

Life is our right, strike is our way

On the position of workers in the Jina uprising

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Preface

The main argument of this article is that understanding the recent mass uprisings in Iran, particularly the Jina uprising, requires considering the class structure of society and its impact on the subjectivity of the oppressed. To support this claim, it is necessary to demonstrate how the objective life circumstances of workers in Iran connect them to broader struggles against the ruling system, which come from various sources, take different forms, and have diverse demands. Additionally, it is important to explore how the diverse mass of workers become the primary agents of these mass uprisings. Consequently, we must address the paradoxical challenge that the majority of working masses lack direct involvement in traditional labor struggles, such as organizing and striking, and their way of life, livelihood, and self-perception do not align with the conventional definitions of the working class.

The ultimate objective of this discussion is to emphasize the perspective that a more organized and effective form of workers' intervention is necessary and feasible within the context of the Jinnah uprising. By expanding labor strikes and connecting them with emerging forms of organization, there is potential for a qualitative and dialectical evolution of the Jinnah uprising, ultimately paving the way for the advancement of the revolutionary process in Iran's political sphere. To defend this perspective, the present text aims to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the position and subjectivity of workers in recent mass uprisings, as well as their potential. The article primarily engages in a critical analysis of an opposing approach known as "labour puritanism," which denies the class origins and implications of the Jinnah uprising. This critical analysis challenges the enduring narrative of Russian Marxism, which forms the theoretical basis of "labour puritanism," regarding the concepts of the working class and class struggle. In doing so, this text seeks to offer expanded interpretations of these concepts that align more closely with the contemporary realities of the proletariat and the requirements for the qualitative advancement of their inevitable struggles.

1. Mass uprisings from the point of view of labor puritanism

A relatively stable and loud approach in the heterogeneous left spectrum of Iran is an approach that tries to determine the class character of the uprising, or specifically the labor character of the mass struggles, according to certain criteria during each mass uprising. Due to the narrow and ideological nature of these criteria, the respective experts in most cases vote that the uprising is irrelevant to the working class. This judgment has been issued implicitly and explicitly about the Jina uprising as well. Because in their opinion, the class nature of an uprising is directly reflected in its main slogans and also in the organized participation (or non-participation) of workers in the uprising process.

However, according to those standards, workers' demands did not have a high weight in the slogans of the Jina uprising, and there was no clear sign of the organized presence of workers in the uprising process, so the nature of this uprising was not directly related to the working class¹ [1]; Instead, [from their point of view] Jina uprising had certain elements of the repressed values and concerns and demands of the middle class (such as the hijab and lifestyle), which was combined with the demands of the oppressed nations, as well as the severity of the state repression, and led to the rapid expansion and radicalization of the uprising. During the last three-four months, as the Jina uprising retreated from the streets in the face of the expanded crimes of the repression apparatus, this *labor puritanism*(or *pure workerism*)² [2], which is presented under the guise of class analysis, has considered its previous judgment regarding the irrelevance of this uprising to the class struggles of the workers as confirmed; And based on this certainty, the left forces loyal to the uprising have been more criticized of irresponsible optimism, sentimentalism and alienation from the class approach of Marxist teachings. We will show that the foundation of this judgment is weak; whether according to its narrow definition of the nature of the working class and the its needs and demands; and/or due to the reduction of the class struggle to fixed elements and limited "classical" stereotypes. In this direction, we also show that such an approach ignores the role of concrete-historical conditions in the methods and channels of labor struggles (including in limiting the forms of workers' organization). And thus, moving away from the principle of "specific analysis of specific conditions", this approach follows a direction against its Marxist-Leninist claims.

2. The foundations of the continuity of mass uprisings

The decline of the street movement (in the sense of nationwide mass demonstrations) was a predictable trend in the process of the Jinnah uprising. Because the disorganized uprising of disaffected people (with any degree of public anger and passion) is fundamentally unable to last for a long time against the coherence and organization of the government repression apparatus; Unless the protestors organize their struggles in different ways during the rising process (we will come back to this point). It is precisely to eliminate such a possibility that governments use all their power to suppress these uprisings (such as the Iranian government's confrontation with the November 2018 uprising). The global experiences of mass uprisings against the neoliberal calamity - from the Arab Spring onwards - have also shown that the capitalist governments in the "Global South" have constantly equipped and rebuilt themselves based on the objective possibility of the explosion of social conflicts and the occurrence of such uprisings³ [3].

1 In the mainstream media as well as by liberal feminists (and sometimes leftist feminists), Jina uprising is also considered more or less irrelevant to the working class and class struggle. According to their view point this revolutionary uprising is represented only as a "women's revolution" or an uprising centered on women's demands.

2 The interpretation/representation of the so-called spectrum of *pseudo-anti-imperialist* forces (in Iran: the "resistance axis") from the recent mass uprisings in Iran also partially overlaps with the approach criticized in this article. But the term "labor puritanism" in this text refers only to those who do not necessarily have a political kinship with the "*pseudo-anti-imps*".

3 During the recent decades, especially in the "Global South", states have continuously expand and equipped their repression apparatus for enhancing their ability to suppress the new waves of mass uprisings. The specific manifestation of this phenomenon can be seen in the allocation of huge budgets for the promotion and expansion of militarism. In Iran's sphere, since December 2016, the military-security apparatus has been massively under

However, in general, systematic state repression in the context of a crisis society merely perpetuates a fragile balance. Today's repetition of this situation should be explained by referring to the context of the global sphere: more or less from the mid-1970s onwards, while entering into the era of the perpetuation of capitalist crises (in the words of Fernan Braudel, Mazarosh, Wallerstein and other commentators), the central capitalist states took a macro-strategic approach by resorting to "crisis management". This strategic approach, or the neoliberal turn, has pursued the target of projecting the growing costs of crises, through political-economic tools (neoliberal policies), to the inferior majority of societies. Naturally, the crisis-causing consequences of this approach have been much more serious in the societies of the Global South; which in turn has often been shown in the form of overflowing anger and public despair in mass uprisings. Since state repression, no matter how decisive and violent, leaves the very essence of the crisis-causing situation intact.

In the same way, in the current Iran, the decline of the street movement due to state repression cannot be considered as the end of the process of mass uprisings, as well as the end of the Jina uprising. There are at least two related reasons to be mentioned for this assert: on the one hand, the crisis-causing, anti-life and oppressive foundations of the ruling order are still functioning; the same foundations that have been the motivation and target of the incessant resistance of the oppressed people since the 2018 uprising. And on the other hand, in the ups and downs of this multi-year process, the necessity and legitimacy of the collective struggle (against the continuous denial, distortion and repression of the state) has turned the gap and conflict between the state and the society into a naked antagonism. In this process the public mentality has been continuously reconstructed and refined toward cultivation of revolutionary subjects. {The degree of this antagonism has been increasing: whether it is due to the collective trauma of repression and killing; and whether it is because, in such a context, the state, in order to maintain its survival, has continuously increased the costs of militarization and supports to its elites and dependents to the detriment of the majority of the society, thus strengthening this antagonism.} Quantitative and qualitative intensification of the current multiple crises (such as hyperinflation and livelihood crisis, environmental crisis, political crisis) and... is a manifestation of the first strain; And the continuation of popular protests in new forms (despite all the restrictions and repressions), is a manifestation of the second strain: from civil disobedience against the mandatory hijab, enlightenment and media disclosure campaigns, and student protests; to the non-stop holding of ceremony for the martyrs of the uprising, the expansion of the justice-seeking campaign, and the new wave of labor strikes (the validity of this last case has yet to be shown).

3. Who are the anonymous carriers of mass uprisings?

The ontological necessity of living (biological survival), in connection with the collective experiences and memories of oppression and repression, as well as the experiences of struggles for the right to life and well-being, in the socio-political sphere of Iran, has caused the continuity of the struggles in recent years, despite all the vicissitudes and ruptures (which led them to adopt different forms). In the meantime, the reasons for the anger/rebellion and the demands of the subjugated have

expansion for fulfilling the same aim. See in Farsi: Amin Hosuri: *On the foundations and mechanisms of the state in the Global South - regarding the recent uprisings of the subjugated*, Kargah Dialectic, Dec.r 2019.

many overlaps, because the oppressive mechanisms that have been the sources of their suffering and anger are structurally intertwined. From this point of view, for example, any analytical effort to isolate and weight the contribution of national oppression, sexual-gender oppression/discrimination, religious discrimination, and economic deprivation in the contents of anger and protest and political hope of a Baloch or Kurdish or Arab woman is an abstract work, making that nonsense. In this regard, it may be enlightening to reflect on the reasons and contexts of the early spread of the slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi"⁴ [4]. The rapid spread of this slogan in the Jina uprising (apart from its birth and initial expansion via the struggles of Kurdistan women) had a dual origin: the entanglement of oppression mechanisms; and the overlaps in the motives and demands of the protesters. This comprehensive cooperation and unanimity among the heterogeneous spectrum of the oppressed became possible, only due to the recognition of each other's sufferings. But considering the long-standing dominance of patriarchy, centrist nationalism and neoliberal values, it would not have been possible to take such a step toward struggle solidarity, if a degree of overlap did not exist among the heterogeneous objects of these oppressions, as a result of the structural intertwining of the oppression mechanisms. That is, the fact that in contemporary societies, most people are the targets of multiple oppressions (of course, in different combinations and degrees). Obviously, recognizing the oppression of women in the above slogan, by highlighting the inferiority, humiliation and discrimination, evokes identification with this general situation among the oppressed; apart from the fact that women themselves constitute half of the oppressed population. In the same way, valuing life (in the middle part of that slogan) reminds many of the subjugated people of their own situation, in which they are deprived of the minimum standards of human life; A situation that requires continuous confrontation with the threats of a fragile and crisis-ridden subsistence (cf. Part 6). The same could be valid for the last part of the slogan: "freedom". On this basis, the slogan "woman, life, freedom", contrary to the view that considers it an imported slogan and irrelevant to the working class, covers well the multi-layered nature of the lives of the subjugated people and the multiple oppressions inflicted on them. And no need to mention that the scope of the social subjugated/oppressed includes above all the heterogeneous mass of the working class; those who, according to their material position and social position, stand at the crossroads of the matrix of social oppressions.

On the other hand, if we only consider the role of economic oppression (which is undoubtedly the most immediate objective threat to life and the aggravating base of other oppressions), the situation in Iran in recent years - even according to government statistics - is highly critical. The intensified trends of poverty, deprivation and hunger tend practically to dehumanize workers and/or threaten their physical lives⁵ [5]. The Iranian regime's paradoxical insistence on continuing this practice,

4 The rooting of this slogan in the struggle treasury of the (women) movement of Kurdistan alone does not explain the reason for its widespread use. For example, the dominance of the discourse of centrist nationalism could have been an obstacle to its widespread expansion in the uprising.

5 In Spring 2023, Iran's Statistics Center announced the official inflation rate for all consumer goods as 55%. According to the World Bank's report (May 2023), the increase in food prices (compared to May 2022) was about 73%. On the other hand, according to one of Iranian authorities, the increase in housing prices from Dec. 2017 to Dec. 2022 amounts 840%. This increase in inflation and housing rent has been accompanied by continuous process of eliminating subsidies for energy and basic goods (under liberalization of prices), reduction of social support/services by government, and the downward trend of the real wage of workers compared to the officially announced "poverty line". The objective consequence of this situation in recent years is that more and more of the country's population have been continuously pushed below the "absolute poverty line". This unequal war of the oppressed people against

despite its obvious crisis-causing consequences (even from the perspective of the stability and durability of the government), indicates that the state uses starvation of the workers/subordinates as a strategic weapon to disarm them; This naked economic repression could be regarded as a state weapon which functions alongside the more general approach of "Death Politics" (Necropolitics), aiming to paralyze or vanish the workers' subjectivity by threatening the material/physical life of workers (and their families). Some of the direct functions and "achievements" of this policy for the state include: excessive cheapening of labor power, fueling competition and division among workers and strengthening extreme individualism, strengthening overcautious tendency in workers and weakening their ability to take risks⁶ [6], attracting and integrating layers of subjugated/workers into the social body of the system (and even into the repression apparatus) by making them dependent on government "special protections" (or hopeful to gain such protections). At the same time, the state's resort to the starvation policy is also associated with the significant risk that the mechanisms that bring the mentioned achievements do not necessarily work equally and effectively for all people and layers of the subaltern; Rather, it can have just a temporary function in parts of the subalterns and can even act - in the opposite direction - and strengthen the tendency to protest and rebellion in them. The fact that the rulers of Iran, despite this objective danger, continue to pursue the above strategic line is simply due to the fact that the state is structurally trapped in the contradictions and major crises it has created, being unable to mitigate them. Instead, the state tries to adjust and compensate for the shortcomings and dangers of the starvation strategy by constantly expanding the apparatus of repression.

So, from any angle we look the situation, the workers have had important and diverse reasons and motivations to accompany the Jina uprising, which are not found in the analyzes of pure workerism or "labor puritanism". To put it short, the class status of the heterogeneous mass of protesters who sustained the uprising has a large overlap with the category of the working class.

4. Criticism of the perspective of labor purism

This section provides a critical analysis of the evaluation of the "labor puritanism" approach from the class character of recent mass uprisings in Iran (including the Jina uprising). First, we address three interrelated components, which constitute the theoretical foundation of this approach:

A) A one-dimensional view of the social existence nature of workers: based on this view, at least as far as it goes back to the sphere of class struggle, "the worker is an economic human being": A person whose motivations, interventions and demands have a direct economic origin, because the intensity of exploitation has deprived him of the very basic material needs of life. Ironically, such an understanding is in remarkable agreement with the conventional bourgeois understanding of the social nature of the working class. Based on this understanding: either workers are considered excluded from non-economic mechanisms of oppression (i.e. beyond exploitation); or they have no

the "absolute poverty line", has been in turn manifested by increased number of: marginalization from cities; informal (and often risky) occupations/works; homeless people; applicants for selling body organs; suicide, violence; theft and delinquency; etc. {[Khabar Online](#): In summer 2022, the average poverty line for an Iranian 4-member family was 15% higher than the minimum wage received by a working-class family.}

6 Such as avoiding from taking part in labor organization and collective struggle at the workplace due to the fear of its consequences in facing again unemployment and worsening the existing fragile situation.

subjectivity in confrontation with these oppressions; or such subjectivity is considered as a personal/individual matter, which has no connection with the class struggle of the workers. In other words, an immanent strain of this understanding is that the oppression on the working class can only be understood in the form of exploitation, which inevitably manifests itself only in economic channels, mainly in the labor relations between the workers and the capitalists. Here, not only the multiple identities of the workers (based on nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) is neglected, but also the structural entanglement of various mechanisms of oppression that make possible the reproduction of capitalism as a socio-historical totality.

B) A narrow conceptual understanding of the scope of the working class: Here, the approach of “pure workerism” ignores the historical dynamism and continuous changes of the capitalist system and its inevitable impacts on the working class, regarding their ways of working and living and consequently their self-perception (self-identification)⁷ [7], which impact obviously the forms of their political engagements. Since the integration of Post-Fordist production with neoliberal strategy has turned today's societies more and more into a "social fabric", it has become impossible to separate the boundary between the realm of work (implying the factory) and the realm of personal-social life. Because the historical expansion of capitalism was not only realized in the form of geographical expansion of the law of value and commodity relations (globalization), but also a process to conquer the spaces and realms of social life. To this credit, the age of neoliberalism, gave a special acceleration to the historical process of proletarianization of societies; no matter how these proletarian masses identify themselves individually or collectively, which is contrary to the clamorous claim of post-Marxists and bourgeois commentators regarding the decline of the dimensions of the working class and its future replacement with the middle class. In addition, the significant increase in the internal diversity and heterogeneity of the new working class has been accompanied and combined by some other historical developments (such as the global decline of the leftist discourse and labor and socialist organizations and movements), which shaped together the downward trend of the workers' class consciousness. Based on this, recognizing the worker only in work clothes or in the work environment (such as a factory) is a highly reductive and misleading approach that does not place the worker's social existence as the point of departure for its analysis.

C) A Limited view of forms and channels of the class struggle of the workers: here this issue is ignored, how the socio-political structures of contemporary societies have limited the possibilities and options for the workers to establish/advance their own collective struggles. As we know, the neoliberal policies have deeply reconstructed the contemporary societies with the following mechanisms: flexibility of work, expansion of temporary/precarious works, diversification of labor contracts, legalization/facilitation of the rapid dismissal of workers (as "adjustment" of the workforce), elimination of social/welfare supports by the government, "liberalization" of prices, etc. Under such circumstances, it is not far from the expectation that the competition between workers would grow significantly and become an opposing weight against labor solidarity. At the same time, neoliberal policies by shrinking workplaces, expanding outsourcing and temporary work, and limiting the legal powers and scope of labor unions significantly reduced the possibilities of collective resistance of workers and blocked the channels of reproduction/multiplication of labor organizing experiences. In this historical context, not only the level and amount of workers

⁷ Amin Hosuri: "*On the weakness and strength of workers*", published in Farsi by Kargah Dialectic, Nov. 2021.

organized struggles have decreased, but also the way of class self-perception of workers, their self-identification channels and consequently the forms and methods of their intervention to improve their working and living conditions. All these transformations happened generally to the detriment of the development of the workers class consciousness and class struggle.

Now, taking the special situation of Iran to these general historical-global conditions in account, we should add the extra-inhibitions of the tyranny and political suffocation and the pervasive effects of the huge repression apparatus. Here, for the worker surrounded in this geography, the struggle in the street is partly a response to the blockaded path of the organized struggle in the workplace, as well as the lack of conventional labor struggles. The unorganized presence and participation of workers in street protests probably makes many of them vulnerable to the influence of bourgeois political tendencies. But this is also ultimately a reflection of the conditions that have blocked the path to the growth of class consciousness and the workers' possibilities for organized struggles. It is interesting, however, to note that from the late 2017 onwards many labor protests have used both spheres of factory and street to organize their protesting actions or marches, in order to overcome the restrictions imposed in the workplace, and/or increase the political attention/influence (via attracting solidarity and public support). In this sense, the protesting but unorganized presence of workers in the street during mass uprisings, whether it was merely due to anger and rebellion or for the general demand of "freedom" and "right to life", is worth paying more attention to: Since it implies the inevitable connection between different spaces of struggle in the mentality and actions of those, who have been the subjects of these struggles; And at the same time, it is a manifestation of the imposed lack of methods, tools and traditions of organized labor struggle⁸ [8].

All three proposed critical lines confirm that the leftists influenced by "pure workerism", despite their steady proclaim of class analysis, have lost the guiding principle of "concrete analysis of concrete conditions". At the same time, insisting on the normative appeal to abstract doctrines makes this inadequacy invisible to them. To show this inadequacy, we turn to one of their central arguments, which is linked to the aforementioned theoretical foundation: in justifying their assessment of the non-labor character of the Jina uprising, they refer to the contents of the slogans prevailing in this uprising and their lack of connection with "labor demands". Whereas: 1) by default, they limit the range of labor demands to direct economic demands; 2) Even in this limited framework, they ignore the frequent repetition of slogans such as "poverty, corruption, expensiveness... we are going to overthrow"⁹ [9]; and at the same time 3) they miss the point that in the context of the hegemonic struggles of the hostile forces, the lack of a clear discourse of working class and concrete strategy for its class struggle, certainly affects the way in which the oppressed masses expresses their demands, as well as the form of their movements; And most importantly 4) they neglect this point that when the masses of unorganized workers target the entire system in many of their slogans (in street protests)¹⁰ [10], they recognize the special role of the state in

8 More than 120 years ago, Lenin wrote: "The joining of [organized] workers to the general uprising depends on the level of the class struggle." (What Is to Be Done?)

9 And similarly, this slogan: "no to unemployment and servitude ... no to the women's mandatory hijab".

10 Such as these frequent slogans: "Death to the dictator"; "This is the last warning... the goal is the whole system"; "Islamic Republic, we don't want, we don't want"; "Don't call it as protest... it's called now a revolution."

reproducing the crisis and blocking the people's movements and struggles (including the labor movement).

Hence, the approach of "labour puritanism" traps ironically in a contradictory situation, which could be described as follows: while its proponents do not recognize the unorganized presence of the workers (deprived of their own lines, demands and slogans) in the mass uprisings as part of workers' class struggle, rather attribute it to the trans-class and non-labor character of these uprisings, they have been contributing in strengthening the underlying historical context that generated this situation. Since their insufficient understanding of (and treatment towards) the concepts of working class and class struggle, as part of the influential intellectual-political heritage of Russian Marxism, has been one of the obstacles for the formation of an effective discourse around the working class and an alternative strategy for the worker's class struggle. Nevertheless, the proponents of labor puritanism in the face of mass uprisings are satisfied to adopt the position of a passive observer, claiming to be "critical observer". This type of observation, however, cannot basically be critical, since it only suffices, from a positivist point of view, to register and categorize phenomena with some abstract prototypes; and so, it ignores the roots, links, and potentialities (because they can be observed and measured), and also the manifestations inconsistent with those holy prototypes (to avoid acknowledging the unfamiliar). Such an approach is obviously a passivity, because it waits for the promised emergence of a "pure working class" instead of moving on the uneven ground of transformative political practice. This passivity-trap however becomes a dead-end, as its proponents alongside turning away from the present-day reality of the working class and its inadequate struggles, at the same time consider this treatment as their own critical political practice.

In addition to the above theoretical reasons, there are also several concrete evidences that challenge the disbelief of labor puritanism in relevance of the Jina uprising for the (struggle of) working class: 1) A significant number of protesters who were killed and injured in the streets during the Jina uprising, were executed or are still imprisoned under torture were workers, even with a narrow definition of the concept of worker; 2) Along with the Jina uprising and in its peak months, a number of labor strikes were organized (including by workers of southern industries), which faced security repressions in the very first steps; 3) Teachers and retirees (as well as nurses, drivers, etc.) as important layers of the working class, during their movements, repeatedly and in different ways declared their solidarity with the Jina uprising; 4) In the last several years, alongside the successive mass uprisings (regional and national), security-judicial pressures on organized labor activists have increased significantly. This indicates that the strategists of the oppression apparatus are well aware of the class character of these uprisings and the high potential of their articulation with organized labor strikes and protests. A significant number of these activists were arrested and imprisoned before the beginning of the Jina uprising and a large number of them have been persecuted and suppressed continuously since the beginning of the uprising. Ignoring all these evidences indicates an insistence on a rigid understanding and definition of the working class and class struggle.

It seems that the ideas of labor puritanism, as part of the legacy of Russian Marxism, still have influence on the paradigm of class struggle in Iran, which makes it difficult to expand the concept of the proletariat, as well as the necessity of "connecting the struggles in the street and the factory". For example, in Iran's left and labor literature, the "the teachers' movement" (and similarly, the

pensioners' and nurses' movement) are still spoken as being separated from workers' movement; It is as if we are faced with some non-labor movements that can merely help and complement the labor movement due to a moral or tactical considerations. This phenomenon, rather than being inadvertent or due to verbal habits, is rooted in the misconception of the working class, which limits the definition of workers to productive work, producing surplus value. The implication of this concrete example becomes clearer when we put this self-imposed delimitation of the concept proletariat next to the fact that capitalism, with all its ideological and political tools, tries to isolate the labor struggle from the general sphere of society.

5. Who is the working class?

Against these strong assumptions about the concepts of the working class and class struggle, in the rest of this article, we will try - based on what has been said - to briefly present an alternative understanding:

Today's worker is an ordinary person: she works, or is unemployed and looking for work; is engaged in formal or informal work; What she does is often not recognized and valued as work; Part of her spare time, as her social communications, is filled with digital media and virtual social networks; She joins mass protests in the workplace or on the street in the hope of reclaiming her rights or getting rid of her suffering situation; Or based on precautionary considerations, she distances herself from these protests; Even sometimes, influenced by dominant intellectual and discursive resources, she seeks her benefit in other ways such as "individual progress" or closeness to the authorities. Today's worker mostly does not get her social identity and political insight through the awareness of the opposition of her social existence with the totality of the capitalist order; Therefore, she is unable to recognize her proletarian class identity; And therefore, she does not necessarily feels a shared destiny and class affiliation/solidarity with those who stand in a similar social existence; Instead, depending on the circumstances, she links his identity in opposition to one of her multiple denied/repressed identities; Or in opposition to one of the oppressive mechanisms that dominate her, she searches for a collective identity, which is often built in divergence and even conflict with other layers of the masses of workers and the oppressed. Due to reluctance to accept her class identity, today's worker often gladly joins her identity to the common image of the middle class (which seems attractive, inclusive and accessible). As a result, today's worker is more prone than her predecessors to become defenseless and disarmed in face of the influence of bourgeois ideology; And in the same way, sometimes she sympathizes with reactionary political ideas and forces (even in the midst of mass uprisings). Despite all this, today's worker is angry and rebellious, because the effects of the multiple crises that surround her constantly threaten her livelihood and social stability and mock his expectations of building/having a minimal normal life. All these images are the different aspects of social life and the contradictory subjectivity of today's proletariat: the heterogeneous mass of those who are the "other" of capital in terms of their social existence; who their lives have been damaged to various degrees by capitalist relations and are still exposed to even more dangers. However, the contents of their current subjectivity is mostly not compatible with the requirements of liberation from this subjugated social existence.

However, the conceptual expansion of the working class, to place it under the broader concept of the proletariat ("new proletariat"), is not an arbitrary expansion or just influenced by humanist egalitarian tendencies. Rather, it comes from the fundamental function of the capitalist system in the increasing proletarianization of the masses and the destruction of the foundations of their lives in order to guarantee the accumulation of capital; A function that inevitably deepens the gap between the ruling class (capitalists) and the subordinate class (the oppressed). Capitalist reproduction based on the exploitation of both humans and nature inevitably consolidates and expands the processes of exploitation and expropriation. In this sense, the concept of the proletariat also refers to the expropriated; And therefore, the scope of social inclusion of this concept is beyond the multitude of those who are directly exploited in the work processes. If the term "we are 99%" seemed a little metaphorical during the occupation of "Occupy Wall Street Movement", the continuous intensification of the process of exclusive distribution of wealth and power in the last decade has shown how the structure of contemporary societies has moved more and more towards the deepening of the class division and the objectification of the polarity of capitalist class and the proletariat class. At the political level, the emergence of the New Right extremism (in response to the growing distrust of the masses towards conventional politicians) was a populist response to the inevitable consequences of this polarization. At the level of bourgeois ideology, the incessant pumping of the "middle class" tenet and its attachment to "accessible" lifestyle patterns was a strategic approach to curb the mental effects of this polarized situation in order to maintain/establish class reconciliation. Regarding the transformations within governments, the weakening and suspension of conventional democratic laws and procedures, complemented by extensive reconstruction of security-surveillance institutions and technologies, were preventive and pragmatic measures to face mass rebellions and the political-social consequences of the growth of this bipolarity.

However, all this does not mean that the new proletariat (as the "other" of the ruling class) is a homogeneous whole and has a transformative and emancipatory role by itself. In the domain of concrete reality, the situation is completely opposite. The unity that the concept of the proletariat evokes on the verbal level only implies the kinship of its members in terms of social existence and as the "other" of the ruling class. In the same way, the subjectivity attributed to this concept is only based on its material potential. In practice, the mechanisms of capitalism and the social form of its reproduction constantly turn the proletariat into separate and often opposing parts. That is, while assimilating the life foundations of the oppressed people, capitalism continuously disperses them in the field of social life. The prevalence of racism, sexism, and nationalism within the proletariat or the support of a significant part of the masses for reactionary and extreme right-wing parties are manifestations of the existence of this fragmentation and divergence. From this point of view, any alternative strategy for relaunching the class struggle in order to realize the historical potential of the proletariat must be aimed at creating two interrelated processes: a process to overcome the dispersion and internal divergence of the proletariat; and a process for trimming the proletariat from the internalized defects of capitalist life. If this assumption is correct that the driving force necessary for the creation and development of these two processes can only be developed through the growth of class consciousness in the process of collective struggles, then social movements and mass uprisings should be considered as important areas for providing this necessity.

From this point of view, the fact that the recognition of the worker's social and class position is often conditioned to a high level of her class consciousness and/or her active participation in organized labor struggles, is a reflection of a procedure that tends to turn away from the complexity of the contemporary reality (erasing the initial question) and a kind of political puritanism. Because the main challenge is, ironically, in what direction and with what strategies the potential subjectivity of the masses of real workers (not imaginary "super-workers") can be realized for their liberation from their subjugated social existence. Likewise, assessing the character of the late mass uprisings merely based on fixed patterns and elements, assumed to represent class consciousness and struggle, is an insufficient and misleading approach. To avoid this error, it should be accounted which effects have had the recent capitalist developments in the forms of proletarianization of societies. This would include the ways of living and working of the "new proletariat", as well as their sources of identification and political intervention. Moreover, the concept of class struggle should be reconstructed based on an expanded understanding of the mechanisms of capitalist reproduction, and not just the sphere of capitalist production.

6. About an alternative class struggle

Even if the new proletariat is on the path of overcoming its fragmentation, it will not become uniform, but still will include different layers of the proletariat in terms of: their positions regarding multiple mechanisms of oppression (i.e., the degree of their vulnerability to and participation in the mechanisms of oppression); the degree of their benefit or deprivation of social wealth, dignity, stability and social welfare; and their motivation, possibility and readiness to take part in collective/class struggle (that is, the level of class consciousness). Moreover, they will have different social positions and political potentials in terms of their possible effects in disrupting the process of capitalist reproduction. However, the main point is that all of them have a single objective enemy concerning the factors/structures that threaten their material life, overcoming of which, regardless of the degree of their class consciousness, requires the recovery of all their collective powers. From this point of view, the alternative strategy for class struggle should be based on solidarity in anti-capitalist struggles. This strategy is aimed at activating all the existing potentials in order to restore the overall strength of the proletariat; while taking into account the differences in the wide range of the proletariat and taking advantage of the actual possibilities of some parts of the proletariat to establish more effective class struggles. Such an approach does not look at a distant and ambiguous future, but considers the practical renewal of the class struggle in the heart of the current struggles as necessary to influence the near and medium-term future. Because any struggle that begins only with the actual forces of the proletariat (for example, workers strikes in an industrial branch) will be doomed to failure or at least retreat and compromise, if it is deprived of the active support and solidarity of a larger part of the proletariat.

In general (and abstractly), it can be said that all the struggles that challenge the consequences of the capitalist order and the supporting mechanisms of this order are various forms of class struggle. However, in the absence of an alternative and comprehensive narrative of the anti-capitalist struggle for a socialist horizon, many of them are in practice merely local struggles that often do not consider capitalism as the main goal of their struggle; And therefore, they are not aware of the necessity of their strategic link with other battles. Since decades ago, we have witnessed the rise and

fall of countless social movements, which are actually various forms of resistance and struggles of the new proletariat in different areas of oppression. But these progressive movements, despite their existential necessity and temporary achievements, due to being fragmented and scattered as well as being separated from the social totality, have not been able to leave a lasting impact on the transformation of dominant relations. Sooner or later, many of them were forced (and are forced) to reduce their political horizons and give in to compromises and even integrate and consume in the devouring mechanisms of capitalism. So, the point of departure for the redefinition of the class struggle is the recognition of this historical and strategic necessity that the fighting power of various social movements and the scattered protests of the new proletariat - along with the struggle for specific demands - must be directed towards the foundations of the reproduction of the established order (the totality of capitalism). In this sense, the revolutionary reconstruction of the class struggle requires presenting a new narrative of the class society, the proletariat, and the foundations of domination, oppression, and exploitation; A narrative that recognizes all the oppressions, sufferings and struggles of the oppressed. Only via introducing this inclusive narrative in the process of rebuilding class consciousness and class struggle the dispersing and passive mechanisms of the proletariat can be confronted, for turning the class struggle once again towards its revolutionary perspective. This new narrative of the class struggle will necessarily be a new narrative for the reconstruction of the socialist project¹¹ [11], which can be called "socialism from below", following Hal Draper¹² [12] and David McNally¹³ [13] (breaking from camp socialism and restoring the Marxian meaning of socialism).

Now, with regard to the specific situation of Iranian society, we try to draw a more concrete scheme for the reconstruction a new narrative of class struggle: it was already mentioned that capitalism in its historical development process has expanded exploitative relations over the whole society and removed the conventional border between work environments and living spaces. This aggressive expansion (according to the mechanisms of capital accumulation and capitalist reproduction) required simultaneously the continuation of expropriation and the expansion of commodity relations to all spheres and corners of social and natural lives. One of the social outcomes of this intertwined process of exploitation and expropriation has been the *mass production* of people who were deprived of any material means for providing their livelihood. These proletarianized masses sought the possibility of selling their labor power (as their only asset). The life of a large part of them inside or on the margins of big and small cities underwent significant fragility; If they found jobs, following the implementation of neoliberal policies, these jobs were mainly with temporary contracts and low wages (insufficient against the rapid inflationary increase in costs) and with the risk of unemployment; Some of them, who failed to find official jobs, were driven to work in the informal and/or unstable sectors (in the position of *Precariat*), which naturally has been associated with long periods of unemployment (and joining the unemployed reserve army); Some of them were forced to travel between cities and villages as seasonal workers/unemployed; A part of the

11 By the begin of downward spiral of socialist discourse since 1970s, whose final fall was heralded by the collapse of the "real existing socialism" we have been facing the lack of an alternative narrative of the socialist project that would connect the various anti-capitalist struggles. For a discussion about the necessity of this alternative narrative, see: Interview with Chidam Chidamli: "*Socialism is dead; Long live socialism!*", *kollektiv* aus Bremen, Kargah Dialectic, Nov. 2022.

12 Hal Draper (1966): *The Two Souls of Socialism*. New Politics.

13 David McNally (1980): *Socialism from Below*. International Socialists, Canada.

younger population layers, who had chosen the difficult path of education to acquire professional expertise for improving the possibility of selling their labor power (and sometimes with the illusion of the possibility of social-class mobility), mostly faced the high barrier of unemployment; Etc. Under these conditions, every new wave of inflation or reduction of social services (as well as elimination of subsidies of basic goods) and increase in housing rent was (and is) a terrible storm threatening their lives¹⁴ [14]. Having said that, it must be clear that the proletariat does not face the capitalist mechanisms only as exploitation under the working relations in the working environment; rather the whole realm of society is, for the proletariat, the domain of exploitation, domination and oppression. From this point of view, in order to change this situation, the scope of anti-capitalist struggle should be expanded to all areas of society to include all forms of oppressions and their respective potential subjects. In this regard, it is clearly necessary to restore the class struggle via overcoming the hypothetical gap between the factory (all workplaces) and the street (neighborhoods, schools and universities and public spaces).

In other words, organization in the living environment and neighborhoods and all spaces of the public sphere can and should complement organization in the factory and workplaces. That means we need a strategic perspective to develop alternative forms for organizing proletariat beyond the workplaces (especially neighborhoods), which are linked with the workers' organization in the workplaces. This approach is not a prescriptive rhetoric to generalize arbitrarily the class struggle, but rather a historical necessity that arises from the coordinates of work and life under today's relations of domination, oppression and exploitation. During the Jina uprising, we also witnessed how the dynamism arising from the praxis of struggle formed the seeds of organization in the neighborhoods (in the form of neighborhood resistance committees). Even though there are still many steps to be taken in this direction; as well as to establish links between different spheres of organization.

7. As summary

Undoubtedly, the revolutionary process does not have a unique form and path. Because the torrent of anger and rebellion of the oppressed, as well as their determination to (and their awareness of) an liberating change cannot be shaped. We have shown, however, that there are strong material foundations for the continuation and expansion of mass struggles and uprisings in the "Global South" sphere (including Iran) in an emancipatory direction. However, the continuation of struggle *per se* does not guarantee victory over the dominant system in Iran; unless this continuity is accompanied by qualitative ruptures, in which the usual shortcomings and failures in the process of struggle are absorbed as collective awareness to be sublated (*Aufhebung*) and articulated as historical achievements in the upcoming path of struggle. For example, awareness of: how to overcome the fragility, dispersion, and transience of street protests; How can alternative forms of organization (such as neighborhood resistance committees, women's committees, students' committees, etc.) be expanded despite the existing obstacles and limitations; How to move from scattered workers' sit-ins and strikes to coordinated workers' strikes; And finally, how labor strikes

14 One other mechanism that destroys or weakens the livelihood resources of the subalterns is the systematic destruction of environment, lands, water resources and natural resources, as aggressive implementation of the of the neoliberal policies and expropriation.

can be articulated with alternative forms of protests and civil disobedience, despite the decline of mass street demonstrations, for creating new levels of organized struggle.

In a general assessment, it can be said that Jina uprising has failed to make the final progress towards revolutionary transformation for two major reasons: one is the lack of organized and coordinated forms of protests, beyond the mobilization, to encounter effectively with the repression apparatus, which would enable the continuation of street protests and its expansion to other public arenas; And the other, the failure to form coordinated labor strikes with the horizon of setting up a nationwide general strike, which could disrupt the reproduction paths of the daily order and the efficiency of the repression apparatus, making the final progress for the revolutionary movement possible. The existence of these deficiencies in the process of the Jina uprising have not been contingent or accidental, but rather a result of given historical conditions. Because in Iran's political environment, the failure to create and spread organized forms of public protests (as distinguished from political mobilization¹⁵ [15]), and the failure to organize and expand labor strikes have common structural roots, that via blocking the development of organized struggles in each of these two areas, have also weakened the possibility of their organic linking.

However, along with the above assessment, it should be considered that the Jina uprising took place in a double historical context: one, the expansion and intensification of multiple structural crises that generated the growing anger and dissatisfaction of the oppressed¹⁶ [16]; And the other, the suppression and defeat of the mass uprisings of the previous years. Focusing only on the first historical context leads us to reach an entirely objective and more or less deterministic understanding of the Jina uprising based on the inevitability of mass uprisings (in the mentioned context). But if we include also the second historical context in our evaluation, a neglected subjective component enters the equations, and that is: the experience of a mass uprising (in fact, several successive uprisings in recent Iran) has incalculable effects on the development of the (potential) political subjectivity of the oppressed, which itself is a determining factor for the final destiny of the ongoing struggles and developments. From this point of view, Jina uprising can be considered as a rebellion of the oppressed against the structures and mechanisms that produced past failures and defeats, which is at the same time an attempt to recover/develop their political subjectivity. So, even though the Jina uprising is surrounded by the structural limitations of its historical conditions, it simultaneously has material potentials and surpluses to overcome these limitations; And this potential material tendency forms its revolutionary strain. The high position of the component "life" in the central slogan of this uprising (woman, life, freedom) also confirms such a reading; Because the subjugated and the oppressed, inspired by this component, not only have challenged the regime's repression and "Death-Politics" in favor of the will to live, but at the same time, they also try to push back and break the apparently insurmountable cycle of their destiny (i.e. the inevitability of defeat).

15 Despite the necessity of *political mobilization* to establish and - partly - expand political protests and mass uprisings, these protests are doomed to fail if they are not articulated with effective forms of *organizing/organization*. All the defeated experiences of mass uprisings since the Arab Spring, as well as in Iran, confirm this fundamental principle.

16 The widespread poisoning of girls in schools and, more recently, the re-acceleration of the state execution machine, have been other sources of increasing public anger.

Therefore, in a situation where the specter of the Jina uprising still hovers over the society despite all the objective threats, the necessity of "defending life" (against the *death-based* foundations of the Iranian regime and its Necropolitics) can be a strong basis for preparing organized and interconnected struggles¹⁷ [17]. If labor strikes are strengthened and expanded on such a basis and are simultaneously accompanied by organized support from the "street/public space"¹⁸ [18], the dialectic of struggle will flow. Stopping the killing-machine of the Islamic Republic is possible only by restoring this dialectical movement.

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Note:

This article was first published in Farsi by *Manjanigh* magazine (*Falakhan 237*). To translate this article into English, the Farsi version was revised and edited. The present text is then a modified version of the original text.

17 For example, in current situation where the street movement is - temporarily - has declined, the necessity of "defending life" can be the a basis for recovering the potentials of neighborhood resistance committees and multiplying them within the life-spaces of the oppressed (proletariat). This means that if the regime tries to paralyze or destroy the potential subjectivity of the subjugated by advancing the "starvation strategy" (along with the "death-politics") and also tries to integrate a part of them into its social corpus (even into the apparatus of repression), the necessity of "defending life" could be an important guideline for a new strategy: it demands that the neighborhood resistance committees should be developed and/or expand based on the principle of cooperation and solidarity in organizing the immediate needs of the neighborhood residents. The first step would be identifying the immediate needs (such as food, medicine and care) and trying to provide them by mobilizing collective resources. In the next steps, establishing mutual assistance funds, funds to help strikers, and political education programs could be other possibilities for strengthening neighborhood resistance committees and linking them to labor and radical struggles.

18 From organizing street protests to organizing civil disobedience and symbolic strikes. In this arena, neighborhood resistance committees, student resistance committees, and women's resistance committees could take the initiative before others.