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Stop censoring the opponents of war!

On Saturday, Facebook deleted a video posted by the Socialist Equality Party of Germany opposing the German government's participation in the US-led NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

The video, titled “No Third World War! Against the war in Ukraine, NATO aggression and German rearmament!” places the conflict in Ukraine in historical and political context. It was viewed by 20,000 people before being removed.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), which produced the video, wrote to Facebook to demand an explanation for its actions. The SGP has yet to receive an answer.

There is no innocent explanation for this action from a company that, earlier in the war, changed its guidelines to allow users in certain countries to publish calls for acts of violence against Russians. It is an act of political censorship directed against anyone who opposes war and militarism.

Facebook's actions expose the official narrative that the Ukraine war is about defending “Western democracy” against “Russian authoritarianism” as a propaganda lie. Indeed, the ruling class in the imperialist countries is increasingly resorting to repressive measures because it fears the growth of opposition in the working class to its murderous policy in the interest of the rich.

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The suppression of opponents of war has a long tradition in Germany. During the Franco-German war, the two workers' leaders August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht were imprisoned in December 1870 because they had demanded a peace without annexation in the Reichstag. During the First World War, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht served lengthy prison terms. Carl von Ossietzky, a prominent opponent of German militarism, was sentenced to 18 months in prison in 1932, even before Hitler took power, because he had uncovered the secret rearmament of the Reichswehr. After another six years of Nazi terror against the working class, the Nazis launched a new world war, leading to the greatest crimes in human history.

Opponents of war in Germany are now censored once again because the NATO powers are in a de facto state of war. As the censored video shows, NATO has long been a war party in Ukraine. It has deliberately provoked the reactionary Russian invasion and is continually intensifying its aggressive threats against Russia. "The Ukrainian people are being sacrificed as pawns in order to advance NATO's confrontation with Russia. This confrontation, which can quickly lead to a nuclear war, is now escalating with breathtaking intensity," the video says.

On the weekend the video was deleted, US President Biden announced a "decades" long "fight" and openly stated that the goal of American foreign policy was regime change in Russia. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz made a similar statement when he defended the tripling of the German military budget on television Sunday, saying that Germany must again be able to wage war against Russia. The rapidity with which the NATO powers are heading towards a world war is breathtaking.

The video is a thorn in the side of the ruling elite because it breaks through official propaganda and explains the real background and circumstances of the war. It shows that the main causes of the imperialist powers' war policy are the fundamental contradictions of capitalism.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the US sought to establish its global supremacy. In the countless wars in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and many other countries, any threat to US hegemony was to be eliminated, the video explained. For its part, German imperialism reacted with a return to militarism and is now eagerly arming itself. The acute danger of a Third World War is the consequence of this policy.

The video concludes that the fight against war requires a fight against its roots, capitalism. “A catastrophe can only be prevented by an international movement of the working class against capitalism,” it explains.

Such a socialist perspective against war is being banned in Germany. Anyone who opposes the ubiquitous and deafening war propaganda is to be silenced. But as always in history, such a reaction is not an expression of strength, but of weakness. The censorship of opponents of war is a desperate response to the growing opposition of the working class to warmongering.

The drive to war is exacerbating all social contradictions. Food and energy prices are already rising rapidly as a result of the war in Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia. The interruption of supply chains is resulting in temporary layoffs and redundancies in German industry. The ruling class is intensifying its ruthless “profits before life” policy in the pandemic, which has seen governments let COVID-19 run rampant, by turning to war. Such a policy is incompatible with democratic rights, which is why censorship and repression are increasing.

The tech companies collaborate intimately with the governments and the state apparatus of the major imperialist powers. Facebook alone hired more than 20,000 employees for its security and enforcement team to monitor and censor the posts on its platform. Many of them are “former intelligence and law enforcement officials,” admitted Monika Bickert, Head of Counter-Terrorism at Facebook, in January 2018.

In Germany, more than 1,000 people are employed to monitor the content on Facebook. Cooperation with the government is particularly close. With the Network Enforcement Act, the Federal Government has turned the large technology corporations into de facto Internet judges who can independently decide on the censorship of content and are even encouraged with the threat of high fines to delete more content rather than less. Hundreds of thousands of posts have already been deleted on the basis of this law.

The current censorship of the SGP’s anti-war video is directly related to the Federal Government’s attempt to criminalize the SGP and, with it, any socialist perspective.

In 2018, the Federal Ministry of the Interior included the SGP in the report of the Verfassungsschutz, Germany's secret service, for the first time and defamed the party as left-wing extremist. This move was later justified on the grounds that the SGP's "fight for a democratic, egalitarian, socialist society" and "agitation against alleged 'imperialism' and 'militarism'" were unconstitutional. The Berlin Administrative Court followed this antidemocratic line of argumentation in its first-instance ruling in December last year on a lawsuit brought by the SGP against its inclusion in the Verfassungsschutz report. Only a few months later, anti-militarist videos are already being censored.

These developments are not limited to Germany. In 2017, Google announced that it would give preference to "authoritative sources" in search results in the future. At the same time, socialist and anti-war websites, and in particular the *World Socialist Web Site*, were censored and banned from search results. Facebook tried twice last year to block pages and content of the ICFI but was forced to reverse its actions because of an outpouring of opposition.

The authoritarian and antidemocratic measures are aimed not only at the socialist perspective of the ICFI, but at every principled opponent of war. Julian Assange, a courageous journalist who has uncovered the war crimes committed by the NATO powers, is subjected to ongoing torture in Belmarsh maximum-security prison and is threatened with death if he is extradited to the US. Progressive journalist Chris Hedges, who is well known as an opponent of US-led wars and has criticized the Government-dictated narrative of the NATO-Russia conflict, reported on Monday that all episodes of his show "On Contact" on YouTube were deleted without notice or explanation.

The fight against censorship and ruthless war policies must be based on the mass opposition to a third world war. It must give a voice and a socialist perspective to the deep-seated hostility to imperialist war in the working class. We strongly urge all our readers to spread this article widely and protest on all social media channels against censorship. Use the hashtags #defendSGP, #StopCensoringSocialism, and #SpeakOutAgainstWW3 to distribute the video censored by Facebook.

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