

Document Citation

Title	Soviet silent cinema : part 2 : 1926-1927
Author(s)	Sonia Volochova
Source	<i>Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)</i>
Date	1975 Oct 02
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	6
Subjects	Protazanov, Iakov Aleksandrovich (1881-1945), Moscow, Soviet Union Koval-Samborsky, Ivan (1893-1962) Chekhov, Mikhail (1891-1955) Golovnia, Anatoli (1900)
Film Subjects	Chelovek iz ritorana (The man from the restaurant), Protazanov, Iakov Aleksandrovich, 1927

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

October 2 - November 18, 1975

SOVIET SILENT CINEMA

THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT

Part 2: 1926-1927

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, October 25 at 5:30

Tuesday, October 28 at 2:00

With the showing of four Protazanov films (THE FORTY-FIRST, DON DIEGO AND PELAGEYA, THREE THIEVES, and THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT) on three successive days (October 23, 24, 25), and the earlier showings of two others (AELITA, 1924, and THE TAILOR FROM TORZHOK, 1925), we hope to remedy the neglect accorded one of the seminal figures in film history. That Protazanov is known at all is due, in the main, to repeated showings over the years of FATHER SERGIUS (OTETS SERGII), 1918, one of the Film Department's first acquisitions, and to the efforts of Jay Leyda (in his model history of the Russian Film, Kino) to put him in proper perspective. Those who have seen FATHER SERGIUS are aware of its powerful dramatic impact. Two of the films being shown, THE FORTY-FIRST and THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT, are also dramas, the other two, DON DIEGO AND PELAGEYA, and THREE THIEVES, reveal this director's flair for comedy.

Properly speaking, Protazanov (February 4, 1881 - August 8, 1945) is, in technique and style, outside the revolutionary mainstream, of the period, more "old guard" than "avant garde." His contribution consists in demonstrating that traditional methods, too, could serve ideological ends.

His traditionalism is not surprising. His career began when the screen was still in swaddling clothes (1907), and he directed his first film, THE PRISONER'S SONG (PESNYA KATORZHANINA), in 1911. The many films that followed revealed an original talent, dramatic sensitivity, and most important, a mind attuned to the potentialities of the fledgling cinema. Of his numerous pre-revolutionary films one is of special interest: DRAMA BY TELEPHONE (DRAMA U TELEFONA), 1914, which exactly follows Griffith's THE LONELY VILLA (1909). Leyda conjectures Protazanov may have copied a Danish or German print of Griffith's original. (Kino, p. 143). One of his greatest assets was his ability to entice noted stage players to appear in his films and to exact great performances from them, vide Ivan Mozhukhin in FATHER SERGIUS, Ada Voitsik and Ivan Koval-Samborsky in THE FORTY-FIRST. His films were very popular, and, along with Pyotr Chardynin and Vladimir Gardin, he was one of pre-revolutionary Russia's leading directors.

The economic and ideological dislocations of war and revolution brought an influx of émigrés from the Russian film world to Germany, and, especially, Paris. Protazanov was one to these émigrés.

"A natural interchange of material and techniques took place between the Russian and the French filmmakers. The French avant-garde of the early 1920's found much to admire, imitate and borrow wholesale from the Russian work. Marcel L'Herbier, particularly, demonstrated this influence in his work of that time. When Delluc began direction on his own, his handling of Eve Francis produced results remarkably similar to Protazanov's direction of Natalya Lissenko. On the other hand, Protazanov, now Jacques Protozanoff, politely adapted French literature, Zola's Pour une Nuit d'Amour and Paul Bourget's Le Sens de la Mort for the Thiemann studio. Of the latter film Delluc pointedly said, "Le Sens de la Mort est un excellent film français. Il a été fait par des Russes" Quite aside from the quality of the film, it will probably be remembered solely for the appearance in a minor role of a young actor, Rene Clair, whose observation of Protazanov at work may well have been a spur to his own talents."

(Leyda, Kino, pp. 116-17)

Invited to return in 1924, Protazanov resumed his Russian career with the science-fiction romance AELITA, 1924 (shown in Part I of Soviet Silent Cinema). It was followed by the more "agitational" HIS CALL (YEVO PRISYV), 1925 (U.S. release: Chicago, December 3, 1926, the only Soviet silent film premiered outside New York, for a special audience, two days before BATTLESHIP POTESKIN). Other important films, in addition to the ones listed above, include: THE LASH OF THE CZAR (BELY ORYOL), 1928 (U.S. release: February 11, 1929); AN HOUR WITH TCHEKHOV (CHEKHOVSKY ALMANAKH), 1929 (U.S. release: September 5, 1933); HOLIDAY OF ST. JURGEN (PRAZDNIK SVYATOVO YORGENA), 1930, TOMMY, or SIBERIAN PATROL (TOMMI, or SIBIRSKY PATRUL), 1931 (U.S. release: May 13, 1932); MARIONETTES (MARIONETKI), 1934 (U.S. release: 1934); WITHOUT DOWRY (BESPRIDANNITSA), 1937; SALAVAT YULAYEV, 1941. His last film was NASREDDIN IN BUKHARA (NASREDDIN V BUKHARE), 1943. Some of the films he directed abroad were DER LIEBE PIELGEFAHRT (Germany), L'AMOUR ET LA LOI (France), POUR UNE NUIT D'AMOUR (France, 1919), JUSTICE D'ABORD (France, 1919), a remake of his 1917 PUBLIC PROSECUTOR (PROKUROR).

He died as he had lived -- working on a shooting script.

With the showing of four Protazanov films (THE FORTY-FIRST, DON DIEGO AND PELAGEYA, THREE THIEVES, and THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT) on three successive days (October 23, 24, 25), and the earlier showings of two others (AELITA, 1924, and THE TAILOR FROM TORZHOK, 1925), we hope to remedy the neglect accorded one of the seminal figures in film history. That Protazanov is known at all is due, in the main, to repeated showings over the years of FATHER SERGIUS (OTETS SERGII), 1918, one of the Film Department's first acquisitions, and to the efforts of Jay Leyda (in his model history of the Russian film, Kino) to put him in proper perspective. Those who have seen FATHER SERGIUS are aware of its powerful dramatic impact. Two of the films being shown, THE FORTY-FIRST and THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT, are also dramas, the other two, DON DIEGO AND PELAGEYA and THREE THIEVES, reveal this director's flair for comedy.

Properly speaking, Protazanov (February 4, 1881-August 8, 1945) is, in technique and style, outside the revolutionary mainstream of the period, more "old guard" than "avant garde." His contribution consists in demonstrating that traditional methods, too, could serve ideological needs.

His traditionalism is not surprising. His career began when the screen was still in swaddling clothes (1907), and he directed his first film, THE PRISONER'S SONG (PESNYA KATORZHANINA), in 1911. The many films that followed revealed an original talent, dramatic sensitivity, and most important, a mind attuned to the potentialities of the fledgling cinema. Of his numerous pre-revolutionary films one is of special interest: DRAMA BY TELEPHONE (DRAMA U TELEFONA), 1914, which exactly follows Griffith's THE LONELY VILLA (1909). Leyda conjectures that Protazanov may have copied a Danish or German print of Griffith's original. (Kino, p. 143). One of his greatest assets was his ability to entice noted stage players to appear in his films and to exact great performances from them, vide Ivan Mozhukhin in FATHER SERGIUS, Ada Voitsik and Ivan Koval-Samborsky in THE FORTY-FIRST. His films were very popular, and, along with Pyotr Chardynin and Vladimir Gardin, he was one of pre-revolutionary Russian's leading directors.

The economic and ideological dislocations of war and revolution brought an influx of emigrés from the film world to Germany and, especially, Paris. Protazanov was one of these emigrés.

"A natural interchange of material and techniques took place between the Russian and the French filmmakers. The French avant garde of the early 1920s found much to admire, imitate and borrow wholesale from the Russian work. Marcel L'Herbier, particularly, demonstrated this influence in his work of that time. When Delluc began direction on his own, his handling of Eve Francis produced results remarkably similar to Protazanov's direction of Natalya Lissenko. On the other hand, Protazanov, now Jacques Protazanoff, politely adapted French literature, Zola's Pour une Nuit d'Amour and Paul Bourget's Le Sens de la Mort for the Thiemann studio. Of the latter film Delluc pointedly said, 'Le Sens de la Mort est un excellent film français. Il a été fait par des Russes.' Quite aside from the quality of the film, it will probably be remembered solely for the appearance in a minor role of a young actor, René Clair, whose observation of Protazanov at work may well have been a spur to his own talents." (Kino, pp. 116-17).

Invited to return in 1924, Protazanov resumed his Russian career with the science-fiction romance AELITA, 1924 (shown in Part I of Soviet Silent Cinema). It was followed by the more "agitational" HIS CALL (YEVO PRISYV), 1925 (U.S. release: Chicago, December 3, 1926, the only Soviet silent film premiered outside New York, for a special audience, two days before BATTLESHIP POTESKIN). Other important films, in addition to the ones listed above, include: THE LASH OF THE CZAR (BELY ORYOL), 1928 (U.S. release: February 11, 1929); AN HOUR WITH TCHEKHOV (CHEKHOVSKY ALMANAKH), 1929 (U.S. release: September 5, 1933); HOLIDAY OF ST. JURGEN (PRAZDNIK SVYATOVO YORGENA), 1930, TOMMY, or SIBERIAN PATROL (TOMMI or SIBIRSKY PATRUL), 1931 (U.S. release: May 13, 1932; MARIONETTES (MARIONETKI), 1934

(U.S. release: 1934); WITHOUT DOWRY (BESPRIDANNITSA), 1937; SALAVAT YULAYEV, 1941. His last film was NASREDDIN IN BUKHARA (NASREDDIN V BUKHARE), 1943. Some of the films he directed abroad were DER LIEBE PIELGEFAHRT (Germany), L'AMOUR ET LA LOI (France), POUR UNE NUIT D'AMOUR (France, 1919), JUSTICE D'ABORD (France, 1919), a remake of his 1927 PUBLIC PROSECUTOR (PROKUROR).

He died as he had lived -- working on a shooting script.

-- Sonia Volochova

THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT (CHELOVEK IZ RESTORANA). 1927. Released August 12, 1927. U.S. release: January 5, 1930. Drama. 6 reels. Mezhrabpom-Rus. Russian intertitles. ca. 90 minutes.

Scenario (from I. Shmelyov's story): Yakov Protazanov, O. Leonidov. Direction: Yakov Protazanov. Photography: Anatoli Golovnya, K. Ventz. Design: Sergei Kozlovsky. Assistant director: Ya. Urinov.

Cast: Mikhail (Michael) Chekhov (Skorokhodov, waiter); V. Malinovskaya (Natasha, his daughter); Ivan Koval-Samborsky (Sokolin, her fiancé); M. Narokov (Karasev, factory owner); S. Kuznetsov (minister); M. Klimov (Shtoss, headwaiter); A. Petrovsky (general); K. Alexeyeva (Skorokhodov's wife); M. Zharov (waiter); P. Karelina-Raich, S. Yakovleva, S. Levitina, V. Gromov.

SYNOPSIS

Period: The last years of the first World War, 1916-17. Among the waiters in a Moscow restaurant is Skorokhodov, a timid little man, cowed by his menial position in life. From early morning to late night the restaurant is filled with carousing merchants, government officials, officers. Skorokhodov doesn't earn much. The cost of the damage inflicted by the rowdy clientele, of the dishes they break, is deducted from his wages. Fate is merciless to him. His son is killed at the front, his wife dies, and his only solace, his beautiful daughter Natasha, is expelled from the gymnasium for nonpayment of the tuition. He's forced to rent out a room in his miserable apartment. It is taken by a messenger from the munitions department of the War Office, Sokolin, a simple, modest young man. He and Natasha fall in love and decide to get married. Her father gets work for Natasha, an excellent violinist, in the restaurant's orchestra. Her looks immediately attract the attention of the restaurant's habitués. The most persistent seeker of her favors is the manufacturer Karasev. Unsuccessful in his pursuit, he resorts to a frame-up. While in the waiting room of the munitions department he steals some confidential documents from Sokolin's table, which he uses as bait to get Natasha to his house. To save the man she loves, she comes. Unsuspectingly, her father, too, comes, to prepare "supper for two." Karasev exacts a price for returning the documents. His advances rejected, he tries to force Natasha to submit to him. Her screams bring her father. At long last, the little "man from the restaurant" acquires stature. He strikes Karasev, and, with the help of the newly arrived Sokolin, rescues Natasha.

Soviet Fiction Films:
An Annotated Catalog, Vol. I.
Moscow, 1961, p. 235, No. 533.

Translated and revised by Sonia Volochova

The popularity of the story from which THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT was adapted was so great that four pre-revolutionary versions preceded the Protazanov remake. (Kino, p. 240). This latest version did not please the Soviet critics. They denounced it for over-emphasizing tsarist luxury and making "bourgeois decadence" attractive. (Paul Babitsky

and John Rimberg, The Soviet Film Industry, p. 139). In other words, its ideology was distorted. Variety, on the other hand, thought its "propaganda streak" was "a yard wide." (January 29, 1930).

In content THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT is basically a social melodrama, of the type Griffith so frequently favored. Much therefore depended on the acting, especially the lead. The role of the waiter was first offered to Ivan Moskvina, leading luminary of the Moscow Art Theatre, who rejected it. It was accepted by Mikhail (Michael) Chekhov (1891-1955), also of the Moscow Art Theatre. Chekhov's initiation into films, in the 1913 "epic" of the pioneer Russian producer, Alexander Drankov, TERCENTENARY OF THE ROMANOV DYNASTY'S ACCESSION TO THE THRONE (TRYOKHSOLETIYE TSARSTVOVANIYA DOMA ROMANOVYKH), was a harrowing experience, typical of the embryonic state of the Russian film industry. (For details, see Jay Leyda, Kino, pp.64-66.) Nevertheless, he continued to appear in films. Due to his emigré status, his name has been expunged from Soviet records. Abroad he established drama schools in London and New York, and appeared in a number of Hollywood films, among them Gregory Ratoff's politically controversial SONG OF RUSSIA (1943), Alfred Hitchcock's SPELLBOUND (1945), and Ben Hecht's SPECTER OF THE ROSE (1946). Source: Jay Leyda, Kino and Leslie Hollowell, The Filmgoer's Companion, 3rd edition.

"In the late 1920s there were an unusual number of departures, especially among actors, and these led in most cases to the elimination of their names (though not their faces) from Soviet publications....One actor who appeared so many Soviet films that the elimination of his name (until recently restored) was physically awkward was Ivan Koval-Samborsky (September 16, 1893-1962), [the film's romantic lead]. He went to Berlin to appear in a Prometheus production of a Bela Balazs scenario, 1+1+3, but arrived four days too late, so waited for another role, in Schinderhannes; he later returned to Moscow, but disappeared again for a while." (Kino, p. 271.)

The checkered career of this prominent actor encompassed both stage and screen. He came to films from Meyerhold's theater. His first important film was Protazanov's HIS CALL, or THE 23RD OF JANUARY (YEVO PRISYV, or 23 YANVARYA), 1925. Equally expert in both drama and comedy, he was popular and in demand, especially in Germany. His more important Russian films include: Pudovkin's CHESS FEVER (SHAKHMATNAYA GORYACHKA), 1925, and MOTHER (MAT), 1926 (shown October 13, at 2:00, and October 18, at 3:00); Barnet's MISS MEND, 1926, and GIRL WITH THE HATBOX (DEVUSH S KOROBKOI), 1927 (to be shown November 13, at 5:30); Otsep's EARTH IN CHAINS, or THE YELLOW PASS (ZEMLYA V PLENU), 1928; Raizman's FLYERS (LYOTCHIKI), 1935; and Alexander Macheret's BOLOTNIYE SOLDATY (MARSH SOLDIERS), 1938. His last appearance was in Gleb Nifontov's THE GREEN PATROL (ZELYONY PATRUL), 1961.

Of the 20 or more films he appeared in abroad, the following are of interest: SCHINDERHANNES (Germany, 1928), directed by Kurt (Curtis) Bernhardt; CAGLIOSTRO (France, 1928), directed by Richard Oswald; DAS DONKOSSAKENLIED (SONG OF THE DON COSSACKS) (Germany, 1929), directed by Georg Asagaroff; ALRAUNE (Germany, 1930; U.S. release: 1934), directed by Richard Oswald; and GROSSTADTMACHT (Germany, 1933), directed by Fyodor Otsep (or Ozep). (We are indebted for the information on Koval-Samborsky's non-Russian films to Norman Miller.)

Protazonov was fortunate in obtaining the services of Vsevolod Pudovkin's ace cameraman, Anatoli Golovnya (February 2, 1900--). Innovative and creative, Golovnya was as indispensable to Pudovkin, whose approach to filmmaking he shared, as Eduard Tisse to Eisenstein and Andrei Moskvina to Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg. In fact, after his first film, BRICKS (KIRPICHIKI), 1925, directed by L. Obolensky, he worked almost exclusively for Pudovkin, on CHESS FEVER (SHAKHMATNAYA GORYACHKA), 1925; MECHANICS OF THE BRAIN (MEKHANIKA GOLOVNOVO MOZGA), 1925, to be shown November 14, at 2:00; MOTHER (MAT), 1926, shown October 13, at 2:00, and October 18, at 3:00; THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG (KONETS SANKT-PETERBURGA), 1927, shown October 18, at 5:30; STORM OVER ASIA (POTOMOK CHINGISKHANA), 1929; DESERTER (DEZERTIR), 1933; MININ AND POZHARSKY, 1939; SUVOROV, 1941; ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV, 1947. Of the handful of films Golovnya made for other

(6)

directors, only two are important: THE MAN FROM THE RESTAURANT and Fyodor Otsep's THE LIVING CORPSE (ZHIVOI TRUP), 1929, in which Pudovkin played the lead.

Golovnya is also the author of several books on cinematography, wrote the scenario for and directed GREAT WEEKDAYS (VELIKIYE BUDNI, 1932), and wrote the scenario for RUDY'S CAREER (KARIERA RUDDI, 1934). Since 1934 he has been teaching at the Soviet State Film Institute.

-- Sonia Volochova

Source of biographies (except Chekhov's): The Soviet film dictionary Kinoslovak, 2 vols., 1966, 1970.

Andrew C. McKay
5961 North 4th Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19120
NOV 20 1975