

Letters on “The American Historical Review discredits Robert Service’s biography of Leon Trotsky”

30 June 2011

Dear WSWS,

Thank you for the piece on the American Historical Review. I read Professor Bertrand Patenaude’s combined review of Robert Service’s *Trotsky* (2009) and David North’s *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* (2010).

As an academic, I confess that I was not initially prepared for the frankness of Patenaude’s exposure of Service, and I commend the Stanford University professor for this and his objective assessment of North.

The prose style most academic journals employ does, indeed, tend to be “cautious and restrained,” and journal editors, in my experience, are usually nervous about direct honesty. The truth hurts.

The *American Historical Review* has a review policy to “delete passages that are, in our judgment, ad hominem attacks on an author, including unsubstantiated or libelous allegations of plagiarism.”

But the policy continues: “However, we also accept the responsibility of publishing responsible charges of misappropriated scholarship,” that is, charges of wrong and dishonest academic writing.

This says a lot about Patenaude’s book review—it is a “responsible” work that warns professional scholars that Robert Service has “misappropriated” the facts about the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky.

I agree fully with how the WSWS sums things up: “bad historian [. . .] Service.”

Sincerely,

AD

Dear David North & the WSWS Editorial Board,

In an age where the politically astute constantly, vigilantly and tirelessly have to uphold the truth, defend his or her position, protect him or herself from slander and disrespect, guard his or her human dignity, fight for basic survival, suffer the consequences of bravely standing for what appears most natural and obvious, then the vindication of David North’s honest treatise on Leon Trotsky should come as sweet reward to us all. I congratulate David on his courageous, meticulous work. Be assured that your efforts are admired around the globe and that they, ultimately, defend the interests of the great majority of humanity. Robert Service should be exposed for what he really is, a defender of lies, tyranny, oppression and the subjugation of the most vulnerable by some of the most repressive social forces ever known to humankind. I urge the WSWS to make the findings of the *American Historical Review* known to all academia and public organs across the UK and elsewhere; after all, it is the duty of socialists always to stand for, embrace, and expose the truth. A Luta Continua!

CWK

South Africa

Very happy to read this. I thought that the academia would never discredit Service.

Thushara



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