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FILMS FROM CUBA GOING TO CAPITAL

Institute Plans Showing
Despite U.S. Blockage

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

The American Film Institute Theater in Washington is going ahead with plans to show next month the Cuban films that the Federal Government blocked from showing here last week—and is now trying to seize—under provisions of the Trading With the Enemy Act.

"The films are good, they should be shown," said Michael Webb, film program manager of the national archive which is supported by public funds and membership subscriptions.

Meanwhile, at a news conference yesterday at the Olympia Theater at Broadway and 107th Street, the organizers of the curtailed Cuban film festival said they would continue to refuse to supply the Treasury Department with details of how the films were obtained.

The department's Foreign Assets Control Division is insisting on knowing from whom the films came, to establish that Cuba is deriving no commercial or financial benefit from the showings.

Imported From Montreal

The film festival sponsor, American Documentary Films of 336 West 84th Street, maintains that the 23 films were given free by non-Cuban sources in Montreal. The festival's organizer, Michael Myerson, a writer and filmmaker, said yesterday he had imported the films in the trunk of his car in two trips last fall. He conceded that he had not declared them during the perfunctory customs check at the border.

Unless the Treasury Department pronounces itself satisfied with Mr. Myerson's assurances, or an impending court test settles the legality of showing the films, the planned Washington showings April 19-29 could provoke a sharp confrontation.

Mr. Webb indicated that he would not be dissuaded from the showings "by the fact that agents of the Treasury Department decided they [the New York sponsor] had not complied with regulations."

"I personally think," he added, "the whole trading with the enemy thing is absurd. Look at the transactions going on now with China. It's all extraordinarily arbitrary."

But the acting director of the Foreign Assets Control Division in Washington, Stanley L. Summerfield, said he was aware of the Institute's plans and "I'm going to advise them they're prohibited from engaging in any transaction" economically or commercially beneficial to Cuba."