

# “Ask the *Answer-Man*, the Man Who Knows Everything”<sup>1</sup>

Broadcasting the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands  
through *De Antwoordman*

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## Abstract

The European Recovery Act, commonly known as the Marshall Plan, was a comprehensive four-year aid package from the United States (US) that was meant to support the recovery of European states after the devastation of World War II. With the Marshall Plan also came comprehensive public diplomacy campaigns, which were meant to inform and convince European publics and show Congress and the American taxpayer that their money ultimately benefit US national interests. The European-wide campaigns, coordinated from the American side by the European Cooperation Agency (ECA), included various forms of media, from the printed press to film, events, pamphlets, and radio. This thesis examines the role of the Dutch radio program *De Antwoordman* as part of the Dutch and American Marshall Plan public diplomacy campaign in the Netherlands. While this program aired under the flag of the Dutch broadcaster AVRO, the ECA covertly sponsored and commissioned the program. This thesis shows that *Antwoordman* was part of a state-private network which enabled the ECA to directly implement its public diplomacy purposes in the Netherlands. However, the notion that the ECA covertly sponsored *Antwoordman* rather than publicly, was at the heart of the frustrations of the Dutch press and government with American public diplomacy. It was specifically the ECA's covert sponsorship of *Antwoordman*, which made the show counterproductive to the shared goals of the American and Dutch governments with regard to the Marshall Plan.

*Keywords:* Cold war; Marshall Plan; public diplomacy; propaganda; information; radio; broadcasting; state-private network; covert; the Netherlands; United States.

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## Introduction

The European Recovery Act (ERP), commonly known as the Marshall Plan, was a comprehensive four-year aid package from the United States (US) that was meant to support the recovery of European states after the devastation of World War II. In June 1947, the American Secretary of State, G.C. Marshall responded to the post-war destruction in Europe in a speech at Harvard University, in which he explained the need to help the Europeans. In this speech, he argued that the purpose of the aid “[...] should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.”<sup>2</sup> In this speech, Marshall also urged European countries to consider what was needed for economic recovery and work together to reach this goal. The initiative for the aid, so the Americans believed, had to come from the European governments.<sup>3</sup> After intense debates between the European states themselves and the US, and subsequently in Congress, the ERP was signed by President Truman on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1948. Seventeen countries participated in the ERP; all of them were European.

With the economic support of the ERP also came a significant public diplomacy campaign. Not just European publics had to be convinced the ERP was to the benefit of their respective countries, but also Congress, which agreed to fund the ERP, and the American taxpayer, which ultimately paid for it, had to be convinced that the money was spent effectively, and that the Marshall aid served national interests.<sup>4</sup> The execution of the ERP was coordinated by the Economic Cooperation Agency (ECA), which was also in charge of the promotion of the plan in Europe. This organization was centered in Paris and had mission offices in all countries that participated in the ERP. The European-wide campaign included various forms of media, from the printed press to film, events, pamphlets, and radio.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis focuses on the use of radio in the Netherlands as part of the Marshall Plan public diplomacy. Radio broadcasts were a particularly gripping tool of public diplomacy in the Cold War. On both sides of the Iron Curtain, radio broadcasts could transfer public diplomacy directly

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<sup>2</sup> “The ‘Marshall Plan’ Speech at Harvard University, 5 June 1947,” OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), accessed November 28th, 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/general/themarshallplanspeechatharvarduniversity5june1947.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Pien van der Hoeven, *Hoed af Voor Marshall: De Marshall-Hulp Aan Nederland 1947-1952* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1997), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Hoeven, *Hoed af voor Marshall*, 101

<sup>5</sup> Frank Inklaar, “Van Amerika Geleerd: Marshall-Hulp En Kennisimport in Nederland” (dissertation, Sdu Uitgevers, 1997), 27.

into people's homes. According to historian Linda Risso, Western broadcasts in countries under Soviet control "[...] opened up an alternative channel for the flow of new information and ideas and it contributed to the erosion of public support for the government."<sup>6</sup> Radio stations, such as Voice of America (VOA), Radio Liberty (RL), Radio Free Europe (RFE), and the foreign stations of the BBC are among the most famous and well-researched instances of American broadcasting in Soviet territory.<sup>7</sup> In the West, broadcasts were meant to convince listeners of the power of the United States and the need for European cooperation and – especially – rearmament.<sup>8</sup>

The Netherlands is a fitting case study of the American efforts to steer Dutch public opinion towards a more optimistic and cooperative stance towards the Marshall Plan with the means of radio. Not just because the Netherlands was one of the prime receivers of Marshall aid but also because the pillarization of the Dutch media landscape at times presented quite unique challenges to American public diplomacy purposes. Dutch society at the time was split up in different pillars, “*zuilen*” in Dutch, which all voted for a specific party, read a specific newspaper, and listened to specific radio programs.<sup>9</sup> These pillars were based on the worldview of their followers, such as their religion and their political preferences. To give some examples, the *Volkskrant* was a predominantly Roman Catholic and progressive newspaper, the AVRO, a national radio broadcaster, was a neutral liberal network, while the broadcaster VARA was socialist-oriented.

## Research Question

Within the context of Marshall Plan public diplomacy in the Netherlands, this thesis focuses on the scandal surrounding the AVRO radio program *De Antwoordman*.<sup>10</sup> This program aired on Dutch radio between November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1950, and October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1951. The fifteen-minute show aired

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<sup>6</sup> Linda Risso, “Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War,” *Cold War History* 13, no. 2 (2013): pp. 145-152, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2012.757134>, 145.

<sup>7</sup> See, Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); A. Ross Johnson, “Managing Media Influence Operations: Lessons from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 31, no. 4 (February 2018): pp. 681-701, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2018.1488498>; Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003); and Philo C. Wasburn, *Broadcasting Propaganda: International Radio Broadcasting and the Construction of Political Reality* (Praeger, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Risso, “Radio Wars,” 146.

<sup>9</sup> David J. Snyder, “Domesticity, Rearmament, and the Limits of US Public Diplomacy in the Netherlands during the Early Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): pp. 47-75, [https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws\\_a\\_00370](https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00370), 53.

<sup>10</sup> I will address the program interchangeably with *De Antwoordman* and *Antwoordman*, to improve readability.

on Tuesdays and Thursdays and was presented by Dutch journalist and AVRO-*omroepster* (announcer) Netty Rosenfeld. The program featured questions from listeners which were answered by a mysterious “answer man”. These questions could be about anything, from the question of “who composed the first opera?” to “how many parts does a car consist of?”<sup>11</sup> Netty Rosenfeld would ask the question on behalf of the listener and the answer-man would then give the answer.

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951, the Dutch daily *De Volkskrant* published a story that the popular radio show *De Antwoordman*, aired by the AVRO, was sponsored by the ECA. Furthermore, the program was produced by an American publicity bureau commissioned by the ECA, the Bruce Chapman organization. The article – and the associated editorial commentary – in the *Volkskrant* presented this affair as an example of covert American propaganda in the Netherlands.<sup>12</sup> It appeared that while the questions that featured in *Antwoordman* could be about anything, many of them noticeably focused on the workings of the Marshall Plan and American power.<sup>13</sup> These questions turned out to be scripted by the Bruce Chapman organization in Paris to promote the Marshall Plan and US national interests in general. In this case, the ECA cooperated with the Dutch broadcaster AVRO to promote American interests in the Netherlands.

While academic scholarship has devoted significant attention to the Cultural Cold War and the public diplomacy for the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands, the use of Dutch radio has been rather neglected. This thesis strives to fill this gap in research by examining the Dutch radio show *Antwoordman* as part of the Marshall Plan public diplomacy. The research question that this thesis will answer is as follows: how does *Antwoordman* fit in the American and Dutch diplomacy campaigns for the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands? In order to answer this main question, the subsequent chapters in this thesis will answer the corresponding sub questions: what was the role of radio in American Marshall Plan public diplomacy in the Netherlands; how did the ECA and the AVRO cooperate to broadcast *Antwoordman* in the Netherlands; and why did the ECA sponsor *Antwoordman* covertly?

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<sup>11</sup> “Vraag het de “Antwoord-Man,” de man, die alles weet,” *De Radiobode*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> “De *Antwoordman*: politieke reclamestunt van de Amerikanen,” *De Volkskrant*, August 11th, 1951, 1. Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010843039:mpeg21:p001> (Accessed December 12th, 2021); “Ten Geleide Weg: De bekende weg,” *De Volkskrant*, August 11th, 1951, 6. Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010843039:mpeg21:p006> (Accessed December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Floribert Baudet, “De Strijd Om De Hearts and Minds: Amerikaanse Voorlichting En Propaganda in De Jaren Vijftig,” in *De Amerikaanse Ambassade in Den Haag: Een Blik Achter De Schermen Van De Amerikaans-Nederlandse Betrekkingen*, ed. Duco Hellema and Giles Scott-Smith (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016), pp. 41-51, 48.

## Historiography

This thesis builds on the historiography of the Marshall Plan public diplomacy and the Cultural Cold War. Much of the Cold War historiography – and the historiography of the Cold War in general – has been described as threefold: from a traditionalist view to a revisionist critique and a post-revisionist perspective.<sup>14</sup> All three perspectives derive from the same master narrative, which shows a bipolar view of the Cold War.<sup>15</sup> The traditionalist view on the Cold War presents a history in which the Soviet Union is to blame for the tensions and conflicts in the Cold War. The revisionist view became popular roughly in the 1960s, in which the United States was equally to blame for the Cold War. From roughly the 1990s, the post-revisionist view argued in opposition towards the blame-game in the preceding decades and opted for a more complex policy analysis, mainly in the United States.

A key problem of this bipolar view, as argued by contemporary historians and scholars, is that it overlooks the complexity of the Cold War. What distinguishes the scholarship since the late 1990s from the earlier historiography is that it tries to understand these complexities, not just between states but also between public and private actors.<sup>16</sup> As Krabbendam and Scott-Smith argue in their 2003 book *The Cultural Cold War*, more recent scholarship has

“[...] shown a more sophisticated approach, revealing the complexity of the issues, the diversity among the various nations involved, the uses of contributions from different academic disciplines, with end results that represent a move beyond the simple question of right and wrong in the Cold War.”<sup>17</sup>

As part of this stream of Cold War historiography, historians of the Marshall Plan have targeted the possibilities and restraints the ERP’s public diplomacy campaigns in European states.<sup>18</sup> David Elwood, for instance, argued that the ECA’s propaganda efforts – mostly through

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<sup>14</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, “Introduction: Boundaries of Freedom,” in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe: 1945-1960: Special Issue*, ed. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: Cass, 2003), pp. 1-11, 2.; Reynolds, David. “Probing the Cold War Narrative since 1945: The Case of Western Europe.” Essay. In *The Cold War: Historiography, Memory, Representation*, edited by Konrad Jarausch, Christian F. Ostermann, and Andreas Etges, 67–82. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018, 75; Michael Holm, *The Marshall Plan: A New Deal for Europe* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), xix.

<sup>15</sup> Reynolds, “Probing the Cold War Narrative,” 75.

<sup>16</sup> Krabbendam & Scott-Smith, “Introduction,” *The Cultural Cold War*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Krabbendam & Scott Smith, 3.

<sup>18</sup> See David Ellwood, “The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context,” in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*, ed. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: F. Cass, 2003), pp. 225-

film and cinema - in Italy were rather ineffective because of the Cold War context and the Italian political landscape.<sup>19</sup>

While public diplomacy through printed media, such as pamphlets and newspapers, and visual media has received significant attention, radio – let alone in the Netherlands - is one of the areas that has received little attention. This is striking, as radio was one of the most used forms of media in the Netherlands. This was especially the case before the official introduction of television in 1951.<sup>20</sup> In the case of the Netherlands, the ECA mission to the Netherlands estimated that radio reached about 83 percent of the Dutch population.<sup>21</sup> The Americans could thus reach a large majority of the Dutch via radio, which contributed to the usefulness of this medium in their public diplomacy purposes.

While scholarship on the use of radio in the Cold War focuses predominantly on Eastern Europe, the use of radio in the context of public diplomacy in Western Europe has not received the attention it deserves. Radio stations targeting Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, like VOA, RL, and RFE do have received significant attention. In *Broadcasting freedom*, for instance, Arch Puddington argues that RL and RFE were important tools in the American Cold War strategy.<sup>22</sup> In another key text, Johnson focuses on these two stations as important tools of American foreign policy in the first two decades of the Cold War.<sup>23</sup> The use of radio in Western Europe, however, has not received such attention. This is significant because it was, for instance, part of public diplomacy campaigns by the ECA.

The public diplomacy for the Marshall Plan in Western Europe was generally aimed at promoting public policy. The way in which radio was used, however, differed per country. In the Netherlands, for instance, policy makers of the ECA focused on Dutch broadcasters, rather than American stations like VOA. Historian David Snyder argues that programmers of the United States Information Service (USIS) chose to use Dutch radio broadcasters instead of using American radio

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236.; Maria Fritsche, *The American Marshall Plan Film Campaign and the Europeans: A Captivated Audience?* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Ellwood, "Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy", 226

<sup>20</sup> Ger Sleijpen, "60 Jaar Televisie in Nederland," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, December 3, 2008), <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2008/49/60-jaar-televisie-in-nederland>.

<sup>21</sup> Eugene Rachlis to Roscoe Drummond, December 15, 1949, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box 10, inv. No. 114.

<sup>22</sup> Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), x.

<sup>23</sup> A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 2.

stations, such as Voice of America (VOA).<sup>24</sup> Only six percent of Dutch listeners tuned in to Voice of America as a foreign broadcaster, as most tuned in to the BBC.<sup>25</sup> DeVos argues in his dissertation on the effectiveness of the United States Information Service in the Netherlands, that broadcasting via Dutch networks was more effective because “[...] a more extensive and sometimes even unsuspecting audience may be reached, in comparison to the audience of the Voice of America, which needs to tune in consciously and as may be assumed to be friendly or curious, and thus not necessarily in need of persuasive information.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, dispensing American information through Dutch networks would have a greater effect than dispensing it through foreign networks.

While academic scholarship mentions two Dutch radio shows that were part of American public diplomacy in the Netherlands, attention to the two has been very limited.<sup>27</sup> These shows were *Antwoordman*, which was secretly sponsored by the ECA, and *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, which was co-produced by the USIS. Both programs aired under the flag of the Dutch secular-liberal broadcaster AVRO, which was one of the public – but independent – broadcasters in the Dutch radio landscape. When these programs are mentioned, however, they are mainly used as instances in which American public diplomacy struggled to persuade the Dutch public. David Snyder, for instance, mainly touches upon the notion that these radio shows only marginally contributed to a broader understanding of American security interests in Western Europe.<sup>28</sup>

This lack of academic attention to *Antwoordman* is remarkable. An analysis of the ECA’s sponsorship and production of *Antwoordman* could shed light on important aspects of Marshall Plan public diplomacy in the early 1950s. Not only can it provide new insights in the role of radio in American public diplomacy in the Netherlands, it can also further illuminate the different visions on public diplomacy by the ECA and the Dutch press agency. Therefore, this thesis will try to fill this research gap in the historiography of the Marshall Plan that currently exists.

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<sup>24</sup> Snyder, 67.

<sup>25</sup> Snyder, 67.

<sup>26</sup> Ton Pieter DeVos, “A Field Study in the Effectiveness of the United States Information Service in the Netherlands” (dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1961), 88.

<sup>27</sup> Essentially, only Snyder in his article on the limits of American public diplomacy in the Netherlands and Baudet in his chapter on American public diplomacy in the Netherlands in the 1950s seem to touch upon this topic.

<sup>28</sup> Snyder, 69.

## Conceptual framework

This thesis is embedded in a theoretical framework and will, therefore, refer frequently to relevant concepts. This section will both elaborate on the concepts in question and will provide definitions of the terms and concepts that are used in the following chapters. A central concept in this thesis is (soft) power. Power is generally described as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want.”<sup>29</sup> When states use what is called ‘hard power’ to pursue those desired outcomes, they often use threats or weapons of militaristic or economic nature. Scholars of the realist school, such as Morgenthau, see this as the main way in which states act in the international arena. Through this form of power, states try to obtain what they want through coercion. States can, however, also reach their goals through ‘soft power’. This term, coined by scholar of International Relations (IR) Joseph S. Nye, generally refers to “the ability to shape the preferences of others.”<sup>30</sup> He argues that “the ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority.”<sup>31</sup> According to Nye, soft power is equally important to hard power.

Soft power is, therefore, not just aimed at another state’s government but also at the public. The idea is that when a country’s public opinion is favorable to (a policy of) another country, makes this particular policy more effective and easier to implement. It thus enhances the ability of a certain state to pursue its agenda. States often wield soft power through public diplomacy, through which they do not just communicate with other governments but also with nongovernmental actors, such as citizens, and other nongovernmental organizations.<sup>32</sup> Public diplomacy includes any form of communication, from films to radio broadcasts, printed press, music, and sports. The public diplomacy that accompanied the Marshall Plan could well be described as a fitting instance of the use of soft power.

Another conceptual intersection in which this thesis is situated, deals with the terms “public diplomacy,” “information,” and “propaganda.” It is vital to understand what these refers to in this thesis, especially because they carry different meanings with different connotations. A public

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): pp. 94-109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>, 94.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 95.

<sup>31</sup> Nye, 95.

<sup>32</sup> Nye, 101.

diplomacy campaign can, for instance, include news reels with information to convey a certain message to a foreign audience, but this is not necessarily propaganda. For American policy makers in the early Cold War, propaganda simply meant “information with a purpose,” which did not imply disinformation, dishonesty or manipulation.<sup>33</sup> It is important to keep in mind this definition of propaganda, not just when it is used in this thesis but also when reading the excerpts of the primary sources that this thesis will feature.

While public diplomacy and propaganda can serve a similar purpose, namely convincing another foreign audience, the two should not be intertwined. Public diplomacy is about building up credibility and building a relationship between a government and a foreign public. According to John Brown, lecturer on public diplomacy at Georgetown University, public diplomacy at its best “[...] achieves credibility through careful presentation of fact and thoughtful argumentation, while the worst propaganda achieves credibility by falsification and sensationalism.”<sup>34</sup> In the eyes of Nye, propaganda is counterproductive as a form of public diplomacy, as it lacks credibility.<sup>35</sup> As chapter 3 of this thesis will demonstrate, the credibility of propaganda also depends on whether the source from which it derives is publicly acknowledged or is hidden. This thesis will use the terms “overt” and “covert” to describe this difference. In the context of this thesis, overt will refer to a situation in which the involvement a US government body is publicly acknowledged, while covert will refer to a situation in which the American involvement is hidden through, for instance, a proxy.

## Methodology and structure

In order to answer the main research question and sub-questions in the following chapters, and thus put the theoretical framework into practice, I will rely on both secondary and primary sources. The primary sources include newspapers and magazines, and archival sources from the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies in Middelburg and the National Archive in The Hague. These archival sources include a variety of letters, memoranda, and reports from American information officers at the ECA-mission office in The Hague and the ECA-headquarters in Paris, and

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<sup>33</sup> Johnson, *Radio*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> John Brown, “Public Diplomacy & Propaganda: Their Differences,” *American Diplomacy*, September 2008, <https://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2008/09/public-diplomacy-propaganda-their-differences/> (Accessed November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

<sup>35</sup> Nye, 101.

communication between the Dutch press agency and the Dutch Marshall Plan coordinators. All of the newspaper articles that I will use in this thesis are in Dutch. Therefore, the quotes from these articles that I will use to substantiate my arguments are English translations.

In chapter 1, I will answer the sub-question of what the role was of radio and *Antwoordman* in the Dutch and American Marshall Plan public diplomacy campaigns. To answer this question, I will first map the Dutch and American considerations that went into the Marshall aid and the associated public diplomacy campaigns. Then I will demonstrate how these aims developed over time, and how Dutch radio broadcasts relate to this development. In order to do this, I will use existing scholarly analyses on the Marshall Plan, the subsequent Dutch and American public diplomacy campaigns in the Netherlands, and the use of radio in these campaigns.<sup>36</sup> I will mainly rely on existing scholarly analyses on the historical context of the Marshall Plan, the public diplomacy campaigns, and Dutch radio.

Chapter 2 will answer the sub-question how *Antwoordman* was part of an American state-private network in the early Cold War. In this chapter, I will both rely on scholarly research and primary sources. The secondary sources will provide the necessary context of the public diplomacy campaigns and the use of state-private networks. Because *Antwoordman* is a rather understudied topic, I will rely on Dutch and American newspapers and magazines from 1951 to provide detailed information on the radio program. I will use archival sources to further understand how *Antwoordman* fits into the larger state-private structures.

Chapter 3 will answer the sub-question of why the ECA decided to sponsor *Antwoordman* covertly. While I will use both scholarly analyses on American covert public diplomacy operations in this chapter, I will predominantly rely on primary sources. The primary sources that I will use are both from Dutch newspapers from 1951 and archival sources from the Roosevelt Institute and Nationaal Archief. These primary sources provide the necessary information to understand how and why the ECA covertly sponsored *Antwoordman*, and what the result was of this covert operation.

The conclusion will answer the research question by summarizing the answers and insights from the three chapters. It will specify the relevance of these answers to the academic debate, will indicate the limits of this and the subsequent recommendations for further research.

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## Chapter 1 – From the Marshall Plan to *Antwoordman*

The Dutch radio program *De Antwoordman* was funded and scripted by the European Cooperation Administration (ECA), while it aired under the flag of the *Algemene Vereniging Radio Omroep* (AVRO). In order to understand the role of this show in the Dutch-American public diplomacy campaign of the European Recovery Program (ERP), one needs to understand what constituted this effort. Therefore, this chapter answers the question of what the role was of radio in American Marshall Plan public diplomacy in the Netherlands? First, this chapter will provide the necessary context. This chapter will first map the reasoning behind the Marshall Plan and the shared need of the Dutch and the Americans to heavily promote the aid program. Second, this chapter will outline the objectives of both the Marshall Plan and the public diplomacy campaign. Third, this chapter demonstrate that *Antwoordman* was part of the European-wide Marshall Plan publicity campaign.

### 1.1 The Dutch and American contexts

The first few years after World War II, the Dutch economy struggled to recover. The war, which cost about 230.000 Dutch lives, crippled much of the Dutch industry, agriculture and infrastructure. The post-war industrial production was thirty percent of the production before the war, mainly because the factories of the Dutch industrial tycoons, like Shell, Philips, and Unilever were either destroyed, or moved to Nazi Germany during the war.<sup>37</sup> Dutch agriculture suffered from flooding, much of the equipment was either seized by the Nazi's or destroyed during the war, and livestock had also shrunk significantly.<sup>38</sup> As a result of the damaged infrastructure, transportation was also difficult. Harbors were destroyed, merchant fleets sunk, almost all trains moved to Germany, and trucks were either old or battered.<sup>39</sup> Almost all essentials were lacking, such as food, clothing, housing, fuel, and medical supplies.

Despite the destruction, the first post-war years saw a speedy reconstruction of the industry and infrastructure. The speed of the recovery, however, caused a new problem. To facilitate the recovery, Dutch economy relied heavily on American imports. While these goods were needed for the recovery, the Dutch monetary reserves could not sustain such a high level of expenditure for a longer period. This was due to an increasing dollar shortage in the Netherlands, which was the

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<sup>37</sup> Van der Hoeven, 36

<sup>38</sup> Van der Hoeven, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Van der Hoeven, 36.

result of the high level of imports and very low level of exports.<sup>40</sup> To compensate for the shortage of this exchange currency, the Dutch reserves of other foreign currencies and gold diminished. This posed a dilemma for the first post-war Dutch government, as it either had to lower the import-levels, which would lead to shortages and slower recovery, or it had to continue their import policy and risk bankruptcy.<sup>41</sup> And there were other setbacks. The extreme winter of 1946-47 forced the Dutch government to increase import-levels for fuel, the Dutch colonies in Indonesia were also crippled by WWII in the Pacific and declared independence in 1947, further straining the Dutch economy.

The United States (US) had several reasons to start the Marshall Plan. The aftermath of WWII posed several challenges for the Truman administration. Despite the victory over Nazi-Germany, Europe lay in shambles. Especially the post-war situation in Germany was concerning. As opposed to the situation after World War 1, when Germany was punished severely by the victorious allied states, the Truman administration now agreed that Germany should not be suppressed but helped in its recovery by an international effort. The Truman administration argued that the German economy was vital for the recovery of European economies because of its natural resources and industrial potential. Without a speedy recovery of Germany, the recovery of the rest of Europe would falter. The Dutch economy, for instance, was highly dependent on Germany. Without the German industries, the Netherlands would have lost its export market and Germany would have become an agrarian competitor.<sup>42</sup> In addition to this, the Truman administration feared that the crippled European economies would hurt the American economy. Europe was one of the largest markets for American goods and services, so decreasing European imports would hurt American businesses significantly.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the Truman administration believed that helping Germany was ultimately the only way to reconcile Germans and the victims of Nazi-Germany.<sup>44</sup>

### 1.1.1 Cold War tensions

To further understand the creation of the ERP and the subsequent public diplomacy campaigns, it is crucial to realize the relation of the program to the geopolitical tensions in the early Cold War.

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<sup>40</sup> Van der Hoeven, 40.

<sup>41</sup> Van der Hoeven, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Van der Eng, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Van der Eng, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Richard T. Griffiths, "Het Jaar 1947," in *Van Strohalm Tot Strategie: Het Marshall-Plan in Perspectief*, ed. Richard T. Griffiths et al. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997), pp. 5-16, 9.

The Marshall Plan was of great geopolitical importance for the US. With the experience of the interbellum period, during which economic downturn, poverty, and nationalism proved to be a breeding ground for Nazism, the US did not want to allow a totalitarian power to rise in Europe again.<sup>45</sup> Without the Marshall Plan, there was a chance that European countries, especially France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands would have to resort to severe austerity measures.<sup>46</sup> Such measures could play into Communist sentiments, which the US perceived as a legitimate threat in Italy.<sup>47</sup> The idea was that if the ERP could stimulate structural economic growth, chances that a European state would lean towards Communism would decline.

This way, the Truman doctrine, aimed at containing Soviet influence, and the ERP were mutually reinforcing policies. The Marshall Plan would, for instance, intensify the relationship between European countries and the United States, which would help keep the Soviet influence in Western Europe in check. This American intent to invigorate the Atlantic ties between the US and Europe also reveals a larger motivation. American policy makers hoped that the ERP could, with its focus on European cooperation (and later, unification) help break down the historical geopolitical divides in Europe.<sup>48</sup> Without these security concerns between European states, a new Atlantic order could arise, in which the US could foster democratic freedoms and open economic markets.<sup>49</sup> The ERP was, of course, not the only instrument which could stimulate such a development but can be seen as a part of this larger American strategy to establish a new world order.

## 1.2 The ERP and the need for public diplomacy

The ERP was signed by President Truman on April 3rd, 1948. The starting point of this undertaking was that the European countries had to take the initiative. This program was initially set-up by sixteen European participants at the Paris Conference in September 1947, in which they ultimately managed – under severe American pressure – to come up with a comprehensive

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Holm, *The Marshall Plan: A New Deal for Europe* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), xxiii.

<sup>46</sup> Bronislaw Geremek, in *The Marshall Plan Lessons Learned for the 21st Century*, ed. Eliot Sorel and Pier Carlo Padoan (Paris: OECD, 2008), pp. 43-50, 46; For the Dutch context: Van der Hoeven, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Holm, *The Marshall Plan*, 72.

<sup>48</sup> Rob Kroes, “Het Marshall-Plan En Wij: Economische, Politieke En Culturele Bedoelingen,” in *Van Strohalm Tot Strategie: Het Marshall-Plan in Perspectief*, ed. Richard T. Griffiths et al. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997), pp. 38-48, 32.

<sup>49</sup> Kroes, “Het Marshall-plan en Wij,” 32

recovery plan.<sup>50</sup> Without going into the details of the Marshall Plan, the ERP essentially subsidized European import from the US. Every year the Marshall Plan was in effect, European states were allocated a specific amount of money, which they could use to import goods and services that would help their recovery. This way, the countries receiving the Marshall aid could continue to import the necessary goods, without further straining their dollar and monetary reserves. The goal of the Marshall Plan was that the aided countries could continue doing so independently after the program ended.

The US also set several conditions that the receiving countries had to meet in order to be eligible for the Marshall aid. These conditions were set out in the bilateral agreements between the US and the participating countries. States were, among other things, obliged to increase their stability, stabilize their own currencies by balancing their budgets and work with other European states to remove trade barriers.<sup>51</sup> For the Netherlands, there were some additional provisions. One clause that was particularly hard to swallow was that the US could unilaterally withdraw from the Marshall aid, while the Netherlands was still bound to the American conditions.<sup>52</sup> In the publicity clause, the Dutch also agreed “that a wide circulation of reporting on the development of the program is desired”.<sup>53</sup> The Dutch were to have an active part in the promotion of the Marshall Plan.

The need to promote the ERP, in the case of the Netherlands, mainly came from the United States. Congress had the authority over the budget of the ERP and evaluated the program’s budget annually, so it was of paramount importance that the Americans and the Dutch showed that the money of the American taxpayer was spent effectively and benefited US national interests.<sup>54</sup> It was thus in the interest of both the Dutch and American administrations to generate publicity for the ERP. The Dutch government naturally wanted to make use of the financial advantages of the Marshall aid and, therefore, was keen to show to the Americans how well their money was spent. In addition to this, the promotion of the Marshall Plan was part of the bilateral agreement between the Netherlands and the US, so the Dutch government had to keep up its end of the deal. The ECA

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<sup>50</sup> Inklaar, “Van Amerika Geleerd,” p. 9

<sup>51</sup> Inklaar, 23; Van der Hoeven, *Hoed af*, 83.

<sup>52</sup> Van der Hoeven, 84.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in Tity De Vries, “Een Brede Verspreiding Van De Berichtgeving Is Wenselijk’: Publiciteit Rond De Marshall-Hulp Als Overheidsvoorlichting Nieuwe Stijl,” in *Van Strohalm Tot Strategie: Het Marshall-Plan in Perspectief*, ed. Richard T. Griffiths et al. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997), 40.

<sup>54</sup> Inklaar, 26; Van der Hoeven, 101; Van der Eng, 111.

also wanted to maintain its yearly budget and needed to show to Congress the effectiveness of its program.

While the publicity campaigns in the Netherlands promoted the advantages of the Marshall aid, the Dutch generally did not need to be convinced. According to a Dutch poll in July 1947, 73% percent of the Dutch population was aware of the plan, of which 75% was cooperative towards the plan.<sup>55</sup> When asked about the link between the MP and European cooperation Dutch public opinion was somewhat less positive and there was more resistance.<sup>56</sup> This was one of the topics that the publicity campaigns could garner more support for. But in general, the Dutch perception of the ERP was already clearly in favor of the ERP before the program materialized.

The attention of the Dutch public to the ERP is significant, especially as the dominant issue at the time was the struggle with the aftermath of WWII in the Dutch East-Indies.<sup>57</sup> Indonesian nationalists, led by Soekarno, declared independence from the Netherlands after the defeat of the Japanese in WWII. The Dutch government tried to regain a hold of its colony by sending two military campaigns in July 1947 and December 1948. Ultimately, the Dutch government, which was under significant pressure from the international community and especially the US, had to recognize the independence of Indonesia. Because of the importance of this matter to Dutch politics, society, and economy, this issue was dominant in the late 1940s.

Before president Truman signed the ERP, there was also widespread political support in the Netherlands for the Marshall aid. A poll from March 1948 shows that almost all political parties, except the Communist party CPN, supported the Marshall Plan.<sup>58</sup> While the CPN vigorously opposed the Marshall Plan, this faction was not a dominant party in Dutch parliament and thus no threat to the ERP, as opposed to the communist parties in France, Italy, Denmark, and Greece.<sup>59</sup> While most parties concurred that the Marshall aid would help the Dutch economy, there was opposition against the bilateral agreement. In the eyes of the CPN, for instance, the agreement violated Dutch sovereignty because it would force economic reforms and forbid the Dutch to

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<sup>55</sup> Van der Eng, 110.

<sup>56</sup> Van der Eng, 111.

<sup>57</sup> Van der Eng, 110.

<sup>58</sup> Van dr Eng, 91.

<sup>59</sup> Van der Eng, 91; Albertine Bloemendal, *Reframing the Diplomat: Ernst Van Der Beugel and the Cold War Atlantic Community* (Boston: BRILL, 2018), 79; Holm, 33. For the discussion on the isolation of the communists in the Netherlands, see Jos van Dijk, *Ondanks Hun Dappere Rol in Het Verzet...: Het Isolement Van Nederlandse Communisten in De Koude Oorlog* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2016).

nationalize companies.<sup>60</sup> While other parties also had their reservations on the domination the Americans would have on Dutch policy matters through the bilateral agreement, the benefits of the ERP in general were seen as critical.

### 1.3 The public diplomacy campaign in the Netherlands

Only weeks later after Truman signed the ERP into law, the first shipments arrived in the Netherlands. But with the supplies and the dollars also came a comprehensive public diplomacy campaign that included pamphlets, posters, events, film, music, and radio broadcasts. The Economic Cooperation Administration, with its headquarters in Paris, was the independent body that coordinated the ERP in Europe. The Information Office of the ECA headquarters coordinated the public diplomacy efforts in the receiving countries of the ERP, and had mission offices in all of these countries.<sup>61</sup> These offices were part of an existing American embassy, so the ECA mission in the Netherlands was located in The Hague. In terms of staff, these missions would generally “have one US information officer who, with a couple of local support staff, would be responsible for the whole spectrum of information work, including film, press work, exhibitions and publications”.<sup>62</sup>

The public diplomacy campaigns of the ECA were not a stand-alone effort. There were other American organizations and departments that the ECA cooperated with. The Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the Office of the Special Representative (OSR) also had their own information departments which produced various forms of publicity and propaganda.<sup>63</sup> Departments that were not directly related to the Marshall Plan, such as the USIA and the CIA, also carried out information campaigns.

It is important to realize that the publicity campaigns in the Netherlands were a collective endeavor between the Dutch and the Americans. From the Dutch side, the Marshall Plan publicity was both coordinated and produced by the *Persdienst* (press service) of the Ministry of Economic

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<sup>60</sup> Van der Eng, 85.

<sup>61</sup> Van der Hoeven, 101.

<sup>62</sup> Fritsche, *The Marshall Plan Film Campaign*, 22.

<sup>63</sup> Anne M. Dixon, “The European Recovery Program,” George C. Marshall Foundation, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/foreign-assistance-act-1948/the-european-recovery-program>; The OEEC, established after Marshall’s speech at Harvard, was a permanent organization tasked with the general coordination of aid in Europe and stimulated further European cooperation. The OSR was a central office, stationed in Paris, that stood between the ECA and the OEEC. Any communication that from the country missions was also sent to the OSR.

Affairs. Max Weisglas, the director of the *Persdienst*, was responsible for the execution of this campaign. He received almost a *carte blanche* from Hans Hirschfeld, the government commissioner who was responsible for the entire Marshall Plan in the Netherlands. The Dutch press service worked together with the ECA to promote the Marshall Plan. Weisglas, for instance, frequently met with the ECA country mission to the Netherlands to harmonize the public diplomacy campaigns.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Dutch *Persdienst* employee, G.L. Verheul, also worked as a liaison officer for the ECA in the Hague, in order to keep an eye on the American efforts and to help coordinate publicity events for the MP.<sup>65</sup>

### 1.3.1 The aim of the publicity campaign

The publicity campaigns were not just meant to garner support for the Marshall Plan but also to change the perception of the Dutch on topics such as European cooperation, rearmament, and the “American Way of Life”. Support for the Marshall Plan was abundant, and the large majority of the Dutch was already aware of the importance of the Marshall Aid.<sup>66</sup> Aside from the workings, importance and potential of the Marshall Plan, the Dutch publicity campaign focused on Dutch economic policies, the productivity drive, and the Dutch appreciation and gratitude towards the Americans.<sup>67</sup> This was particularly important because the ECA had to show the American public that their taxes not only resulted in economic growth but also created new trans-Atlantic amities.

While both the *Persdienst* and the ECA played their part to promote the Marshall Plan and put the United States in a positive light, they sometimes disagreed about the way to do this. In the first few months, the ECA thought the Dutch publicity campaign was rather “static,” as the *Persdienst* mainly organized publicity events and information gatherings for the private sector. When the first MP-funded shipment of supplies entered the port of Rotterdam on April 26, 1948, a ceremony was held in which several members of the Dutch cabinet together with the American ambassador to the Netherlands, H. Baruch, welcomed the ship.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, an advertisement which proclaimed “*Nederland ZAL er bovenop komen!*” (The Netherlands will surmount!) featured in all major newspapers.<sup>69</sup> Other arrivals of goods funded by the Marshall Plan were also utilized

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<sup>64</sup> Van der Hoeven, 101.

<sup>65</sup> Van der Eng, 116.

<sup>66</sup> Van der Eng, 114.

<sup>67</sup> Van der Eng, 109-113.

<sup>68</sup> Van der Hoeven, 101.

<sup>69</sup> Van der Hoeven, 103.

in the publicity campaign. The Americans, however wanted a more “dynamic” approach, a campaign that reached and swayed more parts of Dutch society.<sup>70</sup> The first results from polling also showed that the understanding of the Marshall Plan among the Dutch public had not increased since the start of the ERP. *Persdienst* employees feared that the Dutch would distrust any kind of, what they called, *Poppenkast* (Puppet-show).<sup>71</sup>

Despite the Dutch objections, the publicity campaigns from 1949 indeed showed a more dynamic approach. The *Persdienst*, together with the ECA, organized conferences and exhibitions, produced radio plays, short films, brochures, and pamphlets. The *Persdienst* organized exhibitions, like *Alle hens aan dek* (All hands on deck) and published booklets like *Hoe werkt het Marshall-plan?* (How does the Marshall Plan work); *Zo werkt het Marshall-plan!* (This is how the Marshall Plan works!); and Jo Spier’s especially successful *Het Marshall-plan en U* (The Marshall Plan and You).<sup>72</sup> Over the course of 1949 and 1950, the publicity campaign could present the first results of the Marshall aid, like the post-war repairs in the war-torn Arnhem, draining flooded areas in Walcheren, and repairing the port of Rotterdam.<sup>73</sup> Geopolitical developments, like the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, also made a significant impact on the publicity campaigns. The focus shifted from the workings of the Marshall Plan to related topics, such as European unification and rearmament.<sup>74</sup> The frictions between the the *Persdienst* and the ECA, however, remained.

The ECA also worked separately from the Dutch to garner goodwill in the Netherlands towards the Marshall Plan and the United States generally. The ECA funded, for instance, the import of American books and magazines. ‘Informational media’, as the Dutch historian Van der Eng describes, was imported and distributed, including books and magazines, such as *Life*, and *Reader’s Digest*.<sup>75</sup> A significant part of the ECA’s public diplomacy campaign in the Netherlands was the medium of film. These films were meant to present both the workings and purpose of the Marshall Plan, and showed the potential and comfort of life in the US In addition to this, the ECA

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<sup>70</sup> Tity de Vries, “Berichtgeving,” *Marshall Plan in Perspectief*, 40.

<sup>71</sup> Van der Eng, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Van der Eng, 122; Mathilde Roza, “Educating the Nation: Jo Spier, Dutch National Identity, and the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands,” in *Politics and Cultures of Liberation: Media, Memory, and Projections of Democracy*, ed. Frank Mehring, Hans Bak, and Mathilde Roza (Brill, 2018), pp. 39-64, 39.

<sup>73</sup> Inklaar, 29.

<sup>74</sup> Inklaar, 29.

<sup>75</sup> Van der Eng, 123.

also commissioned and funded prominent Dutch filmmakers, such as Herman van der Horst and Bert Haanstra, to make documentaries that promoted the Marshall Plan.<sup>76</sup>

### 1.3.2 Broadcasting the Marshall Plan

Based on the existing literature, the medium of radio seems to have been used mostly as a supportive medium to bolster publicity events. While Hirschfeld and the *Persdienst* did not control the printed press or radio broadcasters, these often complied and heavily reported on these events.<sup>77</sup> The ceremony on April 26<sup>th</sup> in 1948 at the port of Rotterdam, for instance, aired live on Dutch radio.<sup>78</sup> On December 15, 1949, Eugene Rachlis, an information officer for the ECA mission to the Netherlands, reported to the director of the Information Division at the American embassy in The Hague, Roscoe Drummond. At the time of reporting, Rachlis stated that the medium “[...] has been used mainly for news and special events coverage”. He also stated that “in general, radio can as be said to be as cooperative as the press”.<sup>79</sup>

Radio broadcasting was also part of the change towards the more comprehensive publicity campaigns since 1949. The correspondence between Rachlis and Drummond shows that the ECA is trying a new approach on radio. According to Rachlis, Dutch radio broadcasters had no experience yet with radio documentaries. Therefore, he reports, the ECA mission in the Hague was “[...] working with radio writers on a series of shows to be done for us under contract”.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, from the existing literature it appears that after this report, Dutch radio broadcasting incorporated the documentary-like style. The catholic broadcaster KRO, for instance, aired an “American Day” in March 1950.<sup>81</sup> In this program, the Dutch-American cultural ties were emphasized through a radio-play and a contest on the question “What does the Marshall aid mean for the Netherlands?”. The social-democratic VARA broadcast a radio-play on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950, called *De Kermis van Europa* (Europe’s Fair) and broadcast a radio-series for children on the Marshall Plan, and the liberal AVRO aired a play called *De nieuwe wereld helpt de oude* (The new world helps the old).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Roza, “Educating the Nation,” 59; De Vries, 46.

<sup>77</sup> Inklaar, 27.

<sup>78</sup> Van der Hoeven, 103.

<sup>79</sup> Eugene Rachlis to Roscoe Drummond, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box, inv. No. 114.

<sup>80</sup> Eugene Rachlis to Roscoe Drummond, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS).

<sup>81</sup> Van der Eng, 119.

<sup>82</sup> Van der Eng, 122; Van der Hoeven, 106.

This way, broadcasters from various pillars of society actively engaged with the Marshall Plan and worked to create publicity for the aid program.

Also part of the change from a rather “static” to a more “dynamic” publicity campaign are two major radio programs that engaged with Dutch-American relations. *Antwoordman* and *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* both aired under the AVRO-flag and were very popular features on Dutch radio. It seems that, before 1950, Dutch radio was predominantly used for information, while *Antwoordman* and *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* were both informative and entertaining. In the case of *Antwoordman*, the program did not just answer questions. The show played into the curiosities of listeners, as they could send in the questions. But it was the mystery of the anonymous but seemingly omniscient answer-man added that mainly captivated Dutch listeners. It was rumored, for instance, by listeners that the answer-man knew all the answers without consulting books.<sup>83</sup> This also set *Antwoordman* apart from *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, as in the latter program both the presenter and the answer-man were credited by the AVRO.<sup>84</sup>

While both programs were part of the publicity campaigns’ development, the programs served different goals. *Antwoordman* aimed at a more general audience, as the questions that were asked in this program could deal with anything. However, as the program was clandestinely produced by the ECA, this program featured many fabricated questions about the Marshall Plan and the United States in general. *Antwoordman* was, therefore, also aimed at an unaware listener. *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, on the other hand, specifically dealt with the relationship between the Netherlands and the United States. The United States Information Service (USIS) described the program as an attempt to “increase Dutch understanding and appreciation of the United States, and to dispel misconceptions about the United States”.<sup>85</sup> According to historian of the Cold War, David Snyder, *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* was also an attempt by the State Department to specifically reach Dutch housewives.<sup>86</sup> While *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* was also funded by the ECA, it seems that *Antwoordman* was more an attempt to inform the Dutch public of the Marshall Plan than *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* was.

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<sup>83</sup> “De *Antwoordman*: politieke reclamestunt van de Amerikanen,” *De Volkskrant*, August 11th, 1951, 1.

<sup>84</sup> “Onze Amerikaanse Buren,” *De Radiobode*, October 15th, 1950, 9, Het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Snyder, 68.

<sup>86</sup> Snyder, 68.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided the necessary context that is needed to understand the role of *Antwoordman* in the broader Marshall Plan publicity campaigns in Europe. Cold War tensions laid the foundation of American aid to post-WOII Europe. With the Marshall-aid came comprehensive publicity campaigns that, most importantly, were to show the US Congress that the American taxpayer's money was spent effectively and benefit US national interests. In the Netherlands, it was mainly the ECA that cooperated with the *Persdienst* of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs to inform and persuade the Dutch public of the importance of the Marshall Plan. Despite substantive differences between the *Persdienst* and the ECA, the nature and focus of the publicity campaigns became more wide-ranging over time. This was not in the least due to the escalation of the Cold War. *Antwoordman*, can be seen as part of this development because it was not just an informative program but also a very entertaining and popular feature on Dutch radio.

## Chapter 2 – *Antwoordman* and the US state-private networks

The previous chapter demonstrated that *Antwoordman* was part of the larger Marshall Plan publicity campaigns in the Netherlands by the ECA. It did, however, not map how the AVRO, the European Cooperation Administration (ECA), and the Bruce Chapman organization worked together to produce and broadcast *Antwoordman* on Dutch national radio. To understand the role of *Antwoordman* within the larger structure of American early Cold War public diplomacy, the relationship between these state and private actors is crucial.

This chapter, therefore, will answer the question of how *Antwoordman* was part of an American state-private network in the early Cold War. First, I will set out the role of radio in the state-private networks in American public diplomacy in the early Cold War. Second, I will show how the *Antwoordman* was part of this structure. Third, I will argue that the ways in which the CIA worked through proxies and local citizen groups seem comparable to the cooperation between the ECA and the AVRO to broadcast *Antwoordman*. Essentially, this chapter shows that *Antwoordman* was part of a European-wide network between state and private actors that stretched well beyond the scope of the Marshall Plan.

### 2.1 State-private networks and American radio broadcasting

The concept of the state-private network refers to the many relationships, interconnections, and overlaps between American state actors and private sectors. In academic literature, it is argued that these networks were an important mechanism that contributed to the expansion of American power in the Cold War.<sup>87</sup> Similar to the creation of the European Recovery Program (ERP), American state-private networks that engaged with public diplomacy were rooted in the geopolitical tensions of the early Cold War. Fears of the spread of Communist thought and the expansion of Soviet influence in Eastern, Central, and Western Europe were powerful forces behind policies like the Truman Doctrine and the subsequent Campaign of Truth. The Truman Doctrine, for example, was directly motivated by the Greek civil war between Communist and the Greek government.<sup>88</sup> In addition to this, the National Security Council (NSC) was genuinely concerned about the rise of

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<sup>87</sup> For a more elaborate conceptualization of the state-private network, please see Inderjeet Parmar, “Conceptualizing the State-Private Network in American Foreign Policy,” in *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network*, ed. Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 13-28.

<sup>88</sup> Wasburn, *Broadcasting Propaganda: international radio broadcasting and the construction of political reality*, 24.

Communist sympathies in Italy. The NSC paper 1/1 concluded in February 1948 that “the United States should make full use of its political, economic and, if necessary, military power [...] in preventing Italy from falling under the domination of the USSR either through external armed attack or through Soviet-dominated Communist movements within Italy”.<sup>89</sup> Although a military campaign was not necessary, these concerns bolstered the foundation of comprehensive public diplomacy campaigns.

The legal basis for these campaigns did not just come from the Truman administration but also from Congress. Senator Alexander Smith and Congressman Karl Mundt were concerned about the negative image of the United States (US) in Europe and the Communist propaganda apparatus, and therefore initiated the US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948. This was meant “to promote the better understanding of the United States among the peoples of the world and to strengthen cooperative international relations,” through the use of printed press, radio broadcasts, films, exchanges, and exhibitions. This act was the basis on which the United States Information Service (USIS) of the State Department carried out its operations.

The subsequent public diplomacy, often referred to as psychological warfare, was divided under various bodies of the US government. In December 1947, the NSC appointed the CIA with the responsibility for “covert psychological operations,” while the State Department focused on overt propaganda. This distinction was mainly made because Secretary of State Marshall did not want to be associated with any covert operations. These overt and covert operations were part of a larger strategy that included the use of private actors to counter the Soviet sympathies. While Chapter three further investigates the overt and covert aspects of American radio broadcasting in the Netherlands, this does show that state-private networks were central to the American public diplomacy campaigns in the early Cold War.

Developments in the Cold War further intensified US propaganda. As historian Rawnsley enumerates, “the deterioration of the international situation after 1948 and the hardening of the Cold War, symbolized by the Berlin blockade, the consolidation of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe, and the outbreak of war in Korea, convinced the Truman administration that a more concerted and certainly more militant propaganda effort was required”.<sup>90</sup> This more vigorous approach to public

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<sup>89</sup> David H. Stauffer et al., eds., “Index: Document 469,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, Volume III, Western Europe Press Release* (Department of State, 1975), pp. 765-769, 767.

<sup>90</sup> Gary D. Rawnsley, “The Campaign of Truth: a Populist Propaganda,” in *Cold-War Propaganda in the 1950s*, ed. Gary D. Rawnsley (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1999), pp. 31-46, 31.

diplomacy, was to counter the Soviet “lies” worldwide by distributing the “truth” around the world. Congress subsequently appropriated 80\$ billion dollars to the large range of public diplomacy tools.<sup>91</sup>

### 2.1.1 Broadcasting via state-private networks

Within this framework, various government bodies used state-private networks to change the hearts and minds of people on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The mobilization of student groups and international student exchanges, for instance, required the cooperation of the US State Department and local universities. Sports were also used to spread a positive image of the US in the world, especially concerning race relations. The State Department, for instance, funded worldwide campaigns by the basketball team Harlem Globetrotters to positively reflect on the place of African Americans in society.<sup>92</sup> Within the US, the government – sometimes covertly - funded intellectual magazines, such as *The Reporter*, *Partisan Review*, and *New Leader*.<sup>93</sup> This way, these magazines became part of the Cold War propaganda system.

In the realm of American radio broadcasting, American information officers also had to make use of the state-private networks. Especially Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) are excellent examples of this. Voice of America (VOA), often named together with the other two stations, is different. VOA, which is still the official American radio broadcaster abroad, has been under the jurisdiction of the State Department and overtly aired 24/7 American reporting in forty languages.<sup>94</sup> As opposed to RFE and RL, VOA was meant to tell the “truth” and accurately portray American life.<sup>95</sup> RFE and RL, on the other hand, engaged with propaganda in the sense of “information with a purpose”. These stations were meant to be an alternative source of information in the Soviet-controlled territories, and thus actively counter the Soviet narrative.<sup>96</sup>

While VOA relied mostly on American reporting, RFE and RL were entrenched in state-private networks to broadcast on the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain. As Johnson argues in his book

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<sup>91</sup> Toby C. Rider, *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and US Foreign Policy* (Urbana etc.: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 20.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas, Damion L. *Globetrotting: African American Athletes and Cold War Politics*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017, 43.

<sup>93</sup> Elke Van Cassel, “The Reporter Magazine and The Cold War,” in *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network*, ed. Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 116-140, 134.

<sup>94</sup> Rider, *Cold War Games*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> Wasburn, 27.

<sup>96</sup> Wasburn, 28.

*Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: the CIA Years and Beyond*, these radio stations were the result of years of attempts to use the talents of displaced persons in the Eastern-European Soviet states to broadcast in favor of US national interests.<sup>97</sup> While the various local émigré groups had some autonomy in their broadcasts, the stations were covertly funded by CIA proxies. The stations were funded by the seemingly private National Committee for a Free Europe and the Free Europe Committee, and the substantial fundraising campaign called the Crusade for Freedom.<sup>98</sup> Without the funding, these group would not have been able to broadcast. The bulk of funding that came from the Crusade for Freedom seemed to have been gathered by fundraising events, this was “a cover for covert US government funding [...]”.<sup>99</sup> It was the CIA that, using the wording of historian Frances Stonor Saunders, “called the tune” in this public-private network. At the same time, such state-private networks were not controlled by “a state puppet-master pulling the strings” but existed through negotiation between actors.<sup>100</sup> These operations should, therefore, not be seen in the context of “control” but of “direction”.<sup>101</sup>

## 2.2 The state-private network of *Antwoordman*

The ECA also made use of these state-private networks in its public diplomacy. The ECA could be seen as an example of a state-private network in itself. The collaboration between the state and the private sector was prominent from the outset. Initially, the Marshall Plan organization was meant to fall under the State Department.<sup>102</sup> Secretary Marshall argued in a Senate hearing in early 1948 that it would have been “unfortunate” if a whole new body of government needed to be established for the ERP.<sup>103</sup> Critics, such as the Select Congressional Committee on Foreign Aid, pointed out that the State Department lacked resources and know-how to carry out such a vast operation. The Brookings Institution, a non-partisan think tank, advised that the Marshall Plan should be executed by a mixture of state and private actors because the aid mainly targeted

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<sup>97</sup> Johnson, *Radio*, 7.

<sup>98</sup> Wasburn, 26; Rider, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Johnson, *Radio*, 14.

<sup>100</sup> W. Scott Lucas, “Beyond Freedom, Beyond Control: Approaches to Culture and the State-Private Network in the Cold War,” in *The Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960*, ed. Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 15-40, 60.

<sup>101</sup> Lucas, “Beyond Freedom,” 60.

<sup>102</sup> Bloemendal, 67; Van der Eng, 20.

<sup>103</sup> Bloemendal, 67.

businesses.<sup>104</sup> Because of the significant involvement of American corporate representatives in the making of the ERP, the plan was actively supported by the American businesses sector.

The apparatus of the ECA also shows the linkages between the public and private sector. The ECA was a body of the US government but attracted many employees from the private sector. For instance, the ECA mission to the Netherlands was set up by A. Valentine, who previously was the president of Rochester University. In June 1949, Valentine was succeeded by C.E. Hunter, who was the president of the credit bank New York Trust Co. The ECA, in addition to this, also cooperated closely with non-state groups. It produced films together with Dutch film makers, Marshall Plan brochures were made together with Dutch illustrators, and Dutch newspapers and radio broadcasters often reported positively on the Marshall Plan. The Dutch Marshall Plan organization also worked with both the ECA and Dutch private actors. For instance, Hans Hirschfeld, the chief-coordinator of the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands, urged Dutch journalists in a press briefing on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1948, to generate more publicity about the Marshall Plan.<sup>105</sup> The press releases on the Marshall Plan written by both the *Persdienst* and the ECA-mission to the Netherlands were generally adopted by newspapers completely.<sup>106</sup>

In the case of *Antwoordman*, the ECA cooperated with the Bruce Chapman organization and the Dutch broadcasting network AVRO. The Bruce Chapman organization, a public relations bureau, originally produced the Answer Man program in the US where this program broadcast between 1937 and 1956. While the program started out in Manhattan, the program over time spread out over the U.S and in 1950 the Answer Man broadcast in 51 American cities.<sup>107</sup> The headquarters of the program was located in New York, where all questions sent by post were examined and were either answered in the broadcast or returned by post by the organization's 40 person staff.<sup>108</sup> In Europe, the Bruce Chapman organization produced different language-versions of the Answer Man program for the ECA. For example, the Answer Man program aired "in Germany as Der Antwortmann; in France as L'Homme Qui Salt; in Holland as De Antwoord-Man; in Poland as Dr.

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<sup>104</sup> Van der Eng, 21.

<sup>105</sup> Van der Eng, 113.

<sup>106</sup> Van der Eng, 111.

<sup>107</sup> "Radio: Indians, Snakes & Noah," Time (Time Inc., March 5, 1951), <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,805793,00.html> (Accessed December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

<sup>108</sup> John Dunning, *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 37; "Radio: Indians, Snakes & Noah," Time (Time Inc., March 5, 1951).

Wszech-wiedzi”.<sup>109</sup> While the set-up of the show was the same in all these countries, the ways in which these European versions were produced and aired differed.

What makes the Dutch *Antwoordman* stand out between these versions of the program, is the state-private aspect of its production. *Antwoordman* seems to be the only Answer Man program broadcast via a private actor. In Luxembourg, for instance, the ECA bought airtime to broadcast the program and in Germany the ECA broadcast the program via an American radio station.<sup>110</sup> In these countries, the ECA did not use an intermediary to air the program. Just as the CIA and the USIS worked with private actors on the local level for Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, the ECA worked with the AVRO to air *Antwoordman*. The main reason for the Americans to broadcast through the voice of a Dutch broadcast network was that Dutch listeners mostly tuned in to Dutch programs.<sup>111</sup> An English-language show would be highly ineffective. While Dutch national broadcasters like the AVRO, NCRV, and KRO, served a public purpose and were funded in part by taxes, they are independent institutions on which the Dutch government has no influence. The AVRO and other networks were thus free to work with the ECA, albeit frustrating to the *Persdienst*.

Another reason why the ECA chose to broadcast *Antwoordman* in the Netherlands via an intermediary may be because Dutch radio listeners mainly tuned in to the radio broadcaster of their own *zuil* (pillar) in society. The pillarization of Dutch society posed a significant challenge for any American public diplomacy campaign, as each broadcaster or newspaper had a specific group of followers. The target audience for the AVRO was neutral liberal, for the KRO Roman Catholic, for the VARA socialist, for the NCRV Calvinist orthodox, and for the VPRO liberal Protestant.<sup>112</sup> To reach the general public, Americans worked with various broadcast networks. The AVRO proved to be a rather pragmatic partner for the ECA. This broadcast network was one of the larger networks, with 175.000 members, which was comparable to the VARA and the NCRV.<sup>113</sup> As opposed to the latter two networks, the AVRO’s audience was relatively neutral and programs, such as *Antwoordman* could perhaps also appeal to other pillars of Dutch society.

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<sup>109</sup> “Radio: Indians, Snakes & Noah,” *Time* (Time Inc., March 5, 1951).

<sup>110</sup> “De *Antwoordman*: politieke reclamestunt van de Amerikanen,” *De Volkskrant*.

<sup>111</sup> DeVos, “A Field Study”, 88.

<sup>112</sup> Snyder, 68.

<sup>113</sup> Eugene Rachlis to Roscoe Drummond, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1949, RIAS.

Through the state-private network between the ECA and the AVRO, the Americans did not have to rely on reluctant state cooperation. *Antwoordman* was out of the control of the *Persdienst* because the AVRO took the final editorial responsibility. Similar to RL and RFE, *Antwoordman* seemed like it was a local production. It seemed as if the questions came from the listeners, which were asked by presenter and AVRO-*omroepster* (announcer) Netty Rosenfeld. Meanwhile, many of these questions were drafted and produced in the ECA headquarters in Paris.<sup>114</sup>

### 2.2.1 The ECA's limited control and the AVRO's agency

Similar to the CIA in the context of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in the 1950s, the ECA did not directly control the broadcasts of *Antwoordman*. While *Antwoordman* was being funded by the ECA, the answers to the questions and some of the Marshall Plan-related questions themselves, were provided by the Bruce Chapman organization.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the ECA was not able to supervise the contents of the show, which frustrated the information department in the mission in The Hague. The ECA's information officer Kenyon Kilbon uttered his frustrations on July 30, 1951, to Robert Hopkins of the ECA information department in Paris. Kilbon disapproves of the quality of the scripts of *Antwoordman* written in Paris, as these were "[...] obnoxious enough to lose a substantial part of the following the program now has. It's not only a question of poor taste [...] but also one of accuracy in some instances".<sup>116</sup> He even advised to cancel the program if the overall quality or supervision did not improve.<sup>117</sup> The fact that Kilbon suggested this, demonstrates that the ECA did not necessarily have direct control over the contents, but that it could steer it in a certain direction.

It is important to acknowledge that the AVRO had a certain agency in dealing with the ECA. The AVRO was an independent broadcasting network and cooperated with the ECA because it furthered its own interests. For the AVRO, this was simply an opportunity to broadcast a popular show for free. A week after the *Volkskrant* published the story on the ECA's involvement with the program, AVRO-director Willem Vogt responded in the AVRO's magazine, *De Radiobode*. On

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<sup>114</sup> Kenyon Kilbon to Robert Hopkins, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box 10, inv. No. 466.

<sup>115</sup> "De Antwoordman" "AVRO heeft contract met ECA," *De Volkskrant*, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, 1, Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010843040:mpeg21:p001> (Accessed December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

<sup>116</sup> Kenyon Kilbon to Robert Hopkins, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS)

<sup>117</sup> Kenyon Kilbon to Robert Hopkins, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, RIAS.

August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1951, he stated that such a question-answer program would be too expensive for the AVRO to broadcast independently, due to the high workload of processing, researching, and answering all questions sent by post.<sup>118</sup> According to Vogt, the Bruce Chapman organization was merely an “information-center” where all questions could be answered. In the words of Vogt, the fundamental basis of the ECA’s cooperation with the AVRO was that if the ECA was allowed to answer Marshall aid-related questions for *Antwoordman*, it would also provide the answers to all other questions in the program as well.<sup>119</sup> In addition to this, Vogt also stated that the agreement between the AVRO and the ECA allowed the ECA to include and produce three questions related to their affairs each broadcast.<sup>120</sup> The final editing of the scripts, however, was still in the hands of the AVRO.

Vogt essentially argues in this preface to the *Radiobode* that the cooperation between the ECA and the AVRO was one of two equal partners. Neither the ECA nor the AVRO was paid in the cooperation, but they worked together because they had “two parallel, wholly honorable interests”.<sup>121</sup> The AVRO, on the one hand, would have a popular program on national radio. The ECA, on the other hand, sponsored and commissioned the program because it believed it was “[...] a valuable contribution to the cultivation of understanding for the concept of European unification”.<sup>122</sup> By openly stating this, the ECA acknowledged that the program was an integral part of the Marshall Plan public diplomacy, as European unification was one of the focal points of the ERP. The AVRO was fully aware of this motivation, as Vogt argued that the Marshall aid in itself “[...] is not enough, but that [America] next to the aid creates an “information service,” which explains whom, why, and how they support”.<sup>123</sup> The AVRO thus knew that the Marshall aid came with a campaign to inform the Dutch public of the necessity of the ERP and the conditions, such as further European cooperation, that came with it. In the eyes of the AVRO, the ECA’s motivation was the reality that they had to deal with.

Another aspect that adds to the idea that the AVRO could exercise agency concerning *Antwoordman*, is that it was able to continue the program for six weeks after the ECA withdrew.

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<sup>118</sup> “Antwoordman,” *De Radiobode*, August 26th, 1951, 3, Het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

<sup>119</sup> “Antwoordman,” *De Radiobode*.

<sup>120</sup> “Antwoordman: Politiek van Amerika?” *Het Vaderland*, August 11th, 1951, 7, Delpher Online Archive. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB19:000846036:mpeg21:p00007> (Accessed January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022).

<sup>121</sup> “Antwoordman,” *De Radiobode*.

<sup>122</sup> “De Antwoordman” AVRO heeft contract met ECA,” *De Volkskrant*.

<sup>123</sup> “Antwoordman,” *De Radiobode*.

Contrary to what is generally written about the program, *Antwoordman* ended indefinitely on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1951.<sup>124</sup> After the ECA ended its involvement with the show in late August, the AVRO worked directly with the Bruce Chapman organization. However, due to continuing pressure and public distrust of the program, the AVRO and Bruce Chapman together decided to end the show.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.3 Dutch frustrations with the state-private network

The *Persdienst* naturally wanted to retain control over the information campaigns in the Netherlands. Not in the least because visions on public diplomacy differed between the Dutch and the Americans. The Dutch government disliked the myriad of information and publicity campaigns of the ECA in the Netherlands.<sup>126</sup> The *Persdienst* feared that too much publicity would be counterproductive because it could overload the Dutch public, only resulting in more distrust towards the Marshall Plan.<sup>127</sup> The *Persdienst*, as a representative of Dutch society, believed it knew best which public diplomacy method would be effective in the Netherlands.

Despite their disagreements, the *Persdienst* occasionally needed to comply with the ECA's wishes. One reason behind this, was that the continuation of the Marshall Plan depended partially on the American goodwill that the Dutch could build through cooperation. *Persdienst* executive, Hoogwater, reported to Hirschfeld on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1952, that the Americans would like Hirschfeld to participate in a radio broadcast on the workings of the Marshall Plan.<sup>128</sup> The *Persdienst* urged Hirschfeld to acquiesce to this request, while both Hoogwater and Hirschfeld knew “[...] that such a radio broadcast is of little use”.<sup>129</sup> At the time of the scandal surrounding the ECA's involvement in *Antwoordman*, some anti-American sentiments were already noticeable.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps Hoogwater believed such a public speech would not help regain the trust of the Dutch public, after the public relations debacle of the *Antwoordman* affair. However, Hoogwater argued that “perhaps it is desired that we are willing to cooperate with the Americans so now and then in the field of publicity”.<sup>131</sup> The *Persdienst* advised Hirschfeld to do the speech not because Hoogwater believed

<sup>124</sup> “De Antwoordman,” *De Radiobode*, October 7th, 1951, 5, Het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

<sup>125</sup> “De Antwoordman,” *De Radiobode*, October 7th, 1951, 5.

<sup>126</sup> Van der Eng, 125.

<sup>127</sup> Van der Eng, 125.

<sup>128</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1952, Dutch National Archive, the Hague, Code-Archief Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1945-1954, inv. No. 23056.

<sup>129</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1952, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>130</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1952, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>131</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1952, Dutch National Archive.

it contributed to a better understanding of the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands, but because it would temporarily satisfy American wishes.

When the ECA's sponsorship of *Antwoordman* became known, what mainly frustrated the *Persdienst* was that American Marshall Plan organizations in Paris implemented public diplomacy policy without consulting the Dutch government. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Hoogwater communicated about this with Van der Beugel, who coordinated the daily implementation of the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands. Hoogwater informed him that *Antwoordman* was a publicity feature by the ECA and that the *Persdienst* was not consulted in the matter.<sup>132</sup> He also mentions that it happened frequently that plans, like *Antwoordman*, were developed by Marshall Plan organizations in Paris and then implemented locally.<sup>133</sup> While Hoogwater argues these plans were sometimes successful, they could also have "unpleasant repercussions," in which he refers to the aftermath of *Antwoordman*.<sup>134</sup> The main problem that he mentioned was that the American public diplomacy policy was established independently from European advisors, which was the result of a lack of communication between the Marshall Plan organizations and European information agencies like the *Persdienst*.<sup>135</sup> This resulted in American publicity attempts that ultimately decreased trust in the Marshall Plan, while they were intended to boost Dutch opinion on the Marshall Plan and the US, in general. Hoogwater advised Van der Beugel to "again address the Americans to advocate the use of European information agencies".<sup>136</sup> The Dutch and American governments would benefit from a successful public diplomacy campaign, but if the Americans would not take into account more the local sensibilities and attitudes, this would undermine its effectiveness.

Indeed, the anti-Americanism that Hoogwater noticed in this correspondence to Hirschfeld, is also apparent in the newspaper coverage of the scandal. The *Volkskrant*, for instance, denounced this association and the way in which information about either Russia or America was "woven deviously through a seemingly regular program".<sup>137</sup> The liberal newspaper *Het Vaderland* responded to the *Volkskrant*'s publication that the story could contribute to the existing skepticism towards the US, as it argued that "there is also this great danger to this disguised American

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<sup>132</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to E.H. Van der Beugel, August 13th, 1951, Dutch National Archive, the Hague, Code-Archief Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1945-1954 (2.05.117), inv. No. 23056.

<sup>133</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to E.H. Van der Beugel, August 13th, 1951, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>134</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to E.H. Van der Beugel, August 13th, 1951, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>135</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to E.H. Van der Beugel, August 13th, 1951, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>136</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to E.H. Van der Beugel, August 13th, 1951, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>137</sup> "Ten Geleide: De bekend weg," *De Volkskrant*, August 11th, 1951, 6, Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010843039:mpeg21:p006> (Accessed December 3rd, 2021).

propaganda, that part of our people, who already are distrustful, quite unjustly will be inclined to hear the voice of Americans behind other publications, either by radio or in the press”.<sup>138</sup> The communist newspaper *De Waarheid* accentuated a similar sentiment, as it argued that the ECA’s choice to secretly fund and produce *Antwoordman* “underlines the fact that anti-Americanism is growing fast among our people”.<sup>139</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the ECA made use of the state-private networks that the US utilized in the early Cold War in order to sponsor *Antwoordman*. Similar to the efforts of the CIA to counter communist thought in Eastern Europe through Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, the ECA used such a network to broadcast in the Netherlands. The CIA used Eastern European émigré groups, funded by a proxy, to broadcast in the Eastern Europe, while the ECA broadcast *Antwoordman* in cooperation with the Bruce Chapman organization through the AVRO. The ECA chose to work with the AVRO mainly because this broadcaster was deemed relatively neutral in the pillarized media landscape. This way, the ECA-headquarters in Paris could directly implement its public diplomacy in the Netherlands without consulting the *Persdienst*. Similar to the CIA’s position with regard to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, the ECA was not able to directly control the contents of the broadcasts but could steer the direction of the show by, for instance, threatening it with cancellation. The use of such a network by the Americans was frustrating for the Dutch government because it believed the American methods would be counterproductive in the Netherlands.

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<sup>138</sup> “Binnen klein bestek: ongelukkige propganda,” *Het Vaderland*, August 13th, 1951, 1, Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB19:000846037:mpeg21:p00001> (Accessed January 6th, 2022).

<sup>139</sup> “De *Antwoordman* van de AVRO is een Amerikaan,” *De Waarheid*, August 13th, 1951, 3. Delpher Online Archive  
Delpher op 14-01-2022, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010852623:mpeg21:p003> Accessed December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

## Chapter 3 – Secretly broadcasting *Antwoordman*

In the previous chapter, I argued that *Antwoordman* was part of the state-private networks that the United States (US) established after World War II (WWII) for public diplomacy campaigns. In these networks, US state actors cooperated with local private actors domestically or abroad, like citizen groups, journalists, and artists, to more effectively inform and persuade a particular populace. As some of these networks were kept from the public at the time, the question arises to why the ECA decided to sponsor *Antwoordman* covertly. Subsequently, this raises the questions of whether the secrecy surrounding the program was conventional in the Marshall Plan's public diplomacy and what the result of this confidentiality was.

This chapter will, therefore, systematically examine the covert aspects of *Antwoordman*. First, I will question to what extent *Antwoordman* was a covert operation and with that, the degree to which the show was propaganda. To do that, I will first map the three degrees of propaganda, those being white, gray, and black. Second, I will question why the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) chose to broadcast the program clandestinely and to what extent this was a common strategy by the organization. Third, I will examine what the aftermath was of the disclosure of the ECA's involvement in *Antwoordman* for the public diplomacy campaign of the Marshall Plan, and with that relationship between the ECA, the *Persdienst* (the Dutch press agency), and the Dutch press.

### 3.1 Propaganda and public diplomacy

Spreading information and propaganda is one of the methods through which states can exercise public diplomacy. However, the boundaries between information and propaganda have been blurry in the realm of American public diplomacy. What complicates this matter is that the definitions of information and propaganda were not as stark in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as they are in our day and age. For this reason, it is crucial that these concepts are defined carefully and clearly. In the early Cold War, propaganda in the eyes of American policymakers did not mean much more than “information with a purpose”.<sup>140</sup> Nowadays, propaganda often refers to disinformation, deception, and treachery.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Johnson, *Radio*, 4.

<sup>141</sup> Johnson, *Radio*, 4.

It is useful to identify different forms of propaganda, as they can indicate different methods and strategies of the producer of the information. While the following conceptual interpretations are essentially all propaganda, the extent to which the information involved is accurate and the source is either known or trustworthy differs. According to scholars of communication and propaganda, Jowett and O'Donnell, white propaganda is "that which comes from a source that is identified correctly and accurately reported".<sup>142</sup> For instance, Voice of America can be described as white propaganda. The broadcasts of this international radio station provide a one-sided perspective on world affairs but it is clear that the station is funded by the US government.

The difference between white and gray propaganda mainly refers to the transparency of the source. In the case of gray propaganda, the source "may or may not be correctly identified and the accuracy of the information is uncertain".<sup>143</sup> Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty are examples of this, as these stations were secretly funded by a CIA proxy, the Crusade for Freedom. Before the CIA's involvement was revealed in the 1960s, it seemed the station was funded by a group of concerned American citizens. Black propaganda, lastly, refers to information "[...] which is credited to a false source and spread lies, fabrications and deceptions".<sup>144</sup> Following this categorization, covert public diplomacy operations generally engage in either gray or black propaganda because the source of information is not clear.

The use of such propaganda in public diplomacy by the Americans was rooted in early-Cold War policies and developments. The Truman Doctrine and the Campaign of Truth, aimed at countering the propaganda and narrative of the Soviet Union, already bolstered a propaganda apparatus that spread an American narrative through various forms of media. In addition to this, the war in Korea and the rise of the anti-communist surge of McCarthyism in the United States toughened the American message in public diplomacy and stressed anti-communism and rearmament of post-War European countries.<sup>145</sup> The ECA campaigns in the Netherlands, for instance, needed to steer Dutch public opinion towards rearmament.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Jowett, Garth, and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999 cited in Guth, David W. "Black, White, and Shades of Gray: The Sixty-Year Debate Over Propaganda Versus Public Diplomacy." *Journal of Promotion Management* 14, no. 3-4 (2009): 309–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496490802624083>, 311.

<sup>143</sup> Jowett, Garth, and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda and Persuasion* cited in Guth, David W. "Black, White, and Shades of Gray: The Sixty-Year Debate Over Propaganda Versus Public Diplomacy." 311.

<sup>144</sup> Jowett, Garth, and Victoria O'Donnell cited in Guth, 311.

<sup>145</sup> Baudet, 47.

<sup>146</sup> Snyder, 70.

### 3.2 *Antwoordman* as a covert propaganda operation

*Antwoordman* can be also seen as an example of gray propaganda, in which the source might not be acknowledged and in which the information might not be accurate. In the case of this program, the source of information was hidden from the public. The AVRO tried, for instance, to present *Antwoordman* as a Dutch production, rather than an American one. The AVRO advertised the program for the first time in its magazine, *De Radiobode*, on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1950. While the AVRO did mention in this announcement that the Answer Man-format already existed in several countries, like the US, the broadcaster did not mention that the program was produced in association with another organization.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, in the radio broadcasting guide of the magazine, the title of the program was not followed by a comment on the contents of the program.<sup>148</sup>

After the ECA's involvement in the show became public, the newspapers also commented on this aspect. In the the *Volkscrant*'s publication on the ECA's involvement on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951, the newspaper stated that the AVRO gave the impression that *Antwoordman* was its own production "by handing over their own announcer (Netty Rosenfeld)," while the one behind the answer-man was "in short Washington, or to stay closer at home Paris".<sup>149</sup> *Parool* argued the answer-man was "a figure commissioned by the ECA".<sup>150</sup> Even though the AVRO carried the responsibility for the information broadcast in *Antwoordman*, the listener was deceived and unconsciously listened to American-sanctioned information. The comments by these newspapers suggest that this covert aspect blurred the boundary between American and Dutch information. In that sense, *Antwoordman* seems to be a form of gray propaganda.

The AVRO did, however, acknowledge its partnership with a US body of government for a different show. *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* was broadcast by the AVRO between 1950 and 1956, which overlaps with the time period in which *Antwoordman* was broadcast. These programs have been mentioned together in scholarly literature on American public diplomacy as an instance of

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<sup>147</sup> "Vraag het de "Antwoord-Man," de man ,die alles weet," *De Radiobode*, November 15th, 1950, 6.

<sup>148</sup> "Dinsdag 21 november: Hilversum II 298," *De Radiobode*, November 15th, 1950, 19, Het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

<sup>149</sup> "De *Antwoordman*: politieke reclamestunt van de Amerikanen," *De Volkscrant*, August 11th, 1951, 1.

<sup>150</sup> "Koekoeksei in de Politiek: kritiek op uitzending van "Antwoordman," *Het Parool*, August 11th, 1951, 3, Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010830781:mpeg21:p003> (Accessed January 2nd, 2022).

American radio broadcasting in the Netherlands.<sup>151</sup> This show used a similar question-answer feature, including a Dutch actress who read the questions and an answer-man.<sup>152</sup> In the advertisement in the *Radiobode* which introduced *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* to the AVRO's members, Mrs. Eleanor Templeton of the US embassy in The Hague expressed her wish that "the Dutch and the Americans will get to know each other at least as good as they know their own neighbors".<sup>153</sup> In contrast to the announcements for *Antwoordman*, the source behind *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* was transparent.

In the instance of *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, the AVRO acknowledged its affiliation with the United States Information Service (USIS). The advertisement mentions that the answers will be given with the support of the USIS. Furthermore, each time the program featured in the *Radiobode*, it stated that the program was "prepared in cooperation with the United States Information Service of the American embassy in The Hague".<sup>154</sup> In his chapter on the American publicity campaigns and propaganda in the Netherlands during the 1950s, Floribert Baudet wonders why *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* did not end the same way as *Antwoordman*. The answer to this is perhaps that the sources of information, in this case, are clear, and while the information that was broadcast served a political purpose, the listener at least knew whose perspective it was. In that sense, *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* can be described as white propaganda, rather than gray.

The continuation of this program, as opposed to *Antwoordman*, also shows that propaganda in itself was not problematic in the Netherlands. Because there was no secrecy surrounding *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, there was nothing that could be revealed about the program. The continuation perhaps demonstrates that the notion of the American government in the Netherlands that the Dutch aversion of propaganda obligated them to engage in covert propaganda was flawed. According to the *Volkscrant*, the Dutch public was, for instance, not necessarily against the promotion of the Marshall Plan.<sup>155</sup> On the contrary, in the eyes of the *Volkscrant*, the US government only deserved praise and gratitude for its efforts. It was the secrecy that mainly frustrated the Dutch government and press.

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<sup>151</sup> Both in Snyder "Domesticity, Rearmament and limits of US Diplomacy in the Netherlands," 67, and Floribert Baudet's "De strijd om de hearts and minds," 49, the two radio shows are examined in the same line of argumentation.

<sup>152</sup> "Onze Amerikaanse Buren," *De Radiobode*, October 15th, 1950, 9.

<sup>153</sup> "Onze Amerikaanse Buren," *De Radiobode*, October 15th, 1950, 9.

<sup>154</sup> "Dinsdag 21 november: Hilversum II 298," *De Radiobode*, November 15th, 1950, 19.

<sup>155</sup> "Ten Geleide Weg: De bekende weg," *De Volkscrant*, August 11th, 1951, 6.

### 3.3 Why so secret?

It is significant that the ECA engaged in covert operations. Unlike the CIA, the ECA was not an organization immersed in secrecy and chicanery. The CIA had been established to enact in secrecy and covert operations in order to protect the security and the interests of the US. The workings of the CIA often remained a secret for years after they occurred. It was, for instance, not until 1968 that *Ramparts*, a left-wing political and literary magazine, revealed that the CIA channeled funds to civilian organizations. And after further examination, it appeared that the CIA covertly funded RFE and RL through respectively the National Committee for a Free Europe and Free Europe Committee.<sup>156</sup>

The ECA, however, was a temporary organization that was tasked with the coordination and execution of the ERP. Its responsibilities and goals were not a secret, neither were many of the publicity campaigns. The ECA engaged in public diplomacy, which is not necessarily a covert operation. It was also no secret that the ECA worked with the press agencies of many countries to inform the European publics. The Dutch liberal newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad*, for instance, argued in response to *Antwoordman*-affair, that “it is well-known that editor’s offices are snowed under with articles and news items both from foreign press services and foreign governmental information services,” to continue that “it is up to the responsible editors to avail themselves of these services or not”.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, Vogt responded to questions of *Het Parool* that “the editorial office of the program rests at the AVRO and that no question passes which has not received the approval of the broadcasting association”.<sup>158</sup> From this perspective, the AVRO carries the responsibility for what was being said in its airtime, not the ECA. This would, however, also be the case if *Antwoordman* had been funded and produced overtly by the ECA.

#### 3.3.1 Protecting the secrecy

The ECA, nevertheless, went to great lengths to protect the secrecy of its involvement in *Antwoordman*. On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, the director of the Bruce Chapman organization, Dan Morley,

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<sup>156</sup> Mickelson, Sig (1983). *America's Other Voice: the Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers. ISBN 9780030632242, 126.; A. Ross Johnson, “Managing Media Influence Operations: Lessons from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 31:4, 683.

<sup>157</sup> This article is cited in Kenyon Kilbon to Eugene Rachlis, August 20, 1951. Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box 10, inv. No. 466.

<sup>158</sup> “AVRO krijgt niets voor “*Antwoordman*,” *Het Parool*, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, 3, Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010830782:mpeg21:p003> (Accessed November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

wrote to Joop Lückner, who was the editor in chief of the *Volkskrant*. This was twelve days before the *Volkskrant* published its article on *Antwoordman*. Morley states that an editor of the *Volkskrant*, Henry C. Faas, came by his office in Paris that day because he wanted to do a story on the Bruce Chapman organization and the international aspect of the Answer Man programs. In this letter, Morley tried to convince Lückner not to publish the story on the program. This seems to oppose what historian Floribert Baudet presented in his commentary on the program, as it was not USIS but the Bruce Chapman organization that reached out to the *Volkskrant*.<sup>159</sup> The article posed a serious problem for the organization and the ECA, as they had both consciously tried for a long time to keep their involvement away from the public.<sup>160</sup>

From this letter, the motivations of both the ECA and the Bruce Chapman organization become clear. Because the Bruce Chapman organization in Paris was commissioned by the ECA to provide the answers to the questions and produce the ECA-related questions for the Answer Man programs in Europe, it was also in its interest that the ECA's affiliation with the program did not become public. Morley describes the relationship between his organization and the ECA, by arguing that his organization "[...] deals with the truth and in the truth alone," while emphasizing that the truth about "[...] the help that is being offered to the people of Europe by the United States through the Marshall Plan" receives somewhat more attention in *Antwoordman*.<sup>161</sup>

The letter also illuminates the ECA's motivations to hide its connection with the AVRO. Morley cites his correspondence with Kenyon Kilbon, an American information officer at the ECA mission office in The Hague. According to Morley, his office asked Kilbon "not too long ago" if it would be a good idea to generate more attention of the press for *Antwoordman*. Kilbon responded dismissively because he did not want to "[...] publish the fact that ECA has any connection with this program," to then argue that "it would be extremely difficult to avoid some publicity about this connection if we were to secure wider newspaper publicity".<sup>162</sup> Kilbon thus wanted to avoid any publicity on the program because he feared the backlash that would appear if this covert relationship were to be disclosed.

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<sup>159</sup> Baudet, 48.

<sup>160</sup> Dan Morley to Joop Lückner, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box 10, inv. No. 466.

<sup>161</sup> Dan Morley to Joop Lückner, July 30<sup>th</sup> 1951, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS).

<sup>162</sup> Dan Morley to Joop Lückner, July 30<sup>th</sup> 1951, RIAS.

Perhaps, Dan Morley counted on the state-private network between the ECA, the *Persdienst*, and the Dutch press, to comply with the wishes of the Bruce Chapman organization. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Dutch press was rather cooperative towards the ECA and frequently printed stories that reflected positively on the Marshall Plan. Morley summarizes his argument by stating that they were “[...] endeavoring to do constructive propaganda to help the people of Europe. Publicity would be most destructive to our aims”.<sup>163</sup> In this case, however, Lücker denied Morley’s request and continued printing the story.

The ECA’s decision to fund and produce *Antwoordman* covertly in the first place was rather common in its public diplomacy campaigns in the early 1950s. Themes like rearmament and anti-Communism became more prominent from 1950 due to international developments, like the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 and the rise of the extremely anti-Communist sentiments in the American government through senator Joseph McCarthy. The American policy makers in the Netherlands, however, believed there was a common aversion to strong political and anti-communist language in the Netherlands.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the *Persdienst* noticed in July 1950, that the Dutch public opinion did not respond well to the Cold War narrative in Marshall Plan public diplomacy.<sup>165</sup> The American embassy, State Department, and ECA also knew that Dutch radio broadcasters dismissed any material that looked like propaganda.<sup>166</sup> To avoid a negative reaction from the Dutch population to the public diplomacy campaigns, the ECA’s policy makers in Paris decided to use a more clandestine approach in the Netherlands. They essentially believed the credibility of their public diplomacy campaign would benefit more from a covert approach than from publicly sponsoring projects. The ECA, for instance, was not credited in the films it produced, while it wanted to maintain its hold on the contents of such films.<sup>167</sup> This way, gray propaganda was a way for the Americans to spread their message in the Netherlands.

*Antwoordman* could well be one of more instances in which the ECA scripted a broadcast, which a Dutch broadcast network then aired. Coulter D. Huyler, an ECA information officer in The Hague, mentioned in a memorandum to the Office of Special Relations in Paris on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1949, that the VARA aired a half-an-hour broadcast on the Marshall Plan. According to Huyler,

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<sup>163</sup> Dan Morley to Joop Lücker, July 30<sup>th</sup> 1951, RIAS.

<sup>164</sup> Baudet, 47.

<sup>165</sup> Van der Hoeven, 118.

<sup>166</sup> Snyder, 67; Baudet, 47.

<sup>167</sup> Baudet, 47.

this broadcast was “[...] based on a script prepared by the ECA Information Office”.<sup>168</sup> Although it is not clear whether the VARA literally aired the script, it does show that there are more instances in which Dutch broadcasters used American-made scripts. Future research is necessary to examine other examples of such broadcasts to further understand the relationship between Dutch radio and the ECA.

### 3.4 The aftermath of *Antwoordman*

The response of the Dutch press and government to the *Volkskrant*'s publication does reinforce the notion that the Dutch strongly renounced the use of covert American propaganda in the Netherlands. The Dutch press castigated the allegedly hidden American propaganda of *Antwoordman* in the Netherlands. The editorial of the *Volkskrant* argued on August 11, 1951, that it was “not in the least pleasant to experience that for a long time a foreign nation was able to make propaganda via Hilversum under the Dutch flag,” to later continue that “the Parisian questions [scripted by the Bruce Chapman organization for the ECA] are the political cuckoo eggs in the nest of national curiosities”.<sup>169</sup> The communist paper *De Waarheid* asked on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, “how is it possible, you might wonder, that a foreign entity can simply seize our microphone and microphones abroad to make this propaganda?”<sup>170</sup> The covert aspect of *Antwoordman* was at the heart of the criticism at the time. When a reader of the *Volkskrant* responded to the article on August 18<sup>th</sup> and downplayed the importance of the alleged propaganda in *Antwoordman*, the editors responded that their publication was aimed at “the sneaky way in which this popular radio show (only established for that one goal) existed”.<sup>171</sup> It thus was the covert nature of *Antwoordman* that was at the heart of the Dutch frustrations.

While the *Persdienst* disliked and condemned the idea that it was surpassed by the ECA in its publicity campaigns and secretly used its own network with local actors, the main source of

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<sup>168</sup> Coulter D. Huyler, Jr. to AI Friendly, Chief, OSR European Information, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box 1, inv. No. 114.

<sup>169</sup> “Ten Geleide Weg: De bekende weg,” *De Volkskrant*, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951, 6.

<sup>170</sup> “De *Antwoordman* van de AVRO is een Amerikaan,” *De Waarheid*, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, 3.

<sup>171</sup> “Geachte redactie,” *De Volkskrant*, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1951, 6, Delpher Online Archive, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010843044:mpeg21:p006> (Accessed November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021); In Dutch, the *Volkskrant* used the word “slinks” to describe the conduct of the ECA regarding *Antwoordman*. There are various English translations of the word, such as “devious,” “dishonest,” “deceitful,” and “insidious”. I chose the word “sneaky” because I believe it covers some of the connotations involved.

frustration for the Dutch press agency also appears to have been that it was done covertly. The director of the *Persdienst*, Hoogwater, focused in his report to Hirschfeld on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, particularly on the identity of the answer-man in the program. Throughout the program itself, the answer-man did not want to reveal his identity and remained undisclosed. The *Volkskrant* revealed his identity, and the answer-man appeared to be Ven Schadd, a former employee of the radio department of the Dutch information service.<sup>172</sup> Hoogwater argued in this report to Hirschfeld that the mystery surrounding the answer-man added to the public's distrust regarding the program and the Marshall Plan public diplomacy campaign in general. Hoogwater also stated that he communicated some time earlier to Joseph Carter, an information officer of the ECA mission in The Hague, about *Antwoordman*. Hoogwater emphasized to Carter "in particular [...] the, in my opinion completely erroneous fact, that Answerman remained anonymous. This man's letters were signed by a completely unreadable signature".<sup>173</sup> According to Hoogwater, the anonymity of the answer-man was counterproductive. Many information services of companies and institutions did not want to cooperate with the program because the identity of the answer-man was a mystery.<sup>174</sup>

What made the *Antwoordman*-affair even more damaging for the Marshall Plan publicity campaigns in the Netherlands, was that could have fed already existing skepticism in the Dutch public. According to the communication between Eugene Rachlis, an ECA information officer in The Hague, to Roscoe Drummond, director of the information department at the Office of the Special Representative in Paris, back in December 1949, this distrust was not a new phenomenon. In Rachlis' report, he stated that they were "in a fairly difficult period of Dutch-American relations. It is sometime the Dutch view that the US gives with one hand and takes with the other".<sup>175</sup> This general distrust towards US intentions in the Netherlands did not fade away. In a letter that Hoogwater sent to Hirschfeld on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1951, in the midst of the *Antwoordman*-affair, the *Persdienst* director mentions that in the previous months "a mounting criticism" was noticeable with regards to the economic and information campaigns of the US government.<sup>176</sup> With such anti-

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<sup>172</sup> "De *Antwoordman*: politieke reclamestunt van de Amerikanen," *De Volkskrant*.

<sup>173</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Dutch National Archive, the Hague, Code-Archief Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1945-1954, inv. No. 23056.

<sup>174</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Dutch National Archive.

<sup>175</sup> Eugene Rachlis to Roscoe Drummond, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1949. Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middelburg, Dutch-American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1784-1973, Reel 7, Box 1, inv. No. 114.

<sup>176</sup> J.H.W. Hoogwater to H.M. Hirschfeld, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1951, Dutch National Archive, the Hague, Code-Archief Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1945-1954, inv. No. 23056.

American sentiments in Dutch society at the time, the *Antwoordman*-affair may have further impaired the public diplomacy efforts of the Dutch and American governments.

The case of *Antwoordman*, however, also exemplifies the relationship between the Dutch press and Marshall Plan public diplomacy is not as straightforward as it seems. While it was clear for the Americans that the Dutch scolded anything that looked like propaganda to them, the press did actively participate in generating publicity for the ERP.<sup>177</sup> The Dutch press, for instance, frequently printed press releases by the ECA and *Persdienst* and reported on the Marshall Plan without much criticism.<sup>178</sup> The efforts of the USIA, for instance, to use Dutch radio were more constrained by the role of radio in the Dutch *verzuiling* of society than the lack of cooperation.<sup>179</sup>

The whole scandal surrounding the *Volkskrant*'s publication on *Antwoordman* also carries a sense of irony. From their own experience, the ECA believed that a large-scale publicity campaign with a clear anti-communist message would not work in the Netherlands, and therefore changed their message.<sup>180</sup> Because the Dutch also loathed what they perceived as propaganda, the ECA decided to work more clandestinely and refrained from putting its name under many ECA productions.<sup>181</sup> It was, however, precisely this ambiguity of the source that startled both the *Persdienst* and the Dutch press. The editorial of the *Volkskrant* also touched upon this, by arguing that if the ECA would have used the *Antwoordman*'s fifteen minutes of airtime to openly promote American interests, this would have been a different story.<sup>182</sup> The irony is that because the ECA did not want to get involved publicly, productions like *Antwoordman* only looked more like covert propaganda.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter shows *Antwoordman* was an instance of gray propaganda by the American Marshall Plan organization, ECA. From the outset of the program, the Dutch broadcaster AVRO did not acknowledge that the ECA funded the program and produced it via the Bruce

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<sup>177</sup> Van der Eng, 115; De Vries, 45.

<sup>178</sup> Inklaar, 27.

<sup>179</sup> Snyder, 68; According to Snyder, the pillarization of Dutch society made it difficult for American information officers in the Netherlands to reach all parts of Dutch Society. Each newspaper or broadcaster had a specific target audience, based on religious beliefs or political preferences. The Americans, therefore, could not reach and convince the Dutch public efficiently.

<sup>180</sup> Baudet, 47.

<sup>181</sup> Baudet, 47.

<sup>182</sup> "Ten Geleide Weg: De bekende weg," *De Volkskrant*.

Chapman organization. The AVRO did make public its affiliation with USIS for another show, *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, which also broadcast during the period when *Antwoordman* aired. The notion that *Antwoordman* ended in a scandal, while *Onze Amerikaanse Buren* continued until 1956, implies that American propaganda in the Netherlands only became problematic when done covertly. The ECA used the covert strategy because it believed the Dutch public opinion would reflect badly on public diplomacy from the US. However, as the aftermath of *Antwoordman* shows, it was precisely the secrecy that startled the Dutch press and government.

## Conclusion

This thesis focused on the role of the Dutch radio program *Antwoordman* as part of the Marshall Plan public diplomacy campaign in the Netherlands. This program, which aired from November 1950 until October 1951, was officially broadcasted by the Dutch broadcaster AVRO. However, the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* revealed on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951, that the program was sponsored and commissioned by the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA). Because of the backlash in the Dutch press, the ECA decided to withdraw from the program in August, after which the AVRO continued broadcasting the program until October 1951. While there has been substantial scholarly attention to both the public diplomacy that came with the Marshall Plan and the role of radio within the American public diplomacy apparatus, the use of radio in the Netherlands has remained rather understudied. This thesis, therefore, sought to fill this research gap by posing the question of how *Antwoordman* fits in the American and Dutch diplomacy campaigns for the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands.

In chapter 1, I mapped the origins of the Marshall Plan public diplomacy campaigns in the Netherlands. From the Dutch side, the Dutch press agency from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the *Persdienst*, was responsible for the publicity of the Marshall aid. From the American side, it was mainly the ECA that was responsible for the publicity of the Marshall Plan. From the beginning, both organizations differed in their approach to public diplomacy. While the ECA preferred a comprehensive and vigorous campaign, in which all available media were utilized to inform and persuade the Dutch public, the *Persdienst* feared this would impact the credibility of the campaign and thus distance the public from the Marshall Plan. Despite the Dutch resistance against the American public diplomacy methods, the nature of the campaigns did change over time. Especially from 1950 on, when the Korean War broke out and American anti-Communist sentiments started to play a bigger role in public diplomacy, the Dutch and American publicity campaign in the Netherlands became more extensive. While Dutch radio before 1950 was mainly used for event-coverage and the news, from the 1950s more Marshall Plan-related programs featured, like *hoorspelen* (radio plays), documentaries, and informative programs. The AVRO programs *Antwoordman* and, to a lesser extent, *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, may be a result of these developments in Marshall Plan public diplomacy.

Chapter 2 dealt with the nature of the cooperation between the AVRO and the ECA in the production of *Antwoordman*. In this chapter, I argued that *Antwoordman* was part of the state-

private network that the US utilized in the early Cold War. By using local actors, like journalists, citizens, and artists, the ECA could more directly implement its policies, as it did not need to consider the *Persdienst*'s wishes. In the case of *Antwoordman*, it seems that the ECA worked with the AVRO because this broadcaster was relatively neutral in the pillarized landscape of Dutch media. The state-private network between the ECA and the AVRO, however, limited the control that the ECA had over the content of the *Antwoordman* broadcasts. The cooperation also shows that the AVRO consciously worked together with the ECA because this would further its own interests. For the *Persdienst*, this cooperation was problematic as the ECA did not have to consult the Dutch for the best method of communication to the Dutch public. In the eyes of the Dutch press agency, the American approach to public diplomacy in the case of *Antwoordman* was counterproductive and only contributed to already growing anti-American sentiments in the Netherlands.

Chapter 3 dealt with the reasoning behind ECA's covert involvement in *Antwoordman*. First, I argued that *Antwoordman* was an instance of gray propaganda because of the secrecy of the ECA's sponsorship and the ambiguity of the source of information. The fact that *Onze Amerikaanse Buren*, a program in which the affiliation between the AVRO and USIS was overt, continued broadcasting until 1956, while *Antwoordman* ended in a scandal, perhaps indicates that propaganda in itself was not problematic for the Dutch public. Second, I argued that the reason why the ECA decided to sponsor *Antwoordman* covertly was perhaps because the message that was to be spread in American public diplomacy carried a political and Cold War-related narrative, something that the Dutch population generally did respond well to. In order to prevent an adverse reaction from the Dutch to the ECA's efforts, the ECA decided to sponsor and produce publicity features, like *Antwoordman*, clandestinely. Third, I argued that it was precisely this covert approach which startled the Dutch press and government. The reaction of the Dutch press, however, also signifies their ambivalent stance towards American public diplomacy. While they scorned the AVRO's secret cooperation with the ECA, newspapers and magazines also eagerly printed Dutch and American press releases on the Marshall aid.

In conclusion, *Antwoordman* was a program that was at the heart of the American and Dutch efforts to promote the Marshall Plan and the US in general in the Netherlands. Not just because it upholds the notion that these publicity campaigns were carried out by both public and private actors on both sides but also because the scandal surrounding *Antwoordman* touched upon

the various frustrations that the Dutch government and press had with the American approach to public diplomacy in the Netherlands. The main reason the credibility of American public diplomacy in the Netherlands was damaged was not necessarily because the ECA engaged in propaganda but because it was done covertly.

### Limitations and further research

The limitations of this research, both due to the scope of this thesis and the sometimes limited availability of primary sources, should inspire further research. While this thesis focuses on the radio show *Antwoordman*, I could not find any recordings of the program in the Dutch *Instituut voor Beeld & Geluid*. I could thus not use any of *Antwoordman*'s broadcasts, which could have provided significant insights in the ways in which the ECA promoted the Marshall Plan and the US, in general. Future research should again aim to find and examine these broadcasts. Moreover, future research on *Antwoordman* should strive to locate the agreement between the ECA and AVRO, which may further illuminate both the relationship between the two organizations and the motivations to keep the ECA's sponsorship of the program a secret.

Another limitation to this thesis was that I could find very little information on the other European versions of the Answer Man program. While this thesis has tried to put *Antwoordman* in the context of Marshall Plan public diplomacy in the Netherlands, it did not include insights from the other European versions of the program. Future research should strive to incorporate information about the other Answer Man programs because this could, for instance, provide new insights into how the ECA adjusted the program for country-specific audiences. Research on the other programs could also further contextualize the ECA's decision to sponsor *Antwoordman* covertly in the Netherlands, while, for instance, broadcast Answer Man in Germany via an American station.

What also came to light in this thesis was that *Antwoordman* is likely not to be the only instance of American covert sponsorship in the realm of Marshall Plan public diplomacy. If future research could further investigate this, perhaps a broader framework of covert partnership between US government bodies and Dutch broadcasting networks can be developed. To conclude this thesis, I would like to express the hope that this study was only the beginning of a new academic interest in *Antwoordman* and Dutch radio broadcasting in the Cold War.

## List of used abbreviations

AVRO	–	Algemene Vereniging Radio Omroep
ECA	–	European Cooperation Agency
ERP	–	European Recovery Program
CIA	–	Central Intelligence Agency
OSR	–	Office of the Special Representative
OEEC	–	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
RFE	–	Radio Free Europe
RL	–	Radio Liberty
US	–	United States of America
USIS	–	United States Information Service
WWII	–	World War II

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