

BS  
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USSR  
CAPTIVE COUNTRIES

EAST BLOC GOES FOR STEINWAY PIANOS.

SOURCE HAMBURG: From trade figures.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Recent and current.

EVAL. COMMENT: Attention Musical Editors All Desks.

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The German-American piano makers Messrs STEINWAY & SONS have recently received the first orders for their pianos from behind the Iron Curtain. Both USSR and all the Captive Countries have placed orders for a smaller or larger number of concert grands.

The shortage of first-class pianos behind the Iron Curtain has long been felt in spite of the large numbers of instruments which the Red Army seized wherever it had the chance. The daylight robbery which the Red Army carried out with musical instruments and especially with grand pianos was possibly of little benefit to the USSR, as the complete lack of knowledge of how to handle pianos caused most of them to be ruined before they reached the Soviet border. Recently returned prisoners-of-war have described how, on their way into captivity in 1944 and 1945 a field of several acres near BARANOVICI was littered with thousands of pianos which had been taken from Poland and Eastern Germany. Most of these instruments had been standing in the cold and wet for several weeks and were completely ruined. This was probably typical of most of the cultural depredations which the Soviets carried out. The shortage of good pianos has, in any case, now made itself very strongly felt, especially with the numerous Western artists who are now admitted for concerts behind

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the Iron Curtain, and, probably more important still, the number of Soviet and Captive Country artists who have recently visited the West and seen what a good piano can be like. We have been informed by Western competitors in the 1954 Chopin Contests that the Polish Ministry of Culture had clearly done everything possible to assemble a representative number of good instruments of various makes, but in spite of the choice, 80 per cent of the total competitors chose or asked to play on Steinways.

A recent order for 11 concert grands in the value of about Dollar 40,000.- for the Conservatoire in WARSAW is a sign that a start is being made in satisfying the wishes of Polish and visiting pianists. Two concert grands have also been ordered for the Bolshoi Theater in MOSCOW, and the Soviet musicians Emil GILELS /pianist,/ Wladyslaw JAMPOLSKI /pianist/ and the violinist David OISTRAKH each ordered themselves new Steinway grands to be delivered to their homes in MOSCOW in the near future. In addition, orders have been received from the Ministries of Culture in CSR, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania. It is understood that these orders are the forerunners of larger ones to follow and the capacity of the Steinway factory in HAMBURG will probably shortly be taxed to its utmost to keep up with the orders now streaming in from this hitherto closed market. Apart from this purchase representing a triumph for the famous Steinway firm, it is also a proof that no satisfactory instruments have been manufactured behind the Iron Curtain.

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