

director's note

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This film was born out of a promise made to a dear friend of mine, Sergio Citti.

For those who aren't aware of it, Citti was one of the most original directors of Italian cinema, from the days he worked with Pier Paolo Pasolini, right up to his most famous films.

There were no actors or actresses who weren't eager to work with him, even for often ludicrous fees, from Jodie Foster to Harvey Keitel, Roberto Benigni to Vittorio Gassman, and so forth.

Sergio died not too long ago, carried away by a terrible illness.

He lived in Fiumicino, and over the last years I had got used to going over to see him from time to time, we'd have dinner together. It was a pleasure hearing him talk, listening to the stories that he would make up for films.

Usually, at the end of dinner, he would say to me: "So you liked that story, did you?" You know, American producers would give me 50,000 Euros for it, the English 70,000 if I sold it to them. But I'll let you have it for 1,000 Euros!"

And I would buy the story. It was a way of helping him out (life wasn't too easy for Sergio) and a tribute to his strange form of creativity.

I have a lot of these stories in my desk drawer, though I never used them.

But one night Sergio said to me: "I was thinking about a film with a tax officer who has to escort a currency smuggler from Rome to Geneva... and on the plane there's the officer's girlfriend who also wanted to come... to make it into sort of a honeymoon trip. What do you think?"

I thought about it a moment, and then told him that in my opinion there wasn't much of a story since a plane trip didn't last very long and nothing could really happen... and then, well, Geneva...

But I liked the idea of a road movie with a cumbersome third party. And so, in the days that followed I drafted up a story that kept in mind that for a trip to be interesting – from a cinematic point of view – it had to be risky, adventurous or timely, and be set in a special historical/geographical context. Then, I thought of Italy torn by WWII, with the fascists and the nazis, etc. From there, I got the idea of having the story begin on 7 September 1943 – that is, on the eve of the day that would change the history of our country, when traveling to the north of Italy would be extremely perilous.

Sergio was very enthusiastic and encouraged me to develop the project. When, after many complications the financing was finally found, Sergio had lost his hearing. I had to write my answers to his questions and observations on a pad for him. He died shortly before we began shooting. It is very painful for me not to be able to show him the finished film and to know what he would have thought of it. Yet, the memory of Sergio's sincere passion and love for cinema has remained with all of us who worked on the project.

This film is dedicated to him.

ROBERTO CIMPANELLI