

# **Lessons from strikes, labour struggles and internationalist tasks**



**A scene from the strike by Haft Tappeh Sugarcane  
Agro-industry Company workers**

## **Internationalist Voice**

**Chained workers!**

**Internationalists!**

**Opponents of wage slavery!**

**The right and left tendencies of capital, given their enormous resources, are able to engineer public opinion. Internationalists in absolute isolation defend proletarian positions and goals. Help us to to disseminate our our vision, narratives and horizons of the struggles and strikes of the working class to our class sisters and brothers.**

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**Communist Revolution or the Destruction of Humanity!**

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## Introduction

The working class in Iran is facing some of the most difficult economic and social conditions. Millions of workers are unemployed, with many thousands of them joining the huge army of the unemployed. The wage level is lower than the poverty line. Wage slaves, who themselves are the creators of human blessings, are themselves deprived of basic needs. With its sinister face, the peripheral capital in a crisis has created an earthly hell for wage slaves. American and Western government sanctions, in which Western gangsters punish Iranian gangsters by for genuflecting before the Islamic bourgeoisie, have had adverse consequences for peripheral capitalism. The bankruptcy and closure of production units, along with the fall in the value of the national currency, was only meant to impose austerity policies on wage slaves, thereby further reducing the purchasing power of workers.

We witnessed labour protests before the street protests of January 2018. At the time of the street protests, the working class, as a social class, continued to protest and strike without engaging with street protests as a social class. But, from this year, the working class has started a new chapter in its struggles: it is safe to say that, after the labour struggles of 1978-1981, for the first time, labour struggles have grown qualitatively and reached an equivalent level. Workers'

protests and strikes occur every day, although they are deliberately not accurately reflected in the news. On average, there are 17 protests or labour strikes in Iran every day [1]. Although labour protests have so far not involved two key industries, the petroleum industry and the automotive industry, part of the industrial proletariat is involved in labour protests and strikes.

Under the slogan “Death to the worker, peace be upon the oppressor”, rather than joining the class struggle, the worker chose to commit suicide in despair. But, in the short term, not only did the slogan of the workers change into “Peace be upon the worker, death to the oppressor”, but anti-capitalist slogans were also disseminated via labour protests and strikes. In other words, this review will consider the flogging of workers during labour protests up to the most powerful class demonstrations. The important point here is that the examination and explanation of workers’ protests and strikes are not only based on news updates but also on points of view, theories and reasoning.

The reality is that there is an ongoing, sometimes secret, sometimes overt, war between gangsters. The United States, along with Saudi Arabia and other capitalist institutions, has begun a psychological and economic war to bring Iran’s economy to its knees; indeed, it has been somewhat successful in this matter. Peripatetic capital dilemmas, political insecurity, US-Saudi threats and so on have caused the value of the rial

to fall by at least 150% in the past few months. In other words, the purchasing power of the working class has fallen by 90%.

The war of Islamic and Western gangs over their imperialist interests do not encroach on the interests of the working class. At one time, the danger of the collapse of society and the fate of Syria seemed to have existed for Iran. As we wrote earlier, if the working class is a social class leading social struggles, not only will the destruction of society be ended and not only will the danger of war and the possibility of foreign interference decrease, but the movement itself, because of its anti-capitalist nature, will also expand the class struggle in the region. We emphasize that the evolution of class struggle not only prevents the collapse of society and reduces the possibility of a crisis caused by gangsters like America, but also increases the chance of expanding anti-capitalist struggles to the capitalist metropolis. In the evolution of the class struggle, the political intervention of the right or left of capital and the actions of the working class as a black army will undermine reactionary interests.

The protests and strikes by teachers and workers at the Heavy Equipment Production Company (HEPCO), the National Steel Industrial Group (NSIG) and the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company have special properties. A responsible review and compilation of the lessons from these struggles are

essential in fighting future battles. The effects of these struggles, especially the battles of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers, will be highly useful in spite of all the weak points in future battles.

Different tendencies of the left of capital have provided different explanations for labour protests. With the metamorphosis of the Marxist concept, the most radical phrase among them announced the slogan “Go forward into revolution!” and stated that the solution for the working class at the present time was represented by the workers’ councils formed at the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company. The defunct councilist communism of peripheral capital created the heroes of the councilist seizure of factories, which in turn was regrettably defeated by reformism. Against the backdrop of these tendencies, internationalists must also, by examining and summarizing the struggles and strikes of the workers, in the course of studying these struggles and strikes, outline their horizons and their duties.

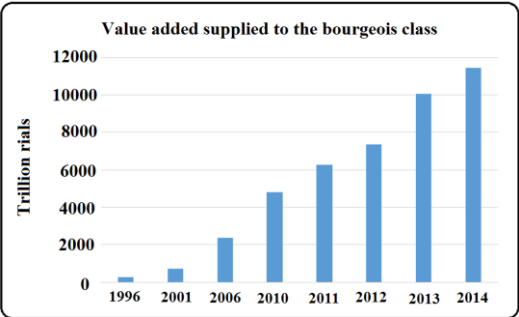
## **The role of the working class in generating surplus value**

Iran faced negative economic growth in 2012 and 2013, even though economic growth was part of



Hassan Rouhani’s economic programme. Rouhani, with his illusions, offered reforms and solutions to the prevalent economic problems during his campaign in 2013. He promised to boost the economy by setting up factories and transform manufacturing centres that were in trouble and improve the living conditions of the people.

Iran was in 21<sup>st</sup> place in the ranking of the world’s major economies in 2011. Following a strengthening of Western sanctions and a decline in GDP, along with a sharp decline in oil prices, which led to negative economic growth, Iran fell to the 28<sup>th</sup> place in 2014 [2]. The main question raised here, despite the negative economic growth and the decline in GDP, concerns the amount of surplus value delivered by the working class to society. The latest statistics released by the Iranian



Statistics Office is for 2014.

The total value added in 2014 was about 11,438,919 billion rials [3]. This is unbelievable, but true. In 2014, every workforce averaged 310 million rials of value added supplied to the bourgeois class. The diagram opposite shows that the value added by the working

class to the bourgeois class has increased year-by-year, in spite of the negative economic growth in 2012 and 2013.

After the end of the reactionary Iran-Iraq war, which destroyed the industry and infrastructure of both countries, when Rafsanjani became president, his title was changed from commander of operations to commander of development. He proclaimed that Iran would become a modern, industrialized country, very similar to Japan in terms of development and economics progress: in other words, an “**Islamic Japan**”. But, everyone has seen how this Islamic Japan has been a barbarity not only for the working class but also for the vast majority of the people. Thirty years since this criminal made such remarks, the supreme leader of the Islamic bourgeoisie continues to ruminate on such matters. Recently, the news website of the supreme leader released a document entitled the “Islamic-Iranian pattern for progress”. According to this document, Iran will be one of the 10 largest economies by 2065 and rank among the top four Asian countries, as well as rank seventh in the list of the world’s top countries in terms of progress [4].

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest assessment, evaluated Iran’s economic growth rate as -1.5%. The bourgeois Islamic Congressional Research Centre evaluated this rate to be

worse than the IMF's assessment, predicting that, in the most optimistic scenario, the rate is -0.5% and, in the most pessimistic, it is -2.8% due to the economic sanctions. Economic growth last year was 3.7%. Since the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the value of the national currency has dropped by 150%. The head of the Council of Wages, a bourgeois institution, has announced that the purchasing power of workers has fallen by 90% [5].

In a symbolic act by Kian Cord factory workers in Malayer in May 2018, in protest at the non-payment of their arrears, they spread out a few bricks



on an empty table to depict their living conditions. Meanwhile, the Islamic bourgeoisie has become more obese every day, and its par excellence and luxurious lifestyle in its dream palaces is not even comparable to the metropolitan bourgeoisie.

## **Flogging the workers**

In December 2014, the Poya Zarkan contracting company dismissed 350 seasonal mining workers with 10 years of experience from the Ag Darreh Mine. On

26 December, these dismissed workers demanded a dialogue with the management in the hope of returning to work, which the management refused. Workers gathered in front of the mine entrance and the protesting workers clashed with the guards on account of being declared as an illegal gathering. On 27 December, the dismissed workers took sanctuary in the mine. On this day, three workers committed suicide, but they were rescued. Following the employer's complaint, the bourgeois judiciary declared 17 workers – that is, 17 wage slaves – guilty. These workers were accused of creating turmoil, deliberate demolition and the prevention of business. These workers, or wage slaves, depending on their accusations, were sentenced to between 30 and 100 lashes, imprisonment and fines.

Workers sold their entire savings to pay for a lawyer. Despite having a lawyer, their conviction was final: punishment by imprisonment and flogging punishment and the imposition of fines. In June 2016, the criminals of the Islamic bourgeoisie flogged eight protesting workers from the mine in public.



Tavakkul Heydari, the head of the province's justice court, while defending the enforcement of the flogging order, stated that these people were not punished

because they were workers, but for disturbing public order and security. In other words, this criminal portrayed the workers who protested about their unemployment as thugs, who threatened the order of capital. This guardian of the capital order said:

*“It was not a matter of flogging them because they were workers; rather, they were a threat to public order and security” [6].*

After this crime, misconduct was stamped on the forehead of the workers, while employers will no longer employ anyone accused of disturbance, destruction etc. on their criminal record. Unemployment is the biggest nightmare among these flogged wage slaves. The day when these wage slaves were flogged, the whole working class was flogged: the day that the criminals of the bourgeoisie felt the power of God and dared to flog the working class.

The workers from this mine are part of the most deprived sections of the working class. One of the main points of the weakness of the protest workers was not to condemn them in front of other workers so that they would elicit solidarity from their class sisters and brothers. Rather, instead of resorting to the class power of workers and public opinion and protesting in the community, they turned to lawyers. At the same time, the passive reaction of other sections of the working

class in this regard caused the criminals to feel powerful.

## **Suicidal workers**

“Suicide among the workers has become an epidemic” [7] is the title of the article in one of the bourgeois newspapers. Unfortunately, there are no detailed statistics of the suicide or self-immolation of workers due to work-related anxiety, dismissal or livelihood problems. However, official statistics, which are not accurate, indicate that at least nine workers have committed suicide. In the headlines of bourgeois newspapers, one can read of the suicide of a worker on the city train, the suicide of a municipality worker, the suicide of a worker in Tabriz...

On 27 February 2018, Ali Naghdi, a protesting worker from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, with 27 years of work



experience, at the age of 50, due to psychological stress and the failure to meet his labour demands, threw himself into a canal and ended his life (see opposite picture). His last words before his suicide were as follows:

*“I’m tired of this situation and I want to commit suicide so that the company’s officials might think about the many years of demands from colleagues” [8].*

The suicide of workers is not only a phenomenon of the periphery of capital, but the product of capitalism itself. In metropolitan capitalism, in the cradle of bourgeois civilization, France, the anxiety, suffering and hardship caused by work has led to a wave of suicides. In a report published by *The Guardian* entitled “Wave of staff suicides at France Telecom” [9], in the 18 months before its publication date, more than 20 telecommunications workers committed suicide after posting letters to confirm that the cause of their suicide was work-related anxiety and pressure.

Certainly, the suicide of workers occurs when class struggle is highly defensive, the wage slave does not see any clear horizons and prospects, and the level of solidarity between workers is low. In such a situation, the only way forward is to get rid of capital. With the advent of class struggle, class solidarity increases among workers, with a clear horizon ahead of the protesters, who, instead of killing themselves, challenge the barbaric and inhuman system of capitalism.

## Strike by teachers

Teachers played an effective role in the protests and strikes from 1978 to 1980. Teachers were historically protesters in the community. With the bloodbath launched by the Islamic bourgeoisie in the 1980s, a generation of teachers were thrown in chains or worse. It was only in the shadow of this systematic repression that the bourgeoisie was able to stifle teachers' voices. It



took more than two decades for teachers to start to protest again. In a protest against the low level of wages, teachers carried out a series of protests between 2001 and 2006, including gatherings in Baharestan Square or in front of parliament, or street protests and sit-ins in school.

On 10 May 2018, in protest at their livelihood and commodification of education, teachers started to protest in front of the building of the Plan and Budget Organization of Iran. During the protest, a number of teachers





was arrested and sentenced to long-term prison sentences and fines. A new round of teachers' protests began with a two-day strike and a sit-in. On 14 and 15 October 2018, teachers protested against high prices, inflation, poor living conditions and the imprisonment of their colleagues by occupying school offices instead of teaching in the class-room. This new round of teachers' strikes had certain characteristics, as follows:

The first characteristic was that the strikes were nationwide, spreading to at least 55 towns and villages. For the first time, teachers were able to curtail classroom work in hundreds of schools simultaneously on 14 and 15 October.

The second characteristic was the simultaneity of the protest with that of truckers, drivers and other workers. The atmosphere of protest was dominant in society, with a sort of class solidarity soon emerging.

The third characteristic of the protest was to counter bourgeois media censorship with the use of social media by teachers so as to make their voices heard.

These characteristics not only lessened the pressure on teachers, compared to previous protests, but also made their voices heard better. Further, both students and in particular workers supported this protest. The short-term nature of the strike and limiting the protest to only inside schools, rather than taking the strike out into society and involving pupils, were the weaknesses

of the protest. If the protests had directly involved pupils, it would definitely have been more reflective of the community.

## **Strike by drivers and truckers**

The first wave of the general strike by drivers and truckers began on 22 May 2018 spread to about 160 cities.

The second wave of this general strike began on 23 September 2018 and spread to more than 200 cities (raising a truck jack represents the act of a striking driver).



In some cities, for example, Shiraz, minibus drivers joined the nationwide strike. Increasing insurance prices, tolls, high commission rates, high repair costs and high prices of spare parts, reduced fuel quotas and expensive car supplies, such as tyres and oils, were among the reasons for the strike.

The strike resulted in a shortage of diesel and gasoline and long queues at fuel distribution stations. The strike also hit some of the basic products on the market. To break the strike, the government used troops and army tankers. Drivers tried to block the movement

of these tankers, which had military escorts. Striking drivers used stones and threats to prevent cargo being transported by strike-breakers. The bourgeois judiciary described the striking drivers as disruptive and stated that their actions constituted “unlawful warfare”, which carried a death sentence [10]. In the second wave, more than 250 people were arrested in various cities.

The banderole installed at the front of a truck (see the photo opposite) explains the reasons for the strike and



how it could be won. Truckers explained to teachers and other workers that “our pain is your pain” and that “our strike victory depends on your support”. Drivers did not appeal to a faction of the bourgeoisie, nor to government officials, but sought support from the working class as a guarantor of their strike victory. This character, with its class orientation, distinguished the drivers’ strike from previous protests. This was the most important character of this strike and its most important point of strength. Another of the strengths of the strike was its extension to more than 200 cities. Strike weaknesses included a failure to extend the strike to other industries or units. In other words, solidarity with drivers and truckers remained more or less

symbolic. The strike by drivers and truckers led to the government's decision to raise fares and better help drivers and truckers.

## **Strike by HEPCO machine workers**

HEPCO was established in 1974 in the heavy industry sector in Arak to become a manufacturer of road, mining and



agricultural machinery. Following the events of 1979, it was owned by the government and privatized in 2007. The company's annual production was about 2,400 machinery, making it one of the most profitable industrial groups. On the one hand, peripheral capitalism in crisis and, on the other hand, sanctions imposed by Western countries, with the support of the Arab World, along with the imperialist ambitions of the Islamic bourgeoisie, have presented Iranian industry with serious problems. Metropolitan capitalism has always been trying to shift the burden of capitalist crisis onto peripheral capitalism. That is why the effects of the capitalist crisis are more brutal and inhumane than the effects of metropolitan capitalism on peripheral capitalism. Along with the crisis of capitalism, the

American-Israeli-Saudi bloc has launched an economic-psychological war against Iran to bring the Iranian economy to a state of bankruptcy so that workers will protest against the status quo and play the black army role for this bloc. But the radicalization of the labour struggle will be an opposite outcome of this policy: in other words, if the radicalization of the struggle continues, it is possible to extend the aforementioned labour protests and strikes to these countries.

It is in a such situation that a part of the industry is rendered bankrupt. HEPCO is a case in point. Its factory has faced serious problems since the early 2010s and its production has been highly limited and threatened with bankruptcy. The production cycle of this industrial group has practically been shut down. Restoring factory production, job security and preventing foreclosure are the main demands of protesting workers.

In the factory, because of the dormant state of the production line, workers cannot use the leverage of the strike to advance their demands, since there is virtually no opportunity to cause economic losses for the employer or extend the protest and prompt demonstrations beyond the factory boundaries. In fact, one of the main demands of workers is to restart the production line and continue to work on production for the sake of job security.

On 19 September 2017, workers from HEPCO and Azarab protested and took their protest to the city to win support for other industries and people. The bourgeoisie is most afraid of the spread of labour protests to other industries. The bourgeoisie did not respond to the demands of the workers, but resorted instead to the riot police, who attached the



ranks of protesting workers with tear gas and batons. In this street battle, only after wounding a large number of workers was the riot police able to break the ranks of protesting workers and reclaim the street. Following that, the bourgeois judiciary issued summons to 20 workers, who were accused of disrupting public order and participating in illegal gatherings. Protesting workers were also threatened with dismissal.



The new round of labour protests at HEPCO began with about 1,000 company workers protesting about the non-payment of arrears (wage and salary waivers) and the uncertainty about the state of the factory on 13 May

2018. They first gathered at the factory but, from the second day on, workers blocked the north-south railroad. Workers handed over an ultimatum to the authorities on 21 May 2018 after closing the north-south railroad with trains. Following that, five workers were arrested, which led to further protests. Finally, with the release of the imprisoned workers and the payment of three months of arrears, along with ownership of the factory temporarily assigned to the government, the protests by workers at HEPCO ended.



## Strike by NSIG workers

The first factory of the NSIG was founded in 1963, after which other factories and workshops were gradually added.



Currently, about 4,000 workers are employed. The total production capacity of this industrial complex was at one point about 2 million tons a year, making it one of

the major exporters of steel products. The factory's capacity dropped from 100% to 5% after the recent economic crisis. The production line is practically dormant, which has eliminated the purpose of striking, such that workers have taken to street protests instead. Launching a production line and continuing production are among the demands of the workers.

The NSIG has witnessed labour protests over recent years. The latest round of labour protests by the NSIG began on 9 November 2018. The demands of the workers were related to the nationalization of the company, job security, the launch of a production line, the payment of wage arrears and medical insurance.

With protests continuing, workers' families also joined the protests. The simultaneity of protests by the industrial workers from the NSIG with those by workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company greatly intensified the atmosphere of the struggle. The slogans of the workers became more radical and anti-capitalist, day by day, and included the following:

- We are the ironworkers; we pull out the roots of oppression!
- We are steelworkers against oppression and injustice; we fight, we fight!
- No threat, no prison, no longer useful!
- The enemy is here, it lies, it is America!



Since the beginning of the protests by NSIG workers, Ahwaz (the province capital) has been the scene of fierce industrial action. With workers' families joining the protests, this had a magnificent effect and the impact of protests on society was greater than before.

Workers have an unimaginable power if they are united; they are able to do extraordinary things which are not ordinarily conceivable. One of the spectacular scenes of worker power was seen on 24 November 2018. The protesters

from NSIG were planning to enter Naderi Street and confront all kinds of equipment in the hands of the riot police. The riot police, with all its pride, could not



prevent the progress of the protesting workers. On the contrary, the riot police was dispersed by the united force of the steelworkers. In turn, the riot police was forced to escape, while the workers moved forward with steady steps (see opposite picture).

How beautiful it was, seeing the riot police escape from the protest workers!

The continuation of the struggle for wage slaves, and especially the spread of the news about these struggles to other sectors of the working class, could not be tolerated by the bourgeoisie. At midnight on 16 and 17 December 2018, repressive and capitalist forces attacked protesting workers' homes and brutalized the organizers of the protests. Racketeers, in defence of the capital, resorted to beating workers in front of family members and confiscating their mobile phones, while dozens of protesters against wage slavery were 'kidnapped' and transferred to local prisons. Over the course of two nights, criminals of the Islamic bourgeoisie arrested 43 workers, or wage slaves, of the NSIG, and transferred them to Ahvaz Prison. To avoid arrest, some workers spent nights on the streets.

The Islamic bourgeoisie did its best to create an atmosphere of fear and panic in order to prevent protests inside the city. Despite this, the workers expressed their anger and hatred of the barbarism of capital by holding protests surrounded by security forces under the slogan of "Imprisoned workers should be free!".

In recent days, families of imprisoned workers, especially the children of workers, have called for the release of their parents by gathering in front of the governorate. The trick of the security forces is to desensitize public opinion by not attacking ranks of protesting workers during the day, but rather to arrest

leading workers at night and terrorize them, then to release them a few days later. It is important to note that a large number of these workers has already been released on bail due to labour protests. Still, seven of the NSIG workers are in local prisons.

The Islamic bourgeoisie was finally able to temporarily defeat the workers' protests through suppression by the police state at the NSIG. Government newspapers announced the visit made by some "representatives" of the steelworkers to labour and industry ministers, where the plight of detainees and the issue of relaunching the company's production line were discussed [11].

The pavement of the streets of Ahwaz was shaken under the feet of the workers and the riot police ran away. The wage slave evaluated not America, but its own bourgeoisie, its enemy. The grandeur of the bourgeoisie was broken. The Islamic bourgeoisie intends to take revenge on the struggles of the NSIG workers. The bourgeoisie, in whispers, discussed the revival of the Islamic Labour Council (whose main task is to spy for the Information Ministry) at this complex, which is as dangerous as chasing and prosecuting wage slaves. Indeed, the struggle for workers without the use of government or religious factions, the emergence of anti-capitalist slogans and the spread of protests to the community have been the strengths of the protests. The lack of bold and class-aware strike leaders in the Haft

Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company and the failure to spread these magnificent struggles to other industries and sectors of the working class have been among their weak points.

## **Strike by Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers**

The Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company started its activity as a scientific agricultural pole in 1961 and is now one of the largest industrial factories in the province of Khuzestan. In 2015, it was privatized. About 6,000 people work in the company. Over the past 15 years, this industrial complex has witnessed labour protests and strikes. In 2005 and 2006, workers protested about their livelihood with the slogan “We are Haft Tappeh workers and we are hungry”. However, in 2007, protests and strikes were held in the form of sit-ins at the factory or on government premises, or protests in the city of Shush, among other actions. In 2017, following protests and strikes, 15 workers were arrested by the police at midnight and about 40 people were summoned to appear before the judiciary.

In the summer of 2018, workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company elected an independent workers' council, which included 22 delegates. The council's assembly of representatives began its work in August, including the organization of strikes, as well as calling for the return of expelled workers, the disclosure of confidential documents and the supervision of accounts. According to Ismail Bakhshi, in relation to the independent workers' council:



*“When we say that the independent workers’ council was formed in the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, some think that this council is the same as the final council, which has reached the highest level. No! We are just beginning and it takes time for even the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers themselves to understand what the work of the council is... I do not claim that the councils of workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company are exactly in line with the*

*theory and definition of the council, which has been discussed in detail. But, according to the psychology of the intellectual and cultural atmosphere and the realities of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers' atmosphere, soviet thinking has shown itself and become dominant" [12].*

The new round of labor protests and strikes by workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company was



launched on 5 November 2018 in protest against overdue salaries, on livelihood issues and job security (privatization). For the first time since the bloodbath by the Islamic bourgeoisie in the 1980s, the strike leader (Ismail Bakhshi), speaking with a loud voice on behalf of thousands, not from workers but also of the working class, describing the working class' dilemma, not just because of the bad economic conditions of the employers, but also because of the performance of the capitalist class. His emphasis on **class** is a thorn in the eye of the bourgeoisie. In his speech, he said:

*"What the authorities declare about the bad economic conditions of employers does not relate*

*to workers, and the conditions of today are due to the function of the capitalist class. Thus, there is no reason to put pressure on the working class” [13].*

In his speech, Bakhshi put forward two alternatives to the striking workers, insisting that they must decide on their own destiny:

*“There are two solutions that you must decide on in the end: one is that the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company is completely manned by the workers. We will set up a committee and run the company on a consultative basis. Do not be worried. We have all the skills. Until today, who has run the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company? Have confidence, believe in yourself. We can manage the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company. It is my wish that, one day, we can manage the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company. The other solution is to assume that we will not be allowed to take over or that there are no requirements, although we will keep our council formations. In this case, if the government intends to take over the company, it will no longer be the same as in the past. Rather, the government should work under the*

*supervision of the workers' council and under the supervision of the general workers. What is the difference between the representatives of the state and these representatives [of the employer]? They can destroy the company on a number of occasions, but we return the next day. Our alternative is the council and collective opinion" [14].*

We will examine the issues of workers' councils and workers' self-management from the Marxist horizon in the following pages. These workers' protests become more radical, day by day, and Ismail Bakhshi became a symbol of the struggle of the working class. On 18 November 2018, workers' protests spread out into the city. The riot police and special units had the protesting workers in their sights. The strike leader put forward the slogan "**Bread, jobs, freedom, council management**". Hearing this slogan from the speaker of the striking workers caused a seizure in the limbs of the bourgeoisie. The strike leader told workers that they should repeat a slogan to remind the riot police that "their salary is paid out of our wages": "No threat, no prison, no longer useful!"

For the first time since the bourgeois bloodbath in the 1980s, thanks to the striking workers, as well as the thousands of protesters in the middle of the city, the council was called. This was akin to swearing in church



for the bourgeoisie. Bakhshi understood the consequences of his work well and knew that he would pay a heavy price for it. Therefore, he ended his speech thus:

*“The only testament I have is that death is truth. If Ismail Bakhshi died for any reason, no one has the right to bury his body. Instead, bring his coffin to the strike to hear his dead screams.”*

On the same day, 18 November 2018, the criminals of the Islamic bourgeoisie began their dirty operations. The security forces arrested 18 protest workers, detaining workers’ representatives, along with Sepideh Ghaliyan, who disseminated news of the labour protests. The bourgeoisie, based on experience, realized that a violent crackdown would worsen the situation throughout the day, leading to the radicalization of the labour struggle. Therefore, with the exception of some radical leaders, the security forces released the remaining detainees gradually and on bail conditions. Workers’ protests continued this time with the slogan, **“I am also Bakhshi!”**, but the bourgeoisie, by arresting the most radical representative of the workers (Ismail Bakhshi), “decapitated” the strike. The bourgeoisie resorted to the dirty politics of division by simultaneously hunting down the radical representative

of the workers and flirting with those representatives willing to compromise.

At the arrest of bold and class-conscious and strike leaders, treacherous representatives seized the opportunity to engage with government officials and the employer without the knowledge of all the workers, in turn providing the context for defeat.

The bourgeoisie, along with every government, judicial, security and employer's agent, developed a skilful plan to break the strike. The bourgeoisie initially took advantage of the workers' communication and propaganda channels (Channel Telegram) with the help of government and employer agents and poisoned the atmosphere by promoting messages from government officials and employers on these channels. The bourgeoisie then completed its premeditated plan to break the strike, along with the head of the Department of Labour, the governor, a new CEO, agents of the employer and some strike-breaking workers, aided by the betrayal of several delegates willing to compromise. They arrested bold strike leaders; a part of the overdue salary was paid; the director was swapped with another criminal.

After 28 days of great struggle, after 28 days of class battles, after 28 days of hope, after 28 days when wage slaves rocked society, on 2 December 2018, the strike by the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers was virtually defeated. On that day,

at least 1,000 workers voted to continue the strike; but, unfortunately, the strike organization was disrupted, on the one hand, by the arrest of bold striker leaders and, on the other hand, due to the compromise and betrayal on the part of some workers' representatives.

Like a wounded snake, the bourgeoisie, is now looking for revenge. It has a long list of criminal acts that it wishes to carry out. The crackdown on striker leaders will be examined in the following pages, but protesting workers who were summoned before the Ministry of Intelligence during the strike and those who have been "freed" on bail and whose families are threatened have recognized the limits of their freedom.

Abbas Hosseini Pooya, the Ahwaz public prosecutor, who was present during the installation of the new director of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, inevitably spoke about the systematic and monthly monitoring of the factory; in other words, the prosecutor would monitor all the work and movements of the workers. He announced that the prosecutor's office would monitor the factory's activities for one year [15].

The new manager, who kept his sword close to his chest, said during his presentation that he would not tolerate strikes and would respond to any dismissal:

*“If anybody no longer wishes to continue working, they are no longer welcome in the company” [16].*

But the most dangerous action by the bourgeoisie involves the revival of the “Disciplinary Committee” and the “Islamic Labour Council”. The issue of the revival of the Islamic Labour Council is even more dangerous than that of the imprisoned workers. The bourgeoisie, with the help of security, judicial, labour office and employer organs, wants to exploit the atmosphere of failure following the strikes and, with the possible cooperation of some of the supine representatives, organize the circus of Islamic Labour Council elections in order to declare these compromisers as representatives of the workers. Independent workers’ collectives are not only thorns in the eye of the bourgeoisie, they are also an inspiration for other workers. The bourgeoisie does not tolerate this. As Ismail Bakhshi said before he was arrested:

*“With coordination and with specific purpose, including coping with me (this does not mean that I am important, but refers to the fact that enemies from outside of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, for example, intend to destroy me because I brought up the slogan about councils), all security and*

*government agencies, employers and labour offices were mobilized to launch Islamic Labour Council elections in the company” [17].*

The bitter reality of the strike being defeated must be accepted and lessons taken from it. Despite the strike’s failure, the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers are no longer as before. The experience of this strike and the lessons from it will be highly valuable in the evolution of the class struggle. It is an irrefutable fact that the recent strike and protests by these workers, after the defeat of the class struggle of 1978-1980, represented the most valuable teaching moments for workers.

Among the strengths of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers’ protest and strikes, we can mention the following:

- Emphasizing the class strength of the workers and emphasizing the struggle for councils.
- Introducing of the slogan of “**Bread, jobs, freedom, council management**”.
- The nurturing of labour leaders, such as Ismail Bakhshi.
- The necessity of a factory committee for a model for labour struggles.
- The loss of workers’ illusions and the strengthening of the boldness and spirit of the workers’ struggle.

- Holding public assemblies.
- Extending the strike to other industries (steel).
- Bringing women workers from the edge into the centre of the struggle.
- Extending the strike to society and especially to the city of Shush.
- Active participation of families in street protests.
- Mass solidarity.

The weak points of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers' protests include:

- The Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company Workers' Assembly, like any other labour organization, includes a range of different tendencies which are naturally self-sufficient. One of the weak points of the recent protests by company workers was the failure to use one of the common traditions of the workers' movement to "dismantle and install representatives" at any moment at the direction of the workers. If that happened, the compromising and treacherous delegates would have promptly given up their seats to more radical representatives.
- The lack of daring and bold leaders, such as Ismail Bakhshi, as well as Bakhshi's arrest, was the biggest hit to the workers' strike.
- Lack of readiness for police repression.

- Betrayal of compromiser deputies, with some delegates betraying the workers in complicity with the government and the employer. Representatives should have reflected on the decisions of the collective struggle. All decisions and negotiations must be public and there is no room for behind-the-scenes negotiations in the labour tradition.
- The prolongation of the strike without any serious expansion to other industries (other than the NSIG, manifestations of solidarity were only symbolic).
- Lack of material readiness of workers to maintain a long-term strike (as thousands of workers live with their families in material terms below the poverty line, there was a need for a financial support fund for the strike).
- Lack of readiness to inform and support other class sisters and brothers and people outside the city of Shush.
- Demagogues of the left of capital in relation to trade unions.

## **The role of women in workers' protests and strikes**

During the labour protests between 1978 and 1980, women workers played an active role, participating in the labour struggle in the literal sense, arm in arm with working-class men. Given the ideological

superstructure of the Islamic bourgeoisie and the systematic repression of women, after the brutal suppression of the 1980s, the role of women in workers' protests and strikes has been negligible. In anti-dictatorial and democratic movements of the past, the presence of women was more perceptible and their voices were also better reflected. Different factions of capital have tried to use women as a black army in their desires. The left and especially the right wing of capital have reflected the voices of women's democracy in terms of their overwhelming resources, while the lack of active participation of women in the working-class movement has also been highly tangible.

With the growth of worker struggles this year, women have not only played an active role, but also been upgraded to level of organizers and speakers in workers' protests and strikes. The opposite photo shows a working woman giving a speech to the striking workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company. The courage, ability and confidence of this working woman, as she





speaks, represents the ascent of a generation of militant women workers who are fighting for their class demands. This is a passionate speech accompanied by the cheering of striking workers.

### Women

(even those who do not work at the factory) and the children of the working class played an



active role in the recent protests. In the street protests, women of the working class walked shoulder to shoulder with men. Meanwhile, the motto of the children of the workers of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company was clear:

*“I am a child of Haft Tappeh and I’m hungry.”*

When workers took their protest into the city to attract popular support from the various neighbourhoods,



the workers’ daughters (future workers) moved to the forefront of the protests. The children of the workers expressed their solidarity with their fathers and their

mothers, carrying placards which read “We are the children of workers, we stand with them!” in their hands.

Working women have played an active role in the protests, not only in the factory, not only in the city protests, but also as female drivers. The photo opposite shows a driver, who, in solidarity with her colleagues, has stopped her truck in the middle of the road, raised the truck jack and expressed her solidarity with colleagues.



One of the strengths of this year’s labour protests and strikes was their capacity to bring women from the periphery into the centre of these events. Given the ideological superstructure of the Islamic bourgeoisie and the systematic repression of women, it is no exaggeration to state that women workers, like Russian women, will play a proactive role in upcoming protests and strikes, as was the case in 1917 in Russia.

## **Defenders of wage slavery in workers’ clothes**

No movements, strikes or protests of the past were pure and without weaknesses; meanwhile, in the future,

such actions will not be without deficiencies or weaknesses. The workers' struggles in Paris, the Petrograd workers' struggles, the Berlin workers' battles, the Shanghai workers' struggles: despite all the zeal, battles and heroism, they all had their weaknesses.

Following the worker struggles of 1978-1980, when the bourgeoisie could only consolidate its sovereignty with a bloodbath, the role of the Islamic Labour Councils as part of this sovereignty and the Ministry of Intelligence became more and more essential to its existence. The fact is that the Islamic Labour Councils have no place among workers and, with the growth of labour struggles, they cannot perform their duties. Workers look at Islamic Labour Councils with hatred. The Islamic bourgeoisie uses unusual tactics to advance its goals. One of the methods is the use of traitorous elements dressed in workers' clothes which advance the interests of the employer and the bourgeoisie.

In the history of labour struggles, humble humans have always been found, who, despite being workers themselves, have been working against the interests of workers, by indulging in major weaknesses (lying, slandering and throwing slime) to erode the fighting spirit and provide grounds to break a strike.

Reza Rakhshan is now the symbol of this kind of humiliation. Speaking with lumpen language, he tries to humiliate and defeat labour struggles, referring to

striking workers as clowns. He has accused labour and strike leaders of seeking to become famous and playing superman, while claiming that labour protests and strikes serve American and Saudi policy interests. For him, calling for workers' councils is the mantra of overheated and hallucinatory communists, thus providing an excuse for suppression.

When workers are on strike, they need solidarity and strength. However, during the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers' strike, he condemned the strike and Ismail Bakhshi, insisting that economic demands should not be politicized. In a peak of despair, he demagogically claimed that questioning the labour law was akin to challenging the Iman at Friday prayers, because it has nothing to do with workers' demands, and there is no need to strike if an employer himself promises to pay deferred wages. He asks: what is meant by an independent workers' organization? In response, he insists that the sloganeering of the past is no more. He does not worry about being seen as a supporter of Ahmadinejad; obviously, he expresses his anti-communist abhorrence and hatred. When it became a substitute for the Islamic bourgeoisie and the Ministry of Intelligence, the majority organization (a leftist group) became a disgrace in the political milieu; now, it is the turn of Reza Rakhshan to hang a medal of dishonour around his neck.

## Suppression of labour leaders

On 18 November 2018, the criminals of the Islamic bourgeoisie arrested the leaders of protesting workers and strikers, including Bakhshi. The bourgeoisie had long sought to silence Bakhshi, who had already been targeted by bourgeois thugs. Indeed, on 14 January 2017, after getting off a bus, these thugs were waiting for him with two cars.

They covered their car plates and attacked him with their hats and guns. As Bakhshi screamed, people became of the attack and, after the thugs dispersed, took him to hospital. Fortunately, his injuries were not profound and he was discharged after treatment.



The bourgeoisie has always used a degradation scenario. To slime Bakhshi's reputation, the bourgeoisie resorted to spreading messages via cyberspace. Indeed, it transpired that Bakhshi was already a supporter of Mir-Hossein Mousavi. Even if this was true, it showed how a worker could surrender his illusion about a faction of the bourgeoisie and realize his class identity. If the majority of workers, like Bakhshi, became aware of their class identity in this

way, they would no longer fight for more wages but pursue the realization of communist societies.

Bakhshi was charged with organizing illegal gatherings, conspiracy and collusion against the interests of national security. In response, workers shouted “**We are all Bakhshi!**”.

On 11 December 2018, Bakhshi, the leader of the strike by workers of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, was “released” from prison on 400-million bail and in other words, moved to a domestic prison. Everything indicates that the security institutions of the capital have put considerable pressure on and threatened Bakhshi and his family in order that he might denounce the strike that he led.

According to an interview conducted by one of his relatives [18], Bakhshi, during his detention and interrogation, was tortured in the most intensive way and repeatedly rendered unconscious, as well as transferred to various security prisons. Fifteen days after his release, Bakhshi still had trouble walking, sitting and even sleeping. His ribs and testicles were damaged, while, instead of pain relief medicine, he was given hallucinogenic drugs so that he would lose control over his mental faculties. Given the destructive effects of these hallucinogenic drugs, after “freedom”, Bakhshi is sometimes under the illusion that he remains in detention. Both him and his family have been warned not to communicate with anyone. According to the

interview, Bakhshi has been expelled from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, while his bank accounts have been blocked and he is faced with severe financial constraints.

Recently, after two weeks of silence, Bakhshi broke his silence and published a small message on his Instagram account, which to some extent confirms the statement made in the interview. Part of Bakhshi's message is as follows:

*“In recent days, I was in a situation where neither the pen, nor my mind or soul was a given, even words were alien to me. But I have not able to bear this heavy burden anymore, so I will try, with my distracted spirit, my stuttering tongue and my shaking pen, in praise of a drop of your love, to write something... and finally in response to my beloved people, who, during the days of my arrest, said or wrote the slogan “I am also Bakhshi!” in order to support me and calm the heart of my sad family, I say to you: **I am also your sacrifice**” [19].*

Apparently, after the release of the news about Bakhshi's dismissal, the authorities contacted him and declared that he could return to work. There is no detailed information on this return.

On 28 November 2018, security forces attacked the retired worker Ali Nejati and transferred him to an unknown prison. Nejati suffers from heart disease and needs medical help. He has been arrested or summoned many times before



for labour activities. On this occasion, he was charged with disrupting the public order by organizing the strike by workers of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company. He was beaten during arrest. The exact fate of Nejati is still unknown, although he is still in the custody of the security forces. Nejati remains unable to explain the story of his detention.

So far, none of the arrested has spoken against the strikes and labour protests. Any lawsuit against labour activists or those arrested in connection with labour protests only represents the crime of those gangsters who only feel the power of God in prison and the torture chamber.

## **Students in support of the labour movement**

In the history of Iran before 1980, Iranian universities were venues where protesters gathered, debated and campaigned about social issues. As a



consequence, until that time, the university was also a place for the recruitment of members to political causes. However, as the tolerance of such activities on campus by the Islamic bourgeoisie was not possible, this vibrant atmosphere was inevitably shut down. The Islamic bourgeoisie, in the spring of 1980 under the banner of the “Cultural Revolution”, was able to take over and purge Iranian universities.

In July 1999, students in protest at the closure of the reformist *Salam* newspaper, at the service of a reformist faction in the Islamic bourgeoisie, were involved in factional disputes, which ended with their suppression. Years later, and with the growth of a left-leaning orientation among students, activities related to libertarian and egalitarian students were organized on campus during the period 2007-2009, with the adventure of Hekmatists, the students were arrested and tortured, leading to the collapse in the movement of libertarian and egalitarian students. Of course, in recent years, universities have witnessed limited and ineffectual protests.

During the street protests of January 2017, the presence of students in the protests was few and far between. Following the developments of 1979, students mostly fought on anti-dictatorship and pro-democracy platforms. But, with the growth of labour struggles, the defence of workers and their class demands has replaced the anti-dictatorship rhetoric of students. Students now stand in support of the demands of

workers for the first time since 1979. Although a few students have joined in workers' protests, the slogans they



express merely repeat those of protesting workers. This is a qualitative change in student struggles. Future developments will show whether students will no longer be a black army in the battle of bourgeois factions or the heroes of the anti-dictatorial struggle, but stand instead in support of workers and their demands.

## **The role of the bourgeois media**

The bourgeoisie, whether in metropolitan capitalism or in peripheral capitalism, is capable of engineering public opinion. Given its many possibilities, it is only in revolutionary periods that it is unable to do so. If the majority of people on this planet make a living by exploiting their workforce, bourgeois journalists will inevitably seek a livelihood by selling their conscience. The radio, TV, journals and newspapers of the Islamic bourgeoisie have failed to accurately cover workers' protests. Meanwhile, the bourgeois media of the West only take note of these

protests when they serve their own interests. As striking workers have claimed:

*“Our disgrace, our disgrace, our radio and television!”*

To overcome censorship of the workers’ struggles, these freedom-loving people, through social media, covered the news in detail. Among them was Sepideh Ghaliyan who was arrested on 18 November 2018 in connection with the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers’ protests.



Ghaliyan had previously been arrested in March 2017 and released on 200-million-bail at the end of her trial. Released after 30 days, during which she was tortured, on 500-million- bail, she is charged with “disturbing the public order”. Despite being bailed and receiving threats from the security forces, she wrote a brief message, which is itself an indictment of this barbarian system:

*“The Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company strike is not a historical event in the distant past providing political lessons to the*

*workers. What went on at Haft Tappeh was the beginning of the class-oriented policy of the workers going into full swing. The repression of the Haft Tappeh workers was neither begun nor ended by the arrests! This repression began with a thorough attack on the livelihoods of the workers, with the ratification of a minimum salary, with a rash of privatization policies and now it is going to be very intense... I was able to support the Haft Tappeh protests given my proximity to the company. And, of course, this did not suit the interests of the security agencies and I was arrested...Thirty days which started with beating and continued with psychological torture and ended with 500-million bail, as if I had committed a crime... The resistance continues. For the release of everyone. For the release of steelworkers” [20].*

Another of those who covered the labour struggles was arrested by criminals of the Islamic bourgeoisie. Asal Mohammadi is a pharmaceutical student who



was arrested in Tehran on 4 December 2018. She was supporting the workers' protests by reporting on and filming the activities in the NSIG (Ahvaz) and Haft

Tappeh. Apparently, she has been transferred from Evin Prison to a prison in Shush. Security forces refuse to provide any information on the fate and circumstances of this prisoner who supported the labour struggles. Mohammadi is still in chains and cannot tell her story of how this happened.

Detention of these loved ones demonstrates that the price paid for any support offered to the workers' struggles is high. The Islamic bourgeoisie wants to create an atmosphere of fear, so that nobody will find the courage to support these struggles.

## **Class solidarity**

Xenophobia is part of the suppression of class society and takes a paradoxical form: the product of capitalist growth and national pride. In times when capital needs cheap labour, it tries to moderate this problem; but, in times of crisis, it tries to outsource some of the causes of the crisis to foreign workers.

The bourgeoisie is always trying to split the working class with the intent of breaking down the class unity of workers, in order to better and more easily exploit the proletariat. The bourgeoisie pits indigenous labourers against "immigrant" workers, black against white, Asians against Europeans, Hispanics against Americans, and so on. Unfortunately,

the Islamic bourgeoisie has repeatedly been able to put workers, who themselves or their parents were born beyond Iran's borders, before indigenous workers, whom they consider worthy of misery and unemployment. This issue has now become a particular problem in metropolitan capitalism too.

But, the growth of workers' struggles strengthens class solidarity and makes sense of racism. With the growth in workers struggles, the worker no longer considers the foreign worker his rival, but his class brother and sister.

Recently, employers have been trying to foster ethnic divisions in the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, including by insulting workers. In this context, Bakhshi said to the workers with a loud voice:

*"Today, Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers' struggle in the country has become a fully fledged pattern of struggle for free elections to independent workers' councils and our demand to be consulted, all of which have become possible in light of our unity of workers. But, for me, one of the most beautiful human manifestations is our human collective... But, my dear brothers and sisters, I need us to remember a very important point: one of the most important goals of the struggles of the workers' movement is*

*to fight the ugly and immoral act of racism and racial divisions. This is because racial division is one of the old means of the capitalist system to divide the working class, which has historical roots, creating a wide gap in the united and occupied ranks of the workers and pushing them away from the main goal and engaging them in internal warfare... Dear brothers and sisters, we must not let these ignorant and notorious individuals undermine our unity and fraternity. We are all workers and brothers, we are all one. If the family and honour of even one single worker are insulted, the entire working class is insulted and we will stand against it" [21].*

A strike leader using straightforward words to express a class truth: that whatever the colour of our skin or what language we speak, we have a common character and we belong to the working class; we belong to the exploited camp and the nation is alien to us. We are all exploited, sisters and brothers.

## **Private or public sector?**

From the beginning of the 2000s, on the advice of the IMF and the World Bank, the Islamic bourgeoisie has put in place a privatization policy. This privatization

involves not only the industrial sectors, but services and education too.

Does the legal form of ownership, whether private or state, play a different role in the exploitation of workers? Does private or state ownership, in principle, provide different living conditions to workers? Job security in the case of state ownership is just an illusion. Is not the state itself bankrupt Unless the state itself has created this catastrophe for the workers? Legal changes in ownership do not affect workers' living conditions, but it is the workers' struggle that can provide them with better job security and livelihoods. Two alternatives have been proffered in relation to the fate of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company:

- The ownership of company is transferred to the state, but under the supervision of independent workers' councils.
- The authority of the company will be entirely delegated to the independent workers' council.

The owners of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Council have borrowed 800 million US dollars on the pretext of building a petrochemical factory for producing coal and tomato paste, using the company as security. Ownership in the capitalist system is **holy**, and the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company is liable for this loan. Assuming that the state could take



back the 800 million US dollars and eventually turn the company into state, will job security be provided to the workers? Will teachers with a government contract have job security? It may be argued that, when the state-owned Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company was in a better situation, the crisis of capitalism, which had become more destructive in recent years, was forgotten about. Capitalism reveals the nature of its crisis in peripheral capitalism more violently and more inhumanely than in metropolitan capitalism. The important point is that the bankruptcy of industries is not limited to peripheral capital, but the result of the crisis of capitalism. The bankruptcy of factories and companies can be seen in metropolitan capital across Europe and North America. Recently, developments in the customs tariff war between America and Europe, as well as the US and China, have taken place in this context.

As noted, pursuing privatization is not the decision of the Islamic bourgeoisie, but of the IMF and the World Bank; in other words, it is the decision of global capital, and this approach is being applied in other peripheral countries, even involving metropolitan capital. Abdullah Pouri Hosseini, head of the Privatization Organization of Iran, concerning the possibility of workers' self-management, has said:

*“No one utters such words, even in the most radical communist country on the planet. Was the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company confiscated by the private sector? Were such things said? Even in the former Soviet Union, before the collapse of the workers’ soviets, there were no such words about handing over the factory to us. So, if it makes profit, then that will belong to us” [22].*

We will discuss the workers’ council and its role in the following pages. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that the head of the Privatization Organization of Iran has somewhat understood the evolution of the class struggle. It is no longer possible to scare off a protesting wage slave with gulag, a kind of capitalist barbarism,. This time, the worker will not seek state capitalism but will pursue a non-class society.

## **Unions against the working class**

In the era of growing capitalism, the trade unions were the real organizers of the working class. These formations represented the interests of the working class and fought for these interests. There was a period when sustained reforms could be imposed on the bourgeoisie, a period in which the communist revolution had not become the daily task of the

proletariat. The excessive attention of trade unions on reformism gave rise to mergers between unions in the capitalist state.

With the arrival of capitalism in its decadent era, which the First World War indicated, unions were merged into the capitalist state, with workers becoming cannon fodder in the imperialist war. Unions not only took the side of homespun capital in the imperialist war but also worked closely with the repressive apparatus, so that no concern would be expressed by the workers back in the homeland for killing their class brothers on the front. Further, German unions in 1919 played an active role in the bloody repression of workers' rebellions.

Unions all over the world have become part of state capital, like the judiciary, education and so on, in order to manage the selling of the workforce. Contrary to the demagogy of different factions on the left of capital, as declared by unions and syndicates, in Western Europe, because of the "workers' aristocracy", they cannot play a radical role in the struggles of the workers. Rather, it is an appropriate constraint on the struggle in peripheral countries of the working class: the events in South Africa, Turkey and Venezuela and the role of unions in these events once again prove the reactionary nature of such positions and the legitimacy of the positions of internationalists. The main task of unions, whether on the peripheries of capital or in the

metropolis, is to control the working class and deflect attention away from the class struggle of the workers.

Anton Pannekoek, in his valuable work entitled *World Revolution and Communist Tactics*, wrote a century ago about the nature and functioning of unions, stating as below:

*“Marx’ and Lenin’s insistence that the way in which the state is organised precludes its use as an instrument of proletarian revolution, notwithstanding its democratic forms, must therefore also apply to the trade-union organisations. Their counterrevolutionary potential cannot be destroyed or diminished by a change of personnel, by the substitution of radical or ‘revolutionary’ leaders for reactionary ones. It is the form of the organisation that renders the masses all but impotent and prevents them making the trade union an organ of their will. The revolution can only be successful by destroying this organisation, that is to say so completely revolutionising its organisational structure that it becomes something completely different.”*

The managers of far-sighted companies learned through experience that a well-timed and planned strike is the most important way to ensure industrial peace in the future.

*"The most notable example of this was the General Motors strike in 1970, when co-operation between union and management reached a new level: the company went so far as to lend the UAW \$30 million to help finance the strike. One bourgeois commentator explained why the strike had been called: "A strike, by putting the workers on the streets, rolls the steam out of them - it reduces their demands and thus brings agreement and ratification; it also solidifies the authority of the union hierarchy"[23]*

Playing the role of the police means providing individual services on the one hand and suppressing workers on the other, which is another part of the duties of unions. In a recent examples from the UK, in the democratic world and not a dictatorship, staff from the largest union, Unite, provided employers with a blacklist of workers who were considered to hold politically inappropriate views, on the grounds that they should not be hired in the interests of production and industrial security! This is the same thing that Islamic Labour Councils do in Iran [24].

In metropolitan capitalism, workers' strikes which take place outside the control of unions are known as "wildcat strikes". In times where the class struggle is less defensive, the level of wildcat strikes is high. In the 1960s, when the proletariat returned to the social scene after the black anti-revolution era, 90% of workers'

strikes were outside the control of unions and thus considered as wildcat strikes.

In the era of imperialism, unions have evolved into giant unions and, like the state apparatus, have staff with all the tools of power, money, newspapers, advertisements and so on. Unions, especially in metropolitan countries, are the main shareholders of companies and play an important role in exploiting the working class. Trade union income is derived from the exploitation of the working class to an astronomical extent. The anti-war movement of Japan and South Korea, which includes unions and leftist movements, has provided funding for Hekmatist's television set-up in one instance worth 400,000 US dollars. This is despite the fact that the union tradition in Japan and South Korea is limited compared to Western Europe and North America.

With the merger of unions in state capital, independent workers' organizations are the only alternative available to workers to advance the class struggle. We have just one kind of class struggle. One hundred years ago, Rosa Luxemburg emphasized this point:

*“For the working class, there are no two different types of class struggle, one economic struggle and one political struggle. But there is only one class struggle in which one limits the exploitation of*

*capitalism within which bourgeois society attempts to overthrow bourgeois exploitation and society in general” [25].*

After briefly explaining the role and function of unions, we must consider the demagoguery of the capital left in relation to unions. Three militant workers, who had been systematically harassed by bourgeois security forces for many years, met with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and unions on a trip to Europe in June 2018 at the Union’s expense. The left of capital described this trip as a journey to link the working class of Iran with the working class in the rest of the world. Let us first look at the inconsistent demagoguery of the left of capital:

*“Finally, three aware workers, three independent representatives of capitalist organizations, after many times on the verge of entering the plane and being prevented from travelling, were finally able to travel thanks to the will of the workers. They were on a journey to the link up with other workers. And to act as spokespeople to express the status and desire of the working class and the decline of society. These delegates were able to find ties with the other half of the world’s working class... their meeting was at the invitation and expense of the five largest French*

*unions, the CGT, CFDT, FSU, UNSA and Solidaires. They also met with other European and global organizations and unions which have reflected on the global media with an incredible reputation... While the ILO's annual meeting was held behind closed doors with trilateral bourgeois delegations, Reza Shahabi, Loghman Weissy and Dawood Razavi had a worthwhile meeting with the officials of the ILO after their meetings in France... Important meetings were also held with officials from the Swedish Trade Union Confederation involved (LO) with the transport and metal industries in Stockholm and Gothenburg, while lectures and Q&A sessions were held at several conferences attended by activists in the labour movement and independent representatives of workers in European countries. With the support of trade unions in France, Norway, Sweden and Germany (Frankfurt and Hamburg), class links and support were established with a view to meeting class demands in Iran... After the tension during the 1940s, for the first time, three representatives of the working class from Iran tirelessly, loyally, spoke the language of the working class" [26].*

The question that arises is this: what is the role of the ILO in the persistence of capitalist barbarism and



the continuation of wage slavery? What wonderful efforts are these unions making on behalf of the working class of metropolitan capital? Since when did unions in Western Europe become the ‘other half of the working class’? If unions are the other half of the working class, why are wildcat strikes taking place? Why do workers leave their union? All the attempts on the part of prattlers seek to give unions a worker nature. No wonder that the same left of capital equates the “paper solidarity” of unions with the class solidarity of workers in Europe with the working class of Iran. As the outcome of the class struggle in the 1960s, 90% of the strikes in the same metropolitan capital were outside unions. In the flourishing of the class struggle, unions will be the first barricades that the proletariat will need to conquer if it is to bring worldwide communist revolution one step closer.

## **Bus company experience**

We believe that the Bus Company Workers’ Syndicate and the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company Workers’ Syndicate in fact are not syndicates in their current state; but an independent form of worker organization that always accompanied by ups and downs. An examination of the Bus Company experience clearly highlights the legitimacy

of the position of internationalists on the emphasizing the independent organization of workers.

On 5 July 1956, the Bus Company started operating and, in 1967, the Bus Company Workers' Syndicate was formed. In 1960, despite the opposition of the syndicate, workers organized the first strike in the Bus Company, supported by students. The workers' demands were the receipt of family allowance and a working week ending on Friday.

The police suppressed the strike and strike leaders were jailed or sacked in significant numbers. They were released from prison with the support of public opinion and students and allowed returned to work.

With the arrival of the Islamic bourgeoisie, which was accompanied by a bloodbath, the Bus Company Workers' Syndicate was also banned and the Islamic Labour Councils (part of the Ministry of Intelligence at work) continued to operate in industries and workplaces.

Since late 2004, some of the drivers with the Bus Company referred to ILO conventions in their requests to reopen the syndicate. On 9 June 2005, workers held a general assembly to elect a board of directors for the syndicate. Worker gatherings were attacked and a large number of workers was arrested. Those arrested were released under pressure from worker protests. Eventually, workers, under semi-secret conditions,

chose 19 members for the board of directors and two inspectors for their syndicate.

The Islamic bourgeoisie attacked the syndicate on 10 September 2005. Several syndicate activists were wounded in the attack and taken to hospital, while the syndicate's offices were raided. The workers' protest began by turning on bus lights on sunny days, with some activists arrested. On 25 December 2005, the workers of the company started to strike with demands for wage increases, health and welfare conditions, and the release of arrested workers.

The Islamic bourgeoisie responded to the strike with help from the police state. Hundreds of striking drivers were arrested and taken to Evin Prison and more than 300 workers were sacked. Over time, expelled workers returned to work, except for a few, and the majority of the detainees were also released on bail.

The head of the syndicate, Mansour Osanlou, was also released from prison and sought to turn the syndicate into a part of Khatami's reformist government. After the departure of Osanlou from Iran, the syndicate ousted him. Osanlou, after becoming a refugee in the US, was tried alongside Kohestani Nejad and Jahanbegloo, as well as received financial support from the Solidarity Center in Washington, DC, to make American politics more aware of the worker movement [27]. The Solidarity Center's task is to advance

American policies in line with US imperialist interests in trade unions, in order to align these unions' interests with those of the US. This policy is preventing the formation of the independent organization of workers. Although this institution appears to be a non-profit organization, it enjoys huge financial resources.

As noted earlier, the Bus Company Workers' Syndicate is not a workers' syndicate but also a workers' organization with all its ups and downs. Its general assembly is more than 13 years old. As it does not enjoy mass membership among workers, it cannot function as a syndicate; thus, it is more like a worker committee.

The elected board of directors of 2005, in a letter dated 30 May 2015 and numbering 41,117 signatories, sought to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare to hold a general assembly as well as local assemblies. Delaware Nazari, director general of the labour and employer organizations of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare, in connection with the request from the workers of the Bus Company, stated:

*“In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 6 of the Labour Law, workers are only permitted to form one of the three organizations, an Islamic Labour Council, a workers' guild association or the selection of labour representatives...”*

*According to the conditions envisaged in the Labour Law, no other form of labour organization under the name of a syndicate in the workshops covered by the law is allowed to operate” [28].*

The Islamic bourgeoisie itself knows that workers regard Islamic Labour Councils as part of the Ministry of Intelligence. Thus, they hope to repair the reputation of organizations like the Islamic Labour Councils by giving them different names in bourgeois assemblies, such as the ILO, pretending there are independent organizations in Iran which are acceptable to capital. It was in this context that a state-sponsored project of trade was commenced by Torabian and his friends. They argued that, since the first general assembly took place 13 years ago, the board was unreliable and another general assembly had to be formed to set up a new board of directors for the syndicate. In the situation where any worker movement was suppressed and the workers of the Bus Company were in chains, how did the Islamic bourgeois allow such people to hold a “legal” general assembly? How did its announcement appear in legal newspapers? The scenario of the Islamic bourgeoisie did not go as expected and ended up scandalizing the Islamic bourgeoisie.

In peripheral capital, particularly where a dictatorship has a sustainable tradition, political

suppression dominates; thus, the situation may differ from that experienced by unions in metropolitan capital areas. Historically, revolutionary syndicalism was also a reaction against the reformist attitudes of unions which were still non-political. But, in the era of capitalist decline, there is only one class struggle. The Bus Company Workers' Syndicate cannot continue to do this forever. It should either work towards legalization (for the time being it has responded negatively) or abandon the prospect of legalization and become an independent workers' organization fighting for labour demands.

It is important to note that legalization means that the bourgeoisie will be in full control of all the functions and activities of the syndicate, as is the case with unions in metropolitan capital.

But, for the left of capital, unions are large labour organizations, and shame is also a good thing! Amir Payam, one of the activists of the left of capital demagoguery, stated as below:

*“In connection with the Bus Company Workers’ Syndicate, its delegation, including Reza Shahabi and Davoud Razavi, and their attendance at the ILO’s annual international conference, began in May this year. This trip was an important historical achievement for the Iranian independent labour movement. On this trip, not only was an*

*official meeting organized by the delegation with large labour organizations, but also, for the first time, with a real delegation of workers from an independent labour organization with an independent voice. Litigating for the working class of Iran at the ILO conference, thanks to many decades of the exclusive presence of anti-labour organizations, handmade by the bourgeois regime, was crushed at this conference” [29].*

Are anti-worker organizations handmade by Islamic bourgeoisie qualitatively different from unions in Western European countries, which saw this visit as an important historical achievement? Both of them spy on workers and blacklist them. What is the issue of working-class litigation at the ILO conference! Contrary to the vagabonds and drivellers, the litigation of the working class is only possible through communist revolution. The left of capital with its charlatanism is doing its utmost to reinforce capitalist positions.

## **Workers’ self-management**

The anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies in Iran’s political milieu are irrelevant; however, such ideas are occasionally weakly formulated on the left of capital. Following recent protests and strikes, the

subject of self-management has been raised again. The management of a factory, workshop or workplace by workers, while the relations of production remain capitalist, was a kind of utopia during the infancy of the working class. This attitude was later developed by different anarchist tendencies and the left of capital, with nothing but a false illusion and confusion for workers on their way to achieving their class identity.

Economically, self-management organizes the exploitation of the workers themselves, and workers take responsibility for the restructuring of crisis-hit institutions for this exploitation. At the expense of the workers in bankrupt enterprises, they re-emerge. Since labour management is not necessarily the opposite of bourgeois management, it can even generate more surplus value for capital by increasing labour productivity; sometimes, this is more satisfactory for capital.

Politically, self-management is more than just economically destructive. Isolated workers within the tight walls of the factory cannot extend the class struggle to other sectors. The workers are engaged in the economic reconstruction of capitalism, while the task of workers is to eliminate the capitalist economy. However, workers are deprived of their fundamental duty, which is the destruction of the capitalist relations of production and the establishment of a dictatorship of



the proletariat on a global scale. The irrefutable truth is that the proletariat is capable of managing production at the global level, not within capitalist relations of production, but after the collapse of the productive relations of capitalism.

Contrary to the illusion on the left of capital, the crisis in economic institutions or the recession in the factories is not based on what is “imperfect and corrupt”, but is also rooted in the capitalist system. The capital itself is also in the direction of better capital accumulation, calls for the good management and desirability of economic institutions. The isolation of workers’ protests and strikes and their confinement within the narrow boundaries of a factory or a workplace and the retreat of the working class from its class identity, alongside the police state and, ultimately, the destructive role of the left of capital, are among the underlying factors in the low-yielding struggle of workers or a problem in the evolution of the class struggle in Iran. The decolonization of the right and left tendencies of capital, the emphasis on the independent proletarian struggle and the expansion of cooperation and communication with other industries and sectors will raise the issue of the class identity of workers, which, in its own process, will shift the working class from a class in itself to become a class for itself.

The possibility of the tolerance of workers’ self-management by the Islamic bourgeoisie is very low due

to its fragility, but not impossible. Instead of organizing capital in the crisis, continuing to generate surplus value should be organized to bring down capital in crisis.

## **Workers' councils**

The content and nature of workers' councils have been separated from the Marxist concept not only by the left of capital but even by those who espouse councilist communism,. A brief explanation or defence of the Marxist concept of workers' councils is necessary before the discussion can continue.

Workers' councils are the highest form of labour organization. When the class struggle develops at a higher level and the two social classes challenge each other, the bourgeoisie is incapable of continuing to rule, while the proletariat has yet to overthrow capitalism. Under certain historical conditions, namely, when the state of a society has a dual power, workers' councils will be formed. In such a situation, workers' councils are formed to take control of factories and neighbourhoods from the bottom up and present themselves as alternatives to capitalist power. Workers also form organizations to defend their councils, which are the earliest spins of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Workers' councils were formed in 1905 and 1917 in Russia and in 1918 in Germany. It is necessary to point out that the growth of the working class is not linear, so the working class offers different political tendencies, which is quite natural. It is important to note that councils do not necessarily have the reversal of capitalism and the conquest of political power on their daily agenda. The reason for this, as previously stated, is that workers' councils include different political tendencies, perhaps among the majority, along with non-revolutionary tendencies. For example, in December 1918, in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were not even allowed to attend the Congress of Councils to address the audience. Both in Russia and in Germany, it was only due to the tireless activity of revolutionaries that anti-revolutionary or "wobbly" representatives were set aside, to be replaced by revolutionary representatives on revolutionary councils.

Outside the ventricle of society, the possibility of managing a factory by a workers' council under the capitalist system, even in the metropolis of capitalism, is just an illusion. It is not possible to create a separate island within the framework of capitalist relations that is not governed by the rules of capitalism. Capitalism is a dominant global production system which has penetrated even the worst periods on the planet.

Against this backdrop, we return to the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company. In July 2018, company workers, through an election, chose to form an independent labour organization, which, despite all its strengths and weaknesses, has been **a great achievement**, not only for these workers, but for the entire working class as well. Applying the concept of a “workers’ council” to this independent labour organization is different from applying the Marxist concept of a workers’ council, as we explained. Ismail Bakhshi, the strike leader who himself presented this plan, says:

*“We selected, this year, in proportion to the size of each section of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, the plan that I was delivering and, along with the other workers, it was implemented. Approximately 22 delegates were appointed from nearly 14 sections of the Haft Tappeh Company and, from among them, we chose a board of directors... This plan looks like an oversight organization, and it monitors the performance and durability of these managers. We can then decide on the company’s management. Haft Tappeh is a small symbol of Iran. When the state has no power to monitor, through independent monitoring from below, we can make it powerful. There is no need for a single*

*negotiation between workers and employers; the worker has come to the conclusion that the council must have a strong representative to oversee and intervene in Haft Tappeh. Power also resides with all the workers who voted for these delegates. With this backing, delegates are protected against arrest and expulsion” [30].*

Bakhshi explains in more detail that the council formed at Haft Tappeh is not the same as those councils at the highest level. But councilist thought has been observed among workers, and this thinking is dominant. Bakhshi’s explanation is very clear and does not need to be interpreted. He says:

*“When we say that the independent workers’ council was formed in the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company, some think that this council is the same as the final council, which has reached the highest level. No! We are just beginning and it takes time for even the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers themselves to understand what the work of the council is... I do not claim that the councils of workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company are exactly in line with the theory and definition of the council, which has been discussed in detail. But, according to*

*the psychology of the intellectual and cultural atmosphere and the realities of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers' atmosphere, soviet thinking has shown itself and become dominant" [12].*

Different tendencies on the left of capital regarding the independent workers' organization at Haft Tappeh have responded differently. For now, we refuse to examine the tendencies of the left of capital and instead look at the positions of those who claim to be radical. The anti-capitalist workers, who apparently do not believe in the "reformism" of the left, wrote in a statement entitled "Ismail Bakhshi and the discussion of making a council":

*"In the speech of Bakhshi... the only thing that the audience is listening to is that they should build a council and supervise the work of the directors! It means reversing the true image of the council in the minds of the working masses, that is, of a discredited and bankrupt syndicate dressed up in the clothes of a council, talking about the council without knowing anything about the role and purpose of building a council. Whether Bakhshi is consciously performing these tasks or whether he is confused and does not know what he is doing, this is something we do not really know, but we*

*know one thing for sure. Whatever he is doing is not helping the current working mass movement against capital exploitation and crime, nor does it serve the organization of the council of anti-capitalist workers, which is quite the opposite. The proposed council of Bakhshi can significantly impact the everyday struggle of workers and each radical attempt to organize an anti-capitalist council...*

*Does our dear friend Bakhshi have any thought about the prescriptions he offers? Does he give any thought to how organizing the council and councilist movements can have the most catastrophic impacts on the lives and struggles of workers?... The council of Mr Bakhshi is no better than those councils, which stand 10 times taller, and are more despicable, inefficacious, outspoken and pro-capital. Therefore, it is better to travel down the right path for the consolidation and establishment of the anti-capitalist council movement" [32].*

If anti-capitalist workers are pushing their positions to the fore and trying to evolve their positions in this direction, they would definitely be seen as an integral trend, set apart from class membership. But, shortly after adopting the positions stated above with a 180-degree spin, they evaluated the council as a constraint

on increasing wages, improving working conditions and so on. This 180-degree rotation, devoid of commitment to any political tendency, expresses the lack of coherence in this trend in one of the most basic proletarian and Marxist concepts. Apparently, this would be the time for anti-capitalist workers to slime the concept of the council. As anti-capitalist workers wrote:

*“The recent struggles of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company workers, Bakhshi’s speech and the emphasis on the council and councilist struggles, and the joint ventures with steelworkers represented a new round in the struggle of the working class in Iran, whose experiences show the enthusiasm and hope found in working families. These struggles can create a gap in the fence of inactivity and observation, showing that, for the majority of workers, there is no rescuer; the only workers’ saviour is the workers’ council movement... The presence of people in this councilist struggle is not based on sharing ideas and thoughts or statutory articles of association. In the context of such a spontaneous relation, where every house hog is a worker, even anti-capitalist workers can play a role. The council, which connects and unifies all workers, can fight to raise wages, improve*



*working conditions, social welfare, political liberties and social rights, and finally emancipate human beings from class exploitation and society” [33].*

“Councilism” was an idealist reaction to the defeat of the wave of world revolution; in other words, the tendency of councilism is not a part of the left of capital, but also represents a mechanical understanding of social incidents within the working class. Of course, it is very important to distinguish between the tendencies of councilism and the currents that have shielded councils from left of capital positions. The ‘activists of the abolition of waged labour’ also abandoned the Marxist concept of workers’ councils. Workers’ councils, where the highest proletarian power resides, are reduced to a lower level. The heroes of consultation in the factory have announced that they would convene a council for each small measure. They fell to the level of anarchists which means that, within the capitalist system, workers can self-manage their factory. They wrote:

*“The workers of the industrial complex of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company started the uprising with a very clear, decisive and repeated emphasis on their council. Loud, deliberate and planned voices shouted that*

*incremental consultative struggle, which referred to the intelligence, knowledge, will and thought of all kinds of workers and without any kind of decision, would go ahead. At the same time and at the very first moment, the advancement of consultative struggle, the dissection of the consultative capture of the factory and the struggle for consultative dominance came together to become the fate of work and production... Factory occupations are provocative and tumultuous!!! The management and administration of the factory are not controlled by the workers, while the problem of raw materials and product sales and the opposition of state forces to the iron dams are on the way! They claimed that: 'Even if we listen to the communists, they only consider the council and the seizure of the factory under conditions of a revolutionary upswing'... the workers believe in their class power. Workers have found themselves to be capable of the consultative capture of the workplace as a moment of class war and resistance to bourgeois emergencies... they have pursued this progression, step by step, with a radical narrative about the struggle of workers and councilism. For each new small measure, they convened the council" [34].*

## **Internationalist tasks**

The main task of internationalists is to defend the communist programme until the elimination of social classes, not the success of the working class, even if this leads to more isolation among workers' formations. A clear example of this was the workers' councils of July 1917 in Russia or of December 1918 in Germany, which were the highest of all workers' organizations (in Germany, out of 480 delegates, only 10 were communist-leaning representatives).

The disclosure of the bourgeois nature of the right and left of capital, the provision of political clarity from labour protests and strikes, and the presentation of an internationalist horizon are among the most important conditions for the advancement of internationalist positions. The growth of the working class is not linear. Therefore, the working class offers different political trends; hence, the communist critique of the political milieu is of particular importance to the advancement of internationalist positions.

Different tendencies on the right and left of capital, in light of their enormous resources, are trying to provide a capital-friendly explanation of social events. The demagogy of the left of capital, especially with the introduction of trade unions, as workers' organizations, is a serious threat to the evolution of class struggle. The importance of independent workers' organizations, the

disclosure of the counterrevolutionary nature of trade unions, and the fact that trade unions are integrated into and part of the capitalist state must be transformed into tireless efforts on the part of internationalists.

The emphasis on the class power of workers is vital. The working class can only repel bourgeois attacks by relying exclusively on its class power and on its own class turf. In this regard, the true bond between the different sections of the working class, and not trade unions, is essential. The release of imprisoned workers or the prosecution of workers is not possible by resorting to the trade unions of metropolitan countries, but only through the united struggle of our class.

Since the class struggle is at a global level in a defensive position, the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party is not the everyday task of internationalists. Rather, efforts in this regard and the theoretical, political and organizational preparation for this important outcome represent the daily priorities of internationalists, who have to work tirelessly in this direction.

## **Workers in chains!**

The working class in Iran is facing some of the most difficult economic and social conditions: on the one hand, the crisis of peripheral capital and, on the other hand, the sanctions imposed by Western

countries. In turn, insolvent capital has plunged the periphery into a deep crisis. The bankruptcy and closure of production units and the fall in the national currency value, for our class, for wage slaves, have provided the context to apply more austerity.

If, at some point, the bourgeoisie allowed itself to flog protesting workers in public, and if, at some point, workers were desperate enough to commit suicide in protest against capitalist barbarism, the growth of the class struggle would have refined the atmosphere of this struggle. Today, instead of the flogging workers in public, the slogan “**Bread, jobs, freedom, council management**” heard from workers shakes the city centre. The bourgeoisie is aware of the potential of our class. In such a situation, Ali Mohammad Naeini, chief adviser to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, says that, in 2019, they will have two basic trigger points: parliamentary elections and labour protests [35].

The bourgeoisie managed to defeat the strikes in the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industry Company and the NSIG. But the achievements of these struggles and strikes are much greater than those of other victories. It is not in vain that the bourgeoisie is preparing itself for labour protests next year [2019], and that it knows by itself that the defeat of workers’ protests is only temporary. The most important character of recent protests and strikes was the reliance on workers’ class power. Striking workers did not

confront the bourgeois institutions and organizations to seek fulfilment of their demands, but to reduce the accumulation of surplus value and capital gains. Indeed, despite all their limitations and their temporary defeat, these strikes strengthened the working class' confidence and strengthened the hope for victory in future battles. The working class of Iran, as the bulk of the working class, is the most concentrated and most experienced working class in the Middle East, which has recorded its most brilliant battles in its historical memory, especially from the period 1978-1980.

Until wage slavery and the capitalist system are defeated, an earthly hell is waiting for our class, waiting for the wage slaves. The intensification of the class struggle is the only horizon ahead of our class. This is the ghost of the class struggle which the bourgeoisie fears more than anything else, because class struggle in its evolutionary process will lead to the revolutionary destruction of the capitalist system. We have to throw this dirty capitalist system into the dustbin of history by communist revolution, ending its disgraceful life and establishing a communist society, in which there is no production of goods, no profit and no exploitation of man by man. We have nothing to lose, except our chains and the world we get!

**Internationalist Voice**

28 December 2018

## Notes:

- [1] <http://www.bbc.com/persian/43947490>
- [2] List of countries by GDP
- [3] <http://www.beytoote.com/news/economy-news/economic-news5020.htm>
- [4] <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/83079514>
- [5] <https://khabarfarsi.com/u/60434235>
- [6] <http://www.rishenews.com/news/20707>
- [7] <http://www.sarpoosh.com/society/social-damages/social-damages970205572.html>
- [8] <https://iranintl.com/علی-نقدی/>
- [9] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/09/france-telecom-staff-suicides-phone>
- [10] Qazvin Prosecutor
- [11] <http://tnews.ir/site/2934124430940.html>
- [12] <https://telegra.ph/انتخابات-آزادو-مستقل-07-10>
- [13] Speech by Ismail Bakhshi, on 26 November 2018, in front of the building of the governorate of Shush
- [14] Speech by Ismail Bakhshi, on 8 November 2018
- [15] <https://khabarfarsi.com/u/62929002>
- [16] <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-workers-strike-haft-tappeh-factory-ongoing/29631975.html>
- [17] as source 12
- [18] [tps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iCbek\\_3A-I](tps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iCbek_3A-I)
- [19] Instagram
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- [21] <https://www.instagram.com/p/BpH-dlil8G5>
- [22] <https://www.dw.com/fa-ir/iran/a-46358358>
- [23] Unions against the working class (International Communist Current)
- [24] <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/04/unit-e-officials-face-allegations-of-collusion-with-firms-that-are-blacklisting-activists>
- [25] The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions - Rosa Luxemburg
- [26] [http://www.azadi-b.com/G/2018/06/post\\_351.html](http://www.azadi-b.com/G/2018/06/post_351.html)
- [27] <https://www.solidaritycenter.org>
- [28] <https://vahedsyndica.com/archive/1046>
- [29] About creating state Syndication
- [30] <https://meidaan.com/archive/57397>
- [31] as source 12
- [32] <http://www.alayhesarmaye.com/index.php/articles/341-shorasazi-7tape>
- [33] <http://www.alayhesarmaye.com/index.php/business/372-2018-11-16-18-48-22>
- [34] <http://www.simayesocialism.com/?p=7882>
- [35] <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/warning-about-the-next-years-crises-in-iran/29684152.html>



## **Basic Positions:**

- The First World War was an indication that the capitalism had been a decadent social system. It also proved that there were only two alternatives to this system: communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- In our epoch, the working class is the only revolutionary class. Furthermore, only this social class can deliver the communist revolution and end the barbarity of capitalism.
- Once capitalism entered its decadent period, unions all over the world were transformed into organs of the capital system. In turn, the main tasks of unions were to control the working class and mislead them about its class struggle.
- In the epoch of decadent capitalism, participating in the parliamentary circus and elections only strengthens the illusion of democracy. Capitalist democracy and capitalist dictatorship are two sides of the same coin, namely, the barbarity of capitalism.
- All national movements are counterrevolutionary, against the working class and the class struggle. Wars of national liberation are pawns in imperialist conflict.
- The reason for the failure of the October Revolution was the failure of the revolutionary wave, particularly the failure of the German Revolution, which resulted in the isolation of October Revolution and afterwards its degeneration.
- All left parties are reactionary: Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists and official anarchists etc. represent the political apparatus of capital.

- The regimes that arose in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc., while being called “socialist” or “communist”, only offered a particularly brutal and barbaric form of capitalism: state capitalism.
- The revolutionary organization constitutes the avant-garde of the proletariat and is an active factor in the development and generalization of class consciousness. Revolutionary organizations may only take the form of revolutionary minorities, whose task neither is to organize the working class nor take power in its stead, without being a **political leadership**, or a political compass, where revolutionary organizations’ political clarity and influence on the working classes are **the fundamental elements for the implementation of a communist revolution.**

### **Political belongings:**

The current status, positions, views and activities of the proletarian political tendencies are the product of past experiences of the working class and the effectiveness of the lessons that political organizations of the working class have learned during the history of the proletariat. Therefore, Internationalist Voice can trace its own roots and origins back to the Communist League, the First International, the left wing of both the Second International and the Third International, and the fractions that defended proletarian and communist positions against the degenerating Third International, which was represented by Dutch-German fractions, and **particularly Italian Fraction of the Communist Left** and the defence of Communist Left traditions.