

# Facebook snuffs out socialist pages, triggers backlash

Please make sure these dispatches reach as many readers as possible. Share with kin, friends and workmates and ask them to do likewise.



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[su\_panel background="#f1f4f6" color="#1d1919" border="3px dotted #02101f" padding="10" shadow="1px 0px 1px #eeeeee" radius="11" target="blank"]**Editor's Note:** Late last week Facebook suddenly took down Socialist Workers Party (SWP) pages in the UK, where they have long been very active, and similar pages owned by the US Social Equality Party (SEP), publisher of [wsws.org](http://wsws.org). Both organizations are Trotskyist, seen by the mainstream liberals (and rightwingers) as "far left". Although, as Marxian organizations, both formations often share analyses of major developments, they do not operate jointly in their political actions. As an independent leftist platform, our own publication sometimes reprints materials from [wsws.org](http://wsws.org), when we judge such analyses to be sound, but we do not in general share Trotskyist viewpoints about a number of important subjects, including the nature of the Soviet Union, Stalin, posture toward some international political actors (such as Iran, Syria, China, Russia, Cuba, etc.) and a variety of related strategic and tactical questions.

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In this first skirmish between Facebook and the "far left",

Facebook apparently decided to beat a quick retreat and restore the pages previously (and arbitrarily) deleted, but such "victories" should be seen as tentative at best. The ruling class in the thoroughly oligarchic and devious West is just beginning to flex its friendly fascist muscles, while perfecting censorship methods and more refined algorithms. Also, it's worth noting that in this spat something unusual occurred, some leading corporate media—The Financial Times, New York Times, etc.—actually **reported** the news about this attack on a part of the supposedly free political spectrum. (This is ironic because the same media, especially the NYTimes and WaPo, acting as shills for the Democrat/CIA wing of the ruling class, have led the charge into full censorship of "dangerous" voices using social media platforms, that is against dissenting individuals and organizations not bowing to the increasingly authoritarian "liberal center". It was after all the Democrats and their media who clamored to have top big tech executives dragged before Congress to be jawboned into more aggressive compliance with their idea of purging unwelcome speech).

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That they first moved against some obviously obnoxious rightwingers and later Trumpers—the so-called "deplorables"—is a mere hypocritical maneuver to feign "fairness" in their attempt to "cleanse" the public square of "irresponsible" voices. **Their real target has always been the real left.** The right, after all, mostly comprised of utterly confused people with a conservative temperament, is basically a natural ally for their adventures in imperialism and dedication to inherently inegalitarian capitalism. Events so far have not disproven this assumption. In the near future, as events get more out of control, and as the ruling class perfects its methods of repression once again, "repression under freedom", mind you, especially as it learns to coordinate its variegated media assets, do not expect much (or any at all) reporting by

the likes of the New York Times, Financial Times, and others on the abuses of private censors like Facebook or Google and the rest of their ilk.

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The global ruling class is currently in disarray, almost in all major centers of Western oligarchic control. In the citadel of the world hegemon itself, the US, there is a split in the ruling class that is far from healed. Trump's removal from the scene will not pacify the waters or make running the empire any easier. Tens of millions of Americans feel –with plenty of reason–that they have been abandoned by the establishment. Despite this, or precisely because of this degree of social anomie and potential disorder, the oligarchy is more determined than ever to regain full control of the official narrative. Thus, once the plutocrats complete their circling of the wagons, once the Great Reset is in motion, victims of censorship and myriad other abuses and crimes by the oligarchy will be simply invisible; the violation of their rights shrouded in abject silence or unchallenged distortion. That's why the Assange case is so important for our freedom, and the very possibility of saving this planet from further crimes and depredations at the hands of global capitalism and its tiny elite of happy beneficiaries. Welcome to Orwell 2.0.  
–Ed [/su\_panel]

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## [Facebook escalates attack on socialist left](#)

[Statement of the Socialist Equality Party](#)

a day ago

**Update 2:40 PM ET:** Due to protests opposing Facebook's purging of the accounts of the University of Michigan chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the

*company has backed down. The UM IYSSE's account has been restored, together with accounts of the administrators. Facebook has provided no explanation for its actions. Remain vigilant. This fight is not over. Further information and political analysis will be posted on the World Socialist Web Site. Please continue to circulate this statement.*

Facebook is engaged in an escalating campaign of internet censorship targeting the socialist left. Entire Facebook pages are being taken down, and individual accounts permanently disabled, without any explanation given or recourse allowed.

The latest act of censorship is Facebook's deletion of the official page of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at the University of Michigan. The IYSSE is the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). It has been an official campus student group at UM since 2007, and its Facebook account has been active since 2013.

Both the group's president and faculty advisor have had their accounts disabled, along with the accounts of six other administrators.

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This Oct. 23, 2019, file photo shows Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifying before a House Financial Services Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington. Americans should never forget it was the government itself, with the Democrats and their shills in the lead, that promoted the jawboning of Big Tech execs into compliance with a systematic approach to global censorship. The latter, seeing their own class interest in play, readily complied and eventually began to lead the charge themselves.

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Those included in the political purge by Facebook include leading members of the SEP in Michigan, where the headquarters of the party is located along with the national editorial office of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Both Genevieve Leigh, the national secretary of the IYSSE, and Niles Niemuth, the US managing editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*, have had their accounts deleted. Both are members of the national leadership of the SEP.

More information is beginning to come out of other groups targeted. Facebook has also removed pages and more than one

dozen individual accounts associated with Struggle La Lucha and the Socialist Unity Party in the US. Late last week, pages associated with the Socialist Workers Party in the UK were deleted along with the personal accounts of those moderating them. While the main page was restored, many of the pages of local branches and member accounts are still disabled.

These actions by Facebook take place in a definite political context. There is an immense and ongoing political crisis within the US state, a raging pandemic that has killed nearly 430,000 people in the United States, an extreme economic crisis, and growing anger in the working class against the entire policy of the capitalist ruling elite. The ruling class is terrified of the growth of social opposition from below.

Less than three weeks ago, US President Donald Trump incited a fascistic insurrection in Washington DC aimed at overturning the results of the election and abolishing democratic rights. The central targets of Trump's increasingly frenzied and fascistic statements over the past year have been "socialism" and "Marxism."

The Democrats, for their part, have come to office under the Biden administration calling for "unity" with the Republican Party. Biden has insisted on the need for a "strong" Republican Party and is opposed to any examination and exposure of the high-level involvement in and support for the fascistic insurrection.

On Sunday, the *Washington Post* published an article under the headline, "Capitol attack will spur broad crackdown on domestic extremists." While it refers to right-wing violence as "a disease that seems to have taken hold in the nation's nervous system," it is clear from Facebook's actions that the principal target is not the right, which, in any case, can rely on support from the state and sections of the ruling class. Under the catchall category of "domestic extremism," the attack will be focused on the left.

The aim is to decapitate socialist opposition to the extreme right. Indeed, the last posts by the IYSSE at UM prior to Facebook's actions included links to the WSWs online [meeting](#), "Where is America going? Trump's coup and the rise of fascism," and the WSWs statements, "[The pandemic and Trump's coup attempt](#)," "[Democrats plead for bipartisanship as the Republicans call for blood](#)," and "[What would have happened if Trump's fascist mob had seized hostages?](#)"

Facebook and other social media companies are not acting alone. They work closely with the state and in particular with the Democratic Party, which is extremely sensitive to and opposed to all manifestations of social opposition from below.

Beginning in 2017, the *World Socialist Web Site* has exposed and mobilized opposition to the censorship and blacklisting of left-wing and socialist views. This began with the moves by Google to change its search algorithms to promote "authoritative content" and demote "alternative views." Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google's parent company, Alphabet, has [admitted](#) that the *World Socialist Web Site* was specifically targeted.

Google's actions were followed by a series of measures by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit and other social media platforms blocking access to and censoring socialist views.

Now, under conditions of unprecedented crisis, the ruling class is escalating its censorship campaign. It is significant that the IYSSE page and SEP leaders first targeted by Facebook are in Michigan, where the SEP and WSWs have a significant influence in the working class. Last March, as the pandemic was beginning its massive spread in the US, autoworkers in Michigan launched wildcat walkouts against being forced to continue working under unsafe conditions.

Articles and statements published by the WSWs calling for a walkout were read by tens of thousands of workers, primarily

through Facebook.

The drive toward censorship can be reversed only through the broadest mobilization of opposition among workers, young people and progressive intellectuals and journalists!

The Socialist Equality Party calls for everyone reading this statement to take the following actions:

1. Send statements demanding an immediate reversal of Facebook's actions to [info@support.facebook.com](mailto:info@support.facebook.com) and [zuckerberg@fb.com](mailto:zuckerberg@fb.com). Send copies of your letters to [comments@wsws.org](mailto:comments@wsws.org) for publication on the *World Socialist Web Site*.

2. Share this statement as widely as possible with your friends and co-workers and on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and other platforms. Include the hashtag **#StopCensoringSocialism**.

3. [Send to the WSWs](#) any information that you have on the censorship of left-wing individuals and publications by Facebook or other social media companies so that we can publicize and oppose these attacks.

**NB: All captions by the editors, not the authors, except where expressly noted.**

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### Addendum

Below, an instance of mainstream journalism we may see less and less of as times goes by. [The Financial Times](#) decides to publicize the arbitrary censorship of socialist organizations by Facebook. The story was picked up by other outlets, such as Business Insider, etc.

# Facebook sparks anger after shutting socialist pages Platform blames 'automation error' after outcry over suspensions

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Facebook has faced intensifying questions about its content moderation policies in the aftermath of the 2020 US election

© REUTERS Jan 25, 2021

**Siddharth Venkataramakrishnan in London and Hannah Murphy in San Francisco**

Facebook said it had mistakenly removed a number of far-left political accounts, citing an "automation error", triggering uproar from socialists who accused the social media platform of censorship. Last week, the social media company took down a cluster of groups, pages and individuals involved in socialist politics without explanation.

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These included the Socialist Workers party and its student wing, the Socialist Worker Student Society in the UK, as well as the International Youth and Students for Social Equality chapter at the University of Michigan and the page of Genevieve Leigh, national secretary of the IYSSE in the US. A Facebook spokesperson said on Monday that it had "restored the Socialist Workers party Facebook Page and several accounts after an automation error", adding: "We apologise for the error."

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Facebook did not respond to requests to clarify how the error had occurred and why it had affected the personal accounts of socialist figures as well as larger groups. But the abrupt

removals spawned accusations of bias against leftwing voices by the social media company, with activists alleging a pattern of deliberate efforts to undermine their voices. The SWP, whose page was shut down on Friday [Jan. 22] and restored the same day after a backlash on social media, said that Facebook had previously shut down accounts belonging to its activists in “error” last December. “They don’t even provide means by which you can recover [the account],” said David North, who chairs the editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site. “It’s like the police storming in and seizing everything in your house.” Niles Niemuth, the site’s managing editor who ran as the US Socialist Equality party’s vice-presidential candidate in 2016, was among the accounts that were suspended and later reinstated.

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The snafu raises questions about Facebook’s enforcement of its content moderation policies, which critics have described as ad hoc and haphazard. In the wake of the US Capitol riots, civil rights groups [read: liberals/Democrats egging Facebook to be more aggressive in implementing censorship] have accused the platform of repeated failures to curb the spread of misinformation about electoral fraud and incitement to violence despite pledges to do otherwise. On January 11 it announced that it would remove all content containing the phrase “stop the steal” – the slogan used by conservatives alleging that Democrats rigged the election – as an “emergency measure”.

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Facebook Inc Facebook ‘Supreme Court’ to review Trump ban  
Facebook has typically faced accusations of anti-conservative bias, most recently after suspending former US president Donald Trump’s account “indefinitely” following the attempted insurrection by his supporters, amid fears that he could use it to incite further violence. The company’s newly formed

independent oversight board is due to review the decision in its first big test. The exact number of those affected by the latest incident remains unclear, said Mr North. Accounts including the IYSSE at the University of Michigan, a registered student body, were suspended until Monday, and only restored after the Financial Times flagged the situation to Facebook. "Even though this particular ban has been [reversed], it's a warning we don't know what might come next," he added. "Social media . . . is privately owned but to all intents and purposes it's [become] what used to be the market square," said Chris Marsden, national secretary of the Socialist Equality party in the UK. "They're using their power in a way that's completely undemocratic."

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And its multitude of minions and lackeys.

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