

A Report on the 1964 activities of the
Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR

I. National activities

1. Construction of new film vaults

1964 has been a year of critical importance for the archive's future. This project has been in preparation for several years, and in January construction was finally begun on new film vaults to be built according to the latest scientific information. By the end of December the basic rough construction work was completed on concrete pavements, 2 vaults for the storage of nitrate film, 1 for the storage of acetate film, a caretaker's house and garages, a transformer station and temporary reception vault. The entire project will be finished by 1966/67. It will include air-conditioned storage capacity for about 800 tons of film. The following will be established: 2 nitrate film vaults, 2 acetate film vaults; and in addition to those buildings already mentioned: a central building with printing laboratory, chemistry laboratory, equipment for restoration and technical examination of films, including cutting-room, projection-room, central heating and cooling and social rooms for staff and visitors.

The construction of the archive's new film store is at present the largest building project attached to film work in the G.D.R. The new vault will eliminate the most serious difficulty of our archive, for our film storage is now only partially under such conditions as will guarantee the preservation of the collection and the security of our personnel. Permanent acquisitions of film during 1964 have compelled us to establish another temporary depot more than 100 kilo-

meters from Berlin. Taking into consideration the negative effects of temporary storage on the physical condition of films, a further increase of personnel was necessary in 1964 to handle technical examination.

2. Cleaning film by supersonics

During 1963/64 a device for cleaning film materials by supersonics was developed in the machine shop of the Staatliches Filmarchiv. Tests were completed last year and the device was put into operation. The idea of removing dirt from films by supersonics has also been investigated in other countries. This machine is extremely high in its cleaning effect, and it can work at a higher speed than other apparatus for cleaning films. Since we have overcome certain infantile ailments of this apparatus we find the machine of our own development quite satisfactory.

3. Copying the collection's nitrate films

In 1964 a long-range campaign, important to the archive's future, was begun: to transfer all nitrate material into acetate material. The process of duplicating these stocks (80% of the archive's collection) will take many years. Its aim is the preservation of films that are endangered by the continuous disintegration, shrinkage and inflammability that are the hazards of the nitrate base. During 1964 3,200,000 meters were copied.

4. Enlargement and arrangement of the collection

In referring to the collection's new acquisitions from the national film production and through exchange with other archives we wish to mention with special gratitude the gift of nearly ninety German feature films by Gosfilmofond, in Moscow. Our incomplete collection, especially in the field of German silent films,

has been immeasurably helped by this generous gesture of friendly co-operation.

In the technical reconstruction of film-theatres in the G.D.R. it was possible for the archive to acquire a large amount of old technical equipment. This is now being arranged and catalogued, along with more detailed work on the collection of film stills.

5. Archive theatre and film clubs

In 1964 the archive film theatre, Camera, celebrated its second working year. We counted about 100,000 visitors to 1,280 performances (Camera shows 3 programmes daily). We have enlarged our monthly printed programme, and given it a more attractive appearance, along with the announcement posters, seen throughout Berlin.

During the first six months of 1964 we circulated a questionnaire to the visitors to Camera, which has helped us deepen our contact with this audience and made us better acquainted with their wishes.

The short experience with Camera has been analysed in a diploma thesis at the Deutsche Hochschule für Filmkunst, and its author has been attached to our theatre as manager since September.

A special point of interest in 1964 was the "Week of Yugoslav Films" organized with the help of the Jugoslovenska Kinotheka.

The archive placed 88 films in special distribution for film clubs, and about 20,000 visitors saw 2300 performances in this way.

Since the autumn of 1964 the archive has prepared and published a series of "film leaflets" to comment on and introduce the films that are shown in Camera and at the film clubs throughout the G.D.R.

II. International Activities

As with the Cavalcanti and Ivens retrospectives in past years, the Staatliches Filmarchiv arranged, under the patronage of FIAF, a retrospective devoted to the work of Robert Flaherty to take place during the VII. International Documentary and Short Film Festival in Leipzig, November 1964. This tribute to Flaherty was an impressive example of the great potential effect of international co-operation among the film archives. For their assistance with this retrospective we wish to take this opportunity to thank The National Film Archive (London), The Museum of Modern Art Film Library (New York), Ceskoslovenska Filmoteka (Prague), Centralne Archiwum Filmowe (Warsaw), Österreichisches Filmarchiv (Vienna), Cinémathèque Royal de Belgique (Brussels), Danske Filmmuseum (Copenhagen), Canadian Film Institute (Ottawa), Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum (Amsterdam), Magyar Filmtudományi Intézet és Filmarchivum (Budapest).

The Flaherty retrospective proved to be the most complete and comprehensive demonstration of the works of one of the great artistic pioneers of the cinema. The tribute to Flaherty's position was enhanced by the presence of Mrs. Frances Flaherty, his lifetime collaborator, and of their daughter, Mme. Monica Frasseto. The occasion became a gathering-place for old friends and colleagues of Flaherty, who were invited as guests of the archive. Among many others we welcomed Joris Ivens, Alberto Cavalcanti, Paul Rotha, Edgar Anstey, Basil Wright, John Grierson and Richard Leacock.

The president of FIAF, Prof. Dr. Jerzy Toeplitz, was a member of this year's jury in Leipzig. Among other archive officers, Mme. Marion Michelle, executive secretary, Mr. Yakubovich of the Soviet Union, Mr. Armatis of Poland, Mr. Molnar of Hungary, Messrs. Konlechner and Kubelka of Austria, and Mme. Christosova of Bulgaria, were guests of the Staatliches Filmarchiv at Leipzig.

For the occasion of the retrospective Wolfgang Klaue and Jay Leyda prepared a book of Flaherty's statements about film, memoirs of his colleagues, analytical writings about his work, and basic documents on all his films. This publication is completed by a very comprehensive bibliography. This is the first book on Flaherty's work in the German language, and its scientific and informative character makes it a valuable addition to international Flaherty literature.

The Staatliches Filmarchiv arranged an exhibition on "Film and Television in the G.D.R." that was placed on public view in Cairo in October 1964. On this occasion Mr. Klaue, head of the archive's research section, visited the capital of the United Arab Republic and had an opportunity to renew our association with the Egyptian Film Archive. Within the exhibition a group of classic German films were shown with success.

The 1964 film festival at Cork showed a comprehensive retrospective of German film history, the films for which were supplied by the Staatliches Filmarchiv.