

new Masses

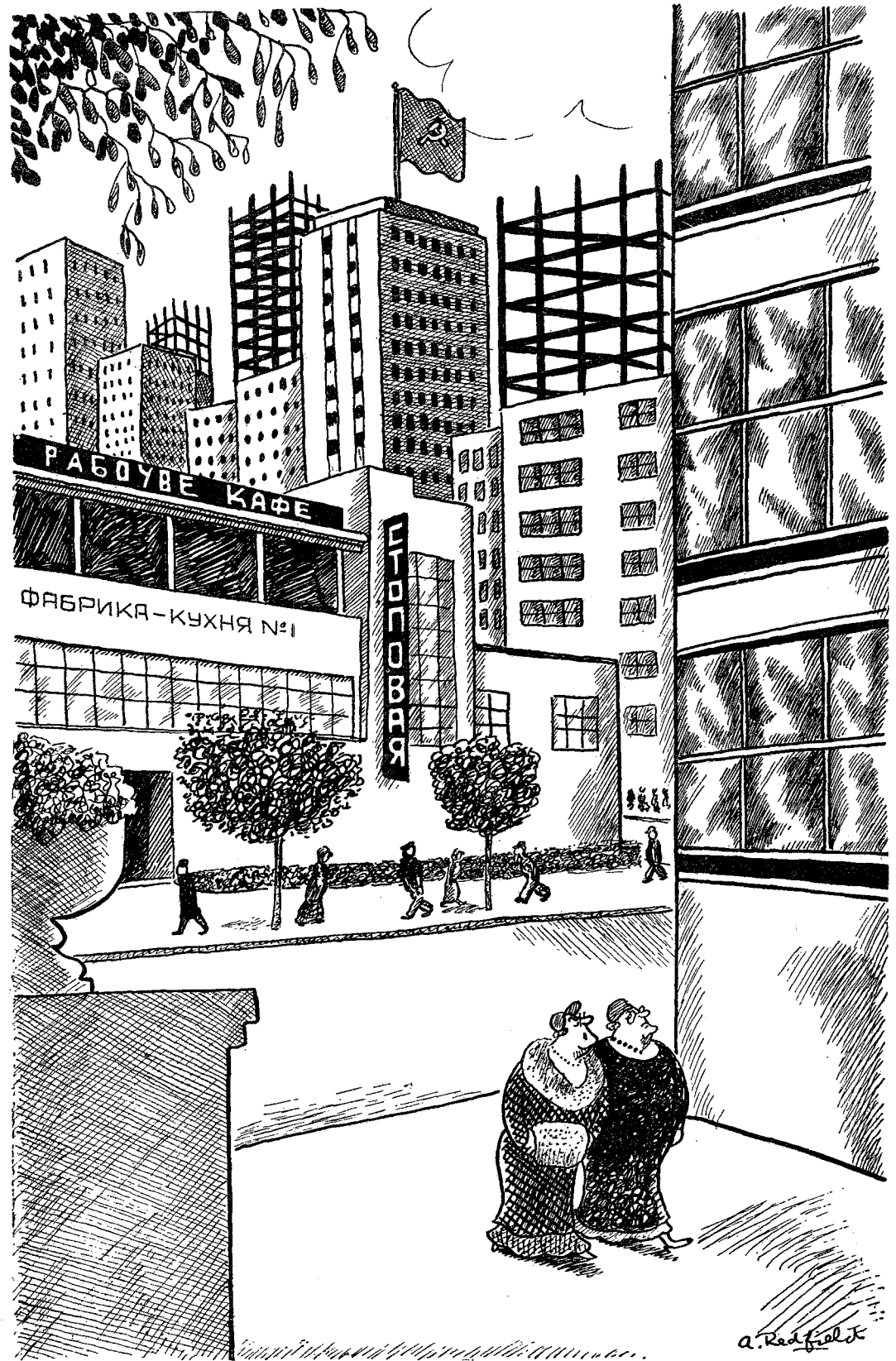
OCTOBER 15, 1935

The Comintern's Appeal

WAR is no longer a matter for debate; it is raging in Ethiopia and threatens to spread to Europe any day. Mussolini's legions in Africa have met with the initial success that was to be expected because of their superior arms. But the Ethiopians are putting up a stiff resistance; the fascist forces will meet with increasing difficulties as their lines of communication lengthen and the terrain becomes more unfavorable for the use of mechanized transport. After a study of the facts, the League of Nations Council has determined that Italy is the aggressor and the Assembly is being called upon to decide what form of sanctions shall be applied. France is playing a shrewd game and is utilizing the occasion to drive a hard bargain with England. The French replied to the English inquiry regarding naval support in the event of Italian resistance with a counter demand that England give the same guarantee in case of military moves on the continent. The war in Africa is the beginning of another struggle for colonies, with England determined to prevent Mussolini from obtaining possession of Ethiopia. Nazi Germany is preparing to use the occasion for an attack on Lithuania and Germany, Poland and Hungary are trying to fashion an offensive alliance. Japan's moves in the Far East show that her militarists are also awake to the possibility that this may be a strategic time for them to strike in China and Siberia.

IN AN effort to rally opponents of war, the Communist International has just issued an appeal to all workers' organizations and friends of peace urging immediate united action. Eight days prior to the beginning of military operations the Comintern issued a similar appeal to the Second International that has not yet been answered. The new appeal points out that not another moment must be lost:

The governments of the biggest capitalist states represented in the League of Nations are again dooming it to impotence. The game of self-seeking interests of the imperialists is rendering collective action by the League impossible.

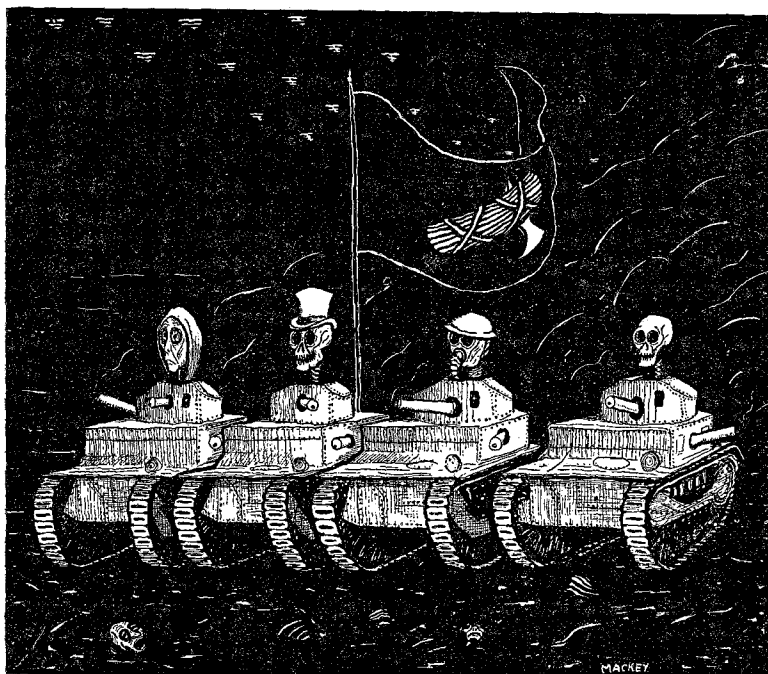


"I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT!"

Redfield

The Comintern is urging workers to take the initiative to make certain that Italy is prevented from obtaining war supplies of all kinds. Immediate action, it is pointed out, will mean "encircling Italy with an iron ring of isolation and smashing the war begun by it; it means a blow restraining all the fascist instigators of war who are preparing to follow the example of Italian fascism." In the United States the strength of peace sentiment has caused President Roosevelt to issue a neutral-

ity proclamation asking citizens not to travel on boats of either belligerent. Since Ethiopia has no ships the proclamation hits at Italy alone. Another factor in the Roosevelt peace policy is the fear that Japan may seize the occasion to expand in the Pacific. For the moment at least the policy of American imperialism accords with the peace desires of the masses. But opponents of war cannot depend on such temporary alignments. If Italy is to be checkmated and war prevented from



THE FOUR HORSEMEN RIDE AGAIN

Mackey

spreading, Americans must demand the lifting of the embargo on arms for Ethiopia and the applications of sanctions to Italy with an embargo on shipments both of finished and raw materials to Mussolini.

The A.F.L. Convention Opens

LABOR throughout America, watching the proceedings at the fifty-fifth annual convention of the A. F. of L. in Atlantic City cannot but heartily acclaim William Green's anti-war declaration in his opening speech. Here, Mr. Green voiced the will of the overwhelming majority of the American people. However, when he came out flat-footed against the formation of a Labor Party at this time, the A. F. of L. leader is certainly not voicing the desire of millions of American workingmen today. Nor can he dodge the issue by pointing a finger toward Moscow and shouting his refusal to accept "dictation from a foreign country." He referred, of course, to the resolutions adopted by the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International favoring the formation of a mass Labor Party to forestall fascism and halt the outbreak of world hostilities. Mr. Green must decide whether he will accept the "dictation" of his proletarian countrymen from Peoria or Denver or Seattle. Even The New York Times admitted the strength of the pro-Labor Party sentiment in this country: "Formation of a labor party . . . will be pressed in a large number of resolutions by international unions,

State Federations, city central labor bodies and local Federal unions." Mr. Green trod gingerly around another fundamental issue before the convention—the question of industrial unionism versus craft unionism. But he will not avoid these issues by digging his head in the sand; they are greater than Mr. Green or any individual leader, for the question of bread and butter is at stake. Greater men than Mr. Green have lost their power when they ignored that one fundamental issue.

Harvard Patrioteers

I do not see how I can possibly conform to a law which I believe violates my constitutional rights as a citizen and a teacher . . . I do not know what will be the consequences, but at present it is my intention to refuse to take the teachers' oath . . . This measure is aimed directly at freedom of thought . . . I have sworn to defend the Constitution several times as a member of the United States Geological Survey, and as a captain in the Officers' Reserve Corps . . . But in my capacity as a member of the faculty of Harvard University I am not an official of the government and never should I be so considered. Teaching in an institution like Harvard must not become a state function. If it does, education is doomed to stagnation and the twilight of democracy will deepen into blackest night.

—DR. KIRTLEY F. MATHER.

WHEN Kirtley F. Mather, Harvard geology professor and Boston liberal, signified last week his intention to refuse to take the oath of

allegiance to the constitution, required of all Massachusetts teachers under the new state law, he threw the reactionaries into complete confusion. For the much-disputed Teachers' Oath Act, passed last spring in the teeth of bitter opposition from liberal and radical groups, provides no penalty for refusal to conform. Representative Dorgan of Dorchester, sponsor of the bill, so admitted, and after unsuccessfully attempting to break up an educators' meeting at which Mather presided, announced he would file a bill in the next legislature that would "put teeth" into the oath law. President Marsh of Boston University urged faculty members to sign the oath. Harvey Gruver, Superintendent of Schools in Lynn, paused in his valiant attempt to expel an 8-year old schoolboy for refusal to salute the flag long enough to announce that Lynn teachers would be required to take the oath individually, "in order to learn the identity of those teachers, if any, who intend to evade taking the oath." Brookline High School students, headed by the faculty, were marched onto the playground and ordered to salute the flag as the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." Leverett Saltonstall, blue-blood Speaker of the House, originally an opponent of the bill, criticized Mather's stand, as the D.A.R. yapped and patrioteers burst into a full-throated bay.

ON the other hand, Mather had considerable support among his colleagues. Some 200 members of the Harvard faculty were reported to be behind him, including internationally-known specialists in the fields of philosophy, history and law; and petitions were circulated among the student body. Boston's 4,500 public-school teachers, who are to be administered the oath this week, discussed what to do, their eyes on Harvard. Many among the Harvard faculty were encouraged by the memory of the words of Harvard's new young president, Conant, who had stated at commencement that, whatever might be the form of government without, "thought within these walls shall remain free." Harvard was considerably stunned, therefore, when President Conant curtly announced that faculty members could take the oath—or quit. Unperturbed by the fact that the Oath Act is of doubtful constitutionality, especially as applied to private institutions such as Harvard, he exceeded the wildest dreams of reac-

tionaries by supplying the Oath Act with the teeth it lacked. In a prepared statement, he said, "It is out of the question for Harvard University, as an institution, to consider not obeying the law," and enlarged on his statement to reporters by promising that any faculty member refusing to take the oath will be told he cannot continue to teach at Harvard. In the face of Conant's ultimatum, Mather has announced he would sign the oath, basing his decision on the legal point that the mandatory instrument for enforcement is, under the terms of the Act, Harvard University and not the courts of Massachusetts. Just how Harvard could legally enforce a measure for which no penalty is provided is a delicate legal question which might be of considerable interest to, say, the editors of *The Harvard Law Review*. But it is entirely irrelevant to the present question, which is quite simply this: Are professional patrioteers to bark and internationally-known men of science to wag their submissive tails? If Dr. Mather reaffirms his original stand, the support he receives will surprise and hearten him. If he meekly submits to Harvard's millions of dollars of tax-free holdings in Massachusetts speaking in the voice of Harvard's bland young

"liberal" president, he will in some measure be guilty of contributing to the "deepening twilight of democracy" against which he warns.

The Army to the Rescue

OPEN alliance between the Army and the Works Progress Administration has now been completed. "By direction of the President, Major General E. M. Markham, Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, has been designated as Engineering Consultant to the W.P.A. and the resources of the Corps of Engineers have been made available to the Works Progress Administration to facilitate its operations. The Consulting Field Engineers will shortly visit the areas to which they are assigned, and State Administrators are requested to afford them every facility for securing full information concerning the Works Program in each state, with particular regard to those obstacles or difficulties which are hampering the speedy development of the program." This is the latest Army game. We had the Army grabbing off a big share of the four billion dollars for uncamouflaged Army projects. Next it extended its sphere of influence to such apparently innocent projects as road building, and the development of

Alaska. And now we have it, quite properly, detailing Lieut. Col. F. C. Harrington and a staff of eleven officers of the Corps of Engineers to the duty of seeing that all W.P.A. work is carried out in a soldierly manner. Perhaps Roosevelt, in his San Diego speech promising peace for the United States, was thinking of such extensions of power to our own Army.

C. R.'s Ally: The Klan

J. B. MATTHEWS, vice-president of Consumers' Research, told a group of subscribers a few weeks ago that vigilante mobs would soon attack the striking employes of Consumers' Research. On the morning of October 4, *The Washington (N. J.) Star* carried a letter signed simply "Disgusted Taxpayer," echoing the Red scare spread through the town by Matthews and demanding that civic organizations band together to run the leaders of the strike out of town. On the night of October 4, the Klu Klux Klan entered the picture with the burning of a twenty-foot cross on a hill overlooking Washington. Did Matthews go to the Klan? One cannot know. But whether or not he did his continued efforts to incite the townspeople against the strike leaders have borne fruit; he cannot avoid responsibility for making the Klan a newest ally of the C.R. management. A committee including Heywood Broun, Congressman Vito Marcantonio, Bruce Bliven, Margaret Marshall, Albion Hartwell, Rabbi Edward Israel and John Chamberlain is planning a public mass trial of Matthews and his strike-breaking colleague F. J. Schlink at Town Hall on the evening of October 24. The committee will do an important public service if it brings out the full story of the union-smashing and Red-baiting activities of the man who only a few months ago wrote: "There are many enemies of the working class today, the most dangerous of them all are those that bring professions of friendliness, like a flag of truce, only to gain a close vantage point for their determined attack."

Progress Notes

TRUE to the President's promise, the Federal Government is going out of "this business of relief." In six states the Federal Emergency Relief Administration has already boarded up its doors. On September 1 all direct relief was stopped in Alabama and Wyoming. Vermont came next, and on

new Masses

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September 30 the F.E.R.A. pridefully announced that "Indiana, Nevada and New Hampshire will receive no more Federal funds for relief." A stringy little woman, standing outside of her Alabama shanty, described life on the dole in three words. "We was breathin'," she said. What will keep millions of workers and farmers "breathin'" now that the dole has been cut off? The F.E.R.A. has a glib sounding answer: "The combination of works program employment for the employables on the relief rolls and the provision of State and local aid for the unemployables will take care of needy from now on." At best this is the wishful thinking of psychotics. More plausibly, it is an unvarnished lie, as even the fudged figures of government reports show. "Works Progress employment for the employables on the relief rolls" has put 194 former relief clients to work in Nevada. The remaining 2,600 of whom statistical cognizance is taken are from now on dropped from the President's reckoning. Are they all "unemployables?" Can the state and local authorities take care of them? These questions were not answered before F.E.R.A. shut its doors in Nevada.

The Dunckel Bill in Action

LAST May, THE NEW MASSES labelled Michigan's Dunckel Bill "the most sweeping challenge to labor in the whole campaign to outlaw all forms of protest against conditions in America." The Dunckel Bill is now in actual use as an instrument of repression. Detroit's police censor, Sergeant J. M. Koller, issued a permit to the Cinema Guild to show *The Youth of Maxim*, a Soviet film on Czarist oppression in Russia during 1906, which had been acclaimed by movie critics throughout America. But when the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Detroit Employers' Association, the University of Detroit and the American Party brought pressure on the sergeant, he suddenly revoked the permit under his newly-acquired powers granted by the Dunckel Bill. Sergeant Koller stated, "this film is Communist propaganda and should not be shown . . . there was a law passed by the last session of the legislature which took effect after I saw the picture under which I act now." But when asked what the name of the law might be, Koller replied, "I don't know the name of it. I haven't read a copy of the law." And he turned to

Walter S. Reynolds, chairman of the subversive affairs committee of the American Legion for aid. Reynolds elaborated: "The law doesn't say film, newspaper, magazine or what. It says you can take anything that advocates overthrow of the government by force." How *The Youth of Maxim*, an historical account of events thirty years past, comes under this ban, the police do not specify. But the Dunckel Bill covers it—covers any suppression of civil liberties the "patriots" of Detroit endorse. But Detroit liberals, labor unionists, social and artistic leaders refuse to allow the Dunckel Bill to rob them of all rights. They have protested in the name of the Cinema Guild; in New York, The New Theater League, the Film and Photo League, The New Theater Magazine and the New Film Alliance are supporting their move by sending letters and telegrams of protest to Mr. Koller of Detroit.

The Gallup Trial Starts

THE trial judge, one James B. McGhee, remarked "I can't see why so much hell is being raised over a few Mexicans." As the day of the trial approached, the "United American Patriots"—a high-sounding name for vigilantes—launched a Red-baiting campaign. The state of New Mexico and the federal government cooperated in spreading the terror. Workers found with defense leaflets in their possession were forced across the Colorado border. Witnesses summoned by the defense have been deported; the wife of one defendant was arrested when she arrived in Aztec to testify. The stage is set in San Juan County for the "trial" of ten miners indicted for the murder of Sheriff Carmichael last April. The ten were among those protesting the eviction and arrest of miners from houses they had built themselves. They had asked for relief. And when the deputies opened fire on unarmed men and women gathered peacefully to insist on the rights of fellow workers, Sheriff Carmichael fell dead with a bullet in his head from the gun of one of his own deputies—while the other officers murdered two miners.

SIXTY men and women are brought up on a charge of murder, although none was armed at the time of the shooting. Ten were held for trial; the deputies who shot the workers were allowed to go free. In a lynch atmosphere comparable to Scottsboro, ten

miners are brought before a reactionary, labor-hating judge who has intimated that his mind is made up before the case is tried. Against him is arrayed a formidable group, including the International Labor Defense, the American Civil Liberties Union, lawyers from the offices of "Wild Bill" Donovan, well-known New York attorney. A. F. of L. unions and liberal and worker organizations demand fair trial and refuse to tolerate the railroading of workers to jail because the owners who control the state want to be rid of militant leaders. To back the defense, the lawyers for the miners ask for protests to the judge, the attorney-general of New Mexico, the governor. They ask that all unions and mass organizations back up their fight for the liberation of the Gallup miners. As Robert Minor warned, the ten defendants must not be made into ten Mooneys, "legally" lynched by the reactionary powers of New Mexico.

The Shopkeeper Strikes

THE small shopkeeper has much the same interest as the worker in the fight against high prices and the profit-squeezing of the large wholesaler. Last summer, the meat strike saw the owner of the corner meat market and the housewife cooperating to bring down the exorbitant price of meat. Unfortunately, in some cases, the mutuality of interest was not sufficiently understood; organizations of housewives failed to maintain close contact with the butchers, who became discouraged and opened their shops before the strike had gained the momentum necessary for a successful struggle. At the present time, 800 retail fish dealers have tied up the Peck Slip in New York City in protest against the high price of fresh-water fish demanded by large wholesalers. Picketing successfully closed the markets; it was extended to the pushcart markets nearer the center of the city. Housewives' organizations are urged to join the picket lines in the event the strike becomes a protracted fight. High prices menace the best interest of workers, who cannot afford to buy and of small shopkeepers, who suffer from lack of buyers. The cooperation of the buyer and the small merchant against the large wholesalers who bear down on both will force reasonable prices and will be the basis for united action for mutual interest in other struggles affecting each group.

The Making of a Revolutionary

FIFTEEN years ago the workers of Moscow buried beside the Kremlin wall, in the spot sacred to revolutionary heroes, the body of an American. It was the body of John Reed, the Harvard playboy who wrote the best report of the Russian revolution and helped to found organized Communism in the United States.

Reed's story is so unusual and yet so truly representative that it deserves to be told and retold. It is unusual not merely because of his background—the good, respectable Oregon family, the fashionable preparatory school, the Gold Coast at Harvard—but because he was, when he came out of Harvard in 1910, what his friends called him, a playboy, eager for adventure, fond of mad exploits, reckless, carefree, undisciplined. And it is representative because John Reed wanted from life just what so many writers of today want who have followed him into the revolutionary movement and learned, in much the same way they have, that his desires could be fulfilled only in a new social order.

The John Reed who graduated from Harvard in the same class as Hamilton Fish, Walter Lippmann and T. S. Eliot was a young man of enormous energy, vast ambition and the sensitiveness of a poet. He was so constructed that he could learn only by experience, but he could learn. What he chiefly wanted was literary success, and it took him a year or two to discover the meaninglessness of writing for Collier's, The American and The Saturday Evening Post. He also discovered, because his vast curiosity about life took him into every corner of New York, that there were such things as exploitation and poverty, and that he belonged to a very small, highly privileged minority. Together, the two discoveries set him to contributing to the newly-founded Masses.

He was still a long way from radicalism, but one day in April, 1913, he went over to Paterson to observe the silk strike. He was arrested, went to jail, saw what the strikers were up against and was heart and soul with them. He organized the Paterson pageant, bringing the strike to Madison Square Garden that the world might know what the class struggle was. He

joined the I.W.W., but he spent the next summer in a villa in Italy. After all, he was a poet; he wanted all experience; the battles of labor were only a small part of life.

The following winter he went to Mexico and spent three months with Villa's army. Mexico made his reputation as a journalist, but it taught him little about revolutions. His sympathies were wholly with the peons and with Villa because he was a courageous man and the peons loved him. But he was interested in colors and surfaces and emotions, not in economic forces.

The World War was a different matter. Reed spent four months in France, England and Germany, and seven months on the eastern front. From the first he had no illusions about what he called "this traders' war," and what he actually saw of its horrors, of what it did to men's minds as well as their bodies, coupled with what he knew of its futility, brought him back to America, saying, "This is not our war!"

During 1916 Reed was one of those who fought American participation in the war and he came to understand the forces he was opposing, the bankers and the munition-makers. The whole picture fitted together now; the system that created the East Side slums and that killed strikers in Paterson, Ludlow and Bayonne was the system that made war inevitable. Everything in him cried out for its destruction, but who could destroy it? Could and would the workers shake off their lethargy and docility and realize their power? The collapse of the Second International and the belligerent patriotism of A.F. of L. leaders made him wonder.

Fortunately he was to see for himself. He arrived in Russia just after the defeat of Kornilov in September, 1917, and remained until just before the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. He went everywhere, saw everything. And he understood. The East Side, Paterson, Mexico, the western front and the eastern, the United States at war—these had prepared him. And with John Reed, all his life, to understand was to act.

Reed was a poet, not a professional revolutionary. It was true that he had written relatively little poetry in the four years since his arrest in Paterson,

but his mind was the mind of a poet. He had written little because, in the first place, he was so occupied with other things and, in the second place, because he was slowly developing from narrowness and imitation into breadth and originality. Growth as a poet went hand in hand with the discovery that the world had to be changed and that he had to play a part in changing it. Delayed for two months in Christiania, on his way back from Russia, he wrote "America, 1918." It marked a new beginning, but it was, except for a few fragments, the last poem he wrote.

Arrived at maturity as a poet, Reed found that there was no time for the writing of poetry. America knew almost nothing about the Russian revolution, and it was his responsibility to tell what he had seen. So he spoke at scores of meetings and wrote dozens of articles and finally, when the government returned to him the notes and documents it had confiscated, he wrote *Ten Days That Shook the World*.

But telling what had happened in Russia was not enough. There were revolutionaries in America, too, and they needed Reed because he had seen and understood the Russian revolution. He became a leader of the left wing of the Socialist Party, a contributing-editor of The Revolutionary Age, editor of The New York Communist, editor of The Voice of Labor. And when the left wing broke away, he was made an official of the Communist Labor Party, one of the two parties that subsequently combined to form the Communist Party.

It was on a mission for the Communist Labor Party that he went to Russia in 1919, by the perilous underground route. He saw Russia in famine and civil war, and learned to admire more than ever its workers and peasants and their leaders. Trying to return to the United States on another mission, he was captured, and spent thirteen weeks in solitary confinement in a Finnish jail. Back in Russia, he attended the second congress of the Communist International, served on various of its commissions, and was elected to its executive committee. He went to Baku for the Congress of Oriental Nations, caught typhus and died.

Not long before he fell ill, Reed told a friend that he wanted "to get this