

Does the WSWS write about Leon Trotsky? Not according to Google

By Joseph Kishore
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The *World Socialist Web Site* is published by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement. Since the launching of the WSWS in February 1998, the site has posted thousands of articles that reference Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the October Revolution and the founder of the Fourth International.

WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North is the author of *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*. Other prominent members of the international editorial board of the WSWS—Nick Beams and James Cogan in Australia, Chris Marsden in Britain, Peter Schwarz and Ulrich Rippert in Germany, Keith Jones in Canada and Wije Dias in Sri Lanka have been active in the Trotskyist movement for decades. All are well-known authorities on Trotskyist history and politics.

This year, the ICFI is marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution. It has posted throughout this year a historical chronology, *This Week in the Russian Revolution*, that has referenced Trotsky in every installment. The series has been extremely popular with readers. For example, according to Facebook, the May 29-June 4 video for the Chronology has been accessed more than 21,000 times, which has driven thousands of readers to the WSWS.

Between March and May, the ICFI held a series of on-line lectures on the history of the revolution, in which the role of Leon Trotsky was a major area of concentration. The lectures attracted a large audience on both Facebook and YouTube. According to the figures recorded by Facebook, the first lecture by David North, delivered on March 13, has been viewed 6,300 times. Another video posted initially in March, in which North previewed the ICFI's lecture series, has been viewed more than 120,000 times.

We cite these figures—and could reference many more—not to boast, but, rather, to establish that the speeches and writings of the ICFI, which are posted on the *World Socialist Web Site*, are very widely followed. To a politically knowledgeable audience, Trotskyism and the *World Socialist Web Site* are synonymous.

And yet, following Google's implementation of its new censorship algorithm, the *World Socialist Web Site* began disappearing from search results, even when users sought information on Trotsky.

In the month of July, the number of Google searches for "Leon Trotsky" return a grand total of ... *zero* impressions for the WSWS, down from 5,893 in May.

In preparing this article, we searched Google for "Who is Leon Trotsky." We conducted this experiment with Chrome, Google's browser, using "incognito mode," to ensure that results were not affected by previous searches. The search term was used without quotation marks.

All manner of right-wing essays and articles come up. The first page includes an essay posted on rbth.com (Russia Beyond the Headlines, put out by the Russian government), "Leon Trotsky: 6 facts about the disgraced Russian revolutionary."

On page three, there is an entry from Edgar's Mission Farm Sanctuary about Leon Trotsky... the piglet, an animal rescued by the farm in Australia in April 2014, who, we are informed, "has more spunk than most who are ten times his size." There is also an article in *Slate*, published in 2007, warning readers, "Don't idealize Leon Trotsky" (the revolutionary), and an entry in the right-wing Conservapedia.

Page four includes a Leon Trotsky flashcard from Quizlet, notes from TVTropes.com, and a reactionary and ignorant entry from the satirical Uncyclopedia informing its readers that Trotsky's greatest legacy is

“his philosophy of permanent factionalism and split-hair revolutionary dialectics.”

Going deeper, on page six, we find pages that collect “Leon Trotsky GIFs” and an essay, “Frida’s Red Hot Lover” from an obscure site, Lisa’s History Room, that, according to Alexa, has global ranking of 1,078,957 (compared to the WSWS at 40,677). Also on page six is an essay on Trotsky and Orwell’s book *Animal Farm*, written by a high school student and published on Prezi.com.

By page 10, we encounter a recipe for a cocktail called the “Leon Trotsky” and a page on lyrics.com on songs containing the term “Leon Trotsky.” On page 12, there is a review of historian Joshua Rubenstein’s biography of Trotsky by the reactionary historian Richard Pipes, published in Tablet in 2011 under the headline, “Trotsky the Jew,” which complains that Rubenstein “obscures the Russian revolutionary’s violent extremism.” There is also a document from the CIA’s website, “Leon Trotsky, Dupe of the NKVD.”

It is not until page 13 that there is any entry from the WSWS, the reposting of Trotsky’s essay, “Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution.” Of course, by this point, most Google searchers, overloaded with rubbish, would have stopped scanning the results.

In April, when Google announced its new policies targeting “fake news,” it claimed that the purpose was to “provide people with access to relevant information from the most reliable sources available,” and “help surface more authoritative pages and demote low-quality content.”

In Google-speak, “authoritative” means “acceptable to the authorities.” As our own experimental search clearly shows, Google searches for “Leon Trotsky” leads to many pages that are reactionary, anti-communist, anti-Semitic, slanderous and nonsensical. But the site that has far more “authoritative” and relevant material than any other on the Internet, the *World Socialist Web Site*, is the one site that cannot be found.

This can only be explained by the fact that Google’s new “guidelines” are intended to demote and blacklist the WSWS. Let the naïve believe that this is merely the outcome of an unintended technical glitch.

Join the fight against Google’s censorship. Contact the ICFI to become involved. Donate to the WSWS to help us fight the suppression of free speech.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>