

---

# THE JOHN REED CENTENARY

---

1887-1920



---

Edited by  
Corliss Lamont

---

John Reed Centenary Committee  
New York, N.Y.  
1988

---



# THE JOHN REED CENTENARY

Edited by  
Corliss Lamont

Cover: Portrait of John Reed painted by Robert Hallowell, Harvard 1910, and presented in 1935 to Harvard University by the Harvard Alumni John Reed Committee and now hanging in Adams House.  
©Copyright President and Fellows of Harvard College

John Reed Centenary Committee  
New York, N.Y.  
1988

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank most heartily for assistance in the publication of this book my wife, Beth Lamont; Mr. Jeff Kisseloff, Editor of *Rights*; Mrs. Joyce Rose, my Secretary; and Mrs. Edith Tiger, Director of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, who managed the Reed Centenary meeting at the Harvard Club of New York City on October 23, 1987.

©Copyright 1988 John Reed Centenary Committee

Library of Congress No.: 88-060577

### CONTENTS

Introduction to the John Reed Centenary, Corliss Lamont 2

Introduction to the Harvard Club, New York City, meeting  
October 23, 1987, Corliss Lamont, Chairman 4

#### Erratum:

On page 1 and page 30 "George Selde" should, of course, be "George Seldes."

-----  
Concluding remarks, Corliss Lamont 39

Harvard University meeting, October 22, 1987:

David Lawson 39

Daniel I. Barenblatt 46

Final remarks, Corliss Lamont 48

bc  
Jo  
ti  
C  
2

## CONTENTS

Introduction to the John Reed Centenary, Corliss Lamont	2
Introduction to the Harvard Club, New York City, meeting October 23, 1987, Corliss Lamont, Chairman	4
Susan Reed	6
James Aronson	9
Hamilton Fish	13
Robert A. Rosenstone	16
Jonathan Moses	21
Arthur L. James	24
Songs: Helene Walker and Leonard Lehrman	26
Ambassador Victor A. Zvezdin	28
George Selde, Message	31
Paul Sweezy, Message	32
Anthony M. Daur	33
Lement Harris	36
Concluding remarks, Corliss Lamont	39
Harvard University meeting, October 22, 1987:	
David Lawson	39
Daniel I. Barenblatt	46
Final remarks, Corliss Lamont	48

## THE JOHN REED CENTENARY

October 22, 1987, was the Centenary of the birth of John Reed, author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, poet and supporter of the Russian Communist revolution of November 7, 1917. Reed was a member of the illustrious Harvard Class of 1910 which included distinguished figures such as T.S. Eliot, Walter Lippmann and Dr. Carl Binger.

Early in 1987 a few Harvard graduates initiated a broad John Reed Centenary Committee to arrange a suitable recognition of Reed's 100th birthday in the United States. The committee consisted of the following individuals:

*Daniel Aaron*, Professor Emeritus of English and American Literature, Harvard University.

*James Aronson*, Harvard '36, Journalist and Thomas Hunter Professor Emeritus of Communications at Hunter College. Former Editor of *National Guardian*.

*Anthony M. Daur*, Teacher of History at Morristown-Beard School. Led student delegation to Soviet Union in 1986.

*Thomas Ferrick*, Humanist Chaplain, Harvard University.

*Virginia Gardner*, University of Missouri School of Journalism '24, Author of *Friend and Lover*, a biography of Louise Bryant.

*Edward B. Hodgman*, Harvard '87, an editor of *Harvard Lampoon*.

*Arthur L. James*, Teacher for 25 years at Morristown-Beard School. Chairman Department of Fine Arts.

*Corliss Lamont*, Harvard '24, Author, Educator and Editor *Collected Poems of John Reed*. Coordinator of Reed Centenary Committee.

*David Lawson*, Author and Educator. Author of "John Reed as a Poet and Cultural Figure."

*Jonathan Moses*, Harvard '88, Managing Editor of *Harvard Crimson*.

*Susan Reed*, grandniece of John Reed. Journalist and a staff reporter for *People* magazine.

*Robert Rosenstone*, Associate Professor of History at California Institute of Technology. Author of *Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed*.

*George Seldes*, Harvard '13. Author and Anthologist. At 97, author of autobiography, *Witness to a Century*.

*Paul Simms*, Harvard '88, an editor of *Harvard Lampoon*.

*Alan Thomson*, Executive Director, National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.

*Edith Tiger*, Director, National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee.

The Centenary Committee organized two successful meetings to celebrate the Reed Centenary: one at Adams House, Harvard University on October 22, Reed's actual birthday, and the other at the Har-

vard Club in New York City on October 23. Other celebrations took place in Portland, Oregon, where Reed was born, and at Los Angeles. Of course, appropriate observances occurred in Moscow and various other Soviet cities.

The programs at Harvard and New York were much the same, although New York had a few additional speakers. This book therefore, is based primarily on the New York meeting but also includes the addresses of David Lawson and Daniel I. Barenblatt made only at Harvard.

We believe the historical record of John Reed's far-reaching influence demands that we publish in permanent form a selection of the speeches made at our two successful meetings.

John Reed Centenary Committee  
Corliss Lamont, Coordinator

## John Reed Meeting at Harvard Club

New York City, October 23, 1987.

Corliss Lamont, Chairman

We are meeting here tonight to honor the Centenary, the 100th birthday of John Reed, Harvard 1910, and author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*. That book is everywhere acknowledged as the best eye-witness account of the Communist Revolution of 1917 in Russia.

The two meetings, one at Harvard and the other in New York, arranged by the John Reed Centenary Committee, are strictly non-partisan. We are not supporting any political party or any special economic system.

But we do believe that this 100th anniversary of Reed's birth comes at an opportune time when tension between the United States and the Soviet Union has much decreased. And we hope that our meetings, centered around a man dear to both countries, will further American-Soviet understanding.

Incidentally, we should note that this Reed year of 1987 coincides with the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution and the 200th anniversary of our great American Constitution.

We have a program tonight that will explore the various aspects of John Reed's many-sided character. But I wish to remind you at the start that Reed's book *Insurgent Mexico* is also a volume to be remembered. And there were other notable Reed writings, as well.

I regard John Reed as one of the great Americans of the 20th century, an uncompromising idealist and fighter for economic security, social justice and world peace, an eloquent and honest author, a character of iron will and profound intellect, a passionate and exuberant human being—in fact an all-around American *hero*.

John Reed's Centenary is being widely recognized this week in the United States. We have Portland, Oregon, where Reed was born, celebrating through October. The city's mayor, J.E. Bud Clark, issued a proclamation declaring October 22 "John Reed Day in Portland, in honor of a native son who blazed across the world stage for his brief 33 years in the spirit of peace and international understanding." Also, on October 22, Portland author Norman Solomon laid a wreath on Reed's grave beside the Kremlin Wall.

The Portland Committees are receiving a delegation of 22 Soviet citizens to take part in an American-Soviet Symposium entitled "John Reed Yesterday and Today."

In Los Angeles, the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research will sponsor John Reed programs. In Utah, Professor Ivan Krasnov, of the Goodwill Mission from the Soviet Union to Salt Lake City, spoke at a high school about John Reed.

The Harvard Alumni John Reed Committee of 1935 arranged the fine painting of Reed by his Classmate, Robert Hallowell. This portrait hangs in Adams House at Harvard University. Harvard always remains proud to have had as a graduate such a remarkable man as Reed, but we go beyond Harvard to share him with the whole American community and the world at large.

## SUSAN REED

Chairman Lamont: *Our first speaker tonight is Susan Reed, grandniece of John Reed, a talented journalist and at present a reporter for People magazine.*

*Miss Reed made a tour of the Soviet Union in the fall of 1986. She laid a wreath on John Reed's grave beside the Kremlin wall and wrote a fascinating article for People about her first-hand contacts with the Soviet people.*

### Thoughts about John Reed After a Trip Around the Soviet Union.

I'd like to begin my remarks on this 100th anniversary of my great-uncle's birth by noting a short article that appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* yesterday. It reported that the Soviets had marked this occasion by opening a special John Reed Museum in the Ukraine. I thought it was especially appropriate because Uncle Jack had a special feeling for the Ukraine. As Professor Robert Rosenstone wrote in his biography, *Romantic Revolutionary*, Uncle Jack had great plans for the Ukraine. In 1918 he had talked about going there to become Commissar of Art and Amusement. He planned to "get up great pageants. Cover the city with flags and banners, [and] twice a month have a gorgeous all-night festival with fireworks, orchestras, and plays in the squares."

Since I'm speaking as a relative this evening, I'd like to tell a familial story about Uncle Jack that I heard just recently. My grandfather Harry Reed followed his older brother Jack to the Morristown School in New Jersey and then to Harvard. Shortly after Harry arrived at Morristown he committed some infraction of the school rules. As punishment, his teacher assigned him one hour of detention. As he was dressing him down, the teacher stared hard at Harry and said, "Say, you're not by any chance related to *Jack* Reed are you?" My grandfather replied that, yes, in fact he was Jack Reed's younger brother. "Well then," the teacher responded, "make that two hours of detention."

As the story shows, Uncle Jack always provoked a strong reaction from people, whether they were his teachers, his classmates, his fellow journalists or the U.S. government. He rarely made a neutral impression – it was either positive or negative, and it was always strong. His Harvard classmate, Walter Lippmann, said of him, "He is many men at once, and those who have tried to bank on some phase of him, to regard him as a writer, a correspondent, a poet, a revolutionist, or a lover, lose him." That quote in particular makes me humble about laying any special familial claim to him, just as Lippmann suggests that he continues to elude the claims of writers, poets, revolutionists and

lovers who knew him.

Uncle Jack was a passionate man – about poetry, about love and about revolution. But what captured his passion most were the goals of the Russian Revolution and the spirit of the Russian people. He enthused in *Ten Days That Shook the World*:

Russian people seem to have a Greek feeling for the land, for the wide, flat plains, the deep forests, the mighty rivers, the tremendous arch of sky . . . the churches incrusting with gold and jewels . . . for the cruel hardness of the northern winter, for the fierce love and wild gayety, and the dreadful gloom, and the myths and legends which are Russia . . . Russian ideas are the most exhilarating, Russian thought the freest, Russian art the most exuberant; Russian food and drink are to me the best, and the Russians themselves are, perhaps, the most interesting human beings that exist."

As a writer for *People* magazine, I had the opportunity to spend six weeks in the Soviet Union last year. We were working on a special issue about the people of the Soviet Union which came out in April 1987. In reporting stories about ordinary and extraordinary people there, we travelled 25,000 miles around the country. In the process, I walked down streets Uncle Jack had walked down 70 years ago and saw with my own eyes the effect he has left on the Soviet people. I'd like to share a few of my impressions with you.

Now, you know and I know that Uncle Jack isn't terribly well known in America, a situation Warren Beatty has done much to rectify with his film *Reds*. If Americans tend to regard him as an errant nephew, Soviets see him as an adopted son. About the second day we were in Moscow, we were on a bus and began chatting with a teenage boy who had never met an American before. One of the photographers in our group pointed to me and said to the boy, "This woman is related to John Reed. Do you know who he is?" In most places in America, that question might have drawn a blank stare. But that boy's face lit up and he replied, "John Reed! But of course I know John Reed. Every child here learns about him in kindergarten."

Of course I was amazed, but this scene repeated itself many times during the next month. I discovered that there was a John Reed Museum in one of the English language preparatory schools, Moscow School No. 4, so I went to visit it. The members of the John Reed Club gave me a tour and invited me to visit his grave at the Kremlin with them on October 22. I'd love to have been able to.

Ten time zones from Moscow in the Yakutian Autonomous Republic, we met a sable trapper named Nikolai Marfyalov. Nikolai rides his

reindeer into the taiga each fall to hunt. A more sensitive, intelligent and exceptional man I have never met. One night he was showing us slides of wildlife scenes he had painted, and Uncle Jack's name came up. "I admire him very much," he told us. "I have read nearly everything he has written."

Several days later we toured the scientific library in Irkutsk, in southeastern Siberia. One of the librarians, hearing about my relationship to Uncle Jack, rushed up to me with an old copy of *Ten Days* and asked me to inscribe it for them. Feeling a bit embarrassed, I wrote that it was a pity Uncle Jack had never laid eyes on such a beautiful part of Russia. "Thank you," the librarian exclaimed. "We will now remove this copy from the stacks and place it in the rare book collection."

I think I've given you an inkling about the depth of feeling ordinary Russians have for Uncle Jack. That, of course, made a profound impression on me and brought him to life for me in a way I had never experienced in my own – and his – country.

Of course, being a fun-loving prankster, Uncle Jack would never have wanted people to take him *too* seriously, and he might have had some pointed words for us here tonight if he could see us sitting here extolling his memory. So in ending, I'd like to tell another story about how he lives on in the Soviet Union that I think he would have very much enjoyed.

Uncle Jack hated bureaucracy, and as you know, that's something that's been raised to a fine art in the Soviet Union. During our trip there last year, we wanted to change our itinerary and return to Leningrad on the Red Arrow train from Moscow for a few extra days. Impossible, we were told. We pleaded. We begged. Finally, we went to see the director of Intourist with Mr. Felix Rosenthal, a Russian who works for *Time Magazine* in Moscow. After explaining our situation, Felix mentioned to the director that one of the journalistic party was the grand-niece of John Reed.

"John Reed?" he asked incredulously "Of *Ten Days That Shook the World*?"

"Yes, the very same one," Felix replied.

"Well then," the Intourist official responded, "I think that the 11th day will shake Intourist." We left for Leningrad that evening.

Chairman Lamont: *We are happy to have with us here tonight other relatives of John Reed. So I ask them to take a bow: Grandniece Diana Reed, Grandniece Katharine Reed, Grandnephew Francis Reed, Grandnephew Henry Reed, Nephew John Reed. Thank you.*

## PROFESSOR JAMES ARONSON

Chairman Lamont: *Our next speaker is James Aronson, journalist and Thomas Hunter Professor Emeritus of Communications at Hunter College, New York City. He is the former co-editor of the National Guardian, now the Guardian. Aronson's important book, The Press and the Cold War, will be re-published in paperback early in 1988 by Hastings House.*

*I must add that students of Mr. Aronson's at Hunter have joined the Reed celebrations by staging a movie, "Resurgent Mexico" based on Reed's book. It will be shown twice on Wednesday, October 28 at Hunter.*

*Mr. Aronson:*

Two things I would like to talk about: one is Harvard – and what it did to John Reed, (You will note that I said *to* and not *for*). The other is the committed journalist. Reed surely was that. I believe there is a connection between the two subjects, and since I have been involved in both – Harvard and journalistic commitment – I may be a bit personal at times. Reed's experiences, in retrospect as I studied them, were evocative for me.

Reed came to Harvard from Oregon. He wasn't exactly wearing a coonskin hat and a deerskin jacket – he had after all been somewhat easternized by two years at the Morristown School – but he was considered by the established aristocratic coterie in Cambridge to be an outsider. Gregarious as he was, it hurt him and he was, as he wrote, for a time "desperately lonely." He tried to "belong," to make the exclusive clubs, to make the sports teams, but those who did belong let him know that he did not.

High-spirited and nonconformist, he went after things that were open to the non-belongers: the publications and the open organizations. He even became a cheerleader at the football games, a rousing good one. He never lost his love for high jinks, and in a deliberate way he emphasized that, bringing to himself the attention he obviously needed. Yet his hurt was never assuaged. He said: "The more I met the college aristocrats, the more their cold, cruel stupidity offended me. I began to pity them for their lack of imagination, and the narrowness of their glittering lives – clubs, athletics, society."

There were contradictions in him, of course. I wonder what would have happened to him if he *had* been accepted and made to feel that he belonged. I doubt that he would long have belonged. He was too curious for that narrow life, too excited by the world outside, and he would soon have un-belonged himself.

I did not know much about John Reed in the Depression 30s, when



I was at Harvard, but I felt a great kinship as I looked back on my own innocent years and my own efforts to belong. I didn't come cross country to Harvard, just across the river, from Dorchester by way of my natal Roxbury. As part of the belonging process, I remember going to Filene's basement and buying, for \$8, a great Abercrombie & Fitch herringbone tweed jacket which did me for my four years. It had knickerbockers (for golf, I guess), which I discarded.

I went out for baseball in my freshman year, and made the Freshman Seconds—the second team composed of some great players who were on academic probation and therefore could not play on the first team, and those whose athletic skills, quite frankly, were not as good as their academic ones. I was in the second category. I recall the camaraderie at practice on Soldier's Field, and in the locker room after a game. And then, the next day in the Yard, some of my teammates passed me by without a nod.

There were other things—non-invitations to tea at the home of a distinguished snob of an English professor (I was an English major because Harvard did not recognize journalism as an acceptable endeavor), the barriers at the *Crimson*. It was the Reed treatment, and it was perhaps my first lesson—I was quite unpolitical at the time—in caste and class. So, I imagine, it was for Reed. When I said earlier that I would talk about what Harvard did *to* Reed, I am quite willing to replace it with *for*. It was an educating experience that helped propel me into the ranks of political and social dissenters. I am sure it did the same for Reed.

How tragic that his life and career were cut off just before he was to turn 33. I have often wondered where he would have gone in the 1930s, with the turmoil of America in the Depression. Would I have listened to him speaking from the steps of Widener Library about the jobless and the homeless? What about the 40s and the repressive 50s? How would he have reacted to events in the Soviet Union in the intervening years?

Joe McCarthy would have found Reed fair game—and Reed would have found Joe quite gamey. In my mind's eye, I can see Reed in the dock in the old Senate caucus room, with McCarthy glowering at him from the center of the inquisition table, nasty little Roy Cohn at his elbow, and McCarthy asking: "Did you have a hand in instigating the Bolshevik Revolution?" And Reed, graying in his mid-60s, but vital as ever, disdaining all amendments, beginning an eloquent extemporaneous statement about the wretched of the earth. The gavel coming down to silence the witness, and Reed rising from his chair to stalk out of the room, denouncing McCarthy as he went.

What a scenario! Where are the filmmakers with imagination? Where is Warren Beatty?

I am sure that Reed would have gravitated down to 17 Murray St., near City Hall, when we began publishing the *National Guardian* exactly 39 years ago in 1948 with, I must say, the warm encouragement of our chairman Corliss Lamont. And speaking of the Harvard connection, I recall one evening in the summer of 1948, after a pre-publication planning meeting, getting a ride home with Corliss and two other planners, and looking around the car, saying: "You know, we are all Harvard—all four of us!" Perhaps, in retrospect, I should not be so tough on Alma Mater. We all must have been inculcated with something in the Yard.

Yes, Reed would have pitched right in with Cedric Belfrage, John McManus and the rest of us, and he would soon be off to Africa or Asia to send his impassioned dispatches, in much the same way that Wilfred Burchett—another committed journalist—did for us from Korea and Vietnam and just about every other place in the world.

There would have been other committed journalists who were Americans but whose byline was the world. In China, today, there is a Three S Society, of which I am proud to be an honorary member. It commemorates the lives and works and provides an opportunity for research about three courageous journalists—Anna Louise Strong, Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow, all of whom helped bring the truth about China to the world—and to the people of China itself. Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* was a seminal book in reporting about the conditions in China which led to the revolution and about the men and women who founded the People's Republic in 1949.

Anna Louise Strong and Agnes Smedley both wrote for the *Guardian*. When she died in Beijing in 1970, Anna Louise was given a heroine's funeral. Agnes died in poverty in England, hounded from her own country by the witch-hunting committees in Washington in the 1950s. Snow is buried in an honored place on the grounds of Beijing University.

In Moscow, John Reed is buried alongside the Kremlin Wall. He will never be forgotten there. His classic *Ten Days That Shook the World* was as seminal as Snow's *Red Star Over China*.

What magnificent journalists they were. They poured their souls into their work because they had faith in the ultimate triumph of reason and sanity. Where are the memorials to them in their native land? They do not exist. If you ask a Russian student about Reed, his face lights up. If you do the same about Agnes Smedley in China, the student smiles and says, "Ah, Sme-de-lee. Yes, I know." When I have put



the names to my own university students in New York, there is no recognition. It is not their fault. It is a piercing comment on the teaching of history and journalism.

For those of us who have lived our lives in journalism or the academy, or both, and especially for those of us who have veered from the accustomed path, there is an important risk. It is to see that the teaching and learning of history, as it happened, is restored to an honorable place in our society. Then the life and work of John Reed will be affirmed, as will his glorious and far-sighted vision, and his passion.

## HAMILTON FISH

Chairman Lamont: *Now we have a real surprise: Mr. Hamilton Fish, Senior, LL.D. Harvard Class of 1910 and a classmate of John Reed, whom he knew well. He appointed Reed cheerleader of the Harvard football team when he, Fish, was captain.*

*Mr. Fish has been a conservative Republican and was a member of the House of Representatives for 25 years, from 1920 to 1945. He will be 99 in November. We are very glad to have him with us tonight.*

*Mr. Fish:*

Mr. Chairman and fellow Americans, I'm very happy and proud to be here tonight to help you to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of a classmate of mine whom I appointed, when I was captain of the Harvard football team, as cheerleader for the team. I appointed him because I knew him personally and liked him and knew he was a man of ability and could do the job. And the job was very difficult because the Harvard team didn't lose a game that year. So that was the start of my real acquaintance with him.

I think he was at heart a Socialist, but I don't think that he belonged to the Socialist Club at Harvard at that time. We did have a very strong Socialist Club in my class headed by Walter Lippmann, who made his fame on the *Herald Tribune* here in New York. But I'm so happy about John Reed, the man who went out there to Russia and wrote this famous book that aroused the whole world, and properly so. Most of us back home in America hoped that the change would result in a new American form of government in Russia, and of course it didn't turn out that way, and even John Reed had some difficulties with the Communists.

They were very proud of him because of the book . . . and a good book . . . and they made a Communist out of him and gave him a position, but I think they were a little jealous of him. Some of the old timers . . . those that were powerful . . . disliked him and I'm afraid . . . as far as I can find out . . . that they persuaded him against his wishes to go down to some southern part of Russia to some celebration to make some speeches there; and he was disinclined to go but they forced him to go, and when he came back he was a sick man. And that is the tragedy of tragedies, because he went to a hospital and he evidently was dying. The only information I have on that is the fact that some very prominent German woman who was a Socialist saw him in the hospital and he complained "I have been tricked! I have been tricked!" I can't vouch for that but it came from a very well known woman at the time, and he was without money and he wanted to go back to America. And he died there in that hospital. And I think



that it's a wonderful thing that you have gathered together to pay tribute to this great man.

I was Chairman of the first committee in Congress, way back in 1920, to investigate Communist activities in the United States, and they were all Americans... the people we investigated were Americans, and as Chairman I investigated a man who ran for President... he ran for President of the United States twice. He was an American on the Communist ticket. He was very truthful when he answered our questions. He said we are against freedom, we are against democracy, we are against the Constitution, we are against religion, but then when I pinned him down on the flag, he tried to dodge and said we're for the red flag. Well, I said, that's nonsense... that's three hundred years old... every revolution took the red flag... But anyhow I am one of those who believes today that every American has the right to Freedom of Speech, and it doesn't make any difference to me what party they belong to, whether they belong to the Republicans or the Democrats or even the Communist party, if they want to. It is the law.

I had the honor of debating with Norman Thomas, who was one of the most attractive men I've ever known, a Presbyterian minister who ran for president on the Socialist ticket and got five million votes. He was a minister at Princeton and a very fine man. And I was devoted to him even though we had differing views.

I want to tell a quite amusing story about John Reed. He and a friend of mine who played on the football team with me, a big guard... they decided they were going over to England... one was going to Spain and the other to England, and they decided to save some money because Reed had no money then, so they went on a tramp steamer... and it was a bad tramp steamer. The accommodations were rotten, the food was terrible and yet they had to go on this steamer. Before they got out of the harbor this friend of mine who played on the Harvard football team with me couldn't stand it and he jumped overboard at night and swam ashore. And then Reed, of course, was still on board. My Harvard friend left his pocketbook... he had quite a lot of money; and the captain found that and thought that Reed had thrown my friend overboard. They were going to put him under arrest when they arrived in England, but then found that the other man was still alive. Well, that's just a little story.

Chairman Lamont: *Of course we know there are various versions of what John Reed said and the meaning of his words as he lay dying in the Moscow hospital. Nobody is really sure. In any case we have full freedom of speech here tonight and there may be disagreement with some of the speeches. That's all right, and we are all most happy that Mr. Fish could address us.*

## PROFESSOR ROBERT A. ROSENSTONE

Chairman Lamont: *Because of health problems, Robert Rosenstone could not make the long trip from California to be with us here tonight. So Susan Reed will read his speech instead.*

*Rosenstone is Professor History at California Institute of Technology. Born in Montreal, he graduated from UCLA in 1957 and obtained a Ph.D. in history from that institution in 1965.*

*He served on the staffs of the Los Angeles Examiner and Los Angeles Times. He is author of Crusade on the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War and Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed.*

*Miss Reed for Mr. Rosenstone:*

Today [Oct. 22] he would be a century old, this man born to privilege who loved to break bread with Wobblies, Villistas and Red Guards; this one-time cheerleader who went from being a highly paid foreign correspondent to someone with no journalistic outlets because he refused to endorse American entry into the First World War; this poet who appeared before a congressional committee investigating radicals and stood trial for sedition more than once; this founding member of the Provincetown Players who also helped to found the Communist Labor Party; this lover of Mabel Dodge and Louise Bryant and Edna St. Vincent Millay, who became a member of the executive committee of the Third International; this Playboy of Revolution (in Upton Sinclair's phrase) whose remains have for six decades lain in a grave before the Kremlin Wall.

To most of us in this room, he is no doubt a familiar and interesting figure. But 20 years ago, when I first toyed with the idea of writing his biography, few Americans other than old leftists and people with an interest in the Russian Revolution seemed to have heard of John Reed. For three months in the spring of 1970, I sat at a desk in the Houghton Library reading his papers. During that time, demonstrations against the Vietnam War, or the corporate state, or in favor of Black liberation seemed to be daily occurrences. I remember the day that Jerry Rubin, a leading Yippie, invaded first the Yard and then some philosophy classes to rail against the oppression of academia and to inform Harvard undergrads that they should leave the classroom for the streets. Yet in this same period, the young radicals around me (and with my beard and long hair I felt at one with them) would yawn at my tales of their illustrious forebear, Reed, clearly thinking his life irrelevant to their own.

Even after my book appeared in the mid-70s, I found myself at far



too many parties having to explain why one should care about this poet, bohemian, journalist and radical. Then in 1982, through the magic door of Hollywood, Jack Reed suddenly entered the American pantheon. This has made the task of a Reed biographer considerably easier. At least since "Reds," fewer people scratch their heads in wonder at why you would want to write a book about a Communist. Now, millions know him as a sweet, temperamental, and somehow very American guy, who loves women, puppies and workers, gets rather overheated about politics, dislikes Soviet bureaucrats who speak accented English, and refuses to let anyone—capitalist or communist—edit what he writes.

This film portrait of Reed is not so much wrong as dreadfully limited. But then, so is the traditional notion of him as no more than chronicler, friend and supporter of the Bolsheviks. Reed was, in truth, a protean figure. His breadth and passion, if not his later seriousness, was humorously portrayed in 1914 by his good friend Walter Lippmann in one of the earliest issues of the *New Republic*:

"Though he is only in his middle 20s and but five years out of Harvard, there is a legend of John Reed. It began, as I remember, when he proved himself to be the most inspired song and cheer leader that the football crowd had had for many days. . . .

"Even as an undergraduate he betrayed what many people believe to be the central passion of his life, an inordinate desire to be arrested. He spent a brief vacation in Europe and experimented with the jails of England, France, and Spain. . . . The next incident took place during the Paterson strike. Reed was in town less than twenty-four hours before the police had him in custody. He capped his arrest by staging the Paterson strike pageant in Madison Square Garden, and then left for Europe to live in a Florentine villa. . . .

"By temperament he is not a professional writer or reporter. He is a person who enjoys himself. Revolution, literature, poetry, they are only things which hold him at times, incidents merely of his living. Now and then he finds adventure by imagining it, oftener he transforms his own experience. He is one of those people who treat as serious possibilities such stock fantasies as shipping before the mast, rescuing women, hunting lions, or trying to fly around the world in an aeroplane. . . .

"I can't think of a form of disaster which John Reed hasn't tried and enjoyed. . . . He is many men at once, and those who have tried to bank on some phase of him, to regard him as a writer, a correspondent, a poet, a revolutionist, or a lover, lose him. There is no line between the play of his fancy and his responsibility to fact; he is for the

time the person he imagines himself to be. . . ."

With his grandiose dreams (at one point he wanted to be a poet and a millionaire) and enormous appetite for life, Reed can seem quintessentially American, a kind of Paul Bunyon of the Left. But it is important to remember that he does not belong to the United States alone. There is a Mexican John Reed, the first young foreigner to sympathetically publicize to the world the seriousness of that great struggle for land and justice. There is the Soviet John Reed, the far-sighted American who not only could recognize the future, but who could number its ten great days and describe its birth agonies in prose vivid enough to fix the image of revolution for decades to come. And there are, no doubt, other Reeds as well, Reeds we cannot fully imagine; Reeds that exist in the minds of those who have read *Ten Days That Shook the World* in one of the two dozen languages into which it has been translated; or Reeds that exist in the Spanish speaking world, where *Mexico Insurgente*, the translation of his first masterpiece, has rarely been out of print.

Many of the themes of Reed's life as he moved from New York to Mexico to Europe to Russia can seem so contemporary that one may wonder at how little the world has changed since the second decade of the century. After leaving Harvard in 1910, he lived in Greenwich Village at the center of perhaps the most creative and exciting counter-culture that this nation has produced. Indeed, he soon became one of that subculture's heroes, which means that he touched upon and embodied all of its splendid and contradictory impulses. Modernism in art and poetry, industrial unionism, radicalism of a dozen varieties, free love, psychoanalysis and feminism—all these were topics that were familiar to him. More than simply taking stands on such issues, he lived them too. Reed wrestled with the problems of sexual equality and a two-career marriage; he supported the right of women to control their own bodies (then via birth control rather than abortion); he exposed (at Paterson and Ludlow) the distortion of labor news as reported by the daily press; and he openly contradicted the lies of government officials about American attempts to combat revolution and support counterrevolution abroad.

As a correspondent in Mexico, during that revolution to which "Reds" could devote only ten seconds, one can see Reed at his best—as both romantic and shrewd. The young poet in him loved the color of the country, the passion of the people, the bravado of leaders like Pancho Villa, the drama of the desert landscape of Chihuahua and Durango. But he also understood what few in the United States could then discern: Mexico was undergoing two revolutions, one political



and the other economic, and in terms of ultimate change, the former was less important than the latter. He understood, too, that one of the dangers of this revolution was possible U.S. intervention to protect American business interests. When an American army headed by General Pershing invaded Mexico looking for Pancho Villa, Reed forcefully opposed the venture.

His reports from Mexico in 1914 made him a famous and highly-paid correspondent, and for a time allowed him to pick his own assignments. Less and less a poet and short story writer, he often covered the struggles of labor to organize unions. After the outbreak of the World War, he journeyed to both Western and Eastern fronts and found nothing but a meaningless conflict in which Western civilization was destroying its noblest values. Even before those jaunts, Reed was calling the conflict "a trader's war" and strongly opposing American involvement. As long as the United States was neutral, such a position was popular enough. But after Wilson's "make-the-world-safe-for-democracy" speech and the American declaration of war in April, 1917, anti-war sentiment became distinctly dangerous to one's personal and economic health. By late that summer, the famous John Reed could not place an article in the commercial press, and he had to borrow funds for a trip to Russia for a look at the revolution that had begun there in February.

Usually when one thinks of Reed, what comes to mind is the great October days in Petrograd. Of these it may simply be said that he came, he saw, he understood, he wrote, and that is why we know him now. His words defined those ten days, and those days defined the three remaining years of his life. As always, he was a man determined to tell the truth as he saw it, and tell that truth no matter what the personal, social, political, legal or economic consequences. But now the stakes for truth-telling were even higher. Back in the United States, support for Bolshevism meant that he was criticized by his family, snubbed by friends, and more than once arrested for attempting to speak in public. Worse yet, the commercial press would not touch his stories on the revolution, and because all his papers were confiscated by the Justice Department, for almost a year he was prevented from getting to work on "the story of a lifetime."

The deadly serious John Reed; the Reed who wrote his masterpiece and then helped to organize the Communist Labor Party; the Reed who returned to the Soviet Union, and who was held in solitary in a Finnish prison for three months and emerged with scurvy; the worn-down, homesick Reed who attended the Second Congress of the Communist International and then went off to the Baku Congress of

the people's of the East; the frail Reed who caught typhus and then suffered a deadly stroke; the Reed martyred at the age of 33—this final Reed is not the only Reed we should remember.

One must never forget the man's humor and passion and love of life and his desire to change the world through art. Reed wrote and directed the Paterson Silk Strike Pageant in Madison Square Garden and was one of the founders of the Provincetown Players, America's first modern theater group. Dramatic impulses were still alive in him during the grimmest moments of revolution. With the Bolsheviks locked in a bitter struggle for control of Russia in the winter of 1918, he could talk of going to the Ukraine, a blasted, dying land where local officials were fighting the new regime, to become Commissar of Art and Amusement. His desire was "to get up great pageants. Cover the city with flags and banners, (and) twice a month have a gorgeous all night festival with fireworks, orchestras, and plays in the squares."

For anyone interested in social change, he may be a hero, but surely it is important to keep from picturing Reed as a saint. At least he would not have recognized any such portrait. This is not just because he was a man who loved the pleasures of the flesh, but also because of his growing self-awareness that sometimes he hurt and disappointed people, even good friends. Life was not easy for Reed, but a kind of daily struggle in the realm that lies between desire and despair. Given an enormous natural talent with words, he used them with conviction, dedication, and clarity of sight. Possibilities for money, fame, or power never deterred him from a personal vision of truth, but a truth that increasingly voiced the truths of the exploited and the powerless. He could be stubborn and unbending, but he could not be corrupted. Along with his two great literary accounts of revolution, this trait alone should make us wish to keep his memory alive.



## JONATHAN MOSES

Chairman Lamont: *We had hoped to have Harvard undergraduates involved in the celebration of the Reed Centenary. And so we are glad that Jonathan Moses, Harvard 1988, can be with us tonight. Mr. Moses is Managing Editor of The Harvard Crimson, one of the country's great newspapers. I know this is true because back in the 1920s I myself was an Assistant Managing Editor of the Crimson.*

*Mr. Moses:*

John Reed wanted to enjoy his time at Harvard. There's no fault in that, I do too. And there's no fault in the fact that while in Russia he lived comfortably. A close reading of the classic *Ten Days That Shook the World* will reveal that Reed was well aware of the practices of the Russians who speculated during the Revolution, hoarding food and bribing officials. These people had plenty of bread and sugar and Reed would dine at their table. Reed took tea with merchants who voted ten to one in favor of Kaiser Wilhelm over the Bolsheviks. And he even managed to catch some theater and dance in between all those political meetings he was attending.

Indeed, Reed seems to have experienced all the human failings to which everyone is prey. And now that I've successfully debunked the paper myth, you may be saying to yourself, "What the hell am I doing here? Let me show you by reading some passages from the chapter on Moscow in *Ten Days That Shook The World*:

"Already through the Iberian Gate a human river was flowing, and the vast Red Square was spotted with people, thousands of them. . . .

Through all the streets to the Red Square the torrents of people poured, thousands upon thousands of them, all with the look of the poor and the toiling. A military band came marching up, playing the *Internationale*, and spontaneously the song caught and spread like wind-ripples on a sea, slow and solemn. From the top of the Kremlin wall gigantic banners unrolled to the ground; red, with great letters in gold and in white, saying, "Martyrs of the Beginning of World Social Revolution," and "Long Live the Brotherhood of Workers of the World."

"Bitter wind swept the Square, lifting the banners. Now from the far quarters of the city the workers of the different factories were arriving, with their dead. They could be seen coming through the Gate, the blare of their banners, the dull red – like blood – of the coffins they carried. These were rude boxes, made of unplanned wood and daubed with crimson, borne high on the shoulders of rough men who marched with tears streaming down

their faces, and followed by women who sobbed and screamed, or walked stiffly, with white, dead faces. Some of the coffins were open, the lid carried behind them; others were covered with gilded or silvered cloth, or had a soldier's hat nailed on the top. There were many wreaths of hideous artificial flowers. . . .

"Between the factory-workers came companies of soldiers with their coffins, too, and squadrons of cavalry, riding at salute, and artillery batteries, the cannon wound with red and black – forever it seemed. Their banners said, 'Long Live the Third International!' or 'We want an Honest, General, Democratic Peace!' . . .

"All the long day the funeral procession passed, coming in by the Iberian Gate and leaving the Square by way of the Nikol'skaya, a river of red banners, bearing words of hope and brotherhood and stupendous prophecies, against a background of fifty thousand people, under the eyes of the world's workers and their descendants forever. . . .

"I suddenly realised that the devout Russian people no longer needed priests to pray them into heaven. On earth they were building a kingdom more bright than any heaven had to offer, and for which it was a glory to die. . . ."

That is incredible journalism. The description, the subject matter, the force behind the writing create a story that captures the reader. Reed writes because he was excited by his subject. He transmits that excitement to the reader with the result that we, too, admire the rise of the Russian people, their demands for change and their success. There's much here to inspire the young journalist, especially when the immediate future for most of us means covering stories about the Everglades for the *Miami Herald*.

But there's something else that pervades Reed's work, which is, I think, the unique talent of journalists. Reed overcomes the gap between the writer and his subject. The people of Russia, their simple demands for peace and land, control Reed's words. He writes, "The only reason for Bolshevik success lay in their accomplishing the vast and simple desires of the most profound strata of people, calling them to the work of tearing down and destroying the old and afterward, in the smoke of falling ruins, cooperating with them to erect the framework of the new." The reason for Reed's success as a journalist is that he too delights and desires to write of the struggle by the vast strata of people.

Reed is enamored most by the resistance of the Russians to the *status quo* – of their desire for change. Pretty amazing for a guy who spent four years hailing the stuffy splendor of the nation's oldest university. There's hope for all of us.



Reed's experience at Harvard is basically all of ours. No matter what we do here, we graduate with a leg up. The tendency is to preserve the *status quo*, to protect our privilege. But I think deep down we all abhor stagnation as did Reed. He did more than most of us ever will. He lived for revolution. Even in the Reagan Age where the *status quo* is said to reign supreme, I think there's a desire for movement in society. Monday, I talked to some friends now working on Wall Street, the very symbol of Reagan Era attitudes. They were having as much fun in the crash as they had in the boom. It was excitement. The down side of a roller-coaster is a blast.

Yet, Reed's attempt goes beyond most of us. Whether it's fear and fun on Wall Street or the life of journalists, with its confrontational and experiential nature, we know how to get our kicks. But the problem is that we truly can live as rebels without a cause. Reed had a cause—progressive change. There was purpose to his exciting life. He recognized that he could not be objective in his reporting and advocated the success of the Revolution. And why shouldn't he support the Russian Revolution?

There was danger, people taking control of their lives, wiping the ancient rust of a monarchy from the cogs of their society. Every assumption was questioned, every idea considered. There have been times in the United States when this has happened as well. This is not one of them, neither was Reed's time. And I think the desire for this way of living is what attracted Reed to the Russian Revolution. It may also be why the so-called "Glasnost" that we hear and read about in the Soviet Union catches our attention. Their society may have miles to go before it reaches our enlightened state, but at least there is change, an excitement in the air that reminds people they can control their lives.

## ARTHUR L. JAMES

Chairman Lamont: *Now we have Arthur L. James, a teacher for 25 years at the Morristown-Beard School and chairman of the Fine Arts Department. John Reed attended the Morristown School for two years. Later it merged with the Beard School to become Morristown-Beard. Mr. James is working on a history of the school.*

*Mr. James:*

It is a pleasure to take part in the centennial of John Silas Reed. For many years I have been fascinated by the many facets of his brilliant and provocative career. And I am grateful for the publications of Chairman Lamont and Professor Rosenstone as well as to Warren Beatty for rekindling interest in Reed through the film "Reds."

You may wonder why John's parents in 1904 packed him off from Portland to the Morristown-Beard School in northern New Jersey. His father, though not a college man, was concerned about John's education. Maybe his father was impressed that this fledgling school had been founded by three Harvard graduates.

This, nevertheless, proved to be a wise choice. Although John possessed an enthusiasm for literature and a flair for writing and dramatics, he had been a somewhat insecure and oftentimes sickly boy. But at Morristown he seemed to find himself and to show sparks of fortitude and leadership which later were to characterize his career.

John's vibrant imagination as an inveterate storyteller won him instant recognition at school. He vigorously pursued a variety of activities, sometimes to the detriment of his studies. He sang in the choir, starred in football, and became vice president of the Athletic Association. He revived the *Rooster*, the satirical underground paper and edited the *Morrisonian*, the newspaper and the *Salmagundi*, the yearbook. He also served on the "Committee of Seven," the student government board and won the Scribner History Prize.

A quotation from one of John's poems, "Diodotus' Speech" in the *Morrisonian* proved prophetic:

*O men of Athens, listen to my words,  
I cannot speak as noble Cleon spoke  
Pouring forth a flood of mellow words,  
But time has come to sink the thoughts of "can,"  
Within the thoughts of "must," and so at last  
Humanity and reason stern have made  
An orator of me.*



Probably for leading a midnight dorm party down the drain pipe and into town, John was not invited to one of the school dances. He retaliated, however, by removing the helmet of the school mascot, Oscar, (an impressive suit of armour) and replacing it with a chamber pot. He was subsequently disciplined for embarrassing the ladies.

John graduated in 1906 and went on to Harvard, but he remains one of Morristown-Beard's most widely read and written about alumni. We are especially proud of his spirit. For like the lawyer Clarence Darrow, he championed the plight of the underprivileged and the oppressed. Like the poet Walt Whitman, he portrayed the suffering of the soldiers on both sides of a war. And like the writer Stephen Crane, he sacrificed his life covering global controversy on the spot.

Chairman Lamont: *We have two songs about John Reed sung by soprano Helen Williams with Leonard Lehrman at the piano.*

*Ms. Williams was a finalist in the 1984 International Artists Recital Competition and has been active on television, stage, film, and in opera and musical theater as both singer and actress. She has just returned from a tour of New York State playing Emma Goldman in E.G.: A Musical Portrait of Emma Goldman by Leonard Lehrman. Miss Goldman was a good friend of John Reed.*

*Leonard Lehrman, Harvard Class of '71, studied with Nadia Boulanger on a Fulbright Scholarship, received his doctorate from Cornell University and then served as Assistant Conductor at the Metropolitan Opera. His first opera won the 1978 Off-Broadway Opera Award for "most important event of the season." His fifth opera, based on a story by Mikhail Sholokov, was presented at the Moscow Youth Festival in 1985 and will be staged in October 1988 in Dresden.*

*The first song is a rendering into music by Leonard Lehrman of Reed's last poem "A Letter to Louise," Reed's wife:*

#### A Letter to Louise:

Rainy rush of bird-song  
Apple-blossom smoke  
Thin bells water-falling sound  
Wind-rust on the silver pond  
Furry starrng willow-wand  
Wan new grasses waking round  
Blue bird in the oak . . .  
Woven in my word-song

White and slim my lover  
Birch-tree in the shade  
Mountain pools her fearless eyes  
Innocent all-answering  
Were I blinded to the Spring  
Happy thrill would in me rise  
Smiling half afraid  
At the nearness of her



All my weak endeavor  
Lay I at her feet  
Like a moth from oversea  
Let me longing lightly rest  
On her flower petal breast  
Till the red dawn set me free  
To be with my sweet  
Ever and forever . . .

*The second song is titled simply "John Reed," with words by Lewis Allan and music by Elie Siegmeister.*

### John Reed

John Reed was an honest man, knew right from wrong.  
His heart was with the people, said, "That's where I belong."  
He saw the homes of working men. He heard their children cry,  
In Paterson he saw them starve, in Ludlow saw them die.

John Reed saw trouble in the making,  
John Reed saw tyranny's face,  
John Reed knew a storm was breaking  
and he said to himself, "There's my place!"  
And he said to himself, "There's my place!"

John Reed was a writing man, wrote what he saw.  
He saw a fight for freedom, just like our Freedom War.  
For ten long days that shook the world while some were writing lies,  
He wrote with honest hand and heart what he saw with honest eyes.

John Reed saw freedom in the making,  
John Reed saw tyranny fall,  
John Reed saw a new day breaking  
and he wrote what he saw, That was all.  
And he wrote what he saw, That was all.

John Reed loved his fellow man, John Reed.

### AMBASSADOR VICTOR ZVEZDIN

Chairman Lamont: *Of course, the Reed Centenary is being widely celebrated in the Soviet Union, both in Moscow and in other cities. Three volumes devoted to Reed have already been published in the U.S.S.R. We are fortunate in having a representative of that great country at our meeting this evening.*

*And I am happy to present Ambassador Victor Zvezdin, Deputy Permanent Representative of the U.S.S.R. to the United Nations.*

*Ambassador Zvezdin:*

Dear Friends,

I couldn't but tell how happy and honored I am to be at this meeting to give tribute to the man who is a legendary person in my country. I'm particularly glad to celebrate the centennial anniversary of John Reed together with you because I'm sure that his deeds, talent, books belong not only to Americans, but to the Soviet and all other peoples of the world.

Today a lot of people in many countries speak about the vital necessity of a new political thinking that will guide mankind to a mutually beneficial solution of existing political, economic and humanitarian problems, to peace and prosperity in all parts of the world. It seems to me that John Reed gave all of us many years ago a good example of such political thinking. I believe this is among the main reasons why his books are still popular in the world, why his thoughts and ideas are carefully examined and shared by many people.

The rather short life of John Reed, his magnificent books about the Mexican and Russian revolutions still teach us that it is not the best thing to reject new ideas and approaches, as well as hopes and aspirations of other nations even if they are different from one's own and difficult to understand at first. John Reed was brought up in America in a capitalist socio-economic system. Being a well-educated and progressive minded man, he knew all the benefits and problems of that system. For the first time he came to Russia in August 1917, and it took him just several months to understand Russia and the problems, hopes and aspirations of the Russian people. That is why he managed to understand the goals of the Great October Socialist Revolution which he sincerely welcomed with all his heart. John Reed did not separate his thoughts from his deeds. He was strong enough not only to welcome the Russian revolution but to tell the truth about this revolution to his people and all other nations in his splendid book *Ten Days That Shook the World*.



This book helped many people in America and in other countries to better understand what was really going on in Russia; and at that time it was very important to say the truth about the revolution, especially because some countries, including the USA, had tried to strangle it by military and economic measures.

Today's world, with all its nuclear stockpiles, is far more dangerous than the world of the 1920s; it is even more important to understand each other, to know each other better, to get rid of stereotypes in order to end the confrontation and cooperate peacefully for the benefit of our two nations. I believe that the agreement in principle to conclude a treaty on eliminating two classes of nuclear weapons, arrived at recently by the USA and USSR, is a very important step in that direction that reinforces hopes of our peoples and all people of the Earth for building a safe world. And I am sure that if John Reed were among us today, he would welcome such an important development in Soviet-American relations like any other step towards peace, friendship and cooperation between our countries.

Dear friends, soon on November 7 my people will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

There is a direct link between the new political thinking which we propose embedding in international relations and the ideas of October. In carrying out the reorganization within our country, which is aimed, in the words of Mikhail Gorbachev, "to ensure more socialism and more democracy," to resolve the accumulated domestic problems and to consolidate glasnost and democracy, we proceed from the premise that renewal is also necessary in the sphere of international relations.

The paramount task is to bring those relations in conformity with the realities of the nuclear and space age, which means acknowledging that the security of all and of everyone is the only formula for survival. A comprehensive system of international security, to establish which was proposed by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, has its origins in Lenin's concept of a just and democratic world. The formation of such a system that would remove the immoral nuclear deterrence and deliver the peoples from the fear of annihilation would mean democratization, humanization and demilitarization of international relations.

Just like in the days of October 1917, we stand for renewing not only the fundamental approaches but also the techniques, methods and forms of dealing with the questions of war and peace. We propose bridging the gap between the words and the deeds, between politics and propaganda. Following the traditions of Lenin's Decree of Peace, the Soviet Union comes out in favor of conducting affairs on the basis

of openness and glasnost, moving over from confidence-building measures to a large-scale policy of confidence which would constitute the centerpiece of the system of security which is being shaped. Today, just like in the days of October, we are addressing our proposals not only to the governments but also to the people. We proceed from our belief that politics is not a privilege of the selected few, but a concern of each and everyone.

That is why we attach great importance to the work of different public movements and organizations which stand for peace, security and friendship among the nations. Of course, every nation has a sovereign right to choose its own social and political system and no one has a privilege to force others not to do so. But today only along with the concept of peaceful coexistence of different socio-economic systems can we find a way to a secure world, to friendship and cooperation among all people. There is a vital importance in this regard to get rid of prejudice, wrong stereotypes and misunderstanding between each other. And I believe that the Soviet-American Friendship Council and the John Reed Centenary Committee are doing a very important job in that direction; a job that brings new life to the aspirations of John Reed who was one of the pioneers of Soviet-American friendship.

In my country, John Reed is now a legend. But his legend lives together with us. We use the example of his life to bring up our children in the spirit of internationalism. We come to his grave at the Kremlin Wall not only to pay our respects to this great American but to learn once again how peoples must try to understand each other and live in friendship for the benefit of all.



## PAUL SWEEZY

Chairman Lamont: *We also have a Message from Paul Sweezy, Harvard '31, and co-editor of the independent socialist magazine, The Monthly Review, since it was founded. Mr. Sweezy is probably the best Marxist economist in the United States.*

*Here is his Message:*

I very much regret that I am unable to be with you today. No one better symbolizes the history, the spirit, and the future potential of American radicalism than John Reed. It is altogether fitting that we should celebrate the centenary of his birth at a time when the global capitalist system against which he so valiantly struggled is facing its worst crisis in more than half a century.

Harry Magdoff and I are in Yugoslavia today to take part in the twelfth annual Cavtat Conference on "Socialism in the World." We hope to have the opportunity to remind this distinguished gathering of socialists from all over the world that the author of the unforgettable *Ten Days That Shook the World*, a veritable landmark in the history of our movement, was born just 100 years ago.

## GEORGE SELDE

Chairman Lamont: *Here is a Message for the John Reed meetings from journalist George Selde, Harvard '13, who knew Reed personally. At 97 years of age, Mr. Selde has just published a best-selling anthology, The Great Thoughts.*

Jack Reed was not only one of the best known journalists in modern history, but was one of the fairest and most honest journalists of our time – or rather his time, which was one of the most difficult times. In an era of world turmoil and of turmoil in his own career, he nevertheless had the discipline to withdraw and write an outstanding book, the history of the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia, called *Ten Days That Shook the World*. This great piece of journalism has been judged by radicals, by liberals, by conservatives, by pro-Communists and anti-Communists as the best eye-witness account ever published of the Communist October Revolution of 1917.

Jack Reed was able to see both sides of questions that were tearing the world apart and to report so truthfully that he was never attacked by either side. Nor did he hesitate to argue with the heads of state, including Lenin himself. In 68 years of journalism I have never known his equal, and I would name him as the man chosen for a journalistic Hall of Fame.

## ANTHONY M. DAUR

Chairman Lamont: *Anthony M. Daur is on the faculty of the Morristown-Beard School.*

*He led a student delegation from there to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1986 and laid flowers on Reed's grave. He teaches history and an honors course in Russian and Soviet studies.*

*On October 22, 1987, there was a school assembly at the Morristown-Beard School of faculty and students to celebrate the Centenary of John Reed.*

*Mr. Daur:*

Now I know how the speaker who followed Mario Cuomo at the Democratic convention felt. The eloquence here tonight has been far beyond my capabilities to match. As I look around this room I realize that I am just a Johnny-come-lately as far as the iconography of John Reed is concerned. I've been at Morristown-Beard for three years, and I am currently teaching Russian and Soviet studies there. With respect to the name of the school – Beard is not pronounced as in barber. In fact, one time the head football coach and I were coming home from a convention when we stopped at a gas station in upstate New York and were asked by the attendant, "What's a Morristown Beard." Jokingly, I responded, "Oh it's a school for barbers in New Jersey." I just couldn't resist!

My reason for being here tonight is a new set of Reed archives. When I first came to Morristown-Beard I had no awareness of the school's relationship with John Reed. But that was to soon change! One day when I was eating lunch in the cafeteria, Penny Merrill, our assistant director of development, said that she had noticed that I had a background in Russian History and wondered if I would be interested in seeing some papers of a certain John Reed who had graduated from the school in 1906. Naturally I was excited, and over the next year Penny and I formulated the idea of making a present of these archives to the Soviet people. It seemed inappropriate for these papers to be lying dormant in the bottom of a filing cabinet in a trailer at the school. This was not the deference and honor that I would have accorded them, and now, fortunately, because of subsequent events they are getting much better treatment!

The idea germinated that we might be able to use this as a vehicle to achieve some long range goals that I had for the school and for people in general. We're all romantics. I don't think we'd be here if we weren't at least partially romantics. I think that's the essence of the man. We



can talk about his politics. We can talk about the political spectrum, but I think that what John Reed can mean to us today, at least this is the way I'm seeing it, is as a symbol of the romantic vision. The man of action who follows his dream, sees the dream. I see Reed as Don Quixote! I'm not sure that too many literary analogies have been drawn, but I think that he fought his windmills as well as Quixote and Cervantes did theirs.

Out of the initial conversations the idea came forth that maybe we could make these archives a presentation to the people of the Soviet Union; to use them as a bridge. My ulterior goal was that I envisioned at Morristown a center for secondary school education in the area of Russian and Soviet studies. I feel that we have a unique situation, as we are the only prep school that has a graduate buried beside the Kremlin Wall. And living in the metropolitan area with Princeton just down the road, we figured that we are in an ideal location to draw on the expertise of the Russian and Soviet experts in the area. And I think that this is a dream that one day will be accomplished. At the same time, I saw that if we were successful in our presentation to the Soviet people, that the possibility of an exchange program at a secondary school level might be open to us. We are a small school, but I felt that our program and our capabilities allowed us to move in that direction.

To make a long story short, I had the opportunity this summer to visit the Soviet Union to present to the people of the Soviet Union on behalf of our school and the people of the United States, a copy of our school's Reed archives. I have here a duplicate copy, and when we're done here anybody who's interested in looking at it may do so. You'll be able to find out that on John Reed's Harvard entrance exam he got all D's and E's which probably meant that he had some friends in powerful places or some powerful friends in high places, whatever the case might be.

I'd like to tell you a story. While I was there, I met a man whom I consider extraordinary. We had a very formal presentation with the Assistant Director of the Lenin State Library, Yevgeny Fenelonov. It was a very nice affair, but during the process of the day I got to meet a man, Ivan Krasnov, with whom you may or may not be familiar. He is a member of the Academy of Sciences and an historian in the Soviet Union. I consider him a man of extraordinary warmth and somebody who has had a great impact on me. He changed me, I think, from someone who was just trying to utilize John Reed in a peace process and the development of the school, to somebody who then came home and spent a lot of time looking into the man himself. Ivan Krasnov was present at our presentation on the 28th of June at the Lenin State Li-

brary, and I was fortunate in that I was part of the presentation along with David Hedley who was our student government president, and the man struck me. There was something about Krasnov . . . there was a charisma . . . a magnetism . . . I just couldn't take my eyes off the man!

When David handed over the copy of the archives, Mr. Krasnov wept. Here was a man who had spent 35 years of his life studying John Reed. He is the foremost biographer of John Reed in the Soviet Union. He has written a number of books, one of which he gave to me and autographed. That was very nice, and I've just received a letter from him last week, and he's sending more material to our school. He's been gracious enough to send us some material that he has in his archives so that they may become a part of our school archives. The tears in his eyes said more than any words could!

The point I'm trying to make is, and I know that Susan Reed pointed out earlier, is that the man evokes emotion. I'm just saying this from the heart right now, because I'm sure that everyone in this room, whatever our politics are, appreciates the stature of someone who does go out, does pursue the windmill, and does not give up the fight!



## LEMENT HARRIS

Chairman Lamont: *Lement Harris, Harvard '26, represents tonight the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship. He is the author of a recent most stimulating autobiography, My Tale of Two Worlds, published by International Publishers.*

*Harris first visited the Soviet Union in 1929 and has paid countless visits since then, the last one being in August, 1987, to see how Gorbachev's reforms were affecting agriculture. Harris himself spent several years working on Soviet farms.*

*Here he is.*

Admirers of John Reed:

At the time of the October days in Petrograd, John Reed was just 30 years old and full of enthusiasm. I believe that he had a premonition that the events he was witnessing and recording were indeed the most significant of the 20th Century! But he was not the only American. There were others who like Reed responded to what those events meant to all of humanity.

One such man was Albert Rhys Williams, who, too, was in Petrograd at the time of the uprising. He was befriended by Lenin, who, unbelievably in spite of the pressure of events, actually offered to help him learn how to speak Russian. Williams related that during one of the sessions in the Smolny Institute when the new Soviet Government was being formed, Lenin from the floor saw Williams in the crowded balcony reserved for the press. You can imagine the envy of the working press when Lenin beckoned to Williams to come down to the floor. Surely Williams would scoop them all with a personal interview with Lenin.

This seemed confirmed when reporters could see Lenin animatedly talking with Williams, but out of their hearing. This was the scoop:

Lenin: "Albert, how are you coming with your Russian studies?"

Williams: "Not very well. I am one more American who has little ability to learn a foreign language."

Lenin: "Maybe you should try my system. When I study a foreign language, I start by learning maybe 200 verbs. That's enough for a start. Nouns, you need about 500. Then come adjectives and adverbs, maybe 50. Prepositions and conjunctions present little difficulty. Then start using all these!"

I might add that this theory of language study has not become one of Lenin's most frequently quoted opinions.

With Lenin's approval, Williams traveled far and wide throughout

European Russia, mainly observing the reaction of the peasantry to the overthrow of the landlord class. In one charming instance, he described in one of his books the fate of a landlord named Medem with extensive holdings. This man was decent in his relations with "his" peasants. Unlike others, he did not run away when the Bolsheviks took power. And "his" peasants protected him, even calling him "Comrade Medem." He continued to rattle around in his mansion though bereft of servants. A time came when he was told that his mansion was needed for a home for orphans and was offered a small house, which he accepted.

Decades later, when Williams was a guest in my home, I lined up my children and told them to shake hands with Williams. When they had done so, I told them that they had just shaken the hand which had shaken the hand of Lenin.

Other Americans heard humanity's call: Jessica Smith joined the American Friends' Service of Quakers who helped relieve the famine which developed in the lower Volga region as a result of the wars of intervention and drought. Also participating with the Quakers was Bob Dunn, for decades the director of Labor Research Inc. Beulah Hurley, a farm woman from New Hope, Pennsylvania, still living, also participated with the Friends' Relief in Russia.

Also in those early days, the man whom Jessica Smith was to marry, Harold Ware, also heard the call. He was an agricultural engineer and was convinced that this and future famines could best be combatted by introducing modern power farming methods directly on Russian soil. With the approval of Lenin, he put together personnel and equipment for the purpose. First he went to North Dakota where farming resembles that of the Russian steppes. He convinced a group of young, but experienced pioneer farmers, to drop everything and come with him to revolutionary Russia. Then he gained the agreement of the Case Farm Implement Company to donate 40 tractors and accompanying tillage machinery and harvesting machinery for this demonstration.

Land was assigned to Ware in the Urals along with 40 young peasants whose previous experience with machinery was limited to the wheels of a cart. But in a week's time, Ware reported, these young Russians became competent tractor drivers.

The success of Ware's demonstration was appreciated by Lenin. He sent a special message to the American Society of Friends with Soviet Russia and asked that it be published in the American press: It read in part:

I have just verified . . . the extremely favorable information that was published in our newspapers about the work of your



Society, headed by Harold Ware . . . In spite of immense difficulties . . . you have achieved successes that must be regarded as truly outstanding . . . No form of assistance is as timely and as important for us as that which you are rendering.

Lenin, Chairman of Council of  
People's Commissars  
October 24, 1922

We do well to honor John Reed and the others who responded to humanity's call. As 70 years have passed since those seminal days, the building of a Socialist society has witnessed both heartening and disheartening events. But who can doubt that the October Revolution ushered in a new and exciting epoch in humanity's evolving history.

I leave you with the thought: If the United States and the Soviet Union can be good allies in time of war, why can they not be good friends in time of peace?

Chairman Lamont: *We have concluded our New York John Reed meeting. In the midst of great troubles in our country and especially in our Government as well as in the world at large, we who admire Reed can draw courage and strength from his valiant life and dwell on the inspiring Message of a great American, to his fellow Americans and fellow human beings.*

## DAVID LAWSON

Chairman Lamont: *We turn now to the Reed meeting at Adams House, Harvard University on October 22, which was efficiently arranged by Thomas Ferrick, Harvard's Humanist Chaplain.*

*We are adding two excellent addresses made only at that meeting. The first is by David Lawson, author and poet, about the poetic and cultural aspects of John Reed's character.*

I think it appropriate to quote, initially, from an article by John Reed's grandniece, Susan Reed, which appeared in *People* magazine last April: "John Reed doesn't exactly tower over America's historic or literary horizons, and generally his name stirs only vague recognition." Furthermore, some words of caution have been supplied by Walter Lippmann, who said, in 1914, "He is many men at once, and those who have tried to bank on some phase of him, to regard him as a writer, a correspondent, a poet, a revolutionist, or a lover, lose him." It occurs to me that I may still be justified in looking at him as a poet since I am not, after all, trying to *bank on him* as such. In any event, as Max Eastman was to say in 1936, "Poetry to Reed was not only a matter of writing words but of living life." In this sense, Reed the poet and Reed the revolutionary were one and the same person.

The quotation from Max Eastman which I have just read continues with a related thought: "We had a certain scorn of books. Jack Reed did especially. His comradeship with Louise Bryant was based on a determination to smash through the hulls of custom and tradition and all polite and proper forms of behavior, and touch at all times and all over the earth the raw current of life . . ." In this respect, Reed as a poet belongs to an unbookish, Whitmanesque tradition, and it is a paradox that poets with a biophilic scorn for books may wind up adding to the shelves of the world's supply of such books. While mentioning Whitman, the influence of Rudyard Kipling, especially on earlier poems, also seems evident.

In spite of a thought, already here expressed, that Reed the poet and Reed the revolutionary were one and the same person, it is also the case that John Reed was known to have said of himself that as the revolutionary phase of his life developed, his career as a poet declined. It may not be without significance that Richard Hofstadter saw fit to quote words of Reed's to this effect in his *Anti-Intellectualism In American Life*. Fundamentally, however, I see him as an "invincible romantic" (to borrow an expression describing him from Louis Untermeyer.) Such romanticism spanned the word-loving world of the poet



and the action-loving world of the revolutionary. This romanticism was originally directed towards the past in such a way as to produce youthful poems celebrating ancient Greek and medieval European legends – King Arthur, for example. During his Greenwich Village days, Reed seems to have liberated himself from the claims of the past and took great joy in rendering the present. Then his production of poems began to taper off, and this development went along with what was, after all, a *future-oriented* revolutionary politics. In this sense, alternating poetical and political claims might be understood as a function of a “past-to-future” temporal movement. In this development, a mythical past gave way to an objective and concrete future. Even so, such a future – like poetry itself – went hand in hand with vision.

It will be useful to consider, first, the youthful poetry of bygone romantic myth. This was made all the more possible by an early exposure to fictional romance – stories of knights in battle as well as, for example, the Arabian Nights and, as noted, Greek myths. A poem from his prep school days to Tennyson is as follows:

Singer of the Kingly Arthur,  
Deathless song which cannot die.  
To thy truth I'd fall a martyr,  
Truth from lips that will not lie.

Give to me thine inspiration,  
Let thy soul my soul immerse  
Till through sweetest meditation  
I can sing my soul in verse.

At about age 20, John Reed has himself standing at Thermopylae, and in lines with a metrical scheme resembling “Hiawatha”:

As I stand upon the mountain  
Gazing down into the shadows  
Of the grave of Leonidas,  
Once again the sea is beating  
Restlessly against the boulders;  
Once again the mighty army  
Of the Persians, rolling onward,  
Scourged to battle by its masters,  
With a roaring like the ocean  
Breaks upon the iron Spartans. . . .

Again drawing upon the Greek myths, Reed wrote a poem, “The Tempest,” which begins with an equally romantic scene:

As Pallas sprang from the head of Zeus,  
Divine in her splendid mail,  
I leapt full-armed from the Sun-god's brow  
And rode in the roaring gale. . . .

Equally important were the Arthurian legends, and here the poet demonstrated his ability to compose a technically correct sonnet (on the Miltonian and Petrarchian model) which I shall read in its entirety:

King Arthur passed away into the night.  
Borne upon his sombre barge along,  
While through the dark there thrilled a wondrous song  
To Bedivere gazing with tear-dimmed sight.  
Straight to the east into the ashy light  
Of dawn, the strange ship held its lonely way,  
And like a sunbeam, in the eye of day  
The king's helm flashed far out upon the bight.  
The old, true days are gone; the future lies  
As dark and cheerless as the morning grey.  
The dreary countryside before his eyes  
Wakes a dull pain, as on his weary way  
The knight returns. A brooding vulture flies  
Toward the fateful field of yesterday.

As Corliss Lamont has indicated in the table of contents of Reed's *Collected Poems*, which he edited, the poet's output follows a three-way division, the first ending with the completion of his student career at Harvard, the second corresponding to his Greenwich Village period, and the last commencing with his Mexican assignment in 1914 and ending a year before his death. While the first group of poems contains much more in the way of romantic imagery from the past, there is also evidence of a dawning interest which parts company with this tradition. I refer, for example, to “The Change of the Political Brigade,” with lines such as follows:

Twenty votes, thirty votes,  
Forty votes onward  
Into the voting booth  
Strode the three hundred. . . .

“Forward, O Democrats!  
Down with black Darby hats!”  
How could the Party know  
Someone had blundered? . . .

There is a poem called "Mediaeval Gastronomy," dating to about the year of his graduation from college, which I feel significantly represents a great divide as between romantic awe of the tradition of chivalry and a new satirical outlook which can afford to scoff at it. This one begins:

'Tis not for such as I to doubt  
Those mediaeval tales,  
Yet oft they reach a point where the  
Imagination fails.  
The knights are dust, their good swords rust  
The sad-eyed poet sings;  
Yet, How *could* they wear such heavy clothes  
And eat such heavy things?

Nonetheless, at this stage in his life, John Reed is still capable of rendering lines which describe:

... the trackless shores of the sea, where the alien shouting  
of breakers  
Beats on a desolate land, and is lost in the swirl of the dunes,—  
The unsatisfied souls of the sea-dead wander the flowerless  
acres,  
Tracing in shadowless sand the mystic ineffable runes.

\* \* \*

John Reed parted company with the self-indulgent shams of bohemianism which he observed during his Greenwich Village days with his epic, "The Day in Bohemia," or "Life Among the Artists," which was dedicated to Lincoln Steffens. Likewise dedicated to Steffens is "Sangar," to me his single most impressive poem, which was published in the December, 1912 issue of *Poetry* by Harriet Monroe.

Sangar, an old-time warrior who says, "Greatly I killed in youth," is persuaded by his son to take up arms against the invading Huns. Although Sangar obliges, his pacifist leanings cause him to leap into no-man's land, saying, "Peace! God's Peace! Heed what Christus says." He then goes on to declare, to the amazed warriors, "When will you cast out hate? . . . Mercy . . . For sake of him who died on Tree, Who of all Creatures, loved the Least,"—at which point a priest cries: "Blasphemer!" In contemporary terms, I suppose what has happened here is that Sangar has become a "wimp," and he is duly denounced as a traitor by his son, who proceeds to kill him with a two-handed sword.

Luckily, there is a welcoming heaven for Sangar, though this is not my point. My point is rather that Sangar's own declared position is inconsistent: having appealed to the pacifist claims of Christus, he has then gone on to describe him as one who "loved the Least," thereby placing peace and love in contradiction and alienating both the priest and the warriors. I suggest there may be something autobiographical in the poet's own character here, insofar as Reed himself was to become *persona non grata* both with the United States government and with members of the Russian revolutionary Comintern. In the words of Emerson, quite simply, "To be great is to be misunderstood."

The discipline required to be a communist revolutionary was, of course, at odds with the undisciplined ways of bohemia. There was a further conflict for Reed, one between the claims of a success-oriented individualism according to the American success-mystique (he was a highly-paid journalist) and his idealistic bent to merge himself with the socialist cause. I think it is worthwhile to entertain a comparison here as between the poetry of John Reed and that of the young Englishman Christopher Caudwell, the semi-centennial of whose death in the Spanish Civil War occurred at the beginning of this year. Caudwell's poems demonstrate wit and a mastery of traditional forms and of technique, at the same time adding up to a poetic voice which never had an opportunity to find itself.

Both John Reed and Christopher Caudwell came from privileged family backgrounds. Reed might have found something to admire in the more bookish Caudwell, who with his widely-ranging interests, approached the ideal of the Renaissance Man. Another comparison is justified—one with Stephen Crane, likewise both a poet and a war correspondent. As gifted correspondents, Crane and Reed were equals. I think it must be said that, as poets, Crane may have the edge on Reed for being experimentally far ahead of his time, for anticipating, in fact, the movement in poetry known as Imagism. Both poets, in differing ways, echo Walt Whitman.

During the course of this year, a centenary tribute I wrote for John Reed appeared in a magazine called *Humanist in Canada* as well as in the American *Humanist*. My purpose—aside from wishing to memorialize him—was to show ways in which he should be regarded as a Humanist, one living, however, before a time when there was a formal Humanist association. In this respect, the first Humanist Manifesto was not issued until a dozen or so years after his death.

If we accept the fact that two major concerns of the Humanist position have always been, first, a critical vigil in the face of holier-than-thou attitudes stemming from religious supernaturalism, and, second,



a defense of human resources in the face of advancing mechanization, then, with regard to the first, I quoted one section of his poem "Revolt," which describes what he calls a "Church of the Negative Virtues," which has in turn what might be called a "laundered" Sunday service. Now I shall quote other lines from this poem:

Lovers anaemic and spotless;  
Passion deplored as a vice;

and also:

No harm in Thought is you think what you're taught—  
Yes, a magnificent race.

This poem concludes:

And you, who are holy, have made it—  
Have ticketed men and their ways—  
Have taken the zest from all that was best  
In these contemptible days!

Regarding a second Humanist concern I have described, which deplores mechanization, I quoted in my centennial tribute a section from the poem "Hospital Notes," with its sickening contrast between human and mechanical details. Now I shall quote from another section where a morbid cynicism masquerades as science:

The doctor said,  
"A most interesting case . . .  
"An acute cystitis, long neglected,  
"Infected bladder, ureters, kidneys—in fact  
The entire superpubic—you wouldn't understand . . .

"It is extraordinarily virulent. I've never seen  
"Such rapid progress . . . kill him? Ha, ha.  
"Well no, really. It's our duty, you know,  
"To preserve life as long as possible—and besides,  
"The last stages are particularly interesting. . . ."

Elsewhere, John Reed demonstrated his characteristic humanist attitude in a poem dedicated to Max Eastman, which includes this line:

A vision of new splendor in the human scheme

Also, in *Ten Days That Shook The World*, where Leon Trotsky is a central figure, he quotes him as saying, "A new humanity will be born of this war." If John Reed's full range of activities is taken into account, it must be acknowledged that he was a poet, journalist and political activist whose journalism was in a sense raised to the level of an art and whose political activism was a direct extension of his poetry. This is in keeping with a statement by Max Eastman, quoted here at the outset, that for Reed "Poetry was not only a matter of writing words but of living life." And it seems evident that a Humanist commitment and perspective is the overarching consideration, in forming all three of these activities.

At the outset I quoted words of Susan Reed, who said that her relation "doesn't exactly tower over America's historic or literary horizons, and generally his name stirs only vague recognition," and it seems fitting to return to them in conclusion. I have been interested in describing him as much as a cultural figure as I have a poet, and feel that the key to his cultural significance as well as his significance as a poet lies in his ability to fuse his words with action.

That in itself, it seems to me, makes him most unusual. It is simply not necessary to attempt to *justify* him as a poet, since he was obviously unique and thereby hardly in competition with other poets. His abiding status as a cultural figure is nowhere better indicated than by the fact that the literary journal *Partisan Review* was originally an outgrowth of the John Reed clubs. That in itself is a particularly high tribute, and he assumes a special importance in the arts when it is seen that his poems and his journalistic work form, in combination, an impressive kind of cultural activism.

## DANIEL I. BARENBLATT

Chairman Lamont: *The second Harvard speech is by an undergraduate, David I. Barenblatt '88, who is Hautbois of The Harvard Lampoon.*

WE SHALL NOW PROCEED TO CONSTRUCT THE SOCIALIST STATE!!

No, no, just kidding.

History has recorded several phases in John Reed's personal development as a revolutionary. We know him variously as eloquent union firebrand, traveller with Pancho Villa's army, close friend of Lenin, and proletarian revolution enthusiast. I would venture to assume that the making of a radical begins foremost with his attitude and feelings about the world, and that ideals and doctrine follow later. A mischievous, satirically-inclined mindset provides the fertile soil in which the seeds of revolution may grow. And for Reed, as for many Harvard students, the *Harvard Lampoon* provided an ample source of fertilizer. Indeed, the *Lampoon* remains a favorite organization of The Kremlin. A stained glass window in the Great Hall of the *Lampoon* Castle bears a red hammer and sickle seal which was donated by the Soviet government in memory of Reed. And his burial in the Kremlin shows the glittering destiny to which all *Lampoon* members aspire. One little known fact is that Khrushchev's infamous U.N. address, in which he banged his shoe on a table and proclaimed "We will bury you," was directed not toward the entire U.S., but specifically to the *Lampoon*. Of course, the remark was intended as a friendly gesture. In the prevailing Cold War chill, however, it was sadly misinterpreted.

In his elected office of Ibis (that is, vice-president) of the *Lampoon*, Reed found an unofficial organ for the expression of his jokes, cartoons, doggerel and light verse. Granted, none of it got much more political than, say, his pseudo-medieval ballad on the amorous exploits of a knight named the Robber-baron Schnizelbank. And the future author of *Ten Days That Shook The World* and Bolshevik propaganda speeches began his career by editing a decidedly apolitical *Lampoon* issue entitled "Through All My Days I'll Sing the Praise of Brown October Ale." And the smug humor and elitist glamour of the magazine was quite representative of the superior posturing of aristocratic Harvard College in the years 1907-1910. However, as former *Lampoon* president John Updike '54 has noted, the organization is "clearly an establishment flower, but it is just as surely a twisted one." The *Lampoon* in those days was one of a mere handful of campus organizations in which election and status were based more heavily on ability and

devotion than social background. Moreover, the *Lampoon* has never taken any institution seriously, and jabs at the college, its stodgy patri-cians, and Back Bay society were as common in its pages as the standard snipes at cold-blooded Cliffies or perennially goofy Yalies. The *Lampoon* accepted Reed because it accepted his jokes, and this in itself must have seemed a liberating experience. As an undergraduate, Reed found himself shut out of many prestigious clubs because he lacked social cachet. In an autobiographical essay reprinted in *The New Republic*, Reed wrote: "In two open contests, the trial for editor of the college daily paper (the *Crimson*) and that for assistant manager of the varsity, I qualified easily for election; but the aristocrats blackballed me. I began to pity them for lack of imagination and the narrowness of their glittering lives; outside there is the same class of people, dull and sated and blind."

II. Sir Brian de Bois Gilbert, in  
His iron B.V.D.s,  
Reclines in his ancestral board,  
Breakfasting at his ease.  
A haunch of venison, two steaks,  
And half a dozen quail,  
Then; He tops it off with buckwheat cakes  
And thirteen mugs of ale.

III. Mon dieu, you'd think that after that  
This gastronomic knight  
Would be unwell for quite a spell,  
Or leastways *hors de fight*,  
But with an energy undimmed  
He grinds his trusty blade  
And disdainful of dyspepsia,  
He starts a small crusade.

That piece carried illustrations by famed *New Yorker* illustrator Gluyas Williams.

I've gotten an E  
The surprise is a sad one.  
I really don't see  
Why it wasn't a B,  
And this one makes three,  
And the Dean is a bad one,  
I've gotten an E,  
The surprise is a sad one!



No, actually that one wasn't written by Vice President John Reed. But I just felt I had to share it with all of you. That one was written by the president.

E or no E, a reading of Reed's college works reveals that at Harvard, he had begun to establish his own alternative, defiant, elitism. He was an organization man who reveled in the perverse power of organizations, like the *Lampoon*, to oppose the class of the "dull, sated, and blind" with creative energy and subversive imagination.

Chairman Lamont: *The speeches by David Lawson and Daniel I. Barenblatt conclude our celebration of the John Reed Centenary of October, 1987. Complimentary copies may be obtained on request from Mrs. Edith Tiger, Director, National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.*