

**OTHER VIEWS** / TOM HAYDEN

## 'JFK' Asks Americans to Look For Truth Behind the Facade

**T**HE PRESENT media furor over the movie "JFK" is about more than whether Oliver Stone takes license with certain facts, which he does, or whether he proves his conspiracy thesis, which he doesn't.

The argument is really over the meaning of the 1960s.

That decade's radicalism has been mostly dismissed as a failed cause. There now are no visionary heroes, no civil rights marches. Politics has become a cynical marketing game, financed by special interests. Critics of our most recent war were mostly deleted from media coverage, which turned instead to commentary from retired military men.

Now comes Stone as an incarnation of the '60s who cannot be dismissed. He terrorizes official subconsciousness with the fear that a new generation will be infected with the radical virus which was supposed to be eradicated.

But the sensibility of Americans like Stone should not be treated like this. We came of age in a time of great idealism that was shattered by the killing of a president, which led to a very bad decade indeed.

Our experience led us to believe that democracy was not what it claimed to be, a process

of peaceful interest groups competing for a voter majority within a framework of law.

Our alienation deepened with Kennedy's murder, with the Warren Commission's unbelievable public relations effort, with the subsequent escalation in Vietnam — and above all — with the fact that the institution we trusted for the truth, the media, offered too little criticism too late.

At the risk of infuriating some, the media has, in its current frenzy, been acting indeed as a "propaganda asset" for a storybook concept of democracy. Too many successful journalists cannot bring themselves to believe they live in a country where leaders could be murdered by interest groups.

Instead they cling to a threadbare notion of democracy which lets them sleep at night. But can they seriously claim that democracy is working as planned?

We need more haunted souls than comfortable sleepers in this country. We cannot repress and deny the past forever. Thank God Oliver Stone tries to wake us up.

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