



*Simona Tobia*

**Advertising America**  
The United States Information  
Service in Italy (1945-1956)

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the highly complimentary reports she sent to Washington illustrating the results of the work carried out by the United States Information Services (USIS), ambassador Clare Boothe Luce sometimes doubted the efficient operation of the American informational network in Italy. Satisfactorily accomplishing its mission under the real conditions the USIS had to deal with in the Fifties was not always an easy task.

I should like to remind you that as a member of the staff of USIS I have seen to it that certain fairly important public relations arrangements have gone decidedly well for you – and to assure you that, if I have anything to do with them, others in the future will go decidedly well for you again [...]. It is my job, and it would be my pleasure, to do so. But I am forced to be frank and to tell you that, in the present circumstances in USIS, I shall not be able to do a thorough, thoughtful job for you.<sup>1</sup>

It fell to Chief Information Officer John E. Dineen to reply to the ambassador's complaints with a long and embarrassing letter in which he reminded her about his efforts to do his job unfailingly, a hard duty in Rome in those years. From Mr. Dineen's letter, it was quite clear that a job at the USIS in Rome was generally not considered a real job, but a sort of reward for tasks accomplished in the past and that the staff were «people who are somewhat relaxed from somewhat too much of the beautiful life in Rome»<sup>2</sup>. The officers showed limited interest in their work in Italy; many

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<sup>1</sup> NARA, RG 84, Entry 2783 A, Italy, Rome Embassy, Records of Clare Boothe Luce 1955-1957, Box 3, *Urgent – Personal – Confidential, The Situation in USIS*, From John E. Dineen, To The Ambassador, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

of them preferred to let themselves be seduced by the temptations of the capital's social life, or by other, more private relationships, like Nedville E. Nordness, head of the Italian USIS from 1955. His affair, which he did not even attempt to keep particularly secret, with the secretary of the Press and Publications Service's chief Allan J. Funch, while his wife and children were away in Norway, had embarrassed the entire American informational structure in Rome, attracting the attention of Via Veneto's gossipmongers. Despite the very relaxed attitude of both the American and Italian staff however, it is undeniable that the whole USIS network achieved important results in developing American cultural policies for Italy in the first decade after the war, an important step towards the 'Americanization' of the country during the Cold War.

In recent years, many scholars have attempted to study the 'Americanization' of the world from several points of view. The most recent example is Victoria De Grazia's work published in 2005<sup>3</sup>, which highlights the way that America's consumerist society has won over the world; Richard Pells attempted a much broader approach to the question of the 'Americanization' of Europe in 1997<sup>4</sup>, considering several aspects of the problem, including public diplomacy as well as mass culture and economic and social life. Pells then extended his research not only to several types of sources, but also to many European countries, avoiding the constraint of concentrating on one in particular, which resulted in a very wide-ranging work. The study of the influence of the American model on Italian culture is not new, but those who have attempted it have rarely shown an interest in the activities of the USIS. Pier Paolo D'Attorre<sup>5</sup>, for instance, analyses several aspects of the question, from comics to advertising, but does not show an interest in activities of cultural diplomacy, whereas Stephen Gundle<sup>6</sup> considered cinema first and foremost; those who approached diplomatic cultural activities generally preferred to concentrate on the period of the Allied liberation/occupation of Italy<sup>7</sup>. It must be noted, however, that most scholars interested in Italian-American relations generally focus especially on economical activities, such as those linked to the Marshall Plan and to relations with the trade unions, and on political affairs<sup>8</sup>. Nor, on the other hand, do the studies dealing with the history of either the USIS, the United

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<sup>3</sup> De Grazia 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Pells 1997.

<sup>5</sup> D'Attorre 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Gundle 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Ellwood 1977; Pizarroso Quintero 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Aga Rossi 1977 and 1984; Del Pero 2001; Di Nolfo - Rainero - Vigezzi 1990 and 1992; Di Nolfo 1986, 1990/1991 and 2002; Ellwood 1985 and 1992; Faenza - Fini 1976; Gabrielli 2004; Guasconi 1999; Poggiolini 1990.

States Information Agency (USIA) or Voice of America (VOA)<sup>9</sup>, analyse the case of Italy in depth, concentrating essentially on the history of those agencies and of their policies as they were conceived in Washington. Two exceptions to this rule are the recent books by Silvia Cassamagnaghi, which deals with the influence of the American model on Italian women, and by Giles Scott-Smith, which pays particular attention to American cultural exchanges with Great Britain, France and the Netherlands<sup>10</sup>. As to influences on Italian culture, much has been written, especially in Britain, but these works are often conceived in close contact with cultural and media studies and generally are not purely historical analyses, tend to trace the relations between politics, culture and society<sup>11</sup>.

The most important exception to all this is Luigi Bruti Liberati's book<sup>12</sup>, the first published historical account of the USIS in Italy in the post-war years. As he pointed out very clearly in his introduction, the entire concept of the 'Americanization' of Italian society is doomed to remain quite vague if the concrete processes through which it was accomplished are not analysed in depth<sup>13</sup>. This book, although far from being exhaustive, is intended to continue Bruti Liberati's work right from where he left off, and it represents a contribution to the debate on 'Americanization', trying to determine the limits and success of the State Department's public diplomacy in the Italian cultural environment.

The USIS was the network of overseas branches of the various offices in charge of the State Department's international cultural and informational policies<sup>14</sup> between 1945 and 1953, and which after 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1953 merged to form the independent agency known as USIA; its foreign branches, still called USIS, were based in embassies and consulates. They had arrived in Italy in 1943 with the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB), and after the Liberation they started to work independently. The USIS' aim was to convince the Italians that the main objective of American policies was peace, firmly rooted in freedom and security, but they also wished to provoke attitudes and actions in support

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<sup>9</sup> Barrett 1953; Bogart 1976; Cowan Shulman 1990; Dizard 1961; Esterline - Esterline 1997; Heil 2003; Henderson 1969; Krugler 2000; Pirsein 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Scott-Smith 2008; Cassamagnaghi 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Baranski - Lumley 1990; Baranski - West 2001; Duggan - Wagstaff 1995; Forgacs - Lumley 1996; Forgacs 1990; Risso - Boria 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Bruti Liberati 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. II-III.

<sup>14</sup> Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (1945-1948); Office of International Information (1948-1950); Office of International Information and Cultural Exchange Programs (1950-1952) and International Information Administration (1952 - 1953).

of the United States' objectives in both the people and the government, as stated in one of Washington's country plans for Italy<sup>15</sup>. The USIS' work was divided among various branches: American libraries and cultural centres, the Press and Publication Service, the Motion Picture Section, the International Broadcasting Branch, namely VOA, and the section in charge of cultural exchange including Fulbright grants. They produced huge amounts of publications, films and radio shows, but they also organized art exhibitions, concerts, conferences and other events that could lead to scientific, economic, and especially cultural cooperation.

The main theme of USIS-produced material and of VOA broadcasts to Italy was the idea of advertising the American model, and the American 'way of life', namely 'advertising America'; their mission was to make the Italians feel they needed American welfare, wellbeing and wealth as linked to the model of democracy and freedom which ultimately depended on the 'Western choice' of the Italian people. This was because Italy, in addition to having the strongest Communist Party in Western Europe, was not a very resolute ally. More widespread production, obtained through American aid, would have spread prosperity through all sectors of society, solving the problem of social and labour struggles, which, in the USIS officers' opinion, were primarily associated with poverty. Economic growth would thus bring the Communist Party's influence to an end; hence, the necessity of showing American wellbeing and wealth, already present *in nuce* during the war years, was strengthened in the post-war period.

The approach chosen by this book is strongly analytical, and although the nature of the area under discussion is close to cultural and media studies, this remains purely a historical work that attempts to trace the history of the Italian USIS and tries to determine the actual importance of its endeavour to influence Italian life in the late Forties and Fifties. The five chapters divide the subject into two main areas: the policy as it was conceived in Washington and the history of the agency in general on the one hand, and the policy's practical application in Italy by USIS officers in embassies and consulates on the other hand. The book also follows chronological criteria adopted to highlight the relations between the developments in American informational and cultural diplomacy, those in Italy's social and political situation, and the changes in the international Cold War situation. The material is thus divided into three main areas: the legacy of the war and the reconstruction, until the Italian elections in 1948; the shift from 'containment' to 'roll back' until the change of Administration in 1953; and the

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<sup>15</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65/2-852, Box 2466, *USIE Country Plan – Italy – 3<sup>rd</sup> Priority Area – Confidential – Security Information*, January 1952.

years of Clare Boothe Luce's mandate as American ambassador in Rome, between 1953 and 1956.

At the end of the war, the USIS initially tried to reach Italian mass audiences primarily through the press and the radio, but clearly this was not working. In 1950 country plans for Italy established a huge and hard-hitting intervention, extended to the whole population, especially to those who were part of the so-called 'labour' target group, mainly factory and rural workers who were more likely to be seduced by the Communist Party. This kind of intervention was very expensive and, as has been said, it did not seem to be working. The news bulletin sent to newspapers and magazines every day was hardly used by the Italian press, and VOA's listening figures testified that the population was clearly more likely to listen to the RAI frequencies.

When, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1953, Clare Boothe Luce arrived in Naples on board the *Andrea Doria*, it was clear that a plan to roll back communism in the country was ready. Along with the Italian USIS chief director Lloyd A. Free, Ambassador Luce prepared a prospectus for Italy for 1954-1955<sup>16</sup>. Important budget cuts<sup>17</sup> were on their way for the new fiscal year, so an 'Italianization' of the USIS work was needed, letting Italian 'public opinion moulders' move to the front lines. The Italian cultural elite thus became the most important target group. The USIS started to develop personal contacts with a group of people chosen very selectively from among journalists, politicians, free trade union leaders, teachers and university students, and anyone who could be considered as a 'moulder'. This was the cheapest way of reaching the mass public indirectly, and it also proved to be the most effective. Clare Boothe Luce's USIS thus transformed Italian cultural leaders into cultural 'brokers', to put it in the words of David Forgacs<sup>18</sup>. The principal tools used to engage Italian cultural leaders were basically words: spoken and written words. The emphasis was on book translation and presentation campaigns, on the establishment of university courses on American studies in Italian faculties and, to form well prepared scholars, on cultural exchange programmes. When the primary target group was no longer the one called 'labor', VOA was moved to the rearguard; in 1953, its broadcasts were cut to only 15 minutes per day, and they were abolished by 1957. VOA's Italian Desk, however, continued to exist and to

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<sup>16</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65/5-1353, Box 2467, *Foreign Service Despatch, From Amembassy Rome – Lloyd A. Free, To The Department of State, Washington, Subject: IIA Prospectus*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1953.

<sup>17</sup> In fiscal year 1953: 628,000 U.S. dollars USIS; 3,500,000 MSA. Fiscal year 1954: 656,000 USIS; 1,000,000 MSA.

<sup>18</sup> Forgacs 1990, p. 5.

work in close cooperation with the USIS officers on the other side of the ocean, in Rome. And they were doing so with a new aim: to colonize the RAI, and possibly try to control the news it aired, supplying it with both ready-made programmes and material to be used in the RAI-produced broadcasts, without any label indicating that those programmes originated in the USA.

The USIS' aim was to involve those leaders who were already interested in American culture. They were not conservative, but open and ready to receive new cultural views, and also new subjects, such as those regarding the social sciences, which were not yet popular in Italy at that time, and still considered by many as instruments of the capitalist culture. Thus subjects such as sociology, political science, economics, and public opinion studies, but also American history and literature, began to be regarded as the best weapons for fighting communism in Italy. The USIS recruited the soldiers for a new cultural army from among those leaders that could be defined liberals, as they were both anti-fascist and anti-communist. Il Mulino and its founders, intellectuals who wanted to come down from their ivory towers, were just the right people in the right place. The introduction of courses of American studies into Italian universities is another example of the recruitment of liberal scholars. The USIS propagandists regarded writers like Moravia, and later Silone, who were closer to the Communist Party, with great interest in the hopes of winning over not only their hearts and minds, but also those of their readers. The right 'public opinion moulders' could convey the right message to their fellow-countrymen.

These operations can certainly be considered as 'Americanization', but Italy proved to be somewhat less than eager to be passively conquered by a foreign empire. The USIS officers, therefore, could only appeal to those who were already intellectually interested in all things American, namely the cultural leaders, and Italy used American propaganda, or 'cultural imperialism', and not just the Marshall Plan money, as an opportunity to advance.

This study is based on the very abundant, and for the most part still unexplored, materials available at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD. The papers of the USIA are available there, within the huge Record Group 306, which is entirely dedicated to the Agency; the papers of the State Department, in the immense Record Group 59, have also been very useful, especially for the study of the information offices that preceded the creation of the USIA as an independent agency. Record Group 84, containing the papers of the foreign posts, has been extremely valuable in examining the case of Italy, especially for the recently-declassified Record of Clare Boothe Luce 1955-1957, which, if used in conjunction with the Clare Boothe Luce Papers at the Library of

Congress, is very helpful in determining the role of Mrs. Luce's intervention on Italian culture. The American National Archives have also provided the primary sources for the study of VOA, both through papers held in Record Groups 59 and 306, and through the VOA's scripts held in the National Archives and Records Administration Northeast Region in New York City. These archive materials have been used in comparison with the results of some Doxa surveys which are held at Doxa's premises in Milan, Italy, and with the USIS-produced publications still available in various Italian libraries that inherited them when the USIS libraries closed in the Nineties.

Different studies of the material available are also possible, both from the point of view of Italian home affairs, comparing the developments of the USIS policy with the history of Italian political affairs, and from the perspective of cultural and media studies. In this book, in fact, the part regarding cultural exchanges was limited to the most important examples for the period of time under consideration, because its primary purpose is to trace a more comprehensive history of American diplomatic cultural activity in Italy during the Cold War. Furthermore, this book does not aim at providing an exhaustive response dealing with the actual dimension of Italy's 'Americanization', which calls for wider analysis, of which cultural diplomacy is just one aspect. Its aim is, on the contrary, to determine the intentions of the American government in this country and to what extent it actually succeeded in obtaining some long-lasting results.



# I

## WARS OF IDEAS: AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION SERVICES

### 1. 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1942: ON THE AIR

The Voice of America speaks. Today America has been at war for seventy-nine days. Daily at this time, we shall speak to you about America and the war. The news may be good or bad, we shall tell you the truth.<sup>1</sup>

It was 2.30 a.m. on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1942, exactly 80 days after Pearl Harbor, when this broadcast was aired from New York to London, and then re-transmitted to Germany. A new international radio service had been created to keep war-torn Europe informed with the truth, and it was included within the net of information offices desired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after the United States entered the war.

Voice of America, and its acronym VOA, has been the name of the new broadcaster since March 1942, and it was regularly used both by announcers on the air and in correspondence headings. Thanks to its simplicity the name spread very quickly; indeed, to start with: «You are listening to a broadcast by the radio production division of the Foreign Information Service of the Coordinator of Information of the United States of America» would have been quite complicated. «The Voice of America speaks» was certainly much better.

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<sup>1</sup> USIA, *America's Overseas Information Program*, Washington 1958, in Pirsein 1979, p. 58. Heil 2003, p. 32, the most recent publication on VOA's history, covering the period since its creation in 1942 until 2001, offers a slightly different version of the quotation: «We bring you voices from America. Today, and daily from now on, we shall speak to you about America and the war. The news may be good for us. The news may be bad. But we shall tell you the truth».

William Harlan Hale, an announcer who spoke German with a slightly American accent, was recruited for that first time on the air. Only two studios were working at the beginning of February 1942, at VOA's Madison Avenue premises in New York. The 'German desk', consisting only of two journalists and a secretary, started to produce a daily 15-minute programme, consisting only of news from newspaper clippings. These were then broadcast across the Atlantic Ocean by cable to London. The British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) European Service re-transmitted them from London through its relay stations, while other programmes, on the other hand, were recorded on acetate discs, and were then sent to Europe by air. The BBC thus received the first broadcast during the night between 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 1942, and passed it on to Germany through its famous relay stations, on medium wave. VOA, however, usually celebrates the anniversary of its foundation every 24<sup>th</sup> February, because that was the day when the first programme was actually prepared and all the work was done. Two days later, on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1942, the regular transmission of a news programme that passed through London and reached Germany, France and Italy daily in their own languages was started as well. A fourth programme in the English language was added on 8<sup>th</sup> March; it could be listened to all across Europe, from Stockholm to North Africa, and it became famous as the *Yankee Doodle Hour*, from the title of the song that opened and closed the programme. The choice was not casual at all. As a matter of fact, among American traditional songs dating back to the Revolution years, *Yankee Doodle* probably best represents the national pride of the country, being the tale of a 'Yankee', a simple settler, dressed only in rags (also called 'doodles'). It was a mocking song, and British troops were said to sing it while going to battle in the first days of the War of Independence. The settlers soon started to sing the same song, but adding dozens of new verses both to mock the British troops and to praise George Washington's men. After the British defeat of Yorktown in 1781, *Yankee Doodle* became a sort of informal American anthem, representing the true soul of a nation that had grown thanks to the work of the poor 'doodles' who had nothing but their own strength. Those themes suited American war propaganda very well in Europe during the Forties<sup>2</sup>. Thus the song, played at the be-

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<sup>2</sup> Forcucci 1984, pp. 44-46. The song *Yankee Doodle* became American after a process of assimilation. Before the War of Independence it was known not only in Britain, but also in the rest of Europe, and the British surgeon Richard Shalkburg used it at the beginning of the conflict to mock the rebels, who soon made the song their own. They even played it at the ceremonies following Yorktown, on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1781. For the different versions of the lyrics, see: Lomax - Lomax 1935 and 1954; Lomax 1960. Also see the section 'Songs and Poems' in the Library of Congress' web site.

ginning and at the end of every one of its programmes, became the icon of VOA's radio broadcasts, a sort of trademark that made it immediately distinguishable from other international broadcasters such as the BBC or Radio Mosca. Even VOA's headquarters in Washington are still sometimes called 'Yankee Doodle Station'<sup>3</sup>. Actually, a version of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* should have been used as VOA's theme song, and Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians were recruited to play it. John Houseman, first director of VOA, recalls the reason for this change of mind:

It sounded glorious, and we were very proud of it – until we were informed, by the British, that this was exactly the same tune as an old German marching song. *Laura, Laura* it was called, to which Nazi troops had marched into Norway and the rest of Europe the year before. Sadly, we replaced Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians with a sprightly small band rendition of *Yankee Doodle*, which Virgil Thompson orchestrated for us in a hurry, which became the signature of the Voice of America. It had the right spirit, and as we later discovered, the ability to pierce the organized bedlam of jamming.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. WORDS AS WEAPONS

«Together we cannot fail»<sup>5</sup>. President Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to communicate this message to the nation one evening in March 1933, when he had just started his mandate. Those were the dark years of the Great Depression and Roosevelt had already understood that his voters needed consolation and reassurance. To reach them directly in their homes, the President choose radio, giving the first of his popular 31 'fireside chats'.

Between 1924 and 1936 the number of radio sets in American homes increased from 3 to 33 million<sup>6</sup>; it was an enormous change, which did not stop even during the crisis that was at its peak right before the Second World War. In 1937 no less than 80 per cent of the population had the

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<sup>3</sup> Ingrassia Fitzgerald 1987, pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> J. Houseman, *Excerpts from John Houseman's Speech*, USICA World, 1982, in Heil 2003, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> It is the sentence that President Roosevelt used on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1933 to close the first of his 'fireside chats', the famous speeches he gave on the radio to encourage the population, exhausted after three years of deep recession. The 'fireside chats' were transmitted until 6<sup>th</sup> January 1945, whenever the President felt the need to speak directly to the population, and they were aired through every national channel at 10 o'clock at night (East Coast time), so that they could be heard in every time zone.

<sup>6</sup> Holbrook Culbert 1976, p. 15.

chance to have a seat next to a radio set, and in the same period Americans used to listen to the radio for four and a half hours a day on average<sup>7</sup>. At the beginning of 1940, there were as many as 44 million sets, and 91 per cent of homes in urban areas had at least one set, while in rural areas the percentage decreased to 69 per cent, but still remained substantial<sup>8</sup>. So, Roosevelt's choice was not casual, as in those years it seemed natural to exploit a medium that made it possible to reach the widest possible public, practically coming into the living rooms of the whole population. The President easily understood that this would grant him enormous and unprecedented political power, so during that night in March 1933 he invited radio audiences to sit next to him and hear his speech about the way he intended to stop the crisis that was making America starve to death.

Nothing was left to chance in Roosevelt's speeches: they were usually quite short and written by a staff of professional writers who tried to choose mainly among the 1000 words most used in the country, in order to make them understandable by as many people as possible. On the night of 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941, Roosevelt addressed his 'fellow Americans' speaking about the declaration of war on Japan following Pearl Harbor, and said: «So we are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows».

In 1939, when war broke out in Europe, the United States was the only power without an international propaganda service. The efforts of Nazi propaganda architect Joseph Goebbels were well known, as well as those of the Soviet Union, Italy, Japan and Britain, who used their mass media to spread their own 'truth' outside national borders. In the spring of 1940, the collapse of France was partly attributed to a loss of willpower due to the Nazi propaganda that had preceded the military intervention, and the United States became aware that greater efforts were needed to awaken faith in democratic values and spread them among Europeans. President Roosevelt, as a consummate politician, had started to exploit the mass media for his 'fireside chats', and it was probably because of these efforts that often his non-interventionist opponents were not granted the same space on private mass media. However, the Administration still had not given way to an explicit and spectacular propaganda, which could cause too much criticism, and would not do so before the 1940 elections. As a matter of fact, for many Americans the First World War heritage still strengthened the feeling that propaganda was a sinister and alien thing, typical of totalitarian regimes such as Germany. In fact between 1917

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<sup>7</sup> Parrish 1992, p. 505.

<sup>8</sup> Frezza 1986, pp. 216-217.

and 1918 the Committee on Public Information, better known as the Creel Committee from the name of its creator and director, the journalist George Creel, literally covered the country with propaganda posters and leaflets, exciting national fervour almost to frenzy. It was a campaign of hate against the enemy, which contributed to distorting the perception of war events. The original purpose of the Committee was to coordinate and simplify the circulation of government news, but Creel turned it into a huge propaganda network to drum up support for American intervention in the war throughout Europe, and for this purpose many writers, journalists, publishers, and people working in advertising and theatre were recruited. The Congress, especially the republican minority, soon expressed its worries that such an impressive structure could also be used by President Wilson for political purposes, and not only to help win the war. At the end of the conflict, the United States returned to its traditional isolationism, rejecting the very concept of propaganda, also because of the suspicion that British propaganda had induced the country to join the war in 1917, widely circulated among public opinion. The Creel Committee was not allocated any more funds and the Congress abolished it on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1919<sup>9</sup>.

Between 1939 and 1941 President Roosevelt created a series of bodies, often with similar or converging tasks, with the task of taking care of information in accordance with government policies.

The first of these bodies was the Office of Government Reports (OGR), created towards the end of 1939 and in charge of informative propaganda; it had to spread news about public defence programmes, but also to supply the government with information about public opinion trends. The President thus hoped to create an atmosphere of confidence in his foreign policy, providing information that private media could also use. Lowell Mellet, former editor of the *Washington Daily News*, was chosen to direct the OGR.

In 1940 Roosevelt was worried by Nazi penetration in Latin America, so he decided to create the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), directed by Nelson Rockefeller, grandchild of John D. Rockefeller<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> For an outline of the Creel Committee see Bruti Liberati 2004 and Henderson 1969.

<sup>10</sup> John Davison Rockefeller (1839-1937) was the founder of one of the first big trusts in the United States, the Standard Oil Company. He was also one of the most important American philanthropists, who created many foundations and institutions both for medical research and for education, such as the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, created in 1901, and the General Education Board, which distributed more than 300 million dollars of education funds between 1902 and 1965. But the Rockefeller Foundation, created in 1913, is certainly the better-known institution, with the goal of promoting welfare throughout the world. Nelson A. Rockefeller (1908-1979) was a businessman

On the home front, more prudence was required. In 1941 the President established an Informational Division within the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), in line with the informational propaganda strategy.

In 1941, after Roosevelt's confirmation at the national elections, interventionists started insisting on the construction of an office in charge of active propaganda, i.e. suggestion, because in their opinion, the existing bodies did not satisfy the needs concerning the circulation of information. On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1941 the President created the Office of Civilian Defence (OCD), with Fiorello La Guardia<sup>11</sup> as director, which was included in the list of government bodies in charge of the preparation for war.

On 11<sup>th</sup> July 1941 the President, as Army and Navy Commander in Chief, issued a military order<sup>12</sup> creating the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), which represented not only regular propaganda, but also psychological war: it was an actual secret service, also in charge of missions abroad and which cooperated in close relations with the Army; its tasks included 'dirty' propaganda, using tendentious rumours to produce confusion and defeatism among enemy forces. The office was thus in charge both of 'open-information' and of the so-called 'covert information activities' and of intelligence. At the head of the COI in Washington there was Colonel William J. 'Wild Bill' Donovan, former lawyer in New York and hero of the first World War, who had developed a passion for international politics and intelligence during his trips to Europe. Despite being republican, Donovan was close to the President, and his appointment as COI director contributed to creating a bipartisan structure that Roosevelt wanted for the war years. In March 1944 Donovan came back from Europe ready to take care both of psychological warfare and of intelligence. He had very clear opinions concerning propaganda, based on the political and military purposes to be fulfilled: the COI should not be merely an information service, but it should use news as an actual weapon to fight the enemy. 'Wild

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and a politician. Son of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the only male heir of the Standard Oil founder, Nelson enlarged the family interests from business and philanthropy to politics, and he was appointed to several governmental offices. After being Coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs during the Roosevelt presidency, he continued to be interested in foreign policy during the Truman, Eisenhower and Nixon Administrations.

<sup>11</sup> Fiorello Henry La Guardia (1881-1947) was a politician and mayor of New York City for three terms, from 1933 to 1945. The son of Jewish immigrants of Italian origins, La Guardia started his political career in 1916, when he was elected to Congress with the Republican Party.

<sup>12</sup> The creation of the body through an executive order would have established an executive agency, directly subordinate to the Congress and funded through the Bureau of the Budget. On the other hand, the creation of the office through a military order allowed Roosevelt to fund it with his Presidential budget.

Bill' Donovan explained his theories to the President: «The specific role of propaganda is to soften up the civilian population and make the job of the armed forces considerably easier»<sup>13</sup>. In his opinion, propaganda thus represented the initial phase of penetration, to be followed by espionage and guerrilla actions, and then by open war. Propaganda could also be used for more specific purposes, such as fomenting rebellions and political opposition, and consequently demoralizing the enemy before sending the troops. To be effective, propaganda had to be combined with an intelligence team, which should collect all the necessary information to prepare covert operations<sup>14</sup>. This was Donovan's recipe for the creation of a new secret service, and the CIA would later use all these ingredients.

Owing to the confusion and criticism caused by the creation of all those bodies and offices, in the autumn of 1941 Roosevelt established the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF), with the task of coordinating the other bodies and spreading thorough information. But the government only actually started its own 'war of words' in July 1941, when Robert Emmett Sherwood, a playwright, liberal in politics, whom Roosevelt had chosen to write his presidential speeches, decided to establish the Foreign Information Service (FIS) and became its director. Sherwood was from a family of high social standing and of conservative tradition. After his isolationism of the post-First World War period, in 1939 he was converted to active interventionism. In those years he was quite famous as an author of light comedies, and President Roosevelt asked him to join his staff as the writer of presidential speeches after the publication of a full page article in the *New York Times* in 1940, about American efforts in support of Great Britain and against Axis powers<sup>15</sup>. From the Administration's point of view, Sherwood was certainly the ideal propagandist, as he was liberal but not too much inclined towards the left, he was well respected in the whole nation and did not have political enemies. Moreover, the fact that he was passionately devoted to the President surely did no harm. Bob Sherwood believed in the power of words to influence audiences, and consequently in the need to use them as weapons. In his opinion America's words should tell news about America and about war, focusing on the campaign to counter Axis forces, and should be based especially on 'the power of truth'. He wanted FIS radio programmes to be based on official speeches of politicians and on real events, with the twofold purpose of keeping the allied troops morale high and weakening the enemy's. To realize this project, Sherwood recruited

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<sup>13</sup> Memoranda from Donovan to Roosevelt, March 1942, quoted in Cowan Shulman 1990, pp. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Cowan Shulman 1990, pp. 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> Cowan Shulman 1990, p. 17.

a staff with the following qualifications: «[...] knowledge of foreign affairs, aggressive support of Roosevelt's foreign policy, and willingness to work for very little money»<sup>16</sup>. They were mainly journalists.

The FIS was initially a branch of Donovan's COI, which Roosevelt had created with a military order on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1941, in charge both of informational policies and propaganda, as well as espionage and intelligence services. After only three days, the President also assigned the COI the responsibility for all international broadcasting linked to the achievement of moral objectives abroad, i.e. radio propaganda management, namely the FIS' task<sup>17</sup>.

The COI, however, was destined to have a short life. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military authority, wanted an organization that would take care of intelligence and covert operations solely following military directives, in order to avoid such operations hampering war plans. In other words the Joint Chiefs of Staff aimed at integrating the COI into the armed forces. The impressive number of informative organizations created between 1939 and 1941 caused a certain amount of administrative chaos: COI and CIAA were in charge of propaganda to Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, while OFF and the informative division of OEM were working on the home front. The Bureau of the Budget decided to join all those bodies into just one agency in charge of both home and foreign information services. Presidential approval was needed for the reorganization, but Roosevelt, in spite of his advisors' pressures, wasted some time because he was afraid of causing the public opinion's loss of confidence in the Administration. The President signed executive order 9182 on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1942, and the White House announced the creation of the Office of War Information (OWI), directed by Elmer Davis, former CBS analyst and *New York Times* editorialist. This body united all information and propaganda functions of four preceding offices: the OEM Division of Information, the OGR, the OFF and the FIS, which would later become the Overseas Branch of the OWI.

The presidential order that created the OWI established that its task was to undertake campaigns to improve knowledge about war matters both at home and abroad, and to coordinate all government information activities taking care of contacts with the media<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Cowan Shulman 1990, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Pirsein 1979, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> Matchette 1995, RG 208, Records of the Office of War Information (OWI). The guide to the federal archives reports OWI's functions as follows: «Functions: Formulated and executed information programs to promote, in the United States and abroad, understanding of the status and progress of the war effort and of war policies, activities, and aims of the U.S. government».



Besides simplifying the network of offices dealing with informative tasks, the creation of the OWI also allowed the Administration to separate these responsibilities from those related to intelligence and covert operations, which had been under the COI until then. On the same 13<sup>th</sup> June 1942, another presidential order established the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)<sup>19</sup>, the forerunner of what in 1947 would become the CIA<sup>20</sup>, which was granted intelligence tasks under 'Wild Bill' Donovan's direction. The reorganization also settled the differences that had marred relations between Donovan and Sherwood. The office in New York, headed by Sherwood, was too concerned with radio production needs and good journalism, and, according to Donovan's men, it disregarded the subversive potential of broadcasting, instead of exploiting it. On the other hand Sherwood did not like the kind of propaganda that 'Wild Bill' wanted, a sort of initial arrow of penetration and subversion, and preferred to build a radio which could compete with the BBC for the quality and reliability of its production<sup>21</sup>.

The OWI's Overseas Branch was in its turn divided into two sections, in charge of the two war fronts: Atlantic Operations and Pacific Operations. Joseph Barnes and his assistant Louis G. Cowan<sup>22</sup> directed the former, which acted through its four departments: Motion Picture Bureau, Publications Bureau, News and Features Bureau, and Radio Program Bureau, namely VOA<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Matchette 1995, RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Its functions were the following: «Functions: Conducted overt and covert intelligence procurement activities in support of the war against the Axis Powers. Analyzed raw intelligence and disseminated finished intelligence to appropriate government agencies. Engaged in clandestine operations in support of planned military operations».

<sup>20</sup> Matchette 1995, RG 263, Records of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The OSS was abolished on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1945 with an executive order effective from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1945. It was followed by the Strategic Services Unit (SSU) of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War from 1945 to 1946, and then, from 1946 to 1947, by the Central Intelligence Group of the National Intelligence Authority (NIA). They were all embryonic stages of the CIA. The National Security Act created the agency within the National Security Council (NSC) on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1947, and it has been effective since 18<sup>th</sup> September 1947. Matchette's guide to the NARA summarises its functions as follows: «Functions: Advises the National Security Council and other Executive branch agencies concerning intelligence matters. Coordinates federal intelligence activities and provides centralized services for other agencies. Develops and disseminates intelligence, counterintelligence, and foreign intelligence information. Engages in intelligence and counterintelligence activities outside the United States».

<sup>21</sup> Cowan Shulman 1990, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Louis G. Cowan was the second director of VOA, from August 1943 to August 1945. His daughter, Holly Cowan Shulman, authored an important book on VOA's history in wartime (Cowan Shulman 1990), and dedicated it to her father.

<sup>23</sup> For OWI's history, gestation and operative procedures, see Winkler 1978; Koppes - Black 2000; Bruti Liberati 2004; Henderson 1969.

From the beginning, however, Elmer Davis and his OWI had to face a troubled life. Despite the fact that the new agency was intended to have a certain amount of autonomy and power, it was immediately clear that very few people in Washington wanted it to work independently and freely. Not only could the OWI not take part in the formulation of information policies and psychological warfare guidelines; neither did it receive all the necessary information about military operations on time. The armed forces were actually the worst enemies of the agency, because they considered it as the main supporter of a clear and transparent policy of communication. This could be very dangerous from the military point of view, especially for the planning of operations, but also for fear that too much information could reach the enemy as well as the allies. In fact, War and Navy Departments maintained the power to choose the news.

Another big problem concerned OWI's personnel, which at the end of the war consisted of about 13,000 employees and cost 70 million dollars a year. Most of them were communication professionals, who came from journalism or advertising, but there also were artists, writers, technicians and expert broadcasters. The accusation levelled by part of the politicians and of the public opinion, which looked unfavourably on propaganda, was that they were liberal intellectuals, former New Dealers or even communists. These fears were especially rooted among republicans, who also thought that an impressive propaganda structure could also be used after the war for the next electoral campaign. In spite of all these troubles, the OWI soon started to work at full pace, and continued to take care of psychological warfare and propaganda for the duration of the conflict. The most important part of the agency's job was the transmission of news, so the American press also saw it as an excellent competitor.

VOA started its transmissions on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1942 under the aegis of the FIS, whose headquarters were an office in 270, Madison Avenue, in New York. The office was in charge of the diffusion of propagandistic material produced and funded by the government, such as posters, leaflets, and of course medium and shortwave radio broadcasts. The FIS had to spread this material throughout the whole world, except Latin America because this area was still managed by the CIAA. At the beginning, in 1941, the FIS did not have any broadcasting stations at its disposal, nor did it have agreements to use frequencies with the private broadcasters that had spread through the United States since the Twenties. Thus, the FIS could not start transmissions on its own frequencies until February 1942. In 1941 the radio service started by sending material to private networks<sup>24</sup>. Press

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<sup>24</sup> Pirsein 1979, pp. 44-48.

offices in Washington sent items of news to the FIS' News and Editorial Section, directed at the time by a former Berlin correspondent of the *New York Herald Tribune*, Joseph Barnes. The office selected the most interesting pieces, rewrote them for shortwave broadcast, and then sent them to the office of the Coordinator for International Broadcasting (CIB), headed by Stanley Richardson, which eventually sent them to private stations under the heading «The following from the Coordinator of Information is for your use if desired»<sup>25</sup>. In the same period a former presidential advisor, James P. Warburg, was working to organize a Foreign Language Section, which was later to become VOA's actual backbone. With a staff of expert translators, preferably native speakers, in November 1941 the Foreign Language Section could provide the private networks with material in 16 foreign languages<sup>26</sup>, and Italian was among them.

The propaganda strategy used in these transmissions was the opposite of the Axis strategy, aimed at dividing, weakening and immobilizing. American material on the other hand aimed at converting the audiences to the allied cause, convincing them to believe in its force. All campaigns were thus centred on encouragement and on an explicit promise to succeed<sup>27</sup>.

The FIS Broadcasting Section became more structured in 1942, particularly after the first direct transmission. By March, the Section had three branches: the Radio News and Feature Division, headed by Joseph Barnes, in charge of enemy propaganda analysis, of the preparation of materials, and of the supervision and monitoring of all shortwave transmissions; the Radio Technical Division, responsible for equipment operation and maintenance; and the Radio Production Division, which prepared the programmes and translated texts based on the materials provided by the News and Features Division into foreign languages. John Houseman was its director. After Pearl Harbor, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1941, Sherwood summoned the producer John Houseman to New York to take care of the new governmental broadcasting station. As a matter of fact, Houseman was the first director of VOA, from its creation until July 1943. Houseman came from the world of entertainment, and he was particularly famous for his productions for the Mercury Theatre; his popular radio adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*, produced with Orson Welles and aired during Halloween night in 1938, frightened thousands of listeners with its tale of an alien invasion taking place on earth during the broadcast. Undoubtedly, Houseman knew how to appeal to the audience. For him «news was the raw material from which it was my

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<sup>25</sup> Pirsein 1979, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Pirsein 1979, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed analysis of American radio propaganda during the Second World War, see Cowan Shulman 1990.

job to fashion shows»<sup>28</sup>, as he wrote in his memoirs. In politics he was a liberal, like many of the FIS propagandists<sup>29</sup>, with whom he prepared the first three 15-minute weekly broadcasts in German, French and Italian, to be aired in Europe through the BBC.

When the FIS became part of the OWI in June 1946, its staff consisted of 816 people, and produced more than 42 hours of programming per day<sup>30</sup>. An actual international radio service was thus fully operative. As chief of the OWI's Overseas Branch, Bob Sherwood was in charge of the planning and realization of psychological warfare and government propaganda. The Overseas Branch was divided in two sections: Pacific Operations, focusing especially on Japan, and Atlantic Operations, directed by Joseph Barnes and by his assistant Louis G. Cowan. The section, in charge of Europe, had four offices: the Motion Picture Bureau, the Publications Bureau, the News and Features Bureau and the Radio Program Bureau (VOA). With the creation of the OWI and the branching out of its structure, the old FIS headquarters in Madison Avenue became too small, and Houseman's Radio Program Bureau moved to the Argonaut Building at 224, 57<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City. It remained there until 1954, when it moved to the capital where it still is. Until 1954 the fact that the operative structure was in New York and the political headquarters in Washington remained one of the biggest problems for VOA. In the OWI, VOA's internal troubles were mainly linked to matters of military security: if its policy was to tell the truth, some borderlines had to be settled, in order to avoid the risk of revealing too much to the enemy. Besides jurisdictional disputes between the New York and Washington premises and between the OWI and the OSS, there was also the question of the autonomy of every single Language Service, which was to remain even after the end of the conflict. The dispute between the tendencies towards autonomy and towards centralization was solved only in 1998, with the BBG's independence.

VOA's development was linked both to national transmission plants and to the relay stations across the Atlantic, on which the quality of reception also depended. The most effective response to enemy jamming<sup>31</sup> was the use of more than one relay station simultaneously in different geographical areas, and the use of several different frequencies. At the time of the OWI's foundation, the Administration was taking leasing arrangements

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<sup>28</sup> Houseman 1979.

<sup>29</sup> Cowan Shulman 1990, pp. 3-12.

<sup>30</sup> Pirsein 1979, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> 'Jamming' is the effort to make a transmission or programme difficult or even impossible to hear by sending out a signal, on the same frequencies, that interferes with it. It was a very common practice in the Cold War years.

for the use of private shortwave transmitters existing in the United States, and at the same time the President approved a project for the construction of new stations<sup>32</sup>. In this way shortwave transmissions reached Great Britain, where the United States had an agreement for the use of the BBC relay station in Wofferton, England, which then retransmitted them on medium wave to other countries. The government had built 19 shortwave transmitters by the end of the conflict, all linked to the lines leased from the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T). So VOA had two networks at its disposal: the Bronze Network for transmissions towards Europe, and the Pacific Network for all the others<sup>33</sup>. Towards the end of the war, many of the relay transmitters used in Europe were those that the OWI had taken possession of by commandeering them from the enemy, and putting them back to work, but with the suspension of hostilities they had to be returned to their owners. Besides, as liberated areas such as Southern Italy were controlled by the allied armed forces, responsibility for the use of commandeered transmitters by VOA laid with the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB).

In April 1944 another broadcaster was also set up, the American Broadcasting Station in Europe (ABSIE), which transmitted directly from Europe using some of the British relays. Its signal was thus a lot stronger than VOA's, and it also had better reception. ABSIE's first program was aired on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1944 and, being in the war field, it was subject to General Dwight D. Eisenhower's orders. Its existence came to an end on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1945, because its mission was by that time accomplished.

During the OWI's life, government policy was determined in the Planning Board weekly meetings, attended by OWI's Overseas Branch, State Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff officers. The result was a directive which set general propaganda lines and supplied information on military and political matters, also suggesting how to deal with them. Some regional directives were also produced, and these were very important for the Language Desks because they defined which points of the general directive had to be handled in depth in different transmission zones. Furthermore, two daily meetings were held to establish how to deal with the most recent pieces of news, which also produced some 'guidance notes', the actual pattern for VOA programmes. In its general lines, this model remained operative at least until USIA's independence in 1953.

The OWI received the news by cable and then supplied the Language Desks with adaptations to be translated. Most of the programmes were

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<sup>32</sup> Pirsein 1979, p. 66.

<sup>33</sup> Pirsein 1979, pp. 78-79.

mainly news and analysis, but there were also different types of shows such as *America at War*, *The Labor Show*, *Women's Show*, and *Projection of America*, all with the purpose of telling about life in the United States. There were also *Made in America*, describing American industrial organization and wartime reconversion, and *American Profiles*, which told life stories of important political, military and industrial personalities<sup>34</sup>. Besides English, Italian, German and French were of course considered the most important languages, and it was quite hard to find adequately qualified personnel who could speak in a way suitable for radio. So the Language Desks chose to recruit war refugees, people with well defined opinions about the conflict and whose loyalty was not questionable.

In June 1944, at the peak of its war activity, VOA transmitted in more than 50 languages and produced about 119 programming hours per day. In the same period of time, 750 people were working at the New York premises, while the whole VOA personnel in the United States and abroad counted about 3,000 people, within the total OWI staff of 10,000 people<sup>35</sup>. In the meantime the progressive liberation of enemy-occupied territories was slowly changing New York's Radio Program Bureau objectives. Listeners in liberated areas were free to choose their radio programmes again; while before the liberation the BBC and VOA were the only sources of democratic information they could have access to. The new challenge for VOA was thus to keep the listeners it had gained and in order to do that it changed its programming, reducing time for news and increasing entertainment and cultural programme time. The board of directors also changed: John Houseman went back to Hollywood, and he was replaced by Louis G. Cowan in 1943, while Edward Barrett took Sherwood's place at the beginning of 1944 as Overseas Branch executive director. In February 1944 Warburg and Barnes resigned as well.

With the end of the war clearly approaching, VOA's effectiveness started being studied: the results showed that it was widely popular, even among enemies, but its credibility and effectiveness were very small if compared to those of the BBC. During 1945, many people wondered what future information services would have after the conflict, while VOA's staff was already being reduced. In January the workforce was reduced from 750 to 555 employees, and programming for Europe was cut; the language services under the New York office were cut from 25 to 19. The fact that VOA could survive the conflict was in severe doubt, even if one of its most eminent advocates was President Roosevelt himself:

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<sup>34</sup> Pirsein 1979, pp. 68-70.

<sup>35</sup> Pirsein 1979, pp. 90-92.

If the principle of freedom to listen is to help in providing the basis for better understanding between the peoples of the world, it seems to me important that we lay the proper foundations now for an effective system of international broadcasting for the future years.<sup>36</sup>

But the person who decided on OWI's future was his successor, President Harry Truman, when in the summer of 1945 he signed executive order 9608, which closed the office from 31<sup>st</sup> August 1945. Some of its functions, and VOA was among them, were transferred to the Interim International Information Service (IIIS), within the State Department. IIIS' existence, additionally, was limited to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1945.

The first step for the creation of a permanent international information service was taken a few months before the end of the war, during the reorganization of the State Department. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1944, the role of Assistant Secretary of State in Charge of Public and Cultural Affairs was established, and conferred on Archibald MacLeish. But for the moment, information and psychological warfare remained the OWI jurisdiction.

President Harry Truman decided on the OWI's destiny, closing the agency on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1945, with executive order 9608, and transferring its functions to the IIIS. Its existence was scheduled only until 31<sup>st</sup> December of the same year. With the executive order that closed the OWI, Truman declared in a White House press release that: «The nature of present-day foreign relations makes it essential for the United States to maintain information activities abroad as an integral part of the conduct of our foreign affairs»<sup>37</sup>.

The President also urged the Secretary of State to formulate a programme «to be conducted on a continuing basis»<sup>38</sup> within the end of the year. The presidential declarations that followed Truman's executive order were the first official recognition concerning the need for a peacetime propaganda system, and the thought expressed by those declarations would continue to prevail in the process that led to the creation of the USIA, especially the fact that the United States would continue to «endeavor to see to it that other peoples receive a full and fair picture of American life and of the aims and policies of the United States Government»<sup>39</sup>.



<sup>36</sup> Memorandum 'President Roosevelt to Chairman of Federal Communication Commission (FCC), James L. Fly', 16<sup>th</sup> November 1943, quoted in Pirsein 1979, pp. 100-101.

<sup>37</sup> Bruti Liberati 2004, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Henderson 1969, p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> Henderson 1969, p. 36.



3. «RADIO ALL'OMBRA DEI GRATTACIELI»:  
VOICE OF AMERICA'S PRODUCTION FOR ITALY

From the landing in Sicily in July 1943, an authentic psychological penetration had begun, with the intention of destroying the fascist forces, but also of consolidating those values and ideals that had inspired the conduct of the Allies during the whole conflict, such as love for freedom and democracy and mistrust of Soviet communism. To the Italians, these values were deeply linked to the image of welfare that the American presence, in particular, managed to spread in the 'Regno del Sud'. From that moment on, the myth of 'Americanism' was charged with the promise of better lives, of the end of hunger and suffering, and of the arrival of wealth and welfare. The penetration was performed with a variety of instruments, all coordinated by the PWB, whose task was exceedingly complex in a country that was co-belligerent, enemy, occupied and liberated all at one time.

The Allies directly or indirectly controlled all Italian media, nonetheless for the first time after twenty years of fascist dictatorship, they felt free to express themselves. If the press was directed mainly at the liberated territories, the radio could also reach behind enemy lines, and it had two main groups of listeners: southern Italians and northern Italians. According to a PWB survey of 1943, 10% of Sicilians listened to the radio every day, 64% of radios could receive shortwave transmissions, and 87% of the audience regularly listened to local broadcasters controlled by the Allies. It is interesting to note, however, that 48% of the population tuned to Radio Londra 18 times a month on average, VOA 12, and Radio Algeri five. But 50% of the audience also tuned to the Ente Italiano Audizioni Radiofoniche (EIAR) still in republican hands in the north and in the centre, 15 times a month on average. This should have seemed alarming to the Allies<sup>94</sup>.

While they advanced towards the north, the Allies liberated EIAR relay stations, or what remained of them, and used them to broadcast other transmissions besides those which reached Italy through the BBC or Radio Algeri relays.

Radio Palermo was put back into operation on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943, with a staff of Italian-American and British journalists enrolled by the PWB because of their familiarity with the Italian language and culture. The transmissions consisted of a detailed news programme, commentaries, special features on the war, but also music and cultural programmes with the aim of keeping the population's moral high. All were based mainly on

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<sup>94</sup> PWB-AFHQ, *Surveys of Public Opinion Held in Sicily*, 1944, in Pizarroso Quintero 1989, pp. 44-45; cf. also Holt - Van De Velde 1986, p. 132.



AFHQ press releases, on international press agencies and sometimes on articles by Italians who were unquestionably anti-fascist. Radio Palermo also retransmitted BBC, Radio Algeri and VOA programmes<sup>95</sup>.

The person in charge of Radio Palermo at the time was Mikhail 'Misha' Kamenetzky<sup>96</sup>. The journalist had already worked for the PWB at Radio Algeri, in the preparation of programmes directed at Italy, because of his knowledge of the language and culture of this country, but also, and it is important to stress it here, because of his plainly liberal and Crocean education. After Palermo, Stille followed the Allied troops northwards, to Naples and to Milan. The group of young bourgeois anti-fascists that occupied Radio Bari after 8<sup>th</sup> September 1943 had the same inclinations<sup>97</sup>. Radio Bari remained in their hands for a few days only, and then it passed under Allied control on 16<sup>th</sup> September. The British Major Ian Greenlees was called to direct the broadcaster, being a noted expert on Italian culture and language. He did not remove the staff of Italians that had got Via Putignani's radio operational again; on the contrary he directed it responsibly, and left freedom of choice and opinion. Radio Bari's broadcasts thus appeared more and more trustworthy and they were the first to stimulate debates and confrontations despite the PWB censorship. Radio Bari is still considered as «the first audible voice of Italian democracy»<sup>98</sup> and all the members of its editorial staff were members of the PWB and of various anti-fascist parties. They were journalists, writers and politicians who wanted to contribute towards rebuilding the Italian state; they had to work hidden behind a pseudonym, still an important precaution for everybody in that period.

From 1944, the Allies' attitude was reflected by the mass media, especially by the radio, which emphasized its moderate line in accordance with a certain allied diffidence towards anti-fascist movements and ideas<sup>99</sup>. As a matter of fact, the freedom in work and relations in the allied broadcasting stations was limited by careful censorship, to make sure that political comments followed the official allied policy.

Many of those who had worked for Radio Bari moved to Radio Napoli in 1944, together with some communist journalists such as Italo De Feo,

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<sup>95</sup> Pizarroso Quintero 1989, pp.119-122. Quintero's work is still unsurpassed, but a detailed reconstruction of the PWB's relations with Italian radio can also be found in Monteleone 1995, pp. 164-172, and in Monteleone 1980, pp. 3-44.

<sup>96</sup> On Ugo Stille, see *supra*, pp. 69-72.

<sup>97</sup> They were a group of habitués of the Libreria Laterza, members of the Action Party and thus republicans and democrats. Cf. Monteleone 1980, p. 26.

<sup>98</sup> «La prima voce sonora della democrazia italiana» (Monteleone 1995, p. 170).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Monteleone 1995, p. 194n, and Faenza - Fini 1976, p. 50.

and others who had worked for fascist journalism<sup>100</sup>. Ugo Stille was part of the Radio Napoli group as well.

In the meantime, negotiations between the Italian government and the PWB for the EIAR management went on from December 1943 until the definitive signing of an agreement on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1944 in Naples<sup>101</sup>. Until that moment, the Allies' attitude had been only apparently conciliatory, and the negotiations had been conducted following the principle 'those who pay, decide'. The May 1944 agreement established the creation of a general management office within EIAR, in charge of administrative and technical matters, but left out of programming matters. It was thus clear that the Allies wanted to keep their control over radio broadcasts for as long as possible; this agreement remained effective for the whole duration of the AMG, except for a modification made in October 1944 that granted EIAR the responsibility solely for the music programming.

The liberation of Rome, followed by the transfer of the Italian government, was a real turning point in the relations with the Allies, who were both liberators and occupants. The transfer of competences to the Italian authorities was accelerated in every field, including that of information, but the deep diffidence towards the expansion of leftist groups within the anti-fascist forces undoubtedly hampered the process. Newly liberated Rome lacked everything, from electrical power to radio stations, partly dismantled by the Germans; however, by the second half of 1944, the capital had already become the main radio production centre in the country. Journalists, operators and technicians who had previously run away, came back to Rome, together with some of those who had worked for Radio Napoli, like Longanesi and Soldati, while Italo De Feo became chief of the Radio office of the Presidenza del Consiglio.

On 26<sup>th</sup> October, the first Bonomi government issued the first bill on the reorganization of the whole radio system, transforming EIAR, created during the years of fascism, into Radio Audizioni Italia (RAI).

In November 1944, the AFHQ and the ACC decided to maintain control, through the PWB, of the news and commentary programmes on Italian radio, and over other spoken programmes as well, such as theatre and prose readings. After the liberation of Rome, however, disputes between Italians and the Allies for the management of the RAI began. In December

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<sup>100</sup> Among others, Antonio Piccone Stella, Leo Longanesi, Mario Soldati, Arnaldo Foà and Franco Rosi worked for Radio Napoli. For a better description of this environment, which is not the theme of this book, see Monteleone 1980, pp. 47-52.

<sup>101</sup> Pizarroso Quintero 1989, p. 146. The agreement was signed by Ellery W. Stone of the ACC, George W. Edman (PWB chief in Italy), and Mario Fano, Italian undersecretary of state for post and telegraphs.

1944, the PWB and the AFHQ issued a 'Radio Plan' for liberated Italy<sup>102</sup>, which established the transfer of all competences regarding radio broadcasting to Italy by 1<sup>st</sup> March 1945. The date was obviously the same as that chosen for the transfer of functions regarding the press from the PWB to ANSA. During the first months of 1945 there was unrest among the RAI personnel, because many demanded that the new structure purge the fascist elements. In spite of that, or perhaps because of that, the Allies were afraid for the future of the RAI, because with the transfer to the Italian government of both press and radio control, the AMG would risk finding itself at a great disadvantage in the event of tensions. They also suspected that not all journalists were above suspicion<sup>103</sup>.

There were many dismantled relay stations in northern Italy, but those in Milan and Genoa remained operational. The CLNAI had started to use them before the arrival of the Allies, and it demanded a model of management for radio in northern Italy similar to that of Florence<sup>104</sup>, but both the AMG and the Rome government objected to that request. At the time, in fact, while Florence was at the limits of the radio system and the RAI in Rome was fully functioning, the allied control in the north was still very strict, and would relax only when the PWB ceased its activity. Before leaving, however, the office left a great deal of audio material in Italy; moreover, the RAI continued to air British and American programmes produced in London and New York: *Voce di Londra* (Voice of London) and VOA. Both the BBC and the OWI, as well as the information offices that would follow it, pursued a PWB directive<sup>105</sup> until the Fifties establishing that Italian radio had to present daily BBC and OWI programmes even after the PWB departure.

It was a very sensitive moment in Italian history, when there were many people among the listeners who needed a model to follow, a model of welfare and wellbeing that was more and more linked to the western style

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<sup>102</sup> NARA, RG 331, AFHQ-INC-PWB, *Radio Plan for Liberated Italy*, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1944, in Pizarroso Quintero 1989, p. 172.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Pizarroso Quintero 1989, pp. 172-175.

<sup>104</sup> Radio Firenze represented a peculiar case in the history of radio broadcasting during the liberation. After Florence's liberation on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1944, the clash between the new PWB elements and the old EIAR staff became sharper. Radio Firenze had already been more autonomous than other broadcasters during the clandestine period, and after the liberation, together with the local administration, the left-wingers succeeded in creating a managing council elected by an assembly of the entire Radio Firenze staff. See also Monteleone 1980, pp. 52-55; Monteleone 1995, pp. 182-183; Pizarroso Quintero 1989, pp. 203-205.

<sup>105</sup> NARA, RG 331, PWB, *15<sup>th</sup> Army Group final Weekly Activities Report*, n. 45/29 15<sup>th</sup> July 1945, in Pizarroso Quintero 1989, p. 231.

of democracy. VOA had to suggest and describe this model in detail, in order to prevent the Soviet model from attracting part of the audience.

However, Italian radio really only started its post-war life on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1946, when the national network was unified again through the parallel connection of two complete channels. But until then, the reconstruction process was very complicated. As to the management of the Italian radio system, it was entrusted to the RAI, the sole concessionary, which still had to fulfil the obligations of the 1927 convention, due to expire in 1952<sup>106</sup>. The first RAI board of directors was appointed in April 1945, whereas the first president, Arturo Carlo Jemolo<sup>107</sup>, was appointed on December 1945.

For both technical and financial reasons<sup>108</sup>, two different groups of channels continued to exist until November 1946: those for northern Italy and those for the centre-south. Their programme schedules were quite similar, with news, cultural programmes, special programmes for veterans as well as English and French courses. On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1945 the publication of the *Radiocorriere* was resumed also<sup>109</sup>.

With the unification of the national network in November 1946, it was decided that the two channels were to be equal, both in terms of the power of transmission and for their artistic and cultural contents, so as to avoid one being considered more important than the other. The Rete Rossa and the Rete Azzurra were thus created. The government, however, remained the sole authority concerning radio broadcasting, because it had both financial and political instruments at its disposal. From this moment, the rigorous control over and influencing of the RAI by the DC also commenced, by means of Jemolo's replacement with the Christian Democrat Giuseppe Spataro in August 1946. Between 1947 and 1949, various elements contributed to the relaunching of the RAI, and among them there was an improved organization that eventually managed to overcome the division along the Gothic line, and an increase in funding due to a licence

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<sup>106</sup> EIAR was created in 1927; the state granted it the monopoly for broadcasting services until December 1952. The concession was transferred to the RAI in October 1944.

<sup>107</sup> Arturo Carlo Jemolo was an Italian jurist and historian. He was particularly interested in ecclesiastical law, wrote for Mario Pannunzio's *Il Mondo* and for Piero Calamandrei's *Il Ponte*; initially close to the Action Party, he later supported the alliance between the Republican Party and the Radical Party, and in the last part of his life he was among the Vatican's advisors and one of the most authoritative writers of *La Stampa*.

<sup>108</sup> The relay stations and the recording facilities were still severely damaged, and the limited funds available were not enough to cover the reconstruction costs. The license fee had not been adjusted for inflation and advertising incomes were still very limited.

<sup>109</sup> The *Radiocorriere*'s publication had been suspended during the war, and it was resumed in two editions, one for the north, published in Turin, and one for the centre-south, published in Rome. It was eventually unified on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1947.

fee rise in January 1948 and to the ERP aids. Between 1949 and 1952, the reconstruction of the RAI could be considered completed, thanks to new medium wave relay stations that allowed the new Programma Nazionale to reach the whole country. The two networks maintained two different management organizations in Turin and in Rome until the February 1948 unification, with the creation of a 'general management' office responsible for all decisions. The DC victory at the 18<sup>th</sup> April elections marked the consolidation of the RAI management related to that party.

The radio and all mass media became the instrument of a heated propaganda campaign regarding both domestic and international affairs; in a typically Cold War perspective, the left was seen as the spectre of bolshevism, which needed to be fought in order to defend liberal and Catholic values. And it was to be fought, for both economic and political reasons, following the American model<sup>110</sup>. In this complicated situation, the audience from different social strata increasingly expressed its need for information, testified by the doubling of radio subscriptions. At the end of 1947, however, the radio density<sup>111</sup> in Italy still was among the lowest in Europe, but thanks to a huge propaganda campaign, subscriptions rose from 1,646,466 in 1945, to 2,242,507 in 1948<sup>112</sup>, and to 4,800,170 in 1953<sup>113</sup>. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1954 the RAI eventually celebrated its 5 millionth subscriber<sup>114</sup>.

The take off of both the company and listening figures thus took place between 1948 and 1953. In 1952, upon the expiry of the 1927 agreement, the concession for all broadcasts (including television) was renewed with the RAI for a further 20 years. As to programming, the distinction between Rete Rossa and Rete Azzurra remained in force until 30<sup>th</sup> December 1951, when a new organization took its place: the channels were divided into Programma Nazionale, Secondo Programma and Terzo Programma. For the first time, a division based on contents was introduced to satisfy the audience demands<sup>115</sup>, and programmes reached the whole country. The Programma Nazionale was thus conceived to satisfy the average audience requirements, with news programmes for those who wanted to be informed

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<sup>110</sup> The use of radio as an instrument of political propaganda, but also for spreading Catholic values, together with the presumed lack of interest on the part of the left for the medium, which is not relevant in this analysis, can be read in Monteleone 1995, pp. 231-242.

<sup>111</sup> Monteleone indicates as 'radio density' the diffusion of radio sets, which could be measured by comparing the number of subscriptions out of 1,000 inhabitants.

<sup>112</sup> Natale 1990, p. 113.

<sup>113</sup> Monteleone 1995, pp. 245-246.

<sup>114</sup> *Radiocorriere*, 26 (27<sup>th</sup> June - 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1954).

<sup>115</sup> The listeners' preferences were determined through the analysis of the various letters that the RAI received, but the programming also considered listeners cultural levels.

on political questions and international affairs, but also with entertainment programmes; the Secondo Programma was more recreational, while the Terzo Programma was more cultural, with a programme schedule aimed at more intellectual listeners. The radio thus replied to informational and educational exigencies of a wide and very diverse audience: the majority needed programmes of a basic level, whereas a smaller group could aspire to expand its knowledge, and only a very limited part of the public could be considered as intellectuals, with a higher level of education. Keeping these differences in mind, it is clear that VOA's radio propaganda was conceived for an audience of a lower level of education, since its programmes aired through the Italian network were mainly of entertainment and appeared on the Programma Nazionale and on the Secondo Programma, but never on the Terzo Programma. VOA, in fact, not only used its own frequencies, always advertised in the RAI's official magazine *Radiocorriere*, but it also introduced some of its programmes directly into the RAI's programme schedule. This confirms the fact that the USIS choice for Italy was to provide the cultural elite with means such as libraries, cultural centres and educational exchanges, which as a matter of fact seemed more effective. A survey by the RAI's Servizio opinioni performed in 1955 revealed that in the first month of that year, there were 19.1 million people over 12 years of age who owned a radio set. More than 80% of these listened to the radio every day, and the others between 3 and 5 times a week. About 3.2 million people did not have a radio set in their own home, but they formed a sizable part of the audience because they listened to the programmes at relatives or friends' homes and, two or three times a week, in public places like bars or village clubs. It was also estimated that radio was listened to for four hours a day on average, and the Secondo Programma was more popular than the other two<sup>116</sup>.

Thus, in 1955, radio was chosen as means of information and entertainment mainly by the middle and lower social and cultural classes, and this observation is quite useful for the analysis of VOA programming aired through Italian radio.

I find a particular kind of poetry in skyscrapers, a poetry with verses made of stone, cement and iron; the desire of bridges cast between reality, the earth and the sky. I beheld them many times in the 'hour that turneth back desire', when the colour of the sky fades away and becomes as grey as stone: the limit between air and material is lost and one has the sensation of finding himself in front of a huge theatrical scene, in which thousands of windows lit from within have been capriciously carved.

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. Monteleone 1995, p. 250.

No, the building where Voice of America is located is not a skyscraper: it only has eight floors and seems like a younger brother, close to the huge skyscrapers facing 57<sup>th</sup> street. Its name is 'Argonaut Building' and it contains the essence of radio, that travels without a halt from country to country.<sup>117</sup>

Carlo Alberto Pizzini used these words at the beginning of 1950 in his reportage for the *Radiocorriere's* section 'Radiomondo illustrato'. VOA's headquarters in New York must have made a respectable impression on Italian readers, with its stately building, its advanced technology, and its organization that could reach the whole world. From there, in the heart of New York City, America also spoke to the Italians through its international Voice. The 'Italian section' was on the sixth floor of the Argonauts Building:

And now let's enter the Italian section: sixth floor, at the end of the corridor on the right. Even very early on Sunday mornings you can hear people answering the phone and typewriters tirelessly typing: there is no weekend here! Let's enter the huge room crowded with desks, typewriters and shelves together. Are you looking at the walls? Yes, they most certainly are posters printed in Italy to advertise tourism; the staff of the section put them up to create authentic scenery and to feel less homesick. Naples, Florence, Venice, Bologna, Trento, the Dolomite mountains and Sicily: the whole of Italy, all told, with its lively colours and its attractions. In that tiny closet with the glass door, in the right corner (where only a tiny desk and a chair can fit), sits – when he can – the editor of the Italian section, the dearest and very good Aldo D'Alessandro, a magnet for all his regular and occasional collaborators. There is never any shortage of work, with this collection of two-legged volcanoes! They share the task of writing news, commentaries, the various reviews, the answers to listeners, assembling, and so on. In a country where everything is multiplied by hundreds, it is amazing to see that the organization of the radio does not respect the same proportions; on the contrary, very good results can be obtained even with a limited staff. Be careful, though, not to tell the

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<sup>117</sup> «Io trovo nei grattacieli una particolare poesia, una poesia verticale dai versi di pietra, cemento e ferro; dei ponti gettati fra la realtà, la terra ed il cielo, l'aspirazione. Li ho contemplati più volte nell'ora – che volge al disio –, quando il cielo scolora e diventa grigio come la pietra: viene così a perdersi il limite fra aria e materia e si ha l'impressione di trovarsi davanti ad un immenso fondale di teatro, nel quale siano state capricciosamente intagliate miriadi di finestre, illuminate posteriormente. No, il palazzo dove è sistemata – La voce dell'America – non è un grattacielo: ha soltanto otto piani e fa la figura del fratello minore, vicino ai contigui e prospicienti grattacieli della Cinquantasettesima Strada. Si chiama 'Argonaut Building' e nel nome c'è l'essenza della radio, che viaggia incessantemente da Paese a Paese»: C.A. Pizzini, «Radio all'ombra dei grattacieli», *Radiocorriere*, 6 (5-11<sup>th</sup> February 1950).

Voice's staff that their programmes are well made. They would become your enemies! I know this, because during an interview on the air, I said I had found a perfect organization. I still remember Fred Chamber's fierce glare, very different from the looks he threw me when we were together at Liceo Tasso in Rome. He was about to turn down my interview because of my frank and most spontaneous declaration. *We want criticism from a technician like you* – he kept repeating – *not praise!* I am taking advantage of Fred's absence to assure you, dear readers, that the radio in the shadow of the skyscrapers works perfectly.<sup>118</sup>

VOA's Italian section was made up of Italians and Italian-Americans mainly, such as its first editor Giorgio Padovano, who was born in Italy in 1903 and was already in New York when the broadcaster first started its transmissions in 1942. Padovano studied at the University of Florence and in the USA he began to work for a private broadcaster in Cincinnati in 1941, becoming an American citizen in 1945. His successor, Aldo D'Alessandro, on the other hand, was born in New York City in 1911<sup>119</sup>. After the interruption of direct transmissions to Italy on shortwave in July 1957, both continued their career within VOA. Padovano became one of the broadcaster's Senior Officials, whereas D'Alessandro continued to write comments on European affairs with a passionate anti-communist emphasis. He later

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<sup>118</sup> «Ed ora andiamo nella Sezione Italiana: sesto piano, in fondo a destra. Anche alla domenica mattina di buon'ora, sentite gente che risponde al telefono e macchine da scrivere che battono instancabilmente: qui non si rispetta il week end! Entriamo insieme nel vastissimo stanzone affollato da tavolini, macchine da scrivere e scaffali. Guardate le pareti? Sicuro, sono proprio cartelloni murali, editi in Italia per la propaganda turistica; i redattori della Sezione li hanno affissi alle pareti per dare un'ambientazione e per sentir meno la nostalgia. Napoli, Firenze, Venezia, Bologna, Trento, le Dolomiti e la Sicilia: tutta l'Italia insomma, coi suoi colori vivaci e le sue bellezze. In quel minuscolo sgabuzzino con la porta a vetri, nell'angolo di destra (dove entra appena un piccolo scrittoio ed una seggiola), siede – quando ne ha la possibilità – il direttore della Sezione Italiana, il carissimo e bravo Aldo D'Alessandro, calamita dei suoi collaboratori abituali ed occasionali. Il lavoro non manca mai, con questa collezione di vulcani a due gambe! Essi si dividono il compito della stesura delle notizie, della redazione dei commenti, delle varie rassegne, delle risposte agli ascoltatori, dei montaggi, ecc. In un paese dove ogni cosa è moltiplicata almeno per cento, stupisce constatare che l'organizzazione radio non rispetti le medesime proporzioni; anzi con personale limitato di numero, si ottengono ottimi risultati. State attenti però a non dire ai redattori de 'La voce' che i loro programmi sono ben fatti. Ve li fareste nemici! Ne so qualcosa io che, nel corso di un'intervista al microfono, ho detto che avevo trovato una organizzazione ottima. Ricordo ancora lo sguardo feroce di Fred Chamber, ben diverso da quelli che mi lanciava quando stavamo al Liceo Tasso di Roma. Quasi quasi mi faceva bocciare l'intervista per causa della mia sincera e più che spontanea dichiarazione. *'Vogliamo critiche, da te che sei un tecnico* – andava ripetendo – *non elogi!*'. Approfitto della lontananza di Fred e vi assicuro, amici lettori, che la Radio all'ombra dei grattacieli, funziona egregiamente» (*ibidem*).

<sup>119</sup> Walter Roberts, former Associate Director of USIA, interview with the author.



became director of the Munich Program Center under Barry Zorthian's direct supervision<sup>120</sup>. During the second half of the Sixties, D'Alessandro and Zorthian were again working together to fight communism in one of the planet's hottest zones: Vietnam. There they worked for the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), directed by Zorthian<sup>121</sup>. The procedure to recruit employees for the Italian section was the same as that which VOA used for all its departments, but special consideration was certainly given to those who had studied at Columbia University in New York, which already had a very good school of journalism at that time.

In 1945, VOA's transmissions on short and medium wave reached Italy between 6.30 p.m. and 10.15 p.m.<sup>122</sup>, and in 1946 new programmes were added during lunchtime, in the early afternoon, and at 11.00 p.m. They were news programmes and commentaries above all; the only other programmes were *Cronache d'America*, *Università per radio*, and short musical interludes. Already in 1947, the parts dedicated to news and political commentaries were notably reduced in the programme schedule studied for Italy, to allow more time for various types of entertainment programmes, but this tendency consolidated especially between 1948 and 1950.

In December 1945, VOA's request show *Ai vostri ordini* also began<sup>123</sup>, and it was aired initially at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesdays, and then, from 1947, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 9.30<sup>124</sup> p.m., while the reviews on topics like economics, sport, literature, medicine and even philately were started in 1948, together with programmes especially aimed at women and youths. From 1948, then, there was a complete reorganization of the whole programme schedule, which was divided into three different parts of the day: at 7.15 a.m. it started with *Il giornale del mat-*

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<sup>120</sup> Zorthian was VOA Program Manager from 1956 to 1961.

<sup>121</sup> Barry Zorthian, former VOA Program Manager, interview with the author.

<sup>122</sup> See Appendix I, *infra*, pp. 287-292.

<sup>123</sup> This programme does not appear on VOA's programme schedule until 1947, but the examination of the *Radiocorriere* reveals that it was on the RAI's schedule from 27<sup>th</sup> December 1945.

<sup>124</sup> From October 1948 the programme is indicated in American documents with the title *La risposta per tutti*, but on the RAI's programme schedule it always appears as *Ai vostri ordini* from 1945; the *Radiocorriere* analysis also reveals that the programme does not appear on VOA frequencies until 1947 and it was apparently interrupted on those frequencies between 1948 and 1949. During that time it was only aired by the RAI. It reappears on VOA's programme schedule from 1950 as *La risposta per tutti*, but it remained *Ai vostri ordini* on the RAI. From the examination of VOA's scripts at the NARA Northeast Region in New York, *Ai vostri ordini* seemed to be aired daily in the first part of *L'ora italiana della Voce dell'America* between 18.30 and 19.00. Cf. NARA, Northeast Region, New York, RG 306, Samples of Broadcast Master Scripts for Calendar Years 1948-1954, Box 841 231-1949, *At Your Request – Ai vostri ordini*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1949.

*tino* (*Breakfast Show*), a 15-minute news programme; at 6.00 p.m. there was another 15-minute afternoon news programme. The transmissions continued during the evening at 9.30 p.m. with *L'ora italiana della voce dell'America* (*The Italian Hour*), which actually lasted between 30 and 45 minutes<sup>125</sup>. It included different programmes, being usually opened by a brief news roundup<sup>126</sup> followed by three reviews that changed according to the day of the week.



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<sup>125</sup> Between 1948 and 1949, the daily duration of programmes was continually changed because of VOA's budget problems.

<sup>126</sup> *Headlines* is the title that indicates these news items, consisting of only a few lines, on VOA's scripts.

## SEDUCING THE INTELLECTUALS

## 1. CLARE BOOTHE LUCE AND THE USIS' TURNING POINT

With the election of the republican Dwight D. Eisenhower as President of the United States at the end of 1952, international politics entered a new phase, and 1953 represented a real turning point, especially in the history of American information services in Italy. In 1953, one phase of the Cold War came to an end, as Stalin's death in March marked the beginning of a process of political revision in the Soviet Union; and the signing of the armistice in Korea in July terminated a conflict that had represented the passage to the 'hot' war. In August, the creation of the United States Information Agency marked the beginning of a new era for informational policies, which were reorganized from the operational point of view, and coordinated with the most important decision-making bodies for American foreign affairs, such as the NSC and the OCB.

Despite moving from the strategy of 'containment' to that of 'roll-back', a dialogue between East and West seemed to be opening up, thanks to the proposals on disarmament and to the talks on the peaceful use of atomic energy<sup>1</sup>. Although the détente was beginning, the Cold War was not entirely finished, other international crises were bound to arise in the following years, and the role of the USIA became more and more complex owing to the necessity of conforming to government policies.

In Italy Ellesworth Bunker, the new ambassador who succeeded Dunn in 1952, was destined to remain in charge for only a few months, because

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<sup>1</sup> It is appropriate to mention the UN conference on the peaceful use of atomic energy held in Geneva in August 1955, which some USIA officers also took part in. Cf. Bruti Liberati 2004, p. 167.

Eisenhower and his new Administration renewed the diplomatic representation in foreign posts with new figures that were undeniably linked to the Republican Party. For Italy, in March 1953, the choice fell to Clare Boothe Luce, journalist and playwright, but best known as the wife of the super-powerful publisher of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*, Henry Luce. She had also been a republican congresswoman in the early Forties. Clare Boothe was a champion of anti-communism, and she is often presented very negatively, as an exaggeration of American diplomacy in the Fifties, and is criticized by many for her excessive interference in Italian affairs; and her line was similar to the general strategy of the Eisenhower Administration from several points of view.

In order to create a new and more reliable Italy, which was able to assume responsibilities and to be integrated into the new European projects, it was necessary to solve the problem of Italian communism once and for all. Western Europe had to represent a bastion against Soviet expansion that could allow Moscow to take control of both Europe and Asia, damaging the United States. The risk represented by Italy in this environment, with its powerful Communist Party, was decidedly too high, and the new Administration decided to intensify its anti-communist policy in the country.

The years of Clare Boothe Luce's tenure in Villa Taverna were characterized by unprecedented intervention in Italian internal affairs, with an unquestionable overestimation of American ability to condition the Christian Democratic governments, and were marked by deep anti-communism<sup>2</sup>. The result of the June 1953 elections was not what Washington had expected, as the DC and its allies did not obtain 50% of the votes plus one, the total needed to obtain the majority bonus allowed by the so-called 'legge truffa', the swindle law, which could have ensured them 65% of seats in Parliament. Thus, in comparison with the 1948 results, the DC was falling behind, while the PCI and the PSI slightly improved their positions; this confirmed the ambassador's concerns, and as a consequence she refused to avoid a direct intervention in Italian affairs. A few days before the elections, on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1953, Mrs. Luce made a speech at the American Chamber of Commerce of Milan, during a meeting with exponents of Milan's political and economic spheres. Underlining the new American strategy for Italy, the ambassador went into Italian internal affairs in depth, as can be noted in the sentences quoted below<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Del Pero 2001, p. 180. On Clare Boothe Luce, see also: Hatch 1956; Morris 1997; Sheed 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. 163-165.

In its fabulous progress along the ancient route of its natural grandeur, Italy can confidently rely on the intimate and kind cooperation of America. We Americans would be very saddened to see this progressive march deviating or coming to a stop. But if – and honestly I feel obliged to say it, although it can never happen – if the Italian people should unfortunately be the victims of the fraudulent manoeuvres of right-wing or left-wing totalitarianism, then serious consequences – logically and tragically – would result for that intimate and kind cooperation which we now enjoy.<sup>4</sup>

The declaration was obviously consistent with the policy promoted by Washington, but the fact that it had been expressed in such an open way caused great embarrassment for both the State Department and De Gasperi.

When, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1953, Clare Boothe Luce arrived in Naples on board the *Andrea Doria*, it was clear that a plan to roll back communism in the country was ready, but Henry Luce's wife was also a very hard worker. She often left her offices in Via Vittorio Veneto to visit the provinces, as she did when she went to the flooded Salerno region and to Sardinia. She always attended expositions such as the Milan Fair, theatrical premières like *Porgy and Bess*, and openings such as the Istituto di Alti Studi Politici of Johns Hopkins University in Bologna. But first of all, she succeeded in conquering people's hearts and minds, and was seen as a sort of American 'fairy queen'.

Dear Excellency, I am a young girl, Monaco Assuntina, 12 years old, ill with leukaemia, and because my father doesn't have the money for my medicine because he is poor, I turned to you. You were so kind as to have my medicine sent from America, and now I am quite well. I tell all those who come visit me that it happened only thanks to the beautiful Mrs. Ambassador Luce. [...] You were my fairy godmother, just like in fairy tales.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> «Nel suo entusiasmante progresso lungo l'antica via della sua naturale grandezza, l'Italia può fiduciosamente contare sull'intima e cordiale collaborazione dell'America. Noi americani saremmo molto rattristati di vedere arrestarsi o deviare questa marcia in avanti. Ma se – e in tutta onestà mi sento obbligata a dirlo, benché è impossibile che accada – il popolo italiano dovesse sfortunatamente cadere vittima delle fraudolente manovre del totalitarismo, di destra o di sinistra, ne deriverebbero – logicamente e tragicamente – gravi conseguenze per quell'intima e cordiale collaborazione di cui ora beneficiamo» («Discorso dell'ambasciatrice Luce alla Camera di commercio americana per l'Italia», *Notiziario quotidiano USIS per la stampa*, 29 May 1953).

<sup>5</sup> «Eccellenza, sono la bambina Monaco Assuntina di anni 12 ammalata di leucemia e, non avendo mio padre i soldi per comprarmi le medicine perché povero, mi rivolsi a lei. Fu tanto buona da farmi mandare dall'America le medicine e ora sto quasi bene. A tutti quelli che vengono a trovarmi dico che il merito è della bella signora Ambasciatrice Luce [...]. È stata per me la buona fata, proprio come si legge nei libri di favole» (NARA,

The USIS did a lot for her in this sense, to enhance her image in the country, and conversely she did a lot for the USIS, with constant supervision and exceptional reorganization of its work in Italy.

In the spring of 1954, an embarrassing incident involved the ambassador and the world of the Italian press. The 25<sup>th</sup> March issue of the magazine *L'Europeo*, edited at the time by Arrigo Benedetti, denounced Mrs. Luce's intrusion into Italian internal politics in a speech she made on 3<sup>rd</sup> January at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. She had mentioned electoral fraud perpetrated by the left at the June 1953 elections, advising the government on how to fight the communists. After the denial that Mrs. Luce sent *L'Europeo*, a dispute broke out among various journalists including Nicola Adelfi, author of the first scoop, the famous Indro Montanelli, and Benedetti himself<sup>6</sup>. The ambassador declared the following:

An article published last week in an Italian magazine which purported to be substantially the text of a speech I am supposed to have made to American correspondents during my recent visit to the United States, twists, distorts, and utterly misrepresents my views on Italy, her problems and her leaders. The article is a fabrication pure and simple. I made no such speech.<sup>7</sup>

Clare Boothe often showed her loss of faith in the Italian government as an ally of the republican Administration, and this led her to assume a more and more uncompromising attitude towards Italy in the fight against communism<sup>8</sup>. All this was also mirrored by the management of information programmes, and caused huge reorganization in the Italian USIS, which was completed in 1955. In May 1953, an action plan<sup>9</sup> was established, and it had two main objectives: to mobilize support for American policies and increase confidence in American leadership on the one hand; and to mobilize support for democracy in Italy, in contrast with right-wing or left-wing extremism, and strengthen pro-democratic elements both among the people and the government on the other hand.

Four tasks, actually not very different from those of the preceding years, were established for the USIS in order to reach the first of these objectives:

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RG 84, Entry 2783 A, Italy, Rome Embassy, Records of Clare Boothe Luce 1955-1957, Box 3, *Italian Thank You*, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1955.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. 216-221.

<sup>7</sup> Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Clare Boothe Luce Papers, Box 637, *Statement on L'Europeo Article*, April 1954; cf. also Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. 216-221.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Del Pero 2001 and Guasconi 1999 on her attitude towards Italian trade unions.

<sup>9</sup> NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65, Box 2467, *USIS Country Plan – Italy*, May 1953.

promoting acceptance of specific American programmes, especially those involving Italy such as the Mutual Security Program, and commercial trade with the United States; promoting support for specific international policies by the Italian government, the most important of which was NATO; convincing the Italians of the historical continuity of American foreign policy<sup>10</sup>; and building confidence in American leadership to convince the Italians of the maturity of democratic thought, by emphasising the elements the Italians could use to identify their interests and aspirations with those of the Americans. The plan established three main target groups to accomplish this design: professional figures from the information field, including the press, radio, cinema and publishing; political leaders, especially members of Parliament; and university students, mainly those of the faculties of jurisprudence, where future political leaders were most likely to be found. For the first and second task it was also necessary to consider the directors of the so-called free trade unions, the CISL and UIL, and all those who worked in the highest ranks in the financial, business and industrial fields<sup>11</sup>. The second objective proposed by the plan was targeted more at a wider audience, through the leaders, and it had several new aspects compared with the preceding plans:

Task One: to convince Italians that the political principles of democracy (rather than those of Communism or Fascism) and the practices of civic action will lead to a fuller and a better life for themselves and for their country.

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Organizations which encourage civic action and responsibility (with a view to assisting and strengthening them).

For Tasks Two and Three:

Business leaders, with particular attention to the more enlightened industrialists and younger potential leaders in industry and finance.

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## SEDUCING THE INTELLECTUALS

## 1. CLARE BOOTHE LUCE AND THE USIS' TURNING POINT

With the election of the republican Dwight D. Eisenhower as President of the United States at the end of 1952, international politics entered a new phase, and 1953 represented a real turning point, especially in the history of American information services in Italy. In 1953, one phase of the Cold War came to an end, as Stalin's death in March marked the beginning of a process of political revision in the Soviet Union; and the signing of the armistice in Korea in July terminated a conflict that had represented the passage to the 'hot' war. In August, the creation of the United States Information Agency marked the beginning of a new era for informational policies, which were reorganized from the operational point of view, and coordinated with the most important decision-making bodies for American foreign affairs, such as the NSC and the OCB.

Despite moving from the strategy of 'containment' to that of 'roll-back', a dialogue between East and West seemed to be opening up, thanks to the proposals on disarmament and to the talks on the peaceful use of atomic energy<sup>1</sup>. Although the détente was beginning, the Cold War was not entirely finished, other international crises were bound to arise in the following years, and the role of the USIA became more and more complex owing to the necessity of conforming to government policies.

In Italy Ellesworth Bunker, the new ambassador who succeeded Dunn in 1952, was destined to remain in charge for only a few months, because

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<sup>1</sup> It is appropriate to mention the UN conference on the peaceful use of atomic energy held in Geneva in August 1955, which some USIA officers also took part in. Cf. Bruti Liberati 2004, p. 167.

Eisenhower and his new Administration renewed the diplomatic representation in foreign posts with new figures that were undeniably linked to the Republican Party. For Italy, in March 1953, the choice fell to Clare Boothe Luce, journalist and playwright, but best known as the wife of the super-powerful publisher of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*, Henry Luce. She had also been a republican congresswoman in the early Forties. Clare Boothe was a champion of anti-communism, and she is often presented very negatively, as an exaggeration of American diplomacy in the Fifties, and is criticized by many for her excessive interference in Italian affairs; and her line was similar to the general strategy of the Eisenhower Administration from several points of view.

In order to create a new and more reliable Italy, which was able to assume responsibilities and to be integrated into the new European projects, it was necessary to solve the problem of Italian communism once and for all. Western Europe had to represent a bastion against Soviet expansion that could allow Moscow to take control of both Europe and Asia, damaging the United States. The risk represented by Italy in this environment, with its powerful Communist Party, was decidedly too high, and the new Administration decided to intensify its anti-communist policy in the country.

The years of Clare Boothe Luce's tenure in Villa Taverna were characterized by unprecedented intervention in Italian internal affairs, with an unquestionable overestimation of American ability to condition the Christian Democratic governments, and were marked by deep anti-communism<sup>2</sup>. The result of the June 1953 elections was not what Washington had expected, as the DC and its allies did not obtain 50% of the votes plus one, the total needed to obtain the majority bonus allowed by the so-called 'legge truffa', the swindle law, which could have ensured them 65% of seats in Parliament. Thus, in comparison with the 1948 results, the DC was falling behind, while the PCI and the PSI slightly improved their positions; this confirmed the ambassador's concerns, and as a consequence she refused to avoid a direct intervention in Italian affairs. A few days before the elections, on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1953, Mrs. Luce made a speech at the American Chamber of Commerce of Milan, during a meeting with exponents of Milan's political and economic spheres. Underlining the new American strategy for Italy, the ambassador went into Italian internal affairs in depth, as can be noted in the sentences quoted below<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Del Pero 2001, p. 180. On Clare Boothe Luce, see also: Hatch 1956; Morris 1997; Sheed 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. 163-165.

In its fabulous progress along the ancient route of its natural grandeur, Italy can confidently rely on the intimate and kind cooperation of America. We Americans would be very saddened to see this progressive march deviating or coming to a stop. But if – and honestly I feel obliged to say it, although it can never happen – if the Italian people should unfortunately be the victims of the fraudulent manoeuvres of right-wing or left-wing totalitarianism, then serious consequences – logically and tragically – would result for that intimate and kind cooperation which we now enjoy.<sup>4</sup>

The declaration was obviously consistent with the policy promoted by Washington, but the fact that it had been expressed in such an open way caused great embarrassment for both the State Department and De Gasperi.

When, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1953, Clare Boothe Luce arrived in Naples on board the *Andrea Doria*, it was clear that a plan to roll back communism in the country was ready, but Henry Luce's wife was also a very hard worker. She often left her offices in Via Vittorio Veneto to visit the provinces, as she did when she went to the flooded Salerno region and to Sardinia. She always attended expositions such as the Milan Fair, theatrical premières like *Porgy and Bess*, and openings such as the Istituto di Alti Studi Politici of Johns Hopkins University in Bologna. But first of all, she succeeded in conquering people's hearts and minds, and was seen as a sort of American 'fairy queen'.

Dear Excellency, I am a young girl, Monaco Assuntina, 12 years old, ill with leukaemia, and because my father doesn't have the money for my medicine because he is poor, I turned to you. You were so kind as to have my medicine sent from America, and now I am quite well. I tell all those who come visit me that it happened only thanks to the beautiful Mrs. Ambassador Luce. [...] You were my fairy godmother, just like in fairy tales.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> «Nel suo entusiasmante progresso lungo l'antica via della sua naturale grandezza, l'Italia può fiduciosamente contare sull'intima e cordiale collaborazione dell'America. Noi americani saremmo molto rattristati di vedere arrestarsi o deviare questa marcia in avanti. Ma se – e in tutta onestà mi sento obbligata a dirlo, benché è impossibile che accada – il popolo italiano dovesse sfortunatamente cadere vittima delle fraudolente manovre del totalitarismo, di destra o di sinistra, ne deriverebbero – logicamente e tragicamente – gravi conseguenze per quell'intima e cordiale collaborazione di cui ora beneficiamo» («Discorso dell'ambasciatrice Luce alla Camera di commercio americana per l'Italia», *Notiziario quotidiano USIS per la stampa*, 29 May 1953).

<sup>5</sup> «Eccellenza, sono la bambina Monaco Assuntina di anni 12 ammalata di leucemia e, non avendo mio padre i soldi per comprarmi le medicine perché povero, mi rivolsi a lei. Fu tanto buona da farmi mandare dall'America le medicine e ora sto quasi bene. A tutti quelli che vengono a trovarmi dico che il merito è della bella signora Ambasciatrice Luce [...]. È stata per me la buona fata, proprio come si legge nei libri di favole» (NARA,

The USIS did a lot for her in this sense, to enhance her image in the country, and conversely she did a lot for the USIS, with constant supervision and exceptional reorganization of its work in Italy.

In the spring of 1954, an embarrassing incident involved the ambassador and the world of the Italian press. The 25<sup>th</sup> March issue of the magazine *L'Europeo*, edited at the time by Arrigo Benedetti, denounced Mrs. Luce's intrusion into Italian internal politics in a speech she made on 3<sup>rd</sup> January at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. She had mentioned electoral fraud perpetrated by the left at the June 1953 elections, advising the government on how to fight the communists. After the denial that Mrs. Luce sent *L'Europeo*, a dispute broke out among various journalists including Nicola Adelfi, author of the first scoop, the famous Indro Montanelli, and Benedetti himself<sup>6</sup>. The ambassador declared the following:

An article published last week in an Italian magazine which purported to be substantially the text of a speech I am supposed to have made to American correspondents during my recent visit to the United States, twists, distorts, and utterly misrepresents my views on Italy, her problems and her leaders. The article is a fabrication pure and simple. I made no such speech.<sup>7</sup>

Clare Boothe often showed her loss of faith in the Italian government as an ally of the republican Administration, and this led her to assume a more and more uncompromising attitude towards Italy in the fight against communism<sup>8</sup>. All this was also mirrored by the management of information programmes, and caused huge reorganization in the Italian USIS, which was completed in 1955. In May 1953, an action plan<sup>9</sup> was established, and it had two main objectives: to mobilize support for American policies and increase confidence in American leadership on the one hand; and to mobilize support for democracy in Italy, in contrast with right-wing or left-wing extremism, and strengthen pro-democratic elements both among the people and the government on the other hand.

Four tasks, actually not very different from those of the preceding years, were established for the USIS in order to reach the first of these objectives:

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RG 84, Entry 2783 A, Italy, Rome Embassy, Records of Clare Boothe Luce 1955-1957, Box 3, *Italian Thank You*, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1955.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. 216-221.

<sup>7</sup> Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Clare Boothe Luce Papers, Box 637, *Statement on L'Europeo Article*, April 1954; cf. also Bruti Liberati 2004, pp. 216-221.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Del Pero 2001 and Guasconi 1999 on her attitude towards Italian trade unions.

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promoting acceptance of specific American programmes, especially those involving Italy such as the Mutual Security Program, and commercial trade with the United States; promoting support for specific international policies by the Italian government, the most important of which was NATO; convincing the Italians of the historical continuity of American foreign policy<sup>10</sup>; and building confidence in American leadership to convince the Italians of the maturity of democratic thought, by emphasising the elements the Italians could use to identify their interests and aspirations with those of the Americans. The plan established three main target groups to accomplish this design: professional figures from the information field, including the press, radio, cinema and publishing; political leaders, especially members of Parliament; and university students, mainly those of the faculties of jurisprudence, where future political leaders were most likely to be found. For the first and second task it was also necessary to consider the directors of the so-called free trade unions, the CISL and UIL, and all those who worked in the highest ranks in the financial, business and industrial fields<sup>11</sup>. The second objective proposed by the plan was targeted more at a wider audience, through the leaders, and it had several new aspects compared with the preceding plans:

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For the application of this plan, a budget of 656,000 dollars for the USIS and 1 million dollars for the MSA was needed, which included the expenses for the 'mass communication program'. The main target group, from that moment on, included all information professional figures, the 'opinion moulders' *par excellence*. It was a group of people chosen according to very selective criteria, based on personal contacts established in Rome and in the other nine cities where there was a USIS office. It was not certainly a group formed by new acquaintances; on the contrary it was a network of already-established contacts, because they had been considered as a target group since 1945, even if they were not yet at the top of the list. For the USIS, too, this was the least expensive way of reaching the wider public as well, 'the mass Italians', those who did not attend the cultural centres and the USIS libraries, or, if they did, they went only to have a look at the most famous magazines; this was the same audience who did not tune to VOA very often, preferring the Italian networks.

Not only would the public opinion moulders have been provided with lots of material with the aim of strengthening their beliefs in accordance with American policies, but they should also have been convinced to publicize and spread American values in the best and most effective ways for the Italian state of affairs. This group was obviously influenced by the press, because all cultural professional figures read books and newspapers, went to the cinema, and wrote things that their colleagues would then read in their turn.

Despite the fact that they were usually considered 'friends' by American propagandists<sup>18</sup>, they were nonetheless very sensitive regarding the possibility of American intrusion in the internal affairs of their own country. The situation was thus quite delicate, even if the USIS' purpose was certainly not to influence journalists of the communist press, which were too difficult to convince, but it aimed at increasing the confidence of those who were already considered as 'friends', and at using them as a means to reach the rest of the population; and an inexpensive means, at that. USIS publications, radio broadcasting and movies were all aimed at the public opinion moulders, together with the book presentation campaigns and the book translation projects. They were also the main users of cultural centres and USIS libraries and, last but not least, the candidates for the cultural and educational exchange programme.



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<sup>18</sup> Cfr. NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65/5-1353, Box 2467, *Confidential Security Information – 1954-1955 IIA Prospectus for Italy – Program Statement*, attached to *Foreign Service Despatch, From Amembassy Rome – Lloyd A. Free, To The Department of State, Washington, Subject: IIA Prospectus*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1953, pp. 2-3.