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October 2 - November 18, 1975

SOVIET SILENT CINEMA

Part 2: 1926-1927

3 Films by Grigori Kozintsev and
Leonid Trauberg.
S.V.D.; THE DEVIL'S WHEEL; THE CLOAK

By special arrangement with Gosfilmofond, the Soviet State Film Archive, and the Pacific Film Archive of the University Art Museum at Berkeley, the Department of Film will present the second of a three-part retrospective of Soviet cinema in its silent period. This program is the most comprehensive ever mounted outside the U.S.S.R. of the classic and revolutionary films of the Soviet Union.

Part I, comprising 29 titles, covered the years from 1918 through 1925, and was presented in 1974 from March 7th through April 15th. Part 2 limits itself to the two peak years, 1926 and 1927, and will include forty titles to be exhibited from October 2nd through November 18th. Part 3, completing the silent years of Soviet filmmaking, will be announced in the future.

The works in the retrospective were selected from a list of surviving Soviet silents in the Gosfilmofond Archive by Professor Jay Leyda in consultation with Victor Privato, Director of Gosfilmofond, and Tom Luddy, Program Director of the Pacific Film Archive. Professor Leyda is the author of the definitive text in English on the history of Russian and Soviet cinema, Kino.

The majority of the prints in Part 2 will contain only the original Russian intertitles. Some of the films which will complement the program will be from the Museum's own collection, and many of these will have English intertitles. Almost all the films will be in 35mm.

Synopses and detailed information will be distributed at each screening. The documentation for the notes has been supplied through the generosity of Gosfilmofond, Jay Leyda, the Pacific Film Archive, Jacques Ledoux of the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique (Brussels), Vlada Petric and Andy McKay. Additional information is also drawn from the Museum's own Study Center files. The Department of Film owes a special thanks to Sonia Volochova who is not only translating from original Russian sources but who is assisting in the compiling of these notes as well.

Saturday, November 1st at 3:00- THE DEVIL'S WHEEL and S.V.D.

Saturday, November 1st at 5:30- S.V.D. and THE DEVIL'S WHEEL

Tuesday, November 4th at 2:00- S.V.D. and END OF ST. PETERSBURG (English titles print, see previous notes for this film.) Program ca. 120 min.

Thursday, November 6th at 5:30- THE DEVIL'S WHEEL and Dovzhenko's two-reel (ca. 20 min) comedy, LOVE'S BERRY (see previous notes for this film)

THE DEVIL'S WHEEL (CHERTOVO KOLESO). 1926. Released March 16, 1926. Gangster drama, adapted from V. Kaverin's story, "The End of the Khaza" (Konets Khazy). 7 reels. Leningradkino. Russian intertitles. Incomplete (reels 3 and 6 missing). Original running time: ca. 90 minutes. Running time of incomplete print: ca. 45 minutes.

Alternate Russian title: MORYAK S "AVRORY" (SAILOR FROM THE AURORA).

Scenario: Andrei Plotrovsky. Direction: Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg. Photography: Andrei Moskvin. Design: Yevgeni Enel. Assistant directors: M. Geraltovsky, S. Shklyarevsky.

Cast: Pyotr Sobolevsky (Vanya Shorin, Red Navy sailor); Ludmilla Semyonova (Valya); Sergei Gerasimov (magician "Chelovek-vopros"); Emil Gal (Koko, variety performer); A. Tserep (tavernkeeper); N. Gorodnichev (house manager); V. Lande (dancer in cafe); S. Martinson (orchestra conductor); E. Kumeiko, I. Berezin (hooligans); Ya. Zheimo (girl gangster); A. Kostrichkin (member of the band); V. Plotnikov (one of the rescuers); A. Kostomolotsky (fence for antiques); A. Arnold (editor).

Synopsis (based on single viewing of incomplete print and material in Soviet Fiction Films).

The slums of Leningrad are defaced by rows of crumbling, windowless houses, lifeless remnants of the Civil War. They are the habitat of the gangster bands, the khazas, which prey upon the city.

Not far away is one of Leningrad's attractions for the unwary, the amusement park known as The Peoples' House. Here the gangsters ply their trade. Among them, in the guise of a magician, self-named "Chelovek-Vopros," (Question-Man) is the leader of one of the bands.

The myriad of delights promised by the Peoples' House entices Vanya, a sailor from the Aurora, and his mates to spend their shore leave there. Valya, a young girl from the slums, also longs for the pleasures of the amusement park, and evades the watchful eye of her authoritarian father to go there. Amidst the raptures of roller-coasters, giant swings, devil's wheels, squeaking hurdy-gurdies, and glaring fireworks the two meet and fall in love.

That love has dire results. Because Valya pleads for one last ride on the devil's wheel Vanya overstays his leave. His comrades look for him in vain. He has become an involuntary deserter, a homeless outcast on the run. Valya, too, is homeless. She is cast out by her father, who suspects the worst. In their predicament, the two young people become easy prey for "Chelovek-Vopros," who tricks them into joining his band. Eventually, however, Vanya musters the courage to break with the gang, return to his ship, and submit to judgment by his mates. His testimony enables the militia to surround the gangsters' den. In the ensuing shootout "Chelovek-Vopros" is killed. It is the end of the khaza.

—Sonia Volochova

S.V.D. 1927. Released August 23, 1927. Historical drama. 6 reels. Sovkino (Leningrad). Russian intertitles. Incomplete. Running time of complete print: ca 80 minutes; of incomplete print: ca 50 minutes.

Alternate English titles: CLUB OF THE BIG DEED; ASSOCIATION OF THE BIG DEED; CLUB OF THE GREAT DEED; THE UNION OF (FOR) THE GREAT CAUSE; BLOODY SNOWS; THE BROTHERHOOD OF DEATH.

Alternate Russian title: SOYUZ VELIKOVO DELA (ASSOCIATION OF THE GREAT DEED).

Scenario: Yuri Tynyanov, Yuri Oxman. Direction: Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg. Photography: Andrei Moskvina. Design: Yevgeni Enei. Assistant director: B. Shpis. Cast: Sergei Gerasimov (Medox); Andrei Kostrichkin (his servant); Pyotr Sobolevsky (Lieutenant Sukhanov); K. Khokhlov (General Vishnevsky); Sophie Magarill (his wife); Ya. Zheimo (girl in circus); M. Mishel (General Veismar); Bronshtein (drummer); V. Fedosiev (officer); L. Semyonova, N. Michurin.

Synopsis (based on single viewing of incomplete print and material in Soviet Fiction Films).

Period: 1825. Locale: Chernigov, a garrison city in the Ukraine.

The reactionary Medox, adventurer, cardsharp, blackmailer, wins a ring bearing the initials S.V.D. Having learned of the planned revolt, being organized by the secret societies of progressive-minded officers, he schemes to denounce the conspirators. To win their trust, he exploits the S.V.D. initials as proof of his membership in the secret society known as "Soyuz Dela" (Association of the