

David North responds to Wall Street Journal's interview with Robert Service

David North
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The Wall Street Journal has posted online and published in its March 12 print edition the following letter from David North, chairperson of the international editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site.

The letter is headlined: "How Robert Service Earned the Ire of Trotskyists Like Me: His attack on the Soviet revolutionary doesn't stand up to scrutiny."

Tunku Varadarajan writes that Robert Service's biography of Leon Trotsky "attracted the ire of die-hard Trotskyites world-wide for saying that their hero shared many basic ideas with Lenin and Stalin on the 'one-party, one ideology terror state.'" (*The Weekend Interview with Robert Service*, March 5).

I am the author of "In Defense of Leon Trotsky," the book Mr. Varadarajan seems to reference. Prof. Service's biography provoked "ire" because it was an exercise in vicious character assassination, built upon blatant falsifications of historical facts. This is not only my assessment. Prof. Bertrand Patenaude, a specialist in Russian-Soviet history at Stanford, wrote as follows in the June 2011 edition of the *American Historical Review*:

"North calls Service's biography a 'piece of hack-work'. Strong words but entirely justified. Harvard University Press has placed its imprimatur upon a book that fails to meet the basic standards of historical scholarship."

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