

Readers protest against the closure of Mehring Verlag's bank account

Mehring Verlag
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In an act of political censorship, Postbank, which is owned by Deutsche Bank, terminated the accounts of Mehring Verlag and its managing director Wolfgang Zimmermann over a month ago. As Mehring Verlag, the German-language publishing house of the *World Socialist Web Site*, states, the closure is aimed at sabotaging its work and obstructing the distribution of its books.

Workers, academics and many other readers have expressed outrage at the censorship in protest emails and statements, declaring their solidarity with the publishing house.

The bank has provided no reason for this arbitrary harassment and, despite the protest, remains silent. In a reply to the Mehring Verlag, it wrote: "You are dissatisfied and cannot understand why we issued the termination. Now you are requesting an explanation from us." The "explanation" in the letter consists of refusing to provide one, citing the terms and conditions: "We are not obliged to provide a justification for our decision. We ask for your understanding."

This brazen and undemocratic action by Deutsche Bank, targeting left-wing opponents of war, underscores the urgent need to build a socialist movement to abolish the entire criminal and parasitic system of finance capitalism. As reader Doug N. wrote in a protest email to the bank: "You provide yet another argument for the nationalisation of the banks."

The *World Socialist Web Site* and Mehring Verlag are calling for a political counteroffensive in response to the attack by Deutsche Bank: to make Mehring books widely known and to provide financial support to the publishing house. Visit the campaign page for more information.

Below we publish some of the many statements of solidarity and protest emails sent by our readers.

Historian **Prof. Dr. Mario Käßler**, who taught at the University of Potsdam until 2021 and researches the history of the workers' movement and antisemitism, stated in an email to Deutsche Bank: "I hereby join the—hopefully numerous—protests against the termination of Mehring Verlag's bank account by your institution."

He continued: "The mere fact that Mehring Verlag preserves the legacy of many persecuted under Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union (starting, but not ending, with Trotsky) should prompt you to reconsider your decision."

The historian and writer **Dr. Alexander Bahar**, who has published works on the background to the 1933 Reichstag fire, likewise called for the termination to be rescinded:

"Mehring Verlag is the most important publisher of the writings of the Russian Marxist and revolutionary Leon Trotsky in Germany. It has not only published Trotsky's fundamental work on the history of the Russian Revolution, but also his brilliant analysis of the crimes of Stalinism and his still relevant writings on the rise of National Socialism [Nazism] in Germany. Other major works by Trotsky and leading Marxists of the twentieth century, as well as many books on current political issues, have also been published by Mehring Verlag. In this way, the publishing house

performs important political educational work."

He stressed that banks are increasingly closing the accounts of journalists and media outlets that express criticism of the government without giving reasons, and referred to the criticism by the authors' association PEN International:

This body "expressed deep concern about any measures that undermine press freedom, including the closure of bank accounts of independent media companies and freelance journalists. It considers the arbitrary closure of bank accounts of media companies and journalists as a form of indirect censorship and a serious encroachment on press freedom. By restricting access to essential financial services, independent voices are silenced and public access to diverse perspectives and the right to informed discourse are stifled."

Max, a nurse from Nuremberg who has joined the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party) and is active in the rank-and-file Action Committee Health/Care for better working conditions in healthcare, stated:

"We must not allow this important vehicle of revolutionary theory and history to be silenced. Mehring Verlag makes revolutionary literature and up-to-date analysis accessible to workers, students and all those who wish to actively oppose capitalism and imperialism. For that reason, solidarity with the publishing house is a duty for all of us."

Marc L. from Canada asked: "Is the bank also closing the accounts of fascists and war profiteers? I doubt it. But it closes the accounts of people who take a principled and justified stance against war and exploitation. One might think banks are not political institutions—but you have just proven that they are."

Jacob Z. explained that democracy lives "from an open discourse of different opinions and viewpoints, most of which, of course, do not have to be one's own. Silencing a critical voice is a blow to the fundamental idea of democracy."

Similarly, reader **Daniel S.** criticised the account closure as contradicting "not only the principles of a free and democratic society, but also the principles of economic neutrality."

In her protest email, **Katharina S.**, a nursery teacher from Berlin, emphasised the importance of access to Mehring Verlag's literature for the general public: "I and everyone else in our society have the right to remain informed about political and historical events independently of state censorship."

Paul M. from the United Kingdom wrote: "There seems to be no other reason for this action than authoritarian pressure from the far right, driven by fear of the growing movement of resistance and opposition to a system responsible for endless inequality and wars across the globe, including the escalating conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. As a European citizen who believes in free expression—and more importantly in the right to access historical and theoretical books from trusted and respected publishers such as Mehring Verlag—I urge you to reverse this unfair decision without delay."

Robert L. from the United States drew attention to ominous parallels with the Nazi era: “In my youth I wanted to believe that Germany’s Nazi past was a nightmare that a new generation was determined to erase. Today it is quite obvious that there are still those who look back on that past with nostalgia and are resorting to the most brazen, unscrupulous methods to deceive the broad, peace-loving public and to harass a publisher of books and ideas.”

Hanne L., a worker from Berlin, recounted her own experience after the fall of the former East Germany (GDR). She witnessed “that money is the most effective means of pressure to intimidate political opponents, force them to capitulate or eliminate competitors. That must not be tolerated.”

Andy Niklaus, a bus driver and executive committee member of the SGP, warned of a “dangerous precedent for restricting critical and independent publishing in Germany” and underlined the importance of Mehring Verlag: “It is the most important publishing house in the German-speaking world that publishes the writings of the Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky, who led the Left Opposition’s struggle against Stalinism.”

Petra K. protested “in the strongest possible terms” against the account closure: “Deutsche Bank is thereby making itself a willing tool of political censorship in this country! The aim is to cut off socialist and broadly left-wing criticism of social injustice, militarisation, war, capitalism and social devastation from financial support. [...] Mehring Verlag is a respected, serious and critical publisher whose existence you seek to destroy. But you will not succeed!”

Several readers referred to specific books published by Mehring Verlag that had influenced them and which they recommend for reading:

According to **Françoise T.**, Mehring’s books help “expose the constant lies, defend historical and political truth, and raise the cultural and intellectual level, which has been degraded by the abysmal state of today’s society.”

Harald B., a historian from Duisburg and regular reader of the WSWS, wrote in his message of solidarity:

“Mehring Verlag is for me a unique source of social science literature dealing from a Marxist perspective with the international revolutionary workers’ movement. The arbitrary closure of its account by Deutsche Bank can only be regarded as censorship. This bank of the ruling class, which in the Nazi era financed the barbarism of dictatorship and war, is today once again an instrument to try to break the growing mass movement against genocide in Palestine and a renewed imperialist war of plunder. But I am convinced it is in vain! Publications by revolutionary socialists from more than a hundred years are stirring the consciousness of the masses, the publishing house is being supported and will continue its work.”

He had always visited Mehring Verlag’s bookstall at events of the Trotskyist movement and especially recommended the book *The Logic of Zionism* by David North. The collected speeches on the history of Israel and Palestine demonstrate the necessity of uniting the international working class:

“‘Workers of the world, unite!’ was never a populist slogan of Marxism, even in the early European revolutions, but was based on a fundamental socio-political and historical analysis of international class struggles. Workers—especially in the era of globalisation—have a common task: to overthrow the murderous bourgeois rule not only in the Middle East but throughout the entire planet; to overcome Zionism and—necessarily—every concept of the nation-state. It is the mystical nation-state, not socialism, that has become utopian!”

Jakob S. criticised the account closure as a “dangerous infringement on freedom of opinion and publication” and emphasised: “Through the books of David North, especially *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century*, I have gained a deep understanding of Russian and European history. These books have greatly expanded and completed my background knowledge—especially in areas neglected or excluded from

school education. They uncover historical connections essential to understanding our world today and offer a perspective for liberating human society from its perpetual crises and wars.”

Kevin, an IT worker in Bavaria, sent the following statement:

“Mehring Verlag is absolutely indispensable to me. It publishes the crucial books that helped me see the world as it truly is—not as it is distorted daily by politicians, the media, and so-called ‘left’ parties.

“David North’s *The Logic of Zionism* opened my eyes to the fact that the massacres in Gaza are not a ‘conflict’ but the outcome of a deeply reactionary, nationalist project closely bound to Western imperialism. His book *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990 – 2016* made clear how the United States has carved a trail of devastation from Iraq to Ukraine since the fall of the USSR—not through ‘mistakes,’ but because it is the logic of imperialism. And Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution* was perhaps the most impressive book I have ever read. It shows how masses of workers and the oppressed, once conscious, can transform society.

“A decisive step away from petty-bourgeois, pseudo-left thinking and towards a Marxist understanding came for me with North’s *The Frankfurt School, Postmodernism and the Politics of the Pseudo-Left*. This book opened my eyes to the hypocrisy of the Greens and other supposedly ‘progressive’ forces who only defend capitalism in new packaging. This critique was philosophically and politically important to me, as it helped me finally dispel all the illusions one tends to adopt when identifying as ‘left-wing.’

“That is why I condemn in the strongest terms the attack by Deutsche Bank and Postbank on Mehring Verlag. It shows how afraid the ruling elite is that workers and young people will read the truth about their decaying system. I hope that many more people will take these books in hand. They are more than just texts—they are weapons in the fight for a socialist future.”

Kim, a mechanic in Norway, wrote: “Not every political group that calls itself left or socialist really fights for a revolution towards an international workers’ state. The book *The Heritage We Defend* by David North, published by Mehring, enlightened me about the history of the workers’ movement and the struggle of the Fourth International to uphold the true programme of socialism against all distortions.”

Moritz, an IT worker, wrote: “Mehring Verlag offers many worthwhile books on the history of the workers’ movement. Many of the backgrounds to historical events important to the working class would have remained unknown to me had these books not been published.” For him, Christoph Vandreier’s *Why Are They Back?* was especially important, as it sheds light on the rightward shift of the ruling class and its representatives in the state.

“Because of the legacy of Stalinism, the term ‘socialism’ is still equated today with the oppression of the working class in the GDR, and this hinders the development of an international socialist perspective. I therefore also recommend the book *The GDR—Forty Years of Stalinism* by Wolfgang Weber, which clarifies the nature of the GDR and the background to the oppression of the working class there.”

From the perspective of **Tom Schrödl**, a tram driver and SGP member in Munich, Mehring Verlag “is the only publishing house that truly represents the continuity of Marxism, by publishing the history and writings of the International Committee of the Fourth International, volumes by Trotsky and other key leaders of the international workers’ movement, as well as texts on Stalinism and its betrayal of the working class.”

He recommended the book *In Defence of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky, which deals with an important debate within the Socialist Workers Party in the United States following the Hitler-Stalin Pact. “In this book, Trotsky explains what materialist dialectics is” and why the Soviet Union remained a degenerated workers’ state whose achievements—such as the

nationalisation of the means of production following the October Revolution—must be defended. It is the task of the working class to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy through a political revolution.”

Isabel R., also an SGP member, wrote: “The population has the right to acquire and read the works of Leon Trotsky and the Marxist movement. Mehring Verlag is known and respected for its high-quality new editions and contemporary political and cultural publications. This attack is intended to block the spread of socialist ideas and the study of the history of the workers’ movement, which so many are now intensely interested in.

“The German people, young and old, have not forgotten the crimes of the Nazis against the Jews, other ethnic minorities, the oppressed and dissidents, especially socialists. The wealth of Deutsche Bank was built on these crimes. And the German government, which already supports the genocide in Gaza and defends the attack on Iran, is now tripling the military budget to wage new imperialist wars.

“I am convinced that in the country of Karl Marx’s birth, such anti-socialist, arbitrary censorship will provoke a strong response.”

She calls not only for the restoration of the accounts but also for “a full explanation of the background to this measure. Who gave the order to close the accounts? Was the intelligence service or another authority involved? I will inform those around me of this attack, because it is ultimately directed against all who oppose social inequality and war. Anyone who shares this view should do the same and support Mehring Verlag in every possible way.”



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