

SMPTE Delegates Make Trip to the Soviet Union

In June of 1987, SMPTE President M. Carlos Kennedy, Ampex Corp.; Editorial Vice-President Howard T. La Zare, Deluxe Laboratories, Inc.; and Director of Motion Pictures Edmund M. DiGiulio, Cinema Products Corp., made a goodwill trip to the Soviet Union. For nine days, June 17 to 25, the three SMPTE delegates visited motion-picture research institutes, laboratories, production studios, and equipment manufacturing facilities in Moscow, Kiev, and Leningrad, the major centers for film and video production in that country.

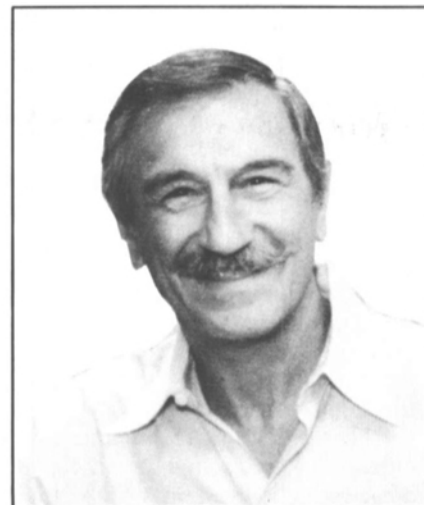
Kennedy organized the small delegation at the express invitation of Sergy Solomatin, the deputy chairman of Goskino, the Soviet Union's

national committee on cinematography. Solomatin's purpose in inviting the group to his country was to acquaint the SMPTE with the USSR motion-picture industry. He hoped that the many tours and technical demonstrations would spark a mutually beneficial exchange of information between American and Russian engineers. To that end, Solomatin arranged a varied and busy schedule for the SMPTE officers.

Solomatin's agenda for Wednesday, June 17, called for the SMPTE delegates and their spouses — Fran Kennedy, Phyllis La Zare, and Louise DiGiulio — to take in the sights and culture of the city of Moscow. On June 18, the SMPTE officers visited

This story was drawn from a series of interviews conducted by *SMPTE Journal* Staff Writer John Varrasi with SMPTE President M. Carlos Kennedy, Editorial Vice-President Howard T. La Zare, and Mrs. Fran Kennedy. Several segments from a report submitted to the *Journal* by the Society's Director of Motion Pictures Edmund M. DiGiulio were incorporated.

NIKFI, a photographic research institute founded in 1929 as a think tank for engineers and scientists involved in film production and related work.



The SMPTE delegates to the Soviet Union: from left to right, SMPTE President M. Carlos Kennedy, Editorial Vice-President Howard T. La Zare, and Director of Motion Pictures Edmund M. DiGiulio.



SMPTE President M. Carlos Kennedy (right) presents an honorary citation to Sergy Solomatn at the meeting of the Goskino on June 25, 1987. The presentation was one of the final gestures at the close of a successful trip to the USSR for the SMPTE delegates.

Super 35mm Format Discussed

At NIKFI, Kennedy, La Zare, and DiGiulio met with Solomon A. Bongard (deputy director at the institute) and other technical experts. The engineers from both countries discussed a range of topics, including Russia's ongoing research into the development of advanced and more efficient cameras, the use of electronic devices in motion-picture production, and proper lighting techniques.

The Super 35mm format, which has been embraced by the USSR motion-picture industry, was covered in considerable detail. Ed DiGiulio noted that Russian cinematographers use both anamorphic and spherical lenses when shooting in Super 35mm. For anamorphic lenses, DiGiulio learned, 1.85:1 is considered to be the ideal aspect ratio for theatrical projection and release.

Bongard guided the delegates on a tour of the institute. They were shown a Soviet technique for 3-D filmmaking: basically, the two interocular images are aligned side by side on 70mm film. Following a demonstration of an electronic traveling matte system, the three SMPTE officers were shown an electroacoustic laboratory. Howard La Zare, who is senior vice-president of engineering at Deluxe and whose background is laboratory technology, expressed his appreciation of the technical expertise that was apparent throughout NIKFI.

"The laboratory technicians demonstrated stereo sound with their own noise-reduction system, which included full-fidelity speakers and microphones," said La Zare. "This system

is called Super Phone and is Dolby-compatible." La Zare added that engineers in the Soviet Union are currently looking into digital sound for a number of applications.

Kiev

The second leg of the trip was Kiev, a city of about 3 million people located southwest of Moscow. In Kiev, there is a school of advanced technical studies with an enrollment of more than 25,000 students.

The SMPTE delegation visited the Dovjenko Studios, a reconstructed dirigible hangar where the Ukrainians claim the first sound film in the Soviet Union was produced. The facility,

which is spread over 18 acres, has a film stage that measures 3000 cubic meters. Some 800 feature films have been produced at Dovjenko since the studio started operations in 1926, and the current yearly output is 12 theatrical movies, 16 made-for-television movies, and a number of videocassettes.

Dovjenko's director of engineering, V. Kovalenko, demonstrated a split-image camera that enables the cameraman to superimpose the top half of one screen on the bottom half of another. Kovalenko also demonstrated a camera boom with remote video viewing.

Kennedy, La Zare, and DiGiulio visited the sound stage area, where the film *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* was being shot. At Dovjenko, most of the sound in a movie is added in post-production. DiGiulio was told that motion pictures in the USSR are produced in multi-channel sound, for they are released in a variety of languages spoken in the country.

The Cinema

The SMPTE delegates' itinerary in Kiev also included visits to a film printing factory; the Ukrainian office of the Goskino, where the American and Russian engineers exchanged ideas on the Super 35mm format and other subjects; and a local movie theater. SMPTE President Kennedy described the theater.



SMPTE Editorial Vice-President Howard T. La Zare in the projection booth of the movie theater the delegation visited in Kiev.



SMPTE President M. Carlos Kennedy holds award given to the Society by Goskino, the Soviet Union's state committee on cinematography. The award is in recognition of the Society's goodwill visit to the USSR.

"It was a single auditorium with about 800 seats," said Kennedy, comparing the cinema in Kiev to the new multiscreen theater complexes that have become commonplace in the U.S., Canada, and other countries. "The projection booth in the theater was not as automated as the ones we're seeing today; the booth was staffed by two projectionists and a film engineer." While in the booth, Kennedy, La Zare, and DiGuilio saw the manager of the theater effect a projector conversion from 4 perf to 3 perf in less than ten minutes.

The officers brought back with them some interesting information regarding Russia's motion-picture business in general. The cinema, while still a very popular art form in the Soviet Union, has been attracting fewer viewers in recent years. The average ticket prices (in Kiev) are 75 cents for an adult and 23 cents for a child.

Next Stop: Leningrad

The delegation spent two days in Leningrad, visiting the Lenfilm studio and various movie theaters. Constituting a major part of the Lenfilm studio is a laboratory that processes some 14 million meters of 35mm film every year (70mm film is processed there as well, though not in the same volume). According to Howard La Zare, the lab handles the initial stages of a motion picture from dailies to

answer print. The conformed negative is then sent from the studio lab, along with all the grading and timing information, to a print factory for final release.

The processors and other machines in the Lenfilm laboratory are mostly of Soviet manufacture, although the delegates did notice equipment bearing trademarks from Western manufacturers. The Soviet engineers are beginning to apply computer technology in Lenfilm, as well as in other facilities like it throughout the country. Overall, a very lively exchange of technical information took place at the Lenfilm studio.

Stimulating technical discussions continued during the tours of the cinemas in Leningrad. Ed DiGuilio was impressed by a 10,000-watt water-cooled xenon arc lamp house which he saw in one of the larger theaters.

One of the hosts in Leningrad was Mr. A. Antipin, a retired director of the Leningrad Institute of Cinema Engineers. Founded in 1918, the Institute offers a diversity of film-related subjects to thousands of engineering students, some of whom earn doctorates.

Moscow Television Center Visited

The delegation returned to Moscow on June 23. Ed DiGuilio visited the design office of a motion-picture camera factory, while M. Carlos Kennedy and Howard La Zare went on tours of a major television center and

a videocassette rental outlet. The television center is composed of two large buildings connected by an underground tunnel. The facility has 48 television studios and 50 other studios for on-air radio programming, in addition to numerous screening rooms. The center transmits 148 hours of television via satellite through five time zones each day. About 8000 people work at the facility.

Kennedy and La Zare discussed technology with Boris Stepanov and several of his engineering colleagues. The Russians believe high-definition television to be several years away in the Soviet Union. With regard to recording, Type-B and U-matic machines are used for news gathering and Type-C for program production and post-production. Most of the equipment is manufactured in the USSR, although Kennedy did notice some hardware from Sony, Bosch, Ampex, and other manufacturers in the West.

Following the tour of the TV center, Kennedy and La Zare visited Videofilm, a videocassette rental shop. The shop's current inventory is about 775 VHS tapes, which can be rented or viewed on-site in either conventional screening rooms or in a small theater. There are 72 shops like Videofilm in the Soviet Union today, with approximately 1000 projected for 1990. The 20,000 VHS-format VCRs in Russia today are expected to swell to about 400,000 by 1990.



SMPTE Editorial Vice-President Howard T. La Zare inspects a split-lens motion-picture camera at the Dovzhenko Studios in Kiev. Describing the camera is Anatoli Volga (right), the general manager of the studio.



SMPTE President M. Carlos Kennedy (left), Editorial Vice-President Howard T. La Zare (second from left), and Engineering Director for Motion Pictures Edmund M. DiGiulio (far right) tour the museum at the Dovjenko Studios, Kiev.

DiGiulio's host at the camera company was Mr. Domakhin, who showed the SMPTE officer all of the new camera designs. The firm has recently developed a compact and lightweight 35mm hand-held camera with snap-in cassette magazines.

Officers Reunite at Mosfilm

The SMPTE officers spent Wednesday, June 24, at Mosfilm, the largest motion-picture studio facility in the Soviet Union. Forty-five feature films and 15 made-for-television movies are produced at Mosfilm each year. Everything from the initial writing of the movie script to casting, post-production, and final release is done at the studios. Mosfilm is also involved, jointly with NIKFI, in extensive research and development for Super 35mm and other new motion-picture technologies.

Film engineers from 19 studios in the Soviet Union were meeting at Mosfilm on June 24. The SMPTE officers exchanged technical viewpoints with many of them and explained the work of the Society in the field of motion pictures.

Cultural and Social Program

Sergy Solomatin and the other hosts in the Soviet Union organized an interesting and educational cultural program for the officers of the Society and their spouses. Touring Moscow in a government-issued limousine, the Americans saw Saint Basils; Gum's, the city's large department store; the Kremlin; and Red Square. Visits included the Imolensky Cathedral, Novodevicky Monastery, Lenin's tomb in Red Square, and the famous crown jewels in the Kremlin.

In Kiev, a city rich in history and tradition, the six visitors saw the Lady of Victory, the magnificent war memorial; Kiev University, with its brilliant red exterior; the Cathedral of the Assumption, built in the 12th century; and the Arch of Victory. The Kennedys and La Zares made mention of the beauty of Kiev, with its parks, bridges, fountains, and statues.

The agenda for Leningrad included visits to various churches and cathedrals, the palace of Peter the Great, and the Hermitage. On the walls of the Hermitage hang masterpieces by Rembrandt, Raphael, Monet, and van Gogh. Breathtaking art also covers the floors and ceilings.

Social activities included a puppet show and circus (both in Moscow), films, a concert (in Kiev), and Russian ballet (in Leningrad).

A Spirit of Glasnost

M. Carlos Kennedy pointed out that the Russians were friendly and hospitable throughout the nine-day visit. Several speeches for friendship, accord, and world peace were heard.

Said Kennedy: "Our hosts in the Soviet Union displayed openness, sincerity, and friendliness. They were respectful and open-minded to our ideas. Indeed, glasnost was very much alive."

— John Varrasi



Delegates Edmund M. DiGiulio, Howard T. La Zare, and M. Carlos Kennedy (from left) with Soviet film engineers at the Lenfilm Studios.