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#### GEORGE CREEL AND THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION 1917-1918

#### By Chloe Maxwell

In September of 1916, a relatively unknown Kansas City journalist published a short book titled *Wilson and the Issues*.<sup>1</sup> The short book, only 167 pages in length, was released deliberately in line with President Woodrow Wilson's reelection. Within these pages, author George Creel systematically defends Wilson and his first term as president. Creel discusses events such as the German occupation of Belgium, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and Wilson's neutrality.<sup>2</sup> Those familiar with Creel's work called him a professional "muckraker" and an outspoken supporter of the Progressive agenda.<sup>3</sup> Before war broke out in Europe, Creel advocated for child labor reforms, woman's suffrage, and direct democracy.

Over the course of World War 1, George Creel created an unprecedented propaganda machine that unified the United States behind the war. Towards the end of his life, Creel wrote that he felt like his work was his patriotic duty to his country, yet, he is still heavily criticized for his wartime propaganda. Creel's actions can be justified by the limited way in which he implemented propaganda and censorship.

The Wilson Administration understood that if the United States declared war on Germany, than public support would be crucial to victory.<sup>4</sup> America was not under direct attack, so public opinion would already be limited. At this time, the United States was a nation with a deliberately weak central government and a diverse population with strong isolationist and antimilitary beliefs. Wilson knew that he would have to unify the country behind a war taking place on the other side of the world.<sup>5</sup> He had to unify the people behind the Wilsonian agenda.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Alan Axlerod, *Selling The Great War: The Making of American Propaganda*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 47.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> George Creel, Wilson and the Issues, (New York: The Century Co., 1916).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Seth Abrams, "The Committee on Public Information after World War I: The Failure to Develop into a Peacetime Organization." *Midwest Political Science Association*, (April 2011): 2-18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Krystina Benson, "Archival Analysis of The Committee on Public Information: The Relationship between Propaganda, Journalism and Popular Culture," *The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society* 6, no. 4 (2010): 151-164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War*, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 78.

It appears as though Wilson had considered creating a publicity agency as early as June 1914. The president hoped a publicity agency would clarify the government's position on certain issues Wilson thought were important to the American war aims.<sup>6</sup> Eight days after Congress passed a Declaration of War, Wilson issued Executive Order No. 2594 which created the Committee on Public Information (CPI).<sup>7</sup> When it came time to select the person who would stand at the head of this committee, George Creel was an obvious choice for the president.<sup>8</sup> Wilson trusted him, and there is no indication that he considered anyone else for the job.9 Creel's loyalty to Wilson and Progressivism made him perfect for this position.<sup>10</sup> Creel viewed it as his job to influence public opinion and to convey the Allies war aims.<sup>11</sup> Creel himself wrote that it was a fight "for the minds of men, for the conquest of their convictions" which would allow for "the gospel of Americanism" to "be carried out to every corner of the globe."<sup>12</sup> He campaigned not only for public support, but also to increase enlistments. He persuaded the American people to buy War Bonds and to save their food. It can be said, though, that the most important goal of the CPI was to convince the populace that they should hate the enemy, which, in this instance, was Germany.<sup>13</sup> Creel was an idealist, and he strongly believed truth should be the prevailing factor in any propaganda. He operated on the theory that when presented with all the facts, people would then be able to think for themselves.<sup>14</sup> Creel believed that facts would persuade the American people that they could make the world secure for democracy at the expense of their sons and, temporarily, some of their rights.15

Creel had the daunting task of uniting the nation behind a war they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Henry Turner, "Woodrow Wilson and Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (Winter, 1957-1958): 505-520.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Eric Van Schaack, "The Division of Pictorial Publicity in World War I," *Design Issues* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 32-45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Many people refer to the CPI as the Creel Commission.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> There were others appointed to a board which was originally supposed to run the CPI but Creel quickly became the most powerful and important actor within the CPI.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Stephen Vaughn, "First Amendment Liberties and the Committee on Public Information," *The Journal of Legal History* 23, no. 2 (April 1979): 95-119.
<sup>11</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America*, 7th ed, vol 2, (New York:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America*, 7th ed, vol 2, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007), 718.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947),
46.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ray Eldon Hiebert, *Courtier to the Crowd: The Story of Ivy Lee and the Development of Public Relations*, (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1966), 253.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Axlerod, 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ibid., 53.

were not completely sure they were ready to support. Creel wrote that in order to understand the actions of the CPI a person must first remember the deep divisions within the country at the start of the war.<sup>16</sup> Historian, Dr. Alan Axelrod writes that the divisions Creel points out seem to be factions that are essentially synonymous with democracy. People living in a democracy are free to think what they wish, rather than be compelled to embrace the ideas of a monarch or dictator.<sup>17</sup> Creel wrote that the nation needed to somehow find a "war-will," which he defined that as a will to win.<sup>18</sup> Axlerod suggests that Creel understood the "paradoxical nature of his mission." Creel was tasked with uniting "a democracy [in] the kind of mass behavior that might be expected from people under a totalitarian regime, yet do so without destroying democracy."<sup>19</sup> The CPI was stuck with a fallacious argument. They needed the American people to be on the side of Wilson and they also needed Americans to feel free to think what they pleased. Americans are sensitive of media censorship. Accordingly, Creel had to find a way to censor the media all the while allowing Americans to think their ideas were original and not orchestrated by the government.<sup>20</sup> The government had two options. The first option would be to implement "ironclad censorship" which would require government officials to determine what was harmful and what could or could not be published. The second option was voluntary censorship, which is what Creel ended up implementing.<sup>21</sup> From the beginning of his career, Creel was strongly against strict censorship legislation. He believed it would be too difficult to enforce such laws that legislatures would ultimately struggle to codify.<sup>22</sup> Creel believed it was "essential in the creation of public support for the war through expression, not suppression, of news."<sup>23</sup> Creel proposed voluntary censorship.<sup>24</sup> He recognized the need for some sort of censorship but knew the government would have to attack it from a less

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Axlerod, 62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Axlerod, 63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Vaughn, 95-119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> James Mock, Cedric Larson, Words That Won the War, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Axlerod, 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> American Journalism, 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Axlerod, 67.

obvious angle.<sup>25</sup> Creel knew if he could tap into the patriotic nature of American newspapermen, then he would possess all the power he would need to control the message.<sup>26</sup> He made every paper its own censor.<sup>27</sup> Creel created three categories of information for the newspapers: dangerous, questionable, and routine. Dangerous news featured reports on operations being performed by the armed forces. Questionable stories were to be published only after the approval of the CPI. Almost all the stories that were published contained information about everyday events which were considered to be routine and those were to be published at the discretion of the newspaper.<sup>28</sup>

Creel would continue to say during and after the war that he had no official power to enforce censorship. Members of the CPI had no authority to arrest anyone who did not comply with their program of voluntary censorship. Creel considered this a check to his power. In 1917, Congress passed two very important acts: The Espionage and Sedition Acts. These acts outlawed any negative criticism of the government and this led to 1,000 convictions.<sup>29</sup> It effectively quieted the opposition.<sup>30</sup> It made it punishable by law to make slanderous statements about the armed forces, hinder the sale of war bonds and enlistments, and for opposing the cause of the United States. Before the country entered the war the Department of Justice (DOJ) had 300 agents posted around the country. A few months into the war they had already added another 100. The DOJ also created the American Protective League which consisted of everyday Americans who wished to do their part on the home front by catching spies. By June of 1917, League members were in 600 cities and it is suggested that their numbers were as high as 100,000. By 1918, their membership reached 250,000. The Espionage and Sedition Acts were the force behind the CPI even if Creel wished not to see it this wav.<sup>31</sup>

One of the most vital aspects of Creel's CPI was the "Four Minute

<sup>28</sup> Vaughn, 95-119.

<sup>30</sup> Tindall, Shi, 718.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Benson, 151-164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> After the war, the Supreme Court heard the case *Schenck v. United States* in which the courts upheld these laws stating "Free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater, and causing panic." They specified that the Sedition Act applied only when there was a "clear and present danger."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Carl Brent Swisher, "Civil Liberties in War Time," *Political Science Quarterly*, 55 no. 3 (September 1940) 321-347.

Men." These men would become the public face of the CPI.<sup>32</sup> Local volunteers were used to spread the word on the community level. They were most famous for speaking to an essentially captive audience at motion pictures.<sup>33</sup>It took movie operators four minutes to change film reels.<sup>34</sup> In these four minutes, the Four Minute men were able to update people on events in Europe and also share Creel's message, usually in speeches that lasted no more than four minutes. Across the country when people went to a show, a slide would appear on the screen which read:

FOUR MINUTE MEN [Name of speaker] Will speak four minutes on a subject of national importance. He speaks under the authority of THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION GEORGE CREEL, CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON, D.C.<sup>35</sup>

Associate Director of the Four Minute Men Division, and Public Speaking Professor, Bertram Nelson stated:

How can we reach [the people]? Not through the press, for they do not read; not through patriotic rallies, for they do not come. Every night eight to ten million people of all classes, all degrees of intelligence, black and white, young and old, rich and poor, meet in the moving picture houses of this country, and among them are many of these silent ones who do not read or attend meetings but who must be reached.<sup>36</sup>

It is estimated that in 1917, ten million Americans went to the cinema every day.<sup>37</sup> In Los Angeles County in 1918, the Four Minute Men were able to speak to 1,000 people in less than a weeks' time.<sup>38</sup> The CPI recruited 75,000 volunteers who gave approximately 7,500,000 speeches to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Axlerod, 92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I*, (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Lisa Mastrangelo, "World War I, Public Intellectuals, and the Four Minute Men: Convergent Ideals of Public Speaking and Civic Participation" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 12 no. 4 (2009) 609.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Fleming, 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Mastrangelo, 607.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Zieger, 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Mastrangelo, 610.

an estimated 130,000,000 people while the CPI was in existence from 1917-1918. During this time, there was a common joke that when more than six people gathered together it would be a rare thing if a Four Minute Man did not arrive to inform them that they needed to buy war bonds, save food and fuel, and support the actions of the government.<sup>39</sup> The CPI knew they had to find a way to spread their message in the most efficient way possible, and the Four Minute Men were the answer.<sup>40</sup> Bertram Nelson provided them with about 30 suggested topics. Nelson also had a speech professional on staff to help evaluate and train future four minute men. The speeches were not done entirely in English, but were instead spoken in a variety of languages such as: Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, Magyar-Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Bohemian-Slovak, and Yiddish. The program is estimated to have cost only \$100,000 which was only a small fraction of the CPI's budget.<sup>41</sup>

When Wilson announced the draft in the summer of 1917, the CPI set out to support this as well. They viewed their work as successful when on the first day of the draft 10,000,000 men signed up and there were no large scale riots or public demonstrations like America had seen after a draft was announced during the Civil War. Creel, and his men, had no problem with taking credit for the large number of people who enlisted after the draft was announced.<sup>42</sup>

As the Four Minute Men worked on speaking to everyone they possibly could, the Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP) worked to expose every American to their form of propaganda. Creel called for the best artists from across the country to do their part to fight the war by using their skills to help the United States in the war effort. According to Creel, America had more posters than any of the countries they were fighting. More importantly, American posters were better. Creel realized early on that posters would play a large role in what they did and to this effect Creel stated, "The printed word might not be read, people might not choose to attend meetings or watch motion pictures, but the billboard was something that caught even the most indifferent eye."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> George T. Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, (Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> See Figure 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Mastrangelo, 610

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Mastrangelo, 612.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 133.

The DPP tended to portray the horrors of a possible German invasion in their work. In one famous poster it says, "Beat Back the Hun with Liberty Bonds."<sup>44</sup> The character can be seen wearing a Prussian helmet called a *Pickelhaube*. The word *Pickelhauben* comes from the German word *Pickel* meaning point and *Haube* meaning headgear. It is was helmet worn primarily in the nineteenth and twentyith centuries by Prussian military, firefighters and police.<sup>45</sup>This was something that Americans viewed as stereotypically Prussian. Ironically, the Prussians had ceased to use this piece of equipment in 1916, yet this this is exactly the point. It did not matter that the pictures were not accurate. The DPP was able to effectively portray through a poster the fears of the average American. They feared that that the Prussians would invade, and if they did, they would have to do so with American blood on their fingers and bayonets. It told the American people that even though they might not be on the battlefield, they could keep the Prussians away by buying War Bonds.<sup>46</sup>

The artists in the DPP played off the fears felt by the average American. Though some, it can be argued, were extremely dramatic, they were effective nonetheless. Joseph Pennell's famous poster depicts Liberty Island in New York City under attack.<sup>47</sup> He wrote "my idea was New York City bombed, shot down, burning, blown-up by the enemy."<sup>48</sup> He originally planned to give it the caption "Buy Liberty Bonds or You Will See This."<sup>49</sup> Millions of Americans believed this was a definite possibility, and the DPP knew it and played off this fear. Creel suggested that their success can be seen in the fact that more than 20 million people, over half the adult population, bought War Bonds. It is estimated that nearly seven billion dollars were raised through their sale.<sup>50</sup> It would give the DPP too much credit to say they were *the* reason why so many War Bonds were bought, but it is reasonable to say they played a large role in this operation.<sup>51</sup>

By the time the armistice was signed in November of 1918, the DPP had 279 artists and 33 cartoonists on their payroll. Creel estimates 700 posters

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/tips/helmets.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Van Schaack, 32-45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> See Figure 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Van Schaack, 32-45.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

were created with a total of 1,438 visual works all together.<sup>52</sup> This included things such as cards for street cars and window displays, items published in newspapers, cartoons, and buttons. The message of the DPP told Americans to not only buy War Bonds, but also to conserve food, coal and electricity, it urged enlistment and support of the Red Cross. The DPP teamed with George Creel was a force that showed the American people what the government wanted them to think.<sup>53</sup>

The publishing machine that Creel created was remarkable. During its existence the CPI published approximately 75 million pamphlets. It also published the government's first daily newspaper, *The Official Bulletin*, which at its height in popularity reached 115,000 subscriptions. The *Bulletin* was also distributed to every news office around the country free of charge.<sup>54</sup> To Creel, public opinion was in a way "a weapon of war." With this in mind, it can be seen that Creel's actions fell completely in line with this opinion.<sup>55</sup>

Within one day of the armistice going into effect, orders were sent out that called all active CPI campaigns to an end. Creel believed that many of the departments within the CPI could be useful in peacetime. He also believed that "the Committee was a *war organization* only, and that it was without [a] proper place in the national life in time of peace."<sup>56</sup> He realized it did not matter how "honest its intents or pure its purposes," the CPI operating during a time of peace would be viewed as tyrannical in the same way Americans viewed a large peacetime standing army.<sup>57</sup> The populace was done with war and had not completely bought into Wilson's idea of "peace without Victory."<sup>58</sup> Creel believed that the work of the CPI was finished but he was not. Creel traveled to Europe with Wilson to work out the President's dream, the League of Nations.<sup>59</sup>

When Creel returned to the United States in 1919, he, like Wilson, had very few friends in the Republican Congress. Creel planned to take apart

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Van Schaack, 32-45..

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Axlerod, 135-145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> American Journalism 14

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Michael S. Sweeney, "Harvey O' Higgins and 'The Daily German Lie," *American Journalism*, 23 no. 3, (Summer 2006) 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 401.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Woodrow Wilson hoped to achieve peace without anyone coming out on top. He hoped this would more permanently stop bloodshed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Axlerod, 214.

the CPI with care, but Congress did not.<sup>60</sup> Congress actively tried to discredit Creel professionally. George Blakey wrote, "The irony of much of the Republican criticism is that it was intended for Wilson [but] aimed at Creel.<sup>361</sup> Creel wanted to save all the records that he knew would someday be important to the story of the CPI but Congress did not think this was necessary.<sup>62</sup> On June 30, 1919 Congress cut off what was left of the CPI from their money supply. In Creel's memoir he wrote:

> Every dollar of our appropriation, every dollar of our earnings, was swept back into the Treasury, and the Committee itself wiped out of existence, leaving no one with authority to sign a check, transfer a bank balance, employ a clerk, rent a building, or with any power whatsoever to proceed with the business of settlement. The action was so utterly mad, and yet...there was nothing we could have done about it.63

Creel took it upon himself to save what was left of the CPI. He borrowed Army trucks to transport everything to empty space he found within the Fuel Administration Building and he rode with every truck load to personally oversee the move.<sup>64</sup> The offices he found were empty, so he hired a security guard at his own expense to watch over the remnants of the CPI.<sup>65</sup> Congress did not let these files stay at this location long. Creel states the files were "dumped into trucks for the second time ... whatever resemblance of orderly arrangement remained was entirely smashed by this last transfer."66 In October of 1919, Congress made allegations against Creel, effectively saying he wasted the government's money, and ironically, the tedious records that Creel worked hard to save were what cleared his name of these accusations.<sup>67</sup>

The only honor Creel ever received in regards to his work with the CPI was a personal letter from President Woodrow Wilson. He spent most of

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 431-432.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Axlerod, 216.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Blakey, 128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Axlerod, 216.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 427.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Creel was rightly concerned that important information would get lost in transportation.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Axlerod, 216.
<sup>66</sup> George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 430.

the rest of his life out of the public eye, except for a failed run in a California Gubernatorial race. Creel continued defending what he did in World War I until his death in 1953.<sup>68</sup> Arguably, Creel is most famous for saying, "In no degree was the Committee an agency of censorship, a machine of concealment or repression. Its emphasis throughout was on the open and the positive. At no point did it seek to exercise authorities under those laws that limited the freedom of speech and press."69

The question that remains is whether Creel was the master propagandist manipulating the minds of naïve Americans or was he a patriot fighting to save democracy. Creel appears to have been some of both. It seems as though Wilson was able to find someone who he could not only trust but also influence. Even though many criticize his work, none of it was illegal or inaccurate. Creel believed he was doing the right thing for the country, and this is something scholars agree on. It is more accurate to call Creel naïve. He behaved as tough he was blinded by the allure of Wilson's progressive agenda. He was a master of propaganda. Creel used his talents in a way that preserved democracy in the best way he could find. Though Creel and the CPI definitely used the heightened emotions of a nation during wartime to their advantage, they absolutely were successful in uniting a majority of the country behind the war. Creel admirably took the initiative to dismantle the CPI following the conclusion of WW1. Creel did produce a large amount of effective government funded propaganda during WW1, but President Wilson should be the one criticized for it, not George Creel.

According to Axelrod, historians have noticed similarities between the way Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, ran the Nazi propaganda ministry with the centralized way Creel ran the CPI. Currently, there is no way to be absolutely certain about this, but it seems logical that Goebbels would have researched the CPI which was the one of the most important propaganda agencies during WW1. In 1933, former CPI official, Edward Bernays invited the foreign correspondent of the Hearst newspapers, Karl von Weigand, to a dinner.<sup>70</sup> Barneys reportedly told stories to the other guests about Goebbels' plan to consolidate Nazi power. Goebbels, who would soon after be appointed head of Hitler's propaganda ministry, showed

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Axlerod, 217.
<sup>69</sup> Cedric Larson, "Found: Records of the Committee on Public Information," *The* Public Opinion Quarterly, 1 no. 1 (January 1937), 116-118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Axlerod cites page 111 of *The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of* Public Relations (New York: 1998) as the source for the relationship between the CPI and Nazi propaganda.

Weigand his extensive library, which included all of the best works on propaganda, the most extensive collection Weigand had ever come across. Goebbels told Weigand he was particularly fond of Bernay's 1923 book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. He used the book "as a basis for his destructive campaign against the Jews of Germany."<sup>71</sup> Hitler also wrote in *Mein Kampf* that "it was not until the [First World War] that it became evident what immense results could be obtained by a correct application of propaganda."<sup>72</sup> It does not appear to be too much of a stretch then to suggest that high level Nazi officials were familiar with Creel's success in propaganda in WW1.<sup>73</sup>

In January of 1939, an article was published in the *Science News Letter* informing the public that mysterious files were found in the basement of an old War Department building in Washington DC. These were the files Creel took so much care to preserve.<sup>74</sup> The files, since made public, tell the story of the CPI and its success in WW1 in a way that the highly-criticized Creel never could. The files shed light on a dark time in American history when President Wilson felt like a propaganda ministry was completely necessary to win WW1. Creel was able to preserve Democracy as best he could by convincing Congress and the President that they did not need explicit, strict censorship. George Creel was a powerful man, but the President was the one with the influence over a man who whole heartedly believed that he was a patriot and that he was doing his part to make the world safe for democracy.

The actions George Creel took during WW1 remained controversial for the rest of his life. Even now the words propaganda and censorship have a dirty connotation, and it is necessary to understand that these things are multifaceted. Creel's WW1 propaganda and censorship were an Americanized version. Although it did play off the heightened fears of a nation at war, there was no force behind the censorship and propaganda, unlike more renowned instances of propaganda, such as the Nazi regime. Because of the lack of force behind the propaganda and the context of the time, the evidence found in the basement of the War Department are enough to exonerate Creel's record and show that his actions were justified.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Axlerod, 219.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Ibid., 218.

 $<sup>^{73}</sup>$  Axelrod seems to strongly believe that there is a strong chance these two events have too much in common to ignore their similarities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> The files were found and analyzed by Dr. James R. Mock and Cedric Larsen of Princeton University. After they concluded studying the files of the CPI, they published *Words That Won the War* arguably the most important monograph written about Creel and the CPI.

Figure 1<sup>75</sup>

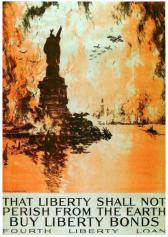


Figure 2<sup>76</sup>



# Figure 3<sup>77</sup>

Time of Day	Theatre	- 1	John E.		Estimated No.
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REMARKS:					

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Van Schaack, 32-45.
<sup>76</sup> Ibid.,
<sup>77</sup> Mastrangelo, 609.