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"HELLO, TOKYO? WHY THE HELL WONT THIS THING GO?"

The Philadelphia Inquirer / TONY AUTH

LETTERS

Readers find fault with doubters of 'JFK'

I'm sorry to see your paper lining up against Oliver Stone's movie *JFK*. The movie is a gripping vision of what happened in Dallas that day, and it deserved better from you.

I'm not a "conspiracy buff." The proponents of a JFK conspiracy, Mr. Stone included, have not made their case. Most of the books on the assassination are poorly organized, badly footnoted and make remarkably selective use of the evidence. Some are almost clinically paranoid.

But the Warren Commission and its defenders have not made their case either. They are equally guilty of sloppy analysis and selective amnesia. Even the well-organized report of the House Select Committee on Assassinations was marred by repeated "trust us" references to evidence that has been locked away for 75 years. Jim Moore's

recent book *Conspiracy of One*, makes a persuasive case for Lee Harvey Oswald's guilt, but Mr. Moore's reconstruction of the shooting differs from both "official" versions, and without further analysis it can't be accepted as what he calls the "definitive" explanation.

Neither side has a smoking gun. Both sides want us to make a leap of faith that is unreasonable. The only responsible attitude toward the assassination is one of skepticism toward all claims.

Yet it remains critically important to understand what happened that day, and what has happened in our country since then. Whether lone nut or tightly engineered coup, the fact is that the democratic process was disrupted, and power changed hands as a result of murder.

Mr. Stone's movie forces us to think about how we've allowed ourselves to be governed

for the last 30 years. The existence of a shadow government and secret policies, formed (sometimes) in defiance of the stated will of the people, are beyond dispute. After the Pentagon Papers, Watergate and Iran-contra, we can no longer comfortably accept the government's version of events as disinterested. We can no longer innocently believe that it always has our best interests at heart. We have been lied to, repeatedly, about matters of critical importance, by our own government — not always for higher motives, but often for baser motives of greed, power and self-protection.

Whether Mr. Stone's fictional version of the assassination approximates the truth or not, his film raises larger issues that must be taken seriously.

Tad Davis
Philadelphia

Specter's irrelevant rhetoric

Arlen Specter's feeble and factually empty defense of his moribund magic-bullet theory is an outrageous collection of irrelevant rhetoric, false logic and outright lies that not only perpetuates the coverup of John F. Kennedy's death, but proves that our senator was a knowing and willing participant in obfuscating the truth (Commentary Page, Jan. 5).

Our senator refers to the House Select Committee on Assassinations as a backer of the single bullet's implausible travels, neglecting to mention that the committee publicly declared that there was a second gunman firing from the grassy knoll, and that Kennedy's murder was "probably" the result of conspiracy. Indeed, the committee, less interested in proving Oswald's lone gullt, overturned the "sound conclusions" of the Warren Commission over a decade ago. In fact, almost half of the members of the commission itself did not believe Mr. Specter's ludicrous theory; nor did Gov. Connally; nor do most of the American people, some of whom reside in Pennsylvania.

I call upon my fellow voters to remove Arlen Specter from office in November, not by the treasonous and murderous tactics that he dishonestly and deliberately works to cover up, but by exercising the legitimate democratic power that all Americans were violently denied nearly three decades ago.

Jonathan Meyers
Wallingford, Delaware County

Press versus cinema

As press criticism of the film *JFK* becomes increasingly shrill, Americans may begin to wonder if the media "protest too much" about Oliver Stone's version of events surrounding the Kennedy assassination.

For if "propaganda" is the real issue, why has the press been so timid in dealing with the same product when manufactured by the Pentagon during the Persian Gulf war or by the Bush administration in the current economic crisis?

A more likely reason for the negative press response to the film is that Mr. Stone has taken a powerful medium — one normally reserved for entertainment purposes — and has used it effectively to challenge an "official" version of reality. This is precisely what

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media are supposed to do in a free society, but having largely abdicated that role in recent years, the press may just be peeved that Hollywood is muscling in on its territory.

Walter J. Fox Jr.
Philadelphia

Hardly unanimous

I strongly disagree with Arlen Specter's article about the one-bullet theory. The Warren Commission did not unanimously conclude there was only one bullet. On the contrary, it split 4-3 on this issue.

If there was no conspiracy in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, why is the government still concealing certain evidence and keeping it from the public? What is it hiding? And how and why has other evidence disappeared?

Albert Schatz
Philadelphia

Dubious 'falsehoods'

In Arlen Specter's attack on the movie *JFK* he states that "Government has an absolute duty not to lie to its people." If The Inquirer were to allow a full rebuttal from a qualified critic, your readers would see the striking irony in that statement.

In the absence of such a rebuttal I would like to address some of Mr. Specter's purported corrections of the film's "falsehoods."

- Mr. Specter insists that all shots came from behind the President. However, the Zapruder film, which he ignores, shows the President first grasping his throat and then being violently driven backward by the last, fatal shot. This is consistent with both the clear statements of the numerous Parkland Hospital doctors and those of the witnesses to the shooting, establishing that most of the shots came from the front.

- It is on record that Jack Ruby did plead with Earl Warren to take him out of Dallas, to Washington, where he would tell his whole story, beyond his limited statements to the Warren Commission.

Also, the public should know that Mr. Specter's claimed televised "debates" with Mark Lane and Josiah Thompson were carefully

controlled non-debates. Mr. Lane was precluded from directly challenging Mr. Specter. I was in the audience at Mr. Specter's "debate" with Josiah Thompson in December 1968, which also was essentially just two separate presentations, and a farce.

The farce continues with Arlen Specter's attempted rebuttal of *JFK*.

Stanley Shur
Palmyra

A commie plot?

Regarding the film *JFK*, the following observations are offered.

Lee Harvey Oswald was a pro-Castro Marxist who opposed U.S. resistance to communistic aggression in Vietnam. Oliver Stone almost certainly shares that ideology. That is a logical conclusion based on his own statements and the theme imbedded in two of his previous films *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*.

The primary objective in his latest perversion of facts is obviously to absolve a communist soul brother of guilt in the assassination of President Kennedy.

Thomas A. Troncone
Turnersville, N.J.

Why so reluctant?

We Americans inherently trust the press — we want to believe that our press is uncovering secrets, reporting the truth, offering unbiased reporting, etc. This makes me wonder — why does the press put up such a fight against finding the truth behind the murder of *JFK*? The press should have been an integral part of finding out the truth.

Instead, the Inquirer Editorial Board repeatedly bashes any new evidence on the assassination, including the recent film *JFK*.

Yes, it is a docudrama, dramatic license is taken, yet *JFK* does attempt to shed light on some glaring inconsistencies on the assassination and the infamous Warren Commission report. You folks should be smart enough and have the country's best interest at heart to seize this moment, instead of labeling any proponent of a "conspiracy theory" as a nut — one of those UFO types who should get written up in the *National Enquirer*.

Life magazine calls this the story that won't go away. It isn't just because this was a beloved president, one of our finest — it's because there's something that doesn't sit right, and the American people know it.

There is an incredible amount of evidence that makes you seriously question the event and the framing of Lee Harvey Oswald. It's right in front of our eyes. Why is the press being so stupid?

Richard Laverick
Philadelphia

Oliver Stone replies to Sen. Specter

A few comments on Arlen Specter's "facts" (Commentary Page, Jan. 5):

- The entry wound in the head of President John F. Kennedy. In Dallas, it was very clear and simple; since, the wound could be best described as transient. As six Parkland Hospital doctors told the Warren Commission, the "right posterior portion of the skull had been blasted" from a "gunshot wound to the temple." At the Bethesda military autopsy, the entry wound moved down and backward, ending up near the base of the skull. Fourteen years later at the House Select Committee on Assassinations, the wound moved again, this time to a position *four inches higher* in the back of the head, as indicated by the official autopsy photos and X-rays.

- Lt. Col. Pierre Finck. Dr. Finck, one of the Bethesda autopsy doctors, did testify at the Garrison-Shaw trial. The lines in the film are verbatim from the court transcripts — Dr. Finck says he was ordered not to track the bullet through Kennedy's neck. The next entry and exit were the crucial first step in the single-bullet theory — if the bullet was not tracked, how do we know it exited Kennedy's body?

Chances are it did not. Two FBI reports by agents in attendance at the autopsy state that the bullet wound in the President's back (another itinerant wound that relocated to the back of the neck for the Warren report but returned to the upper back by 1977) was very shallow and the bullet had not exited at all, much less continued on through John Connally. These documents are included in the commission's material — why does Mr. Specter disregard them?

- Jack Ruby. The scene where Ruby talks to the Warren Commission comes straight

out of commission Volume 5. Mr. Specter should know — he was at the interview.

- Acoustics tests. The National Academy of Sciences did its tests on a second-generation dub of the Dallas police Dictabelt, not the original, making the results invalid.

- Rifle and ballistics tests. Mr. Specter says the commission "conducted elaborate tests" to bolster its conclusions. He doesn't tell you the results. The tests were a disaster: World-class marksmen never equaled Lee Harvey Oswald's shooting success, even under easier conditions; test bullets were distorted and mangled despite causing only portions of the injury done by the intact magic bullet; even the scope on Oswald's rifle had to be adjusted for proper aim.

- Neutron activation analysis. Mr. Specter claims the commission did not have this technology available. It did, and the FBI conducted NAA tests on the magic bullet and various bullet fragments in 1964. According to a memo to the commission from J. Edgar Hoover, the tests were, at best, "inconclusive."

- The Connally wrist fragments. Although the results of the 1977 NAA tests indicated the fragments came from the magic bullet, the House committee could not prove that the fragments tested came from Connally's wrist — *the 1964 fragments had disappeared* from the Archives and the "new" fragments were of unknown origin. Both sets can't be from the magic bullet — their total weight exceeds the amount of metal missing from the bullet.

- As serious researchers know, there are 26 — not 25 — volumes of Warren Commission exhibits and hearings. Either Mr. Specter has an incomplete set, or he really is unfamiliar with the evidence.

Oliver Stone
Santa Monica, Calif.