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Author(s)	Judy Bloch Tom Luddy Yvette Bíró
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# The Devil's Wheel and S.V.D.

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## The Devil's Wheel (Chertovo koleso)

Grigori Kozintzev was 17 and Leonid Trauberg was 20 when they got together in 1922 with cameraman Andrei Moskvin and several actors to form the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, or FEKS, a group that later attracted Eisenstein and others. FEKS began as a futurist theater group that believed in total experimentation, excess and rebellion. Performers practiced acrobatics, mime and physical comportment without any deference to psychologisms. "The tempo of the revolution," believed Kozintzev, "is that of scandal and publicity."

"A drama of the gangster bands that preyed upon St. Petersburg during the Civil War period, *The Devil's Wheel* was based on a novel by Kaverin and was the first FEKS film to achieve a degree of popularity.

Today, the film is extremely interesting for its descriptions of the colorful underworld milieu which existed (apparently) well into the twenties. "The clash between the realistic material and the eccentric treatment by the FEKS seems to have increased the force of the film. All disparate elements were pulled together by the dramatic, expressive, Germanic photography of the cameraman Moskvin." (Jay Leyda)."

--Tom Luddy and Yvette Biro

*Note:* Reels 3 and 6 are missing from this and all existing prints.

• Directed by Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg. Based on *The End of the Khaza* by V. Kaverin. Photographed by Andrei Moskvin. With P. Sobolevski, L. Semyenova, Sergei Gerassimov. (1926, 45 mins, Silent with Russian intertitles and live English translation, Print from PFA Collection)

## S.V.D. (The Club of the Big Deed)

*S.V.D.* is the story of the Decembrists' revolt in 1825, but it is not an historical film. The story is used as a springboard for developing a romantic, revolutionary melodrama, with its artistic roots in such disparate areas as nineteenth century Russian romantic painting and "American Eccentrism," the FEKS terms for the "new aspect of the comic outlook on life created by Anglo-American genius"—slapstick, chases, narrow escapes and unbelievable heroism. But all the distortions did have a rational method, and *S.V.D.* draws the viewer into the period while avoiding the "naive naturalism" which the directors opposed.

*Note:* Reels 2 and 6 are missing from our print of this rare film.

• Directed by Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg. Written by Yuri Tinyanov and Yuri Oxman. Photographed by Andrei Moskvin. With Sergei Gerassimov, P. Sobolevsky. (1927, 50 mins, Silent with Russian intertitles and live English translation, Print from PFA Collection)