

Strong response to IYSSE lecture on the *Communist Manifesto* at Sri Lanka's Peradeniya University

Our reporters
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On February 21, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a successful lecture titled “A study of the *Communist Manifesto*” at Peradeniya University in Kandy. It was the second in a series of lectures on Marxism held at the campus following an invitation from the university's Political Science Student Association. The first lecture—on Historical Materialism—was two months ago.

Socialist Equality Party (SEP) General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera delivered the lecture to about 50 participants, including university students, non-academic employees and IYSSE/SEP supporters. He expressed his gratitude to the Political Science Student Association for inviting the IYSSE/SEP to hold the lectures.

Jayasekera pointed out that the principles of the world socialist movement, elaborated in the *Communist Manifesto* and published in 1848, were completely valid today, even after the passage of 176 years.

The lecturer referred to the opening sentence of the *Manifesto*, which states: “The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles.” The analysis of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, he continued, was based on the method of historical materialism, which revealed the dialectical relationship between the productive forces and relations of production within a given society.

The lecturer again quoted from the *Manifesto*: “By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live.”

Jayasekera highlighted how various middle-class, pseudo-left organisations promote identity politics—religious, racial and gender divisions—because they were opposed to the scientific fact that the most basic division in bourgeois society is class.

Noting the rise of working-class struggles today from the

imperialist nations to the backward countries, Jayasekera said: “Contrary to the claims of these [pseudo-left] organisations, we have seen since the beginning of this decade an explosion of international struggles by the working class. The *Communist Manifesto* finds its highest vindication in this context.”

Jayasekera referred to the *Manifesto* which noted that the commercial and industrial crises of the capitalist system were part of a fundamental crisis, which threatened the whole of society with devastation.

“The capitalist class has no progressive solution to the deepening global crisis of capitalism. Their so-called solution is war. During the last century the imperialist powers pushed this planet into two brutal world wars, destroying millions of lives and vast sections of the productive forces,” he said.

The lecturer explained how the deepening crisis of capitalist system had brought the world towards a third world war, pointing to the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, Israel's genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza, which is fully supported by the US and all the other imperialist powers, and Washington's intensifying war preparations against China.

The lecturer said that the true nature and purpose of the bourgeois state—whether bourgeois democratic, fascist, military-dictatorial or Bonapartist—is to defend the capitalist system of private property and profit-making by violently suppressing all resistance by the working class and other oppressed masses. He quoted the *Manifesto*, which states, “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”

In line with this analysis, Jayasekera pointed out that any struggle by the working class to defend its basic social and democratic rights against the attacks of the capitalist government is necessarily a political struggle against the government and bourgeois rule as a whole. It was therefore

necessary, he said, citing the *Manifesto* again, “to organise the proletariat (the workers) as a class and in a political party.”

Jayasekera discussed the April–July 2022 popular uprising, which led to the resignation of Sri Lankan President Gotabhaya Rajapakse and his government. The critical lesson of that struggle, he said, was the necessity to mobilise the working class on revolutionary socialist policies. The response of the trade unions and various middle-class pseudo-left outfits was to impose a “no politics” directive to try and block the mobilisation of the working class as an independent political movement. Against this reactionary formula, Jayasekera outlined the SEP’s response to the mass movement, and its fight to mobilise the working class on the perspective of international socialism.

Jayasekera said that the working class could not take power through the capitalist legal framework or its parliament and again quoted from the *Manifesto*: “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.”

The speaker rejected the assertions of various apologists of capitalism that the masses today could win some rights and improve their social conditions because there was an existing democracy and therefore no need to oust the capitalist class through a revolution.

But what we see globally today, Jayasekera continued, is not the blossoming of bourgeois democracy but a rapid shift towards dictatorial forms of rule as exemplified in former US President Donald Trump’s attempted coup in January 2021 and the increasing moves of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to establish a fascist Hindutva state.

Concluding the lecture, Jayasekera said: “Comrades, we are holding this series of lectures as the world Trotskyist movement. It is today’s Marxist party and the only movement fighting to mobilise the international working class as an independent political movement. Our aim is to overthrow capitalism and establish workers’ power globally, based on the perspective and program of international socialism. I urge you to join with the SEP and the IYSSE to take forward with that struggle and read the *World Socialist Web Site*.”

During the question and answer session, one student asked for further clarification about the dangers of dictatorship under a future government led by the opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

The lecturer cited remarks by Anura Kumara Dissanayake,

leader of the JVP and its electoral front the National People’s Power (NPP) at a seminar in Colombo on January 2. The JVP/NPP leader insisted that “a national awakening movement” needed to be built in Sri Lanka. This meant, Jayasekera said, that workers, peasants, fishermen, writers and students would have to “sacrifice for the country.” In other words, workers should not ask for wage hikes, peasants should not present their issues and students cannot raise their legitimate demands for education facilities.

Jayasekera also referred to Dissanayake’s comments about the Syriza government in Greece during an October 17, 2022, interview with the Swarnavahini television channel. Dissanayake hailed the Syriza government’s imposition of savage austerity measures as demanded by global bankers, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and insisted that people had to “change their consumption patterns.” These are the same claims made by President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Jayasekera said.

The lecturer pointed out that the JVP/NPP was fully committed to IMF-dictated austerity, citing their statements that a future JVP/NPP government would “renegotiate” with the IMF. This would see the JVP/NPP regime move towards dictatorial methods to suppress working-class opposition to its cost-cutting social attacks. Jayasekera referred to the recent national and district conferences of retired military officers convened by the JVP/NPP.

Another student asked how the SEP proposed to deal with Sri Lanka’s huge burden of foreign debts if the IMF’s austerity measures were rejected. Jayasekera responded by outlining the party’s socialist program.

The SEP’s call to repudiate these foreign debts, he replied, was based on the strength of the working class and the fight for a government of workers and peasants committed to socialist policies. This includes nationalisation of the banks and the key industries, placing them under the democratic control of the working class and reorganising production according to human need, not private profit.

“In its refusal to pay back the foreign loans, the Sri Lankan working class necessarily depends on the support of its international class brothers and sisters mobilised in a united movement against imperialist war, austerity and dictatorship,” the lecturer said.



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