

Letters from our readers

18 May 2007

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “A response to ‘Two New York City transit workers killed in less than a week’”

Thank you for that most engaging portrait of a man, a man of his times who dedicated his life to inspiring and sharing of a gift that bestowed the greatness of that which he comprised. I too am a fellow track worker and good friend who had the pleasure of not only working on and off the job with Marvin, but also having been captured on canvas in watercolor by this true genius. Yes, he will be eternally missed...

Thanks again,

MJ

12 May 2007

On “Leon Trotsky and the post-Soviet school of historical falsification: A review of two Trotsky biographies by Geoffrey Swain and Ian Thatcher”

I’ve just spent the weekend reading David North’s excellent four-part review of recent historical work on Trotsky and wish to commend him for making this material available to those of us who are not able to hear him personally—for reasons of distance. It is first-class analysis of the type unavailable in most media outlets.

If Winston Churchill once attempted “to strangle the Bolshevik babe in its cradle,” his later successors are now trying to erase entirely the alternative legacy of Trotsky. The Soviet Union has collapsed, Stalin (for most of us except Swain and Thatcher) is completely tarnished, and “Communism is (supposedly) dead.” But the radical heritage of Trotsky lives on and is still a threat to the establishment. So it must be subject to the same type of “falsification” Stalin pioneered, a technique still used by the spin-doctors of the American Democratic and Republican Parties, as well as New Labour (which is “Stalinist” in all but name with its antidemocratic, bureaucratic oppressive machinery).

As North states, it “is characteristic of unscrupulous

and bad scholarship to conceal or disregard historical evidence that runs counter to one’s argument,” but this is what historical revisionism, conservative academic practices, and the contemporary establishment does today. He also recognizes that this is all part of an historical counterrevolution and his reference to the ideological role of profanity definitely rings a bell today. As Trotsky says, “Civility and politeness is a necessary lubricant in daily relations.” But many wish this very progressive well to run dry for reasons that need not be stated here.

Rather than these two disreputable books, David North’s essay should be circulated to students. He has recognized a key political crisis linked with the predominance “of truly reactionary modes of thought, associated with post-modernism, which repudiate the very concept of objective truth.” This four-part essay is just one of the many achievements of WSWS in promoting objective history, the value of culture, and a much needed alternative to the state of things that exist today.

TW

14 May 2007

David North has produced a grave indictment of Thatcher and Swain. There is certainly a case for them to answer. Whether they will answer these charges is doubtful; I suspect that academic charlatanry goes hand in hand with moral cowardice. It is also testimony to the abysmal state of intellectual life in universities that they have not been hauled over the coals for producing such shoddy pieces of work, riddled with outright falsehoods, half-baked suppositions and baseless assertions.

Whether their opinion of Trotsky is good or bad is not the issue here, but rather whether they have conducted their research properly, cross-checked references and assiduously uncovered all available evidence in their quest for the truth. However, it is clear that Thatcher and Swain have about as much regard for the truth as

Stalin. Surely, if an undergraduate student had to hand in such a poor piece of work, he or she would receive a zero.

EG

14 May 2007

On “Top federal student loan official in US resigns amid controversy”

I just wanted to thank you for reporting this student loan scandal. It is very disheartening. One wonders whether the refusal to raise the Pell Grants on the part of the Democrats and Republicans was due to intense lobbying by loan companies and banks, whose interest is in keeping everyone in debt from birth to grave. Also the sharing of debt information obtained by the government is scandalous. The same thing is happening with Medicare and social security. It is especially grievous how it affects young people. No end in sight.

JR

13 May 2007

On “Emily Carr: Painter, writer ... symbol”

Thank you for your sensitive and perceptive comments about Emily Carr. I used to work as a tour guide at her birthplace in Victoria, and I too have felt that the overemphasis on her stature as a Canadian icon has created a backlash in which the value of her art and work have been derided; in your article you were able to describe the limitations of her perceptions while recognizing her basic humanity and worth as an artist.

KV

North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

17 May 2007



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