

# Letters from our readers

21 November 2009

*On "In The Service of Historical Falsification: A Review of Robert Service's Trotsky"*

Thank you very much for this wonderful book review. It highlights the sorry state that has befallen much of academia with regards to scholarly integrity. It seems that most modern biographies must be contrarian as a point of principle, and when there is no real basis for this then personnel attacks are the method by which it is carried out.

It brings to mind a quote about Trotsky by Bernard Shaw that Isaac Deutscher mentions in *The Prophet Armed*: "When he cuts off his opponent's head, he holds it up to show that there are no brains in it; but he spares his victim's private character...He leaves [his victim] without a rag of political credit; but he leaves his honour intact."

It would appear as Robert Service cannot show Trotsky to have a lack of brains he must attack his private character. Fortunately it says more about Service's lack of honour than Trotsky's.

David C  
19 November 2009  
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After reading David North's devastating critique of Robert Service's abominable *Trotsky*—noting in particular the lack of any references in this historically false and calumnious attack on the great revolutionary to any of Trotsky's writings on a vast range of subjects with penetrating insights and clarity and displaying a breadth of knowledge far surpassing that of recent poseurs in the wasteland that now passes for academia—I went back to Isaac Deutscher's *The Prophet Unarmed* and found this statement by Deutscher in the Preface:

"Access to untapped sources has, I think, enabled me to give either wholly or partly new versions of many crucial events and episodes. The relations between Lenin and Trotsky in Lenin's last years; the vicissitudes of the subsequent struggles; the relations between Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and other leaders; the formation and the defeat of the various anti-Stalinist oppositions; the events of Trotsky's first year of exile near the Soviet-Chinese frontier, especially the divisions which had already appeared in the Trotskyist Opposition, foreshadowing its collapse many years before the Moscow trials—nearly all of these are narrated or interpreted in the light of some hitherto unknown facts. *I have also, as in the previous volume, paid special attention to Trotsky the man of letters and devoted many pages to his views on science, literature, and the arts, in particular to his work as Russia's leading literary critic in the early 1920s. That work, remarkable for the largeness of his views and his clear-sighted rejection of any party tutelage over science and art, has also a special relevance to the present situation:* such progress in these fields as was achieved in the Soviet Union during the post-

Stalinist 'thaw' went in the direction of Trotsky's ideas, although it will probably still be a long time before views as undogmatic and bold as his make their appearance again in the Soviet Union." [Emphasis added.]

Nothing could further demonstrate the difference between the work of a true historian (Deutscher) with an opprobrious charlatan such as Service.

Carolyn Z  
California, USA  
19 November 2009

*On "Denial of breast cancer screenings will have deadly consequences"*

The risks outweigh the benefits? Are they kidding? I'm gobsmacked. How do the powers that be reconcile the increase in breast cancer diagnosis with better and earlier screening tools? Useless coincidence? Unbelievable. I know of 5 women who, thanks to their baseline mammograms under the age of 45 were diagnosed early and successfully treated. In four of the cases, cancer was not noted in their family history. Are they a collective anomaly?

Simone S  
Toronto, Canada  
18 November 2009

*On "Cancer and class"*

This is a tremendous article of great importance. My ex-girlfriend was only 39 years old when I helped her discover a 7 cm lump in her left breast (the same bogus report cited in the article also called self examinations "useless"). Fortunately, access to good health care (through her union plan in the school district in which she taught) saved her life. Thanks to new "genetically targeted" therapies, she remains cancer free some seven years later. Annual mammograms have been an essential part of her post-cancer treatment regimen. We need more good science and medicine, *not* a rationing of needed care.

Ernie M  
California, USA  
19 November 2009  
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Caution is in order in connection with this perspective.

It may seem as if the recommendation by a US government panel that women under the age of 50 not undergo annual mammogram screenings is a form of discriminatory cost-cutting that will result in more or more serious cancer. However, there are confounding variables here that need to be considered.

The existing recommendation for such screening at age 40 may have been nothing more than a profit-driven scheme in the first place. More tests equaled more reimbursement charges, paid for by both public and private reimbursers. Plus, early screening was never really shown to have resulted in either less cancer or less serious cases. What is

worse is evidence now emerging that mammograms are unsafe in the first place and should be used less frequently, not more so.

Consider this quote:

“High-risk women for breast cancer, who are subject to periodical mammograms, have increased chances of developing the disease...”  
source: bio-medicine.org

Assessment of impact on profit and determination of payor-identity remain the key factors in determining the real motivation for any and all medical pronouncements in the US healthcare system. This caution applies equally well to mammograms for women and to prostate cancer screening for men, both of which may do more harm than good.

Jerry L  
19 November 2009

On “*Once again: The New York Times and Obama’s attack on health care*”

You tell ‘em, Kate! One grows tired of being appalled day after day and thinks that the fawning media—represented by the *New York Times*—can’t become any more disgusting. Then we hear them cheerleading for the screwers of the working class. Their arrogance and isolation from the lives of the majority of the population (that word “unbridled” reveals everything) demonstrates such a lack of humanity, such coarseness, that all they need are powdered wigs, knee breeches and spots on their faces to reincarnate the pale worms of the *ancien regime*.

One has always known that the rich are, indeed, different. There was a time when they attempted to disguise their contempt for the rest of the human race, either out of fear of reprisal or in order to view themselves in a better light. This pretense has been dispensed with and the vermin are casting aside the rocks under which they have hidden for so long and showing us their shiny, slimy, wriggling selves.

How much longer will it take for the working people of this country to reach for insecticide?

Carolyn  
California, USA  
17 November 2009  
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Thanks greatly, that was news to me.

I must be missing something obvious, but why is there this marked “We’ll throw any amount of pills at you, but we’d rather be dead than do diagnostic tests.”? I’ve noticed it for a long time and wondered about it. Suspect it is fundamentally important, and not just cost cutting; after all it does not, in general, cut costs.

Thanks again for the highly thought provoking article.

Lugo T  
19 November 2009

On “*This Week in History: November 16-22*”

It is certainly a progressive move to include This Week in History as a permanent rubrique, to follow the Perspective. Historical perspective is essential to a socialist view of the world. Congratulations!

The last item on the Zelaya ouster, 100 years ago, could well be the headlines today, which validates the Marxian axiom that history repeats itself, first as a tragedy, and then as a farce!

Mirek  
Australia  
17 November 2009  
On “*An evaluation of Roman Polanski as an artist—Part 1*”

Not only the best thing I’ve read here on Polanski, but also the best thing I’ve read here on art. Kudos.

Nick P  
18 November 2009  
On “*Students and school pupils protest across Germany*”

Teachers, textbooks, buildings, transportation, plumbers, and all kinds of other expenses exist in the educational system, and seeing as many of the workers in Germany are unionized, it’s very expensive. The reason Germany has so many engineers and artists and quality teachers and college graduates is because Germany no longer has massive stockpiles of military hardware and is not running bases in nearly every country of the world. This, however, is changing. The right-wing, pro-war industrialists and war-profiteers have been in hiding for quite some time, but they’re slowly emerging from their dens and the coming escalation of the Af-Pak-Iraq Big Oil Grab is giving them a foot in the door. It won’t be long until Germany is once again pouring billions into war and closing schools, shutting daycare centers, slashing public transportation, and cutting holes in the social safety net. In order to “protect” the people of Germany, they must be impoverished. That’s the way it is, and that’s the way it must be. Nobody ever got rich at 5 percent interest running a daycare center or health clinic.

PK  
19 November 2009



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