

ITEM No 8961/56

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CAPTIVE COUNTRIES

IRON CURTAIN COUNTRIES STRESS INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT
AT SALONIKA FAIR.

SOURCE ATHENS: RFE News Bureau.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: September 2 to 4 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: None.

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Although peaceful prosperity was the keynote for all nations participating in the 21st SALONIKA International Fair which opened September 2 /closing date September 23,/ there was more than a hint of the Iron Curtain's contempt for the welfare of the individual and continued emphasis on the build-up of heavy industry to the neglect of consumer goods.

In sharp contrast to the US exhibition glorifying the "fruits of freedom," the Iron Curtain countries managed to stress their industrial equipment, heavy power lathes, advanced scientific tooling, generators and electronic measuring equipment despite a display of colorful textiles, flashy motorcycles, automobiles, kitchenware, photographic equipment, bric-a-brac and even Christmas tree decorations.

Of the seven Free World countries and seven Iron Curtain countries /USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, East Germany and Yugoslavia,/ and hostess-nation Greece participating in the Fair, only the United States provided life and zest to its display. Where the Soviets alone of the Iron Curtain countries displayed an odd dozen toys for children, and those of extremely shoddy manufacture, the US had constructed a complete kindergarten playground with blocks, finger-painting, swings, etc., together with a large-size triple-track electric railroad.

Where the Iron Curtain countries displayed mediocre textiles in brilliant colors but posted guards to see that no one felt the poor quality, the US staged a complete fashion show whose purpose was to show how every woman could

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cut out and sew her own dresses from a wide range of patterns and styles available in any part of the United States.

Where the Iron Curtain countries featured a window filled to overflowing with canned caviar, salmon, sausage, ham, etc., the US pavilion featured a display of milk, ice cream and doughnut machines drawing thousands daily to watch the processing and taste the free samples of re-constituted milk, soft ice cream and American-style sugared doughnuts.

Where the Soviet exhibit displayed 20- and 24-inch television receivers, the US featured a television camera, together with five receivers working on a closed co-axial circuit wherein the visitors could see the show or wave at themselves.

Where the Iron Curtain displayed the heavy lathes and machinery of continued industrial expansion, the US displayed the small power tools of the "do it yourself" home-maker, a display of build-yourself boats and canoes.

Instead of the factory and laboratory measuring instruments of the Iron Curtain displays, a new US-made solar portable radio was exhibited and played; for the Iron Curtain surgical instruments and chemicals -- all neatly packed behind cellophane, the US featured a living operation theater with a practical demonstration of the medical usages of atomic isotopes.

Displays of plastic household utensils on an endless moving band, together with a kitchen worked by three local Greek girls who baked innumerable cakes, contrasted with the dull Iron Curtain displays of "Woolworth-type" kitchen aluminum ware and primitive electric cookers.

The entire US exhibit was the "Joe Barnes story," as depicted in one panel of the exhibition by a series of colored photographs. The exhibit showed the Greeks and other visitors how the "Joe Barnes" family of America lives from day to day, how their children are brought up and the conditions under which they work and enjoy the fruits of their freedom.

And "Joe Barnes" is not a banker, nor a Wall Street broker. He is not the bug-bear capitalist of the Iron Curtain countries but an ordinary Pittsburgh steelworker, a member of the working "proletariat" and a union man. As though to round off the exhibition's emphasis on the everyday benefits accruing to every working man in the United States, two American union officials are present throughout to emphasize to Greeks and others that the unions in the US fight for the workers and not, as in the Iron Curtain countries, against them.

End.