

Exporting Americanism: Arthur Bullard and American Propaganda in Russia

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Abstract

The essay provides a broader understanding of American propaganda abroad during World War I and its aftermath by analyzing the role of the Committee on Public Information in revolutionary Russia through one of its directors, Arthur Bullard. While the main goal of the CPI was to keep Russia in the war, his view went beyond the conflict and looked at emphasizing the desire of friendly relations between the American and Russian peoples by appealing to the admiration that many Russians felt for the American lifestyle, in order to contain the spread of Bolshevism in Russian territories.

Keywords: Bullard; Committee on Public Information; Public Diplomacy; Propaganda; Bolshevik Revolution.

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1 Introduction

When the United States joined World War I in April 1917, the need to support participation in the conflict emerged. For this purpose, a few days after the declaration of war on Germany, and based on the advice of the progressive journalist George Creel, Wilson created the first propaganda agency, the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The CPI organized the first mass propaganda campaign in history aiming to “sell the war” to the American public opinion, as well as to publicize the American war aims around the globe by presenting the image of America and its president in a positive light. In a short period, it opened divisions in various locations worldwide.¹ It was in Russia where the CPI’s Russian Division, directed by the socialist journalist and freelancer Arthur Bullard, faced the most complex situation, and employed the greatest number of agents in an effort to launch a cultural attack against Bolshevism.

This article seeks to provide a broader understanding of American propaganda abroad during, and in the aftermath, of World War I.² Drawing largely on material from the Papers of Arthur Bullard, this essay focuses on Bullard’s role outlining the basis of American “democratic diplomacy” and his efforts to promote American values and principles in Russia through it. In the eyes of scholars of Soviet-American relations, Bullard has often been relegated to a subordinate role, overshadowed by more notable figures like ambassador David R. Francis or the head of the CPI, George Creel. Although some scholars, like Kennan and Vaughn, reassessed the role of Bullard,³ too little credit has been given to his ideas on public diplomacy and education as propaganda tools in order to limit the spread of Bolshevism among the lower echelons of Russian society.

2 The birth of the CPI

In April 1917, George Creel wrote Wilson complaining about the fact that censorship intervened too frequently to hide or suppress information concerning American war aims. Simultaneously, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Secretary of War Newton Baker and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, asked the president to create a “committee on public information” which would have combined the two functions of publicity and censorship.⁴

As a result, the CPI was established by an executive order issued by Wilson on April 14, 1917, a few days after the American intervention.⁵ Even though the CPI anticipated the colossal propaganda machines established by the European totalitarian regimes during the twentieth century, it was the direct outcome of the affirmation of the notion of “publicity,” in which American progressives placed their faith. According to them, a mere statement of the fact was sufficient to obtain public support. Therefore, it was not about propaganda, but about information, instruction and education. George

1. For decades, the only thorough works about American foreign propaganda have been George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Harp & Brothers, 1920); Idem, *Complete Report of the Committee on Public Information, 1917:1918:1919* (Washington D.C.: Govt. print. off., 1920); Cedric Larson and James R. Mock, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917–1919* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939). For one of the most recent works about the CPI is Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: the making of American Propaganda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Axelrod provides a narrative history of the CPI, but, by placing the figure of Creel at the center of his account, he overlooks the efforts of other relevant members of the CPI. The best book about Creel’s agency remains Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines. Democracy, Nationalism and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), which focuses on the domestic activities of the CPI and Bullard’s contribution to its formation.
2. For specific analysis of the CPI’s activities in some of the involved countries, see Gregg Wolper, “Woodrow Wilson’s New Diplomacy: Vira Whitehouse in Switzerland, 1918,” *Prologue*, 24, 3 (Fall 1992): 227–239; Idem, “Wilsonian Public Diplomacy: The Committee on Public Information in Spain,” *Diplomatic History*, 17, 1 (January 1993): 17–34; Daniela Rossini, “The Italian Rediscovery of America During World War I,” *North Dakota Quarterly*, 60, 1 (Winter 1992): 226–254.
3. George F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War, Vol. 1 of Soviet-American Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 46–50; Idem, *The Decision to Intervene, Vol. 2 of Soviet American Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 190–207; Vaughn, *Holding Fast*, 3–22.
4. Cedric Larson and James R. Mock, *Words that Won the War*, 10–11, 48.
5. Executive Order 2594, April 14, 1917, in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (hereinafter PWW), ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966–1993), Vol. 42, 59.

Creel's attempt was to purge the notion of propaganda from its classic negative meaning that "in German hands, had come to be associated with lies and corruptions,"⁶ when he stated that "our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of facts."⁷

Behind the success obtained by the CPI during its short life (April 1917–December 1918), laid the development of a new political communication based on a number of innovative elements in society at the time. First, the expansion of suffrage, which extended the political competition to social groups previously ignored by political forces. Second, the advent of mass society, that produced a new political space and compelled the political forces to renew their language and the channels—lower-class-oriented magazines, political cartoons and motion pictures—through which the language was conveyed. Third, the involvement of the civilians in the conflict, which brought about the need to keep the morale high, not only of those who were fighting at the front, but also of those who remained at home.

While the initial project of what also came to be known as the "Creel Committee" only involved propaganda at home, subsequently it has endowed itself two branches, the Domestic Section and the Foreign Section. The first was an important vehicle of nationalization of the masses through the promotion of a development of a mass ideology which anticipated the spread of the last century's powerful communication tools. The latter was created to export American ideals and to present American war aims to the other countries by advertising the image of the United States and Wilson policy abroad, both in enemy and especially allied countries. CPI's field of action extended itself to the entire globe, and in it was transferred the enthusiasm for the spread of the Wilsonian gospel. As Creel affirmed in his report: "We fought indifference and disaffection in the United States and we fought falsehood abroad. We strove for the maintenance of our own morale by every process of stimulation; we sought the verdict of mankind by truth telling."⁸

What Creel later defined as the "world's greatest adventure in advertising,"⁹ opened several branches both in warring and neutral countries in Europe, South America and Asia, including England, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Russia. The Russian Division operated under the guidance of Edgar Sisson until March 1918, when he returned to the United States to abdicate the leadership to Arthur Bullard.

3 Bullard's vision of the Revolutionary Russia

Bullard had been in service in the CPI since the first days of its creation, when he worked in Washington as Director of the Divisions on Foreign Correspondents, Foreign Language Papers and the Censorship of the newspapers. Although he believed that the idea of such a committee was brilliant, Bullard did not consider his job as appropriate for his skill set, making him feel like "a square peg in a round hole." His ambitions included a return to Russia where he witnessed the Russian Revolution of 1905, and where his expertise in Russia could have finally been properly valued.¹⁰

Raised in a Presbyterian family, Arthur Bullard, driven by an interest in the conditions among the masses and problems relating to criminality and social justice, he left college in 1903 to move to New York. There, in addition to work as a probation officer, he joined the University Settlement, the organization that provided social services to immigrants and low-income families.¹¹ This was also the headquarter of the gentlemen socialists, a group of wealthy young intellectuals, which mostly came from the best American universities—like Harvard and Princeton—and shared a belief in socialism.

6. Creel, *Complete Report*, 1.

7. Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 4–5.

8. Creel, *Complete Report*, 1.

9. Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 4.

10. Bullard to Leonora Baggs, May 1, 1917; June 17, 1917, Arthur Bullard Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton (hereinafter Bullard Papers), Box 8.

11. "Biographical Material, 1879–1929," Bullard Papers, Box 1.

On the eve of the 1905 Russian Revolution, they recognized the sacrifice of Russian revolutionaries as a source of inspiration for American socialists' activities. Although Bullard's move away from his family meant a deviation from its Presbyterian tradition, life on the Lower East Side was an opportunity to look closer at the phenomenon of immigration and the living conditions of the Eastern European immigrants who settled in that neighborhood, finding in their political efforts a new religion, that of revolution.¹² The enthusiasm and the desire to be part of this new civilization that Russia offered to the world through its "Reformation," had convinced him to be witness to the 1905 revolution. Writing articles for some important American magazines, Bullard described from Petrograd and Moscow the brutalities committed by the Cossacks and glorified the actions of the revolution's protagonists.¹³

During this period, Bullard developed an affinity with the members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, with whom he shared the idea that "Russia is neither an advanced Asiatic Despotism nor a retarded Western Empire," but, referring to her 'collectivistic' features—like the *obshina*—and to the cultural influences coming from both the Western neighbors and the Eastern Tatar hordes, he argued that "the Slavic Civilization is unique," therefore, she would have not "run in the same rut as that of Western Europe."¹⁴ In tune with the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), Bullard proposed to bring class-consciousness to the peasants in order to encourage their revolution. Driven by these beliefs, he built up an interpretation of the revolution by recounting in his articles and reports that the SRs were the more vital and revolutionary movement, as well as by highlighting that the peasants' demand for freedom of speech and press, and their desire for a representative government was shared by a large part of society.¹⁵

Hence, unlike many *fin de siècle* American crusaders, even though he shared with them a belief that Russia could have freed herself only through a revolutionary transformation, he pinned his hopes on socialists, rather than bourgeois, liberals. For this reason, at the moment of the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in March 1917, this outlook led to cautious optimism that soon transformed into gloomy pessimism. According to Bullard, in fact, the liberal character of the Provisional Government prevented Russia from adopting "any revolutionary solution ... which might be prejudicial to 'good landlords'."¹⁶ Consequently, Bullard's interpretation of the Bolshevik Revolution was divergent from those who thought that the October was a *coup d'état* put into action by agents paid by the German Empire. In this regard, Bullard was one of the first American representatives in Russia to recognize that what happened in Petrograd was a genuine social revolution, and it was not a conspiracy, nor the result of the interference by the Kaiser.¹⁷ Bullard was convinced that the causes of the failure of the Provisional

12. David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38–43; Viktoria Zhuravleva, "Revolyutsiya 1905–1907 godov v vosprzyatii amerikanskikh 'gentlemenov-sotsialistov,'" *Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya*, 1 (2013): 69–77.

13. See, for example, Albert Edward [pseudonym of Arthur Bullard], "An Eye-Witness's Story of the Russian Revolution," *Harper's Weekly*, 50 (17 and 24 February, 3 March 1906), 228–229, 232, 258–261, 294–296, Bullard papers, Box 6; Idem, "Under the White Terror," *Collier's*, (April 14, 1906): 13; (April 28, 1906): 25, Bullard Papers, Box 1.

14. Albert Edward [Arthur Bullard], "Rise of the Russian Proletariat," *The International Socialist Review*, July 1, 1907, 21, Bullard Papers, Box 6. Although his association with socialism, Bullard was never a member of the Socialist Party of America. In this regard, the historian George F. Kennan, who considered Bullard as "the best American mind observing on the spot the course of the Russian Revolution [of 1917]," described him as a liberal rather than a socialist. George F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 49; Idem, *The Decision to Intervene*, 190.

15. Bullard, "The Russian Revolution," chapter II, 7–9, Bullard Papers, Box 5; Bullard, "The St. Petersburg Massacre and the Russian East Side," *The Independent*, 58 (1906): 252–256, Bullard Papers, Box 5. Bullard criticized the Marxist-inspired movements for dissociating themselves from the SRs' ways and practices. According to Bullard, the Marxists' attitude was typical of the "revolutionists because of their head," while it was appropriate to be revolutionaries "because of the hearth" by putting aside differences in order to focus on the outcome: socialism. Bullard, "The Revolutionist," Bullard Papers, Box 2. By 1918, Bullard developed a drastic change of opinion about the revolutionary role of the peasants. In his reports sent from Petrograd, he accused the rural society of being destined to "be overwhelmed in blood [or] whipped and tamed into sullen hate" because of their irrationality. Bullard, "Memorandum on the Bolshevik Movement in Russia," January 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6.

16. Arthur Bullard, *The Russian Pendulum* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 26.

17. Like alleged by the Sisson Documents, a set of Russian-language files purported to demonstrate the Bolsheviks' subordination to the German Empire. Bullard have always been mistrustful of the documents. Lenin's ideas, Bullard pointed out, was not changed from that ones that the Bolshevik leader elaborated since the 1905 revolution. Despite many questioned the

Government lied in the shortsighted policy of Kerensky, culpable for failing to grasp the peasants' demands for "land and peace." The only party that met the popular demands was the Bolshevik party, thereby winning support of the masses. For this reason, he admitted that it was "stupidly and dangerously wrong to think of this Bolshevik movement as simple pro-Germanism."¹⁸

While Bullard did not agree with the revolutionary government's *modus operandi*, the convergence of interests between Lenin and Wilson led him to consider the Bolsheviks as a thorn in the flesh of German militarism. "There is no possible gain," Bullard wrote Colonel House in a January 1918 memorandum, "for the Allied Missions to encourage any other faction," because "there is no other party in sight that will put more real anti-Kaiser hate into their politics than the Bolsheviks." Although this view did not lead to a request for official recognition of the new government because of its undemocratic practices which, Bullard thought, recalled the old tsarist methods, he insisted on the need to maintain informal contacts with the Bolsheviks and to abandon the watch-and-wait policy of the Wilson administration.¹⁹

Because of his rejection to issue an utter condemnation of the Bolshevik regime, Bullard was accused of being a pro-Soviet sympathizer, mostly from those who a few years earlier shared with him the revolutionary experience of 1905. However, if on the one hand, Bullard had repeatedly pointed out that a more tolerant approach toward Lenin and Trotsky would have resulted in a more productive American foreign policy in Russia, on the other hand, the accusations that depicted him as a pro-Soviet were unfounded. Bullard himself argued that his puritan traditions did not allow him to pin his hopes on a government "as undemocratic as the former Tsar." Both the Bolsheviks and the Tsar, added Bullard, as well as being "cold blooded in their disregard for the truth," had "no more idea of tolerance towards a difference of opinion than Torquemada."²⁰

4 Diplomatic Diplomacy

Bullard's deep knowledge of Russian revolutionary movements did not go unnoticed by George Creel, who recommended him to Wilson for service in the Root Mission, which was going to Russia to study its situation, and to establish solid relations with the Provisional Government. Creel described Bullard as someone who "probably knows as much as any other man in America about the various radical groups in Russia and their leaders," and Wilson, in turn, supported Bullard's appointment in a letter to the Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who eventually rejected the suggestion because the job as a journalist had already been filled.²¹

In June 1917, Bullard left Washington to go to Russia on his own, because, as he confessed to Colonel House, it was "from [his] point of view the most desirable."²² Bullard spent four months in Moscow to "study the new effort at Russian self-government" while giving unpaid help to the General Consul Maddin Summers, and supporting himself by writing magazine articles, until Creel drafted him for the Russian Division of the CPI in October.²³

authenticity of the Sisson Documents, it was not until 1956 that George F. Kennan definitely proved the apocryphal nature of the documents. Edgar Sisson, *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy* (Washington D.C.: Committee on Public Information, 1918); Bullard to Sisson, May 1920, Bullard Papers, Box 10; George F. Kennan, "The Sisson Documents," *Journal of Modern History*, 28:2 (June 1956): 130–154.

18. Bullard to House, December 12, 1917, Bullard Papers, Box 9.

19. Bullard, "Memorandum on Bolshevik Movement in Russia," January, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6.

20. Bullard to Maddin Summers, January 11/24, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6.

21. Creel to Wilson, May 10, 1917; Wilson to Lansing, May 14, 1917 in PWW, Vol. 51, 267, 290–291. As the historian Gregg Wolper observed, Lansing's refusal was probably due to Bullard's socialist tendencies. Gregg Wolper, "The origins of Public Diplomacy: Woodrow Wilson, George Creel and the Committee on Public Information" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1991), 170–171.

22. Bullard to House, June 18, 1917, Bullard Papers, Box 9; Malcolm Davis to Ethel Bullard (Arthur Bullard's wife), January 31, 1931, Bullard Papers, Box 1.

23. Telegrams from Creel to Sisson, January 28 / February 1, 1931, enclosed in Malcolm Davis to Ethel Bullard, February 3, 1931, Bullard Papers, Box 1. Although Creel's conviction that Bullard was not sent by House, Ernest Poole, who accompanied Bullard on the journey, recalled that he went "not alone as a correspondent, but at the request of the President, to seize up

Bullard's commitment to promoting publicity predates the American involvement in the war. Already by 1916, the ties with Colonel House, one of Woodrow Wilson's closest advisors, allowed him to maintain an open channel with the president, to which Colonel House did not shrink from bringing attention to Bullard's concerns about the so-called "secret diplomacy."²⁴ Bullard's idea was to provide the State Department with information agencies located abroad that would have balanced the news about the United States through the "diplomatic use of newspapers." He observed that diplomacy was the "least touched [field] by modern ideas," describing it as an "empty survival of medievalism."²⁵ This outlook was part of a wider reconsideration of diplomacy found in his book *Mobilising America* (1917), in which Bullard's typical liberal distaste for censorship and for the overwhelming control of the press by the government in view of the war clearly emerged.²⁶

While he was working on his book, *Atlantic Monthly* offered him the possibility to publish his ideas on censorship and the diplomacy's reform. The article—a compendium of the ideas and proposals that Bullard already presented to Colonel House—outlined the basis for a foreign policy combined with a "democratic diplomacy," to definitely overcome the secrecy of diplomacy through which the United States had conducted their own foreign policy until then. While Europe had already experienced the shift from secret diplomacy to democratic diplomacy during the early twentieth century in the United States—when the importance of the parliamentary declaration began to prevail over communication by diplomatic channels²⁷—Bullard argued, there was a diplomatic caste of professionals defending "their special privilege of secrecy with passion" and opposing "democratic interference with their prerogatives." As well as reiterating the prominent role of the press as an instrument of propaganda to spread and advertise American history, Bullard proposed a few steps to democratize American diplomacy. First, he contended that it was important to educate the American public by investing in research into diplomatic areas regardless of the exceptionality of the war, which should not have eclipsed the free expression of an "enlightened public opinion." Second, he proposed "to break through the barriers of diplomacy and to establish more contact with popular forces of the other countries" by improving American ambassadors' activities abroad to address messages of good-will from the American government, and by increasing the involvement of foreign diplomats in Washington in order to establish more direct methods of communication between the people of different countries.²⁸

Bullard's idea to create a publicity department that would promote the values of democratic diplomacy took shape when the American intervention in the war appeared on the horizon. Bullard believed that such an event was the best way to prevent the spread of a dangerous public opinion to give "the man in the street something wholesome to think about,"²⁹ by informing the public about the work and the needs of the men at the front in order to make the struggle comprehensible and popular.³⁰

The program Bullard outlined in *Mobilising America* was incorporated in the Committee on Public Information. An analysis of its activities as well as of its methods of information helps us to understand the general schemes of American ideological strategies at an international level, and to highlight the ideological impact on the foreign public that contributed to the implementation of both American foreign policy, as well as the aims of the American ruling class in relation to a country and to Russia in particular. The delicacy of the situation was confirmed by the American ambassador in Petrograd, David R. Francis, who, fearing that the Bolsheviks could seize the government, sent a telegram to

the situation and advise as to ways and means of promoting friendly relations ... and also of helping Kerensky Government to continue the war. I remember his showing me on the boat a letter of instructions from Colonel House," Ernest Poole, as quoted in George. F. Kennan, *Soviet American Relations. Russia Leaves the War*, 48n.

24. House to Wilson, June 14, 1916, in *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House: From Neutrality to War, 1915–1917*, ed. Charles Seymour (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 198, 232.

25. Bullard to House, July 18, 1916, Bullard Papers, Box 9; Vaughn, *Holding Fast*, 3–22.

26. Bullard, *Mobilising America* (New York: MacMillan, 1917).

27. Enrico Serra, *L'intesa mediterranea del 1902* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1957), 212.

28. Arthur Bullard, "Democracy and Diplomacy," *Atlantic Monthly*, 119 (April 1917): 491–499.

29. Bullard, *Mobilising America*, 40.

30. *Ibid.*, 42–43.

Lansing in which he claimed “the great need for discreet propaganda to influence Russian sentiment, restore army moral and correct erroneous impression concerning America.”³¹

5 CPI's work in Soviet Russia

Established in November 1917, the American information bureau of the CPI was located in the heart of Petrograd at 4 *Gorokhovaya Ulitsa*. Although working under the circumspect eye of the Red Army, they were not hindered by the Bolshevik government while installing their offices, or in the spread of propaganda material. Putting up hundreds of posters that advertised Wilson's speeches, and the American war effort, the CPI was committed on two fronts. First, to counter German propaganda that urged Russia to quit the war and belittled American work at the front. Second, to obstruct Bolshevik propaganda that called for an immediate peace, and for a proletarian revolution, which added to the theme of an American capitalist plan to keep Russia in the war.³²

Bullard's prospect, however, went beyond the horizon of the war. He thought that no propaganda actions would have changed the course of events in Russia because any attempt would be like “shooting arrow at a thunderstorm.” Rather, he contended that the main reason to undertake a massive propaganda campaign was to emphasize “our desire for cordial relations in the future” with the Russian people.³³ For this purpose, the deployed strategies sought to leverage Russian admiration for America, its democracy and its advanced industrial society.³⁴ Among them, one of the most efficient strategies was the screening of propaganda films aimed at providing a positive image of America.³⁵ While the printing of posters, besides generating enormous costs, only had any impact if they were excellently produced, the motion picture was a “very important mean of propaganda everywhere, but especially so in a land of illiterates like Russia.”³⁶

Another successful initiative was the publication of the translations of a series of informative pamphlets written by historians, sociologists and professors of major American universities aimed to give the people “a fundamental understanding of the causes of the war and of the absolute justice of America's position.”³⁷ However, it was Arthur Bullard who carried out the most precious work with the anonymous publication of a pamphlet called *Letters from an American Friend*.³⁸ Made available throughout Russia—especially among working people's sections—the aim of the thirty page pamphlet, as George F. Kennan observed, was to explain to the Russian people what they thought they ought to know about the United States.³⁹ Aside from wanting to win the trust of Russian people as an anti-German strategy, the goal of the pamphlet was also to provide a positive image of the United States, through the presentation of its history, its institutions' history, as well as the American public opinion's evolution toward Russia. Despite its anonymity, the pamphlet clearly showed how the author was familiar with the psychology of revolutionary Russian movements. Moreover, the description of

31. Francis to Lansing, October 4, 1917, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], Russia 1918: 1* (Washington DC: Govt. print. off., 1937), 202–203.

32. “Sisson's Report on Installation of Committee of Public Service in Russia,” May 29, 1918, pp. 7–9, Bullard Papers, Box 6. For Bolshevik propaganda in the aftermath of October Revolution see Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 471–418.

33. Bullard to Wright, October 11, 1917, Bullard Papers, Box 6.

34. David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism. U.S. Intervention in the Russia Civil War, 1917–1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 108–110.

35. For an interesting analysis on the work of the Russian Film Division of the CPI see James D. Startt, “American Film Propaganda in Revolutionary Russia,” *Prologue*, 30:3 (Fall 1998): 166–179.

36. Creel to Wilson, August 20, 1917, PPW, Vol. 43, 526–530; Bullard to Baggs, August 28, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 8.

37. “How the War Came to America,” June 15, 1917, Bullard Papers, Box 8; Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 99.

38. Even though Bullard had been living in Russian for total period of three years, he had an extremely limited Russian language skill. For this reason, the original text had been drawn up in English and then translated into Russian.

39. George F. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, 194.

the United States was free from the tendency of American glorification and admitted that “[American] democracy has never been ideal or perfect.”⁴⁰

A meaningful contribution to the spread of American ideals in Russia was the publication of several pamphlets that advertised the prosperity and richness of the United States, describing the different stages of its history as well as the lifestyle, and containing articles and letters from immigrants who were successful in the United States. The most important of these pamphlets was the *American Bulletin*, a 16-pages publication issued weekly and made available free of charge to a mailing list of forty-thousand names which included newspapers, cooperatives, schools, trade unions and state institutions.⁴¹

Unlike other organizations, such as Consular Corps or the War Trade Board, CPI was not bound to any commercial interest thanks to its special position. For this reason, rather than emphasize capitalist aspects of the United States—like American improved industrial and agricultural processes or American giant machinery—Bullard considered it appropriate to focus on aspects that could have been closer to the Russian mentality, without overlooking those who adhered to Bolshevism. These aspects included: American democratic idealism; “her passion for ever improving the living and working conditions of her people”; American progress in municipal government; factory legislation for the protection of American worker; American experience in improved political methods; direct legislation; the use of school building as “Community Centers”; growth of public libraries. However, Bullard’s liberal soul and paternalistic spirit emerged when he argued that the CPI should have showed “these poor devils” who “don’t know what to demand of their government...what a ‘good road’ is and never dream of expecting the Government to furnish them.”⁴²

Although the United States was part of the alliance that included Great Britain and France, its propaganda was not considered by Russians as completely negative—as it was for the other two countries. While the Russian press never failed to show its hostility toward American allies’ aggressive propaganda, it tolerated American propaganda for his aim “at reaching the broad masses of the Russian people trying to make friends with them.” On the same page, even though the Soviet leaders had an antagonistic feeling for America as a capitalist country, they were not opposed to its “campaign of information” as they were sure that it was not doing anything directly against the Bolshevik regime.⁴³ This attitude was different from the one that the Bolshevik Party held between September and October 1917 to the Socialist-Revolutionary press financed by the American Red Cross headed by the mining tycoon William Boyce Thompson. Thompson provided subsidies to a committee of popular education headed by the “little grandmother of the Russian Revolution,” Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaya,⁴⁴ with the intention of launching a propaganda campaign against the Bolshevik Party. In order to achieve this goal, the committee founded about twenty magazines, which were later subjected to a full boycott by the Bolsheviks, in particular the periodical *Narodnaya Pravda*, whose main focus was repeated attacks on Lenin and the Bolsheviks.⁴⁵

After Russia quit the war by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in March 1918, the Bolsheviks intensified control on Allied Powers’ propaganda activities. Sisson, who thought that it would soon be impossible to get material into European Russia, ordered Bullard to move American offices to Siberia, where the main work did not begin before September 1918.⁴⁶

40. Bullard, “Letters from an American Friends,” February 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6; Raphael Grigorievitch, “Editorial,” *Novaya Zhizn* (March 24, 1918) Bullard Papers, Box 6.

41. Creel, *Complete Report*, 222.

42. Bullard to Phil Norton, December 25, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 7.

43. Creel, *Complete Report*, 228–229, 232.

44. In the United States, the Russian populist Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaya was made famous by the explorer George Kennan—a distant relative of the famous 20th century diplomat—in his reports on the Tsarist prison system in Siberia. She had a great reputation among the American liberals for being the emblem of the fight against the Tsarist regime. George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* (New York: TheCentury Co. 1891).

45. Raffail S. Ganelin, *Rossia i SShA, 1914–1917: Ocherki istorii rusko-amerikanskix otnoshenii* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1969) 370–388.

46. *Ibid.*, 212–213; 230–231. According to many Americans, Siberia represented the land of opportunity, on which to build a democratic Russia. The explorer George Kennan, who became famous in the United States for denouncing the terrible conditions of Russian prisoners in Siberia, highlighted the uniqueness of Siberian character. In his opinion, Siberians

6 Education and propaganda

Printing material produced by the CPI received unexpected consensus by the Russian people. Workers as well as students took copies of the pamphlet, while there were quite a few who proposed to privately print the material and circulate it among their family and friends.⁴⁷ Every day, the CPI office received several letters from people all over Russia and different social backgrounds that, in addition to complaining that “a crowd of suspicious and very dark adventurers got control of this unfortunate country,” showed enthusiasm for the CPI efforts and all their interest in the information about the United States as well as the functioning of American institutions to “lighten our darkness.”⁴⁸

One of the most interesting aspects is that over one third of the letters were requests to receive more information about American educational institutions. The subject of education was one of the main themes which Bullard emphasized to achieve long-term results. In a letter sent in March 1918 to the Chairman of the CPI, Bullard insistently asked him to produce an ABC text destined for Russian children and semi-literate adults. The book was to contain a broad picture of American history, from discovery to “Civil War as test of Federal principle, industrial political and social development of last half century,” as well as, “descriptive treatment of geography, ethnology, zoology,” and “vivid picture of immigration problem for those who may immigrate.”⁴⁹

Already one year earlier, impressed with the French propaganda agencies’ *modus operandi*, Bullard stressed the importance of the role of school as an intellectual center for community in the framework of widespread propaganda to cover areas that were difficult to reach by press and information, through strict communication between Minister and teachers.⁵⁰ Though Bullard recognized that centralization of France aided the technique’s success, later the United States utilized a similar system. From September 1918 through May 1919, CPI published and distributed the *National School Service*, a biweekly sixteen page pamphlet destined to schools throughout the United States. Each teacher on American soil received one. By informing civilians on the movements and the objectives of the American army at the European front, the aim of the pamphlet was to support their morale and to create an atmosphere of war and of strict “national” discipline, in order to actively involve students of all the schools.⁵¹

Bullard’s basic premise was to create a conformity of mass thinking, or, as he said, to work on the unification of the “national mind.” By teaching the history of the wars, patriotism was stimulated in the children’s mind from an early age to conform their thinking.⁵²

This propaganda pattern closely related to education, perfectly fit into the geographical conformation of Russia. In Bullard’s eyes, education was the best propaganda to carry out in Russia for two reasons: (1) education, in general, is not related to political situations and (2) he considered Russian

differed from European Russians. “Siberians,” Kennan pointed out, were more independent and less sired, because driven by more pronounced national aspirations and united by a strong sense of solidarity. The installation of an anti-Bolshevik government, Kennan argued, would have caused a domino effect able to destroy Soviet power under the blows of American ideals. The historian Donald Treadgold has drawn a common line between Siberian and American people, bonded by the same migration process, which made Siberians more similar to Americans rather than to European Russians. George Kennan, “Can We Help Russia,” *Outlook*, 119, 21 (May 1918): 141; Donald Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 3–9.

47. Creel, *Complete Report*, 235–236.

48. Bullard to Creel, September 1, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6.

49. Bullard to Creel, March 8, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6. The 3000 advance copies destined to schoolchildren have never been sent out for two reasons. First, because of delays that was judged expedient in view off the attitude of the Government. Second, because of excessive cost of the printing of ABC book, about 12000 rubles, which could have been needed for more general propaganda. Creel, *Complete Report*, 226–227.

50. Bullard, *Mobilising America*, 58–59.

51. “National School Service,” issued by the Committee on Public Information, (Washington D.C., 1919).

52. Bullard, *Mobilising America*, 58, 60. During those years in the United States there was the perception that Americanism has been jeopardized on several fronts. In first place, the focus was put on integration of immigrants into society, by making them adopt American lifestyle in order to prevent their cultural kaleidoscope from affect American protestant tradition. In second place, the activities of the labor movements, socialists and trade unions, excited by the news from Russia, created an alarming situation. In order to smooth out social unrest, society needed to “sell the war.”

people anxious about American assistance in this field. Promoting American educational systems through scholarships and the introduction of specific textbooks were some of interventions to satisfy Russian hunger for information about the United States and to attract young students—something even more relevant if we think about the lack of professional figures due to the war.⁵³

To avoid difficulties related to the dispatch of the pamphlets in the furthest villages of Siberia, Bullard called in Russia William Fletcher Russell, chairman of the College of Education of the State University of Iowa. Russell, who arrived in Siberia in the summer of 1918, carried out efficient work in many of Siberian cities and townships, from Omsk to Vladivostok. Until the winter of 1919, when he returned to the United States to present the problems of the Russian educational system and to manage the scholarship issue to host Russian academics in American universities, Russell was involved in manifold activities. These included publication of educational articles destined for newspapers, the organization of conferences with Russian teachers, assistance to municipal councils for drafting municipal laws on the American model and adapting them to Siberian needs and limitations.⁵⁴

The paternalistic theme of Russia to be indoctrinated from above so that she could develop her own capacity to self-govern, was a recurring feature of the American Information Bureau. The belief was that publicity through circulation of information about American culture and policy, “served to create confidence in America as a country not seeking for internal control in Russia and Siberia and truly interested in free and fair play for Russians in the settlement of their own affairs.”⁵⁵

Arthur Bullard stayed on as head of the Russia CPI Division for one and a half years, with enormous sacrifices in terms of health. Once the Russian experience ended, he was appointed as one of American representatives at the Paris Peace Conference in quality of expert about Russia, but he could not turn to the French capital because of a disease contracted during the journey.⁵⁶ He had never completely recovered from health problems until his death in 1929.

7 Conclusion

In 1893, Pierre Botkine, the secretary of the Russian legation in Washington, claimed that a “bridge of sentiment” existed between the United States and Russia because, despite different forms of government, they were “natural and disinterested allies.” According to George Kennan the elder, only sharing the same form of government would ideally unite Russia of the *zemstvo* and liberal Americans.⁵⁷ In March 1917, the overthrow of the Czarist regime and the seizure of power by a group of liberal Russian leaders who were steeped in western political thought seemed to give shape to the realization of those principles that the United States had been promoting in Russia from the end of the nineteenth century. Influential American circles started to perceive Russia as a “dark double” by seeing it through a mirror

53. Bullard to Wright, October 11, 1917, Bullard Papers, Box 6; Bullard to Creel, March 8, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 6; Bullard to Creel, December 7, 1918, Bullard Papers, Box 7. Bullard’s ideas were not different from what the famous journalist Walter Lippmann wrote to Woodrow Wilson before entering the war. Lippmann warned the President about the dangers of the censorship under the control of military corps, which although was the simplest form “of barrier between the public and an event ... it is known to exist, and is therefore in certain measure agreed to and discounted.” He suggested that, for a democratic government, it would have been desirable that such procedures were under control of those civilians who had “real insight and democratic sympathy.” Moreover, Lippmann urged Wilson to issue a statement that, besides aimed to gain support of public opinion, would have captured the liberal opinion in Allied Countries and encouraged German radicals to force a statement “which might ... tend to divide German opinion.” It is evident how Bullard’s ideas on propaganda and public opinion can be seen in the context of Lippmann’s writings about those topics. There is no evidence that Bullard and Lippmann engaged in correspondence, but there is evidence that Colonel House asked Lippmann to help to set up a “publicity bureau.” The day before the creation of the CPI, Lippmann proposed a clearinghouse for information on government activities, a monitoring of foreign press, a taking into action of the motion-picture industry, and the tracking down of “rumors and lies.” Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: MacMillan, 1922), 43–44; Lippmann to Wilson, February 6, 1917, March 11, 1917, in PWW, Vol. 41, 134–135; 388–390; Vaughn, *Holding Fast*, 5–6; Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 125.

54. William F. Russell, *School in Siberia, One Way to Stand by Russia* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Company, 1919).

55. Malcolm W. Davis to Bullard, “Report on Siberian Activities,” Bullard Papers, Box 7.

56. Bullard to Norton, January 29, 1919, Bullard Papers, Box 7.

57. George Kennan, “A Voice for the People of Russia,” George Kennan Papers, New York Public Library, Box 4, Folder 9.

of the West, which distorted its image in America. Since then, attempts have been made in order to help the “barbaric” and “uncivilized” Russian people to take up the path Americans had trod.⁵⁸

Not only did the Bolshevik revolution of November 1917 change the American perception of Russia, but it also intensified an ideological component. This attitude resulted in Arthur Bullard’s effort to establish contacts with the Russian people, who were considered as oppressed and unrepresented by the new Bolshevik government, and to spread information from overseas in order to urge Russians to challenge the Bolshevik government. An examination of Bullard’s work in Russia reveals that, while fighting censorship, the CPI did not promote publicity, but it controlled the information, trying to censor mass thought. In a period when United States was adopting a policy of political and military containment of the revolutionary government,⁵⁹ Bullard was committed to a cultural containment to prevent lower class people from listening to the Bolsheviks’ siren calls. Bullard’s commitment was not sufficient to prevent Bolshevism from spreading in other territories and to build a bridge of sentiment between Americans and Russians but was far-sighted, and his methods changed the concept of propaganda.

58. David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission*, 7–33; Donald D. Davis, Eugene P. Trani, *Distorted Mirrors: Americans and their Relations with Russia and China in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 1–9.

59. Donald D. Davis, Eugene P. Trani, *The First Cold War: The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson in US-Soviet Relations* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002).

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