Mark Zuckerberg Doesn’t Seem Very Sorry or Very Forgiven

Zuckerberg, but notably not Sheryl Sandberg, has at last addressed the Cambridge Analytica scandal but failed to quell the furor.

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After days of deafening silence over the Cambridge Analytica scandal that compromised the personal data of 50 million people, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg issued a lengthy post notable for containing no version of the words “sorry” or “apologize.”

You won’t find those words in his lengthy New York Times Q&A, either, but in an interview with *Recode* Zuckerberg finally let slip the S-word.

“I think we let the community down, and I feel really bad and I’m sorry about that,” he said.

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Zuckerberg, but notably not yet Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, is finally addressing that latest and loudest development in the long-unfolding story of Facebook’s role in spreading inflammatory misinformation during the 2016 election. Much of what Zuckerberg has to say is about deflecting blame — in this specific incident back on to Cambridge Analytica for misappropriating data and allegedly lying about having destroyed it — and fending off demands that he testify before Congress, telling *Recode* he is “open to doing it” if he is the “right [person]” to do so.

Congress seems confident he is.

“This isn’t going to cut it,” David Cicilline, a Democratic U.S. representative from Rhode Island, said in a Facebook post responding to the CEO’s statement. “Mark Zuckerberg needs to testify before Congress.”

Related: Read Mark Zuckerberg’s Full Statement on Facebook’s Data Scandal

Similar exasperation was voiced by lawmakers in both the U.K. and the EU which, unlike the U.S., both have strong data protections written into law, and neither Zuckerberg nor Facebook could be much comforted by media reaction to him finally speaking up. A searing *Bloomberg* article accused Facebook of “playing the victim’’ while *Politico* pointedly headlined “Zuckerberg and Sandberg lean out,’’ speculating the Cambridge Analytica scandal could put an end to the notion of either Zuckerberg or Sandberg running for president.

Facebook, like the tech industry as a whole, has been lightly regulated for years in the U.S., but Zuckerberg, in perhaps his most newsworthy comment on the Cambridge Analytica fallout, said he is not uniformly opposed to regulation. “I’m actually not sure we shouldn’t be regulated,” he told CNN. “I think the question more is what is the right regulation rather than should we be regulated.”

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Largely overshadowed by Zuckerberg’s whirlwind semi-apology tour was the overwhelming passage in the Senate of a bill to hold websites, such as the notorious Backpages.com, liable for promoting sex trafficking. The legislation had been fought by the internet trade groups on the grounds of it peeling back the “safe harbor’’ provision of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which Backpages used successfully to avoid prosecution.

Paul Gallant, an analyst at Cowen, told *The New York Times* the legislation is “cracking the door open to broader platform liability for other types of content. Today it’s sex trafficking and down the road, it’s content from foreign governments.”

Whatever comes next, it seems the fallout from the 2016 election includes a fall from grace for Facebook, the behemoth of social media. In a searing article on *Vox* bluntly titled “The Case Against Facebook,” writer Matthew Yglesias compares Facebook to alcohol and cigarettes for the harm its product does, adding that Facebook’s “core function makes people lonely and sad.’’

“The good news,” he wrote, “is that the executives have already made a lot of money and the workers have valuable, in-demand job skills. You could shut the whole thing down tomorrow and everyone would be fine.”

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