

## The Screen

### John Reed in Mexico, at the Regency.

REED: INSURGENT MEXICO, directed by Paul Leduc; screenplay (Spanish with English subtitles) by Juan Tolar and Mr. Leduc; from John Reed's book "Mexico Insurgente"; photography, Alexis Grivas; editors, Rafael Castaneda and Giovanni Korporaal; released by New York Films. At the Regency Theater, Broadway between 67th and 68th Streets. Running time: 110 minutes. This film has not been classified.

John Reed ..... Claudio Obrégon  
General Urbina .. Eduardo Lopez Rojas  
Pablo Seanez .....Ernesto Gomez Cruz  
Julian Reyes .....Juan Angel Martinez

By NORA SAYRE

How can you film a revolution—without conveying the specific issues and individuals that set it off? It's not enough to show that people are poor, nor to have them talk of "liberty," nor simply to show them fighting. Political fuzziness is the main flaw of Paul Leduc's "Reed: Insurgent Mexico," a movie about John Reed, the American journalist, and his experiences in the Mexican Revolution in 1913-14, when he followed the troops of Gen. Tomas Urbina and Pancho Villa. (The film is based on Reed's own book, "Mexico Insurgente.") But Reed—who later reported on the Russian Revolution, wrote "Ten Days That Shook the World," and formed the American Communist Workers' party—was too complex a figure for this kind of fictionalized account. The movie is playing today at the Regency Theater.

However, the movie is worth seeing for its thoughtful evocation of old-fashioned warfare, when fighting was a slow and clumsy process. Heavy donkey-drawn carts were carefully loaded with explosives, and it was an effort simply to reach the battle itself. Even sparse troops did not have enough horses for everyone, hence some soldiers with cumbersome weapons stumbled after their mounted colleagues.

The movie is shot in sepia to give it a period flavor, and the device does work. The worn faces of civilians and soldiers appear to emerge from another era. And there are many vivid details, such as the general who loves being photographed (he poses with his Victrola at his side), the scenes of soldiers chatting casually or trading insults, and the moments when the troops stare at a calm field—waiting for it to erupt with bullets and bombs.

Claudio Obrégon, who plays John Reed, looks too Latin for the part—hence he seems like a mere outsider, rather than a creature from a totally alien culture. Still, his subtle performance succeeds in evoking a reporter troubled by the familiar question of participation. Since he supports the revolution, he feels guilty at being a mere spectator and thinks he ought to fight, yet admits his personal fear of doing so. At times, he wondered why he was in Mexico at all, when he felt that he should be back in the United States, "fighting the rich." His dilemma is well-served by this movie—even if the Mexican revolution is not.