

Introduction

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Two days after John Reed died in a Moscow hospital with his wife, Louise Bryant, at his side, the *New York Times* began his obituary in this way, “John Reed, magazine writer, died yesterday in Moscow, Russia, of typhus, according to a telegram received here by Henry G. Reed, a brother, from Louise Bryant, Reed’s widow.”¹ Reed was three days short of his thirty-third birthday. His postcollege life from 1910 to 1920 was a decade of extraordinary, even frenetic, activity that found Reed in Mexico, labor strikes, World War I, and of course, the Russian Revolution. His adult life was consumed by some of the most dramatic events of his age. A century later, he is best known for his dramatic and energetic account of the Russian Revolution of 1917, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919). Of all the American accounts of the Russian Revolution, Reed’s work is among the most detailed, and in contrast to others has remained consistently in print since its first publication. Reed’s life before he arrived in Russia in September 1917 made it seem as if this last and most significant episode was a natural climax.

John Silas Reed was born on October 20, 1887, in Portland, Oregon into a family of significant wealth that stood among Portland’s elite. Reed’s maternal grandfather, Henry Green, was an early settler of Portland and made his fortune on the frontier. Reed’s father, Charles Reed, was not as successful, but his marriage into the Green family brought both status and money for his sons, John and Henry. He would later be appointed by Theodore Roosevelt as a US Marshall to help defeat Oregon land fraud. Jack, as John was known, grew up in comfortable surroundings. He enjoyed the outdoors, though as a child he was often ill at home, where he spent much of his time discovering his love of literature. Stories of fantasy and adventure captured the imagination of the young Reed and would have a profound influence on the rest of his life.²

Reed’s last two years of high school were spent at a boarding school in Morristown, New Jersey in preparation for attending Harvard University. In Portland Reed had not been a very serious student. He was known for playing youthful pranks, which continued during his time in New Jersey. He played football and joined the swim

¹ “John Reed Dies in Russia,” *New York Times*, October 19, 1920, 11.

² Robert A. Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 7–15; Eric Homburger, *John Reed* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), 7–13; John Reed, “Almost Thirty,” *New Republic* 86 (April 15, 1936): 267–70.

team, but his ill health kept him from excelling. Because of his family connections and writing ability, he was admitted to Harvard on his second try, in the fall of 1906. Even though he came from Portland's elite, he was not well received by the moneyed East Coast students who dominated Harvard University. Reed had a rough first year, continuing many of his childhood antics, but he eventually began writing for the student publications *Lampoon* and *Monthly*. During his four years at Harvard, he grew increasingly irritated with how the elites treated him and other classmates from different backgrounds. He used the pages of these publications to mock the social structure at Harvard.³

While at Harvard, Reed was heavily influenced by one of his professors, Charles Townsend Copeland, who taught English Literature. Copeland not only taught Reed about literature and writing but also took the young and lonely student under his wing and became a mentor and friend. He recognized Reed's talent early on and gave him confidence in his writing. Copeland also explained to Reed the complicated world of Harvard social circles. In an attempt to raise his social standing, Reed later joined the Dramatic and Cosmopolitan clubs, but the move did not work as he had hoped. He also befriended classmate Walter Lippmann, who was a co-founder of the Socialist Club. At the time, socialism was gaining popularity nationwide. Socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs received nearly 7 percent of the vote in the 1908 election which proved to be the high water mark for a Socialist candidate. Though Reed was a friend of Lippmann's, he never joined the Socialist Club. He was more concerned with writing and increasing his social standing than with larger Socialist issues.⁴

When Reed graduated from Harvard in 1910, he had earned no honors, but he had found his vocation in life—poetry. Being a bit uncertain of what he would do next, and with the encouragement of his father and Copeland, he took a tour of England, Spain, and France. Along the way, he had many adventures, wrote about several of them for multiple publications, and took stock of what he wanted to do next with his life. In March 1911, he settled in New York to write poetry and engage in journalism with the help of his father's friend Lincoln Steffens. Reed lived the "Bohemian" life of New York, where he dabbled in Progressive politics, muckraker journalism, and the free love of the era. From 1911 to 1913, he wrote for several magazines, including *American Magazine*, but did most of his work for *The Masses*. It was during this era that he observed two significant labor strikes. In 1912, he reported on the Lawrence, Massachusetts which shocked the country with news of the mill owners' use of starvation wages. In 1913, he spent several weeks in Paterson, New Jersey where he was arrested, spent four days in jail, learned about the plight of immigrant workers, and began to see clearly the inequalities inherent in the American industrial capitalist system. Reed's time in Paterson had a huge impact on him. Soon afterward he organized a large "pageant of labor" in Madison Square Garden in

³ Granville Hicks, *John Reed: The Making of a Revolutionary* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), 16–23; John Reed, *The Education of John Reed*, ed. John Stuart (New York: International Publishers, 1955), 7–10.

⁴ Homberger, *John Reed*, 17–25; Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 36–50.

New York City. Labor activists and friends from the Village applauded Reed's efforts at illuminating their labor issues, but they were most impressed with the theatrical nature of the presentation.⁵

While planning the pageant, Reed became involved in a tempestuous affair with Mabel Dodge, a prominent socialite in Greenwich Village who often hosted a wide array of activists in her apartment and who was eight years his senior. Most of Reed's biographers depict their relationship as one in which Dodge was emotionally manipulative of the younger man—constantly needing him but also disapproving of his behavior,⁶ in particular his freer lifestyle. Reed's intensely on again off again relationship with Dodge left him with mixed feelings about relationships and marriage.

However, in the fall of 1913, Reed's life took a sudden turn. Carl Hovey, a former student of Copeland's at Harvard and the managing editor of the *Metropolitan*, asked Reed to go to Mexico to report on the developing revolution there. The Mexican Revolution had begun in 1910, and by 1913 had reached the American border near El Paso, Texas. Within a few days, Reed was in El Paso ready to cross into Mexico border to report on the movements of rebel leader Pancho Villa. By Christmas of 1913, Reed was traveling with Villa. Villa did not especially trust Reed or other journalists, but allowed Reed to travel with him for several weeks. Reed looked upon Villa's cause as a romantic revolutionary story. He found Villa extremely optimistic and embraced the idea of freedom for the common people of Mexico. This concept increasingly appealed to Reed but put him in direct conflict with the administration of President Woodrow Wilson, who thought Villa was a dangerous leader and even sent US soldiers into Mexico to intervene in the revolution.⁷

Reed sent back articles that were published in the *Metropolitan* and *The Masses* and gained notoriety for their detail and acumen. His access to Villa provided a perspective that other journalists were unable to give. After a few months in Mexico, Reed returned and published a book-length description of his adventures called *Insurgent Mexico: With Pancho Villa in the Mexican Revolution* (1914). Walter Lippmann, John Dos Passos, and Rudyard Kipling praised Reed's sketches of revolutionary life and claimed that Reed's prose brought Mexico to life for people who had never visited the country. However, later historians who analyzed Reed's text discovered that his chronology and historical accuracy were not terribly consistent. Reed, being more of a poet than a prose writer, employed his romantic nature to create a vivid and sweeping picture of his time with Villa.⁸

⁵ Richard O'Connor and Dale L. Walker, *The Lost Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1967), 70–85; Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 99–116.

⁶ Hicks, *John Reed*, 91–108; Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 134–48.

⁷ Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 149–65; Homberger, *John Reed*, 58–80.

⁸ John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico: With Pancho Villa in the Mexican Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1914); Jim Tuck, *Pancho Villa and John Reed: Two Faces of Romantic Revolution* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984), 104–10.

Arriving back in the United States in April 1914, Reed immediately encountered another serious labor strike in which the common people were suffering at the hand of corporations. Mining strikes in Colorado had reached a fever pitch, resulting in a massacre of coal miners in and around Ludlow, Colorado. Reed and notable labor activists like Mother Jones traveled to Colorado to protest the mining company's brutal exploitation of the workers. Reed established a connection with the laborers similar to the one he had with the ordinary Mexican people, and his articles in *Metropolitan* and *The Masses* reflected this relationship. The year 1914, though, proved to have still more adventures in store for him.⁹

After visiting Portland and New York, Reed left for Italy in the late summer of 1914. He joined Dodge, who had set out ahead of him, and the two tried to rekindle their romance as they traveled across Europe at the onset of World War I; the relationship failed to reignite as the war heated up. Reed became frustrated with his failure to gain access to battlefronts and ordinary soldiers on the French Front. He lamented the severe restrictions placed on journalists by all sides in the war. In early 1915, Dodge returned to the United States, causing Reed's life in Europe to spin out of control. He spent several months drinking heavily, engaging in numerous sexual affairs, and leading a life of debauchery. Friends who visited him in Europe saw that he was becoming more and more erratic. Friends back in the US, including Dodge, expressed growing concern. In addition, during his time in Europe Reed constantly battled health issues. As a child, he had suffered various illnesses that often kept him at home, and as an adult, he had a recurring issue with one of his kidneys that was often inflamed.¹⁰ After his return to the US, Reed temporarily reconciled with Dodge and wrote several articles on World War I for *Metropolitan* and *The Masses*. Reed's experiences led him to conclude that the war was a battle between companies for profit; it was not a war in which the United States needed to engage. Much to his disappointment, however, many Socialist groups in England and the United States were working on behalf of the war effort.¹¹

After just a few months in the United States, Reed took on another assignment from *The Masses* to report on the war from the Eastern Front. He was sent to Serbia with Canadian artist Boardman Robinson, who was tasked with sketching the war as Reed reported it. Their travels led them through war-torn Serbia and later through Romania and Bulgaria. Reed and Robinson eventually determined that they would need to travel to Russia to see what was actually going on in the war. They applied for permits to travel to Russia, but none were being issued, so, the pair snuck into Russia, only to be arrested and detained as spies. The American ambassador was unsympathetic to their plight, but the British ambassador helped secure their release. Reed and Robinson eventually ended up in Bucharest; however, all of their notes

⁹ Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 170–79; Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 10–15, 211–18.

¹⁰ Homberger, *John Reed*, 75–100; Hicks, *John Reed*, 148–70.

¹¹ Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 195–200.

and sketches had been confiscated. They spent several weeks trying to recreate what they had seen along the way, an effort that resulted in the book *The War in Eastern Europe*, published in the spring of 1916. In their movements in and out of Russia, Reed witnessed firsthand the deplorable conditions to which Jews were subjected in the Pale of Settlement. Reed knew of the poor living conditions of Eastern European immigrants, including Jews, in New York, but the conditions in the Pale were far worse. Even though he came from a prominent family and was a Harvard graduate, he never looked down on any of the people he encountered, from working-class laborers in the United States and commoners in Mexico to the Jews in Eastern Europe.¹²

After his return to the United States, he visited his home in Portland and met Louise Bryant; they soon began dating. In 1916 he returned to New York with Bryant to continue his writing endeavors. Reed and Bryant did not have an exclusive relationship, adhering to the Bohemian lifestyle of the time. Both became friends with writer Eugene O'Neill, and the three lived in a cottage in Provincetown, Massachusetts during the summer of 1916. Much to Reed's dismay, Bryant and O'Neill had a brief affair. Reed covered the presidential campaign and supported Wilson, hoping he would keep the US out of the war. In the fall of 1916, Reed and Bryant married. In November 1916, Reed had a kidney removed, which required more than a month of recovery. In early 1917, he felt as though the country was moving toward war, a war he did not believe in. When Wilson declared war in April 1917, Reed felt betrayed. He declared, "This is not my war, and I will not support it. This is not my war, and I will have nothing to do with it."¹³ By this point, his radical views had severed his relationship with *Metropolitan*, which had taken a prowar stance. *The Masses* continued to publish his articles as they became more and more stridently antiwar. However, *The Masses* was in jeopardy of being shut down due to a lack of funding, harassment by the US government, and distribution problems. By the summer of 1917, it was clear to Reed that he needed to be in Russia. Based on his first experience in Russia and the February Revolution of 1917, Reed was certain that Russia was the center of social change and revolution. Reed and Bryant set sail for Petrograd on August 17, 1917.

As the couple left the United States for a defining adventure in Russia, Reed felt totally disconnected and disgusted by American society. He had lost most of his publication outlets because of his strident antiwar stance. Many of the publications in which he had once seen his work appear found themselves under greater scrutiny and harassment by the US government. They were systematically being silenced under new wartime laws. Reed felt betrayed by Wilson's leading the US into the war, and he saw that the Progressivism he had once thought could be the radical change America needed was now indeed dead. Even more worrisome to Reed, though, were the many American Socialists who began taking up a prowar position. His despair

¹² O'Connor and Walker, *Lost Revolutionary*, 119–40; Hicks, *John Reed*, 183–200; John Reed, *The War in Eastern Europe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916).

¹³ Quoted in Homberger, *John Reed*, 122.

was lightened only by the idea of traveling to the center of the action in Russia, the place he thought was experiencing the radical change the whole world needed.¹⁴

Reed and Bryant departed on the *United States* and arrived in Petrograd on September 10, 1917. Some wealthy leftists in the United States financed their trip, and Reed was granted journalist credentials by the small Socialist paper *New York Call*. Since Reed had been in Petrograd briefly two years earlier, he noticed the increasing dilapidation of the city, though he found the situation to be relatively quiet, contrary to the rumors of chaos. Once Reed and Bryant settled in a hotel, they met other foreign journalists who were covering the revolutionary activity. The couple became friends with two other American journalists, Bessie Beatty and Albert Rhys Williams. Beatty, reporting for the *San Francisco Bulletin*, had been in Russia since June and was sympathetic to the revolution. Williams, reporting for the *New York Daily Herald*, had also been in the country since June, seen many of the key events unfold, and was supportive of the Bolsheviks. He and Reed had known each other for a bit in New York but did not run in the same circles due to Williams's religious background. During the first few weeks, Williams brought Reed up to speed on the events of the summer, including the Root Mission, July Days, and the Kornilov Affair, events that seemed to define the direction of the revolution. Williams, Bryant, and Reed were all under scrutiny by the US government while in Russia. All three, and Beatty to a lesser degree, were considered by the government to be dangerous subversives. This judgment was based in part on articles they had published indicating that a further revolution by the Bolsheviks was imminent, contradicting official US confidence in Russia's democratic future and commitment to staying in the war.¹⁵

Reed, Bryant, Williams, and Beatty began to work together in an effort to gather as much information as possible about the tumultuous situation. While technically competitors, they saw a common goal in getting the story of Russia and the Bolsheviks back to American readers. One of the obstacles for American journalists covering Russia at this time was the Russian language itself. Some of the top Bolshevik officials like Lenin and Trotsky spoke other languages, including French and English, but the overwhelming majority of Russians at the time did not. Williams had arrived without any knowledge of the Russian language but picked it up rather quickly that summer through intensive study and his journalistic endeavors. Beatty entered not knowing a single Russian word and left without having learned much. She relied largely on official news sources. Reed attempted to learn Russian, but most of his biographers have concluded that his Russian was never very good. He could read the language well, but his ability to understand spoken Russian and to speak the language were rather poor. Williams and others would often translate for him in public venues.

¹⁴ Hicks, *John Reed*, 249–65; Homberger, *John Reed*, 130–39.

¹⁵ Albert Rhys Williams, *Journey Into Revolution: Petrograd, 1917–1918* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 21–40; Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 278–90.

However, Reed's lack of Russian did not prevent him from experiencing all of the important events of the period.¹⁶

From mid-September to the beginning of November, Reed and Williams darted throughout the city in search of the most accurate information about what was happening and what was about to happen. They visited the Estonian and Latvian Fronts in early October in an effort to provide their readers with a report on the state of the war. They also wanted to see what support the Bolsheviks had among the ordinary soldiers. Back in Petrograd, Reed increasingly spent more time at Smolny, which seemed to be the center of the action. He interviewed several leading members of the Provisional Government, including Alexander Kerensky. It became clear to Reed that the Provisional Government was clinging to its last sources of power and was about to be swept away by more radical forces. During this period, Reed seemed to transform himself from a journalist covering the revolution into a participant in the revolution.

On November 6 and 7, Reed, Bryant, and Williams found themselves in the middle of the Bolshevik Revolution. They watched as the Provisional Government lost its base of support throughout the country. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries who filled the majority of the seats in the Council of the Republic were no longer in control of the city, the army, or the country. Kerensky attempted to seize control one last time by ordering the arrest of many of the Bolshevik and Soviet leaders. This, in turn, prompted Lenin and Trotsky to issue orders to resist and take control of parts of the city. The American journalists were on Nevsky Prospekt as the soldiers moved from place to place, barricades were erected, leaflets were distributed (even a few by the Americans), and uncertainty about who ruled the country reigned. Reed was able to sneak into the Winter Palace late on the evening of the 6th, but Kerensky had already fled and Reed was uncertain about who was in control of the palace. On November 7, Reed, Bryant, and Williams met up with Beatty and Alexander Gumberg, a Russian-American who aided the American journalists, at Smolny. By late in the evening, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was called and the leading Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were replaced by the Bolsheviks. The next day, the American journalists and Gumberg once again found their way into the Winter Palace in time to witness the draining away of the Provisional Government's last vestiges of power. The revolution was complete.¹⁷

For Reed and the other Americans, the events that brought the Bolsheviks to power were not nearly as dramatic as the meaning they held. Although Reed's account was one of the most popular among the American readers of his day, for the romantic revolutionary Reed the events were a bit disappointing. Trotsky himself noted the anti-climactic nature of the revolution in his history, written some fifteen years later. He wrote:

¹⁶ Williams, *Journey Into Revolution*, 35–43; Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1996), 406–50.

¹⁷ Alexander Rabinowich, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 273–80; Homberger, *John Reed*, 130–45.

Where is the insurrection? There is no picture of the insurrection. The events do not form themselves into a picture. A series of small operations, calculated and prepared in advance, remain separated from each other in both space and time.... There is no action of great masses. There are no dramatic encounters with the troops. There is nothing of all that which imaginations brought up to the facts of history associate with the idea of insurrection.¹⁸

These events were greatly exaggerated by a later Soviet propagandist, the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Yet for Reed, the events proved to be anti-climactic despite the enormous importance of what had just happened.

From early November 1917 to early February 1918, Reed found himself amidst a whirlwind of activity. For the first few weeks, the Bolsheviks were trying to keep control of the revolutionary gains they had just made. Reed and Bryant spent their days reporting on what they had seen but also playing an increasingly larger role in Bolshevik affairs. Many in Russia were disturbed by the Bolshevik seizure of power. The Committee for the Salvation of Russia quickly formed to try and stop the Bolsheviks from solidifying their control over the country.

By December, Reed had run out of the money he had brought to Russia. He worked a bit for the American Red Cross, which was headed by Raymond Robins. Robins was no supporter of the Bolsheviks but, unlike the personnel in the American Embassy,¹⁹ he believed that the United States and the Bolsheviks could form a productive relationship. By early 1918, Reed, Williams, and Boris Reinstein were working for the Soviet international propaganda bureau, headed by Karl Radek, under the auspices of Trotsky's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Their goal was to produce printed materials to be distributed in Germany, with the hope of spreading the revolution there.²⁰

By January, Reed and Bryant were making plans to leave Russia. Bryant left on January 20 as an official courier of the Foreign Affairs office so she could carry her and Beatty's papers out of the country. Some controversy erupted though over Reed's nomination to be Soviet consul in New York. The nomination was subsequently withdrawn because the United States government did not recognize the legitimacy of the new Soviet government. In late January, Reed and Williams spoke briefly to the Third Congress of Soviets, where American journalist and representative of the American Committee of Public Information Edgar Sisson was appalled by Reed and Williams's participation in the Russian events. Sisson would continue to attack Reed and Williams. In early February 1918, Reed left Russia for the United States. He and Williams had had quite explicit conversations about the difference between being a revolutionary in Russia and being a revolutionary in America. They felt comfortable

¹⁸ Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 3: 217.

¹⁹ See Neil V. Salzman, *Reform & Revolution: The Life and Times of Raymond Robins* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991).

²⁰ Rabinowich, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 278–83; Homberger, *John Reed*, 155–63.

in Russia among people of like minds. The challenge would be to return to America and continue this work. Both recognized that this would be a daunting task.²¹

As Reed left Russia, the American authorities tracked him, and he was detained in Norway for several months. Throughout the spring of 1918, he waited in Norway for permission to return to the United States. He began drafting his book on the revolution while he was there, without the help from his earlier papers and notes, which the American government had seized. As soon as he returned to the United States, he faced a firestorm of controversy. *The Masses* and many fellow radicals were facing prosecution under new wartime sedition and espionage laws that charged their writing and speeches as illegal. Reed himself was arrested several times in the first few months after his return for his writing and activities in Russia. Many fellow radicals warned Reed not to be provocative in wartime America by giving speeches promoting Bolshevism. He did not heed their advice and continued to speak whenever possible about what he had experienced in Russia. This brought more charges, surveillance, and harassment from the US government.²²

In November 1918, the American government returned Reed's papers to him. From early December 1918 to January 1, 1919, Reed holed up in an apartment in New York to write his account of the Russian Revolution. After a year of delay, he decided not to write a strong polemical argument but rather to return to his journalistic roots to provide a complete account of the most critical days of the Bolshevik Revolution. On January 1, 1919, Reed turned over his manuscript to Boni and Liveright, a New York publishing company. Later that spring, the publication of his book brought him international notoriety. While the book was rich with detail, it often proved confusing for readers because of its excruciating level of detail, errors in chronology, and tendency to embellish. Most historians have concluded that Reed's book is a wonderful source on the revolution but a difficult read, and that its accuracy is subject to question. Not long after the book's publication, John Philip Morris critically reviewed it in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Morris characterized Reed's depiction of the Russian revolutionaries as far too mild, gentle, and not following any known pattern of revolution. Additionally, Morris declared that Reed had failed as the objective reporter of events he had proclaimed himself to be in the beginning of his book. Morris asserted, "It is an interesting book. A book to read and shudder over." Yet, despite his criticism of Reed's thoughts on revolution in general, Morris concluded that "most of the pages and all of the voluminous appendices consist of excerpts from speeches, proclamations, etc., each one of which is of interest to anyone who would know what is going on in Russia."²³ In the end, most liberal and left-wing reviewers praised the book, while most conservative reviewers, like Morris, criticized not only the book but also the concepts of revolution and Bolshevism.

²¹ Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 290–301.

²² Hicks, *John Reed*, 303–15; Homberger, *John Reed*, 164–70.

²³ John Philip Morris, "Books: Reed on Comrade Lenine," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (May 24, 1919), 12; Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1959), 250–59.

From that spring to October 1919, Reed engaged fellow Socialists to discuss the future of the movement in the United States. The harassment of left-wing organizations in the United States during World War I and afterwards was unrelenting. The harassment intensified after an attack on Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's home in the summer of 1919. The attack resulted in the rounding up of foreign radicals for expulsion, which began in January 1920 under the supervision of J. Edgar Hoover. Internecine debates among American Socialists led to a splintering of left-wing movements in the United States. Reed helped found the Communist Labor Party, while other colleagues created the Communist Party. By October 1919, his new party had decided to send him back to Russia to seek recognition from the Communist International (Comintern). Reed sailed on a freighter under the identity of "Jim Gormley" to avoid detection by White forces in Scandinavia and Finnish and American authorities. After a few months of discussion and negotiations, Reed received the endorsement of the Comintern along with about \$15,000 in cash and a stash of diamonds to help fund the new Communist Labor Party in the United States. In the spring of 1920 he tried twice to leave Russia. On his second attempt, he was arrested and imprisoned in Finland. American authorities knew of Reed's plight, but let him sit in prison. Bryant, who was very unhappy that Reed had left, tried to reach him for some time, but the two had never had any communication while he was in Russia or Finland. By April 1920, news of Reed's arrest and imprisonment had leaked out, and Bryant sought help from Socialist friends and the US government, but no one came to Reed's aid. His health, which suffered significantly during his time in jail, was made even worse by a hunger strike. In June, Reed was suddenly released, but he was forced to return to Russia through Estonia because the US government denied him reentry.²⁴

Bryant, however, knew nothing of Reed's movements as she departed for Russia in late July. By that time, he was back in Moscow suffering from scurvy and under the care of the exiled radical Emma Goldman. Once Reed was feeling better, he continued to try to get messages to Bryant concerning his location and general condition. She received none of them. As Bryant arrived in Russia in August, Reed was being coerced by the Bolsheviks into attending a conference about anti-imperialism in Baku. At this point, Reed realized that his greatest foe inside of Russia was Grigorii Zinoviev. He had done everything possible to manipulate Reed and his presence in Russia. The trip to Baku was just another example. The trip was about a month long and ill-advised considering Reed's delicate health. Reed, and others on the trip, were appalled at the debauchery of Zinoviev and Radek on this long trip. By mid-September, he was back in Moscow and reunited with Bryant.²⁵

Reed and Bryant took in all the sites of Moscow and had meetings with Lenin and many other prominent Bolsheviks. In late September, Reed fell ill with typhus and suffered for several weeks in a Moscow hospital. Bryant stayed by his side for the

²⁴ Homburger, *John Reed*, 200–10; Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 360, 367–68; Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 255–65.

²⁵ Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, 365–75.

entire time, but little could be done because Western medicines were not allowed into Russia due to the Allied blockade. Reed died on October 17, 1920, and was buried at the foot of the Kremlin wall.²⁶

Further Reading

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²⁶ Homberger, *John Reed*, 210–17.