

Valenti Adds Latest Fuel to 'JFK' Debate

■ **Movies:** The president of the Motion Picture Assn. of America calls Oliver Stone's film a 'smear' of his former boss, Lyndon B. Johnson.

By DAVID J. FOX
TIMES STAFF WRITER

After months of charges and countercharges, debates, panel discussions, talk show appearances and Op-Ed pieces, it looked like the furor surrounding Oliver Stone's "JFK" might be quieting down. The Academy Awards were over and the film had received only two Oscars out of its eight nominations.

Even before its release, "JFK" reignited a national debate about the circumstances behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. After its December release, the debate became more heated and Stone has been outspoken in its defense, replying personally to film critics and writers who disputed his conspiracy theories put forth in the film. He also appeared at scores of forums and awards shows in Washington, New York and Los Angeles.

Then, just when it looked like the fury had abated, Jack Valenti took aim.

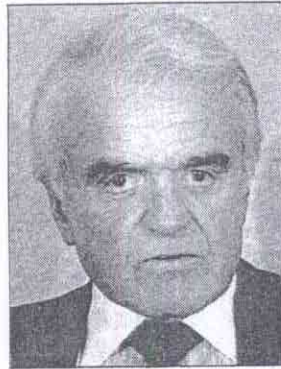
In a personal statement published Thursday in the New York Times, the president of the Motion Picture Assn. of America and a former aide to Kennedy's successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, attacked the film in strong terms, comparing it at times to Nazi propaganda films.

The idea that Valenti, whose job is chief Washington lobbyist and cheerleader for America's major movie companies, would publicly assail the product of one of his association's members—in this case, Warner Bros.—caused a ripple in Hollywood circles.

And Stone, who at first was reluctant to offer any further comment, later said in response to Valenti's commentary: "The proof of the movie is in the pudding. Congress is considering opening the [assassination] files."

In an interview, he called Valenti "a former government official who never did anything to get the files released. Now he's attacking me, as well as my freedom as an artist."

"I wish he would have exercised the same passion in protesting the circumstances surrounding Mr.



'My own rebuttal to Mr. Stone comes down to this: I was there, and he wasn't.'

JACK VALENTI
Motion Picture Assn. president



'[Valenti is] a former government official who never did anything to get the files released.'

OLIVER STONE
director of 'JFK'

Kennedy's death, which had consequences for the world far more than my movie ever will." Stone said he stood by earlier

comments he has made about how the news media has treated the film.

Please see 'JFK,' F4

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