

# 15 years of Fulbright activity in Belgium and Luxemburg

by Gilbert DE LANDSHEERE

On October 8, 1963, it was 15 years since Belgium, Luxemburg and the United States signed the Fulbright Agreement which created the United States Educational Foundation in Belgium and made possible the Fulbright Program in Belgium and Luxemburg.

Four Belgian research scholars went to the United States as Fulbright grantees in 1948, but the first full-scale exchange program was carried out during the academic year 1949-1950. Since that time, 375 American grantees have come to Belgium/Luxemburg under Fulbright auspices and a total of 612 Belgians and Luxemburgers have received Fulbright Travel Grants to go to the United States (557 Belgians ; 55 Luxemburgers).

Belgium had a fairly long tradition of exchanges with the United States before the Fulbright Program was established. Since the time of the First World War, a large number of Belgian students and scholars had been helped to go to the United States by the Belgian American Educational Foundation and some American scholars had come to Belgium under that Foundation's auspices. The Fulbright program differed from that of the Belgian American Educational Foundation by opening exchange possibilities to a great many more people. Primary and secondary school teachers and school administrators were eligible for awards as well as University professors ; and graduates of normal schools, professional and technical schools could compete for study grants as well as the graduates of the Belgian universities.

The Foundation is well pleased with the achievements of its wide variety of alumni :

61 former grantees are teaching in secondary schools in Belgium ; 9 have become inspectors ; 6 are *préfets* or directors of their schools ; 87 former grantees are now lecturing in Belgian universities and one has become the Rector of the Facultés Universitaires Notre Dame de la Paix in Namur.

The first Belgian center for the treatment of cerebral palsied children was opened in Brussels by a Fulbright alumna in 1955. The staff of Brussels University's tumerology center includes 12 young doctors who have trained in the United States.

After 15 years of exchanges, it is difficult to name a field in which no one has worked under Fulbright auspices, but the examples cited above give some idea of the Foundation's concern with the welfare of Belgian society and its concentration on exchanges in education and health.

Belgium and Luxemburg are two of the 143 different countries of the world which had exchanges in America in 1962, the latest year for which figures are available. There were 69,683 foreign scholars in the United States in 1962, while 17,524 American scholars went abroad during the same period of time.

39 countries of the world have Fulbright Foundations to administer their exchanges. The Foundation in Belgium/Luxemburg is one of the smallest, in point of view of

annual budget and numbers of scholars, but immodest though it sounds to say it aloud, it is one of the best. Our Foundation was first to set up a series of information meetings for Belgians and Luxemburgers going to the United States and the meetings became models for use throughout the world. We were first to plan national and even international activities for American scholars in Belgium. Our 10th anniversary celebration was the first alumni banquet to be attended by Senator and Mrs. Fulbright and they have not forgotten the ovation they received. The first meeting of European Executive Officers took place in Brussels in 1956 at the invitation of our Foundation and the first European Returnee Conference met in Brussels in 1960 at the invitation of the Fulbright Alumni Association in Belgium.

There are other "firsts" and "bests" which we could cite as well. But this might lead us to too great a sense of our own accomplishments and cause us to overlook some of the very real difficulties under which the Foundation labors.

By 1968-1969, the money set aside under the present Fulbright Agreement will be expended. Unless the United States, Belgium and Luxemburg review their Fulbright Agreement, Fulbright exchanges will cease in 1968-1969.

Until now, money for Fulbright exchanges has come from the Government of the United States. Members of the Governments of Belgium and Luxemburg have agreed that the time has come to make this a truly bi-national, or tri-national, exchange venture. In 1963, the budget of the Belgian Ministry of National Education contained 450.000.— frs. which were used to support Belgian Fulbright scholars. This was a most welcome gesture on the part of the Belgian Government, but a great deal more is needed if exchanges are to continue at an effective level in Belgium and Luxemburg after 1968-1969.

Because of the terms of the Fulbright Agreement, Fulbright grants to Belgians and Luxemburgers have, until now, been limited to travel. To be sure, many of us received complementary awards from the U.S. Government and from American schools, universities, hospitals and private foundations. However, bi-national support, coming from Belgium and Luxemburg, would make it possible to give complete awards to Belgians and Luxemburgers, thereby increasing freedom of choice of American institutions and opening the Program to many who cannot now afford to participate in exchanges with the United States.

As stated in the *Tattler* for January, 1962, the United States Government opened the way to improving the present Fulbright Agreement when the Fulbright-Hays Act was passed by the American Congress in 1961. Flexible provisions of the new Act were incorporated in an Amendment proposed to the Governments of Belgium and Luxemburg by the American Embassy at Brussels in May, 1963. The Amendment has received verbal approval and formal approval is expected early in 1964.

Thus, as we mark our 15th anniversary in Belgium, we rejoice in a past of which we may be proud and we look forward to busy years ahead to ensure the continuation and development of our educational exchanges with the United States of America.