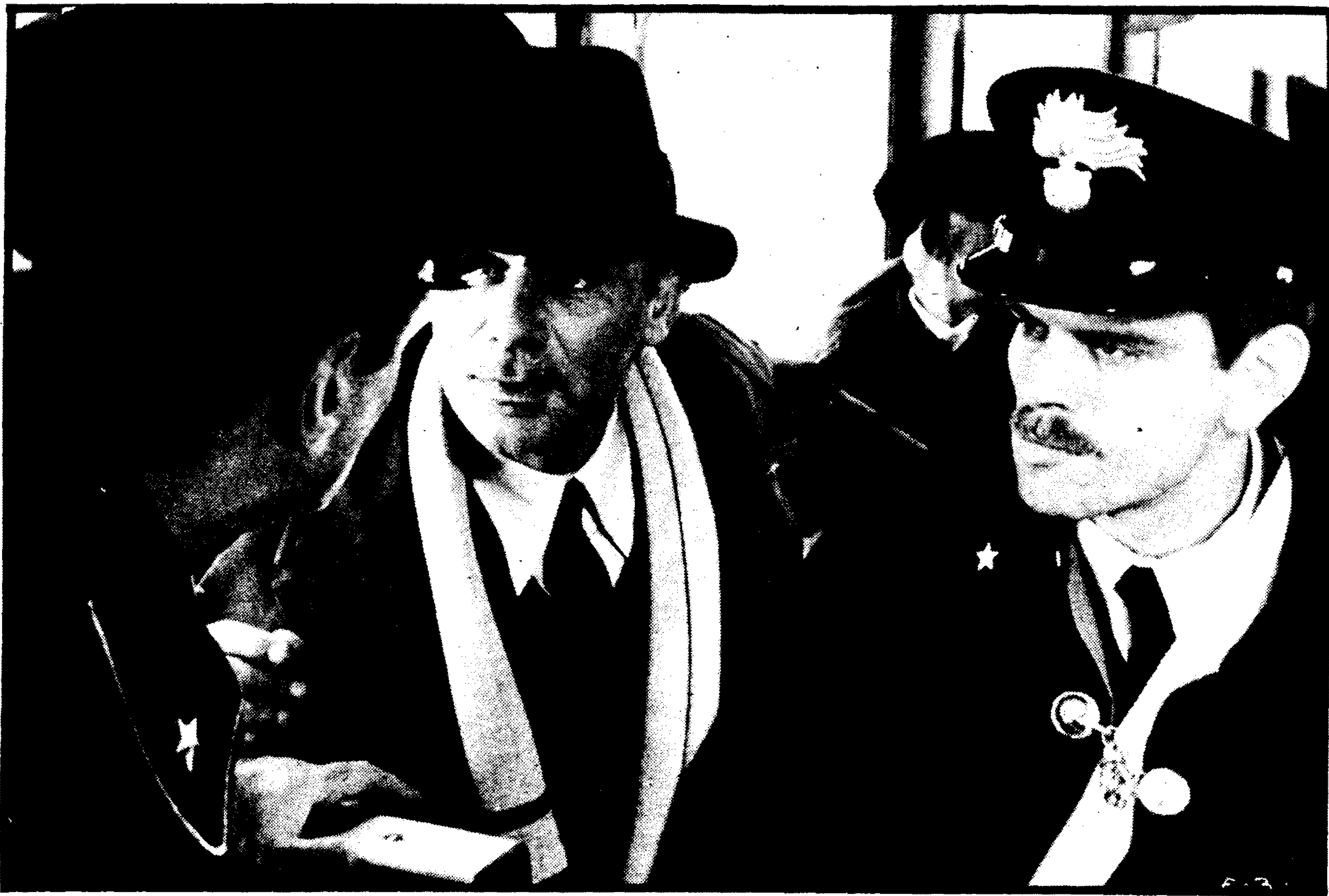


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*Gian Maria Volonte arrives in a primitive village in Southern Italy, a scene from "Eboli."*

\*\*\*\***EBOLI** should receive the Best Foreign Film Oscar for 1980. Based on an autobiographical novel by Carlo Levi, who was sent as a political prisoner by the Fascisti to the arid south of Italy, the work has been transferred to the screen with perfect fidelity and great humanity. Gian Maria Volonte, whom I've only seen before as an authoritarian police chief-murderer in *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*, is perfect as the civilized physician-writer-humanist hero. His book's title was *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, from a folk-myth that Our Lord had come to Italy, but never went into

the bitterly poor South, in which the conditions of the peasants have not changed in a thousand years, a region "without comfort or solace, where the peasant lives out his motionless civilization on barren ground in remote poverty, and in the presence of death." The Fascist petty bourgeois, politicians, professionals, police, are almost meaningless here, though they are portrayed with sharp, telling, sometimes amusing strokes. Irene Papas, as the hero's peasant maid, is real, strong and durable as the earth itself, yet warm. And the faces of her fellows, many actual peasants of the area, are real. The director is Francesco Rosi, a name to remember.