

Letters from our readers

18 February 2014

On "Appearance of Robert Service in Berlin ends in fiasco"

There is no question anymore that Robert Service is a junk scholar, a pure hack and an ideologue. This Jörg Baberowski, too, is an obvious madman, a dangerous tyrant. These people are not academics.

Yes, "lies, falsifications, intimidation and oppression" sums it all up. I am very sorry Mr. David North had to endure violent insults and threats. Prof. Mario Kessler also should not have been banned.

On Baberowski's claim that Hitler was not a psychopath, I strongly recommend Erich Fromm's "Malignant Aggression: Adolf Hitler, a Clinical Case of Necrophilia" in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*.

Awerawet

14 February 2014

On "Nine questions for Robert Service"

"...more interested in spreading world revolution than in defending the country's interests"

This is a popular fallacy maintained by Right-wingers who have never actually read Trotsky's own words. A relevant counter-point to this is shown by Trotsky's speech of December 7, 1925, reproduced in the booklet *Women and the Family*. In there he discusses reports of infant mortality figures which had recently been compiled.

While emphasizing a need to be cautious and not run after good reports blindly, he attaches strong importance to the indications that the USSR had already accomplished a notable reduction in infant mortality as compared with Czarist Russia. The tone in this speech is not one of boastful self-praise, the way that later Soviet propaganda often was, or the way that Hitler's speeches in the 1933-6 period typically were. Instead Trotsky emphasizes that such an accomplishment as a reduction in infant mortality must be treated very seriously to make sure that the successes are real and continue. This is not the tone of a

speech which one would expect to find if guessing based upon Service's description of Trotsky's outlook. That one speech delivered to the 3rd All-Union Conference on Protection of Mothers and Children reveals more about Trotsky's real outlook than the entire book by Service does.

Patrick M

11 February 2014

On "Reddit forum blacklists WSWS"

This is frightening news, especially for reddit, which prides itself as a paragon of free speech on the Internet. Reading the post announcing the decision—which has been "unstickied" meaning that it no longer is given prominence on r/socialism—it's obvious that this decision was politically motivated. Little to no explanation is given, and only three cases—Polanski, Allen, and Assange—are ever cited, despite some redditors claiming that there are "years" of examples. Instead, the epithet "brocialist" (meaning a misogynistic erstwhile socialist) is tossed around.

Even redditors from political tendencies that are generally hostile to the WSWS seem to oppose this ban! (This includes practically the entire Anarchism subreddit.) It only appears to be a small clique that support the band, consisting of one moderator, at least one purposefully antagonistic poster, and a handful of identity-politics-oriented posters.

I am not sure how reddit's appellation process functions, but I would like to call on WSWS-sympathizing redditors to appeal this blacklist to moderators other than "GOVERNMENT," who seems keen on shutting down discussion on it altogether.

Josh

New York

11 February 2014

On "Heroin use at historic highs in Chicago area"

I think this article hits the nail on the head. It also raises the question: what incentive does a heroin addict have to get clean in the first place, considering the

bleakness of present conditions? Given the monumentally difficult task ahead of the addict who actually wants to quit and tries desperately to do so, with relapse rates in the stratosphere statistically for those who don't use maintenance/replacement medications (Methadone, Buprenorphine), the road ahead for the heroin addict whose heart is not really in getting clean is not just rocky, it's pretty much impassable.

I say this not with a sense of despair, but rather to confront the reality of what heroin is and what it does--how it changes--the brain and its chemistry. To put it simply, once one becomes addicted to the drug, one is addicted for life. The best, safest, and frankly, most realistic scenario to help addicts is to decriminalize the drug, make it available in a clinical setting with clean needles and medical supervision where people can administer what they need--without dangerous cuts and impurities--free of charge, with the option of free counseling and job training/placement.

We need to eliminate the stigma of heroin addiction. There is a difference between someone receiving a dose sufficient to avoid physical withdrawal and to satisfy cravings without impairing abilities, and a recreational dose to take a vacation from reality for a few hours. With relapse rates of over 90 percent within the first year for those who detox in rehab and then try to simply live without the drug, it is not clear to me what other options are available that realistically speak to the problem.

Adam C

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12 February 2014



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