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I

Time brings a better adjustment to the war. There had been so many times when, to those who had energetically resisted its coming, it seemed the last intolerable outrage. In one's wilder moments one expected revolt against the impressment of unwilling men and the suppression of unorthodox opinion. One conceived the war as breaking down through a kind of intellectual sabotage diffused through the country. But as one talks to people outside the cities and away from ruling currents of opinion, one finds the prevailing apathy shot everywhere with acquiescence. The war is a bad business, which somehow got fastened on us. They won't want to go, but they've got to go. One decides that nothing generally obstructive is going to happen and that it would make little difference if it did. The kind of war which we are conducting is an enterprise which the American government does not have to carry on with the hearty cooperation of the American people but only with their acquiescence. And that acquiescence seems sufficient to float an indefinitely protracted war for vague or even largely uncomprehended and unaccepted purposes. Our resources in men and materials are vast enough to organize the war-technique without enlisting more than a fraction of the people's conscious energy. Many men will not like being sucked into the actual fighting organism, but as the war goes on they will be sucked in as individuals and they will yield. There is likely to be no element in the country with the effective will to help them resist. They are not likely to resist of themselves concertedly. They will be licked grudgingly into military shape, and their lack of enthusiasm will in no way unfit them for use in the hecatombs necessary for the military decision upon which Allied political wisdom still apparently insists. It is unlikely that enough men will be taken from the potentially revolting classes seriously to embitter their spirit. Losses in the well-to-do classes will be sustained by a sense of duty and of reputable sacrifice. From the point of view of the worker, it will make little difference whether

his work contributes to annihilation overseas or to construction at home. Temporarily, his condition is better if it contributes to the former. We of the middle classes will be progressively poorer than we should otherwise have been. Our lives will be slowly drained by clumsily levied taxes and the robberies of imperfectly controlled private enterprises. But this will not cause us to revolt. There are not likely to be enough hungry stomachs to make a revolution. The materials seem generally absent from the country, and as long as a government wants to use the war-technique in its realization of great ideas, it can count serenely on the human resources of the country, regardless of popular mandate or understanding.

II

If human resources are fairly malleable into the war-technique, our material resources will prove to be even more so, quite regardless of the individual patriotism of their owners or workers. It is almost purely a problem of diversion. Factories and mines and farms will continue to turn out the same products and at an intensified rate, but the government will be working to use their activity and concentrate it as contributory to the war. The process which the piping times of benevolent neutrality began, will be pursued to its extreme end. All this will be successful, however, precisely as it is made a matter of centralized governmental organization and not of individual offerings of good-will and enterprise. It will be coercion from above that will do the trick rather than patriotism from below. Democratic contentment may be shed over the land for a time through the appeal to individual thoughtfulness in saving and in relinquishing profits. But all that is really needed is the co-operation with government of the men who direct the large financial and industrial enterprises. If their interest is enlisted in diverting the mechanism of production into war-channels, it makes not the least difference whether you or I want our activity to count in aid of the

hope that in the recoil from war we may find the treasures we are looking for.

war. Whatever we do will contribute toward its successful organization, and toward the riveting of a semi-military State-socialism on the country. As long as the effective managers, the "big men" in the staple industries, remained loyal, nobody need care what the millions of little human cogs who had to earn their living felt or thought. This is why the technical organization for this American war goes on so much more rapidly than any corresponding popular sentiment for its aims and purposes. Our war is teaching us that patriotism is really a superfluous quality in war. The government of a modern organized plutocracy does not have to ask whether the people want to fight or understand what they are fighting for, but only whether they will tolerate fighting. America does not co-operate with the President's designs. She rather feebly acquiesces. But that feeble acquiescence is the all-important factor. We are learning that war doesn't need enthusiasm, doesn't need conviction, doesn't need hope, to sustain it. Once manoeuvred, it takes care of itself, provided only that our industrial rulers see that the end of the war will leave American capital in a strategic position for world-enterprise. The American people might be much more indifferent to the war even than they are and yet the results would not be materially different. A majority of them might even be feebly or at least unconcertedly hostile to the war, and yet it would go gaily on. That is why a popular referendum seems so supremely irrelevant to people who are willing to use war as an instrument in the working-out of national policy. And that is why this war, with apathy rampant, is probably going to act just as if every person in the country were filled with patriotic ardor, and furnished with a completely assimilated map of the League to Enforce Peace. If it doesn't, the cause will not be the lack of popular ardor, but the clumsiness of the government officials in organizing the technique of the war. Our country in war, given efficiency at the top, can do very well without our patriotism. The non-patriotic man need feel no pangs of conscience about not helping the war. Patriotism fades into the merest trivial sentimentality when it becomes, as so obviously in a situation like this, so

pragmatically impotent. As long as one has to earn one's living or buy tax-ridden goods, one is making one's contribution to war in a thousand indirect ways. The war, since it does not need it, cannot fairly demand also the sacrifice of one's spiritual integrity.

III

The "liberals" who claim a realistic and pragmatic attitude in politics have disappointed us in setting up and then clinging wistfully to the belief that our war could get itself justified for an idealistic flavor, or at least for a world-renovating social purpose, that they had more or less denied to the other belligerents. If these realists had had time in the hurry and scuffle of events to turn their philosophy on themselves, they might have seen how thinly disguised a rationalization this was of their emotional undertow. They wanted a League of Nations. They had an unanalyzable feeling tjat tjos was a war in which we had to be, and be in it we would. What more natural than to join the two ideas and conceive our war as the decisive factor in the attainment of the desired end! This gave them a good conscience for willing American participation, although as good men they must have loathed war and everything connected with it. The realist cannot deny facts. Moreover, he must not only acknowledge them but he must use them. Good or bad, they must be turned by his intelligence to some constructive end. Working along with the materials which events give him, he must get where and what he can, and bring something brighter and better out of the chaos.

Now war is such an indefeasible and unescapable Real that the good realist must accept it rather comprehensively. To keep out of it is pure quietism, an acute moral failure to adjust. At the same time, there is an inexorability about war. It is a little unbridled for the realist's rather nice sense of purposive social control. And nothing is so disagreeable to the pragmatic mind as any kind of absolute.

life, they cannot feel themselves a part of it in its futile and self-mutilating enterprise of war. We can be apathetic wit ha good conscience, for we have other values and ideals for America. Our country will not suffer for our lack of patriotism as long as it has that of our industrial masters. Meanwhile, those who have turned their thinking into war-channels have abdicated their leadership for this younger generation. They have put themselves in a limbo of interests that are not the concerns which worry us about American life and make us feverish and discontented.

Let us compel the war to break in on us, if it must, not go hospitably to meet it. Let us force it perceptibly to batter in our spiritual walls. This attitude need not be a fatuous hiding in the sand, denying realities. When we are broken in on, we can yield to the inexorable. Those who are conscripted will have been broken in on. If they do not want to be martyrs, they will have to be victims. They are entitled to whatever alleviations are possible in an inexorable world. But the others can certainly resist the attitude that blackens the whole conscious sky with war. They can resist the poison which makes art and all the desires for more impassioned living seem idle and even shameful. For many of us, resentment against the war has meant a vivider consciousness of what we are seeking in American life.

This search has been threatened by two classes who have wanted to deflect idealism to the war — the patriots and the realists. The patriots have challenged us by identifying apathy with disloyalty. The reply is that war-technique in this situation is a matter of national mechanics rather than national ardor. The realists have challenged us by insisting that war is an instrument in the working-out of beneficent national policy. Our skepticism points out to them how soon their "mastery" becomes "drift," tangled in the fatal drive toward victory as its own end, how soon they become mere agents and expositors of forces as they are. Patriots and realists disposed of, we can pursue creative skepticism with honesty, and at least a

VIII

The conservation of American promise is the present task for this generation of malcontents and aloof men and women. If America has lost its political isolation, it is all the more obligated to retain its spiritual integrity. This does not mean any smug retreat from the world, with a belief that the truth is in us and can only be contaminated by contact. It means that the promise of American life is not yet achieved, perhaps not even seen, and that, until it is, there is nothing for us but stern and intensive cultivation of our garden. Our insulation will not be against any great creative ideas or forms that Europe brings. It will be a turning within in order that we may have something to give without. The old American ideas which are still expected to bring life to the world seem stale and archaic. It is grotesque to try to carry democracy to Russia. It is absurd to try to contribute to the world's store of great moving ideas until we have a culture to give. It is absurd for us to think of ourselves as blessing the world with anything unless we hold it much more self-consciously and significantly than we hold anything now. Mere negative freedom will not do as a twentieth-century principle. American ieas must be dynamic or we are presumptuous in offering them to the world.

IX

The war — or American promise: one must choose. One cannot be interested in both. For the effect of the war will be to impoverish American promise. It cannot advance it, however liberals may choose to identify American promise with a league of nations to enforce peace. Americans who desire to cultivate the promises of American life need not lift a finger to obstruct the war, but they cannot conscientiously accept it. However intimately a part of their country they may feel in its creative enterprises toward a better

The realistic pragmatist could not recognize war as inexorable — though to the common mind it would seem as near an absolute, coercive social situation as it is possible to fall into. For the inexorable abolishes choices, and it is the essence of the realist's creed to have, in every situation, alternatives before him. He gets out of his scrape in this way: Let the inexorable roll in upon me, since it must. But then, keeping firm my sense of control, it will somehow tame it and turn it to my own creative purposes. Thus realism is justified of her children, and the "liberal" is saved from the limbo of the wailing and irreconcilable pacifists who could not make so easy an adjustment.

Thus the "liberals" who made our war their own preserved their pragmatism. But events have shown how fearfully they imperilled their intuition and how untameable an inexorable really is. For those of us who knew a real inexorable when we saw one, and had learned from watching war what follows the loosing of a war-technique, foresaw how quickly aims and purposes would be forgotten, and how flimsy would be any liberal control of events. It is only we now who can appreciate The New Republic — the organ of applied pragmatic realism — when it complains that the League of Peace (which we entered the war to guarantee) is more remote than it was eight months ago; or that our State Department has no diplomatic policy (though it was to realize the high aims of the President's speeches that the intellectuals willed America's participation); or that we are subordinating the political management of the war to real or supposed military advantages, (though militarism in the liberal mind had no justification except as a tool for advanced social ends). If, after all the idealism and creative intelligence that were shed upon America's taking up of arms, our State Department has no policy, we are like brave passengers who have set out for the Isles of the Blest only to find that the first mate has gone insane and jumped overboard, the rudder has come loose and dropped to the bottom of the sea, and the captain and pilot are lying dead drunk under the wheel. The stokers and engineers however, are still merrily

forcing the speed up to twenty knots an hour and the passengers are presumably getting the pleasure of the ride.

IV

The penalty the realist pays for accepting war is to see disappear one by one the justifications for accepting it. He must either become a genuine Realpolitiker and brazen it through, or else he must feel sorry for his intuition and be regretful that he willed the war. But so easy is forgetting and so slow the change of events that he is more likely to ignore the collapse of his case. If he finds that his government is relinquishing the crucial moves of that strategy for which he was willing to use the technique of war, he is likely to move easily to the ground that it will all come out in the end the same anyway. He soon becomes satisfied with tacitly ratifying whatever happens, or at least straining to find the grain of unplausible hope that may be latent in the situation.

But what then is there really to choose between the realist who accepts evil in order to manipulate it to a great end, but who somehow unaccountably finds events turn sour on him, and the Utopian pacifist who cannot stomach the evil and will have none of it? Both are helpless, both are coerced. The Utopian, however, knows that he is ineffective and that he is coerced, while the realist, evading disillusionment, moves in a twilight zone of half-hearted criticism and hoping for the best, where he does not become a tacit fatalist. The latter would be the manlier position, but then where would be his realistic philosophy of intelligence and choice? Professor Dewey has become impatient at the merely good and merely conscientious objectors to war who do not attach their conscience and intelligence to forces moving in another direction. But in wartime there are literally no valid forces moving in another direction. War determines its own end — victory, and government crushes out automatically all forces that deflect, or threaten to deflect, energy from the path of

intuition told us how much all rich and generous emotions were needed at home to leaven American civilization. If we refused to export them it was because we wanted to see them at work here. It is true that great reaches of American prosperous life were not using generous emotions for any purpose whatever. But the real antithesis was not between being concerned about luxurious automobiles and being concerned about the saving of France. America's "benevolent neutrality" had been saving the Allies ofr three years through the ordinary channels of industry and trade. We could afford to export material goods and credit far more than we could afford to export emotional capital. The real antithesis was between interest in expensively exploiting American material life and interest in creatively enhancing American personal and artistic life. The fat and earthy American could be blamed not for not palpitating more richly about France, but for not palpitating more richly about America and her spiritual drouths. The war will leave the country spiritually impoverished, because of the draining away of sentiment into the channels of war. Creative and constructive enterprises will suffer not only through the appalling waste of financial capital in the work of annihilation, but also in the loss of emotional capital in the conviction that war overshadows all other realities. This is the poison of war that disturbs even creative minds. Writers tell us that, after contact with the war, literature seems an idle passtime, if not an offense, in a world of great deeds. Perhaps literature that can be paled by war will not be missed. We may feel vastly relieved at our salvation from so many feeble novels and graceful verses that khaki-clad authors might have given us. But this noble sounding sense of the futility of art in a world of war may easily infect conscientious minds. And it is against this infection that we must fight.

reality, we search much more actively to clarify our attitudes and express a richer significance in the American scene. We do not feel the war to be very real, and we sense a singular air of falsity about the emotions of the upper-classes toward everything connected with war. This ostentatious shame, this grovelling before illusory Allied heroisms and nobilities, has shocked us. Minor novelists and minor poets and minor publicists are still coming back from driving ambulances in France to write books that nag us into an appreciation of the "real meaning." No one can object to the generous emotions of service in a great cause or to the horror and pity at colossal devastation and agony. But too many of these prophets are men who have lived rather briskly among the cruelties and thinnesses of American civilization and have shown no obvious horror and pity at the exploitations and the arid quality of the life lived here around us. Their moral sense has been deeply stirred by what they saw in France and Belgium, but it was a moral sense relatively unpractised by deep concern and reflection over the inadequacies of American democracy. Few of them had used their vision to create literature impelling us toward a more radiant American future. And that is why, in spite of their vivid stirrings, they seem so unconvincing. Their idealism is too new and bright to affect us, for it comes from men who never cared very particularly about great creative American ideas. So these writers come to us less like ardent youth, pouring its energy into the great causes, than like youthful mouthpieces of their strident and belligerent elders. They did not convert us, but rather drove us farther back into the rightness of American isolation.

VII

There was something incredibly mean and plebeian about that abasement into which the war-partisans tried to throw us all. When we were urged to squander our emotion on a bedevilled Europe, our

organization to that end. All governments will act in this way, the most democratic as well as the most autocratic. It is only "liberal" naïveté that is shocked at arbitrary coercion and suppression. Willing war means willing all the evils that are organically bound up with it. A good many people still seem to believe in a peculiar kind of democratic and antiseptic war. The pacifists opposed the war because they knew this was an illusion, and because of the myriad hurts they knew war would do the promise of democracy at home. For once the babes and sucklings seem to have been wiser than the children of light.

V

If it is true that the war will go on anyway whether it is popular or not or whether its purposes are clear, and if it is true that in wartime constructive realism is an illusion, then the aloof man, the man who will not obstruct the war but who cannot spiritually accept it, has a clear case for himself. Our war presents no more extraordinary phenomenon than the number of the more creative minds of the younger generation who are still irreconcilable toward the great national enterprise which the government has undertaken. The country is still dotted with young men and women, in full possession of their minds, faculties, and virtue, who feel themselves profoundly alien to the work which is going on around them. They must not be confused with the disloyal or the pro-German. They have no grudge against the country, but their patriotism has broken down in the emergency. They want to see the carnage stopped and Europe decently constructed again. They want a democratic peace. If the swift crushing of Germany will bring that peace, they want to see Germany crushed. If the embargo on neutrals will prove the decisive coup, they are willing to see the neutrals taken ruthlessly by the throat. But they do not really believe that peace will come by any of these means, or by any use of our war-technique

whatever. They are genuine pragmatists and they fear any kind of an absolute, even when bearing gifts. They know that the longer a war lasts the harder it is to make peace. They know that the peace of exhaustion is a dastardly peace, leaving enfeebled the morals of the defeated, and leaving invincible for years all the most greedy and soulless elements in the conquerors. They feel that the greatest obstacle to peace now is the lack of the powerful mediating neutral which we might have been. They see that war has lost for us both the mediation and the leadership, and is blackening us ever deeper with the responsibility for having prolonged the dreadful tangle. They are skeptical not only of the technique of war, but also of its professed aims. The President's idealism stops just short of the pitch that would arouse their own. There is a middle-aged and belated taint about the best ideals which publicist liberalism has been able to express. The appeals to propagate political democracy leave these people cold in a world which has become so disillusioned of democracy in the face of universal economic servitude. Their ideals outshoot the government's. To them the real arena lies in the international class-struggle, rather than in the competition of artificial national units. They are watching to see what the Russian socialists are going to do for the world, not what the timorous capitalistic American democracy may be planning. They can feel no enthusiasm for a League of Nations, which shuold solidify the old units and continue in disguise the old theories of international relations. Indispensable, perhaps? But not inspiring; not something to give one's spiritual allegiance to. And yet the best advice that American wisdom can offer to those who are out of sympathy with the war is to turn one's influence toward securing that our war contribute toward this end. But why would not this League turn out to be little more than a well-oiled machine for the use of that enlightened imperialism toward which liberal American finance is already whetting its tongue? And what is enlightened imperialism as an international ideal as against the anarchistic communism of the

nations which the new Russia suggests in renouncing imperialist intentions?

VI

Skeptical of the means and skeptical of the aims, this element of the younger generation stands outside the war, and looks upon the conscript army and all the other war-activities as troublesome interruptions on its thought and idealism, interruptions which do not touch anywhere a fibre of its soul. Some have been much more disturbed than others, because of the determined challenge of both patriots and realists to break in with the war-obsession which has filled for them their sky. Patriots and realists can both be answered. They must not be allowed to shake one's inflexible determination not to be spiritually implicated in the war. It is foolish to hope. Since the 30th of July, 1914, nothing has happened in the arena of war-policy and war-technique except for the complete and unmitigated worst. We are tired of continued disillusionment, and of the betrayal of generous anticipations. It is saner not to waste energy in hope within the system of war-enterprise. One may accept dispassionately whatever changes for good may happen from the war, but one will not allow one's imagination to connect them organically with war. It is better to resist cheap consolations, and remain skeptical about any of the good things so confidently promised us either through victory or the social reorganization demanded by the war-technique. One keeps healthy in wartime not by a series of religious and political consolations that something good is coming out of it all, but by a vigorous assertion of values in which war has no part. Our skepticism can be made a shelter behind which is built up a wider consciousness of the personal and social and artistic ideals which American civilization needs to lead the good life. We can be skeptical constructively, if, thrown back on our inner resources from the world of war which is taken as the overmastering