

# ISO and DSA bar Socialist Equality Party panel on the fight against fascism from upcoming Historical Materialism conference

By Joseph Kishore  
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*Socialism in Our Time*, a public event organized by the journal *Historical Materialism* and produced in conjunction with *Jacobin Magazine* and the Socialism Conference, has rejected a proposed panel submitted by the Socialist Equality Party on “The fight against fascism and the lessons of history.” *Jacobin Magazine* is produced by supporters of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The Socialism Conference is directed by the International Socialist Organization (ISO).

The decision to exclude the panel is a blatant act of censorship, motivated by the political differences of the DSA and ISO with the Trotskyist politics advanced by the Socialist Equality Party, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The SEP panel was to feature as its main speaker Christoph Vandreier, deputy national secretary of the *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei* (SGP) in Germany. Vandreier is the author of *Why are they back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany*, which will soon be published in English. The title of his presentation was to have been, “Back to the 1930s: Trotskyist policy in the fight against war and neo-fascism.”

The other speakers on the panel were to include WSWs Latin American affairs editor Bill Van Auken, who has been active in the socialist movement for nearly a half-century. The topic of his presentation was to have been “Bolsonaro’s victory and the debacle of Brazil’s Workers Party.” The panel also included Socialist Equality Party member Fred Mazelis, whose activity in revolutionary socialist politics spans 60 years. The title of his presentation was to have been:

“‘It can’t happen here’—The Trump administration and the rise of the far-right in America.”

According to its organizers, the conference, which will be held on April 13-14 in New York City, is being organized around the themes of “Capitalism in Crisis,” “History” and “Resistance Today; Mapping the Future.” The conference webpage states, “To prepare for the fights ahead, we have to study the struggles that came before us.” It goes on to state that the organizers “welcome contributions that address History of Social Struggles and Movements; History of the Labor Movement; History of Organizations and Parties; Legacies of Particular Thinkers and Activists.”

The deadline for submissions was January 21, with responses from the organizers due by February 11. The Socialist Equality Party submitted its panel proposal on January 5. An unidentified conference organizer sent the following email to the SEP on February 13: “I regret to inform you that your proposal: The fight against fascism and the lessons of history was not selected for presentation at this year’s Socialism in Our Time Conference.”

No explanation for the rejection was provided in the email, but it is obvious that the rejection is based on nothing other than factional interests, rooted in the political alignment of the DSA and ISO with the Democratic Party and the pro-corporate AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy.

The unprincipled and essentially anti-communist action of the ISO and DSA has objective political significance and consequences.

Christoph Vandreier and the SGP have played, as is well known throughout Germany, a leading role in opposing the growth of far-right and fascistic

movements. The SEP panel proposal explained that Vandreier would speak on “the significance of the revival of fascism throughout Europe, including the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and efforts within Germany to relativize the crimes of the Nazis and rehabilitate Hitler. He will review Trotsky’s analysis of the origins of fascism in the 1930s and its relevance for today.”

Vandreier is the author of *Why are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy, and the Revival of Fascism in Germany*. Published in 2018, Vandreier’s book analyzes the interaction of the relativization of the crimes of the Third Reich with efforts of high-level state officials to legitimize and promote the neo-Fascist *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), which now functions as the official principal opposition party in Germany.

Vandreier’s book will soon be presented at the Leipzig Book Fair. The English-language edition of his book will be presented at next month’s London Book Fair.

In addition to his writing, Vandreier has been active in mobilizing university students in Berlin and throughout Germany in opposition to the neo-Nazis. The International Youth and Students for Socialist Equality (IYSSE), affiliated with the SGP, scored a major victory last month in the student parliamentary elections held at Berlin’s Humboldt University. In a campaign centered on opposition to German militarism and the university’s defense of Hitler apologists on its faculty, the IYSSE outpolled the youth organization of the state-affiliated Left Party and received only a few votes less than the candidates sponsored by the Green Party.

In response to its campaign against the pro-Nazi forces, Vandreier and the SGP have been the target of right-wing attacks and denunciations in the capitalist media. In July, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), Germany’s domestic intelligence agency, added the SGP to its official list of “left-wing extremist” organizations subject to state monitoring.

The decision of the ISO-DSA conference organizers to reject the SEP panel and prevent Vandreier from presenting his report denies those attending the New York conference the opportunity to learn from the political struggle that is being conducted by Vandreier

and the German Trotskyist movement.

The political activities of the AfD and its network of pro-Nazi academics are reported on in the United States by Breitbart and even more openly neo-Nazi publications. They will welcome the decision taken by the *Historical Materialism* conference organizers. A major opportunity to alert, inform and mobilize the left in the United States against the resurgence of German fascism has been blocked by the DSA and ISO. This is the objective consequence of their unprincipled anti-communist factionalism.

The action taken by the DSA and ISO exposes their politically deceitful claims to be defenders of democratic rights, let alone fighters for socialism.

Protests against the censor the SEP panel should be sent to: [socialisminourtime@gmail.com](mailto:socialisminourtime@gmail.com). [Forward a copy to: [sep@socialistequality.com](mailto:sep@socialistequality.com)]

To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>