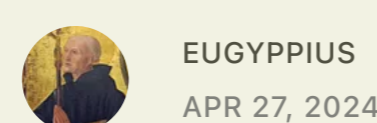




# Leading German politician calls for the state to issue "revocable social media licenses" for the privilege of commenting online

If only speech were not a right but a privilege granted selectively by the state, our democratic freedoms would be that much more secure.



EUGYPPIUS  
APR 27, 2024

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You may remember this man. His name is Mario Voigt, and he is the head of the centre-right CDU in Thüringen. He made national headlines a few weeks ago for grievously threatening German democracy by agreeing to debate his AfD counterpart Björn Höcke on national television. Because the AfD in general and Höcke in particular are antidemocratic fascists, allowing them anywhere near a microphone is very likely to destroy our entire system of government, that is what a weak and failed state we have here in Germany.

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The duel between our leading Thuringian politicians was all but unwatchable, as indeed almost all political debates turn out to be. While Höcke could've acquitted himself better, Voigt's performance was flat, uninspired and profoundly banal. Among other things, the man suffers from a peculiar rodentine aspect; he bites his way stiffly through bland preformulated arguments like a squirrel chewing a stale nut or a beaver gnawing through saplings. After the event, the CDU took to the press to declare victory, but polls showed that viewers found Höcke on balance more persuasive, which is of course the real reason that everybody told Voigt to avoid the confrontation. Voigt is intensely democratic and therefore extremely right about everything, but somehow – and this is very awkward to discuss – his being eminently righteous and correct in all things does not manifest in an ability to defeat the very wrong and evil arguments of his opponents. It's very weird how that works, perhaps somebody should look into it.

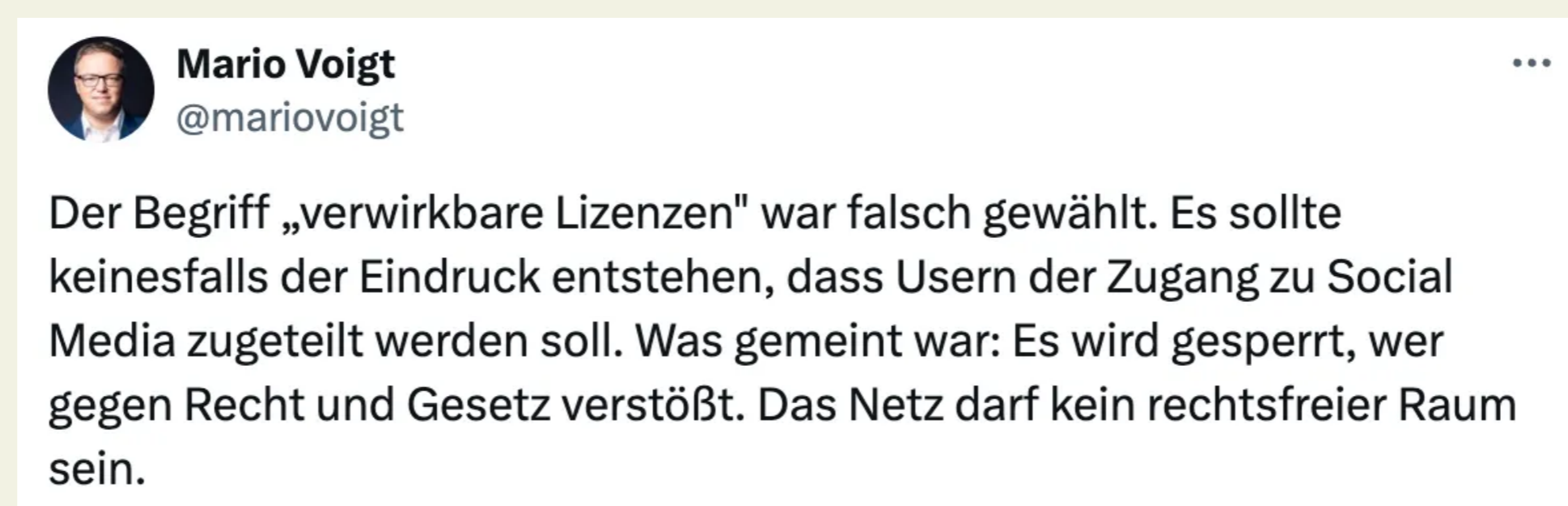
Stung by this failure, Voigt has set off to find other means of defending democracy. This week, in the Thüringen state parliament, he gave an amazing speech outlining a five-point plan to protect German democracy from that other great menace, the free and open internet:

- So how do we protect democracy in the area of social media? There are five approaches:
  - Ideally, we should agree to ban bots and to make the use of fake profiles a criminal offence.
  - There is also the matter of **requiring people to use their real names, because freedom of expression should not be hidden behind pseudonyms.**
  - Then there's **the question of whether we should create revocable social media licences for every user**, so that dangerous people have no place online.
  - We need to consider how we can regulate algorithms so that we can revitalise the diversity of opinions in social networks.
  - And we also have to improve media skills.

For all that Björn Höcke is supposed to be a "populist authoritarian" opposed to representative government, I've never heard him say anything this crazy. Voigt, meanwhile, is a leading politician for the officially "democratic" Christian Democratic Union (you know they are democratic because the word is in their name), and he's actually dreaming of requiring Germans to obtain state-issued licenses for permission to post their thoughts to the internet.

Because Voigt's regulatory regime would entirely abolish online "freedom of expression," it is unclear how banning bots and pseudonymity could ever defend it. Generally speaking, for a thing to be defended, it must first exist. Equally curious is Voigt's belief that any "diversity of opinion" will survive his social media license scheme to benefit from the regulation of social media algorithms.

Voigt's remarks provoked a massive uproar, and the man betook himself to Twitter for a brief moment of damage control:



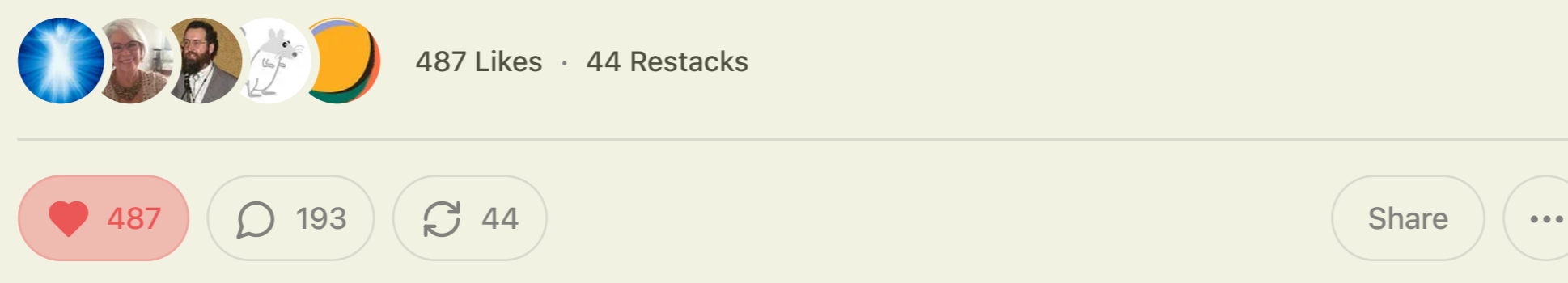
The term "revocable licences" was incorrectly chosen. It was not intended to give the impression that the state should allocate access to social media to users. What was meant was that anyone who violates the law will be banned. The internet must not be a realm free of law.

What a sad duplicitous man, who crawls around fantasising about ever more draconian repressions to eradicate opinions he doesn't like, and when he is caught out pretends it was a mere slip of the tongue and that he meant almost the opposite of what he originally said.

As I noted in February, the German Interior Ministry has declared war on the political opposition, announcing wide-ranging plans to restrict the speech, travel and economic activity of anyone deemed to be on "the extreme right," which is just a slur for anyone whose politics the establishment doesn't like. While this campaign has provoked sharp opposition both abroad and here in Germany, it seems to have shifted the terms of debate, bringing even more repressive schemes into the realm of contemplation. Voigt is too dim to have come up with his social media licensing plan all on his own. These are ideas being cooked up in back rooms by unholy swarms of think-tankers and lobbyists, determined to find a means of finally freeing German democracy from the inconvenient opinions of German voters.

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**Accipiter** Apr 27 ♥ Liked by eugypius

It is the absolute right of the State to supervise the formation of public opinion.

Joseph Goebbels

Goebbels would feel perfectly at home today, as democracy is replaced by legions of jobsworths with control in our best interests as their raison d'être.

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**Blair** Darkness to Light Apr 27 ♥ Liked by eugypius

Looks like they're trying really, really hard to "save democracy!"

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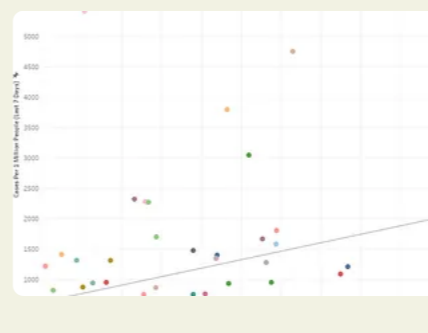
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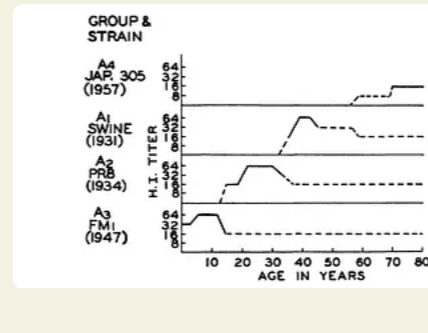
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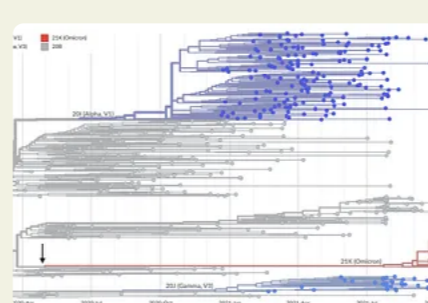
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