

As a result of the luncheon with the Belgian press on Wednesday, independent financial daily *De Tijd* (9/10) (circ. 38,300) ran the following article, outlining the Ambassador's profile and the long-term policy goals he is pursuing together with the Obama administration, while in Belgium.

### **“Obama of Course Will Need to Make Compromises’**

“American Ambassador in Brussels Calls for Long-Term Vision”

**ERIK ZIARCZYK**

“To describe Howard Gutman, the new American Ambassador in Brussels, as a supporter of Barack Obama is an understatement of size. That became obvious yesterday during an introduction talk with the Belgian press. Gutman passionately defended his President, with whom he has been working for years.”

“The 53 year-old Gutman made name as a lawyer in Washington DC and apart from that struck people also as an actor. In the motion picture ‘Fame’, that will come to Belgium in movie theatres, he plays the role of a butcher. But he foremost was a successful fundraiser for Obama. He gathered over \$ 500,000 (€344,000) for the latter's electoral campaign. After moving into the White House, Obama rewarded Gutman with his post in Brussels.”

“The 53 year-old Gutman has been working as the Ambassador in Belgium only since last week. ‘My most important mission is to bring people to take a fresh look on the relationship between Belgium and the United States’, he says. Gutman already spoke with Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Yves Leterme and his colleague on Defense Pieter De Crem.”

### **“Afghanistan”**

“Of course the battle in Afghanistan came up. The U.S. has requested from NATO partners extra efforts – read: troops – to win the fight. But the European countries, including Belgium, are not very eager to boost their military presence in Afghanistan.”

“I am not in a position to ask for more troops’, Gutman says. ‘But I will discuss the matter with Leterme and De Crem. Do not forget that all NATO members agree that the situation in Afghanistan needs to be stabilized. And then we are not talking military efforts only. Also the civilian part of the reconstruction deserves attention.’”

“Obama has proclaimed Afghanistan to the priority of his foreign policy. Gutman is full of confidence that his President will also realize his ambitious plans. Also on other international issues, like climate policy, Obama will book results. Gutman admits that things are not always going that smoothly, but calls the growing irritation about Obama’s policy nonsense.”

“‘Only the final goal counts’, he says. ‘In other terms, a climate plan and healthcare reform are on the way. The latter is by the way necessary if the U.S. wants to remain a competitive economy. Buy for instance a cup of Starbucks coffee. Not the beans or the cup make the coffee that expensive, but the costs for healthcare insurance do.’”

“Gutman: ‘Of course, Obama will have to make compromises with the Republican opposition. That is the way the system works in the end. But the most important thing is that he books results in the end. And believe me, Obama is very patient. He does not expect results immediately.’”