

cial; well connected in has no interests but self- and advancement.

Thuong, on the other ore complex. He has no and is swayed not by out by pride and a sense ability. He is able to rise s of the attack and helps mpany.

iculty of communication ; all dealings with Ameri- failure is not one of lone but springs from the ae cultural gap between roups. The Vietnamese not quite understand why cans are helping them, than their own apathy er are comprehensible to ers. The old men and the villagers are totally . One of them confuses with the Vietminh and y are still fighting the

mericans are all officers sionals. They are there ey have a job to do.

Anderson is competent, l dedicated. He has gone ouble of learning Viet- t his knowledge does not ge the distance between ie Vietnamese.

entral figure, Captain expresses the dominant of the Americans. He is d and impatient. There ar lines on the map, and erefore no purposeful ad- etreat, only a repetitive yearisome and boring cir- aupre is also afraid, not ut of the heat and of his ater and of the possible at will prove he is ad used

imagines that this war is rom the others in which rticipated — Korea, Ger- l Normandy. Yet in most e echoes the familiar com- earlier American fighting e boredom and the fear, ience with the allies, and breakdowns in the system ys the normal reactions forced into combat with ived from a peaceful soe difference in the war m the need for restraint. ust be polite to Dong, r cannot be deployed, be no unconditional sur- d the most desirable out-

come of it all will be not utopian but a choice of the lesser of evils.

Conspiracies

The suspicion of conspiracy, in Europe as in America, arises out of a desire to simplify complex phenomena. Most men find it intolerable to acknowledge that some of the important events of their lives are the results of causes that are not fully known. The unwillingness to concede that evidence may be partial and inconclusive induces even the rationally minded to imagine that hidden connections explain what is otherwise inexplicable. Hence the long, and often tragic, history of efforts to uncover secret plots against the well-being of society.

These fears in France often focused upon the Jews. Anti-Semitism there rose to its apogee after the Dreyfus case and left its mark down into the Vichy regime. **THE JEWS** by ROGER PEYREFITTE (Bobbs-Merrill, \$7.50) is a fictional effort to expose the follies of anti-Semitism. Originally published in 1965, it sold 200,000 copies in France; if wide circulation and extensive discussion were enough to counter a myth, the book should have had a good effect. Unfortunately, the novel may actually have heightened the suspicions it sought to quiet.

The plot is simple. A young Catholic girl intends to convert to Judaism in order to marry Baron de Goldschild. Her bigoted mother wishes to prevent the marriage, and with the aid of a convenient Jesuit rehearses a long roster of anti-Semitic accusations. The narrator, a friend of the family's, is doing research on the subject and becomes an intermediary in the discussion. In the end, the accusation of nefarious Jewish influence is reduced to the absurd by the revelation that all the famous families of the West have Jewish ancestry.

Ridicule is a dangerous technique, and when it is overly subtle, backfires. Thus, much of the argument revolves about plays upon names. Is Jean-Paul Sartre one of them? Well, if his first name were actually Jean-Loup and the Loup were spelled without a "p," it might be the Languedocian form of the definite article. The name would then be le Sartre, meaning tailor (*sartor* in Latin), a common trade among Jews. The logic, in a sense, is

funny, except that it rests upon and confirms a stereotype. The book, whether it is mocking common prejudices, or describing fictional characters, or referring to real people, repeats and gives currency to a variety of erroneous beliefs. It may therefore unintentionally sustain the fears its author hopes to dispel.

The tragedy of the Kennedy assassination has given rise to widespread conspiratorial theories in the United States and in Europe. The effort of the Warren Commission to provide a decisive answer to the doubts about the guilt of Lee Harvey Oswald was doomed to failure. More than a century after Lincoln's assassination there remain unanswered questions about the events in Ford's Theater. Given the nature of the case and of the evidence, no more definitive answer was possible about the crime in Dallas.

Challenges of the accuracy of the Warren Commission Report appeared shortly after its publication, and numerous assassination buffs have been poring over the data ever since. They have been able to find fault with the report. They have not yet come up with a convincing alternative explanation.

Two recent works add to the literature. **SYLVIA MEACHER'S ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT** (Bobbs-Merrill, \$8.50) is an elaborate systematic compilation of the evidence, in which the Commission is criticized for two kinds of failings: there are occasional internal inconsistencies, and the investigators failed to follow up all the lines of inquiry which, in retrospect, might have been significant. These errors of judgment persuade the author to argue for a new disinterested investigation, although she herself propounds no alternative theory.

JOSIAH THOMPSON'S SIX SECONDS IN DALLAS (Bernard Geis, \$8.95) is bolder. Thompson argues that there were four shots and three assassins, none of them Oswald. The conclusions rest upon analysis of the photographs as well as the juxtaposition of unreconciled statements by observers. The analysis remains speculative, however. Thompson can score points against the Commission, but his own conjectures are open to similar criticism. The disagreeable prospect is that we may never succeed in allaying all doubt and that these uncertainties will continue to generate conspiratorial theories.

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