

John Reed--Revolutionist

By SAM DARCY.

There is a difference between a worker who deserts his class and becomes a lackey of the ruling class, and one of the ruling class who aligns himself with the cause of the workers; for in the former case the individual sells his soul for reactionary aims and in the latter case the individual aligns himself with historical progress.

Pohn Reed Lives Forever.

History gives many examples of both types. But those who serve reaction have sunk into inglorious oblivion and today we know little of them. But to those who have aligned themselves with the oppressed and who often because of superior education and training have become leaders of the oppressed, to those we feel grateful for having served our cause, the cause of posterity and we therefore keep their names alive.

John Reed was one of these. Though a graduate of Harvard and classed among the bluest of the Blue Blood, he yet had enough vision and enough courage to break from his surroundings and join the revolutionary proletarian movement. It is true he belonged to the intelligenzia but then he was distinguished from the rest of the intelligenzia in that he really had intelligence and not merely a veneer with which to hide stupidity.

Goes to Mexico.

In 1914 he was in Mexico, almost immediately after he left the university, officially reporting the revolutionary events there, but actually studying them and feeling a deep sympathy which he coupled with a critical understanding of the revolutionary movement which was then agitating all of Mexico, and which was being utilized by a military clique for their own purposes. He wrote a book on his findings there called "Insurgent Mexico." In discussing what he characterized as the "opportunist, reformist, and self-seeking bourgeois character" of the leadership of the Revolutionary Army, he recognized the weakness of the Mexican revolution.

Reed's cause in Mexico was as one who knows Reed would expect, the cause of the peon. And all through his activity in Mexico just one vein of thought ran through his mind, his writings and his activity; namely, how best to utilize the events that were taking place for the freeing of the peon from the economic and political bondage with which he was so heavily burdened. Thus he denounced the so-called revolutionary generals of the time, for he despaired of their military and nationalist narrowness. He bitterly complains, in his book, that "during all the time I talked with them (Carranza, and the other generals) I never detected one gleam of sympathy for, or understanding of, the peons."

Scored Bourgeois Honors.

Then the war broke out. John Reed who was already back in the United States joined the revolutionary movement. He had been working for a bourgeois newspaper in New York but he used his income and his major energies for the revolutionary movement. The bourgeoisie acknowledged that he was a brilliant writer and certainly one of the greatest war correspondents that ever lived. They offered him every honor (honor as they saw it) but this meant nothing to Reed whose only conception of honor was honor in the service of the revolutionary proletariat. "The Masses," the "Liberator," the organ of the left wing of the socialist party, the left wing and the Communist Party themselves all are witness to the activities

of John Reed. He was no "outsider" in the revolutionary movement. In the bitterest factional struggle, in the days immediately after the Russian revolution when there was no clarity in our movement, John Reed was as closely involved in every fight as was the most hard-boiled worker. Many of us who were in the left wing, in the Communist Labor Party, etc., will undoubtedly remember the athletic hulk of John Reed, which had given him football fame in exclusive Harvard, pulling his trousers up and tightening his belt in preparation to delivering a broadside against one or another faction within the Communist movement.

We do not pretend that he was a theoretician. His revolutionary spirit was born out of a deep sympathy for the oppressed but because he was not a theoretician we cannot afford to under-estimate the role he played in our movement. Today, we lead the workers' struggle in the clear light of the teachings of Marx and Lenin but it was not always so. Many a revolutionary figure who has played a noble role and has made sacrifices which have emblazoned his name forever in history did not understand fully the class forces at work in a particular historic era or the relation of that era to other eras and the developing forces in their influence and in their results. Thus we must understand John Reed for what he was, a noble, fearless fighter whose healthy instincts made him fight with the workers and against capitalism and who did not hesitate to pay any price necessary to carry that struggle to a successful end.

Made Revolution Live In Words.

The revolutionary events in Russia would not let him rest in the United States, and it was not long before he passed through the blockade and entered the First Workers' Republic. The stories of his adventures from America to the scene of the Russian revolution as told both by himself and many others who participated would in themselves make a book and must be found elsewhere than in the space of this article. However, after he landed in Russia, his activity on behalf of the revolution was without limit. He was among its publicists, writing to the workers of the world, the wonderful story of the revolution as he saw it through his youthful eyes unhampered by traditional conservative ideas. He was among its best fighters helping to organize revolutionary regiments both of foreigners and Russians in order to go to the front and fight in defense of the revolution. He was one of the best symbols of the Russian revolution in that he helped to complete the international character of that world-shaking event. And possibly, greatest of all he was one of those who organized the revolutionary forces against the counter-revolution among the workers and peasants in those heroic struggles against the blockade, counter-revolution and economic break-down. He travelled through all of Russia in this work.

Brought Workers' Message to U. S.

In a series of articles that he wrote for the "Liberator" in the middle of 1920 he tells of the suffering and sacrifice of the Russians who were working with him. Throughout his articles it seemed never to have occurred to him that he was going through these struggles with the same heroism that he was crediting to the Russian masses. In one of these articles he says:

"And when I was done saluting them in the name of the American revolutionists (in a meeting of vil-

lagers), a gaunt youth leaped to his feet and cried passionately: 'From the workers of Serpukov, take this word to our brothers in America. For three years the Russian workers have been bleeding and dying for the revolution and not our own revolution but the world revolution. Tell our American comrades that we listen day and night for the sound of their footsteps coming to our aid. But tell them, too, that no matter how long it may take them we shall hold firm. Never shall the Russian workers give up their revolution. We die for socialism, which perhaps, we shall never see.'"

The eloquence of this spirit could only be communicated to America through such as John Reed for he was one of the few whose pen was gifted with the fluid of fire.

Gave Life for Revolution.

It was while he was carrying on this work that he fell sick with typhus. At first he disregarded his ill health and counted on his splendid physical frame to resist this dread disease. But his frame had lost its early health in the severe days of revolutionary struggle, and he succumbed among those others of his Russian comrades who had contracted the same disease in the same struggle. Finally, on October 17th, 1920 he died.

The Russian workers knew him for his work and they deeply felt the loss of him. They buried him with the honors they gave only to the most beloved of the revolutionary dead. And now, underneath the great Kremlin Wall he lies in close proximity to the graves of the dead of the October Revolution, the great Mausoleum where Lenin lies and beneath the niche that Comrade Ruthenberg has won within the Kremlin Wall itself.

A Heroic Figure.

John Reed has made a great contribution not only to the Russian and World Revolutions but most particularly to the American Revolution, for John Reed is a great example to the American youth. Let none scoff at his lack of clarity on some of the teachings of Marx and Lenin for his revolutionary work is a powerful light that pales into insignificance the vaporings of those who only pretend to know. A real Marxist-Leninist will appreciate the true greatness of John Reed's contribution. Let us therefore all remember him for what he was and hold him aloft as one of those heroic figures which the struggling revolutionary proletariat of the United States will in historic perspective learn to love and honor for what he gave to our cause.

Lenin Flats Are Best in London's Working Class Section of City

LONDON, Aug. 29.—The Bethnal Green Borough Council has just built a block of flats that is called the Lenin Estate. The rents range from \$2.75 to \$5.75 a week including electricity.

In contrast to the old broken down tenements that surround it, the building stands out most conspicuously. It is claimed by many that they are the finest and most modern flats in London's east side.

There are 32 apartments which flank the sides of a quarrangle. Each has a separate entrance and all are two three bedroom type, with complete modern equipment. Artistic dresser and cabinets are built in. There is a generous supply of hot water.

THINK OF THE SUSTAINING FUND AT EVERY MEETING!