KINONIK

ROME, OPEN CITY (1945)

Directed by Roberto Rossellini

WEDNESDAY January 14th 7PM

SATURDAY MATINEE January 17th 2PM

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Roberto Rossellini's **Rome, Open City** (1945) was shot in January 1945, seven months after the Nazis fled Rome. The city's rubble-strewn streets were still visible. The war damage hadn't been repaired. Rossellini and his co-writer Federico Fellini began working on the script in August 1944 while Rome was still occupied, drawing from their own experiences and the lives of those around them.

Rossellini later said: "This was a film about fear, the fear felt by all of us but by me in particular. I too had to go into hiding. I too was on the run. I had friends who were captured and killed."

The film follows resistance leader Giorgio Manfredi as he's pursued by the Gestapo through occupied Rome. He seeks help from Don Pietro, a Catholic priest, and Pina, the pregnant fiancée of a fellow resistance fighter. The film captures diverse Romans - communists, monarchists, clergy, ordinary civilians - united against Nazi occupation.

Rossellini shot on location with stolen electricity and scraps of 35mm film stock sourced from the black market. He used mostly non-professional actors to authentically portray the hardships of life under occupation. Only a few established stars appeared: Anna Magnani in her breakthrough role as Pina, and Aldo Fabrizi as the priest.

What emerged looked unlike anything audiences had seen. The documentary-like immediacy, the improvised quality, the raw authenticity; it launched Italian neorealism as a movement. "All roads lead to Rome, Open City," Jean-Luc Godard later said, meaning when you think about modern cinema, you have to come to terms with Rossellini's film.

For our series examining how systems manufacture criminality and force complicity, **Rome, Open City** shows resistance under occupation. But it also shows something more complex: how Nazi bureaucratic fascism forces ordinary people into impossible choices. Collaborate and survive, or resist and die. There's no neutral position when the occupying power controls everything. Remember our presentation of Casablanca: Rick's neutrality was enabled entirely by his privilege.

The film premiered in Italy in September 1945 to a lukewarm reception; Italian audiences wanted escapism after years of war, not realism. But it became a massive success abroad, earning $3 million at the US box office and winning the Palme d'Or at the first-ever Cannes Film Festival in 1946.