

COSTAS GAVRAS

RESISTING through film

Costa-Gavras enjoys a very special relationship with his audience. When the Greek-born, French-based director finds himself in a crowd, he is invariably approached by those who wish to share a word or two, while others offer him their broadest smiles. Sometimes, he is even presented with gifts.

A few days ago, for instance, following a discussion on his new feature film, "Le Capital" (Capital), at the Onassis Cultural Center in Athens, a member of the audience gave him a backgammon set, while another presented him with homemade "halva" – the man in question had read somewhere that the semolina dessert was among the director's favorites.

A day later, during a series of interviews with local journalists at the French Institute in Kolonaki, Costa-Gavras was repeatedly asked to pose for photos and shake hands. At one point he was even told, "We need you."

What do people need from Costa-Gavras? Some of it was revealed at the Onassis Center, where the well-attended discussion was coordinated by journalist Tina Mandilara. During the event, questions addressed to the director of "Z" and "Missing" sought his position on major issues regarding the economy and society through his cool-headed, penetrating, deeply humanistic and clear insight, which is also reflected in his films.

Based on Jean Peyrelevade's "Le Capitalisme total," "Capital" explores the world of highflying bankers, hedge funds and totalitarian capitalism.

"While the world is made of political boundaries, there are no financial boundaries," argued Costa-Gavras during the discussion. "I have met a certain number of French bankers, all cultured and charming people. In the movie, however, I wanted to talk about their darker side."

The director also spoke about the omnipotence of the economy, the current evaluation of success and how inequality leads people to individualism. "A society cannot exist under such terms," he said.

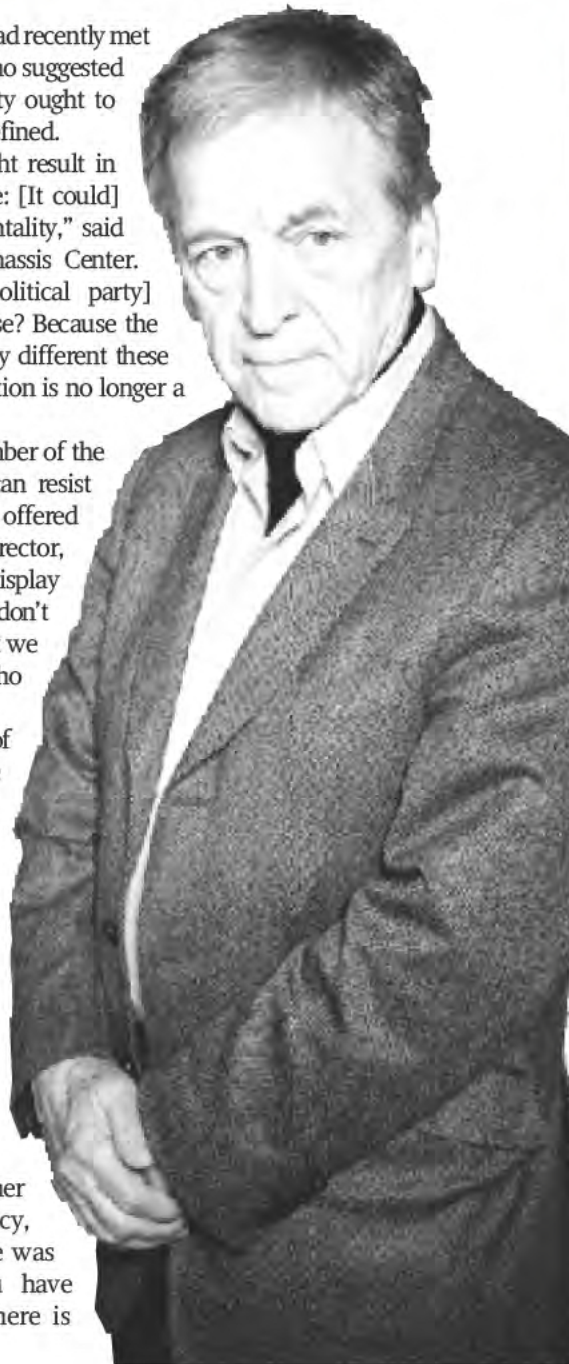
Costa-Gavras said he had recently met a French philosopher who suggested that everything in society ought to be re-examined and redefined.

"The Greek crisis might result in something quite positive: [It could] help us change our mentality," said Costa-Gavras at the Onassis Center. "Why is [neofascist political party] Golden Dawn on the rise? Because the living conditions are very different these days and because education is no longer a safeguard."

When asked by a member of the audience how people can resist nowadays, Costa-Gavras offered his own take: "As a director, I ask questions and display some resistance, but I don't have the solutions. What we need to think about is who we vote for and why."

On the subject of political cinema, he argued that the genre's role is to "reveal things we didn't know," while regarding his support for countries with strong cinematic identities, he argued that these industries were paramount in order to observe "multiple reflections of the world."

Asked about whether he believed in democracy, Costa-Gavras's response was unequivocal: "Do you have another suggestion? There is nothing better."



Le Capital

Master filmmaker Costa-Gavras (Z, Missing) tackles the world of international high finance in this jet-setting, globetrotting drama about the closed-doors intrigue and high-stakes power plays at a French financial giant. This is the story of the unstoppable ascent of Marc Tourneuil, an expendable servant of the Capital who became its undisputed master.

Banks and the dizzy world of high finance turn the wheels of Capital, Costa-Gavras' topical dissection of the capitalist system. The celebrated filmmaker has never been one to shy away from controversy, nor issues of the moment and in his new film he tackles an issue that has been at the forefront of media attention since the economic meltdown of 2008. Four years after the bailouts, bank scandals continue to dominate the headlines, and Gavras has leapt into the fray with this scathing drama.

RECEPTION

The film received slightly above average reviews during its initial appearance at various film festivals.

It was the closing film at the Festival International du Film Indépendant de Bordeaux in Bordeaux, France. It was nominated for the Golden Shell for best film, the Silver Shell for Best Director and the special jury prize at the 2012 San Sebastián International Film Festival and a FIPRESCI prize at the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival.[2]