree that the financial collapse of September 2008 marked the failure of neo-liberalism and the beginning of the end of that particular system of international capitalism. All evidence points to a prolonged period of economic crisis as the capitalists desperately search for a new model of fleecing the world's people. Since the fortunes of capitalism and revolution are inversely related, this means that a period of revolutionary advance is in the making.

No one can predict with any accuracy precisely when a revolutionary movement will break out, nor in which country it may occur first. Lenin pointed out that revolution breaks out where the imperialist

system is the weakest, but where that may be is often recognized after the fact rather than before. In other words, there is not much to be gained by speculating where and when a revolutionary movement will emerge. In the case of Canadians such speculation is invariably focussed on some other country, rather than at home, so it is even more damaging. If we base ourselves on history and science, however, we can safely conclude that the objective conditions in Canada are crying out for the revolutionary transformation of society. We can also conclude that, while the subjective conditions may be lagging behind, we are due for another upsurge in the revolutionary movement within the next decade (or two at the latest) and those are the periods when the subjective conditions tend to catch up with the objective conditions. Those are the periods when revolution is a possibility in the immediate sense.

So, at this time Canadian revolutionaries and anti-capitalists are confronted with a choice. We can either go to sleep and wait for the next wave of revolutionary fervour to somehow find its way through the maze or we can begin preparing conditions to facilitate the birth of that new revolutionary movement. The Manitoba Regional Committee has spent the past decade working to prepare itself and the world around itself for the coming upsurge in the revolutionary movement. Others have been working towards the same objective in their own ways. It is our hope that during the second decade of the twenty-first century those various currents of thought and work will coalesce into a mighty river capable of sweeping away the capitalist system and creating a new and better world, not just for Canadians, but for all humanity. Working to facilitate that coming together to create a revolutionary movement is the task that the Manitoba Regional Committee has set itself for the coming decade.

On this occasion of a New Year and a New Decade we wish all of our friends all the best in the new year and wish all revolutionary and anti-capitalist peoples everywhere success in their work in the coming year and decade.

- MRC, January 1, 2010

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The failure to reach an agreement at Copenhagen is not because the leaders of the big capitalist countries fail to understand the consequences of failing to act. It is not because of doubts about the science of climate change. Instead, it is the result of the basic motive of production of capitalism – the maximization of capitalist profits. No capitalist will agree to restrictions of greenhouse gas emissions which put them at a competitive disadvantage vis-a-vis their rivals. Therefore, the U.S. and European monopoly capitalists are insisting that the emerging capitalist economies of China and India face the same restrictions as they do. Otherwise, more and more production will shift from North America and Europe to China and India. Conversely, the Chinese and Indian monopoly capitalists insist that they need such a competitive advantage in regard to greenhouse gas emissions in order to compete on a level playing field with the North American and European capitalists, who have had two centuries of unrestricted emissions during which they accumulated their wealth. Neither side cares about the negative impact on human society, or at least not enough to sacrifice any of their profits to do something about.

To expect any other outcome from the Copenhagen conference is to be either naive or to fail to understand the real nature of capitalism. The monopoly capitalists have been quite eager to force the adoption of a “cap and trade” system on the world’s people because this is an opportunity for them to create one more investment bubble from which they can profit, just as they did from the sub-prime mortgage bubble. As the world’s people experienced in the wake of the collapse of that bubble in 2008, it is always the people who end up footing the bill, while the big capitalists end

up bleeding the public treasuries to make up any losses they may experience.

A solution to the climate crisis cannot be found so long as the world is under the dictate of monopoly capital. Only an economic system which puts the wellbeing of the people before any other consideration is capable of solving this problem. Only such an economic system will be capable of balancing the needs of the people for an increasing standard of living with their equally important need for a natural and social environment fit for human existence. Copenhagen is a symptom of the problem. No number of such conferences will succeed in making any advances in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The beginning point of a solution is necessarily the overthrow of the dictate of monopoly capitalism and the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism.

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