

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Filmmakers for RAI - Radiotelevisione Italiana</b>
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Source	<i>Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)</i>
Date	1971 Mar 3
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	3
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Atti degli apostoli (The Acts of the apostles), Rossellini, Roberto, 1968

# The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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## FILMMAKERS FOR RAI - RADIOTELEVISIONE ITALIANA

Wednesday, March 3, 1971 at 2:00 and 5:30 p.m.

ATTI DEGLI APOSTOLI (THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES): PARTS I and II. 1968. Directed and edited by Roberto Rossellini with the collaboration of Renzo Rossellini, Jr. Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for RAI-TV, ORTF, TVE, and Studio Hamburg with the collaboration of Les Films de Carthage. Script by Roberto Rossellini, Dominique de la Rochefoucault, Vittorio Bonicelli, Luciano Scaffa, based on The Acts of the Apostles. Photographed by Mario Fioretti. Decor by Gepy Mariani and Carmelo Patrono. Costumes by Marcella de Marchis. Music by Mario Nascimbene. Theme song by Sonali Senroy.

CAST: Edoardo Gattorno (Paul); Jacques Dumur (Peter); Mohamed Ktari (Mark); Mohamed Kouka (John); Renzo Rossi (Zachariah); Ben Reayeb Moncef (Thomas); Bepi Mannaiuolo (Philip); Zignaani Houcine (Stephen); Malo Brass (Aristarcus, the Greek Scribe); Enrico Ostermann (Caiaphas); Daniele Dublino (Silas); Olimpia Carlisi (Lydia); Bradhai Ridha (Matthew); Missoume Ridha (James the Greater); Zouiten (James the Less); Hedi Nouira (Andrew); Bouraoui (Bartholomew); Lydia Biondi (The Pythoness); Dino Mele (Aquila); Maria Quasimodo (Hostess in Corinth); Paul Muller (Greek Sophist); Sergio Serafini (Roman Christian); Gian Paolo Capovilla (Greek Soldier in Neapolis).

NO ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

PART I - 58 minutes  
PART II - 58 minutes  
TOTAL - 116 minutes

The original length of ATTI DEGLI APOSTOLI is 5 hours and 42 minutes. There are five episodes which run 58 minutes, 58 minutes, 64 minutes, 64 minutes and 98 minutes. Although the Department of Film had hoped to show the complete print, it is not possible at this time. Instead, we shall present the first two episodes. The Department has every intention of trying to get the complete print for a future showing.

ATTI DEGLI APOSTOLI shows the spreading of Christianity as prophesied by Jesus himself. "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

### PART I:

A. The time is circa 30 A.D. The Roman Magistrate with his escort arrives in Jerusalem. He is given a Greek scribe, Aristarcus, who is also a slave to serve as a guide to the city and to the customs of its inhabitants, the Hebrews. Aristarcus' comments serve to instruct the new magistrate (as well as the spectators). Examples of Aristarcus' comments are: "Here in Jerusalem live the proudest people on earth. The Hebrews worship one God only and say they have made a pact with him....The Temple is the center of the Hebrew religion. Solomon constructed it one thousand years ago. During the centuries, it has often been destroyed by the enemies of Israel and then reconstructed by them. The Hebrews say that each time they are conquered, this happens because their God is jealous. When the Hebrews lead a life of corruption, vice, God punishes them and gives them up to their enemies, until in the misery of slavery, they return once more to being faithful. Only then do they find the strength to throw off their enemies...."

If you watch the Hebrews when they are working, you can understand about them. Look how they concentrate....how they are absorbed and convinced of what they are doing.... And the reason is always the same one: God. It is God, their God, who prescribes work....And (since Adam disobeyed) man must work to come close again to God....At Athens they say that if one works, he cannot be a citizen. I know that for you Romans laziness is the privilege of the wise ones. But here (in Jerusalem) everything is the other way around....This is a society practically without slaves....even during the period of one's slavery, the law guarantees you the respect of your owner -- even foreign slaves, acquired or taken in war, are protected by the laws....All the laws in this land are nothing but the application of the laws given to the Hebrews by God so that everything, absolutely everything becomes an emanation of God....Now Jerusalem is governed directly by the Roman Proctor of Caesar but the Hebrews, strengthened by their own laws, form something of a separate state and often pretend to deal with the Romans as equals. This people whom God has made one are divided into rival groups: Pharisee, Sadducee, Essene, Hellenist, Herodian....These Hebrews are really strange; they refuse to take part in the census. And why? They don't want to be counted. They say that only God could count them and for this reason they circumcize their sons. Circumcision is the sign of the flesh, of the pact that they have made with God....Those people over there are waiting for a Messiah, or, to use the Greek term, a Christ -- that means the savior of the people of Israel who will liberate them from slavery....some say that the Messiah has already arrived. I'm talking about the followers of a new sect. They say things so incredible that very few listen to them. And, moreover, they hide because they are afraid. The one who for them was the Messiah was condemned to death and it was the Hebrews, themselves, who consigned him to the Romans as a malefactor. This undoubtedly is one of the strangest stories that has happened in this strange country. It's a story that began some years ago.....

B. The followers of Jesus have convened in the house of Mark. They choose Matthew as the apostle to replace Judas Iscariot who committed suicide after his betrayal.

C. It is the holiday of the Pentecost. Jerusalem is filled with pilgrims. The Apostles announce that the Holy Spirit descended upon them, that Jesus is the Messiah that Israel was waiting for, that the people should convert and be baptised in the name of Jesus.

D. At the river Cedron, Peter baptizes.

E. Peter cures a cripple.

F. Peter and John are imprisoned by the Sanhedrin and then freed.

G. The Apostles assemble again in Mark's house. Peter breaks bread that he has blessed and distributes it because Jesus said "take and eat, this is my body given for you -- do this in remembrance of me." Peter then blesses the cup full of wine and says, "This is my blood shed in remission of sins." The Apostles pray. After the prayer, the house was shaken and all were full of the Holy Spirit.

continued....



PART II:

The Apostles begin organizing their community and select new deacons. Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin again and are prohibited to discuss Jesus with the people. Stephen, one of the Greek-speaking deacons, is arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin for disobeying the Mosaic law by distributing food to the poor on the Sabbath. Stephen is stoned to death for blasphemy. His body is hung from a tree. The Greek Jews flee Jerusalem. Philip, another one of the deacons, sets out for the desert. He meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is the minister of the Queen of Ethiopia. Philip baptizes the eunuch. Saul, who was a persecutor of the Apostles and their followers, is struck blind by the Lord on his way to Damascus. At Damascus, in the house of Ananias, Saul is baptized by Ananias and his eyesight is restored (this is the same Saul who later takes the name of Paul).

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Parts III, IV, and V of ACTS OF THE APOSTLES focus on the story of Paul. He is the missionary, destined to spread faith and gospel among the nations. All of the episodes of the film are really necessary for an understanding of the whole film.

"ATTI DEGLI APOSTOLI centers on the consequences of an idea in the hearts of a small group of men....The Apostles' testimony, like that of the little monks in FRANCESCO, GUILLARE DI DIO, has to take effect in actions not words....Each acts on his own initiative, according to his own conscience in the situation he has to confront, knowing nothing of the actions of his brethren, so that each act becomes an extension of the same idea....Paul seems to be a symbol of the complete change that ATTI DEGLI APOSTOLI is meant to chronicle. The film documents the decadence of Israel, Greece and Rome, while describing and analysing the early growth of a new society. Paul is the visible sign of both, in that he represents the passing world and announces the world to come."

— Jose Luis Guarner, Roberto Rossellini (Praeger)