

# The Metro Section

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Photographs by James Estrine/The New York Times



Above, a display in the duty-free shop of Kennedy Airport's new Terminal 4. An Alexander Calder mobile, left, hangs in the departure hall.

# Making 'Dwell Time' Fly Just a Little Faster

## New \$1.4 Billion Terminal at J.F.K. Aims to Ease Waits for Passengers

By RONALD SMOTHERS

In the age of the ocean liner, the Port of New York and Ellis Island were the gateways to and from Europe. But 1959 marked a turning point: more people crossed the Atlantic by air than by boat.

This shined the spotlight on Kennedy International Airport, then Idlewild, which was just ending a decade of construction in anticipation of the age of air travel. With its nine new terminals strung like jewels along a circular roadway, it was the quintessence of American modernism and seemed the place where the term "jet set" might have been coined.

At the center of the airport's image

was its International Arrivals Building, a structure which grew from a few crude Quonset huts in the 1940's into a huge glass and steel hangarlike building 11 blocks long. It was so long, managers brashly asserted, it could accommodate a field equal to the distance of the Wright Brothers historic first flight. It also boasted the first supermarket-style customs and immigration clearance halls.

But by the 70's, its erstwhile modernity had succumbed to future shock. As air travel changed from a clubby, luxury mode of transportation to mass transit, what had been a magnificent gateway to the United States came to be considered an embarrassing anachronism. The



high-design swan had become an ugly duckling, falling into disrepair.

But the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey says the airport is now most like a phoenix. A \$1.4 billion replacement for the International Arrivals Building is scheduled to have its grand opening and rechristening this week as Terminal 4.

The new terminal, said Neil Levin, executive director of the port agency, which operates the airport, is the centerpiece of some \$10 billion in new terminals, light rail and other improvements that will make Kennedy "a 21st-century airport and a symbol of what is to come."

If "modern travel" was the buzz phrase for the arrivals building in the 50's, then "customer service" is the rallying cry for the new Terminal 4, Mr. Levin said. This has come about, he said, through the port agency's privatizing the terminal and placing it under the management of a profit-making consortium, JFK IAT. The consortium is made up of Schiphol U.S.A., an American subsidiary of the Dutch company that manages airports in the Netherlands and in several other countries; LCOR, a national real estate company; and the global real estate finance group of Lehman Brothers, the investment bank.

From its airy and vaulted departure



An exterior view of the terminal, top. Above, in the immigration and customs hall, bas-reliefs of New York City scenes greet arriving passengers.



Customer service is said to be the rallying cry for the new Terminal 4.

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