

Of the reds



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'Reds' (1981) - A Film Review As it attempts to bring across a fair biographical account of the widely acclaimed American radical journalist John 'Jack' Reed (Warren Beatty) with respect to his working advocacy for communist ideals alongside the romantic complications with co-writer and progressive thinker Louise Bryant (Diane Keaton), the film 'Reds' thematically exhibits an overall attribute of humanizing a political movement the outcomes of which appear to challenge the main character's resolve for ideology. Beginning with his acquaintance to L. Bryant in Portland, Oregon, Reed moves to Greenwich Village then Provincetown with liberal companions who have altogether driven Bryant with the highest motivation to tag along and acquire the same radical principles with a special spot for feminism. Despite their growing faith of love for each other, Reed eventually realizes the essence of deeper involvement with the co-founded American Communist Party, known as the 'Reds' backing the cause of labor strikes. This point might have significantly depicted ideology as a deadly mistress and an unseen force that puts the lovers to the test to the extent of physical separation and splitting apart of mutual perspective for romanticism which runs counter to Reed's ensuing passion for communism. Louise consequently avails relief through love affair with their common friend and renowned playwright Eugene O'Neill (Jack Nicholson) yet inevitably reconciles and marries Jack notwithstanding his already obsessed partnership with the established set of ideals for communism within the leftist politics. Upon witnessing the dreadful incidences of the Russian Revolution in 1917 led by the Bolsheviks, J. Reed writes and allows circulation of the 'Ten Days that Shook the World' in 1919, prompting Stalin's Communist Party of the Soviet Union to raise allegations regarding the book's factually erroneous content

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and make pertinent corrections accordingly. In the movie, Reed expresses idealism yet becomes disillusioned himself towards Bolshevism and the bureaucratic Grigory Zinoviev (Jerzy Kosinski) of the triumvirate in further control via Soviet leadership after Lenin passed away. Near the film's end, Reed portrays being in a profound spiritual ordeal through personal encounters with Emma Goldman (Maureen Stapleton) and Zinoviev which pierce him with discordance between the state of Soviet Union's reality and the socialist idealism. While in an enthusiastic conversation with Goldman who argues - "The soviets have no local autonomy. The central state has all the power. All the power is in the hands of a few men and they are destroying the revolution. They are destroying any hope of real communism in Russia," Reed responds - "You sound like you are a little confused about the revolution in action. Up 'till now you've only dealt with it in theory... Did you honestly think things were going to work right away? Did you honestly expect social transformation was going to be anything other than a murderous process? It's a war EG, and we got to fight it like we fight a war: with discipline, with terror, with firing squads. Or we just give it up." With a real heart for radical social change, Reed exemplifies a Maoist conviction where 'revolution' ought not to be perceived as a 'dinner party'. Apparently, Goldman's viewpoint is representative of radical idealist 'left' which rids itself of any political accountability or attachment with real existing socialism thus, it may not be aligned with the true revolutionist spirit. By this attitude, anarchists like Goldman would only withstand having to criticize but not redress Bolshevik flaws through an actual counterrevolution as she barely sees beyond her own preconceived Utopian inclination. The other aspect to Reed's philosophy exclaims to Zinoviev: "When you separate a man from

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what he loves the most what you do is purge what's unique, and when you purge what's unique in him, you purge dissent... And when you purge dissent, you kill the revolution. Revolution is dissent!" To his last breath, however, as he dies in his beloved's keeping, neither she nor Zinoviev ever ceased of addressing Reed as 'comrade' in spite of their numerous intellectual rifts and misunderstandings.