

Bringing the Third World to the Silver Screen

By LIONEL MARTIN
Reuters

HAVANA — A new film foundation and school has been opened in Cuba and hailed by outstanding moviemakers from around the world as a milestone for Latin American cinema.

The foundation, headed by the Colombian

Nobel prize winning novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, aims to help make the Latin American film industry more dynamic and enhance cooperation among filmmakers in the region.

The sister project, the film school, begins its first course this month, with 230 students from Asia, Africa and mostly Latin America.

Fernando Birri, the Argentine film

director who is heading the school, called it "a factory and laboratory for the eye and ear" and a "productive center of creative energy for audiovisual images."

Participants believe that talent, as well as socially significant third world themes, must be discovered, encouraged and given both financial and creative support.

They say they also seek to challenge what they view as a U.S. and Western European monopoly of international film distribution.

Many non-Latin American moviemakers have recognized the importance of the foundation and school, among them some of the famous actors and directors — like Francis Ford Coppola and Harry Belafonte — who were in Havana last month for the eighth festival of New Latin America Cinema, a film trend that stresses social and political awareness.

At the foundation inauguration Dec. 15, messages of support were read from some of the world's most illustrious directors: Francesco Rossi of Italy, Ingmar Bergman of Sweden, Britain's Peter Brook, Akira Kurosawa of Japan, and Canadian animated filmmaker Norman McLaren.

The Foundation for New Latin American Cinema and the International School for Cinema and Television are private.

Though not controlled by the Havana, the government did renovate and donate quarters for the foundation — an old mansion in the La Corcuera section of Havana — and the school, in Santiago de los Baños, south of the capital.

President Fidel Castro, who attended the inauguration, told reporters that Cuba would contribute about 1 million dollars a year to the project. The foundation and school will have to pay for hard currency expenses, such as plane fares and teachers' wages.

The foundation has ambitious plans.

Among its projects is a series of films about Nicaragua "as a gesture of

solidarity."

Directors of those films will be Santiago Alvarez of Cuba, Miguel Littin of Chile, Jorge Sanjines of Bolivia and Geraldo Sarno of Brazil, all well known exponents of the "New Latin American Cinema."

The foundation will also sponsor a full-length documentary on the popular Panamanian leader, Omar Torrijos, who died in a plane crash in 1981 which many Latin Americans believe was caused by sabotage. A Panamanian, Pedro Rivera, will direct.

A television series based on five Garcia Marquez stories is also on the foundation's agenda. They will be made by directors from Cuba, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Argentina.

The new school, on the outskirts of Havana, has projection and editing rooms, studios, and a sizable tract of farmland where vegetables will be grown.

It also has a running track and a new olympic-size swimming pool which Castro said, half in jest, "can be used for learning underwater photography."

Birri, the Argentine filmmaker with the flowing patriarchal beard and omnipresent black fedora, said the school will be divided into three levels.

The regular three-years course will attempt to turn out all-around moviemakers, versed in production, direction, lighting, stage setting, sound, filming and script writing.

Birri explained that the broad training will make them better filmmakers and will also help them find jobs when they return home.

The second level course is called "experimental workshops" where moviemakers will perfect their skills by making films.

The highest level, called "higher studies dialogues," is geared toward more experienced moviemakers he said.



Gabriel Garcia Marquez heads a new film foundation designed to help make the Latin American film industry more dynamic and enhance cooperation