

Introduction

David W. McFadden

Arthur Bullard (1879–1929), the author of *The Russian Pendulum* and numerous articles and reviews, was a native of St. Joseph, Missouri and the son of Henry Bullard, a prominent Presbyterian minister. An 1899 graduate of the Blair Academy in Blairstown, New Jersey, Bullard was a student at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. He left college after two years because of deepening concerns about the urban social crisis. Bullard immersed himself in New York City's Progressive reform community, serving as a probation officer for the New York Prison Association and a resident worker at the University Settlement House on New York's Lower East Side.

Bullard first went to Russia in 1905, at the time of the 1905 Revolution, following a brief stint as the secretary-treasurer of the Friends of Russian Freedom. Before getting to Russia, Bullard worked with William English Walling and Ernest Poole in Geneva, where he managed Walling's pro-revolution news bureau and met with prominent Russian exiles, including Lenin. Bullard next went to Moscow to report on the strike movement, and then he went to the Baltic states and the Ukraine to cover the military repression of the tsarist government. Bullard did all of his reporting under the pen name Albert Edwards, in order to avoid arrest. Numerous reports from his travels in 1905 were published in *Harper's Weekly*, *Collier's Weekly*, and other American outlets. In St. Petersburg, he joined others from the Friends of Russian Freedom, William English Walling and Ernest Poole, in forwarding the work of the Friends Bureau. From 1905 to 1907, he traveled widely in the Russian Empire and continued to write. On his return to the United States late in 1908, he began writing for the socialist daily *The New York Call* and also tried his hand at fiction, publishing two novels: *A Man's World* (1912) and *Comrade Yetta* (1913).

Bullard resumed his career as a world correspondent as World War I loomed. In 1913 he traveled to the Balkans to cover the Second Balkans War for *Outlook* magazine, returning to Europe on the outbreak of fighting in 1914. It was in 1914 that he began his most important work, as an adviser to Woodrow Wilson's chief aide, Colonel E. M. House. Bullard's analyses of the European diplomatic front were sent regularly to House. Their strong relationship, which was to last throughout Bullard's time in Russia, began at this time. Here he championed a plan for the civilian control of wartime information (in opposition to a military plan proposed by General

Douglas MacArthur), which led in 1917 to the creation of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), the official US propaganda agency. Bullard's short book *Mobilizing America* advocated a strategy of propaganda and information dissemination rather than censorship. His most notable contribution with the fledgling CPI was the compilation of documents *How the War Came to America*, of which millions were distributed.

Bullard's most important work came with the CPI in Russia. He wholeheartedly supported Wilson's prowar and pro-Russian reform policies, breaking with his former colleagues in the Socialist Party. Returning to Russia in 1917 with Ernest Poole, Bullard worked as a press aide at the American Consulate in Moscow, then became second in command when the CPI opened an office in Petrograd. He assumed the direction of CPI activities in March 1918. Bullard's efforts to mount a serious propaganda campaign to counter the German effort were at first stillborn. He was unsure how to proceed, especially in light of hostility toward Americans. Bullard recruited Malcolm Davis, a YMCA secretary, for translation. He was also full of ideas for somewhat utopian, "model" projects such as a model school, American exhibits on education and agriculture, and scholarships. But much of this was postponed since Bullard had no budget for any of it. The Russia commission headed by Root had advocated a budget of \$5 million for a publicity campaign in August 1917, but this was cut back to less than \$1 million, and the YMCA part of the campaign disappeared completely. By the time any money was actually available, the Bolshevik Revolution had taken place. The only really viable propaganda and publicity work was carried out by the Red Cross and YMCA missions rather than the Committee on Public Information. Bullard worked with them both, and finally developed his own publicity campaign with the help of Consul General Maddin Summers in Moscow in early 1918. The major accomplishment of this campaign was the wide distribution of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points Speech in multiple copies in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Bullard was forced by Washington to leave western Russia in 1918 lest he be taken hostage. He vigorously protested his recall but sailed from Archangel to New York on a British ship. He eventually ended up back in Russian Manchuria and then in Siberia. When the war ended, Bullard was assigned to work with Colonel House at the Peace Conference in Paris, but he fell seriously ill and never made it to the conference. Bullard wrote *The Russian Pendulum* in 1919 while convalescing from a bout of mastoiditis that nearly took his life. Toward the end of the Wilson administration, Bullard was appointed head of the Russian Division of the State Department, but he resigned upon the inauguration of Harding as president in 1921.

Following his resignation from government service, Bullard resumed his writing, editing a short-lived magazine, *Our World*, which was devoted to international affairs. His last international service was in 1925, when he went to Geneva to represent the American League of Nations Association.

Bullard's papers can be found in the Princeton University Library. They consist of the manuscripts of several of Bullard's novels and many files of miscellaneous

writings in the form of articles, essays, and correspondence. Much of the collection focuses on Russia, but other papers include materials on disarmament, Anglo-American relations, the League of Nations, trade, economics, and World War I.

The Russian Pendulum is organized topically but also chronologically. It begins with the Old Regime and the February Revolution, and takes the story of European Russia through to Bolshevik control, the Civil War, and Lenin's government. It then continues with a section on Siberia and closes with its most provocative section, "What's To Be Done?"

In the preface, Bullard lays out one of his most important premises, that "in the end we must judge Russian affairs by events in Russia."

Bullard begins with an analysis of Lenin, arguing that Lenin took his politics and ideology from a combination of Marx, Blanqui, and Nietzsche. He then goes on to assert that Lenin's ideas flourished in Russia because of the "slave mentality" of the Russian people. Bullard is on firmer ground, however, when he claims that factory workers, soldiers, and poor peasants were the most receptive to the Bolshevik message.

In his next chapter, Bullard goes on to argue that the only hope for a positive, i.e., democratic outcome to the revolution is to be found in the *zemstvos* and cooperative societies, which he believed would come to the fore at some future stage of the revolution. He is skeptical about the soviets as an institution. While accurately portraying their development, he believes that the Bolshevik takeover of the soviets emasculated them as a potential democratic institution.

The Russian Pendulum devotes subsequent chapters to the land and peace questions, arguing that they exceed all others in importance. With regard to the land question, Bullard believed that Bolshevik encouragement of peasant land seizures was at least partially responsible for the Bolsheviks' victory. Equally important was the issue of peace. As Bullard put it, "everyone wanted peace," and it was the failure of the Provisional Government and the Allies to revise the terms for peace that was largely responsible for their defeat. Bullard argued that "we who were in Russia representing in one capacity or another, the allied governments, waited in desperate impatience for the answer of our governments to this appeal of revolutionary Russia," and that it was Kerensky's failure to meet the demands for land and peace that was responsible for his fall.

This brings us to an analysis of the Bolshevik success. They organized around the land and peace issues, and aligned their slogans with the majority of Russians, who were in favor of the peasants taking the land, and the government advocating for an immediate peace. Thus although the Bolsheviks only briefly had the majority of support, they always had a majority of people in favor of their approach to the land and peace questions.

The next chapter in *The Russian Pendulum* is devoted to "The Bolsheviks at Work," but Bullard admits (as well he should in 1919) that "the material for such a study is not

at hand. Nevertheless, he analyzes Bolshevik decrees without any evidence concerning their practical application.

More concrete is Bullard's analysis of the question of "German Gold." While insisting that there is "overwhelming" evidence that Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, accepted German gold and help in advancing the revolution, Bullard also notes, quite rightly, that while Lenin probably made promises to Germany, he never meant to keep them. Bullard was skeptical from the beginning concerning the "Sisson Papers," which turned out to be very skillful forgeries.

Bullard's discussion of the situation in Siberia is based on his own involvement there, as well as on an analysis as of late 1918, when he left the country. This discussion is by far the weakest part of his book. He rightly points to the importance of the railroads for the political and economic health of the region, and he also criticizes the various regimes that had attempted to assert their control over various parts of the vast Siberian area region: Horvath, Vologodsky, the Omsk Government, and various local groups, including those in Irkutsk and Vladivostok. He also spends some time dissecting the failures of the Kolchak regime. Overall, his analysis agrees with most historians in pointing to the extreme conflict among all the contending parties, and the contribution of this conflict to the eventual success of the Bolsheviks.

The last part of *The Russian Pendulum* is in many ways the strongest, and certainly the most thought-provoking. Book III is entitled "What Is to Be Done?" Here, Bullard first takes pains to analyze "some elements of the problem," focusing on the need for those concerned with Russia to highlight all aspects of the current situation, not just the debate between "Hands off Russia" and "Stand by Russia." He argues that we should take pains to seek information on all sides of the conflict, and to accept the fact that an irreversible "agrarian revolution" has occurred and that local political participation must be advanced if the revolution is to become democratic and lasting. He also cogently urges any Russian government to stress public education and commerce as the surest means of regenerating Russia. As for the debate between "hands off" and "stand by," Bullard argues that this is to some extent a false dichotomy, but that the United States should not abandon Russia but rather be involved with Russia as that nation moves on into a revolutionary future. Key to this involvement, according to Bullard, should be US assistance for the regeneration of local bodies of self-government, including the zemstvos and town councils.

Bullard ends *The Russian Pendulum* with a perhaps surprising plea for educational cooperation, arguing that "the greatest need of her [Russia's] people is for increased opportunities for education and these we can furnish free from all partisan bias." His final words constitute a wide-ranging case: "If we wish for friendly relations with the New Russia, if we wish to popularize our ideals of government there, there is no better means than the encouragement of Russian students in our institutions of learning. In no way could we do more 'to help Russia' than by the establishment of a great

scholarship endowment which would attract Russian students to America to complete their technical training ... no money could be better spent.”

The heart of Bullard’s study is his analysis of Allied diplomacy and, most importantly, the question of the Allied governments’ attitude toward the Bolshevik regime. Was it possible to keep Russia in the war, and was it possible to establish some sort of contact, *de facto*, between the US and the other Allies, and the Bolshevik government?

Here it is very useful to remember that in George F. Kennan’s evaluation, Bullard was “the best American mind observing on the spot the course of the Russian Revolution.”¹ Bullard reported directly to Colonel House, ignoring State Department channels. Bullard’s advice to House remained remarkably consistent, from the Bolshevik Revolution to his departure from Bolshevik territory in the spring of 1918: open up contact with all elements, including the Bolsheviks, promote American interests and democratic values, and do not cut the United States off from opportunities. This was essentially the advice that House wanted to hear. As Ernest Poole was to remark later, “He (Bullard) felt strongly that the work of his group should be strictly confined to the friendly publicity campaign. He was at all times strongly against taking part in any activities against the Soviet Government.”²

In Bullard’s initial 20-page missive to House on December 12, 1917, he argued strongly that informal contact with the Bolsheviks was essential to keeping open the possibility of influencing their conduct in negotiations with Germany and keeping Compub activities in Russia alive.³ A few days earlier, in a letter to George Creel, Bullard gave his strong support to Raymond Robins, who was key in all the unofficial contacts and discussions between the Americans and the Bolsheviks:

I suppose that you know Raymond Robins personally. I did not till I met him here... From what I see of him here, I judge that when he fights, he does it so wholeheartedly that his opponents do not quickly forget it. And I do not suppose that there is any great cordiality towards him in the camp of the Administration. But whether or not he has been on the right side before, he has been and is on the right side here. Of all the officials of our Government, whose trail I have encountered here, he has been the most important, the most intelligent, the most single-minded in his patriotism and the most sympathetic to democracy—in short, the best American. In those qualities he has been not only pre-eminent but—unfortunately—almost unique.... He

¹ George F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), 49.

² Ernest Poole memorandum, Arthur Bullard Papers, Princeton University, B-1.

³ Bullard to House, December 12, 1917, Edward M. House Papers, Yale, B-21.

has done more than any other individual here to win a little respect and trust for our country.⁴

In his January memo on the Bolshevik movement in Russia, Bullard argued that the United States needed to maintain openness and communication with the Bolshevik movement despite dislike for it and opposition to its aims and methods.

As late as March 1918, although Bullard disagreed with Raymond Robins on the question of material aid to the Bolsheviks, he still argued for contact, and cautioned against intervention.

Suggested Additional Reading

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⁴ Arthur Bullard to George Creel, December 9, 1917, Arthur Bullard Papers, B-14.