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The Three Million Case

THE SOVIET FILM

(September 25 - November 11, 1969)

Tuesday, September 30, 1969 (2:00 and 5:30)

THE TRIAL OF THE THREE MILLION (PROTSESS O TRYOKH MILLYONAKH)* 1926. Produced by Mezhrabpom-Russ. Directed by Yakov Protazanov; assisted by Yuli Raizman. Scenario by Oleg Leonidov and Yakov Protazanov, from the novel "The Three Thieves" by Umberto Notari. Photography by Pyotr Yermolov. Design by Isaac Rabinovich.

CAST: Igor Ilinsky, Mikhail Klimov, Anatoli Ktorov, Olga Zhizneva.

NO ENGLISH TITLES.

ca. 85 minutes.

Distributed theatrically in the U.S.A. by Artkino Pictures, Inc.

* Silent film, piano accompaniment by Charles Hofmann.

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THE TRIAL OF THE THREE MILLION (also known as THE THREE MILLION CASE; THE CASE OF THE THREE MILLION; THE THREE THIEVES.)

SYNOPSIS

A banker named Ornano, trying to profit from the famine which has raged for years in northern Italy, undertakes a speculation for which he needs a large sum of money. He sells his house for three million rubles to a religious community, after bribing the "holy fathers" who direct it. The banker's wife sends her lover Guido a note telling him that he will find the money in their house. The note falls into the hands of the adventurous Cascarilia, who enters the house during the night. Here he unexpectedly meets his friend the thief Tapioca, but the banker arrives. Tapioca escapes and Cascarilia enters the wife's bedroom. Fearing that the note will get into the hands of Ornano, Cascarilia demands that Noris keep her husband with her until a given signal. Noris has to submit, and Cascarilia flees with the money. The police arrest Tapioca, taking him for the thief and put him in prison. On the day of his trial Cascarilia appears in the courtroom and announces himself as the thief. In response to the doubt in the room, Cascarilia throws packets of counterfeit money into the room. Everybody scrambles to gather up the money and, taking advantage of the chaos, Cascarilia and Tapioca escape.

In the epilogue, a street urchin tries to steal Tapioca's gloves. Tapioca surprises him, telling the unfortunate thief that it is not the gloves that are important but the "sacred law" of property.

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THE THREE MILLION CASE:

Mezhrabpom-Russ, where the scenario department was more forceful than in other studios, had nothing prepared for the anniversary year. They made grand announcements of the literature made ready, this year, for the indefatigable Protazanov: a scenario by Maxim Gorky on the Stenka Razin rebellion (the manuscript was found among Gorky's papers after his death), a film of Dostoyevsky's "Eternal Husband," and, grandest of all, a collaboration by Protazanov with Nemirovich-Danchenko on Tolstoy's "War and Peace". None of these projects was ever seriously begun. Instead, Protazanov made films that were far less grand and possibly more interesting, the first two in a form that became associated with his name -- the satirical comedy: THE TAILOR FROM TORZHOK (commissioned as publicity for the State Lottery Loan) and THE THREE MILLION CASE -- both with much the same cast, Ilinsky, Ktorov, Zhizneva, who were also to play in his later comedies. Though THE THREE MILLION CASE was frowned upon as "an ordinary drawing-room comedy", the two comedies were agreeably successful at the box-office.

-- Jay Leyda, Kino, A History of the Russian and Soviet Film.