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Lev Kuleshov / Lev Kulidzhanov

The Death Ray

1925 80 min. Silent B&W Rental:

Directed by Lev Kuleshov; screenplay by V. I. Pudovkin; assistant directors: Pudovkin, Alexandra Khoklova, Sergei Komarov, Leonid Obolensky; photography by Alexander Levitsky; designed by Pudovkin and Vasili Rakhals. With Sergei Komarov, Porfiri Podobed, V.I. Pudovkin, Vladimir Fogel. English titles.

Please note: The fourth reel is missing in this and all existing prints of this film.

“Then came my next film, *The Death Ray*, which was not too well thought of at home. Admittedly it was too conscious an imitation of the American Cinema. There were too many tricks in it: I wanted to demonstrate all the resources of my students, all that they could do; and in consequence it is a catalog of devices. All the same the film had a certain purely cinematographic interest.” —Lev Kuleshov.

An extremely rare film, *The Death Ray* has been preserved in a print with one reel missing. The lost reel adds much to



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the already existing confusion of this intermittently brilliant failure. Stephen P. Hill describes the wildly improbable action as follows: “Sinister doings in an unnamed western country: noble, dedicated leader (Komarov) is imprisoned by Fascists but escapes jail and comes to brilliant Soviet inventor (Podobed) to get his laser-like ‘death ray’ — which is stolen by masked Jesuit gunman (Pudovkin) for the Fascist side — who is then hunted down by (Fogel), with whom he has a terrifying, unforgettable fight to the death.”

For assistant director/scenarist/actor Pudovkin, *The Death Ray* was the stepping stone to his career as a director: he never failed to credit his mentor Kuleshov for his ideas on filmmaking, indeed for the concept of montage which became the basic tool in Soviet silent film construction. (TL, YB)