

it individual, as though
 tion of its guilt by in-
 ness, hypocrisy, or gul-
 tent the postwar mood
 the frustration of lofty
 ed during the war. . . .
 a might not long have
 nation for participation
 if Utopia had seemed a
 the national advantage,
 t compelling objectives,
 fundamental self-inter-
 completely justified in-
 respect.

a people had been more
 would have gladly ac-
 ces of war as the legiti-
 idealistic enterprise. If
 re egoistic, they would
 I such high ideals from
 as had been more real-
 : have tempered both
 I idealistic inclinations
 ne of enlightened self-
 erer estimate of the role
 ing national relations.
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 ht have seemed, in the
 : war, more consistent
 national ends and mo-
 mean that American in-
 mistake. Such a judg-
 : the alternative of non-
 Id have served Ameri-
 interests better; and this
 w. It is, at least, possible
 narines would have suc-
 ng Great Britain's mili-
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 lessness. There was al-
 nd it is almost certain,
 Brest-Litovsk is any in-
 ace settlement in which

Sentiment, Not Security

Germany held the preponderance of power would have been infinitely more hostile to American ideals and interests than the severest critics of the Versailles Treaty claimed of that settlement. Allied victory guaranteed neither American ideals nor American interests, but at least it gave the nation the indispensable opportunity to achieve both ends through the establishment of a more peaceful and progressive international environment. Would nonintervention have been worth the risk of losing this opportunity?

If Woodrow Wilson erred, it was not because he led the United States into war but because he failed to do everything in his power to prepare the people to see their entrance into a foreign war as an act consistent with imperative principles of national self-interest, as well as with national ideals and sentiments. In fact, by stressing America's disinterestedness as a condition of her mission of bringing peace to the world, Wilson actually directed all the force of his leadership toward concealing what should have been the most compelling reason for American intervention.

If Americans, as a whole, supported intervention for insubstantial reasons, it was not because they were wrong in their idealism, their moral indignation, or their lively sense of national pride and honor; in the light of the international circumstances of 1914-17, there was justification for all these emotions. It was, rather, because they failed from the first to guide and restrain their aspirations and sentiments with a realistic view of national conduct and a prudent regard for the practical consequences of specific policies. For as a result of blind impulse and shortsightedness, their righteous indignation rested upon an uncertain legal case and an exaggerated ethical distinc-

tion between the belligerents, while their idealism, dissipated itself in a self-righteous response to momentary passion. Americans, as a whole, were misguided in that they acted as though the complex task of reconciling the nation's self-interest with universal ideals could be simply and automatically achieved by satisfying certain emotional and temperamental proclivities in an unthinking response to the drift of events.

Armed intervention might well have been the wisest alternative from the long-run standpoint of American ideals and interests, but the great majority of the people did not choose war upon mature deliberation; they simply drifted into war, guided largely by impulses—some noble, some mean—with but a tenuous relation to broad and enduring national policy. Consequently, it is little wonder that the motives which led to war seemed inadequate in the perspective of peace, and that America's vaunted moral leadership revealed itself once more as the irresponsible outburst of a nation physically mature but emotionally and intellectually adolescent—a quick-tempered, good-hearted giant of a nation, moved by impulses it would later regret, undertaking commitments it would not fulfill, and never quite comprehending either the circumstances or the consequences of its erratic behavior.

Yet, lest the perspective of time distort our judgment of a different era, we shall do well to ponder the fact that each step that led to war was, in itself, consistent with the sentiments, beliefs, and policies which had evolved from America's previous experience in world politics; and that in the light of this experience each step was, at the time, a logical response to the unprecedented circumstances of an international conflict.

