

The Belgrade Conference of UNESCO
and the Preservation

It is a great advantage for the preservation of audiovisual media of all kind that UNESCO recognized the problem and presented recommendations to all governments to do all they can to deliver important records to the posterity.

This resolution was the result of endeavours of interested people in FIAF. Vice-President K l a u e - GDR, took the initiative which lead to the proposition of Sovietunion, Switzerland and GDR to the XVIII. General Assembly of UNESCO which was accepted unanimously. Generally this was considered as a decisive break-through in direction to an arrangement of the difficult relations between the copyright and the desired archive right and a help for preservation of audiovisual materials. It was clear that it was a long way until these problems were solved.

According to the resolution of the XVIII. GA a first experts conference of UNESCO was invited 1975 to Berlin-GDR.

Chairman was Vice-President Klaue. FIAF had a great delegation in Berlin (e.g. President Pogacic, Secretary General Ledoux, Chairman of the Copyright Commission Dr. Kuiper and Chairman of the Preservation Commission Volkmann).

The results of the conference was an affirmation of the GA resolution and a concretization for further necessary steps. The Federation of producers, represented by Mr. Brisson, who was in the last years nearly almighty in respect to FIAF, could only vague some running fights.

The XIX. GA of UNESCO confirmed oncemore the appeal to the governments and asked the General Director of UNESCO to prepare a concrete document on the creation of an international instrument (convention or recommendation).

For preparation the Director General of UNESCO charged the well-known specialist for Copyright Dr. Georges Straschnow - Paris with a composition of legal aspects and Herbert Volkmann - GDR, Chairman of the Preservation Commission with the composition of the technical aspects. Both documents were delivered in time.

The Jugoslovenska Kinoteka offered to UNESCO B e l g r a d e as place for another experts conference and UNESCO accepted and invited the participants for November 1977.

I was invited by UNESCO as author of the document of technical aspects, not as representative of the GDR.

FIAF was represented by President Pogacic, Vice-President Eileen Bowser, New Yor, Mr. Sam Kula, Ottava and myself. The final document of the conference is not available until now. It was discussed and resolved with some changes in formulation and should be sent to the participants in its final form.

This experts commission brought some concretization of earlier resolutions but suffered under some unfavourable circumstances.

The first is the composition of the conference.

Only three persons, the President, Mr. Brisson and myself had been taken part in the UNESCO activities. All other people (experts and observers) were confronted with these problems the first time. This was of course a difficulty. Even the originators of the decisive resolution Switzerland, Soviet-union and GDR were not invited. FIAF was represented officially by Vice-President Eileen Bowser. She was not glad with this invitation but ever when she took the floor she spoke intelligent and clear as we are accustomed. She is not the only Vice-President of FIAF. Mr. Klaue, expert in UNESCO affairs, was much nearer to Belgrade and it is against the usual custom not to invite him. I heard, that FIAF and not

UNESCO paid the expensive costs for Eileen Bowser's flight and stay in Belgrade (of course, she personally and her archive could not). If so, it's time to consider whether the membership of FIAF should be lowered if great UNESCO cannot pay the costs for participation in such a case little FIAF cannot do also.

It was also not good that the representative of UNESCO, Mrs. van Vliet was first time occupied with these problems.

The second point is the procedure during the session. It was a disadvantage that the present FIAF-people did not meet before the conference. No doubt, that this was possible. A common line of the FIAF would have been very important for the outcome of the conference and could have avoided collusion in the conference.

Not good was the handling of the voting procedure. In these experts conferences there are always people who are familiar with the themes in discussion and are thus who are for the first time touched with these problems. There is no exact result if in this case the three classical questions are not put before the voter: "for - against" - "abstentions" the president asked only: "who is against?" - and counted every other vote as "for".

During the drafting of the final resolution Dr. Straschnow was asked for the formulations of the legal aspects. I asked the president explicitly for my presence during the formulations of the technical aspects. The president did not wish my presence. This was not a question of personal ambition, but of practical utility. The consequences were some failures in the technical respect which caused long discussion.

One mistake which will be found in the final document is dangerous: the recommendation to look for interim solutions if it is not possible to build up a modern audiovisual archive. I opposed. The same did Mr. Aryeetey, Ghana. He argued:

In his tropical country every interim solutions will not have to preserve films and it is a deadly danger if this interim solution - as usual - became a permanent solution. He refused explicitly such a formulation The same did the representative of the International Council of Archive (ICA) Dr. Anne Perotin and the representative of the Rome Institute for Restoration of Cultural Heritage Mr. de Guichen, two experts in archive work. Nevertheless not enough voices were "against" and every other voices counted as "Yes" (see above).

The consequence of these failures were some mistakes in the documents and also opened controversy between FIAF members in an international gremium. Until now - nine weeks after the conference - the final resolution has not been distributed.

I am convinced that the Belgrade discussion was not a step forwards in the relation between UNESCO and FIAF.

V o l k m a n n