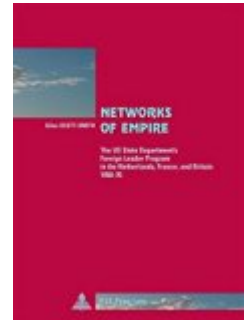


Giles Scott-Smith. *Networks of Empire: The US State Department's Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France and Britain 1950-1970.* Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008. 514 pp. \$61.95, paper, ISBN 978-90-5201-256-8.



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Commissioned by Christopher L. Ball (DePaul University)

This ambitious study analyzes the U.S. State Department's Foreign Leader Program (FLP) across three key Cold War allies. Giles Scott-Smith's familiarity with the current research specific to each nation and the vast array of archival material he musters make this a remarkable study indeed.

Scott-Smith begins by discussing the development and goals of the FLP. "To manage empire," he explains, "particularly the American version of informal empire, it is crucial to maintain alliances and nurture friends" (p. 23). Thus the FLP was created to target the elites of the Western Europe. Under the program sympathetic journalists, politicians, academics, and business elites were brought to the United States and allowed to witness American society first hand. Having learned from the clumsy technical assistance visits of the Marshall Plan, the FLP grantees helped to develop their itineraries and they were under no obligation upon their return. Borrowing Victoria De Grazia's characterization of the U.S. empire, Scott-Smith uses the FLP to demonstrate the openness

of allies' public space to U.S. influence, the export of U.S. civil society, and the norm-making power of U.S. hegemony (p. 29).[1]

Scott-Smith provides a useful overview of the development of U.S. public diplomacy following the Second World War. Hans Speier, of the New School and subsequently RAND, and Paul Lazarsfeld, author of *The People's Choice* (1944), had argued that indigenous elites were superior vectors for propaganda than external sources. Thus, although the Campaign of Truth, as its very title suggests, focused on traditional psychological warfare in opposition to Soviet efforts, the proponents of the FLP were able to present the program as an important and relatively inexpensive component. The goals of the visits fit within the Campaign of Truth's imperative to show a "full and fair" picture of the United States (p. 33). The FLP was boosted by support from academics in the United States and private foundations.

After examining the creation and implementation of the program Scott-Smith proceeds to the

national case studies. In all three countries the FLP was meant to reinforce and encourage Atlanticist elites. The majority of the book deals with the Netherlands. Here the United States favored the Dutch Labor Party, the Partij van der Arbeid (PvdA). The FLP was seen as an antidote to the Bevanism of some center-left politicians and the visit of Hein Vos illustrates the subtlety and effectiveness of the exchange visits. Vos had expressed concerns that the cost of rearmament would result in the loss of social programs. During his U.S. visit in 1954, Vos was impressed at the high standard of living enjoyed by Americans. Upon his return, Vos concluded, "I have learnt a lot. And perhaps the best and most grateful way to express this is that, despite the many problems that I saw and which I have covered here, I returned with *belief in this country*" (p. 132). The FLP's effectiveness can be seen in its ability to effect this type of conversion in a traditional European socialist. Scott-Smith provides a number of examples of skeptical visitors from all three countries who became supporters of the United States upon their return.

Scott-Smith's discussion of European journalists and academics who participated in the FLP adds further support to the thesis that civil society forms a crucial field for the exercise of U.S. hegemony. Notably, under the FLP, journalists from the *Observer* and *Le Monde* visited the United States. Dozens of other journalists were placed with regional U.S. newspapers for three to six months. To demonstrate the efficacy of the program, U.S. Embassy officials carefully documented the column-inches of pro-American coverage generated by these journalists when they returned to Europe.

In the 1960s the priorities of the FLP shifted to Asia and Africa. European anger with U.S. policies in Vietnam overrode any propaganda benefit exposure to the American Way of Life might have had.

The difficulties of assessing the impact of the FLP were a fundamental issue for U.S. officials; it presents similar problems to historians. "The dominant ethos was based on reciprocity and a belief," explains Scott-Smith, "more or less impossible to substantiate, in the positive effects of these programmes over the longer term" (p. 55). Reviewing numerous studies and interviews with FLP participants he concludes that the visits provided "personal experience" that led to more informed, empathetic assessments of the United States. The program functioned as "psychological cement" between the United States and its allies (p. 422).

This study's broad chronology and mutli-national assessment must be commended. Scott-Smith's detailed examination of the FLP is a substantial contribution to the history of public diplomacy during the Cold War.

Note

[1]. Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*(Cambridge: Belknap, 2005).

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