

The energy hunters
An interview with Gillo Pontecorvo
by Laura Barbieri

The story of Agip, a player on the world stage.

Gillo Pontecorvo, one of the internationally well known cinema masters, is the author of *Kapó* and of *The Battle of Algiers*. His early film career started in France, where he was assistant to Yves Allégret and Joris Ivens; he shot various documentaries in Italy. In 1984 he directed for Agip “An energy story”.

“I was supposed to travel and to get acquainted with a new world, and as I always thought that novelties are one of the best things in life, I accepted this experience with pleasure”.

An industrial documentary probably sets creativity limits on a film director.

“Of course, some things have to be told, so there’s little space for poetic creativity. In my case I had the possibility to tell a story through the development of a company. A story made by men at work in an environment, as in the case of offshore platforms, which is particular and unusual to describe”. The objective was to show the organization of an enterprise and how the people working with it lived.

“I immediately had an impression of an extremely efficient enterprise, a sensation of organization that found confirmation also in my work. Everything worked fine. I don’t know why, maybe it’s due to certain hard living conditions, but the men working on offshore platforms have a fairly communicative character, full of internal glamour”.

This documentary was filmed in different countries.

“The objective was to describe the work of the company in the different parts of the world, from Norway to Africa; there we filmed almost everything from a helicopter. I remember at the beginning I felt a little uneasy in the helicopter. Then, after some days of work, tiredness got the upper hand: I’d fall asleep five minutes after departure”.

In these countries, so different from each other, there were certain unifying aspects.

“The machines, the overalls of the workers, the sea, the pride of men who love their job, and their familiarity with the inhabitants of the place, often determined by the possibility of bringing life and employment.