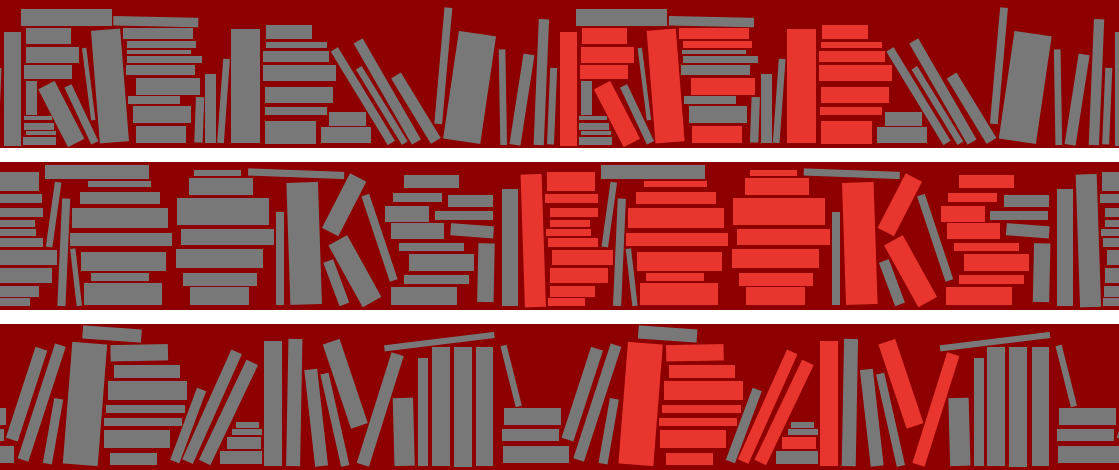# Red Books Day
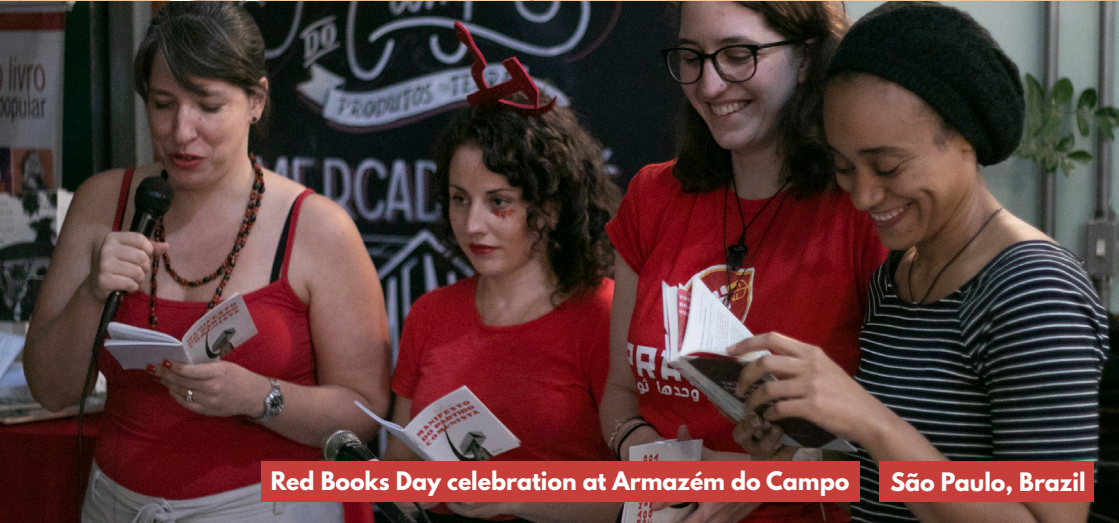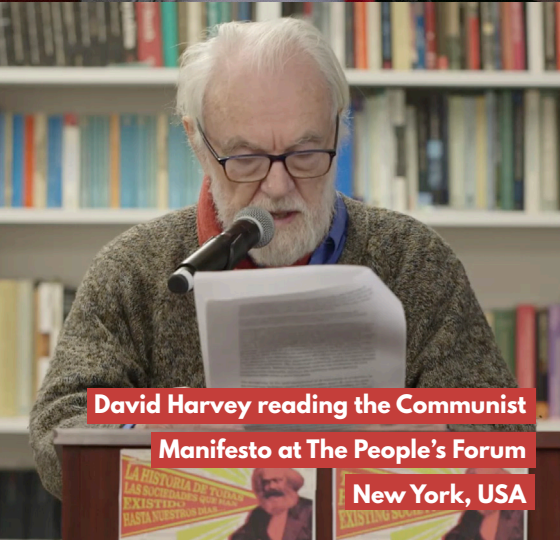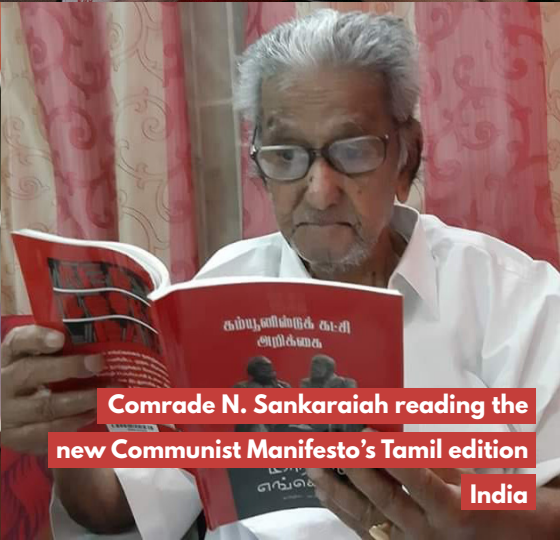# Celebrated
on Each
Continent

Student performance for Red Books Day   South Korea

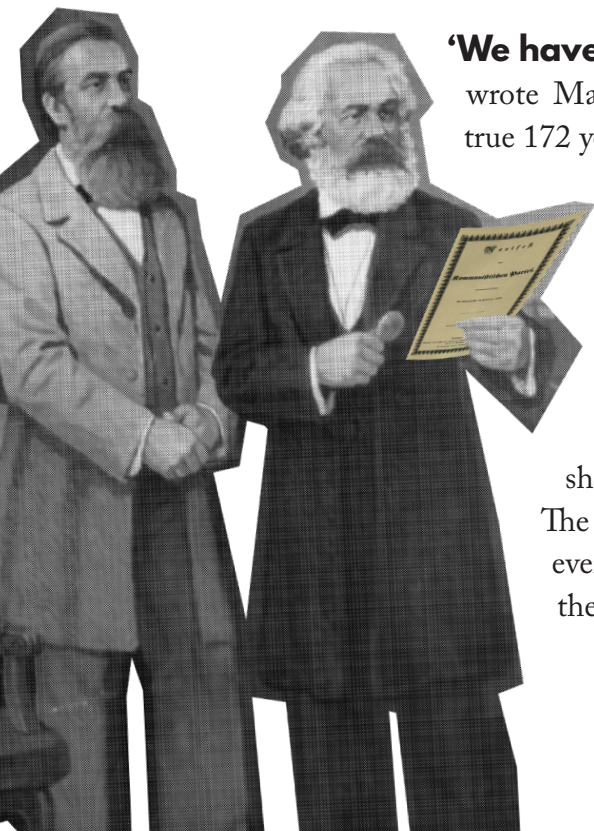Red Books Day celebration at Armazém do Campo   São Paulo, Brazil

David Harvey reading the Communist Manifesto at The People's Forum   New York, USA

Comrade N. Sankaraiah reading the new Communist Manifesto's Tamil edition   India

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *The Communist Manifesto* on 21 February 1848. The book came just before a continent-wide revolt in Europe against its monarchies; a counter-revolution that began in France would sweep away the ambitions of the revolt. The ambitions of the revolt had, however, already been condensed in Marx and Engel's remarkable book, which would become one of the most influential texts in human history. Certainly, Marx's mature writings would have a shaper and more accurate assessment of the capitalist mode of production, but the sheer brio of the *Manifesto* was never surpassed.

'We have a world to win',

wrote Marx and Engels; this remains true 172 years later.

Celebration of the publication of this text has been virtually non-existent. That is one of the reasons why LeftWord Books suggested that Red Books Day should be held on 21 February. The idea for Red Books Day, however, was not merely to celebrate the publication of the *Manifesto*.

Over the past decades, the legions of the far right have specifically targeted left authors, publishers, distributors, and booksellers. Against Marxism and rational thought, the far right has pushed obscurantist and unscientific ideas, a fog around humanity. One of those Marxists who was killed was the Indian Communist leader Govind Pansare, targeted by the far right for his rationalism and for the publication of his book *Who Was Shivaji?*. Pansare was killed on 20 February 2015, on the eve of the day when the *Manifesto* had been published.

LeftWord Books and our partner publishing houses in India – Bharati Puthakalam, Chintha, National Book Agency, Nava Telangana, Prajasakti, and Vaam – gave the call for Red Books Day to be held on 21 February 2020 as a way to fight back against the unreason of the far right. We asked people around the world to go into public places and hold readings of *The Communist Manifesto* in their own languages. The effort was immediately supported by

Street theatre group Jana Natya Manch singing revolutionary songs at the May Day Bookstore

New Delhi, India

the International Assembly of the Peoples and by several political parties, publishing houses, bookstores, writers, and artists. The Indian designer Orijit Sen created the logo; Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research developed a range of posters.

On 21 February 2020, more than thirty thousand people from South Korea to Venezuela joined the public reading of the *Manifesto* in their own languages. The epicentre of Red Books Day was in the four Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, where the bulk of the public readings took place. Without question, Bharati Puthakalam and the Tamil Nadu State Secretariat of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) created the greatest number of events, from a morning reading of the *Manifesto* under the labour statue on Chennai's marina to evening readings at union halls. In Tamil Nadu itself, about ten thousand people participated in the Red Books festival. Peasant organisations affiliated with the Communist Party of

Study of the Communist Manifesto in the Martin Luther King Memorial Center

Havana, Cuba

Nepal held readings in rural areas, while the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil held readings in the occupied settlements; in Havana, study circles met to read the *Manifesto*, while in South Africa it was read for the first time in Sesotho. Left publishing house from Expressão Popular (Brazil) to Batalla de Ideas (Argentina) to Inkani Books (South Africa) joined the effort. At Studio Safdar in Delhi, the *Manifesto* was read in many Indian and European languages, a tribute not only to the text itself but to International Mother Language Day, which also falls on 21 February. Many people report that this was the first time that they opened a book by Marx and that they were enthused to read the captivating prose; this has drawn them to start study circles of Marxist literature.

The left publishers who participated in the effort are now working to build an International Union of Left Publishers. This network will anchor the annual Red Books Day celebration.

Poet, playwright, translator, stage director, and acclaimed performer Napo Masheane reading the Communist Manifesto in Sesotho and in English at the The Commune

Johannesburg, South Africa

Manifesto reading at Florestan Fernandes National School of the Landless Worker's Movement (MST) — Guararema, Brasil

Auto-rickshaw workers reading the Communist Manifesto at their — Puducherry, India

Women's unit at the foothills of Kodai hills engrossed in Red Book Day reading of the Communist Manifesto — Tamil Nadu, India

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