

Bookshelf

ACCESSORIES AFTER THE
FACT by Sylvia Meagher, Bobbs-
Merrill Co.: \$8.50.

As if the Warren Report on the Assassination of President Kennedy needed any further dissection here is a book that effectively discredits the Commission's findings by analysis of its own weapon, the 26 volumes of Hearings and Exhibits. Mrs. Meagher has performed the Herculean task of sifting through all of this evidence, indexing it, and comparing it to Commission conclusions. Her evaluation of the Warren Report: "...it resembles a tale told for fools, full of sophistry and deceit, signifying capitulation to compromise and the degradation of justice by its most eminent guardians."

It would seem impossible for anyone to maintain unshaken faith in the Warren Report after reading "Accessories after the Fact." Mrs. Meagher begins by evaluating, piece-by-piece, the Commission's material pertaining to the motorcade through Dealey Plaza and she presents a large body of evidence from the Hear-

ings and Exhibits that contradicts the lone-assassin, single-bullet thesis. She reconstructs Oswald's movements immediately before and after the shooting from witnesses testimony, revealing the official version of these activities to be a matter of very dubious validity. In regard to the autopsy and medical findings, she displays the cloud of half-truths, incompetence, and hidden evidence which surrounds this whole area of inquiry.

But the real focus of this book is an attempt to present Lee Harvey Oswald as an innocent fall guy. She offers doubts and questions concerning every aspect of the Commission's case against Oswald and provides evidence that he may have been a governmental employee of the FBI or CIA. More significantly, she illustrates the grave weakness of the Report's thesis that Oswald was either qualified or prepared for this feat of marksmanship. In the murder of policeman Tippit and the assassination attempt upon General Walker, she shows Oswald's possible innocence.

In her persistent defense of Oswald, however, Mrs. Meagher dilutes the power of her attack on the Warren Commission, for, in the first case, she can show only "reasonable doubt," whereas, in the second case, she proves sloppiness, incompetence, and prejudicial investigation. For example, her evaluation of Jack Ruby's

activities and character is granted far less space than Oswald; yet her findings about the "assassin's assassin" have far-reaching implications in support of a conspiracy theory. In this area, she also offers the sensational footnote that a London actuary claimed the odds against 15 assassination related witnesses being dead by February, 1967, were 100,000 trillion to one.

Of particular interest to Los Angeles readers is the chapter "No Conspiracy?" which deals, in part, with activities of Loran Eugene Hall and Lawrence Howard in Dallas. Both men have been subpoenaed by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison as material witnesses in his investigation and according to FBI reports they appeared at the home of Mrs. Sylvia Odie in Dallas, where Mrs. Odie claims they told her of an assassination plot. Mrs. Meagher points out that the Commission never thoroughly investigated this matter.

Although Mrs. Meagher is given to excesses of humor and rhetoric which are inappropriate to her topic, the bulk of her 477 pages stands as a valid and monumental critique of the Warren Report. The sensible question is whether the omissions, errors, discrepancies, and misrepresentations she has discovered in the Report substantially alter the Commission's conclusions. The answer is: yes.