

Students and workers speak on the threat of fascism at Leipzig meeting

Our reporters
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At the conclusion of Saturday's public meeting, organized by Mehring Verlag, "The lessons of the 1930s and the struggle against the extreme right," *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke with some of the students and workers who attended.

Ronja and **Silas** came to the meeting after receiving a leaflet about it from IYSSE members campaigning outside their high school. Ronja is 18 and just graduated; Silas is 16 and in Year 10. "I read the headline and decided I had to come," Ronja said. "I had informed myself in the past about Anne Frank and Victor Klemperer, who wrote a book titled *LTI*. It's about the language of the Third Reich. I am very interested about the question of how it could have gotten to this point and to these actions under the Nazis. We visited Anne Frank's house and it was very interesting, because they wrote many things about Hitler and the history. I'm very interested about events between 1920 and 1945."

Silas said he had looked at the different events at the Leipzig Book Fair and read about the presentation of Christoph Vandreier's book, *Why Are They Back?* "I decided it is very important for our generation to know about such things," he said.

Ronja said that she had begun to more seriously consider political questions in recent weeks, while participating in the "Fridays for Future" international youth protests against climate change. "I demonstrated in the street. It's good because here is a way for young people to express themselves," she said. "It's a good thought that we can change something when we are working together. The real change in the political system may happen when we grow older. There are so many teenagers who are informed."

Silas said that the two most important aspects of the presentations at the meeting were the connection

established between the growth of the far-right and capitalism, on the one hand, and the perspective of building a movement in the working class against both fascism and its source in the capitalist system.

"I thought it was very interesting that they explained that the growth of the right wing and the AFD is really going with capitalism," he said. "I didn't think about this before. I had heard before about this two percent of people who have the same amount of wealth as the bottom half of the world. But it's very interesting that it goes together with the working class, and you are explaining that actually the working class is the weapon against capitalism. I had not thought of this before."

Ronja said that "before the meeting I had not really thought about socialism and capitalism" and that "in school there is no time for such discussion." While "maybe we talk about Hitler and sometimes about 1989, there is no discussion about capitalism and socialism."

A WSWS reporter asked whether she thought it was a problem that students could not discuss such questions in school. "It is a big problem actually," she replied. "We think it's a normal system, but it isn't." She added that "capitalism is there but we don't know what the alternative is. It's important to know what goes with capitalism." Silas added, "But I see that the working class is the tool against capitalism." He said that he had never heard of the Russian Revolution before. "We have to know about this."

Hannah, who is in Ronja's grade at school and came along with her and Silas to the meeting, added to the discussion: "In school they never talk negatively about capitalism. All the difficult complex questions are never dealt with. This meeting was difficult for me to follow because I'm 18, but it's very important. I want more young people here."

Silas added: “I think it is important that we all get together and do something against capitalism. Many people say this is difficult. But in some ways I think you can say that, but not realize that it isn’t so hard. After this presentation I realized what the workers are. When I have a job I realize the influence and power that we have under capitalism. I think we all have to know what capitalism is and how we can fight against it.”

Ronja added that she wanted to know about what she and other young people could do right now. A WSWS reporter noted the speakers had stressed that the critical task was to build an international revolutionary party in the working class, which students and workers can only carry out if they study the lessons of history and the experiences of the workers’ movement. “So the international party is there for doing that, for uniting the working class,” Ronja added. “That is good. I think there will be more interest in politics and changing things.”

Judith also attended Saturday’s meeting, the first time she had participated in an event of the Socialist Equality Party. “I wanted to know how you explained the connection between the 1930s and the present day, how anti-Semitism could have come about at that time,” she said. “Before I thought I didn’t have to worry about” fascism re-emerging today, she said, “but now we have politicians like [AfD leader Alexander] Gauland, who declares in the Bundestag that the Third Reich and the Holocaust were only ‘fly shit’ in German history. It gives you a sick feeling.”

“It obviously benefits the people with the big money,” she said. “They are also willing to make money through war.”



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