

Detroit autoworkers discuss upcoming meetings on “The Threat of Fascism and How to Fight it”

By Jerry White
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The campaign for the April 11 and April 15 meetings in Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan on “The Threat of Fascism and How to Fight it” has begun in earnest with teams from the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) reaching out to workers at area auto factories and other work locations.

Christoph Vandreier, Deputy National Secretary of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) in Germany will be the featured speaker at the meetings. Vandreier, a leader in the fight against fascism in Europe and author of the newly released book “Why are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany,” will be on a two-week speaking tour in the US, starting with an April 8 public meeting in Berkeley, California.

The critical importance of the meeting was underscored by the horrific massacre of 50 Muslims at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on March 15. The fascist gunman who had connections to several far-right organizations in Europe and his home country of Australia, specifically praised Donald Trump “as a symbol of renewed white identity” and repeated the American president’s denunciations of immigrants and refugees as “invaders.” The right-wing gunman who murdered 11 Jewish people at a Pittsburgh synagogue on October 27, 2018 used similar fascist language.

SEP and IYSSE members spoke to workers at Fiat Chrysler’s stamping plant in the Detroit suburb of Warren, Michigan earlier this week about the New Zealand massacre and the importance of the public meeting on the fight against fascism.

Workers reacted with shock and horror over the mass

killing and several stopped to discuss the meaning of the event. Several workers saw the promotion of anti-immigrant hatred as an effort to divide workers and scapegoat immigrants for the loss of jobs and deteriorating living conditions.

“The murders in New Zealand were horrible,” one worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. “The problem is not the refugees, it’s the rich folks, the one percent,” he said.

Another worker added, “It’s not the immigrants, the divide is between the rich and the poor.”

Several workers made the direct connection between the racist campaign against Muslims and immigrants and the efforts by corporate management and the United Auto Workers union to pit young and old, black and white and part-time and full-time workers against each other inside the factories.

“It’s divide-and-conquer just like they do inside here,” one worker commented. Another said, “The killing in New Zealand is awful. It’s these companies that want us against each other. Here they try to turn us on workers who get transferred from other plants like Jefferson.”

Another worker said, the fascist murders were “Totally wrong, and inhumane. It’s like the stereotyping of Muslims and immigrants. It’s lies and propaganda. I don’t usually talk about politics because we’re not in control of anything. I stopped believing in voting after the 2000 election when they stopped counting votes and handed Bush the presidency.

“Chrysler is making record profits with all the Jeeps and trucks they are selling. They are not sharing any of that with us. We got a \$5,000 profit sharing check and a lot of that was taken away in taxes. They’ve got

young workers right next to me in the plant doing the same work but at half the pay. That only undermines our unity.”

Several workers expressed their deep hatred for Trump, while others expressed political illusions that the election of Democrats or stricter gun control laws would prevent future atrocities. A small minority, influenced by Trump’s fascistic rants, expressed support for the anti-immigrant witch-hunt. In so far as such views have any support in the plants this is largely due to the decades-long promotion of nationalism and militarism by the United Auto Workers union, which, while overseeing the destruction of workers’ jobs and living standards, has led a racist campaign blaming Asian and Mexican workers for job losses and wage cuts.

Many workers in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and other so-called “Rust Belt” states, which Trump carried in the 2016 election, had originally voted for Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries, attracted by his calls for a “political revolution” against the “billionaire class.”

One worker who stopped at the table said he had backed Sanders and was angered over how the Democratic National Committee (DNC) had sabotaged his campaign in order to secure the nomination for Hillary Clinton.

The Sanders campaign had attracted many workers by pointing to the crushing levels of social inequality in America, only to endorse Clinton, a shill for Wall Street and a warmonger. Sanders had downplayed the illicit maneuver of the DNC and had joined the bogus campaign against “Russian meddling” in the elections. By supporting Clinton, Sanders handed the election to Trump, who was able to tap into deep social discontent by presenting himself as an opponent of the status quo.

Several workers bought pamphlets and donated to the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. Campaigners distributed hundreds of newsletters, which prominently advertised the April 11 meeting and carried articles on the New Zealand shootings and the recent indictment of UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell for taking bribes from Fiat Chrysler. While autoworkers are considering what they will confront in the contract fight this summer, the discussions at the Warren Stamping plant express a turn by increasing numbers of workers to broader political and historical questions,

including how the working class can fight and defeat the danger of fascism and war.

Fascism is not a mass movement like it was in the 1930s. In Germany and other European countries, far-right parties like the Alternative for Germany have been cultivated by a network of pro-fascist academics and state intelligence operatives. In the US, Trump’s endless denunciations of the danger of socialism reveals the real fear of the ruling classes all over the world: that the growth of the class struggle against social inequality, war and dictatorship is leading workers to draw revolutionary conclusions.

The meeting with Christoph Vandreier will review the historical lessons that must form the basis for the building of a powerful socialist movement of the working class capable of preventing the disaster of Nazism from taking place on an even greater scale today. The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges our readers to attend the upcoming meetings.

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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