



A display of U.S. ideas attracts a Greek crowd of all ages.

We're exporting American Ideals

by Jack Ryan

A SICILIAN law student, a future leader of his community, decides to learn for himself about the conflicting ideologies of East and West, both fighting for his loyalty.

He goes to a nearby bookstall and finds that by skipping cigarets today he can afford to buy the communist teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin in paper-bound editions in his own language.

What books can he buy to learn about America? Mostly cheap novels about dope addiction, sadism, or unscrupulous business executives.

To read a copy of "The Federalist," a basic explanation of our Constitution, the Sicilian would have to travel hundreds of miles to Rome where he'd find three copies—in English. Lincoln's writings might be even harder to find. We've distributed only 25 copies throughout the world to show why we think our government is best.

But this failure in providing the world with "the bibles of democracy" is being remedied. The political and social philosophies of Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin—to name a few—are being translated into 25 languages and will be made available in crucial areas of the globe at prices within the reach of the poorest student, teacher, or worker.

The books represent democracy in theory; how they came to be translated and distributed represents democracy in action.

In 1952, a Chicago teacher, Thomas B. Stauffer, returned home after government service abroad during which he saw many situations like that confronting the Sicilian student.

Something, he decided, should be done. In American fashion he wrote his congressman, Barratt O'Hara.

O'Hara was immediately interested in Stauffer's suggestion that our information centers not only tell the free world what is wrong with communism, but what is right with democracy. But he pointed out that Congress would need additional facts before it could consider subsidizing a library of American political classics for overseas book markets.

At O'Hara's suggestion, Stauffer's neighbors—such people as ministers, office and factory workers, and college students—pitched in to assemble those facts. They contacted 3,500 leaders in industry, religion, journalism, politics, and other fields for suggestions on exporting our most precious commodity, political ideals.

Without any prompting, many of the 3,500 wrote their own congressmen about "bibles of democracy," and soon O'Hara was beset by legislators asking, "What is this book idea my constituents are deluging me about? How is it important?"

Thanks to his hard-working group at home, O'Hara had the answer.

We were losing the battle of books—and minds. In Moscow, the Russian Printing Bureau, working on a budget larger than that of our entire information service, was on a 24-hour schedule turning out communist writings in 40 languages. Foreign students in our own universities told how their lands were flooded with Marx and Lenin while they heard only references to Madison and Hamilton.

"America," said O'Hara, "is known

abroad for autos and tractors, for riches and technology, but the specifically American political philosophy and the fundamental ideas of political and social democracy are not widely known in foreign lands."

The big danger in this, historians pointed out, was that whenever a nation adopted democratic government, it did so on the basis of political ideals, not material wealth.

Still there was the question—would people read the "heavy" writings of America's political thinkers? This answer came independently from two U. S. industrialists who helped finance publication of "The Federalist" in Italian. Although relatively expensive, the publication skyrocketed to second place on Italy's best-seller list, was hailed in speeches and editorials, and excited deep interest in similar American writings.

The U. S. government, responding to citizen opinion, next tried a test in Asia by distributing a "year's supply" of "The Federalist." In three months, all were sold.

The last doubt about the worth of the program was dispelled, and Congress appropriated funds for 20 million books. They will be translated and sold in bookstores which now sell only communist ideology.

The first of these translations already are in the hands of people who influence opinion in their countries. Should they ever feel the books are merely words, dreams, or ivory-tower theories, they have only to remember how the books came to them—through people like themselves who wrote a lawmaker and moved a government.

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