

LETTERS

'J. F. K.'

Where Was The Fourth Estate?

To the Editor:

While Tom Wicker may be right in his assertion that Oliver Stone's "J. F. K." represents an absurdly vehement presentation of one possible version of events, his condemnation of it for being a movie, and thus a powerful former of opinion, strikes me as false and disingenuous ["Does 'J. F. K.' Conspire Against Reason?," Dec. 15].

Newspapers are perhaps the most powerful opinion-formers we have. In the assassination of President Kennedy, these opinion formers, soon after the event, switched from uncovering the facts and reporting the crime to reporting the official investigation alone. In doing so, newspapers became organs of the Government's cover-up, by reporting only the official "theory." This, despite the fact that overwhelming evidence against the Warren Commission's own conclusions lay in the report itself.

The negligence on the part of the investigating bodies should have been countered by a direct investigation by the Fourth Estate. The failure to do so in nearly 30 years strikes at the heart of the larger problem of American journalism, which has grown far too comfortable with its relationship with Government and power.

When the very framers of the Bill of Rights assumed the abuse of power and collusion against the people by the Government, who is Mr. Wicker to say a citizen is paranoid to agree? What of Iran-contra, Cointelpro (the F.B.I.'s Nixon-era counterintelligence program) and Watergate? Clearly, agencies or elements therein can and do conspire against the people.

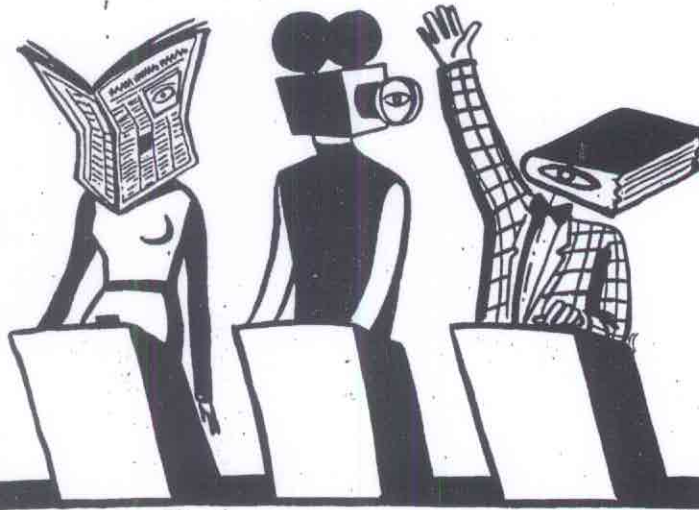
EWEN GILLIES
New York

Righting, Not Rewriting History

To the Editor:

If Tom Wicker originally covered President Kennedy's assassination with the same naïveté on the politics of power in the United States displayed in his article on "J. F. K.," it is no wonder people like Oliver Stone still have to work to get to the truth. In doing so, Mr. Stone has come to the conclusion, as have many others — including the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979 — that the Warren Commission was incorrect in its lone-assassin theory.

A movie is not a trial. Mr. Stone has studied the facts and is now present-



Allison Selfler

ing his opinion. He does not have to present the "other side." That particular pack of lies has already been presented as truth for decades by the very people who profited from its acceptance.

If Mr. Wicker, in turn, truly took a long hard look at both sides, he might realize how much more illogical many of the assertions of the Warren Commission itself are than even the most outlandish ones made by its questioners.

The very fact that Oliver Stone has people talking instead of taking the Official Story as gospel will, I hope, inspire the media to return to their proper role as watchdogs rather than lapdogs of government. With "J. F. K." Oliver Stone is making an attempt to right, not rewrite history. The people in power have already done the latter.

MIRANA BERCOVICI ABBOTT
New York

An Adviser Speaks Out

To the Editor:

Tom Wicker castigates the former District Attorney of New Orleans, Jim Garrison, for trying to do what Texas law officers and courts have studiously avoided. Mr. Garrison attempted to the best of his ability to prove what men like Lyndon B. Johnson had come to believe: that the assassination in Dallas had been part of a conspiracy.

Because Mr. Garrison's account of that trial provides Oliver Stone with a complete panoply of "assassination lore," it gives him an excellent foundation for that part of his broad drama. From that base Mr. Stone goes on to present a full spectrum of facts, such as President Kennedy's docu-

mented plan to withdraw all Americans from Vietnam by the end of 1965 and to bring 1,000 of those men home by Christmas 1963. That Presidential directive created enormous pressures within the United States political and industrial complex.

Tom Wicker writes: "I know of no reputable historian who has documented Mr. Kennedy's intentions." He could quite easily have acquired this information from "Vol. IV, 1961-1963, Foreign Relations of the United States," published by the United States Government Printing Office in 1991. Rather, Mr. Wicker blames this "speculation" on an "unnamed former military officer who sounds like any of a number of hawkish fanatics hanging around Washington."

I happen to be that "fanatic" whom Oliver Stone asked to serve as an adviser to him and his screenwriters, for the simple reason that I had lived through that era and had been working for the Joint Chiefs of Staff when President Kennedy ordered the publication of National Security Action Memorandum No. 263 of October 1963 saying precisely those things that I have written above.

L. FLETCHER PROUTY
Alexandria, Va.

Col. L. Fletcher Prouty, United States Air Force (Retired), was an adviser to Oliver Stone during the filming of "J. F. K."

Overworked Dramatic License

To the Editor:

Once again Oliver Stone is playing fast and loose with the truth. In his previous film he presented a portrait of Jim Morrison that bore little re-

*New York Times
January 5, 1992
page 1 of 2 pages
W/none*

semblance to the leader of the Doors. In "Born on the Fourth of July," he had Ron Kovic being assaulted by Syracuse police, an episode that never occurred, as well as creating a fictional soldier from a fictional town (Venus, Ga.) who supposedly inspired Mr. Kovic to join the antiwar movement.

CASEY LUTHER
Buffalo

page 2 of 2 pages

1/5/92

W/now

A Hollow Catharsis

To the Editor:

It appears to be fashionable these days to expend great quantities of creative energy making bold statements about victimized American citizens. The arts, of course, reflect society in general. A prolonged recession has hurt many of us and has scared the rest. Artistic endeavors like "J. F. K." capitalize on our fears by reinforcing the attitude that we aren't responsible: someone else did it - we need to get even. Instead of being ennobled by the creative experience, we get a hollow catharsis of anger and defensiveness. It's a cheap substitute.

Oliver Stone's descent into polemic reduces his obvious movie-making skill to propaganda of the rankest kind. The haze of controversy surrounding "J. F. K." suggests that Mr. Stone may have missed his real story: James Garrison as a good man tempted to evil in a good cause. It's certainly more fascinating than another didactic plunge into conspiracy theory.

JOEL DENTON
Roswell, Ga.

Conditioned Response

To the Editor:

Perhaps Oliver Stone, in "J. F. K.," is giving us nothing more nor less than we have come to expect of the popular media. For many years, television has presented us with news as entertainment. Mr. Stone now gives us an entertainment disguised as news. The line between the two, already blurred, may disappear completely in another generation.

JOHN MORRESSY
East Sullivan, N. H.