

Facebook censors WSWs article exposing Wuhan lab conspiracy theory

The WSWs Editorial Board
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Since Wednesday afternoon, Facebook has blocked its users from sharing the *World Socialist Web Site* Perspective column, “Washington Post’s ‘Wuhan Lab’ conspiracy theory stands exposed.”

The censorship began less than 12 hours after the article was initially posted. At the time Facebook intervened, the article had been viewed 1,500 times.

Multiple readers confirmed that upon attempting to share the article, they received a message saying “no one else can see your post” because Facebook does not “allow false information that has been repeatedly debunked,” implying that the article contains “misinformation about COVID-19.” Some readers reported that immediately upon sharing the article, their Facebook accounts were suspended for three and, in some cases, seven days.

Absolutely nothing in the WSWs article was wrong, false or misleading. The article in question was based on the position of the World Health Organization, which has excluded investigation of a non-natural origin of COVID-19 on the grounds that there is no evidence to support the claim.

The WSWs article called attention to the backhanded concession by the *Post* in its February 22 editorial, which admitted that, despite the newspaper’s previous declarations that the man-made origins of the disease are a “plausible scenario,” no evidence has been made public to support this claim and called on the US government to release any information it has.

Given that the article is fully in compliance with Facebook’s community guidelines, what motivated this act of censorship? There are two intersecting explanations.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there was direct communication between the *Washington Post* and Facebook. The *Post* was no doubt angered by the

exposure of its embarrassing climb-down.

But it is not just a matter of *Washington Post* owner Jeff Bezos’ wounded ego. The WSWs article undermined a narrative that is central to the foreign and domestic policy interests of the American ruling class: the claim that Beijing is to blame for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WSWs statement exposed very clearly, on the basis of an analysis of the *Washington Post* editorial itself, the fraudulent character of the Wuhan Lab narrative, a propaganda lie that is central to the campaign against China. The Biden administration has continued to push this lie that was promoted aggressively by Trump.

The irony is that the WSWs is being accused of precisely what we exposed, that is, false claims about the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. In stereotypical Orwellian fashion, the exposure of lies leads to charges of lying.

Throughout history, war has always been accompanied by both lies and censorship. The United States has made clear that its primary military objective is to prepare for “great-power conflict,” in particular with Russia and China, which implies the need to control and suppress any information that interferes with war-making operations.

Since 2016, a far-advanced regime of government censorship has been put into place in the United States. This censorship program is enforced by corporations like Google, Facebook and Twitter. But the impetus for the censorship regime comes from the highest levels of the state, using powerful technology to eviscerate what remains of First Amendment rights.

Facebook employs tens of thousands of people in its content moderation department. Speaking at a US Senate hearing in January 2018, Facebook’s

counterterrorism head Monica Bickert bragged that the company has hired tens of thousands of content moderators, many with military, intelligence or police backgrounds. She noted that Facebook boasts “a dedicated counterterrorism team” of “former intelligence and law-enforcement officials.”

The intersection of the military/intelligence apparatus and corporations is so complete that it is impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends.

The censorship regime is staggering in scale and capability. At the press of a button, any exposure of US militarism can be removed from circulation on the Internet. As soon as the state identifies an article, fact or statement it finds inconvenient, it sends instructions to Facebook and Google to suppress it. As Facebook’s censorship demonstrates, action is to be taken not only against those who publish the material, but also those who read and distribute it.

Every act of censorship lays the groundwork for the next, creating the conditions for the suppression not just of social media, but of websites, email and other direct forms of communication. The threat is to all socialist, left-wing and progressive organizations, and there must be a common struggle to oppose it.

The most critical issue is to mobilize support in the working class, which, in the final analysis, is the central target of the attack. Access to information about COVID-19 is a matter of life and death. The working class needs to know the truth so it can arm itself in defense of workers’ lives.

The exposure of military propaganda is likewise a life-and-death issue. The US war in Iraq, which led to the deaths of more than one million people, was justified and prepared on the basis of lies. A war with China would have vastly more catastrophic consequences.

Facebook’s decision to censor the WSWS article debunking Washington’s false narrative on the origins of COVID-19 is a warning of just how far-reaching these war preparations are.



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