> Neither Montand nor I was a member of the Communist Party, though we were in agreement with the majority of its opinions. A great many people believed we were card-carrying Communists. But it was a time when sending a denial to a newspaper that "claimed" you were a Communist—the quotes are intentional—gave the impression of denying an accusation. The Communists I had met during the war, when I didn't always know at the time that they were Communists, were people I respected enormously.[31]

The next ever-present source of creative collaboration is the Spanish-born Jorge Semprun. Like Costa-Gavras, he originated in a country temporarily beset with fascism and sought refuge in France. Ten years older than the director, Semprun matches Costa-Gavras's passion to express himself politically and aesthetically. At the outbreak of the Civil War he left Spain for asylum in France. His father in Spain, like Costa-Gavras's in anticommunist Greece, was a persona non grata because of his leftist, anti-fascist tendencies. Semprun was not one to accept the domination of the Fascists in his new home and entered the Communist party in 1941 and the resistance in 1942. The following year he was arrested and deported to a concentration camp. His first novel, *Le Grand Voyage* (1963), describes his experience en route to the camp. After his return from Buchenwald and Mauthausen, he served as a translator for UNESCO. In 1954, he was made a member of the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist party. For ten years he worked with a clandestine group of political militants in Spain. His scripts for *La Guerre est finie* and *Les Routes du Sud* show his own character refracted in the images of Diego and Larréa, respectively. In 1965, he was expelled from the Communist party in Spain for his divergent sentiments on the political action necessary during the Franco regime. While his literary production advanced with *L'Evanouissement, La Deuxième Mort de Ramon Mercader,* and *L'Autobiographie de Federico Sanchez* (his underground name in Spain), he worked at his adaptions for Costa-Gavras *(Z, The Confession, Special Section),* Yves Boisset *(The French Conspiracy),* Alain Resnais *(Stavisky),* Pierre Granier-Deferre *(Une Femme à sa fenêtre),* and Joseph Losey *(Les Routes du Sud).* His own film *Les Deux Mémoires* (1972–73) displays his constant preoccupation with politics in a sociohistorical context.

Jorge Semprun's leftist ideology is apparent throughout his scriptwriting for Costa-Gavras and Resnais, despite the fact that since the mid-1960s he has not belonged to the Communist party. In a debate among communist (and ex-communist) intellectuals in May 1978, Semprun vigorously exhibited a purist Marxist attitude in politics:

> Today my opinion is that there is something completely contradictory and incompatible between the function of an intellectual and that of the communist system. I say "communist" in the strict sense used by the partisans. For I still continue to believe in the role of the Marxist intellectuals, beyond the narrow framework of the apparatus. Marx himself was not a Party member.[32]

The collaboration of Costa-Gavras and Semprun began with *Z,* when the director returned from Greece with the controversial novel of Vassilikos and

asked the scriptwriter to assist him with the adaptation. In an interview for the *Christian Science Monitor,* Costa-Gavras commented on their rapport:

> It was not an accident that the meeting of both of us led to the explosion of *Z* . . . Moviemaking can be the business of a team—it is not by chance that (Elia) Kazan made his greatest film *(A Face in the Crowd* and *On the Waterfront)* with scripts by Budd Schulberg, or that (Vittorio) De Sica and (writer Cesare) Zavattini had excellent results.[33]

In the early 1970s, this team would do the same with *The Confession* and *Special Section,* sometimes taking up to a year to insure the authenticity or historicity of the scenario before filming.

Most important in launching Costa-Gavras into political fiction and into the international marketplace is Jacques Perrin, who first starred as a fair-featured adolescent in Costa-Gavras's *The Sleeping Car Murder* (1964), and then as a young partisan in *Shock Troops* (1966). Perrin then continued on with Costa-Gavras as the photographer in *Z* and the young liberal attorney Maître Lafarge in *Special Section.* They obtained financial backing from the nationalized Algerian film industry and from the French National Film Center. Perrin also helped in assuring distribution of the film and creating a market for the finished product. Later he assisted the director with *State of Siege* and *Special Section.* Assuming himself the great challenge of political fiction film, Perrin then helped to inaugurate the new genre and to convince other producers to take equal risks with nonestablished directors.

Editing

A permanent fixture in the cinema world of Costa-Gavras has been Françoise Bonnot, the editor responsible for infusing life into the Semprun-Solinas text and the Costa-Gavras filming. Françoise Bonnot's mother was pregnant with her while still editing (with George Grace) André Malraux's Spanish civil war film *L'Espoir* or *Sierra de Teruel.* Her mother also worked with other French directors such as René Clément in *This Angry Age* (Un Barrage contre le Pacifique).

As a young girl of twelve or thirteen, Françoise was already helping her mother at the editing table in the Paris studio. Once her plans for architectural studies did not appear to be working out as expected, she took up the profession of film editing. She already had much practical experience behind her. Her Oscar-winning editing of *Z* brought her international acclaim. She has offered her editing services to other directors such as Jean-Pierre Melville, Henri Verneuil, Yves Courrière, and Roman Polanski in France, Marco Ferreri and Serge Leone in Italy.

During our interview of 7 January 1980 at the Billancourt studio on the outskirts of Paris, Françoise Bonnot emphasized that the editor must work directly and closely with the director. She has found that her contacts with the directors enrich her work; this is especially true in the case of Costa-Gavras.

Although each editing task is different, she ordinarily follows the procedure of reading and discussing the scenario with Costa-Gavras, viewing the rushes and final product with him and showing him her preliminary results. They discuss other possibilities if necessary—he knows what he wants, Françoise Bonnot says. She never works directly with the screenwriter. Rarely does she go on location. One exception was *The Confession,* for which she spent several days at Lille. For *State of Seige* Costa-Gavras forwarded the rushes from Chile to Paris where Bonnot was supervising an assistant and a *stagiaire,* or apprentice. *Missing,* shot in Mexico, was also edited in Paris. In the three- or four-month postproduction phase she has often examined approximately 30,000 meters of celluloid to produce a film of 3,000 meters for which she sometimes has to share the responsibility for the sound editing.

Françoise Bonnot acknowledges that she follows her instincts and feelings more than principles of editing. These feelings, however, are a function of the material and the intentions of the director. She expounds on this in *Cinémonde* after her Oscar for *Z*:

> Montage is a question of rhythm, of sensitivity, of imagination, and of flexibility. Rhythm is of the utmost importance. Following as it does the plot of the film, the montage must never be thrust upon the viewer, but the change should appear at the very moment the viewer would want it to come. Lengthy shots must especially be avoided to prevent boredom. Choosing these shots is a stimulating aspect of this profession. In this stage there is almost a complete reconstruction of the film. The work of editing, moreover, is done in close collaboration with the director where flexibility plays a lead role.[34]

Costa-Gavras reiterates this: "Editing is the most important point in a picture, it is the director really writing the picture with his editing."[35]

The task of Françoise Bonnot is essential for the parallel editing and the recourse to flashbacks to advance the narrative with previous or simultaneous details. None of the plots of the Costa-Gavras's films unfolds in a perfectly chronological order. The flashbacks during the autopsy of *Z*, the Tupamaros's interrogation of Santore in *State of Seige,* and the trial in *Special Section* differ from each other and provide essential material for character development.

Annette Insdorf mentioned to Costa-Gavras that some critics accuse him of a manipulative use of staccato montages. The director disagreed:

> Editing is determined vis-à-vis the spectator. Film presents a monologue—it's false to think a film is a dialogue, and that you have to give the spectator time to think. The general public is not sufficiently trained to reflect upon a film while it is being projected. They have become accustomed to the rapid pace of American cinema, and I have to confess that I feel closer to this rhythm, too. It's only after the film that the spectator can truly reflect upon it. Or reject it.[36]

For some critics, such as Paul Vecchiali of *Revue du Cinéma,* the mold is too rigid and the results hackneyed or worn-out. Vecchiali maintains:

> Costa-Gavras's method remains constant throughout his works: from the very outset he complicates the plot in a leisurely manner, by means of flashbacks or striking examples of parallel editing, placing the viewer in a kind of vise which he gradually releases as the narrative unfolds, thus clarifying the original situation with spectacular effects. . . . Towards the end, a Wagnerian redundancy adds a touch of lyricism to his didactism to conclude in favor of the thesis he proposes.[37]

Music

The music of Costa-Gavras's films not only provides continuity to a battery of images rapidly flashing across the screen but also channels or directs the mood of the viewer. For the sound track of *Z* and *State of Siege* Costa-Gavras turned to a compatriot who also used art as a political tool, sometimes a weapon—Mikis Theodorakis, celebrated in the cinema world for his scores for *Zorba, Electra,* and *Iphigenia,* recognized in the political realm for his attacks on the regime of the colonels. While in his teens, he became politically oriented toward the Left. During World War II, Theodorakis was part of the resistance movement in the United All-Greek Youth Organization, an arm of the National Liberation Front, which had communist direction. Costa-Gavras's father also participated in the NLF, as noted earlier.[38]

In postwar Greece, Theodorakis gradually developed a Marxist philosophy, entering through the door of nationalism and patriotism. From 1947 on he was sporadically imprisoned for his antigovernment stance and exiled to the islands or to tiny mountain villages. In April 1963, he was jailed for his support of the illegal Marathon March to Athens mentioned in *Z* and was at the bedside of the dying Lambrakis following the lethal assassination attack.[39]

He is not far from the theories of Sergei Eisenstein concerning the relationship between art and politics. He is not, however, a "political" musician as such:

> Although Theodorakis believes that true art is inevitably political, he does not consider himself a political composer except in the sense that his music expresses and interprets the feelings of the Greek people. Nevertheless he concedes that his music can be divided into distinct periods and styles, each corresponding to an essentially political experience.[40]

Among the technicians, besides film editor Françoise Bonnot, Raoul Coutard assumes a prominent position and greatly contributes to Costa-Gavras's films with his photography in *Z* and in *The Confession.* The special issue of *Focus on Film* on "Great Cameramen" furnishes an insight into the role of the chief photographer:

> The director of photography needs no apologia for his contribution to the art of film-making. Sufficient to say that he is responsible for the overall visual style of a film (as opposed to the content) as dictated by or worked out collaboratively with the director.[41]

It is only fair to say, however, that Costa-Gavras diminishes the role of the cameraman, whom, he claims, the Americans unduly deify. In *Filmmakers News-*

limited, as Andrée Tournès points out in *Jeune Cinéma.*[21] In some respect the result is similar to viewing the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination in Dallas screened for the Warren Commission.

Although Costa-Gavras is ultimately responsible for the total production of any of his films, he has to have good technicians, just as an established conductor must have talented musicians performing for him. The photography of Raoul Coutard makes the script come alive and introduces a rich dimension to the film. Coutard's professional link with the New Wave gave him the depth of experience that allowed him to work intimately with the director, but yet permitted something original of his own personality and aesthetics to enter into the compositions. He was no marionette. For *Z* he was to Costa-Gavras what Sven Nykvist was to Bergman. In Coutard's hands the camera not only documents but also vivifies and interprets. It captures, for example, the aesthetic composition created by four or five oval discs on the wall; it meanders about the room, peering at the pictures of the king and queen. With telescopic vision, it watches the landing of Z's plane. Moving frenetically, the camera translates the moments of terror into memorable events, such as the pursuit of Manuel in the city streets. It brings a touch of caricature to the portrayal of the military, zooming in on their ribbon-laden chests or capturing a close-up of the bored colonel picking his teeth with a match at the government meeting. The choice of shots aids in the characterization of the various individuals. In a few the subjective camera becomes the individual, as in the swooning Z with blurry vision, after being struck on the head by a demonstrator en route to the meeting. Through a fish-eye lens the faces of the people surrounding him suddenly become rubbery. With close-ups interspliced with long shots of the demonstration, the photographer and the editor create from the ensemble the effect of the viewer's participation in the fray. Costa-Gavras coordinated the movements of these crowds with a megaphone while Coutard was there to record the situation, deciding along with the director the proper lighting and camera angle. John Simon praises the work of the photographer:

> Raoul Coutard is a magnificent cinematographer, and his work with light and shadow, sunburst and brooding nightscape, treacherously lovely exteriors and morose interiors is always exciting without falling into mere prettiness. The images remain just a little grainy—the true texture of history on film; and there is brilliant use of large expanses of white against which a little black or red or both can work miracles of coloristic poignancy.[22]

At times the camera work may be too self-conscious and destroy the feeling of authenticity. The use of flashbacks, scrupulously structured and restructured during the editing process, can seem to be purely contrived.

Jorge Semprun's penchant for the flashback, dating to his early literary works and to his film collaboration with Alain Resnais, and Costa-Gavras's brilliant use of this technique in *The Sleeping Car Murder* paved the way for its use in Z. The flashback visually translates the literary tool used astutely by Vassilikos. Some flashbacks in the film *Z* reveal the past relationship of the deputy and his wife. They add brief, enigmatic material concerning Z's rapport with other women. At

certain moments the device helps recount events of the crime as seen by the witnesses. Through flashbacks Z lives longer on the screen, for his assassination takes place early on in the film. If flashbacks are too long, numerous, or complex, an audience becomes lost, bored, or frustrated, something Costa-Gavras knows from experience and from his own reflections on the use of this technique. In *Z,* the risk was warranted, and Costa-Gavras overcame it. Though the film is slightly convoluted, the quick-paced action in the work is not destroyed.

In the final physical structuring of the flashbacks, Françoise Bonnot was most important. It is a remarkable feat to maintain a serious tone and political depth for *Z* and still to keep the film action moving at a rapid tempo. The final challenge was to make the ensemble a work of art and not merely entertainment. Her close collaboration with Costa-Gavras helped her to achieve these ideals. Besides the general intricate play of flashbacks throughout the film, several examples of editing furnish striking results. The examining magistrate asks one person a question, but a quick cut switches the spectator to the response by another. It is a brilliant shorthand device. Another quick cut uses darkness as a technical link. Yago is detained by a policeman in the hallway where an automatic time switch casts both into darkness every few minutes. Another quick cut leads the viewer to the shadowy theater and the end of a performance of *Romeo and Juliet.* This type of link relates closely to the dialogue as each of the false witnesses in reporting his description of the events parrots the same contrived expression, "*souple et féroce comme un tigre,*" that is, "lithe and fierce as a tiger." The parallel editing during Z's speech rings with tragic irony. The deputy pleads for international peace while outdoors Baroné mercilessly beats Deputy Pirou, mistaking him for Z. Françoise Bonnot's Oscar for editing in 1969 was well deserved and her first work with Costa-Gavras in *Z* merited her a permanent place on his team.

Music

The musical score provided by Mikis Theodorakis warrants some discussion, for it adds a political and aesthetic dimension to the film. When Theodorakis's close friend Deputy Lambrakis was assassinated in May 1963, the politically committed musician took up the cause. Given his previous anti-fascist activities during the resistance and during the political unrest following World War II, Theodorakis was already *engagé,* or "committed." In 1963, almost twenty years after the war, he drew on his national and international reputation in music and his political consciousness to help organize and head the Lambrakis Youth Movement, a group numbering at one time more than 50,000 who were resisters. Like his colleague, he was elected to parliament to represent the same geographical district, Piraeus. In parliament, as a member of the E.D.A., he continued his quest for political, social, and cultural reforms, as he recounts in his *Journal of Resistance.*[23]

Because of Theodorakis's reaction to rightist oppression, his music was banned by rightist law in January 1966. It was forbidden to be played by army

to save the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti. He remembers scenes such as Soviet soldiers burning Nazi flags. The use of newsreels to represent human memory is imaginative. But in this particular instance the memories of London show only his continuing confusion: on the eve before eleven men, no more guilty than he, are to be condemned by the state, he is still associating the Soviet Union with freedom, symbolized by the fight against fascism. The hammer and sickle and the red star on the hat of the prison guard recall to London the triumphant figure of Lenin. Combined with the many newsreel clips of Stalin, at work and at play, these images set up once again the terms of London's dilemma. In what meaningful terms can he continue to call himself a Communist, as he understands the term?[32]

While these newsreels or memory banks serve as historical recapitulation, Costa-Gavras employs the flashforward several times to launch the characters and the spectator into an uncertain future. This device, somewhat imaginative and daring, breaks the natural flow of the narrative. As Osvald Zavrodosky, minister of state security, is being interrogated, there is a flashforward—he is executed in 1954 (two years later). As already developed, after the laughter of the court at defendant Sling's embarrassment at last subsides, there is the ironic flashforward to the remains of the eleven executed men being sprinkled on the roadway to provide traction for the vehicle.

The most audacious and significant use of flashforward technique is the Monte Carlo episode depicting an event of 1965. In the film Gérard faints from exhaustion during the interrogation. He is revived by a bucket of water tossed on him. The scene moves in slow motion. A quick cut to Monte Carlo with its blue water and sky comes as a visual shock. Costa-Gavras deliberately uses the Brechtian technique of a flashfoward to create the effect of *distantiation.* This pulls the spectator out of the normal course of chronological narrative in order to spark his or her reflection on the actual events of 1952. Costa-Gavras comments on his purpose in using this technique:

> This method of interrupting the narrative is anti-cinematographic in the sense that all idea of suspense is shattered by a flashforward. The character whom we have been following and who we may imagine will be executed, is discovered to be very much alive. It was important to do this so that the viewer might pause for a moment and reflect.[33]

This projection into the future may appear artificial, but it corresponds totally to what was happening in London's psyche during the interrogation. London confirmed it in our 1979 interview. Such hallucinations were common to London and to the other prisoners with him, just as starving inmates of the concentration camps used to fantasize about food. This usage of flashforwards may be partially the idea of Semprun, who worked with Resnais. The New Wave director was most sensitive to this type of mechanism, already conveying the correspondence of cinematic technique with psychological tricks of memory in *Marienbad, Hiroshima, Providence,* and more recently in showing the experiences of Dr. Henri Laborit in *Mon Oncle d'Amérique.*[34]

Editing

A director ordinarily has full control over the editing process and can encourage or veto certain shots or juxtapositions proposed by an editor. Costa-Gavras, however, creates a symbiotic relationship with Françoise Bonnot, who edited *Z* and earned a Hollywood Oscar for it. For more than three months in early 1970 Costa-Gavras supervised the editing of the footage at Billancourt, working with four editors and assistants. Costa-Gavras commented on the relationship of director to screenwriter and editor in the following manner:

> In France and I think now in the U.S., the director does the editing. I think the director has control of the film in all its aspects. Jorge Semprun wrote the scenario but if he had written it for another director he would have written it differently. Obviously the director does the shooting but most of all the montage. It's the real writing of the director. The director cannot just give orders to an editor and tell him to go ahead and edit. Personally, and I think all my generation in France, the director does all the editing. He spends eight hours a day with the editor and we say we have to cut here and here—and so really he is in complete control.[35]

The editor, just like the director of photography—for example, Coutard—lends personality and experience to the cutting, although the director supervises and determines the tone. This is obviously the case with Françoise Bonnot. The editor must bear a large part of the responsibility for the actual physical task of cutting, choosing the length of shots, and planning the juxtapositions, which creates the tone and rhythm. Much depends, of course, on the original scenario and on the footage at hand from the filming. Several factors must be discussed with respect to the editing in *The Confession.* First of all, the overall tone of the film is necessarily heavy, dense, and solemn, as determined in advance by the subject matter. Only the humorous incident at the trial and the Monte Carlo flashforward lighten the work. The newsreels maintain the same serious tone, adding a historical as opposed to a human, psychological dimension to the film. The interrogators move along ploddingly at times, as one half-truth is added to another until the final confession is ready after almost two years. Occasionally the extensive interrogation—a daily affair of almost eighteen hours—was broken up in the film by a quick shifting from one interrogator to another, a procedure Costa-Gavras used in *Z,* having the examining magistrate rapidly question a long series of witnesses.

After the viewer has entered slowly into Gérard's physical and psychological condition over the long period of interrogation, the tempo changes to a quick pace—very much like the conclusion of *Z.* We view quickly the trial, sentence, acceptance of the punishment, and the series of incidents that make up the epilogue. The viewer is almost euphoric at the end, when justice has been at last established. Yet the final images return the spectator to the harsh, concrete reality of August 1968, the Soviet invasion.

As noted earlier, quick cutting produces the psychological effect of association of images. There is a cut on a certain clue—the water splashed on Gérard or the

red star on the cap of the guard. There is one flashback that shows Gérard at a dinner with his wife, in which she says, "The Party is always right." There is a cut back to Gérard's cell, where his voice-off agrees: "The Party is always right. It's a misunderstanding. Truth will prevail, if we observe the rules, however hard they are, as proof of our faith."

The juxtaposition of the trial scene with the incident of the ashes may appear on the surface as cruel and ironic, but it is no more so than the actuality. In 1968, London learned from the Czech press the fate of his comrades:

> When the eleven men had been executed the interrogator D. happened to be in the Ruzyn prison in the office of the (Soviet) adviser Galkin. The chauffeur and the two interrogators who were supposed to get rid of the ashes were also there. They said they had put them in a potato sack and had made for the suburbs of Prague, hoping to leave them in a field. Seeing the icy road, however, they decided to throw the ashes on it. The chauffeur laughed. He said it was the first time he had driven fourteen passengers in his Tatra, three alive and eleven in a sack.[36]

In general, the editing techniques of Françoise Bonnot are very sophisticated. Critics such as Vincent Canby are less appreciative of the editing and the flashy style of cinema. Canby and others claim that the extraordinary zoom shots, flashbacks, and close-ups mitigate against the message—a classic case of form opposing content. Whereas this may be true for some of Costa-Gavras's other works, for example, *Z*, the devices appear less obvious and contrived in *The Confession.*

Sound

Part of Françoise Bonnot's work also included sound editing. Her skill is evident in the trial sequence in which there is a dramatic repetition of the phrase "of Jewish origin" and later the meek mutterings of "I accept my sentence." In *The Confession* the dimension of sound is creative and revolutionary. William Sivel was the sound engineer and Daniel Couteau was responsible for the unique effects. Costa-Gavras discusses the conscious manipulation of sound in the film:

> It is in order to accentuate the solitude of the character. This individual has lived twenty-two months with the same noises, the same sound of closing doors, of footsteps—all associated with the recurrence of the interrogation sessions. As soon as a man begins to live in an isolated world, as London did, with little sleep and minimal food, every little noise automatically assumed greater proportions.[37]

To achieve the sense of solitude as well as to recreate the dehumanizing process, the sounds in the prison are exaggerated. The gurgling of filth oozing up from the floor of the cell becomes revolting for London and for the spectator. The voices of the interrogators are fraught with violence as they bully Gérard into submission—"*Marchez*" (Walk!), "*Mangez*" (Eat!), "*Confessez*" (Admit!). The penetrating screams of the other victims undergoing torture make a house of horrors of the prison.

The now common cliché of a spastic heartbeat, used in *Z* during the deputy's operation, is repeated twice in *The Confession.* As Gérard is being followed by the ominous Tatra, his heartbeat quickens. He feels tense. Gérard senses greater anxiety later when the interrogators take him to a park and pretend that they are going to hang him. There is a close-up of Gérard's ear listening to the birds chirping, an alien but welcome sound of nature, of freedom, of life. This use of the close-up of Gérard's ear occurred at the outset of the film as he listened to chimes, while blindfolded by his captors.

Sound was used to introduce irony into the situation. As the curtain is about to rise on the well-rehearsed drama of the trial, a farce, one defendant strikes the traditional three knocks of the French theater to indicate the opening of the performance. While the hunted men soon to be apprehended meet in one room, the sound of children spontaneously emitting bursts of laughter can be heard from the next room—another ironic juxtaposition. One of the most powerful uses of sound occurs in the epilogue during the protest of Prague youth against the Soviet invasion. As the images of the struggle unfold on the screen, the sound track is silent—a symbolic gesture of the embattled, but also a silent protest against this domineering move by the U.S.S.R. Joan Mellen suggests that the absence of sound in this final sequence could be a symbol of the impotence of these youth, but it could also be a symbol of the silent resistance that the Czechs would have to take for the time being.

For the most part music does not play a major role in *The Confession* as it did in *Z.* That makes the film all the more unusual and noncommercial. When music does appear, it is lush and haunting. Just as the sound track of *Z* had its own history, so, too, does that of *The Confession.* London mentioned to us that, while on location in Lille, Chris Marker discovered the music later used in the film. The simple melody is the work of a Czech composer and gives an added dimension to its use in the film. There are only approximately three minutes of music in the two-hour film. Several individuals encouraged the director to insert more music in the sound track to accelerate the momentum of the film. He refused since he had a different purpose in mind and did not feel it was necessary.

Because of the innovative use of sound in the amplication of natural noises, mechanical sounds such as grinding doors, human screams and orders, enigmatic music, in the reflective voice-off of Gérard, Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* calls *The Confession* "one of the most aurally resonant movies" that he has ever seen.[38]

The Film's Epilogue

As in *Z,* there is an epilogue to the film. Just as everything is resolved and one sees Gérard and the others triumphing with their rehabilitation, Costa-Gavras deals the filmgoer a final blow. Several events that followed the trial are used in

used to focus the attention of the viewer upon a certain object, for instance, from the establishing shot at the opening to a close-up of the police at the barricades. When too frequently employed, it becomes manipulative. It forces itself on the spectator in order to make a point. Its effect could be sensationalistic at the same time, and this is where technical form mitigates against political content. Aesthetic contradiction ordinarily occurs when a serious ideological content is cast in a dramatized fictional form that glamorizes the message by its self-conscious technique. Vincent Canby recognizes that following this procedure could be the equivalent of printing sensational stories in tabloid newspapers.

But the process of going from long to short shot having elements subtly juxtaposed is a photographic and dramatic technique that can reward director and viewer alike. Hubert Hardt in the Belgian *Amis du Film et de la Télévision* observes that this way Costa-Gavras goes from the exterior to the interior, from effects to their causes, and from apparent motives to profound reasons. Glenn's and Costa-Gavras's photography becomes the medium of art and drama, and for the most part does not obscure the politics at hand.

Editing

No one can fault Franco Solinas, Costa-Gavras, and Françoise Bonnot for their construction and execution of a brilliantly designed narrative. The narrative may occasionally be convoluted and dialogue-heavy for the uninitiated, but its technical structure is a masterpiece. The editing in general is sober and meticulous. The rhythm is quick-paced and staccato in the beginning of the film as the drama of the kidnapping and of the government reaction unfolds. The pace is then slowed down for the interrogation, only to switch to a rapid tempo at the very end with a mesmerizing flow of images. When there is a repetition of events as in the requisitioning of cars, distribution of tracts, the arrival of Santore in each country, and the exaggerated entrance of the ministers into the high-level conference, the editing cleverly reflects an automatic and routine activity, without creating ennui.

In order to furnish a study of Santore's activities over the several years from his affiliation with the police in Brazil to his kidnapping, the scriptwriter, director, and editor had to make the film a vehicle of complex ideology, and also a vehicle of complex chronology. David Denby in *Dissent* comments on Costa-Gavras's editing style:

> He's perfected a style of cinematic exposition—short, explosive scene-fragments gathered together in rhythmic units—that allows him to pack more action and information into his films than almost anyone else.[39]

To recreate Santore's background nonsequentially, flashbacks are used, as noted earlier. They are clearly marked out, and the viewer is not unduly disoriented when Costa-Gavras changes registers or time zones with this technique. The sheer number of flashbacks may be overwhelming, but in the long run this technique may be more effective than a strict chronological exposition of the facts. Let us enter into some detail in our discussion of this technique.

The first two flashbacks during the nuncio's eulogy are predispositional insofar as they indicate the problem-free life of a diplomat's family, in contrast to the sorry lot of the local population. The third flashback also takes place during the eulogy by the papal nuncio. He bemoans the sudden burst of violence in the city that began last week. Cutting on the last words, the director and editor draw us into the main action of the narrative, starting with the moment of sequestration. We only return to the chronological exposition of the funeral mass after the vote of the guerrillas to execute Santore is taken and immediately before the transport of the body back to the U.S. In between there are constant graphic flashbacks to illustrate the interrogation—shots of Brazil, Dominican Republic, death-squad activities, torture sessions, bomb courses for the IPA in Texas. As in *The Sleeping Car Murder* and *The Confession,* there is also at least one equivalent to a flashforward. Two snipers on top of a roof fire upon a group of young demonstrators, wounding a young girl and killing a young man. The students carry a banner bearing the date 1971. The event actually did take place, but after Mitrione's death. The general effect of this use of both flashback and flashforward is fascinating, stimulating, and very pragmatic for the accumulation of data about Santore's unethical activities. The message, however, runs the risk of getting lost in the spectacular technique.

Sound and Music

Although *Z* is superior to *State of Siege* in its colorful display of sound and music, the latter contains its own wealth. The harsh visual torture sessions rival the dehumanizing aspects of *The Confession,* for example. A device that Costa-Gavras used once again is the trapped individual acutely listening to sounds for clues. In the People's Prison, Santore hears a rumbling noise. He makes it out to be a train and tries to get some idea of the location of the prison from it.

The music is once again provided by Costa-Gavras's compatriot, Mikis Theodorakis, now no longer in protective custody on a Greek island. Greek music (classical, modern, and folk) is his forte. For that reason, his recording for the sound track of *Z* succeeds remarkably. On another continent, he might be a bit out of his element when he uses foreign melodies, primarily Latin American. His critics chide him for being too folkloric in *State of Siege,* using music that diametrically opposes the serious content of the film. The theme of the Tupamaros, introduced early in the film and then developed later, is a slow, haunting melody on low pipes that changes midway to a quick-paced tune with a high-pitched flute. "A People in Struggle" is light and inspiring and has the same overall effect of the instrumental "America in Insurrection," which excites the viewer to sympathize with the revolutionaries.

The elaborate drum piece entitled "Liberators" is also most arousing. The theme used to illustrate Santore's arrival in each Latin American country is played nostalgically on a harmonica. This music, interpreted by the five-member

amplifies the judicial pomp and circumstance. Tradition and fossilized elite forms of society are all emphasized, in contrast to the humble aura surrounding the political prisoners who are soon brought before the court. This resplendent procession borders on caricature, just as the entrance of the wealthy ministers does in *State of Siege,* or the exit of the military officials in *Z* with their chests laden with polished medals. In the courtroom scene, Costa-Gavras translates perfectly the impression that one gets reading Villeré's description of the ceremony:

> The members of the court enter at the back of the hall. The magistrates who are to be installed, rise, with their four Legion of Honor ribbons, their six Military Crosses, and their three war medals. President Villette, first president of the Court of Appeals, advances, followed by the procurator, General Gavarroc. Both are in full dress and, as heads of the court, they wear four stripes on their magistrate's cap.[30]

The lush color and the tongue-in-cheek style of the director here make of these men judicial marionettes in a tragic show.

Editing

In the last four films of Costa-Gavras, Françoise Bonnot was his most faithful technician. From the raw materials of the filming, Costa-Gavras and Bonnot co-created the final version of the film. The director discusses his own evolution with respect to editing:

> There, too, I work very closely. When I made my first movie, I did the editing and saw that it was virtually a re-write for the movie—you have your script, you have your shooting, and you write your movie in the editing. So I think it's quite important just to have a technician editor come in from the outside to do that work.[31]

Costa-Gavras further specifies:

> In order to make the editing work, you must have the material. So you have to carefully think through the effects during the shooting—even though, during the editing, things will change for hundreds of reasons.[32]

When discussing Costa-Gavras's tone and the editing style, critics ordinarily point out that his material is often presented in dossier fashion. This was especially evident in the documentary approach to *State of Siege.* His less flattering critics say this borders on a cold, academic style.

Françoise Bonnot, in our 7 January 1980 interview in Paris at the Billancourt film studio, stated that through cutting, which determines the pace of the film, Costa-Gavras established a triple rhythm throughout the work. In the first part of the film he concentrates on presenting the milieu of Vichy, and in the second, the inner workings of the judicial system. Then suddenly, during the trial, he shifts to the private lives of the three men who are being judged. Initially, the

spectator may have the sense of being bogged down in the heaviness of the content and perspective, but the tone heightens during the court proceedings. Normally a trial can be long, dull, and slow-paced for the lay observer, a drawn-out exchange of opinions and/or facts. In the hands of Costa-Gavras the trial of *Special Section*—like the interrogation in *Z,* the Slansky show trial of *The Confession,* and the questioning of Santore in *State of Siege*—takes on a lively, dramatic spirit by means of an alternation of camera angles and quick cutting. Sampaix's testimony serves as the focal point of the scene and immediately renders the spectator sympathetic to his cause.

The flashbacks are not so frequent as in Costa-Gavras's earlier films. They are inserted naturally during the testimony of the witnesses. Their insertion is less self-conscious than the insertions in *State of Siege.* Since each personal background is being presented subjectively by the individual on trial and challenged by the judge, Costa-Gavras tries to change the coloring of the narrative as presented by both parties. He modifies lighting, staging, and tone to capture this personalization. The biographies are romanticized in the telling, blending lyricism and comedy. Nancy Schwartz in the *Soho Weekly News* refers to these flashbacks as "affectionate bursts of impish tableaux (impish Polish immigrant and family posing outside their store, impish petty criminal stealing a bicycle)."[33] Because of these pleasant, lyrical flashbacks, it is difficult for a viewer not to sympathize with the pathetic figures who are caught in the machinery of *Justicia.* They are contrasted with the pompous bourgeois magistrates who connive to attach a death sentence to six communists and Jews before the trial gets underway. There is, however, no lyrical flashback to the lives of the judges or to scenes from their happy family lives. In this manner the technique is manipulative and one-sided.

Sound and Music:

Costa-Gavras is highly sensitive to sound effects in his works as can be especially verified in *The Confession.* There the imprisoned Gérard listens intensely to every sound. Solitary confinement sharpens his awareness to prison noises. The same is true in *Special Section,* but to a lesser degree. In prison, the men are being assembled for transport to the courtroom. There is the strident clanging of prison doors and the barking of names to punctuate this travesty of justice. Our ears and our sensitivities are irritated and disturbed. The most obvious accentuation of sound occurs during the assassination of Alfons Moser. As Frédo and Gilbert escape from the metro platform, a thumping heartbeat—as in *Z*—dominates the sound track. When they arrive at street level, they spot a policeman; tension mounts. The heartbeat has stopped and there is absolute silence as if their action is suspended in time and space. The contrasting effects turn what could be a cinematic cliché into a powerful aural sensation.

The musical background differs in each Costa-Gavras film, depending upon the composer and the historical situation. Sometimes Costa-Gavras knows ahead of time what type of music he would like and what effect he wishes to produce.

stead, I'm playing a hell of a part. And it is one of the greatest parts I've ever had . . . in my opinion.[14]

Lemmon would soon resemble a surgical instrument in the deft hands of a surgeon.

For Beth Horman, Costa-Gavras proposed Sissy Spacek, for "she has a fragile appearance and yet is so strong inside. You can find a Sissy in any supermarket. She's not a star in appearance, but she's got it all inside."[15] After signing up Spacek, Costa-Gavras advised her not to meet with her real-life counterpart until near completion of the film, for Joyce had radically changed over eight years, matured significantly during her extensive and painful quest for the truth. Instead the actress prepared for her role by learning Spanish, poring over books about the Chilean coup, and viewing documentary footage about these events. When asked at a screening and conference on *Missing* at MIT on 14 February 1982 why he chose the particular actors Spacek and Lemmon, he replied, "There is an element of them in all of you, middle class . . . I saw Spacek in *Three Women,* and they are good actors. . . ."

Although Charles disappears early on in the film, like the doctor-deputy "Z," he returns through flashbacks. To portray the impetuous, intelligent Charles Horman, Costa-Gavras cast John Shea, prompted by Shea's first film performance in the recent British film *Hussy.* Up to that moment he had performed on Broadway *(Yentl, American Days),* in the Shakespeare Festival *(Romeo and Juliet),* and television productions *(Family Reunion, The Nativity).* Shea studied Hauser's book, government files and documents, and Charles's diary to better grasp this part. Spacek and Shea were then instructed by Costa-Gavras to live in their house used in the film in order to acclimate themselves totally to the husband-wife roles and the milieu.

The other actors and actresses gradually fell into place through the casting efforts of Wally Nicita. For Terry Simon, Charles's charming old friend who comes to visit in Chile, Melanie Mayron was chosen. She played in *Harry and Tonto* and *Car Wash,* and also had a principal role in *Girl Friends.* Janice Rule, like Sissy Spacek, played in Altman's *Three Women.* She was selected for the New York newspaper woman Kate Newman who covers the coup in Chile and then heads off to La Paz, Bolivia. She is a composite of three journalists, much like the aggressive journalist in *Z.*

The government officials in Chile linked with deceiving Ed about his son's disappearance were well played, though at times they come across as the traditional Costa-Gavras "cardboard villains": Charles Cioffi (Capt. Ray Tower), David Clennon (Consul Phil Putnam), and Richard Venture (U.S. ambassador).

As director of photography Costa-Gavras chose the Argentine Ricardo Arnovich, responsible for the camerawork of *Clair de Femme,* as well as Tony Laruschi's *The Outsider.* In the collaborative visual work of Arnovich and Costa-Gavras, the rich colors, wispy mists, art nouveau stained glass, haunting night scenes, and eerie morgues take on a striking aesthetic beauty. Once again, Costa-Gavras drew upon the experience of Françoise Bonnot along with several other assistant film editors. The fine blend of narrative and dramatic tension comes

Missing: Terry Simon (Melanie Mayron) is on a trip to Viña del Mar with her friend Charles when the coup breaks out.
(Permission of Universal City Studios, Inc.)

about with Bonnot's technical and sensitive handling of filmed footage since the days of *Z,* as well as her facility to grasp intuitively what Costa-Gavras envisions.

When Costa-Gavras searched for a site to portray the dramatic events of the Mitrione-Tupamaros confrontation in *State of Siege,* he chose Chile to represent Uruguay. With *Missing,* he was unable to film the tragedy of Charles Horman *in situ,* in Chile, given the current government's hostile reaction to leftist activities. Costa-Gavras considered Venezuela, and then finally decided upon Mexico. The studios, film equipment, experienced technicians, and laboratories in Mexico were much more advanced technologically than those in Venezuela. Although he did not get the cooperation of the Mexican government, at least he felt the film company was not harassed. Tolerance would best describe the relationship he had with the government. To create the military image of the coup, he needed tanks, army personnel, and weapons. The Mexican Army did not cooperate here. The tanks stationed in the streets of Santiago/Mexico City and at the airport were made of cardboard, but still appear most convincing and threatening. For government soldiers Costa-Gavras resorted to countless extras from the police force, for they knew how to handle weapons. The elite police force also provided military vehicles.

Approximately thirty different locations in and around Mexico City were selected and slightly modified to re-create Santiago of September 1973. The Latin American country will not be formally identified as Chile in the film, but

its enticing fast-paced style. He wins the major studios as producers. Yet he rejects the general tone of the American cinema as well as its particular defects of happy endings, romanticized characters, and pure entertainment. At times his political message—necessarily diluted—gets lost in the other appealing elements of the film, especially in technique.

Since *The Sleeping Car Murder,* in which the director already showed great promise with his clever technique, Costa-Gavras has matured with respect to this element of his production. His creative mind is constantly at work; no two films completely resemble each other in technique. A film such as *State of Siege* may be considered recherché and journalistic. Yet it has a power all of its own, a power that encourages the public to stay with the director in his presentation of highly developed ideological content. In the hands of Costa-Gavras and his technicians—especially Jorge Semprun, Françoise Bonnot, and Raoul Coutard—technique becomes a lavish, creative vehicle for the political doctrine. To certain critics who do not feel at home in this style of self-conscious technique, the form does not complement the ideological content, but opposes it. It destroys the value and purpose of filming such a controversial subject as the cover-up of an assassination.

Throughout his filming career, Costa-Gavras has been haunted by the criticism of his way of presenting characters from the general of *Z* to the Establishment judges of *Special Section.* It is rare that they escape being labeled stereotypes. Costa-Gavras is thus accused of blatant Manicheism, thoroughly whitewashing the heroes, and carefully discoloring the villains. Only on occasion does he include an ambiguous character (the thirteenth man in *Shock Troops*) or a middle-of-the-road personality (the judge in *Z*). His characters are clearly drawn to be easily recognizable to a public unfamiliar perhaps with the polititcal nuances of the situation, such as the American spectator watching *The Confession.* This is a weakness of the director that has not disappeared during his evolution.

The actors who embody the living political forces in Costa-Gavras's five political films fare better than the characters they represent. They do justice to the content, for they vivify the scenarios with exciting action *(Z),* profound emotion *(The Confession),* subtle acting *(State of Siege* and *Missing),* and crisp ideological dialogue *(Special Section).* The closely knit troupe of actors—especially Montand, Signoret, Bouise, and Dux—responds to the wishes of the director to create a powerful ensemble in addition to the individual cameo roles.

Besides the criticism launched at Costa-Gavras for his political stance and for his characterizations, the most basic challenge he encounters is from the criticism dealing with the aesthetic treatment of a political problem. The area of tension is the one resulting from an artistic rendering of an actual historical event. He has walked on the same dangerous ground that Brecht walked on with *Galileo* and *Mother Courage,* but Costa-Gavras's steps have been more perilous. He has examined easily recognizable, recent historical events. His precarious optic could possibly have distorted the reality as he sought to prove his thesis about perverted Stalinism or destructive justice. His aesthetic vision in such cases may have become myopic.

Costa-Gavras renders dramatic a static, historical moment situated concretely in time and space. This dramatization could be of the ten-day hostage ordeal in Latin America or of an extensive cover-up in a Mediterranean government. To make such content viable on the screen, the director had to dramatize it significantly for it not to remain a mere isolated fragment of historical data. In such cases, popularization through the film medium could interfere with the ideological content, as noted earlier. With *The Confession* he dared to play down the drama; with *Special Section* he attempted the contrary and thereby destroyed the aesthetic viability of his production.

Costa-Garvas claims that, despite his dramatization of the material, what he says is absolutely true. He is correct in this statement. His presentation of any particular situation, however, does not encompass *all* of the truth. His evidence is most often limited to facts that support a specific thesis. His works manifest a reduction of a complex truth to a single element, no less true, but also highly selected. Is it that Costa-Gavras grasps the whole truth but for the sake of unity and of a heightened drama and conflict he only wishes to isolate the obvious injustice? Or is his aesthetic and political vision restricted to one aspect of a cause? Try as he may to present convincingly both sides of an issue in a dramatic, artistic fashion, he falls short of the goal of objectivity. He crosses over onto the terrain of the partisan filmmaker.

The question of artistic *form* must also be raised in evaluating Costa-Gavras's works. He deliberately chooses and develops a specific form that is geared more toward entertaining than educating (or inciting) an audience. To move more in the direction of revolutionizing the masses would militate against his purpose of reaching a large audience with his political philosophy. He realizes and accepts the consequences of the chosen form.

In our reflections on the films of Costa-Gavras we have seen the curious blend of fiction and politics. Is this symbiotic relationship successful in his works? With *Z* and *Special Section* there appears to be more fiction than politics, and with *The Confession* and *State of Siege* more politics than fiction. *Missing* may provide the balance. The two modes of expression, nonetheless, are intertwined in the five major films of Costa-Gavras. Where the accent lies in a given production depends on Costa-Gavras's specific political leaning at the time of filming, his collaboration with the screenwriter, and his aesthetic vision. This does not discount the role of the filmviewer in the process. For Costa-Gavras, it is the public that eventually politicizes the film.

Throughout his film, Costa-Gavras claims that he does not wish to impose lessons or morals on his audience. When Ann Powell asked if solutions are necessary, the director answered:

> Solutions, always a problem. There are many people around giving dogmatic solutions to problems, most of them are our political leaders. I don't want to give any solutions in my films. The only responsibility I have is to try to tell the truth.[3]

Our critical text, created as dialogue of critic and reader has the same essential