V. I. LENIN -- APRIL 23, 1970-JAN. 21, 1924 --

"Art belongs to the people. Art must have its deepest roots in the vast creative masses. It must be understood and loved by the masses. Art must organize the feeling, thought and will of the masses... let us always have the workers and peasants in mind. For their sake, let us learn economics and arithmetic; let us develop in the field of art and culture."
Solidarity—Stand by the seven men of Gustonia.

The London Conference—The diplomats are meeting in London next month for another discussion on disarmament. Which means we are another step nearer the next world-war. Duellists always confer before battle, and choose their weapons. Battleships are outdated; the international duellists are trying to effect an agreement to fight with airplanes and submarines. It is a means of modernizing their armaments, not abolishing them. It is a means of stabilizing capitalism by cutting down the tax-rate. There have been many such conferences. This time the chief comedian is Ramsay Macdonald. The British Empire is sinking. He is trying to save it by an alliance with America against Europe. The British imperial fleet is in the way. He is willing to sacrifice it and offers parity to America. How blind is the human race, not to hear under all the fine disarmament phrases the big guns of the next war! The old diplomacy is out of favor; the new diplomacy has learned to speak the pious vague Ramsayian rhetoric. It leads to mass-murder just the same. It is quite possible that the Christian bellwether of the next world war will be this same Ramsay. He is another Woodrow Wilson. He is being adored by the same people who killed Germans in the last war for such beautiful liberal reasons. Ramsay, whose government shoots down workers in India, Egypt, China, whose aviators bomb native villages in Mesopotamia and Africa! Ramsay, prince of peace, and king of an empire of slaves! Does anyone imagine England could hold its empire without guns, or that Ramsay wants give up that empire?

This is a conference, not to abolish armament, but to abolish obsolete armament. It is also a conference whose subtle, unexpressed object is to form new alliances for the next world war. Watch it.

Prohibition—The Volstead act is a joke, of course. No one expects it, no one obeys it. It will inevitably be modified. We will be drinking in public again, instead of from the hip. Good. But what of it? What makes the liberal journalists so emotional about Prohibition? It is this theme alone that snaps the hard-boiled Mr. Mencken out of his universal cynical, and makes him write with the passion and pathos of a dunce. It is this subject that infuriates the mild, whimsical Heywood Broun so that he begins shouting of barricades and red flags. It is the one subject the liberal intellectuals of America feel most intensely and personally. We others are being constantly amazed by their antics. Can gin be so important an intellectual? They call us fanatics when we protest against the suppression of Haiti, or the industrial barbarities in the south, or the corrupt leadership in the A. F. of L. But do we rant half as much about these serious matters as they do over gin? Really, it's enough to turn one into a Prohibitionist. There's something faintly silly about the man who can remain Olympian when coal miners are being shot down by State troopers, but who suddenly bursts into flaming revolt because his gin is censored. Let's have the gin, if possible, but let's not mistake a bottle of Gordon Dry for the Holy Grail. The thing has become a burlesque. Imagine an army of idealists, marching as to war behind their shuffling, big-footed but noble-hearted General H. Broun. Their eyes shine with the spirit of sacrifice. Their throats are parched, but they sing their sacred battle-hymn as they go: "How Dry I Am." The drums beat, the brasses blow, and above the bristling ranks of bayonets floats a banner with a strange device: "We Want Our Gin!"

It's funny, that's all. If one must fight Prohibition, one ought do it humorously. No solemn crusade can be arranged for such a cause. Even the kris would laugh.

The repeal of the Volstead act will not change America by a single fundamental. Hoover will still be in the White House, miners will still die of black-damp and government bullets, two million children will still be slaving in cotton mills and beet fields, forty million wage workers will still be earning yachts, pearls and Parke avenue apartments for their bosses.

Europe has no Volstead act, but the masses of common people suffer under the same economic slavery as they do here. One can drink gin in England at every streetcorner, but two million unemployed haven't had the price of a pint of bitters for over ten years.

Let's not be trivial.

Literature—Fiction and poetry are two forms of literature that are slowly dying to-day. One does not need to theorize; a glance at any publisher's list confirms the fact. With the growth of the scientific attitude, people are beginning to feel that reality is more miraculous and romantic than all the inventions of the novelists and poets.

It is not materialism that does it. The speculations of Einstein contain more of the sublime, certainly, than whole mountains of Love lyrics, with their feeble biological obsessions.

Facts are the new poetry. The proletarian writer will cut away from the stale plots, love stories, ecstasies and verbal heroisms of the fictionists of the past. He will work with facts. Facts are his strength. Facts is his passion. He will not worry too much about form. Facts create their own new form. Aeroplanes are beautiful, but not because some artist planned this beauty. Utility created it.

Utility, propaganda, will create a beauty of form in the proletarian poems, plays and novels of the future. In Soviet Russia this is already true. The great Russian films are all propaganda films built up on significant facts.