

Annual report of the Staatliches Filmarchiv of the GDR  
to the XIVth Congress of the FIAF

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The most important task accomplished by the Staatliches Filmarchiv in the accounted period of 1957/1958 was the exhibition "60 Years of Cinema" in the east sector of Greater Berlin, established under the patronage of the FIAF and in co-operation with the Cinémathèque Française.

It was owing to the large-scale support of the government of the German Democratic Republic, owing to most of the member archives of the FIAF which contributed numerous exhibits and last not least to the restless activity of the staffs of both archives that this exhibition, so far the greatest of its kind in the world, could be opened on March 30th, 1958, in the Berlin Museum of German History, Unter den Linden.

The attempt to create a popular exhibition of film history, easily accessible to a wider public, can be considered most successful.

On an area of approximately 2.500 sq.meters in a décor specially designed for these halls by M. Langlois, about 2.000 stills, 350 original sketches of set-ups, manuscripts, about 200 posters of old and new films and a great number of objects like technical equipment, costumes, parts of décors, puppets from animated films etc. gave an extensive survey of 60 years of international film history.

In programmes alternating two or three times a day visitors got acquainted with the great works of international film art. As much as 120 films were shown at the exhibition, 98 of which twice or repeatedly by request of the visitors. Besides, short features of the early days of cinema were shown everyday, commented with narrations by Herr Skladanowski, the son of the late German



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bioscope-inventor.

The following films gained particular success:

"The last laugh", "Faust", "Armoured Cruiser Potemkin", "The Mother", "Tchapayev", "Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness", "The Three Pennies Opera", "The Road to Life", "The Seventh Cross", but no less "Dr. Mabuse the Gambler", "The Captain of Koepenick" (of 1931), "Anna Karenina", "The Hound of the Baskervilles" and "Comedians".

Much experience could be gathered, though time was too short to have it thoroughly evaluated as yet. A few facts that speak well for the success of the exhibition may nonetheless be given:

Till the close of the exhibition on September 30th, 1958, nearly 180.000 people visited the exhibition, recruiting from all parts of the population. Film societies, students and school-children took special interest in the guidance given in the forenoons by the staff of the Staatliches Filmarchiv. Film societies of Western Germany took long journeys e.g. from Aix-la-Chapelle to see the exhibition. From abroad there came collaborators of the film archives, touring groups and film workers from the USSR, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Egypt, USA, Britain, France, Italy and Switzerland.

Distinguished film makers of Germany and abroad were welcomed to the exhibition, among them Juli Raisman (USSR), Helmut Kaeutner, Robert Hearlt, Gerhart Lamprecht, Slatan Dudow, Dr. Kurt Maetzig and many others.

Most comments in the visitors book thankfully acknowledged the show without essential criticism. All great newspapers and journals of the GDR highly appreciated the expended work and the abundance of material. They expressed particular joy about meeting again with old films and thanks to everybody who contributed to the success of the exhibition. Prolongation was so frequently and emphatically



requested - the exhibition was provided to close on August 31st - that it remained open one additional month. There were many visitors who expressed the wish for a permanent exhibition with film shows from the archives.

The relatively few critical voices can be summarized in one opinion: the enormous multitude of exhibits ought to have been more clearly arranged in order to permit an organic survey of the evolution of film art. It was proposed to furnish future exhibitions with more equipment of new cinema technique as well as with more moving resp. movable exhibits.

Apart from this foremost task the necessary work with the archives has of course been continued. The progress and present stage of these works is as follows:

1.) Completion of the film collections:

In virtue of the agreement between the Staatliches Filmarchiv and the studios and distribution service of the GDR, mentioned in the report of last year, according to which one print of every film made or distributed in the GDR is given to the archives, the stock *has been* could be enlarged by 298 films (196 being full length features). Besides, 36 valuable foreign and German feature films and various documentary material could be acquired by means of long term lending exchange. Furthermore, the archives are being permanently completed by the periodical series of documentary and scientific films released in the GDR as well as by the DEFA newsreel "Der Augenzeuge" which is published twice a week.

Film material of particularly outstanding preciousness was recently purchased from private collections, among which there are about 1.500 meters of short films from between 1900 and 1906.

2,) Reviewal of stocks

Owing to the aftermath of war very much of the material was shifted,



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reshifted and displaced and is still in a state of inadequate order and registration, obliging the staff to the difficult and lengthy job of a complete reviewal.

A thorough viewing and scrutiny of all film stock has been started, the whole of which is likely to take approximately two or three years. It is not impossible that the examination of documentary material will lead to the rediscovery of feature films. Thus a number of interesting features could be traced in the last weeks. Amongst others there were:

"Bloody Snow", a Soviet silent ~~from the novel by F. Gladkov~~, directors: Kosintzev and Trauberg, leading character: S. Gerassimov,

"Cement", a Soviet silent from the novel by F. Gladkov,

"Sunrise", an American silent, director: F. W. Murnau

"Green pastures", an American sound film, unfortunately defective, directors: Marx Conelly and William Keighley, 1936,

"House without Laughter", a German silent, director: Gerhart Lamp-rech

"Macbeth", a French silent with Paul Monet and Melle Delavaire.

Interesting documentary Material could also be discovered, above all unique shots from the history of the German labour movement.

Along with the reviewal the card-index was integrated and ~~was~~ improved, whereby the ~~data~~ missing data of 30 per cent. of the films could be added.

We shall be able to establish a catalogue of our exchange films in 1959.

### 3.) Preservation

In order to improve the methods of preservation discussions were started with the society for photographical chemistry and with specialists of the printing laboratories, and an exchange of experience with partners of the USSR was initiated.

The majority of prints older than 25 years was submitted to a chemical procedure which grants their preservation for some more years and will enable the projected reprinting on safety film.



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In this connection we succeeded with an experiment of great significance thanks to the workmanship of our laboratory experts. A number of very old hand-coloured short films were successfully reprinted in the colour laboratories, which otherwise could not have been saved from dissolution. But a little nuance of the luminosity of the original colours went lost, which was however due to the progressed state of decay.

The printing of duplicate negatives and positives of uniques is being continued. Within a few years we intend to possess the basic material of every film (Negative, dup-negative or lavender positive), one print to file and one to work with, in order to secure the preservation of films as well as the various possibilities of exploitation.

#### 4.) Exploitation of archive stocks

##### a) Film making and television

The quantity of material placed at the disposal of film makers for direct or indirect use is constantly increasing. By this the Filmarchiv gives a considerable contribution to the making of many scientific and documentary films by the DEFA studios. Directors of feature films could be aided as well by viewing old valuable films for the study of milieu, as was necessary with "Lissy", "Der Aelteste war 13" and "Das Lied der Matrosen".

The Deutsche Hochschule fuer Film und Fernsehen was provided with a variety of examples for lectures on the history of film art, and a lot of sections from archive films were given to the German television studio for programmes propagating film art.

##### b) Propagation of film art

Mention was made already of the greatest enterprise to propagate film art, the exhibition "60 Years of Cinema". Besides that, extensive work was done by organizing special shows of films from the archives. The Staatliches Filmarchiv places these films at the



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disposal of factories, state institutions, clubs, culture houses, political organisations and religious societies for non-commercial shows purposing the propagation of film art.

In the reported year the Staatliches Filmarchiv has thus enabled one or two shows per month in about 350 clubs, societies, studios and so on, summing up to approximately 1.200 special shows.

c) Scientific evaluation

The amount of work necessary for the exhibition (to which belonged the guiding of home and foreign delegations, participation in television and radio broadcasts, elaboration of film comments etc.) considerably restricted the scientific research work. Till August 1st, 1958, three scientific workers were employed. Two graduates of cinema high schools were taken under a so-called promotion contract on August 1st, 1958, and will be employed for two years as scientific assistants.

In the last months stress was layed on the research of German film history of the years between 1925 and 1933. The first result of this work is a film cycle for the propagation of film art entitled "Realistic tendencies in the German cinema between 1925 and 1933". Detailed comments were elaborated and will by the end of the year be placed at the disposal of clubs and organisations (mimeographed or printed), furnishing the basic material for lectures and discussions on the 12 films contained in the cycle.

A similar cycle on the Soviet cinema of socialist realism (1925 to 1945) will likewise be combined by the end of the year.

Furthermore, measures were initiated to enable the scientific staff of the Staatliches Filmarchiv to participate directly in the instruction and research work of the Filmhochschule and Filmfachschule. The elaboration of a detailed plan of research work for 1959 has not yet been finished, since a cinema research centre will be established by that time which is to co-ordinate and guide all film research work in the German Democratic Republic.