

TAKING OFF THE SOFT POWER LENS

The United States Information Service in Cold War Belgium (1950-1958)

- **Frank Gerits**¹ -

On 15 January 1958, Ambram E. Manell, the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) at the United States Information Service in Brussels (USIS Brussels), received a telephone call from the cultural attaché of the Soviet Embassy, Mr. Charov. Through the crackling phone line Charov invited his American colleague for lunch in *La Directoire*, a restaurant in Brussels. Both men, wanted to get an idea of the plans which the competing cultural service was developing for the World Exhibition of 1958 in Brussels. In Manell's words : "Charov was fishing because the Soviets want to be certain that the US will not suddenly swamp them with cultural attractions which would rival or overshadow the Soviet effort". While ordering the most expensive dishes, Charov described the Soviet attractions in the performing arts, which were scheduled for the fair. He also remarked that the US had requested "several million additional dollars" for American performances. He wanted to know what the Americans were planning. Manell limited his response to repeating the text of the press report that had been issued. Nonetheless, he realized that "the Russians are determined to demonstrate their pre-eminence at the exhibition in the cultural field as well as in science [and] that they have a pretty accurate estimate of our program"².

This lunch between Manel and Charov shows how, during the 1950s, the Cold War evolved into a battle for hearts and minds. The hydrogen bomb had made open war between the superpowers all but unthinkable, channeling the rivalry into symbolic and ideological modes of combat³. Hence, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's foreign policy was shaped by propaganda concerns, which found its most direct expression in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy can be broadly defined as "an international actor's attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics (traditionally government to people)"⁴. After 1945 this interaction was primarily organized by governmental institutions, most famously the United States Information Agency (USIA) with its network of local United States Information Services (USIS)⁵.

One of those local posts, the USIS Brussels, presents the historian with three pertinent

questions⁶. First, the organization of this American diplomatic post is discussed. What were its major concerns and activities? And how was the Belgian geopolitical position evaluated? This first set of questions seeks to place the story of American propaganda towards Belgium in a broader context : the international dimension of Belgian post-war history and the changing nature of American Cold War strategy. It is often overlooked that American diplomats in Belgium were preoccupied with international affairs and devoted little attention to internal Belgian affairs.

The second matter examined is the aim of American public diplomacy. The task of USIS officials in Brussels differed from the goals that were set by public diplomats in other countries. Because Belgium was already pro-American, it becomes difficult to explain what foreign policy objectives propaganda

1. The article title is inspired by : MATTHEW CONNELLY, "Taking off the Cold War Lens : Visions of North-South Conflict During the Algerian War for Independence", in *The American Historical Review*, 2000, no. 3, p. 739-769. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Federico Romero (European University Institute, Florence), Prof. Dr. Gilles Scott-Smith (Roosevelt Academy, Middelburg), PhD. candidate Zhai Tao (University of Beijing), Dorien Styven (*Kazerne Dossin* Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre, Mechelen) and especially to Prof. Dr. Idesbald Goddeeris (*Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*) for comments on a draft of this essay. Any remaining errors are my own. Correspondence about this article should be addressed to : Frank.Gerits@EUI.eu. 2. USIS Brussels to United States Information Agency (USIA), *Conversation with Soviet Official in Brussels*, 24.1.1958, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 105, NARA. The term USIS Brussels is adopted from the sources. 3. KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War... Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, Lawrence KA, 2006, p. 2354. 4. Public diplomacy also incorporates cultural diplomacy, an interaction with the public using cultural tools such as exhibits, art, and theatre. See : JESSICA C.E. GIENOW-HECHT, "What Are We Searching For? Culture, Diplomacy, Agents and the State", in Id. & MARK C. DONFRIED (eds.), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy. – Explorations in Culture and International History* 6, Oxford/New York, 2010, p. 4. 5. NICHOLAS J. CULL, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency. American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, Cambridge MA/New York, 2009, p. x. 6. Duco Hellema came to a similar conclusion when he wrote about the Netherlands : "The loyal ally thesis is clearly too simple and further research is certainly necessary to clarify the US-Dutch relationship, both during the Cold War and afterwards" [DUCO HELLEMA, "Introduction. The Politics of Asymmetry : The Netherlands and the United States Since 1945", in HANS KRABBENDAM, CORNELIS A. VAN MINNEN & GILES SCOTT-SMITH (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations, 1609-2009*, New York, 2009, p. 59].

was supposed to advance. While historians have argued that the USIA was created to mobilize foreign public opinion in order to pressure unwilling governments indirectly, the documents of the USIS Brussels tell a different story.

Thirdly the method that USIS Brussels employed to reach its target population is studied. What was – according to the practitioners – the most effective way to influence the Belgian public? Public diplomats modeled the content and style of their propaganda to achieve as large an impact as possible. By analyzing the exhibitions, film screenings, pamphlets, and other propaganda operations, new light is shed on the technique behind public diplomacy, a topic that is under-theorized in historical research⁷.

In order to answer these three questions the working environment of USIS Brussels and the outlook of its employees are described. The two subsequent case studies address the

relationship between soft power and public diplomacy. The campaign in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Korean War is the first story that is told here. It shows how public diplomats freely borrowed from the burgeoning field of public relations theory. In a second example the propaganda projects to promote the European Defense Community (EDC) and European unification are analyzed. This latter account raises important questions about the role that public diplomacy played in the strengthening of the Americanization process. In doing so, this article argues that the concept of soft power does not allow for an accurate description of the wide range of USIA activities.

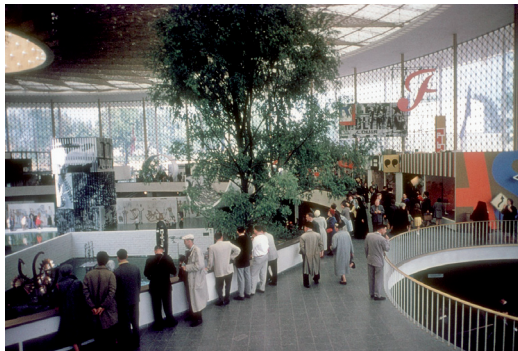
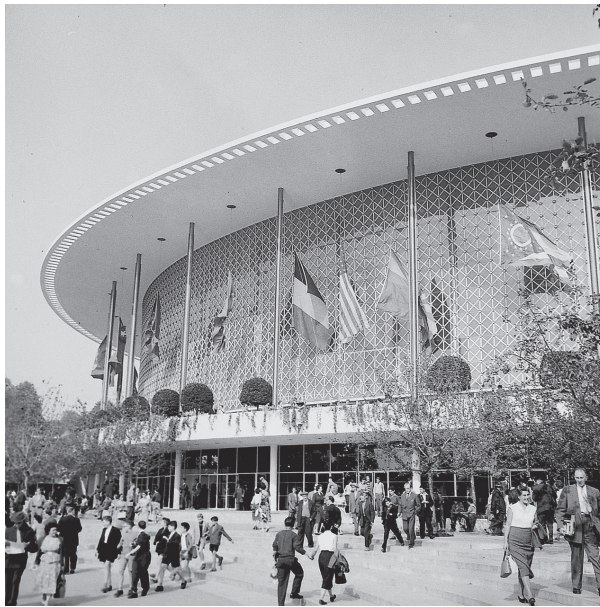
Historians have devoted little attention to how the Americans tried to influence Belgium after 1945. Instead, they present a conventional account of how economic interests and security concerns shaped Belgian foreign policy⁸. This restricted view

7. KENNETH A. OSGOOD & BRIAN C. ETHERIDGE, "Introduction. The New International History Meets The New Cultural History : Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Relations", in ID. (eds.), *The United States and Public Diplomacy. New Directions in Cultural and International History*. – Diplomatic Studies 5, Leiden/Boston MA, 2010, p. 10. 8. Historians in Belgium have written the history of Belgian foreign policy based on documents of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has created an imprecise understanding of the ways in which the Cold War played out in this small country. It appears as if the country was unaffected by international developments, Americanization, and the Marshall Plan. Belgian politicians only invoked the Cold War to further their own goals. Likewise, the evolution of Communism in Belgium, leftist intellectuals, and the purge of the Belgian Communist Party (KPB/PCB) are presented in separate case studies. In recent years, however, attention is being given to the international network of Belgian Communists. Nonetheless, historical writing about Belgium in the 1950s is mainly limited to the Royal Question and the ideological conflicts about education. At the same time however, the Belgian diplomatic corps – with a focus on internationally proactive ministers such as Paul Henri Spaak and Pierre Harmel – is portrayed as skilled in protecting vital Belgian economic and strategic interests. Others consider Belgium to be an unselfish broker between the great powers. Pieter Lagrou's excellent contributions with his focus on the American embassy in Belgium, the older and similar work by Jonathan E. Helmreich and Idesbald Goddeeris's focus on international history are exceptions. See: MARC LAMOT, "De Koude Oorlog als storende ruis en ultiem referentiekader 1970-1990", in MARC VAN DEN WIJNGAERT & LIEVE BEULLENS (eds.), *Oost West West Best. België onder de Koude Oorlog 1947-1989*,

stems from the limited paper archives that high-level meetings between Belgian and American officials produced. As a small country, Belgium did not occupy an important position in the Americans' strategic outlook. To understand what made US policy towards Belgium unique, one therefore has to look at what the Americans were doing on the ground where most of the diplomatic action happened and to turn towards a sphere of unconventional diplomacy: propaganda, the capstone of Eisenhower's Cold War strategy⁹.

The story of USIS Brussels does not only introduce the perspective of public diplomacy as a fruitful way to study Belgian-American relations, it also wishes to contribute to the field of Cold War history. While studies have been devoted to what happened on the ground, they rarely focus on small pro-American countries and the tension between high- and low-level policy¹⁰. This is problematic because the local USIS posts were vital to the development of strategy. The Eisenhower administration encouraged

Tielt, 1997, p. 137-156; JOSÉ GOTOVITCH & ANNE MORELLI (eds.), *Presse communiste, presse radicale (1919-2000). Passé, présent, avenir?*, Bruxelles, 2007; JOSÉ GOTOVITCH, *Du Communisme et des Communistes en Belgique. Approches critiques*, Bruxelles, 2012; EVA SCHANDEVYL, "Immigrants and the Brussels Labour Movement: Activism, Integration and Exclusion since 1945", in WENDY POJMAN (ed.), *Migration and Activism in Europe since 1945*, New York, 2008, p. 209-246; WIDUKIND DE RIDDER, "De communistische subjectiviteit onder de Koude Oorlog. De uitsluitingen uit de Kommunistische Partij van België (1944-1956)", in *Belgische Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis*, 2006, no. 1, p. 175-195; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek. 1830-2000*, Leuven, 2001; ID., *Oorlog zonder einde. De Amerikaanse militaire doktrine na 1945*, Gent, 1980; YVAN VANDEN BERGHE, "België en het buitenland", in LUC HUYSE & KRIS HOFACK (eds.), *De democratie heruitgevonden. Oud en nieuw in de Belgische politiek, 1944-1950*, Leuven, 1995; MAARTEN VAN ALSTEIN, "From Enigma to Enemy. Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian Diplomatic Elite, and the Soviet Union, 1944-1945", in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 2011, no. 3, p. 126-148; ID., "Wat betekende de Koude Oorlog? Belgische diplomaten en de vijandige bipolarisering: Edouard Le Ghaet en Baron Hervé de Gruben", in *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, no. 20, 2008, p. 103-144; VINCENT DUMOULIN, *Spaak*, Bruxelles, 1999; VINCENT DUJARDIN, "Go-Between: Belgium and Détente, 1961-73", in *Cold War History*, 2007, no. 1, p. 95-116; ID., *Pierre Harmel. Biographie*, Bruxelles, 2004; ID. & VINCENT DUMOULIN, *Paul Van Zeeland 1893-1973*, Bruxelles, 1997; PIETER LAGROU, "US Politics of Stabilization in Liberated Europe. The View from the American Embassy in Brussels, 1944-46", in *European History Quarterly*, 1995, no. 2, p. 209-246; JONATHAN E. HELMREICH, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960*, Cranbury NJ, 1998; ID., *Belgium and Europe. A Study in Small Power Diplomacy*. – Issues in Contemporary Politics Historical and Theoretical Perspectives 3, The Hague, 1976; IDESBALD GODDERIS (ed.), *Solidarity with Solidarity. Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982*, Lanham MD, 2010. 9. KENNETH A. OSGOOD, "From Before Substance: Eisenhower's Commitment to Psychological Warfare and Negotiations with the Enemy", in *Diplomatic History*, 2000, no. 3, p. 405-433. 10. Case studies of the USIS activities in specific countries are: JOEY J.R. LONG, *Safe for Decolonization. The Eisenhower Administration, Britain, and Singapore*, Kent, 2011; REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, *Coca-colonization... and the Cold War. The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War*, Chapel Hill NC, 1994; DAVID J. SNYDER, *U.S. Public Diplomacy in the New Netherlands, 1945-1958. Policy, Ideology, and the Instrumentality of American Power*, PhD. Dissertation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, 2006; SIMONA TOBIA, *Advertising America. The United States Information Service in Italy (1945-1956)*, Milan, 2008; KAETEN MISTRY, "The Case for Political Warfare. Strategy, Organization and US Involvement in the 1948 Italian Election", in *Cold War History*, 2006, no. 3, p. 301-329.



The US Pavilion at the World Fair in 1958 stood in stark contrast to the Soviet building. Sober and transparent, and without explicitly showcasing the values of the free West, the US Pavilion was one of the main attractions of the Fair (Photos Rudolph Nevi, www.expo58.tk).

every USIS post to develop its own policy. The Jackson Committee – appointed by the President to devise a global propaganda plan – stated that “more effective tactical control of the information and propaganda program of the various United States agencies is needed at the country level”¹¹.

Consequently, the tactics and aims of the local USIS posts require more research. The aim of public diplomacy has been explained by pointing to the House of Foreign Relations Committee which stated in 1964 : “The recent increase in influence of the masses (...) has created a new dimension of foreign policy. Through the use of modern instruments and techniques of communications it is possible (...) to influence their attitudes (...) These

groups, in turn, are capable of exerting noticeable, even decisive, pressures on their government”¹². In short, American public diplomacy had to get popular opinion on the side of the US. In its turn, the people targeted overseas would exert pressure on their own governments to create a favorable atmosphere towards American foreign policy.

Likewise, historians have explained the USIA methods by referring to the “soft power” logic of attraction¹³. Soft power is the ability of one nation to attract others to its cultural values and consequently come round to its way of thinking, which is separated from “hard power” where others are coerced by offering compensation through bargaining and negotiating or by making threats¹⁴. Giles

11. Report, *The Report of the President's Committee on International Information activities, June 30, 1953*, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954 : National Security Affairs*, Vol. 2, p. 1872. In 1960, a new report confirmed that “the decentralization (...) has been largely achieved.”, see : Sprague Report, Sprague to Eisenhower, *Conclusions and Recommendations of the President's Committee on Information Activities Abroad*, 12.1960, p. 8; US President's Committee on Information Activities Abroad (Sprague Committee) : Records, 1960-61, f: Printed Committee Report, p. 16; Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter : DDEL); Report, AmEmbBru to State Dept, *United States Information Service Brussels Report*, 10.1949, appendix, RG. 59, UD-WWW 1559 General Records of the Department of State Records Relating to International Information Activities 1938-1953, Lot. 560, Box 165, f: Belgium (effectiveness reports) 1949, NARA; USIS-Circular, *Eighty-Eight Country Plans*, [s.d., end 1952], p. 14-15, RG. 306, A 1066 Subject Files 1953-2000, Box 222, f: Country plans report 1953, NARA. 12. The document is cited in full : REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, *Coca-colonization.....*, p. 62; KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War.....*, p. 4. 13. MARIO DEL PERO, “The United States and ‘Psychological Warfare’ in Italy, 1948-1955”, in *The Journal of American History*, 2000, no. 4, p. 1304; WALTER L. HIXSON, *Parting the Curtain. Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961*, New York, 1997, p. xi; REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, *Coca-Colonisation....*, p. 275; KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War.....*, p. 4-8; REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, “The Empire of the Fun, or Talkin’ Soviet Union Blues. The Sound of Freedom and U.S. Cultural Hegemony in Europe”, in *Diplomatic History*, 1999, no. 3, p. 499-524; GREG CASTILLO, *Cold War on the Home Front. The Soft Power of Mid-century Design*, Minneapolis MN, 2010, p. xi. 14. JOSEPH NYE, “Soft Power”, in *Foreign Policy*, no. 80, 1990, p. 160. The concept of Gramscian hegemony is also invoked by historians. Nye has acknowledged the influence of Gramsci's thinking. Antonio Gramsci understood hegemony as the capacity to create submission to the ideas of a dominant social class through a network of cultural institutions. The existence of an institution disseminating material culture is considered to be sufficient proof for influence. Historians who refer to Gramsci are JESSICA C.E. GIENOW-HECHT, *Sound Diplomacy. Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850-1920*, Chicago, 2009, p. 8, 40; DAVID ELLWOOD, “What Winning Stories Teach. The Marshall Plan and Atlanticism as Enduring Narratives”, in MARIANO MARCO (ed.), *Defining the Atlantic*

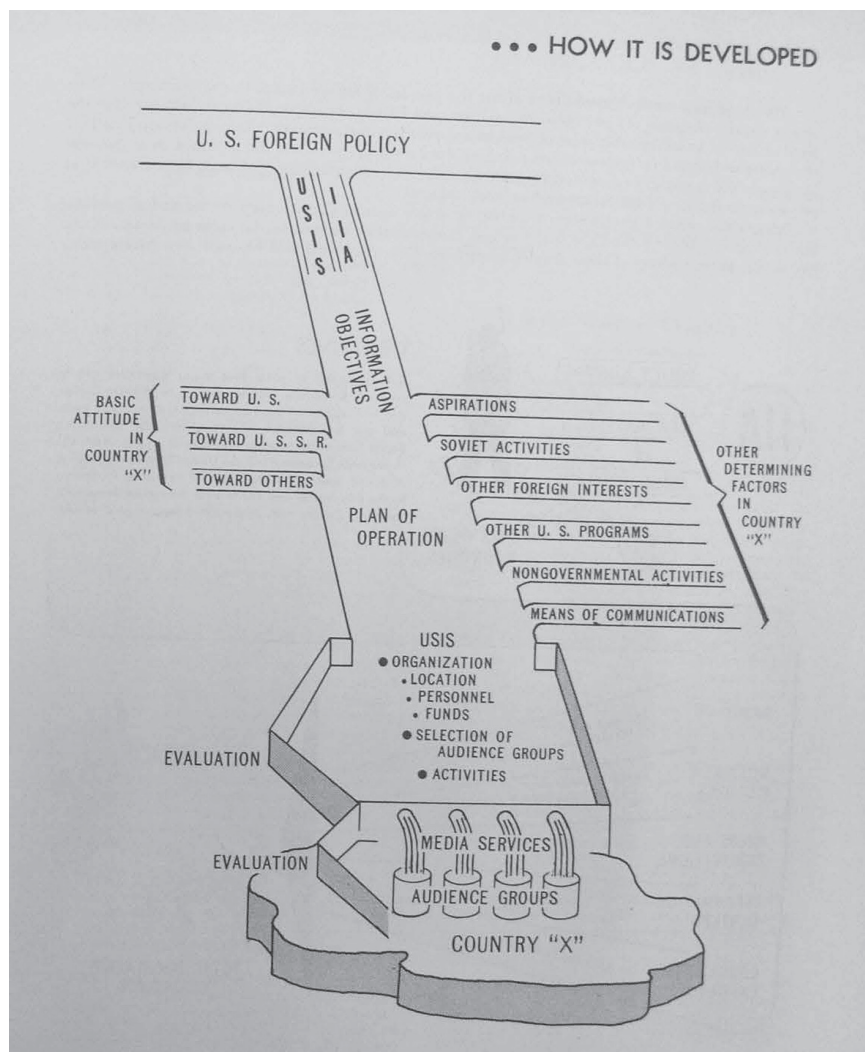
Scott-Smith explicitly acknowledges that : “While tactics utilizing economic measures were one way to secure objectives, it was not wise for the US to lean too heavily on its hard power (...) It was therefore far more effective for the US to achieve its aims by attracting, nurturing, and co-opting actual and potential allies abroad who would then act according to the same belief system”¹⁵.

Despite its wide use, soft power is a highly contested concept. Joseph Nye devised the term in response to a discourse at the end of the eighties that presented the US as a power in decline. He argued that the US still possessed a more potent form of power, namely cultural and ideological attraction, something the US has in abundance, according to Nye. The genealogy of soft power is part of a post-Cold War rationalization of the strategy to project American ideals abroad. Labeling the USIA strategy as soft power thus becomes

almost a circular argument, making the link between public diplomacy and soft power problematic¹⁶.

The following pages attempt to go beyond this narrative by looking at the practitioners in the field who had to make it up as they went along. Their cultural Cold War was shaped by day-to-day challenges and their work was not limited merely to implementing a blueprint that had been hatched in Washington¹⁷. This Belgian lens could only be employed because country plans, country assessment reports, country papers and correspondence – all sent from and to USIS Brussels – have been declassified in the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. In combination with material from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abeline, Kansas, the documents shed a new light on the battle for hearts and minds and tell us something about US policy towards Belgium.

Community, Culture, Intellectuals, and Policies in the Mid-Twentieth Century. – Routledge Research in Atlantic Studies 4, New York/London, 2010, p. 111-131; VICTORIA DE GRAZIA, *Irresistible Empire. America's Advance through Twentieth Century Europe*, Cambridge MA/London, 2005; In-depth analysis of Gramsci in : BENEDETTO FONTANA, “Hegemony and Power in Gramsci”, in RICHARD HOWSON & KYLIE SMITH (eds.), *Hegemony. Studies in Consensus and Coercion*. – Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought 56, New York/London, 2008, p. 80-106; ROBERT COX, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations. An Essay in Method”, in *Millennium. Journal of International Studies*, 2008, no. 2, p. 126-155. **15.** GILES SCOTT-SMITH, *Networks of Empire. The US State Department's Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France and Britain 1950-1970*, Brussels, 2008, p. 31. **16.** JOSEPH NYE, *Bound to Lead. The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York, 1991, p. 1-10. International relations theory has not yet untangled these knots. Some, such as Christian Reus-Smith have dismissed Nye's concept of soft power completely, others like Sarah Graham have sought to address its deficiencies, extend the concept and widen its scope both geographically outside of the US or historically before the Cold War. In this article soft power is examined by looking at the activities of USIS Brussels [CHRISTIAN REUS-SMITH, *American Power and World Order*, Cambridge/Malden MA, 2004; SARAH GRAHAM, “The (Real)politics of Culture. U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in Unesco, 1946-1954”, in *Diplomatic History*, 2006, no. 2, p. 231-251; JESSICA C.E. GIENOW-HECHT, *Sound Diplomacy...*, p. 7-10]. **17.** This dichotomy between Washington and the local levels can be found in : SCOTT LUCAS & KAETEN MISTRY, “Illusions of Coherence. George F. Kennan, U.S. Strategy and Political Warfare in the Early Cold War 1946-1950”, in *Diplomatic History*, 2009, no. 1, p. 39-66; NICK CULLATHER, *The Hungry World. America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*, Boston MA, 2010, p. 1-10.



The USIS and the USIA thought about effective ways to reach target audiences. This picture in an IIA brochure displays a strategy for a particular country. The message for each country was shaped by different influences. The USIS and the State Department set out certain goals, while the attitudes of "Country X" were also taken into account. Finally, the USIS defined "target groups" to whom concrete activities would be directed. These "target groups" would end up receiving a mass of information via different media services.

IIA review, "IIA International Information Administration Program", January 1953, 27, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, FRC 8, Folder US propaganda effort 1950-1955, NARA.

I. Belgium, the Cold War, and American influence

The discourse that surrounded American public diplomacy in the 1950s, considered USIA activities to be diplomatic tools that were used to deal with countries that were either too strong, and which therefore easily resisted the US, or too weak and which consequently could turn to the Soviet Union, in case they were pressurized too much by the US¹⁸. However, Belgium was small, stable, and pro-American. The decisions that were taken behind the desk of the USIS center in Brussels were therefore very different.

Fighting the Cold War from a propaganda office : USIS Brussels

The United States Information Service Brussels was one of the 26 posts which had been founded by the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1945 – the propaganda machine at the American home front – to create a favorable image of the liberating American troops. With the dawn of the Cold War, this local office underwent a transformation, especially in 1953 when Eisenhower became president. He

“wanted it cranked in at all levels of policy consideration from the National Security Council on down” as Abbott Washburn, deputy director of the USIA, described it¹⁹.

During his transition in 1952, the president-elect appointed *Time Life* editor Charles Douglas Jackson as his psychological warfare advisor. He became the director of the Committee on International Information Activities – known as the Jackson Committee – which constructed a bureaucracy that would be able to coordinate a global public diplomacy operation effectively. In 1953, Eisenhower created the United States Information Agency (USIA) with a network of United States Information Services (USIS) abroad, in order to replace the State Department's International Information Administration (IIA). As a result, the USIA took over the task of disseminating publications, setting up exhibitions and libraries, and showing films overseas. Only exchange programs were still run by the State Department²⁰.

As public diplomacy gained more weight, the projection of American ideas abroad was justified in new ways. Yet, Belgium was a fairly

18. I borrowed the dichotomy from Geir Lundestad who sees Americans use European integration to deal with countries that are too strong and too weak (GEIR LUNDESTAD, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945. From “Empire” by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*, Oxford/New York, 2005, p. 105-106). 19. Quote taken from : KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War.....*, p. 390. There is not much attention in the existing research for the way local USIS posts evolved from the post-war situation to the Cold War. Wagnleitner is the only historian who has made a structural analysis of the Austrian post (REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, *Coca-colonization....*, p. 66-83). 20. Public relations specialists within the USIA distinguished between three types of propaganda. ‘White’ propaganda was most commonly produced and was officially attributed to the United States. Nevertheless, USIA also disseminated ‘gray’ propaganda, material that was attributed to third parties and based on state-private cooperation. A third propaganda form was covert, so-called ‘black’ propaganda, which was disseminated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (SCOTT LUCAS, “Beyond Freedom, beyond Control. Approaches to Culture and the State-Private Network in the Cold War”, in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960*. – Intelligence Series 35, London/Portland OR, 2003; KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War...*, p. 246-247).

unproblematic ally and did not fit the typology of countries on the list where USIS posts were needed. In strong and assertive countries, like France, public diplomacy was used to influence the people because pressuring the government was difficult. In weak countries, like West Germany or Italy, public diplomacy was used as a way to work around the “tyranny of the weak”. Vulnerable nations which were rebuilding their societies and were confronted with rampant poverty and proximity to the Communist bloc, could not be pressurized too much, because this would cause a defection towards the Soviet side or alternatively a surge of hostile nationalism²¹. Belgium was neither strong nor weak. While it could mobilize some resistance, for instance against the EDC, the American ambassadors to Belgium, Robert Daniel Murphy and Myron Melvin Cowen, knew that the government would not be able to ignore direct American demands. Cowen was convinced that a conversation with Paul Van Zeeland, the Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1949 and 1954 could push him into deciding on ratification²².

Despite the calm and pro-American climate in Belgium, the US decided to maintain an office in Brussels. The public affairs officer (PAO) was the head of the post and determined the local propaganda policy together with the information officer, the press secretary, the cultural officer, and the assistant cultural officer during meetings from which the local Belgian personnel were excluded²³. While these jobs were in theory separate, the PAO in Belgium was also the information and cultural officer after 1953. Belgians were hired to do jobs such as library work, driving the mobile film unit, or setting up exhibits²⁴. By the end of 1954, 26 people were employed by USIS Brussels.

Initially the USIS personnel were located on the ground floor of the American Embassy while the information center could be found in a separate building that was alternately used as a concert hall, movie theatre, exhibition space, and conference room. The Lincoln Library was also housed in this facility. By 1955 there were 69 of these

21. GEIR LUNDESTAD, *The United States and Western Europe...*, p. 85; ALESSANDRO BROGI, *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*, Chapel Hill, 2011, p. 122-156. 22. RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 393-402; MICHEL DUMOULIN, “Joseph Pholien, Premier Ministre. 1950-1952”, in GUSTAAF JANSSENS & FRANÇOISE CARTON DE TOURNAI (eds.), *Joseph Pholien. Un homme d’État pour une Belgique en crises*, Bierges, 2003, p. 267. 23. In Belgium the first PAO was Alice Rogers Hager (2.11.1948-14.5.1952). Hager left Belgium in May 1952. The MDAP information officer, Henry McNulty, had to replace her temporarily until the arrival of the new PAO, Lewis Rex Miller (4.8.1952-30.9.1954). After a short period without a PAO, Miller was succeeded by Daniel M. Madden (17.12.1953-1.9.1954). The next two public affairs were Abram E. Manell and John L. Brown (1954-1957/1958). Brown was replaced in November 1958 by Hugh B. Sutherland (1958-?). 24. Report, JEAN M. DERY, ‘*Inspection Report by Jean-M. Dery*’ 26 November-10 December 1954, p. 3, 9, RG. 306, A1 1578 Inspection Staff Inspection Reports and Related Records 1954-62 Afghanistan Thru British East Africa, Box 1, f: Belgium March 6, 1961, NARA; REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, *Coca-colonization...*, p. 71; Report, USIS Brussels to State Dept, *April-May Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 19.6.1950, US information library May 1950, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA.

centers on European soil and in June 1950 the information center in Brussels changed its address from *Voorlopig Bewindstraat/Rue de Gouvernement Provisoire 3* to *Waterloolaan/Boulevard de Waterloo 18*²⁵.

The people at the USIS Brussels looked with envious eyes towards the activities that were organized in neighboring countries. In May 1951, the Belgian country team complained: "While it is realized that the Belgian operation can never hope to achieve either staff or funds comparable to those in more critical areas, it is felt strongly that present allocations are definitely too little"²⁶. These grievances were also made in a more subtle way. Alice Rogers Hager, the first PAO, mentioned an alleged quote by Congressman Fred E. Busbey who was "impressed and [felt] that we should have more money"²⁷.

The available reports to Congress, however, show that Belgium was in a fairly good position. Between 1951 and 1954, Congress approved respectively \$75,650, \$117,233, \$122,500 and \$155,300 for Brussels. Within the group of countries that were small, strategic, and relatively pro-American – namely the

Netherlands, Iceland, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden – Belgium moved to the top of the ranking in the first half of the 1950s. In 1951 and 1952, Sweden received more. In 1953 it was third after the Netherlands and Denmark and in 1954 Belgium received the highest grant. Nonetheless, from the middle of the 1950s onwards, the financial situation deteriorated because the focus of USIA shifted to the Third World. Mobile film units were no longer repaired and the USIS feared financial strangulation. The personnel pleaded that they should at least maintain the library: "The value of the library is, in fact, so great, that this post decided, during the most recent retrenchment, that it must stay open, if USIS Brussels were to remain in business at all"²⁸. The USIS was only given a marginal role in the organization of the biggest public diplomacy display window of the 1950s, the World Fair of 1958 in Brussels. After the Congo crisis in 1960, USIS Brussels had to remove the feeling that the US had not supported Belgium, a view held by 80 per cent of the Belgian population a survey noted²⁹. The Americans saw Belgium as a country that was stable and, by and large, pro-American. Why then was the entire operation described above developed?

25. REINHOLD WAGNLEITNER, *Coca-colonization...*, p. 129; *Inspection Report USIS Belgium*, 6.3.1961, p.i, RG. 306, A1 1578 Inspection Staff Inspection Reports and Related Records 1954-62 Afghanistan Thru British East Africa, Box 1, f: Belgium 6 March 1961, 9 February 1955, NARA. 26. Report, USIS Brussels to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report – June 1, through Nov 30, 1950*, 16.5.1951, p. 9, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.552-511.553, f: 1, NARA. 27. Letter, Alice Rogers Hager to Edward W. Barrett, "Dear Mr. Barrett", 22.8.1951, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 28. Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Annual USIS Assessment Report*, 12.12.1957, p. 5, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA. 29. Report, Staff of the United States Pavilion, *A Report on Certain Considerations involved in the Operation of an Exhibits Pavilion at World's Fair*, 1.1959, p. 3-4, RG. 306, Records Relation to USIA expositions, Box 8; IAE Belgium, *Attitude of the Belgians towards the Americans in Relation to the Congo Situation*, 1961, RG. 306, Country Project Files, f: BE 6101 Belgium 1961, NARA.,

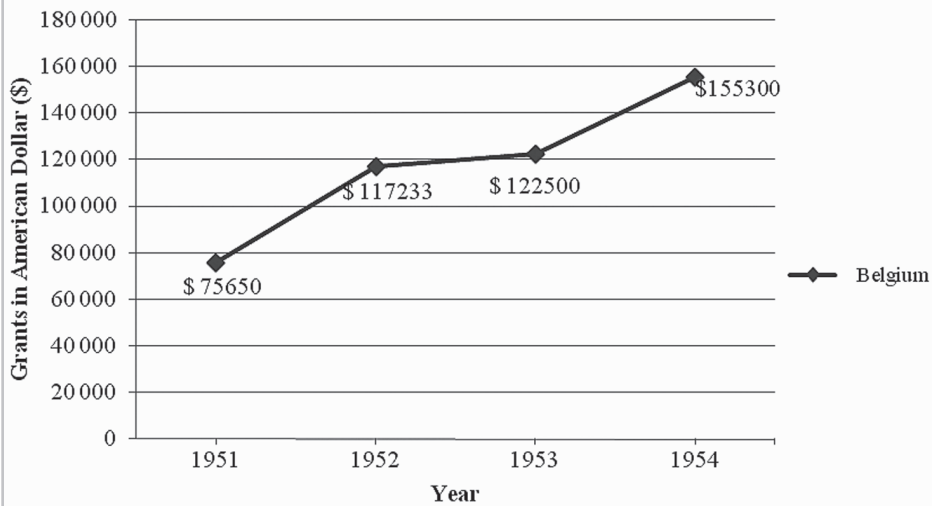
**Tab 1 : Grants (in American Dollar) allotted to the Usis Offices in Western Europe
by the State Department
(1951-1954)**

COUNTRIES	YEARS			
	1951	1952	1953	1954
Belgium	\$ 75 650	\$ 117 233	\$ 122 500	\$ 155 300
The Netherlands	\$ 53 818	\$ 71 710	\$ 151 390	\$ 152 300
Iceland	\$ 16 656	\$ 23 590	\$ 42 000	\$ 50 500
Ireland	\$ 10 007	\$ 13 230	\$ 16 700	\$ 24 900
Germany	-	-	\$ 11 328 782	\$ 8 854 980
Austria	\$ 1 486	-	\$ 3 239 185	\$ 2 680 000
France	\$ 438 390	\$ 677 268	-	\$ 2 066 025
Italy	\$ 795 737	\$ 1 085 014	\$ 1 810 700	\$ 1 884 375
Norway	\$ 39 006	\$ 57 620	\$ 66 000	\$ 91 200
Denmark	\$ 47 445	\$ 57 585	\$ 133 700	\$ 124 340
Finland	\$ 45 864	\$ 83 365	\$ 70 900	\$ 120 200
Sweden	\$ 148 439	\$ 129 000	\$ 76 300	\$ 98 025
Portugal	\$ 42 825	\$ 50 098	\$ 27 000	\$ 40 200
Spain	\$ 71 272	\$ 114 126	\$ 176 690	\$ 240 500
Great Britain	\$ 201 471	\$ 249 857	\$ 422 433	\$ 431 900

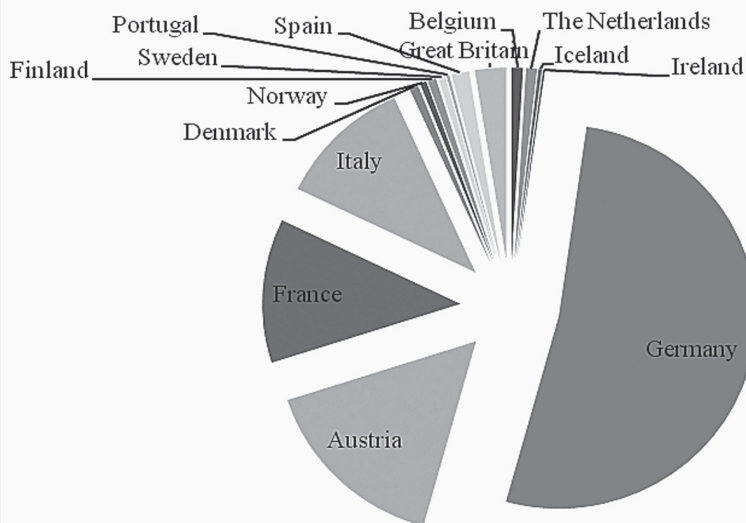
Sources : Report to Congress, "Launching the Campaign of Truth. First Phase (Sixth Semiannual Report of the Secretary of State to Congress on the International Information and Educational Exchange Program July 1 to December 31, 1950" [s.d., 1951], p. 66 and Report to Congress, "Launching the Campaign of Truth. Second Phase (Seventh Semiannual Report of the Secretary of State to Congress on the International Information and Educational Exchange Program January 1 to June 30, 1951)" [s.d., 1951], p. 48, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, Box 8, f: US Propaganda Effort 1950-1955, NARA.

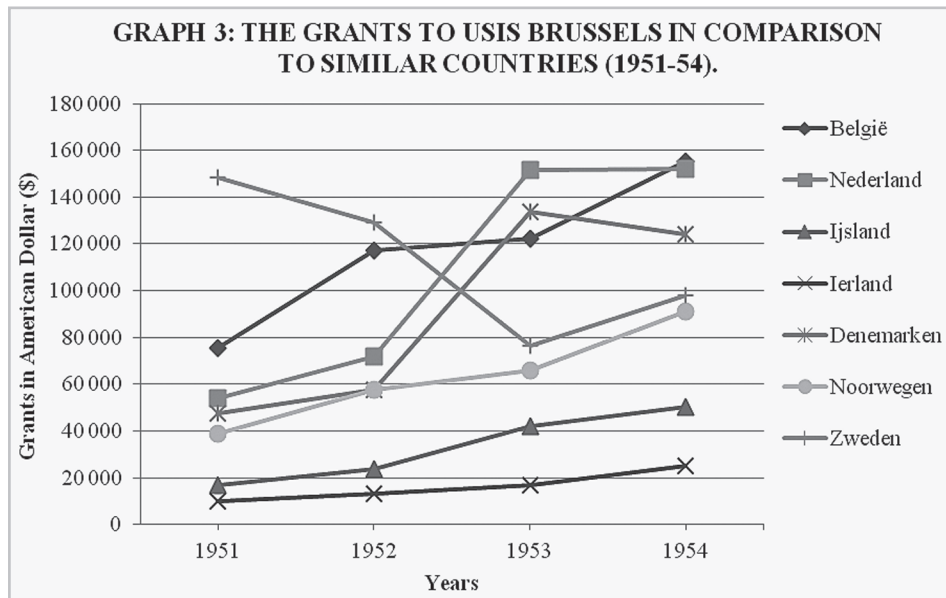
"IIA The International Information Administration 10th Semiannual Report of the Secretary of State to Congress on the International Information and Educational Exchange Program July 1952-Dec 1952" [s.d., 1953], p. 47 and "US Information Agency First Review of Operations August-December 1953" [s.d., 1954], p. 24-25 and "3rd Review of Operations July-December 1954" [1955], p. 38, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, Box 8, f: Semi-Annual Reports to Congress 1952-1959, NARA.

GRAPH 1: EVOLUTION OF GRANTS TO THE USIS-BRUSSELS BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT (1951-1954).



GRAPH 2: GRANTS TO WEST EUROPEAN USIS-POSTS BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT (1954).





Belgium in the American Strategic Outlook

When Theodore Francis, a Democratic senator visited USIS Brussels in 1951 he asked a similar question : What was the strategic weight of a little country like Belgium in American Cold War policy? Belgium was low on the priority list; the correspondence with the White House was limited to the exchanges of holiday greetings and the arrangement of state visits. On the 11 May 1959, King Baudouin – “an excessively shy and timid youth”, in the eyes of Secretary of State Christian Herter – visited the US and met with President Eisenhower³⁰.

The American psychological strategists in Brussels on the other hand, saw Belgium as strategically vulnerable, because of its small size, its key position between Germany, France, and England, a lack of natural barriers, and its high population density. It could easily be run over by the Soviet enemy. The Congo was crucial because of its uranium mines in Sinkolobwe. Despite the fact that strategists had the USSR in mind, USIS Brussels did not fear Communism in Belgium at the beginning of the 1950s. What's more, it wanted to awake some vigilance. The State Department

30. SHAWN J. PARRY-GILES, “Propaganda, Effect, and the Cold War. Gauging the Status of America’s ‘War of Words’”, in *Political Communication*, 1994, no. 2, p. 204; Letter, Alice Rogers Hager to Edward W. Barrett, “Dear Mr. Barrett”, 22.8.1951 and Letter, Alice Rogers Hager to Theodore Francis, “Dear Senator Green”, 17.7.1951, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA; Letter, Herter to Eisenhower, *State Visit of King Baudouin of the Belgians*, 7.5.1959, AWF, Papers as President, 1953-61, International Series, Box 3, f: Belgium (3), DDEL.

agreed : “Today Communist forces are on the defensive in Belgium, but there is no reason to assume that they will remain inactive. Complacency on our part at this stage would be inexcusable”³¹.

This watchfulness has been seen as a sign of Cold War paranoia. After all, the Belgian Communist Party had only been successful in the elections of 1946 because of the role they had played in the Resistance and their loyalty to Moscow made their popularity decline further. After having been part of the Van Acker and Huysmans governments they were ousted on 12 March 1947³².

However, the documents suggest that anti-communist measures and confidence about the weakness of Communism could coexist³³. The ideological opponent did not create enough turmoil, the public diplomats reasoned, to make it easy for them to justify American military aid and Belgian participation in NATO. After a speech in 1950 by the American Ambassador, Robert Daniel Murphy, a

rapport to Washington was pleased that “the Communist press is *at last* attacking him [the ambassador] and also leveling attacks at ECA [Economic Cooperation Administration] and embassy officials. Previously, there had almost never been any mention of either the embassy or individual officers, with the exception of minor ones leveled at ECA”³⁴.

Even with the dawn of the Korean War in June 1950, when the fear emerged that Communists would infiltrate “the key sectors : transportation, communication, government offices”, there was no anti-communist propaganda operation set up. This did not prevent USIS Brussels from becoming a flourishing enterprise. Eight new staffers and a new propaganda officer for the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) had to be hired to deal with the workload. More importantly, public diplomats also seemed to make progress in the attainment of their goals. Belgian newspapers like *De Standaard* and the Social Democratic *Volksgazet* and *Vooruit* wrote polemical pieces about the Communist

31. Policy Report, *Policy Statement Belgium Department of State*, 8.5.1950, p. 5, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 611.55/1-2356-611.55A (A6)/3-1552, f: 1, NARA. 32. LUC PEIREN, “De Communistische Partij van België gedurende de Koude Oorlog 1944-1968”, in MARC VAN DEN WIJNGAERT & LIEVE BEULLENS (eds.), *Oost West West Best...*, p. 194-195. 33. PIETER LAGROU, “US Politics of Stabilization...”, p. 213, 5. Lagrou writes a “realist” account. He refers to the same policy document of 8 May 1950 cited above, to argue that the fear of Communism distorted a rational analysis of the Belgian situation, but does not mention that the report also considered the position of Belgian Communists to be weak. Lagrou’s own evaluation seems to be an overstatement : “The fact that the Americans saw a ‘Communist danger’ emerging within Belgian politics, provides convincing evidence for the fact that their perception was being shaped by the ideological framework of the Cold War and not by an analysis of the domestic situation. [It] shows a ridiculous lack of insight” (original language citation : “Dat Amerikaanse waarnemers vanaf 1948 een ‘Communistisch gevaar’ ontwaarden in de Belgische politiek, is een overtuigend bewijs van het feit dat hun perceptie bepaald werd door het ideologische kader van de Koude Oorlog, en niet door een analyse van de binnenlandse situatie. [Het] getuigt van een lachwekkend gebrek aan inzicht”). 34. The emphasis is my own. Report, USIS Brussels to State Dept, *March Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 28.4.1950, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. ECA : a US agency set up to manage the Marshal Plan aid.

allegations and protested when Soviet citizens won the Queen Elisabeth competition³⁵.

International problems, such as Korea and Communism were thus central in the eyes of public diplomats in Brussels, but when a national crisis like the Royal Question erupted, the Americans in Belgium remained surprisingly silent. The Royal Question began in 1940 when King Leopold III had refused to join his government in London after the Belgian capitulation. When the country was liberated, the German occupation force deported Leopold to Switzerland where American soldiers discovered him in a castle near Strobl in Austria on 7 May 1945. The referendum, which was held to decide on the return of the King, was won by those who favored his return. Subsequent riots in the Walloon region however, forced Leopold to cede the throne to his son, Baudouin³⁶.

Admittedly the American ambassador to Belgium had sent some alarming messages to Washington about rumors of a Leopold-inspired coup. However, embassies tend

to overstate the importance of certain developments in their host country. This became clear when someone other than Ambassador Charles Sawyer, namely the *chargé d'affaires* Jefferson Patterson, reported in October 1945: "It is possible that the remark [of a coup] may be interpreted not so much as a statement of probability as one motivated by a desire to produce a sympathetic attitude (...) towards the Van Acker government"³⁷.

The USIS country team for its part described the riots that surrounded the referendum as an exciting turn of events: "Then began a fantastic ten days in Belgian history". While there had been "extreme incidents", on the whole the attention paid to the Royal Question in the public sphere meant that "valuable time has been lost" for more important issues, namely Belgium's "international obligations (...) in the Korean situation"³⁸. For USIS strategists in Belgium, the Korean War was a pivotal moment in their operation, which had begun with their efforts in 1950 to anchor Belgium more tightly within NATO.

35. Report, USIS Brussels to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report - December 1, 1950 thru May 31, 1951*, 13.6.1951, p. 15, 10, 13, 39 and *Evaluation report June 1 1951 to November 10, 1951*, 2, IIB2, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA; Report, USIS Brussels to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report June 1 1951 to November 30, 1951*, 20.12.1951, p. 4, 3, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 36. PIETER LAGROU, "US Politics of Stabilization...", p. 2132; JONATHAN E. HELMREICH, "United States Policy and the Belgian Royal Question (March-October 1945)", in *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 1978, no. 1, p. 5; GUSTAAF JANSSENS, "Joseph Pholien et la Question royale. 1945-1950", in GUSTAAF JANSSENS & FRANÇOISE CARTON DE TOURNAI (eds.), *Joseph Pholien...*, p. 245-246. 37. PIETER LAGROU, "US Politics of Stabilization...", p. 225; Id., "Een staaf dynamiet voor België en misschien voor Europa' De Koningskwesie door geallieerde ogen bekeken", in MARK VAN DEN WIJNGAERT, MICHEL DUMOIJN & VINCENT DUJARDIN (eds.), *Een Koningsdrama. De biografie Van Leopold III*, Antwerpen, 2001, p. 165; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM & JAN VELAERS, *Leopold III : De Koning, het Land, de Oorlog*, Tielt, 1994, p. 2-10. Charles Sawyer, a fifty-seven-year-old lawyer and local politician from Cincinnati, was appointed ambassador to Belgium on 21 September 1944. 1917, p. 168. 38. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *June Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 20.9.1950, p. 2-3, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA.



A young king Baudouin – quoted as being “exclusively shy and timid” – is welcomed on his arrival in Washington by President Eisenhower on 11 May 1959, at the start of his visit to the USA [Brussels, Archief van het Koninklijk Paleis, Photo Album ‘Reis van koning Boudewijn naar de VS (1959)’, unknown photographer].

II. NATO, the Korean War, and “hard power” public diplomacy (1950-1952)

Despite Belgium’s reputation as a small and trustworthy ally, in the early 1950s the USIS had to work hard to transform words of support into deeds. Initially the Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, advocated a ‘third way’, aligning Belgium with neither the American nor Soviet camps. In 1948 he realized that a small country like Belgium would only be able to defend its interests in international affairs if it was embedded within Europe and the Trans-Atlantic Alliance. Consequently, Spaak supported NATO and the Marshall plan. In doing so he reversed the logic that had guided Belgian foreign policy up until 1945. Instead of focusing on neutrality and independence, Spaak established a policy of European Atlanticism. Belgium was now loyal to the US but demonstrated opposition when that was in line with other European states. To head off this challenge, the USIS opted for hard power propaganda in which American security was presented as a bargaining tool³⁹.

NATO as a bargain (1949-June 1950)

Spaak’s ideological volte-face was marked by his “*Nous avons peur*” speech of 28 September 1948 to the General Assembly of

the United Nations. In the aftermath of the *Coup de Prague*, the Treaty of Brussels, which had united European nations in common defense, was being transformed into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Because of the “increase in tensions in the Cold War”, Alice Rogers Hager intensified the public diplomacy operation in Belgium in 1950. By that time, however, Belgium had already become a solid member of the “Free World”. Tom Braden, head of the CIA, even counted Spaak among his friends. What role then did public diplomacy play⁴⁰?

What worried public diplomacy officers was the skepticism with which American promises to defend Western Europe were greeted. The basis of popular support for the decision to join NATO had to be widened, a choice that the government had already made. Hager welcomed this policy because “continuing instances of defeatism over lack of Western European security have been seen in a number of editorials”⁴¹. To take away Belgian defeatism about the chances of survival in case of war, a clear message was being sent : “The United States is prepared to help defend – not merely ‘liberate’ – Western Europe in the event of war”⁴².

What was important about the strengthening of European defense was its propaganda value. Paul Nitze, who succeeded Kennan as

39. RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 5, 56, 58. 40. THOMAS W. BRADEN, “Speaking Out : I’m Glad the CIA is ‘Immoral’”, in *Saturday Evening Post*, 20.5.1967, p. 10-14. Hager already accelerated the USIS operation in 1949, before 20 April 1950 when Truman officially announced the “Campaign of Truth”. SCOTT LUCAS, *Freedom’s war. The US crusade against the Soviet Union, 1945-56*, Manchester, 1999, p. 84; Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Report for January and February on Information and Cultural Activities*, 24.3.1950, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.552-511.553, f: 1, NARA. 41. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *March Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 28.4.1950, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 42. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *Country Paper for Belgium*, 5.4.1950, p. 2, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA.

director of the Policy Planning Staff and the principal author of NSC-68 – the crucial Cold War document of the Truman administration – advocated military build-up not because he feared an imminent clash with the USSR, but because the psychological impact of a preponderant and monolithic military bloc would increase the Americans' ability to act⁴³. American officials in Belgium displayed a similar way of thinking. A contingency plan – "Operation Canal" – was drawn up because Belgium was seen as vulnerable. In the case of an invasion American citizens would be evacuated through the harbors of Zeebrugge and Terneuzen to the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the head of that embassy, Admiral Kirk admitted to Spaak that : "It was rather fantastic to think of Russian paratroopers landing there but after all we had had Pearl Harbor"⁴⁴. Military measures were in the first place meant to create support for the pro-American decisions of the Belgian government⁴⁵.

To reach this goal, rather than the soft power logic of attraction, the hard power tactic of offering the Atlantic Alliance as a win-win bargain was deployed. Propaganda emphasized security gains in exchange for compliance with NATO obligations.

The Mutual Defense Aid Program (MDAP) was emphasized in every possible way in the activities that the USIS organized. This program was initiated in 1948 and financed weapon deliveries and military training. The USIS considered the promotion of these efforts to be an effective way to influence Belgian attitudes in the matter of European defense⁴⁶.

The USIS officials vigorously kept the press up to date by organizing so-called press seminars, where MDAP officials explained the philosophy behind the program and emphasized American efforts. The ambassador gave interviews and the USIS transported 60 journalists to the harbor of Zeebrugge to report about the first weapon delivery to Belgium on 12 May 1950. Plans were made to send journalists to Germany who would report on the training of Belgian soldiers by Americans. The emphasis on American help also found expression in the 1250 copies of *Document de la Quinzaine* that were furnished to USIS Brussels by the USIA. Its first issue was dedicated to the mutual defense program and in high demand, according to the USIS⁴⁷.

Another propaganda resource that offered the reward of protection in exchange for a benevolent Belgian attitude towards

43. KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War...*, p. 41. 44. Memorandum for the Files, 12.5.1949, RG. 84, US Embassy Brussels Top Secret General Records 1945-1952, 1954, Box 1, f: 502 Congo 1949, NARA. 45. KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War...*, p. 41; *Memorandum for the Files*, 12.5.1949, RG. 84, US Embassy Brussels Top Secret General Records 1945-1952, 1954, Box 1, f: 502 Congo 1949, NARA. 46. Work in political science that presents NATO as a bargain has been important : WALLACE J. THIES, *Friendly Rivals. Bargaining and Burden-shifting in NATO*, New York, 2002; STANLEY R. SLOAN, *NATO, the European Union, and the Atlantic Community. The Transatlantic Bargain Challenged*, Oxford, 2005²; DAVID J. SNYDER, "U.S. Public Diplomacy in the New Netherlands...", p. 469. 47. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *Report for January and February on Information and Cultural Activities*, 24.3.1950, p. 1-2, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552,f: 1, NARA.

NATO, was found in the commemoration of the Second World War at the cemetery of *Neuville-en-Condroz*. Weeks of preparation and long meetings between officers of the United States European Command and the American embassy went into this ceremony. The speeches were translated into German, French, and Dutch and Hager attended the ceremony, which was broadcast live on Flemish radio, indicating the high value that the USIS attached to this message of American defense. Implicitly the ceremony signaled that the US would not hesitate to act again in the event of an attack. The Communist *Drapeau Rouge* reacted by running an editorial that attacked the ambassador by naming him the “New *Gauleiter* of Belgium”. The Belgian public however “came in considerable numbers (even though it was a working day), many walking to the cemetery from miles away, carrying their bouquets of field flowers”. Gratitude for the Liberation and a hostility to renewed war were the fastest route to Belgian hearts and minds⁴⁸. The propaganda of Hager and her team was full of war and weapons. USIS Belgium chose to offer NATO

as a straightforward deal : in exchange for unconditional support, the Belgians were offered security.

This hard power technique was unique, especially when we compare it with the approach of the NATO Information Service (NATIS). NATIS had been founded in August 1950 under the chairmanship of the Canadian, Theodore F.M. Newton, in order to instill a sense of Atlantic Community into the population. This was the fulfillment of Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty which wanted to bring “about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded”⁴⁹. Tours for journalists at NATO headquarters, fellowships, Oxford summer schools, attempts to establish Atlantic chairs, and travelling exhibitions were all aimed at attracting people to a sense of community⁵⁰. This approach differed in fundamental ways from what was done in Brussels, where people were asked to accept NATO to get its benefits in return, a message that was repeated when the Korean War started.

48. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *April-May Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 19.6.1950, p. 2, 3, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 49. LIONEL ISMAY, *NATO Treaty*, Brussels, 2012, (<http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/appendices/5.htm>).

50. GILES SCOTT-SMITH, “Not a NATO Responsibility? Psychological Warfare, the Berlin Crisis, and the Formation of Interdoc”, in ANDREAS WENGER, CHRISTIAN NUENLIST & ANNA LOCHER (eds.), *Transforming NATO in the Cold War. Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s*, London/ New York, 2006, p. 31-49; VALÉRIE AUBOURG, GÉRARD BOSSUAT & GILES SCOTT-SMITH (eds.), *European Community, Atlantic Community?*, Paris, 2008; LINDA RISSO, “Propaganda on Wheels. The NATO Travelling Exhibitions in the 1950s and 1960s”, in *Cold War History*, 2011, no. 1, p. 9-25; Id., “‘Enlightening Public Opinion’. A Study of NATO’s Information Policies between 1949 and 1959 Based on Recently Declassified Documents”, in *Cold War History*, 2007, no. 1, p. 45-74; Id., “‘Don’t Mention the Soviets!’ An Overview of the Short Films Produced by the NATO Information Service between 1949 and 1969”, in *Cold War History*, 2009, no. 4, p. 501-512.



Belgian volunteers during the Korean War in April 1951 are struggling with the terrain itself, somewhere near the Imjin-river. Although one of the smallest units under the UNO umbrella, the Belgian battalion would – together with the Luxembourg unit – hold its ground and force a retreat of more numerous Chinese forces. For this feat, Lieutenant-Colonel Vivario would later receive a medal from the American General James Van Fleet (Photo's CEGES/SOMA, nos. 6348 and 6336).

Propaganda in a shooting war and persistent hard power

On 25 June 1950 – the day North Korea invaded the South – a new period in the battle of the USIS started. Truman and the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, called a meeting of the UN Security Council to condemn the invasion and to push for the formation of a UN expeditionary force on 4 July 1950. It was difficult to find countries that were willing to participate, in part because Truman expected the European allies to carry a bigger part of the financial burden. In line with this new policy, USIS Brussels now asked Belgium to become a more active member of the Western alliance, “a vital core of stability and leadership in Western Europe” with “international obligations to fulfill”⁵¹. Nonetheless, the USIS’s overall methods and goals were maintained.

The USIS country team wanted to achieve both moral and financial goals. First of all, the population had to support the Belgian government, which under American pressure had sent a battalion of volunteers in 1951. In Prime Minister Joseph Pholien, the Americans had found an ally who was willing to raise the defense budget, uphold military service, and take anti-Communist measures. After

the murder on the leader of the Communist party, Julien Lahaut, on 18 August 1950, Pholien purged the Belgian civil service of an estimated 600 fellow-travelers⁵².

Although Van Zeeland had adopted the American view of the conflict in which the 38th parallel was not legally binding, he was still not willing to send troops. When Belgium only sent aircraft carriers, the US stepped up its diplomatic pressure in June 1950. In the end however, a first battalion of 600 men left Antwerp on 20 December 1950. The Belgian “Brown Beret” battalion under Colonel Crahay joined the British in the pocket of Pusan where they pushed back the North Koreans. 3500 Belgian volunteers fought in Korea and 106 fell in action⁵³.

For the USIS the financial goal was crucial. The Belgians had to be convinced to accept their government’s increased military expenditure. In this small country, as was reported to Washington in December 1951, “the sensitive nerve is that of the pocketbook”. In the eyes of the Americans, Belgian approval of NATO, the UN, and the Korean War did not automatically translate into sufficient willingness to finance these initiatives. In light of hostile Belgian attitudes towards conscription, making the

51. YVAN VANDEN BERGHE, *De Koude Oorlog. Een nieuwe geschiedenis (1917-1991)*, Leuven, 2008, p. 167; BRAM BOXHOORN & MAX JANSEN, *De integratie van Europa. Een historische balans*, Den Haag, 1997, p. 15; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 393-394; Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *June report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 20.9.1950, p.3, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 52. MICHEL DUMOULIN, “Joseph Pholien, Premier Ministre...”, p. 256-258. 53. PIETER LAGROU, “Kroniek van de Koude Oorlog”, in MARK VAN DEN WIJNGAERT & LIEVE BEULLENS (eds.), *Oost West, West Best...*, p. 18; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 393; MICHEL DUMOULIN, “Joseph Pholien, Premier Ministre...”, p. 261; Report, AmEmb to StateDep, *June Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 20.9.1950, p. 3, 7, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA; Guidance report, AmEmb to State Dept, *Following Information policy guidance number 1*, 19.12.1950, p. 2 and *Following Information policy guidance number 1*, 19.12.1950, p. 2, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 2, NARA. 1928 [AA, RA/RU(69)7].

assigned period shorter with every election cycle, this American concern was understandable⁵⁴.

This financial goal surpassed any other concern, even the fear of Communism and open war that bubbled to the surface in the first weeks of the Korean War. This paranoia inadvertently took root in the minds of USIS officials because they analyzed public opinion on a day-by-day basis⁵⁵. While USIS reports only six days before the invasion had not even mentioned Communist threats, suddenly Communist infiltrators made an appearance⁵⁶. Before the Korean War there had only been “crypto-Communists”, interested in Marxism. It was a way to assert a national identity that was rooted in an appreciation for high culture as opposed to the popular culture of Americanization. In the words of USIS Brussels : “The Communist ‘line’ is frequently parroted (...) due to fuzzy

thinking, some of it to an overly ‘intellectual’ approach to liberalism (...) the pride of an old, highly cultural people, stubbornly resistant to the inroads of the young ‘barbarian from the West’ appears in curious ways”⁵⁷.

However, after the outbreak of hostilities, Communist propaganda had “influence to a certain extent”. It was “to be found in the ease with which misunderstanding of American motives filters up to top circles”⁵⁸. Little problems that hampered USIS operations were now seen through a Cold War lens. Belgian national radio had not broadcast a message from the ambassador because the quality of the recording was insufficient, which proved that the radio had become infested with Communists. However, the expansion of Belgian popular support for the government’s Korea policy remained the top priority. The PAO and his team did not develop a propaganda policy against the ideological

54. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report June 1 1951 to November 30, 1951*, 20.12.1951, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. In the elections of 1954 the Social Democrats campaigned to reduce the assigned period to eighteen months, in 1956 the fifteen-month period was established and in 1958, the Christian Democrats – now in the opposition – promised to reduce the period to twelve months which they did one year later (PIETER LAGROU, “Kroniek van de Koude Oorlog”..., p. 21-24). 55. YVAN VANDEN BERGHE, *De Koude Oorlog...*, p. 162; DAVID J. SNYDER, “U.S. Public Diplomacy in the New Netherlands...”, p. 410; Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report - June 1, through Nov. 30, 1950*, 16.5.1951, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA; MICHEL DUMOULIN, “Opinion publique et politique extérieure de la Belgique de 1945 à 1962. Orientation des études et perspectives de la recherche en Belgique”, in *Res Publica*, 1985, no. 1, p. 3-29. For Belgian public opinion in the 1950s: VINCENT DUJARDIN, “Opinion publique belge et construction européenne. De la libération aux élections européennes de 1979”, in CHARLES BARTHEL, MARIE-THÉRÈSE BITSCH & WILFRIED LOTH (eds.), *Cultures politiques, opinions publiques et intégration européenne. Actes du Colloque*, Bruxelles, 2007, p. 285-300. 56. Compare : Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *April-May Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 19.6.1950, p. 1-10 with Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *June Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 20.9.1950, p. 2-12, RG. 59, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 57. Country paper, AmEmb to State Dept, *Country Paper for Belgium*, [s.d., 5.4.1950], p. 3, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA. 58. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report - December 1, 1950 thru May 31, 1951*, 13.6.1951, p. 3 and Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report - June 1, through November 30, 1950*, 16.5.1951, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA.

adversary, which was atypical for the Truman period when propaganda was hard-hitting and virulently anti-Communist.

To remove the anxiety that was created by taxpayers' money flowing to a new war, the tactic of attraction was added to the hard power method. Accordingly, visitors to the activities that were organized by USIS were told that the US bore the biggest burden and that it was only fair to ask for a small contribution in return. After all, the gain of collective defense far outweighed the cost, which was a hard power communication strategy wary of any attraction. Exhibitions about the training of Belgian soldiers and the MDAP weapons conveyed the message that "the Mutual Defense Assistance Program is active and 'mutual' and is sending a great many Belgians to the United States for training"⁵⁹. The photo panels that displayed the American training of Belgian soldiers and weapon deliveries, emphasized how much effort the US was putting into Belgium's defense. It was, the argument went, only logical to ask for a small contribution in return.

The Belgian population was told that even after the planned increase of the Belgian defense budget, the effort would still pale in significance compared to the colossal American financial investment. The American ambassador, Robert Murphy, repeated this message in front of an audience of Flemish entrepreneurs : "the Belgian defense appro-

priations were but 5 per cent of the total national product of Belgium (...) Belgium was lagging behind her NATO partners, who were devoting up to 15 per cent (19% in the case of the US)". In private, Murphy also complained to Pholien. In reality the US never reached this percentage, but the propaganda value of such statistics is evident⁶⁰.

Additionally, people had to be captivated by the ideals that the US linked to their involvement in Korea, the first attempt by USIS Brussels to explore the attractive potential of soft power. In that way Belgians would be willing to support the Americans in Korea, not because doing so would ensure their own safety but for the sake of ideals that needed to be defended. Three ideals were attached to this war in order to appeal to the sense of honor that would attract people to the Americans' foreign policy goals. Besides justice and humane warfare a new ideal, namely collective security, was ushered in.

The Korean War was sold as a just war. USIS Brussels spent countless nights writing press reports that detailed why the Korean War was necessary. According to the USIS the new films *Dwight D. Eisenhower, In Defense of Peace* and *Why Korea?* touched the right chord. The film on Eisenhower shows the career of the general and his triumphant tour through Europe and the United States after the war. *In Defense of Peace* puts together news images of the Korean War, the American role

59. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *Evaluation Report June 1 1951 to November 10 1951*, 20.12.1951, p. II.F, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 1, NARA; USIA-circular, *REDATAL 1028*, 27.1.1951, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.5A5, f: 2, NARA. 60. MICHEL DUMOULIN, "Joseph Pholien, Premier Ministre...", p. 268; Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report - December 1, 1950 thru May 31, 1951*, 13.6.1951, p. 1-2, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA.

in World War II, the Marshall Plan speech, and the departure of the Soviet Union from the UN assembly. This linear storyline had to suggest that Soviet behavior had made conflict inevitable. Nonetheless, the US had in the past fought for equally noble causes and would not hesitate to do it again. *Why Korea?* was a Hollywood production by Edmund Reek that took an unambiguous stance : the Second World War could have been avoided if the US had reacted earlier. The fighting in Korea was meant to avert such a scenario of dishonorable appeasement⁶¹.

Korea was not only a just war but also a humane war. The USIS propaganda described how the US respected the life of every citizen. Newspaper publishers were asked to react against the photos that the *Drapeau Rouge* had published, allegedly showing American mass murder. The Christian Democratic *De Standaard* and the Social Democratic papers, *Vooruit* and *Volksgazet*, were the least cooperative in the eyes of USIS⁶². Exhibition displays indicated that "concern is being given for the welfare of Korean civilians, particularly children". Photographs of children playing, field hospitals and food and medicine drops, props of first-aid kits and packages with

parachutes were used to provide material evidence to support this story⁶³.

A third propaganda topic was found in the creation of a new ideal : "collective security". Exhibitions showed that : "The action in Korea is a United Nations action". USIS Brussels wanted to write a pamphlet together with USIS London, not on the American capability to defend the West, but about the values that underpinned NATO and the MDAP⁶⁴. Belgian radio stations received tapes with the testimonies of Belgian volunteers. By letting them speak, values such as courage and self-sacrifice were connected with the fight.

The story of the former Belgian defense minister, Henri Moreau de Melen, who became a volunteer in Korea was even transmitted around the world by the Voice of America. This radio station had been established during World War II and broadcast extensively to areas behind the Iron Curtain, only "112 hours a week to [Western] European countries"⁶⁵. Listeners heard : "I believe we cannot leave [the] responsibility of sustained UN action in Korea to American troops alone. (...) Now that I am free, I believe it is my duty to volunteer"⁶⁶. The message suggests that a

61. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *June Report on Information and Cultural Activities*, 20.9.1950, p. 7, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 62. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report June 1 1951 to November 30, 1951*, 20.12.1951, p. II.F, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. It is unclear if the photos were really falsified. 63. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, *Evaluation Report June 1 1951 to November 10 1951*, 20.12.1951, II.F and AmEmb, *REDETAL 1028*, 27.1.1951, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 2, NARA. 64. *Ibidem*; AmEmb to State Dept, *USIE Evaluation Report – December 1, 1950 thru May 31, 1951*, 13.6.1951, p. 15, 10, 13, 39 and *USIE Evaluation report June 1 1951 to November 30, 1951*, 20.12.1951, p. 2, IIB2, NATO-MDAP 5, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. 65. Telegram, Brussels 508 to State Dept, *Information on Radio Receiver Sets in Belgium*, 13.4.1950, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 2, NARA. 66. Telegram, Brussels to Secretary of State, *Department Pass VOA*, 30.8.1950 and Telegram, Brussels to Secretary of State, *For Puhon VOA From Hager*, 11.10.1950 and letter, Edward W. Barrett to Henry Cabot Lodge, 26.1.1951, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 2, NARA.



Despite all the hardships of war, the American army made sure to provide the Belgian volunteers some time for relaxation by engaging local dancers and musicians (Photo's CEGES/SOMA, nos. 15245 and 15246).

bigger financial effort was equally courageous and served a fundamental UN principle. This radio work also aimed to counter the success of Radio Moscow. US Senator Henry Cabot Lodge had been informed by an anonymous Belgian observer : “‘Radio Moscow’ is so well done and does great harm in the villages (...), they can feel the effect of this radio. They have heard people say ‘After all, will the Russian be so bad?’”⁶⁷.

Despite this strategic refinement, soft power was only partially introduced because the Korean War changed the basic aim of propaganda in American foreign policy. According to historians, war in Korea strengthened the conviction that the battle for hearts and minds had become an independent and crucial battle ground in the Cold War. It coincided with Truman’s launch of the “Campaign of Truth” a few days earlier and it opened up a new propaganda front in Asia⁶⁸. Therefore the US “attempted to gain

some sort of propaganda initiative over the USSR”⁶⁹. Furthermore, the confrontation with prisoners of war who wanted to stay in Communist North Korea and the popularization of the notion of brainwashing made practitioners think about the power and psychological depth of propaganda methods. Edward Hunter’s book on brainwashing became an instant success among policy-makers⁷⁰.

However, by narrowing the task of USIS Brussels to guaranteeing the financial means for the armed conflict, public diplomats in Brussels allowed themselves to become a handmaiden to the more important shooting war. They did not fight their own symbolic battle. Instead of heading to the call of NSC-68 to intensify “the field of (...) political and psychological warfare”, the activities of Hager actually meant a step back for the symbolic struggle. The previous role propaganda had played during World War II – namely as a tool

67. Circular, AmEmb to State Dept, *REDEPTAL 1028*, 27.1.1951 and Circular, AmEmb to State Dept, *REDEPTAL 1560*, 21.5.1951 and Circular, State Dept to AmEmb, *Re EMBTEL 1731*, 27.4.1951 and Letter, Henry Cabot Lodge to Edward W. Barrett Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, 12.1.1951, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 2, NARA. 68. TUONG VU & WASANA WONGSURAWAT, *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia. Ideology, Identity, and Culture*, Cambridge MA, 2009, p. 2-7; TONY DAY & MAYA H.T. LIEM, *Cultures at War. The Cold War and Cultural Expression in South-east Asia*, Ithaca NY, 2010, p. 2-9; WALTER L. HIXSON, *Parting the Curtain...*, p. 17. 69. TUONG VU & WASANA WONGSURAWAT, *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia...*, p. 2-7; TONY DAY & MAYA H.T. LIEM, *Cultures at War...*, p. 2-9; WALTER L. HIXSON, *Parting the Curtain...*, p. 17; quoted in : NICHOLAS J. CULL, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency...*, p. 65. 70. DAVID SEED, *Brainwashing. The Fictions of Mind Control. A Study of Novels and Films Since World War II*, Kent OH, 2004, p. 30-31; MARIO DEL PERO, “The United States and ‘Psychological Warfare’ in Italy...”, p. 1304; KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War...*, p. 46, 54; FRANK A. NINKOVICH, *The Diplomacy of Ideas. U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 19; WALTER L. HIXSON, *Parting the Curtain...*, p. 16; BRIAN ANGUS MCKENZIE, *Remaking France. Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan*, New York/San Leandro CA/Ottawa, 2007, p. 27; SUSAN L. CARRUTHERS, “Redeeming the Captives. Hollywood and the Brainwashing of America’s Prisoners of War in Korea”, in *Film History*, 1998, no. 3, p. 275-294; STEPHEN E. PEASE, *Psywar. Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950-1953*, Harrisburg PA, 1992. The library of USIS Brussels had its own copy which it donated to the Library of Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

to gather popular support for the war – was restored⁷¹.

It shows that the country team in Belgium selectively adopted the new techniques from the burgeoning field of communication science. The most influential theorist was Edward Bernays, who argued in *Propaganda* (1928) that public opinion was best influenced in an indirect way through popular media rather than through hard-sell tactics⁷². Even though USIS officials decided to introduce more attractive tactics to make their target population support the government's decisions, the need to support the war effort diminished the status of public diplomacy as an independent area of Cold War struggle. Only with the debates about the EDC did USIS Brussels definitely switch to more imaginative and attractive tactics to reach the full potential of their operation.

III. EDC, European integration, and learning the soft power way (1952-1958)

At the Korean front, peace talks began on 9 July 1951 and the frontline stabilized in 1952. As

a consequence, the agenda of USIS Brussels became determined by political rather than by military challenges, such as the promotion of the EDC and European integration. The USIS showed more understanding towards the decision to reduce the time recruits had to serve in the Belgian army. "There appears to be no reason," a report noted, "why Belgium should take on greater obligations in this regard than its allies"⁷³. This new climate provided the incentive for the full-fledged use of soft power⁷⁴.

The soft power of a military alliance : the EDC

On 28 October 1950 the French Prime Minister René Pleven presented his plan for the establishment of a EDC, led by nine European commissioners. The Korean War had made the Americans realize that Adenauer's request to militarize West Germany and a shift of a part of the defense expenditures to the Europeans was necessary. However, when Acheson explored this idea with the Europeans at the Waldorf Hotel in New York, he met with a lot of resistance. To break the deadlock, the French suggested the creation of a European Army because it would put a check on German military power. The then NATO commander Eisenhower convinced the

71. Steven Casey has described a similar development on the American home front. The Truman Administration, while realizing the value of the battle for hearts and minds, refrained from overselling the war because it could create hysteria (STEVEN CASEY, "Selling NSC-68. The Truman Administration, Public Opinion, and the Politics of Mobilization, 1950-51", in *Diplomatic History*, 2005, no. 4, p. 655-690). For a detailed analysis of the ways in which the role of propaganda during the Second World War differed from the role propaganda played during the Cold War, see : HAROLD DWIGHT LASSWELL, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, London, 1938; KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War.....*, p. 22-23; NICHOLAS J. CULL, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency...*, p. 16-20. 72. EDWARD BERNAYS, *Propaganda*, New York, 1928, p. 49; STUART EWEN, *PR! A Social History of Spin*, New York, 1996, p. 160. 73. Report, USIS Brussels to State Dept, IIA : *Semi-Annual Evaluation Report for Belgium, June 1 to November 30, 1952*, 5.1.1953, p. 1, RG. 59, Central Decimal, 511.55-511.552, f: 2, NARA. 74. YVAN VANDEN BERGHE, *De Koude Oorlog...*, p. 169.

Truman administration in June 1951 to push for its creation⁷⁵.

Paul van Zeeland told the American ambassador that Belgium supported the EDC project, but rejected the proposal of a European Minister of Defense. The Benelux states opposed the plan because they believed that in a supranational defense structure small countries would be silenced. Belgian resilience in defending its independence became a real threat to the realization of the project. After it was hinted that American aid would be halted if the country kept on refusing, Belgium capitulated and signed the treaty on 27 May 1952⁷⁶.

The public diplomacy machine only started turning after the signature was in place. Ratification of the EDC by the Benelux states was important in order to convince France to do the same. Therefore, when Van Zeeland met Eisenhower during the afternoon of 16 March 1953, the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, recommended that the President "question him firmly regarding just what he plans to do to secure rapid Belgian ratification of the European Defense Community Treaty". He believed that "playing upon Mr. Van Zeeland's vanity" would make him take the initiative. In the end the agreement was rejected by a coalition of Gaullists and Communists on 30 August 1954 who, after Stalin's death and the Korean Armistice in

1953, considered German rearmament to be less urgent⁷⁷.

The EDC propaganda in support of the treaty is fascinating because it is a prime example of how the preferences of the target population made the public diplomacy approach evolve from hard to soft power. The EDC project was understood in a very specific way by USIS officials who wanted to convey their understanding to the Belgian population. Previous encounters with Belgian society had, however, taught the USIS office that a low-profile operation focused on attraction would reap the most success. Despite American efforts to unite Western Europe, the USIS did not explicitly encourage the European idea until 1953. Plans to encourage integration had always been mentioned within the context of military cooperation : "We have endeavored to insure Belgium's active participation in the programs of NATO, EDC, the Schuman Plan, and other efforts towards European Unity"⁷⁸.

This ambivalent transition from the EDC as a purely defense initiative to a broader community that exemplified an idea of cooperation to which people might be attracted is illustrated in the pamphlet, *The European Coal and Steel Community (The Schuman Plan)*. This pamphlet was produced in December 1952 under the auspices of the Mutual Security Agency and thus had a military goal. Nonetheless the ideal of

75. *Idem*, p. 176, 450. 76. GEIR LUNDESTAD, "Empire" by Integration. *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, Oxford/New York, 1998, p. 264; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 395-397. 77. Memorandum for the President, Dulles to Eisenhower, Subject : Call of Belgian Foreign Minister Van Zeeland at 3:00, March 16, 13.3.1953, AWF, Papers as President 1953-1961, International Series, Box 3, f: Belgium (6), DDEL; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 401. 78. Report, AmEmb to State Dept, IIA : Evaluation Report, Dec 31, 1951 thru May 31, 1952, 23.10.1952, p. B. Internat, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 2, NARA.

cooperation was emphasized. It showed a map of the participating countries under a magnifying glass with the slogan “Within the framework of North Atlantic Cooperation...six nations of Western Europe are moving toward economic and political unity”. The EDC was positioned on the next page in a series of calendar pages depicting the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (April 1948), NATO (April 1949), the Council of Europe (May 1949), the European Payments Union (July 1950), and the European Coal and Steel Community. After it, there was an undated calendar sheet for the European Political Community. The pamphlet told the story of how the removal of “one of the historic causes of conflict” and the “strengthening of the coal and steel industries will contribute greatly toward Western Europe’s ability to sustain an adequate defense effort”⁷⁹.

The EDC was understood to be more than a mere defense project. It was also important for what it implied : through defense communities the existence of one common enemy was emphasized. The US made efforts to keep the peace; the USSR stood on the sidelines : “Defense, Unification of Europe, international cooperation with such things as the Schuman Plan, [and] Benelux, prove that the objective is peace”⁸⁰. The so-called feature packet – an envelope filled with propaganda material that was sent to the posts – which contained the Schuman Plan pamphlet bore the very appropriate title, *Working for Peace*. The EDC

was depicted not only as a part of the European integration process but also as a military project. What was discovered, however, was that if this message was to be attractive, it had to be shaped by the expectations of Belgian society. The USIS worried about the fact that the EDC could be seen as an imperial tool in the hands of the Americans. The new PAO, Rex Miller who had joined the Information Service on 4 August 1952, warned against an image that resembled that of the Soviet Union : “It has been, of course, desirable that these programs [EDC, NATO, the Schuman plan] should be identified as European and not American”⁸¹.

USIS officials attempted to reconcile their own understanding of the EDC with the expectations of Belgian society in order to be successful. How could the EDC and more European responsibility be promoted without the US being accused of neo-colonialism? The answer was found in the promotion of values that were deemed universal and not particularly American. Belgian attention was focused on the so-called “high ideals” that were embodied in the goal of establishing the EDC.

In this way Belgians would unknowingly strive towards ideals that were in line with American convictions. The EDC was never explicitly mentioned. Instead three puzzle pieces – American support, the European military contribution, and European integration – were

⁷⁹. Pamphlet, *The European Coal and Steel Community (The Schuman Plan)*, 19.12.1952, p. 3, 13, 15, RG. 306, A1 1002, Box 1 Feature Packets Non-recurring Subjects, NARA. ⁸⁰. Country Plan, AmEmbBru to State Dept, *Official Country Plan for the USIE Program July 1952*, 12.7.1952, p. 2, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA. ⁸¹. Report, AmEmbBru to State Dept, *IIA : Evaluation Report, Dec 31, 1951 thru May 31, 1952*, 23.10.1952, p. II.B.2, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 2, NARA.

joined together into one general message. The receivers of this message were required to put the puzzle together themselves to see the intended underlying image : the EDC as an idealistic voluntary cooperation to resist aggression. USIS employees distributed pamphlets and organized exhibitions about the idealism and bravery that had accompanied military cooperation in the past. For instance an exhibition that depicted NATO and the MDAP implicitly referred to the EDC where collective security and cooperation with the US were crucial as well. Collective security was depicted as an unselfish act in films such as *Alliance for Peace* which explained that the Atlantic organization was a peaceful organization of political cooperation and showed that the NATO treaty was signed to guarantee peace⁸².

In contrast to the beginning of the 1950s the values of cooperation were on display, not a subtext to the call to support the American military effort. In this way, characteristics of the EDC could be propagated without mentioning the project itself. This move towards universal values suggests that the strategy was more and more built on intuitive attraction. If public opinion could be seduced into supporting the ideals, than the public would automatically support projects that

defended and incorporated those principles, such as the EDC⁸³.

The emphasis on the morally uplifting principle of collective security was embodied in the 1952 film *Belgian Troops in Korea*. This film demonstrated how important the EDC was for USIS Brussels because it was the first time that the Belgians were the topic of an internationally distributed propaganda narrative. Normally European propaganda material was adapted to fit the Belgian situation. What is more, USIS collaborated with the Belgian army. They were allowed to amend the storyboard to ensure that the Belgian role was made as big as possible⁸⁴.

Above all, the movie was a prototype of soft power attraction : ideals were essential to the story and hard power in the form of rewards or pressure was absent. The opening of *Belgian Troops in Korea* shows Belgian soldiers crossing a bridge in the glow of explosions. A voice-over hints at the moral ideal that is being communicated : "Each of these Belgians is a volunteer who has offered to fight far from his native land for a principle. The principle is 'collective security'...a basic tenet of the United Nations". The film attempts to cast collective security in moral terms : security is not a bargaining chip. During a

82. Report, AmEmbBru to State Dept, IIA : *Evaluation Report, Dec 31, 1951 thru May 31, 1952*, 23.10.1952, p. II. B.2 and Report, AmEmbBru to State Dept, IIA : *Semi-Annual Evaluation Report for Belgium, June 1 to November 30 1952*, 5.1.1952, p. II.J., RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 1, NARA. **83.** Report, AmEmbBru to State Dept, IIA : *Evaluation Report, Dec 31, 1951 thru May 31, 1952*, 23.10.1952, p. IIB.2, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 2, NARA; Report, USIS to State Dept, *USIS Ostend Summer Operation, 1952*, 9.9.1952, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 3, NARA. **84.** Movie script, IE : *Film Production 'Belgian Troops in Korea'*, 16.2.1952 and Memorandum, IIA : *Motion Pictures : 'Belgian Troops in Korea'*, RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.553-511.55A5, f: 3, NARA; Report, AmEmbBru to State Dept, IIA : *Evaluation Report, Dec 31, 1951 thru May 31, 1952*, 23.10.1952, p. II.C., RG. 59, Central Decimal 511.55-511.552, f: 2, NARA.

medal ceremony at the end of the film, the American general James van Fleet states : “By your contribution, the goal of worldwide collective security has been brought this much closer”. This sentence also contains the second message, being that of the Belgian contribution. The use of Belgian guns and the intellect of the Belgian soldiers was emphasized : “There’s only one trouble [*sic*] : they learn too fast. They finished a three-day lesson in one day!”⁸⁵.

The film attempted to incite a feeling of respect among its viewers for a country that sends its brightest soldiers to accomplish a great idealistic goal. In that way the USIS reproduced an image that had been fabricated during the previous World Wars of Belgium as a small country that was dragged into a war against its will because of the arrogant behavior of an aggressor⁸⁶. Old notions were salvaged to facilitate identification by the viewer with the subject and to attribute historical meaning to the idea of “collective security”.

Eventually the Belgian parliament would ratify the treaty on 26 November 1953 with 148 votes in favor and 49 against. Despite some resistance by those Christian Democrats fearful of domination by the Bonn–Paris axis and the left who saw the EDC as an American foreign policy tool, the American ambassador to Belgium had always been convinced that

ratification would not be a problem. What was problematic was Van Zeeland’s hesitant leadership. The only task of USIS Brussels was making sure that the Belgian population supported its government. After all, Prime Minister Jean Van Houtte had already written to Eisenhower in January 1953 : “[Belgium’s] ideas completely coincide with yours with respect to this policy for strengthening the peace, security, and prosperity of associated states. It is with this purpose in mind that the Belgian government has decided to give full support to the establishment of the European Defense community”⁸⁷. Eisenhower underlined Van Houtte’s idealistic motivations, indirectly approving the USIS’s new strategy of instilling the Belgians with idealism.

Hiding the American hand : influencing the blueprint for European integration

The hidden American hand to attract the Belgian population would become vital in the USIS’s last big project of the 1950s : European integration. The launch of the Schuman Plan on 9 May 1950 was a first step in the direction of a European Coal and Steel Community. While historians disagree about the extent to which American influence shaped European integration, on the whole the Americans stimulated integration in three ways. First, by setting unification as a prerequisite for Marshall aid; second, by emphasizing that European integration was a way to

85. All quotes can be found in : Movie script, *Belgian Troops in Korea*, 5.8.1952, p. 1, 7, 6, 3, RG. 306, A1 1098, Box 4, NARA. 86. RUDI VAN DOORSLAER, “Gebruikt verleden. De politieke nalatenschap van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in België 1945-2000”, in GITA DENECKERE & BART DE WEVER (eds.), *Geschiedenis maken. Liber Amicorum Herman Balthazar*, Gent, p. 227-256. 87. RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 399-400; Letter, Van Houtte to Eisenhower, “The Prime Minister”, 10.2.1953, AWF, Papers as President 1953-1961, International Series, Box 3, f: Belgium (6), DDEL.

reconstruct Germany and contain it; third, the preponderant US power created a climate in which ideas of unification could flourish, because the US would act as a deterrent to German aggression. In the words of the historian Geir Lundestad : “With the kind of pre-eminent position the United States had in several European countries, including the crucial nation of Germany (...), it is difficult to believe that European integration could actually have taken place without American backing”⁸⁸.

American propaganda also had a role to play. In 1954 John L. Brown became the cultural attaché and alternately exercised the mandate of PAO with Abram E. Manell. Brown was a charismatic figure who had connections with all layers of Belgian society. In 1942 he joined the OWI, he became a press officer for the Marshall Plan in Paris and, when posted in Mexico, a colleague threatened to punch him on the nose. His academic view on cultural diplomacy – he published *Panorama de la littérature américaine* – was not always welcomed by others in the USIA, making him a kind of a legend. However John Clifford Folger, the American ambassador, praised

him : “He fully lives up to everything I had heard and is truly an outstanding individual with amazing energy”⁸⁹.

From 1954 onwards this energy was focused on deploying and expanding the role of public diplomacy in support of the European project. Again, the USIS waited until it was absolutely certain that the Belgian diplomatic corps had fully embraced the American vision of an Atlantic Europe. Up until 1954 Belgium had been run by a government who took a skeptical position towards European integration. In 1953 the USIS acknowledged that “[the] Benelux [state] must be heavily depended upon for support of key American objectives, a recognition of the ability of these small countries to undermine the integration process”⁹⁰.

In May and June 1955 Belgium changed its position. The Benelux states produced a white paper for the other members of the European Coal and Steel Community, who were due to meet at the Messina Conference in June. Having always favored the idea of economic integration, and having experienced the advantages of a Benelux customs union and

88. PASCALINE WINAND, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1996, p. 1-10; ALAN S. MILWARD, *The European Rescue of the Nation State*, Abingdon/New York, 2000², p. 1-12; GEIR LUNDESTAD, “*Empire*” by Integration..., p. 137-138.

89. RICHARD T. ARNT, *The First Resort of Kings. American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, Washington DC, p. 130, 194, 357; Letter, John Clifford Folger, American Ambassador to Belgium to Arthur Larson Director of USIA, “Dear Arthur”, 21.6.1957 and Letter, Arthur Larson Director of USIA to John Clifford Folger, American Ambassador to Belgium, “Dear Cliff”, 11.7.1957, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 102, NARA; Assessment Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Annual USIS Assessment*, 24.11.1958, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA; Inspection Report by Jean M Dery, 26 November-10 December 1954, 13, RG. 306, A1 1578 Inspection Staff Inspection Reports and Related Records 1954-62 Afghanistan Thru British East Africa, Box 1, f: Belgium March 6, 1961, February 9, 1955, NARA. **90.** RIK COOLSMAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 401; Draft, USIA to USIS Brussels, *Benelux*, 30.9.1953, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, FRC 7, NARA; Draft, USIS Brussels to USIA, *DRAFT 10/23/53*, 23.10.1953, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, FRC 7, f: chronological file 1953, NARA.

the failure of political integration with the EDC, Belgium, with Spaak as newly appointed foreign minister, enthusiastically pleaded for the creation of a European common market with a supranational authority. When in opposition, Spaak had presented himself as the champion of European integration within an Atlantic framework. It is this political course that the USIS wanted to support. The group behind the PAO believed that their actions would have a broad European impact, because of the growing number of international organizations that had brought their headquarters to Brussels⁹¹.

The tactic of hidden attraction, which had been developed during the EDC years, was expanded. Belgium was now used to attract the European population to European integration. A USIS official explains : "Country objective I might be phrased more accurately as follows : 'further utilization of Belgian leadership in all phases of European integration'"⁹². To reach this goal pro-European organizations within Belgium were supported. The Information Service used Belgium to communicate American opinions to the rest of Europe. American demands were pushed further

into the background through this tactic, because Europeans were asked to support Belgium's policy of European unification, not American plans. This strategy was also meant to give the European allies the feeling that they were managing their own affairs, an approach that gained more prominence because of the failure of the EDC project. At the same time Washington was redesigning its global strategy, because "the blatancy of such propaganda contributes to the rise of anti-American attitudes and sentiments", a report by the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) – Truman's psychological warfare meeting – noted in 1954⁹³.

Pro-European organizations took center stage and the USIS offered hidden support because support for the ideals of these groups meant a furthering of American policy. The invisible US influence and the untainted motives of a harmless small nation only served to increase the appeal. Trips to the US and exchanges were offered, for instance to Jean Drapier, the secretary-general of the European movement. Drapier was a European federalist who had been the chief of Spaak's Foreign Affairs Ministry in

91. BRAM BOXHOORN & MAX JANSEN, *De integratie van Europa...*, p. 113-114; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 412-413; Country Plan, USIS Brussels to USIA, *USIS Country plan - Belgium*, 16.2.1954, 3 and Letter, USIS Brussels to USIA, *USIS Brussels USIA A-11*, 22.3.1954 and *Belgium country directives*, 7.5.1954, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA; Draft, USIA to USIS Brussels, *BELGIUM*, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, FRC 7, f: Jan 1954-May 1955, NARA; Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Semi-annual report of USIS/Brussels for the period July-December 1955*, 1.2.1956, p. 2, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, f: Actions in Belgium 1956, NARA; Telegram, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Benelux (9/30/53)*, 30.9.1953, RG. 306, UD-WW 287, FRC 7, f: Chronological File 1953, NARA. **92.** Quoted in : Plan, *Country Operating Plan*, 29.5.1957, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA; Report, *Semi-annual report of USIS Brussels for the period July-December 1955*, 1.2.1956, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, f: Actions in Belgium, NARA. **93.** Taken from a PSB Draft of Western European Plan, 17.3.1953, quoted in KENNETH A. OSGOOD, *Total Cold War...*, p. 110.



Anti-communist propaganda poster depicting the northern-Korean leader Kim Il-Sung as a poisonous snake (psywarrior.com).

1948. He led the Belgian delegation at the Conference of the Hague which was held from 7 until 11 May 1948. Organized by the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, the Congress brought together representatives from across a broad political spectrum to discuss European political cooperation. Drapier was keen on excluding the Eastern European countries from a federal Europe because they were not genuine democracies: "Again we ask to exclude from the definition of democratic peoples or democratic regimes those who do not guarantee the freedom of press nor the free movement of all intellectual and artistic works". This must have pleased the information officers. It made Drapier the ideal missionary for a US-approved "Federal Europe"⁹⁴.

The USIS also maintained close contact with other organizations such as the European College in Bruges which had been founded in 1950 and the rather peripheral Conference on a European Intellectual and Spiritual Community⁹⁵. The origins of the College date back to the same Congress where Drapier had played an important role. Salvador de Madariaga, a Spanish statesman, thinker and writer-in-exile had proposed its establishment. American intervention aimed to mold these

utopian ideas into a form that would fit with American plans. The European federalist movement had probably captured USIS's attention when they actively lobbied to make the EDC design as federal as possible⁹⁶.

Other propaganda softly whispered the message of European unity. Abstract ideals surpassed the underlying message up to the point that it became almost impossible to notice the link with European unity or to discern American backing. A seminar invited Dutch, Belgian, and Luxembourg teachers to discuss how an atmosphere of European intellectual unity could be created. They talked about teaching methods from the participating countries and the US. The so-called "Franklin Year" in 1956 – organized to commemorate the 250th birthday of Benjamin Franklin – was seized upon to emphasize the intellectual unity of Europe and its connection with the US, through the theme of Franklin's cosmopolitan mindset. Lectures on "*Franklin et l'Europe*" were given by the cultural affairs officer throughout Belgium, Luxembourg, France, and Holland. In Luxemburg the PAO travelled to the local Rotary Club to give a speech on "*Franklin : Citoyen de Philadelphie et Citoyen du Monde*", combined with the screening of the Encyclopedia Britannica film on the life of Franklin⁹⁷.

⁹⁴. Original language citation: "Nous demandons encore que soit exclu de la notion des peuples démocratiques et des régimes démocratiques celui qui n'assure pas la liberté de la presse ni la libre circulation de toutes les œuvres de la pensée et de l'art" [JEAN DRAPIER, *Intervention de Jean Drapier au congrès de l'Europe*, La Haye, 8.5.1948, *Centre de recherche et de documentation dédié aux études européennes* (<http://www.cvce.eu/viewer/-/content/4c99b419-7642-408d-953c-c2c1918bc40a/fr?jsessionid=D8A3688F73FB795729D404FFB2B9C>)]. ⁹⁵. Country Plan, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Country Operating Plan*, 19.5.1957, 3-4, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA. ⁹⁶. DIETER MAHNCKE, LÉONCE BEKEMANS & ROBERT PICT, *The College of Europe. Fifty Years of Service to Europe*, Bruges, 1999, 1-12; RIK COOLSAET, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek...*, p. 398. ⁹⁷. Memorandum, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Franklin Ceremony at Rotary Club of Bruges*, 23.3.1956, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, NARA.

The Pamphlet *Franklin, Citizen of the World* tells Franklin's life story, how he stayed up late to read books, how he travelled to London, his mission to raise men's awareness of civic affairs, his improvement of the postal system, his founding of the University of Pennsylvania, his invention of the lightning rod, and his role in drafting the American Constitution: "But (...) Franklin never lost sight of his basic goals – to contribute in every way possible to the exchange of ideas and knowledge among people. Only through communication, he believed, could real freedom be preserved and universal peace attained". His *Poor Richard's Almanack*, a yearly publication about everyday life, "created a common cultural bond among the 13 separate colonies". The booklet emphasized the benefits that come from cooperation in the realm of culture and politics through Franklin who was "honored throughout the world" for his "great role in advancing man's freedom". With its many pictures and narrative quality it was aimed at a wide audience that was interested in an easy, unchallenging read⁹⁸.

For a more intellectual public, round-table discussions were organized in the USIS library. These were discussions among leading authors or social figures. The organization

of fruitful European cooperation "furthered the idea of integration on the intellectual plane"⁹⁹. In practice, the integration idea was limited to organizing conferences attended by people from different European countries and putting intellectuals on the lecture program who integrated global cultural influences, but especially American ones, in their own work. On 20 February 1956 Jacques Huisman, the director of the National Theatre of Belgium who admired American theatre, spoke in the Lincoln Library of USIS Brussels about his staging of the plays the *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller in Belgian theatres¹⁰⁰.

The fact that public diplomats wanted to get popular opinion on their side by all means possible is at odds with a political economy interpretation of Americanization where the US is seen as the dominant player in the market for material culture after 1945. It is argued that a certain influence was inevitable despite the ability of receivers to adapt American culture to their own taste¹⁰¹. Volker Berghahn and others have claimed that public diplomacy must be seen as a strengthening of the Americanization process. The US wanted to manage cultural exchange. However, while the

98. Pamphlet, *Franklin, Citizen of the World*, RG. 306, A1 53, Box 3 Press and Publication Service/Publications Division, f: B. Franklin - Citizen of the World, NARA. **99.** Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Semi-annual report of USIS/Brussels for the period July-December, 1955*, 1.2.1956, p. 4, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, f: Actions in Belgium 1956, NARA; Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Annual USIS Assessment Report*, 20.12.1956, p. 4, RG. 306, UD-WW 273, FRC 51, NARA. **100.** Pamphlet, USIS Brussels to USIA, *USIS. Library Notes 1956-1957* [1956] and Memorandum, USIS Brussels to USIA, Washington, Mr. Jacques Huisman at the Round Table in American Literature, 4.6.1956, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, f: Actions in Belgium 1956, NARA. **101.** Arguments along these lines have been made by GERALDO ZAHARAN & LEONARDO RAMOS, "From Hegemony to Soft Power. Implications of a Conceptual Change", inINDERJEET PARMAR & MICHAEL COX (eds.), *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy. Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. – Routledge Studies in US Foreign Policy, New York, 2010, p. 21; VICTORIA DE GRAZIA, *Irresistible Empire...*, p. 21; ANGUS MACKENZIE, *Remaking France, Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan*, New York/Oxford, 2005, p. 5-6;

sparkle of the American dream is essential to Americanization – so appealing and qualitatively superior that it could not be resisted – the USIS posts often covered up American involvement. Not only in Belgium did propaganda practitioners adjust their message to heighten appeal : “Helen Kirkpatrick the head of Mission France’s information division for most of the Marshall Plan years, sought to remove the US label from much of its output (...) these officials concluded that the most effective US program was the least visible one”¹⁰².

Very explicit messages about Europe were only being spread in the margins. Movies about European unity and nineteen exhibit windows in twelve Belgian cities filled with photos of Schuman and European maps, served to keep the theme vibrant. Additionally, the European theme was also exploited to receive more money from a mutual fund that had been created to stimulate European unity. The organizers of a library conference clearly tried to receive funds by presenting their project as a European venture. In a dispatch to the USIA, the officer lamented that “the financial burden of this project is too heavy for a post with a budget as

limited as that of USIS, Brussels. However, its European character would justify, we believe, appropriations from funds allocated for projects promoting European integration”¹⁰³.

In short, the EDC was a military partnership, but the Americans took an approach that differed fundamentally from the way in which military issues were addressed at the beginning of the 1950s. They learned that the expectations of the population were crucial to the production of effective propaganda. Collective security was no longer presented as a bargain. At the end of the decade, collective security had become a value used to attract Belgians because support for the ideal would most likely mean support for the EDC initiative that carried this ideal forward.

IV. Conclusion : USIS-Brussels’ public diplomacy in reverse

To summarize, the operation of American public diplomats in Belgium was unique in three ways. First, the impression of Belgium that USIS officers held was rooted in the international Cold War which created concerns about strategic vulnerability, the

CHRISTOPHER ENDY, “Review : Remaking France. Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan”, in *Diplomatic History*, 2005, no. 4, p. 761-764; KARL MARX & FRIEDRICH ENGELS, “The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas”, in MEENAKSHI GIGI DURHAM & DOUGLAS KELLNER (eds.), *Media and Cultural Studies. Keywords*, Malden MA, Oxford & Carlton, 2006², p. 9-12; IINDERJEET PARMAR, “American Foundations and the Development of International Knowledge Networks”, in *Global Networks*, 2002, no. 1, p. 13-30. **102.** Quoted in : ANGUS MCKENZIE, *Remaking France...*, p. 232-233; VOLKER R. BERGHAIN, *Transatlantische Kulturkriege. Shepard Stone, Die Ford-Stiftung und der Europäische AntiAmerikanismus*. – Transatlantische Historische Studien, Stuttgart, 2004, p. xvii. **103.** Quoted in : Letter, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Educational Exchange : Follow-up project : Western European Conference of Key Librarians*, 23.10.1956, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, f: Actions 1956, NARA; Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *Semi-annual report of USIS Brussels for the period July-December, 1955*, 1.2.1956, p. 4-5, RG. 306, UD-WW 344, FRC 99, f: Actions in Belgium 1956, NARA; Report, USIS Brussels to USIA, *USIS Brussels Semi-annual Report*, 5.2.1954, 1, RG. 306, UD-WW 339, FRC 290, NARA.

Korean War, the EDC, and European integration. However, the USIS's assessment of Belgian Communism was not distorted; it was considered to be weak. If anti-Communism was not the main driver behind the USIS presence in Belgium, what then was the *raison d'être* of a propaganda post in a small country that could easily be pressured?

The answer to this question can be found in the basic aim of USIS Brussels : instead of working via the people to get a stubborn foreign government to cooperate, the Belgian government was pressured directly – using Nye's terminology, hard power – and only afterwards was popular support sought through public diplomacy. Furthermore, the propaganda technique applied by local posts were not born out of a widely employed strategy of attraction. Everyday encounters with the Belgian public taught USIS officials, in a rather ad hoc way, that attraction – using Nye's terminology, soft power – was the most effective way to wage a battle for hearts and minds.

The work of the American PAO in Brussels shows that public diplomacy cannot be equated with soft power. A strategy based upon the belief that people could be manipulated or attracted to follow American policy did not pre-date the growing importance of public diplomacy. It was the outcome of a gradual learning process triggered by the challenges of the Cold War. Day-to-day experience with Belgian society created insights into Belgian norms to which USIS officials then adjusted their methods.

These three conclusions have two important implications for the way in which we see soft power logic operate within American public diplomacy and Americanization. First, American soft power could only exist when the US conformed to the norms that existed within the international system. Public diplomacy in Belgium was constrained by structural power, a form of power that stems from the shared values and norms which are part of social structures. In Nye's theory of soft power, however, structural forms of power are taken together with relational forms of power where an actor exercises power within a relationship by changing the values of others. Nye's confusion stems from the fact that he has not taken the outside world into account. Public diplomacy has to be seen as a two-way process not a one-way imposition¹⁰⁴.

A second implication is that the activities at USIS Brussels are at odds with Nye's argument that soft power is a unique resource at the disposition of the United States. Power can only exist within a social relationship and is not a resource that can be accumulated or possessed by one country. The Americans actively tried to hide the American character and emphasized the universality of values such as democracy and freedom of speech¹⁰⁵. Consequently, public diplomacy cannot be seen as a facilitator of the penetration of American culture.

In short, the USIS Brussels did not work through the population to reach a stubborn government, but made sure the

104. MICHAEL BARNETT & RAYMOND DUVAL, "Power in International Politics", in *International Organization*, 2005, no. 1, p. 39; EDWARD LOCK, "Soft Power and Strategy. Developing a 'Strategic' Concept of Power", in IJINDERJEET PARMAR & MICHAEL COX (eds.), *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy...*, p. 34. 105. SARAH GRAHAM, "The (Real)politik of Culture...", p. 231-251

people supported a pro-American decision which the Belgian government had already taken under American pressure. Public diplomats did not see soft power attraction as the widely accepted premise for propaganda, but only gradually used

the power behind ideals and culture to hide the American hand. They reflected in creative ways the transformational mechanism behind propaganda. Historians should follow suit and take off the soft power lens.

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Abbreviations

AmEmbBru	American Embassy Brussels	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
AWF	Ann Whitman File	NSC-68	National Security Council
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency		(Paper) - 68
DDEL	Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (Abilene, Kansas)	OWI	Office of War Information
EC	European Community	PAO	Public Affairs Officer
ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration	RG	Record Group
EDC	European Defense Community	State Dept	State Department
FRC	as in FRC carton, Federal Records Centers	UD-WW	a code for the finding aid in the archives. It doesn’t stand for anything. It indicates that the file is undescribed.
IIA	International Information Administration	UN	United Nations
KPB/PCB	<i>Kommunistisch Partij van België / Parti Communiste de Belgique</i> (Belgian Communist Party)	USIA	United States Information Agency
		USIE	United States Information and Exchange
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program	USIE-ECA	United States Information and Exchange-European Cooperation Administration
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration	USIS	United States Information Service
NATIS	Nato Information Service	USIS Brussels	United States Information Service in Brussels