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# Francesco Rosi

Though Rosi's cinema is in the great neo-realist tradition, he is an individualist who has created his own distinctive style of filmmaking. If he must own to a Maestro it is to Visconti from whom he learned his trade (as assistant on *La Terra Trema*, *Bellissima* and *Senso*) including the ability to direct non-professional actors as well as professionals. But he learned to avoid the Visconti-style aesthetics. Visconti would wait all day to get the right lighting effect. Rosi shoots, where possible, without artificial lighting though his use of cameramen like Gianni Di Venanzo or Pasquale De Santis (who took over from the former half way through *Moment of Truth* and made his official debut as cinematographer with *More than a Miracle*) has ensured a visual quality envied by directors who labour more painstakingly for visual elegance. When directing non-professionals Rosi will not risk losing their spontaneity by interrupting more than necessary for technical adjustments. Yet there is nothing of the improvised or haphazard about the results. Content often dictates the style. In *Hands Over the City* the people in the streets of Naples clamouring against the corrupt bosses were the real people of those streets who have the same problems. In *Moment of Truth* the Linda Christian party sequence was filmed mostly with hand-held cameras during a real party laid on for the occasion. Rosi's first picture *The Challenge* went straight to the heart of the problem of why a young man in Southern Italy takes to crime. As with his second film *The Swindlers*, filmed on location in

Germany, about the Neapolitan pedlars of tatty haberdashery, Rosi made some concessions to melodrama, perhaps influenced by the collaboration of scriptwriters like Cecchi D'Amico and Patroni Griffi. But by his third film, *Salvatore Giuliano* he reached stylistic maturity, keeping his protagonist in long shot except when seen on the morgue table. *Giuliano* is part of a central quartet of Rosi films offering a panorama of political corruption in post-war Italy: from *Lucky Luciano* when the Americans arrived in Naples and set up a bridge between the two Mafias to *Giuliano*, in which the bandits of Sicily are exploited by Rome as a weapon against changing political moods to *The Mattei Affair* showing the other face of the supposed Italian economic miracle to *Hands Over the City* which shows how class politics and graft can destroy the hopes of a long-oppressed city like Naples. This quartet of reconstructed reality is complemented by two films as a prologue and epilogue: *Just Another War* shows how the class conflicts of modern Italy took shape during World War One and *Illustrious Corpses*, hints that the progressive forces of the 1970s are already accepting compromises in order to join in the power game. The other two Rosi films, very different on the surface but still deeply imbued with the theme of the struggle between Mediterranean poverty v power, are *The Moment of Truth*, filmed in Spain, and the enchanting *More than a Miracle* a period Cinderella fairy story is as much about the illusions of Southern Italians.—John Francis Lane.



Mon 11 Jul 6.15. 8.30

## The Challenge

(La Sfida)

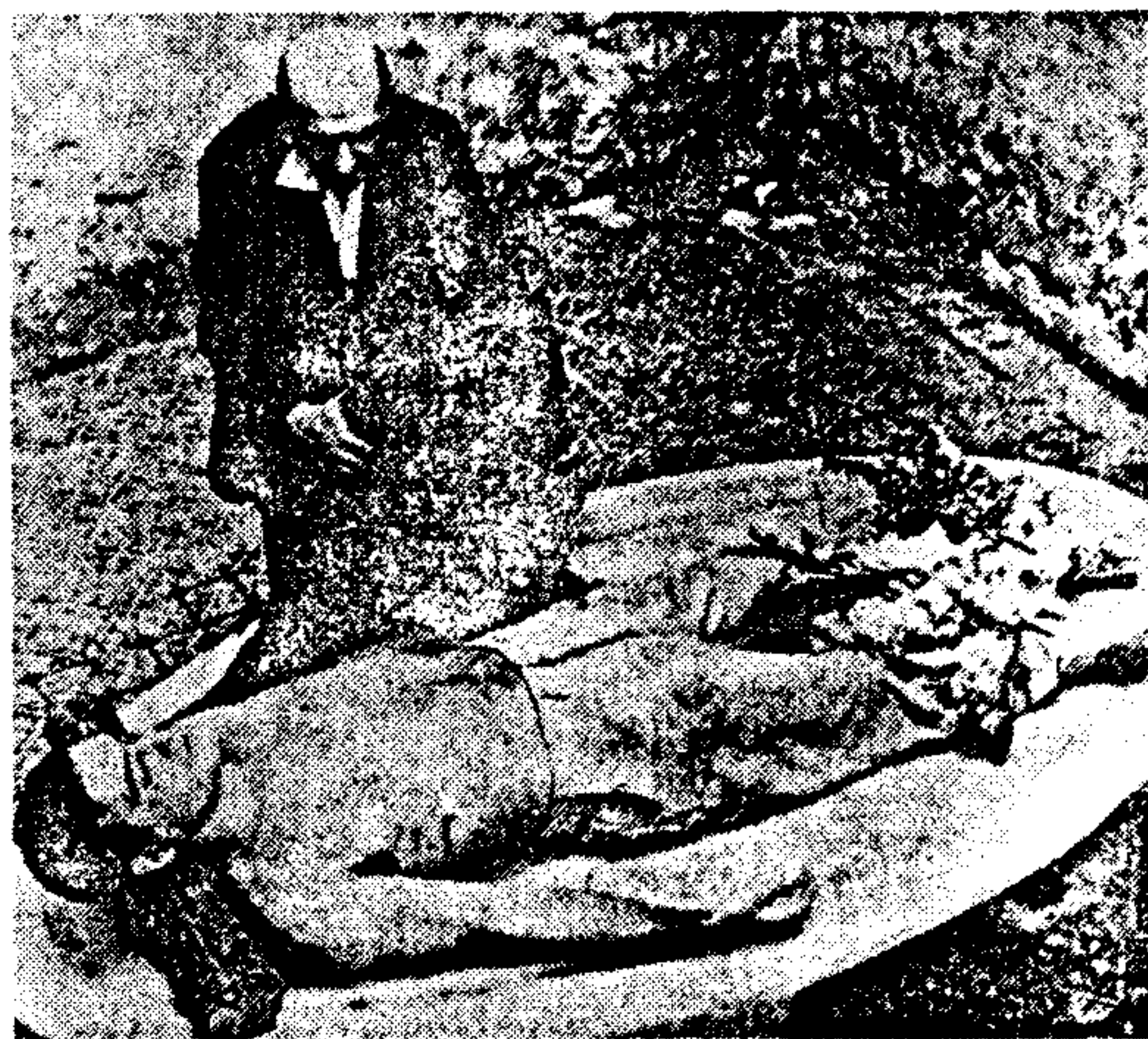
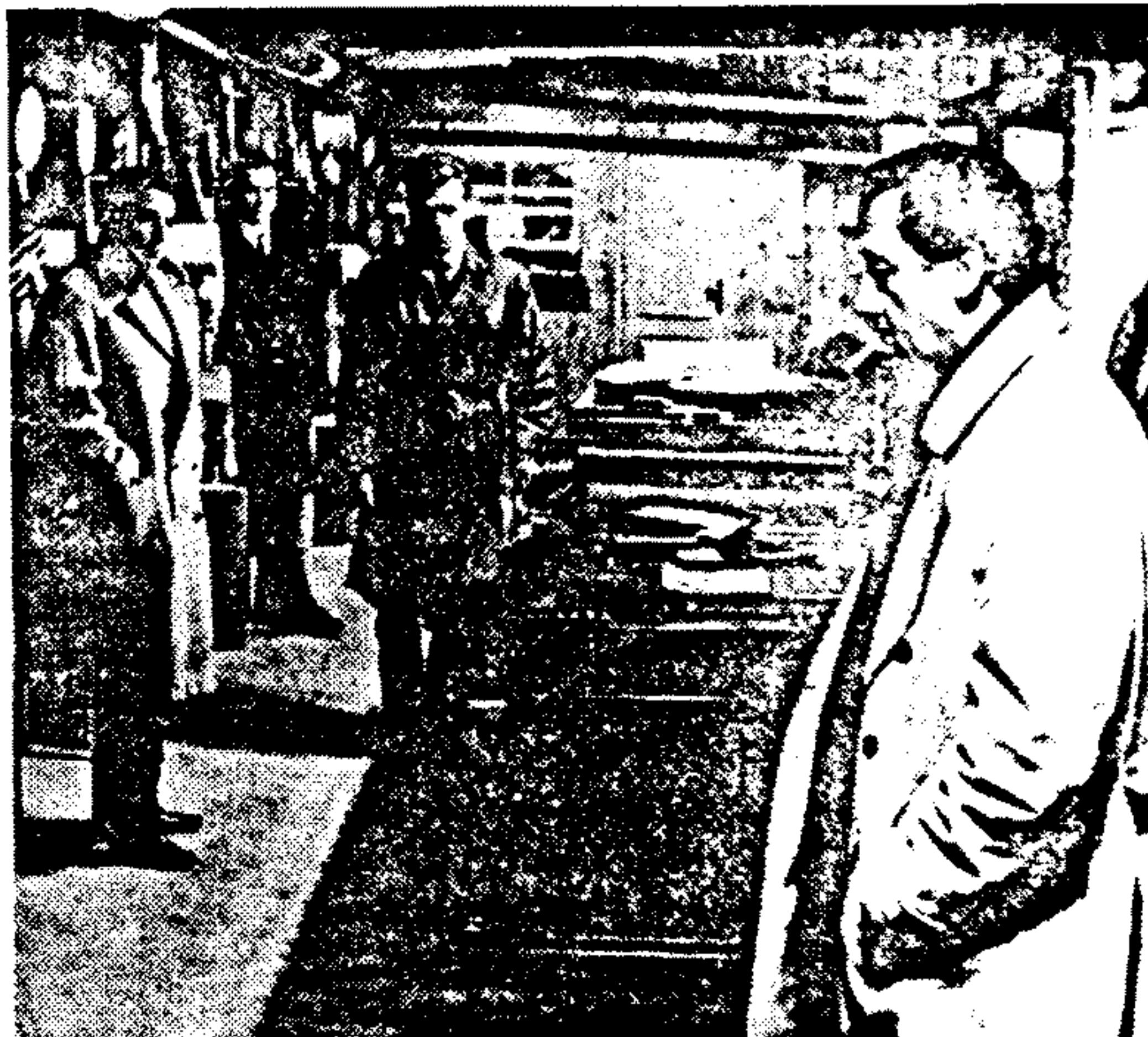
It has been suggested that Rosi was influenced in his first film by the American gangster films. While admitting to his admiration for Huston and Lang, Rosi himself feels that 'a director makes his first film with passion and without thinking about what anybody else has done before'. Based on a real event in the protection racket controlling the Naples fruit and vegetable market, Rosi moves the focus away from the girl who killed her lover's murderer and concentrates attention on Vito who, like 'Ntoni in *La Terra Trema* rebels against the racketeers. Suso Cecchi D'Amico's collaboration on the script, however, ensures space for Assunta, the only prominent female character in any of Rosi's films. *Italy 1958/With José Suarez, Rosanna Schiaffino.*

Tue 12 Jul 6.15. 8.30

## The Ragtrade Swindlers

(I Magliari)

In addition to Cecchi D'Amico, Rosi called in as script collaborator for his second film Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, a friend from his years of working in radio in Naples. *I Magliari* delves further into the theme of the Neapolitan sub-proletariat, showing the extremes to which their fight for survival lead them in Germany. In spite of certain concessions to commercial cinema (the film was produced by Titanus's Lombardo who was balancing super-colossals with encouragement of young directors), the social impact of the drama slips into the background when the script allows sway to Sordi's extrovert comedy image; the film is far from being a minor work and anticipates various motifs of Italian cinema. *Italy 1959/With Alberto Sordi, Belinda Lee, Renato Salvatori.*



Wed 13 Jul 6.15. 8.45

## Salvatore Giuliano

The new script influence on Rosi's third film was Franco Solinas (later to collaborate on Pontecorvo's best films). The first of Rosi's 'reconstructed documentaries', it shows how a certain quality of filmic dramaturgy can be extracted from the methodical reconstruction of historical facts. Though we are now more familiar with this type of 'interpreted reality', Rosi was breaking new ground as he created a labyrinth of facts which takes the audience backwards and forwards over the events surrounding a famous bandit in post-war Sicily, the emergence of a separatist movement, the establishment of the 'Young Mafia' and the political *imbrogli* engineered between Rome and Palermo. *Italy 1961/With Frank Wolff, Salvo Randone, Pietro Cammarata.*

Fri 15 Jul 6.30

## Hands Over the City

(Le mani sulla città)

When I went to Naples to watch Rosi film this drama about housing speculation, I found him in a slum area shouting angrily at his 'extras', Neapolitans who had been unwilling to identify themselves and their own problems with those they were enacting before the camera. As a political denunciation the film was ahead of its time: shown on TV twelve years later it seemed to be about the Naples of today. Neapolitan writer Raffaele La Capria joined Rosi for this script. Steiger accepted the role of the political boss Nottola on the basis of a treatment and after seeing *Giuliano*. That his method school acting blended with Salvo Randone's Italian histrionic school and the non-professionalism of most of the supporting cast is another of Rosi's remarkable achievements. *Italy 1963.*





Sun 17 Jul 6.15. 8.30

**The Moment of Truth** (*Il Momento della Verità*)

Rosi's first experience of colour. Gianni Di Venanzo did the lighting for the first half of the film while Pasquale De Santis, who had been Di Venanzo's camera operator on *Giuliano* and *Hands Over the City*, did the second part and is responsible in particular for the sequences of the bullfighter's early years. Not so much a film about bullfighting as a continuation of the theme of *I Magliari*: the extremes to which a young underprivileged, uneducated Mediterranean is driven to survive. The film reflects bullfighter Miguelin's own story except the Linda Christian episode which is typical of a bullfighter's social image, Rosi shot the sequence with hand-held cameras at a party given for the occasion for the Madrid *dolce vita* set. Most of the bullfighting sequences were filmed live. *Italy/Spain 1964/With Linda Christian*

Tue 19 Jul 6.15. 8.30

**More than a Miracle** (*C'era una volta*)

Produced by Carlo Ponti as an international project and shot in English, the finished English language version never satisfied Rosi who preferred the Italian version in authentic 'Southern' dialects. Sophia Loren, playing her own real-life 'rags-to-riches' Cinderella story, says that she put more feeling into 'Ti voglio bene' than into 'I love you'. In spite of production compromises, this fairy tale is relevant to Rosi's cinema world because the dreams and illusions of peasants, and the fables which writers like Basile immortalised in print, are the other side of the reality of the Italian South. Humorous, romantic and elegantly photographed (by Pasquale De Santis, accepting full lighting responsibility for the first time), this is a distinguished example of Rosi's art. *Italy/France 1967/With Sophia Loren, Omar Sharif.*



Thu 21 Jul 6.15. 8.30

**Just Another War** (*Uomini Contro*)

Rosi worked for the first time on an adaptation from a book (Emilio Lussu's memoir of World War One, *Un anno sull'altipiano*, Eng. title 'The Sicilian Brigade') with Tonino Guerra and La Capria as scriptwriters. A coproduction with Yugoslavia (for the battle scenes), Rosi staked his own salary on this picture which he coproduced with Luciano Perugia. It has the typical characteristics of Rosi's cinema including class conflict (soldiers, often from the South, fighting a war for regions that many of them didn't even know were part of Italy). Rosi is not trying to show that armies are instruments of oppression and sadism but that armies are bad because their mere existence leads to war. *Italy/Yugoslavia 1970/With Mark Frechette, Alain Cuny.*