

The J.F.K. Flap

by Murray N. Rothbard

The most fascinating thing about *JFK*, as exciting and well-done as it is, is not the movie itself but the hysterical attempt to marginalize, if not to suppress it. How many movies can you remember where the *entire* Establishment, in serried ranks, from left (*The Nation*) through Center to Right, joined together as one in a frantic orgy of calumny and denunciation. *Time* and *Newsweek* actually doing so *before* the movie came out? Apparently, so fearful was the Establishment that the Oliver Stone movie might prove convincing that the public had to be thoroughly inoculated in advance. It was a remarkable performance by the media, and it demonstrates, as nothing else, the enormous and growing gap between Respectable Media opinion and what the public Knows in its Heart.

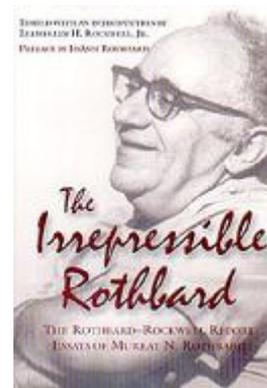
You would think from the shock of the Respectable Media, that Stone's *JFK* was totally outlandish, off-the-wall, monstrous and fanciful in its accusations against the American power structure. And you would think that historical films never engaged in dramatic license, as if such solemnly hailed garbage as *Wilson* and *Sunrise at Campobello* had been models of scholarly precision. Hey, come off it guys!

Despite the fuss and feathers, to veteran Kennedy Assassination buffs, there was nothing new in *JFK*. What Stone does is to summarize admirably the best of a veritable industry of assassination revisionism – of literally scores of books, articles, tapes, annual conventions, and archival research. Stone himself is quite knowledgeable in the area, as shown by his devastating answer in the *Washington Post*, to the smears of the last surviving Warren Commission member, Gerald Ford, and the old Commission hack, David W. Belin. Despite the smears in the press, there was nothing outlandish in the movie. Interestingly enough, *JFK* has been lambasted much more furiously than was the first revisionist movie, Don Freed's *Executive Action* (1973), an exciting film with Robert Ryan and Will Geer, which actually *did* go way beyond the evidence, and beyond

plausibility, by trying to make an H.L. Hunt figure the main conspirator.

The evidence is now overwhelming that the orthodox Warren legend, that Oswald did it and did it alone, is pure fabrication. It now seems clear that Kennedy died in a classic military triangulation hit, that, as Parkland Memorial autopsy pathologist Dr. Charles Crenshaw has very recently affirmed, the fatal shots were fired from in front, from the grassy knoll, and that the conspirators were, at the very least, the right-wing of the CIA, joined by its long-time associates and employees, the Mafia. It is less well established that President Johnson himself was in on the original hit, though he obviously conducted the coordinated cover-up, but certainly his involvement is highly plausible.

The last-ditch defenders of the Warren view cannot refute the details, so they always fall back on generalized vaporings, such as: "How could *all* the government be in on it?" But since Watergate, we have all become familiar with the basic fact: only a few key people need be in on the original crime, while lots of high and low government officials can be in on the subsequent cover-up, which can always be justified as "patriotic," on "national security" grounds, or simply because the president ordered it. The fact that the highest



levels of the U.S. government are all-too capable of lying to the public, should have been clear since Watergate and Iran-Contra. The final fallback argument, getting less plausible all the time is: if the Warren case isn't true, why hasn't the truth come out by this time? The fact is, however, that the truth *has* largely come out, in the assassination industry, from books – some of them best-sellers – by [Mark Lane](#), David Lifton, [Peter Dale Scott](#), [Jim Marrs](#), and many others, but the Respectable Media pay no attention. With that sort of mindset, that stubborn refusal to face reality, no truth can ever come out. And yet, despite this blackout, because books, local TV and radio, magazine articles, supermarket tabloids, etc. can't be suppressed – but only ignored – by the Respectable Media, we have the remarkable result that the great majority of the public, in all the polls, strongly disbelieve the Warren legend. Hence, the frantic attempts of the Establishment to suppress as gripping and convincing a film as Stone's *JFK*.

Conservatives, as well as centrists, are smearing *JFK* because Stone is a notorious leftist. Well, so what? It is not simply that the ideology of the teller has no logical bearing on the truth of the tale. The case is stronger than that. For in a day when the Moderate Left to Moderate Right constitute an increasingly monolithic Establishment, with only nuanced variations among them, we can only get the truth from people outside the Establishment, either on the far right or far left, or even from the highly non-respectable supermarket tabloids. And it is no accident that it is an open secret that the heroic "Deep Throat" figure

in *JFK* is Colonel Fletcher Prouty, who is certainly no leftist. And one of the outstanding Revisionist writers is the long-time libertarian Carl Oglesby.

One particularly welcome aspect of *JFK*, by the way, is its making Jim Garrison the central heroic figure. Garrison, one of the most viciously smeared figures in modern political history, was simply a district attorney trying to do his job in the most important criminal case of our time. Kevin Costner's expressionless style fits in well with the Garrison role, and Tommy Lee Jones is outstanding as the evil CIA-businessman conspirator Clay Shaw.

All in all, a fine movie, for the history as well as the cinematics. There are some minor problems. It is unfortunate that the founding Kennedy Revisionist, Mark Lane, felt that he had to leave the movie-making early, with the result that the film does not bring out the crucial testimony of Cuban ex-CIA agent Marita Lorenz, who has identified right-wing CIA operative E. Howard Hunt, Bill Buckley's pal and control in the CIA, as paymaster for the assassination. (See the brilliant new book by Lane, *Plausible Denial*.) According to Lane, heat from the CIA during the filming led Stone to underplay the CIA's role by spreading the blame a little too thickly to the rest of the Johnson administration.

As the case for revisionism piles up, there is evidence that some of the more sophisticated members of the Establishment are preparing to jettison the Warren legend, and fall back on an explanation less threatening than blaming E. Howard Hunt or the CIA: that is to lay blame solely on the Mafia, specifically on Sam Giancana, Johnny Roselli, and Jimmy Hoffa, none of whom are around to debate the issue. A convincing attack on the Mafia-only thesis was leveled by Carl Oglesby in his *Afterward* to Jim Garrison's book of a few years back (which formed one of the bases for *JFK*) *On the Trail of the Assassins*. The Mafia simply did not have the resources, for example, to change the route or call off military or Secret Service protection.

Many conservatives and libertarians will surely be irritated by one theme of the film: the old-fashioned view of Kennedy as the shining young prince of Camelot, the great hero about to redeem America who was chopped down in his prime by dark reactionary forces. *That* sort of attitude has long been discredited by a very different kind of Revisionism – as tales have come out about the sleazy Kennedy brothers, Judith Exner, Sam Giancana, Marilyn Monroe, et al. Well, OK, but look at it this way: a president *was* murdered, for heaven's sake, and good, bad, or indifferent, it is surely vital to get to the bottom of the conspiracy, and bring the villains to justice, if only at the bar of history. Let the chips fall where they may.

One happy result of the film was the conclusive Stoneian argument: if everything is on the up and up, why not open up all the secret

government files on the assassination? It looks as if the pressure for opening will win out, but once again, phony "national security" will prevail, so we won't get the *really* incriminating stuff. And some of the crucial material is long gone, e.g., the famed Kennedy brain, which mysteriously never made it into the National Archives.