

## THE LAMBRAKIS CASE

In 1963, Greece was still recovering from a brutal German occupation, and from the equally brutal Civil War between the pro-government forces backed by the U.S., and Stalinist Communist insurgents, mostly former anti-Nazi partisans, a conflict marked by families split apart, children kidnapped, and internal purges. The war left a country in ruins and riven with conflict between a fervently anti-Communist regime and thousands of partisan sympathizers in prison or lying low.

In 1963, Gregoris Lambrakis (born 1912 in the Peloponese) was a successful gynecologist who lectured at the University and ran a clinic for the poor, as well as being a member of Parliament since 1961. He had worked for the Resistance during the War and been a Gold Medal-winning athlete in the Balkan Games, holding the Greek record for the long jump for an astonishing 23 years (1936-1959). While not a Communist, his politics were decidedly left of center, being a leader of pacifist and ban-the-bomb movements. In April 1963, he led a Pacifist march from Marathon to Athens, reputedly being the only marcher to finish unarrested (he had parliamentary immunity). On May 22 1963, after addressing a ban-the-bomb assembly in Thessaloniki, he was attacked (exactly as depicted in *Z*) and died of his injuries five days later. At his funeral the next day, a reported half-million people rallied in protest; and, soon after, courageous investigator Christos Sartzetakis (Trintignant in the film) began to uncover the facts behind the conspiracy. (Sartzetakis was imprisoned and tortured by the colonels' regime; after their fall, he became a Supreme Court Justice and President of Greece).

After 3 years, a number of low-level culprits were convicted but given farcically light sentences; after the coup, they were rehabilitated by the regime.

**Written by Michael Jeck © 2009, Rialto Pictures LLC**