

R e p o r t

submitted by the

NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVES OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The National Film Archives' activities during the period under consideration has been characterized by assuring the continuity of its development. The charges which had been started in 1958/59 were continued. Owing to the generous support rendered by the GDR Government, decisive actions to the effect of enlarging, renovating and modernizing the National Film Archives could be taken.

All efforts centered around providing the technical equipment required for properly storing and preserving the film material. The need to appropriately store the numerous films, the involved overload of the film bunkers and the ever increasing national film production required to start planning a new extensible film depot. Now the projecting work for this purpose has nearly been completed. This depot will contain bunkers for nitro and slow-burning films and, besides, all the technical facilities required for testing, preserving, restoring and copying films.

In 1960/61, we extended the cross building and the side-wing of our house in the center of the City of Berlin so as to get more workrooms and two projection rooms. In addition to that a new house was built for our technicians instead of their former preliminary workrooms. This house includes film testing and restoring rooms as well as a cutting room and another projection room.

In the last year the National Film Archives enlarged its range of activities and set up a documentation section which has been working for one year by now.

STORING AND PRESERVATION

a) STORING

Since several years, the National Film Archives has been up against the problem to properly store films. Now it became necessary to

establish a large temporary supplementary depot to ease the strain on the overburdened film bunkers. Moreover, it was due to an extensive housing program to be realized in Berlin that the National Film Archives were forced to give up the depot they had used in Berlin hitherto, inasmuch as it will now be situated in the middle of residential quarters and possibly endanger the neighbouring buildings. Even for this purpose it was necessary to build new bunkers which would make an additional temporary depot.

All these difficulties of accommodation will finally be eliminated through building a new film depot. Modern security installations were installed into the old-time bunkers which, moreover, are being prepared for being provided with appropriate air-conditioning installations.

b) PRESERVATION

Since 1959 all the films have been systematically tested for the first time as viewed from a technical angle. All films are rereeled and tested as to their technical condition. Up to now, this procedure has not yet been finished and it will still take a considerable time. Two washing machines for film restoring purposes were put into operation, they are designed to bubble up the material with water and clean it chemically. It has been envisaged to install still more technical equipment. With a view to preserving the stock approximately 600 000 m of film were doubled and copied from January 1, 1960 to August 31, 1961. Through putting into operation a new efficient printing studio working for the GDR film industry it proved possible to step up appreciably the copy production rate for the Archives.

ENLARGING THE FILM STOCK AVAILABLE, TESTING AND CATALOGUING OF THE STOCK

a) ENLARGING

From January 1, 1960 to August 31, 1961 the stock of the GDR Nation-

al Film Archives was enlarged by 481 feature films and 602 movie shorts through new acquisitions and film exchanging activities. From private collections approx. 15,888 m of film were purchased. An action was started off to copy films which existed only as negatives. From January 1, 1961 to August 31, 1961 positive copies were produced from 170 feature film negatives.

b) TESTING AND CATALOGUING OF FILMS

At the same time all the films available are being technically tested, scientists and archivists review their contents. The process of cataloging the contents of all the feature and non-feature films available will still take many years. For the purpose of speeding up the fulfilment of such tasks, the Archives acquired three cutting tables.

Since 1959 new index systems have been in preparation. At present, there are available a film depot index and a scientifically compiled basic index of feature and non-feature films available. The scientifically compiled basic index includes the most important cinematographic facts and figures concerning the contents of the appropriate films. A completion of this index is dependent on continuing the review of the contents of the films concerned. Moreover, a few subject indices are being prepared such as a geographical index, a film workers' index, and an index of historical events.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE DOCUMENTATION SECTION

Requisite to arranging a Documentation Section was that there were available appropriate facilities for working and film-storing purposes. To this effect, proper rooming conditions were established through moving the management and scientific sections of the GDR National Film Archives to a building located in the center of the City of Berlin. By appropriately extending this building it was rendered possible to set up here a complete photographic laboratory

where cine-micrographic operations, reproductions and other photographic operations can be effected.

a) SCOPE OF AKTIVITIES OF THE DOCUMENTATION SECTION

To begin with, the Documentation Section activity was opened with taking into consideration the objects and documentary data which should be processed for the purpose of documenting film history. Numerous valuable materials were destroyed by war actions and post-war neglect. There was no center where all the material required for historical research in the field of film matters was collected. Based on the experience and know-how of other film archive members of the FIAF we were able to fix the range of the collections and to introduce reasonable methods of systematic film-storing and appropriate indexing activities.

At the Documentation Section of the GDR National Film Archives the following items are being collected, recorded and catalogued: Press cuttings, advertising data, license cards, test certificates, photographs, negatives, scenarios and all the preliminary literary material required for a film, dialogues and captions, stage directions, musics, posters, slides, tape records and phonograph discs, animated cartoon and trick film characters, properties, drawings, designs, outlines, costumes, records and files, technical equipment.

With the first year of the activity of the documentation Section having passed, the GDR National Film Archives has at its disposal more than 7,000 bills, approx. 15,000 publicity leaflets, some 800 scripts, and 2,100 posters that have been properly registered and catalogued there. Including the materials not yet catalogued, there has been available at the Archives documentation material covering approx. 20,000 different films of various quantity and quality.

b) CLASSIFICATION AND STORING

Appropriate documentation material is being catalogued by 4 different indices;

- 1) filed as per films - listing all the material available on each recorded film;
- 2) filed as per film workers - listing all the material available on an individual;
- 3) filed as per events - listing all the material available on events, that can exactly be fixed regarding the time when they occurred;
- 4) filed as per technical equipment used.

Each documentary material is being stored as required. Posters are being stored at appropriate lockers, whereas photographs are being kept at safes, along with appropriate documents; bills, press cuttings, and any publicity material are being collected in appropriate folders.

c) METHODS FOR ENLARGING THE COLLECTIONS

Various methods are being applied by the GDR National Film Archives with a view to enlarging the collections of its Documentation Section. Private collections have repeatedly been purchased so as to acquire historical documents. For this purpose, the Documentation Section has been operating systematically in all districts of the German Democratic Republic. Appropriate notes released by the GDR National Film Archives have been published by GDR newspapers and journals. Film workers have been made familiar with our problems, and called on for offering their co-operation. Thus it was rendered possible to acquire numerous valuable documents for the collections of the GDR National Film Archives.

An appropriate legal provision will be passed on the registration of all documents on today's film production. In compliance with such action to be taken, the GDR National Archives will function as

national central archives for the collection of any important documents required for film history research purposes.

EXPLOITATION OF FILM STOCK

a) FILM PRODUKTION AND TELEVISION

The creative discussion on the level of film arts in the German Democratic Republic is going along with the fact that many film workers devote all their efforts to studying the best traditions of film art. Therefore, the Archives has been asked ever more frequently to show films for information purposes. Using authentic documentation material available at our Archives is another method by which the GDR National Film Archives are aiding our national film production.

The GDR Television Network (Deutscher Fernsehfunk) has scheduled weekly transmissions of films stored at our Archives. In co-operation with GDR National Film Archives a film-historical program is being prepared now.

b) FILM CLUBS

Since the end of last year the GDR National Film Archives has suspended its film-lending to clubs because other urgent tasks involved in securing and preserving the material available require all efforts of the Archives staff. But preparations are in full swing to take up again the lending activities of the Archives. Then the distribution of films by the Archives will be effected at a more extensive and essentially improved scale.

c) EXHIBITIONS

In September 1960 an exhibition called 'Cinema-Radio-Television', was organized in Dresden. GDR National Film Archives had arranged the historical part of the film section, and presented some 30 films featuring world cinema art. The exhibition was opened for a month, and attended by a total of 53,000 people. The films displayed by our

Archives won attention and recognition with the audience and people demanded frequently that they were shown to them. At times there was such a great rush for these films that police had to intervene for regulating the crowds.

The GDR National Film Archives lent some films shot by the renowned film author Murnau to the "Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau" Exhibition which was organized in West Berlin by the Academy of Arts and the Cinematheque Française.

SCIENTIFIC WORK

Within the scope of our scientific activities, the main stress has been laid on the National Film Archives' efforts to work out a filmography of our national production in post-war years. All facts and figures on feature films and non-feature films will be incorporated in this filmography. The complete work will consist of 4 volumes of some 2000 pages. This filmography will be completed every year effective 1961. Along with this work the filmography is being evaluated with regard to individual film workers. An index of all individuals working in film production, along with their individual functions or tasks is being compiled.

Moreover, a reference book on international film artists will be published. In much the same way, periodical publications on documents of film history are also prepared by the GDR National Film Archives. Although the lending of Archives films for non-commercial purposes was temporarily suspended, preparations were made to resume a regular supply of films to film clubs. Two booklets on the cycles "Filmed Literature" and "Films by S.M. Eisenstein" have been completed by now as manuscripts. Three other booklets with their titles being "Fancy Plays and Comedies", "Artistic Documentary Film" and "How Soviet Films present World War II" are being prepared for publication.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In 1960, several representatives of the GDR National Film Archives visited the Moscow Gosfilmofond Corporation. This visit served above all studying the experience of Soviet film archives, with a view to planning a new film depot for the City of Berlin. Moreover, we were given valuable suggestions relative to our entire range of activities, on the occasion of our visit to Moscow.

Owing to the cultural agreement between the People's Republic of China and the German Democratic Republic, it was rendered possible for our director Herr Volkmann to spend six weeks at the Peking Film Archives for an exchange of experience.

In 1960, two staff members of the GDR National Film Archives visited the (West) German Film Archives in Wiesbaden.

Having arranged along with the GDR National Film Archives a festival of German films on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the DEFA, the Czech organization "Ceskoslovenska Filmoteka" and the Polish organization "Centralne Archiwum Filmowe" were visited by staff members of our GDR organization.

Representatives of many other film archives called on the GDR National Film Archives. Numerous film workers, scientists and journalists visited the GDR National Film Archives for getting acquainted with our working method and collections.

Owing to the generous assistance which the GDR government has rendered all cultural institutions and owing to the conscious and methodical activity of all its staff members, the GDR National Film Archives kept continuously developing in 1960/61. With all feasible efforts being made, the staff members of the GDR National Film Archives will successfully continue their organization's development and consolidate friendly relations among all film archives.