

A New Wave of Street Protests: The Proletarian Horizon and Perspective



A scene from a recent demonstration

Internationalist Voice

A new wave of street and social protests against social conditions has enveloped the whole of Iranian society. The unbridled suppression by the police state, which has resulted in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries and thousands of arrests, has not prevented the growth of the protests, which have spread from north to south and west to east, involving more than 110 cities.

The death of Mahsa Amini sparked a political explosion and released the pent-up anger of the lower masses. As in the protests of 2017 and 2019, the deplorable conditions created for working people and the lower strata of society by decaying capitalism have prepared the ground for the protests of September 2022. Members of the younger generation, who cannot imagine a future for themselves and have nothing to lose, constitute the material force of these protests. The courage, dedication and fighting spirit of the protesters opposing the police state, which has created a hell on earth for every member of society, show that it is possible to rise up and protest against even the most predatory police state. The anti-riot police, which are armed to the teeth, and which until yesterday used to act as the power of God, could not resist the anger of the protestors, and are fleeing in cities like Tabriz, Amol, Ardabil, etc., which demonstrates the power of the oppressors against a united struggle and reveals the power of the police to be built on sand.

All the political tendencies of capital from the right to the left, from monarchists to the radical phrase part of the left of capital, from nationalist and patriotic movements to the Mujahedin, proclaim the progress of the people's movement and all have the same goal. The suppressed anger, the beaten anger and protest of the working masses and the lower strata of the society are supposed to be channelled in the democratic and anti-regime channel so that the working people would be like a black army of anti-regime struggles, the repetition of the events of 1979. However, even if something goes according to their plan, it will only lead to regime changes in the framework of the capitalist system.

Due to the imperialist tensions between the western bourgeoisie and the Islamic Republic, westerners have defended the Iranian people's struggles under the claim that they are supporting democracy. They even use this issue as a lever to put pressure on the Islamic Republic. They try to pretend that these protests are a kind of "scarf revolution" like the colour revolutions in other countries. But they cannot hide that they are no different from the Islamic criminals and are only looking out for their imperialist interests.

One of the basic features of popular street protests is the participation of working people, including the lower and middle strata of society who do not possess any kind of thinking ability and class affiliation, as in the French yellow vest movement. Workers take part in such movements not as a social class, but as individuals.

The working class has not appeared as a social class in street protests until this moment. Working-class people, especially the youth and the unemployed, have participated in the protests along with other sections of society. If the material conditions are ready for social protests, but the protestors do not have a horizon or perspective for their movement, society will explode and these demonstrations will take the form of riots, rebellions, or even uprisings.

When in a society has not yet risen to a revolutionary position and is not yet ruled by dual power, or when the working class as a social class has not entered into class conflict, the hegemony of popular street protests is not in the hands of the working class. All kinds of subversive ideologies are behind the barricading of the street. The people who occupy the street barricades in popular protests do not define the nature of the barricades. In popular protests, working people, when separate from the working class, cannot express their class positions in the street, or in the form of rebellion. Instead, they become the black army of other classes.

One important issue is the idea that the bloodier a protest is, the more radical it is. This is a misunderstanding and is unrelated to the militant tradition of the working class. Such attitudes are rooted in the tradition of anarchism, which does not believe in the collective and class power of the working class. From the perspective of class and the anti-capitalist struggle, as well as the communist point of view, the labour protests in the autumn of 2018, in which not a single person died, were more radical and anti-capitalist than the popular ones of 2019, when more than 1500 people were killed. The labour protests in the autumn of 2018 were able to draw families and people from the neighbourhoods into the streets, which turned into public gatherings. The street, the neighbourhood and the factory became places of discussion and even controversy. These factors led the protestors to continue their protest based on a collective consciousness, which caused the protests to become increasingly radical each day. Although the glorious protests of the autumn of 2018 were suppressed, their achievements have become a part of historical memory. Social protests and marches should serve the class movement of workers, and the street should become a gathering place for families, as well as for a general assembly of protesters. In such a situation, instead of the protests being anti-regime, they take an anti-capitalist form and provide the grounds for the formation of factory committees, strikes, neighbourhoods and other protest institutions.

When the working class appears as **a social class** in the events of a society, the manoeuvring of the reactionary tendencies of the bourgeoisie is greatly reduced. A clear example is offered by the labour protests in the autumn of 2018, during which media such as the BBC, Voice of America, etc., were stifled. In such a situation, the bourgeois tendencies, especially the western bourgeois hypocrite type, are forcibly suffocated. Because western governments finance their war (defence) budgets by reducing the living standards of the working class, inflation has reached double digits in Britain and the US. As a result of the economic austerity policies implemented by the western governments, the working class has come to the fore to fight in such countries. Labour protests and wildcat strikes have taken over Britain and are ongoing in other western countries as well. The struggles and interests of the working class are the same regardless of the language spoken, whether in Iran or Britain, so the westerners, the BBC, the White House, etc., cannot defend protests that have a proletarian class nature and these will be smothered.

The chained workers!

All eyes are fixed, all hopes invested, in our class. If the dormant giant does not awake, if the working class does not consciously emerge from these protests as a unified social class, if the demonstrations do not open up the possibility of differential class trajectories, if the working

class does not form its own neighbourhood, factories, strikes, committees and struggles - and fails to establish other independent bodies and entities - the distinctive struggle of our class will be obscured and its unique contribution will remain indistinct from the wider anti-regime protest. In 1979, the Islamic bourgeoisie rode on the shoulders of our struggles and as a result, the Islamic bourgeoisie replaced the royal one, but wage slavery continued for our class.

It is not in our interest simply to overthrow the ruling class; it is in our class interest to destroy the entire capitalist system. The evolutionary process of class struggle, because it is rooted in opposition to capitalism, will not only spread to other capitalist countries but also challenge the very authority of the capitalist state. We just have to fight for our class interests.

Long live the class struggle!

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