

"Debate on the accuracy and adequacy of the Warren Commission's work." *The New York Times* editorialized sourly in September 1966, "is now approaching the dimensions of a lively small industry in this country." The first wave of "revisionist" books brought Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* to the top of the best-seller lists and seriously shook much of the American public's confidence in the findings of the Warren Commission. Defenders of the Commission quickly counterattacked, reaffirming the official version of the assassination and dismissing its critics as moneygrubbing publicity hounds. The counter-counterattack is now under way, with a barrage of new books blasting the Warren Commission, its defenders and its apologists. Their tone and quality are uneven, ranging from strident and sparsely documented polemics to sober and scrupulously researched studies of the Commission's evidence. A few build a disturbingly persuasive case against the Warren Report and deserve serious attention.

The best of the new crop of books—and the most chilling in its implications—is Sylvia Meagher's *Accessories After the Fact* (Bobbs-Merrill), a comprehensive and exhaustively researched analysis of the Warren Report and its 26 volumes of supplementary evidence. "The central purpose of my book," writes Mrs. Meagher (a World Health Organization consultant who in 1966 privately published a 150-page "Subject Index" to the Warren Report), "is, by citing the actual evidence from the Hearings and Exhibits, to prove (1) that Oswald, far from being a lone assassin, may well be innocent of any implication in the crimes of which he has been accused; (2) that there were two or more assassins; and (3) that the Warren Report is a travesty of the American system of justice, conspicuously

of the assassination." Mrs. Meagher amasses an impressive array of evidence in support of her contentions, to the considerable discomfiture of any reader not congenitally prone to conspiratorial theories of history. Her scholarship, perception and grasp of the intricacies of the Commission's evidence make *Accessories After the Fact* the definitive work to date on the assassination. There may be answers to all the grave charges in her massive indictment; but until they are presented, *Accessories After the Fact* will stand as a modern *J'Accuse*.

Another responsible researcher, in a field too often—and too hastily—discredited by the sensationalism of a few "literary scavengers," Harold Weisberg has been as prolific as he is meticulous in investigating the assassination. Forced to publish his own books at considerable expense, Weisberg has followed his earlier assassination volumes—*Whitewash*, *Whitewash II* and *Photographic Whitewash*—with a carefully documented new examination of the Garrison investigation, *Oswald in New Orleans*, subtitled "Case for Conspiracy with the CIA." Always a painstakingly accurate and assiduous—if less than impartial—researcher, Weisberg brings these talents to bear with considerable success in his latest effort. He contends that Oswald was involved with the late David Ferrie, anti-Castro Cuban exiles and elements of the CIA in a well-organized and ultimately successful conspiracy to kill the President. It's his conclusion, buttressed by a hefty array of evidence, "that the CIA and its involvement in the assassination were whitewashed" by the Warren Commission. On all major points, Weisberg supports the thesis of District Attorney Jim Garrison; and, along with Garrison's own case, his book will stand or fall with Clay Shaw in the courts. He does not pretend to be objective, but he never retches or manipulates the facts; his research, particularly in the area of the so-called "second Oswald" and Oswald's ties to right-wing anti-Castro exile groups, is significant—and unsettling—in view of the Warren Report's failure to unearth any such associations. *Oswald in New Orleans* is read by the uncommitted reader with the hope that Weisberg is wrong—and the lingering fear that he isn't.

Yet another new dimension of the assassination is examined in Josiah Thompson's *Six Seconds in Dallas* (Geis). Thompson, a philosophy professor at Haverford College who served as a consultant for *Life* magazine's team investigating the assassination, has closely scrutinized the photographic evidence taken at the assassination site on November 22, particularly the famous Zapruder film of the shooting. On the basis of a detailed examination of the films and photographs, some of which Thompson

## Warren Commission Gets Thorough Study

By RALPH J. HICHOK  
ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT

Sylvia Meagher  
Bobbs Merrill

Subtitled, "The Warren Commission, the Authorities and the Report," this book is the most exhaustive study so far of the contradictions involved in the Warren Report.

A year and a half ago Sylvia Meagher published a subject index to the report and its 25 volumes of hearings and exhibits — an index unaccountably omitted by the commission, and a great source of help to other researchers.

In the process she learned a great deal about the report, naturally, and came to the conclusion that the commission's conclusions were wrong, that the single-bullet theory was untenable and, along with it, the theory that Oswald was a lone assassin went out the window.

There is nothing new about that. Indeed, there is much here that has been said by other critics of the report.

But Mrs. Meagher has gone a good deal further into the report and into certain critical interviews and reports cited but not included in the Hearings and Exhibits volumes — to substantiate her claims.

At times she seems to quibble, at other times to push a bit too far in her conclusions. But one cannot read this book without being shaken, if only because of the shoddy investigative techniques it

exposes, particularly on the part of the FBI.

She suggests that many key witnesses were dismissed from consideration because their evidence didn't jibe with certain pre-established conclusions; that others were cross-examined unfairly, while unreliable witnesses (Marina Oswald is the chief example) were treated with kid gloves; and that still others never even got the chance to testify before the commission.

Criticisms of the commission and the report, which seemed pretty well laid to rest just a short time ago, may well burst into new controversy with the publication of this well-documented study.

LEHIGH VALLEY LABOR HERALD  
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**ACCESSORIES AFTER THE  
FACT:**

The Warren Commission,  
The Authorities and  
The Report.

By Sylvia Meagher.  
The Bobbs-Merrill Company. \$8.50

Three out of five Americans doubt or disbelieve the findings of the Warren Report; the proportion may be greater if this astonishing book gets the wide reading it merits. Mrs. Meagher is a meticulous, far-reaching critic of the Report who believes its findings were erroneous. A scholar of awesome depth, she has as well the skills of a great defense attorney and her book gives Lee Harvey Oswald posthumously the day in court an assassin's bullet denied him.

In his Introduction to her book, Leo Sauvage calls Mrs. Meagher the only person in the world who knows every item in the 26 volumes of the Hearings and Exhibits on which the Warren Commission based the conclusions in its Report (as well as much more about the Assassination that is missing from the volumes). In nearly 500 closely packed pages, this tireless author examines point after point of evidence to try and find a correlation between the evidence of the Hearings and Exhibits, and the conclusions of the Report. She finds very little.

Her method is simple but devastating. She lays before the reader a mass of alleged facts, describes the conclusions that the Report draws from them, and then proceeds to her own "appraisal of the known facts" which is almost always at complete variance with the Report. Her logic is powerful and dazzling, her prose bitterly ironic and almost scornful. She charges the Commission with "distortions, discrepancies and misrepresentations" of innumerable points of evidence, stating bluntly that it issued a "false indictment" of Oswald, who had "no motive, no means and no opportunity to assassinate President Kennedy.

While it is not her purpose to prove a conspiracy and turn up the true killers, Mrs. Meagher does construct a plausible theory that ties up some loose ends left by the Warren Report and points in the same direction as that of District Attorney Jim Garrison of New Orleans. But she has had increasing misgivings about the use of the latter as it continues to unfold.

Mrs. Meagher concludes with a plea that many readers will wish to second: Open the 75-year time vault holding all the evidence in the case to a new investigation by an impartial body, which her book ringingly avers the Warren Commission was not. And do it within our lifetime.

THOMAS G. BRUNI

By J. B. Mullaney

The "lively small industry," as the New York Times characterized debate on the accuracy and adequacy of the Warren Commission Report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, is growing livelier and larger as the years pass.

Debate as yet it scarcely has become. Defense of the report has been scantily represented. The commission itself has not dignified attacks by response. But critics and their magazine-book publishers have been excessively industrious.

One-sided debate is not illuminating, which in this case is a national misfortune. The platform has been left open for critics to be persuasive even at their worst, and the worst is shrill and shoddy.

TWO NEW additions to the library of criticism are neither shrill nor shoddy, probably the most sober and thoughtful to appear thus far.

They are *Accessories After the Fact*, by Sylvia Meagher (Bobbs Merrill; \$8.50) and *Six Seconds in Dallas*, by Joseph Thompson (Geis; \$3.95).

Mrs. Meagher is the compiler of the Subject Index of the 26-volume, 20,000-page, 10-million word report of the hearings and exhibits of the Warren Commission. She is credited with being more thoroughly informed on the contents of the report than any other single person. Her analysis and comments warrant the claim.

Thompson, a young philosophy professor, attempts a scientific reconstruction of the events of Nov. 22, 1963, largely based on an intensive study of the Zapruder film of the assassination and the questions it raised to him.

Both authors dispute the single-bullet, single-assassin theory accepted by the Warren Commission. Both are convinced that bullets came not only from the Book Depository ambush of Lee Oswald (or someone else) but from the grassy knoll ahead and to the right of the presidential caravan. Thompson adds a third rifleman in another building.

ARE THEY convincing? Not to the point where one is led to totally disregard the

commission's findings and accept theirs. Neither author makes a claim of disproof that Oswald was involved in the assassination. They believe the president was the victim of an unidentified conspiracy in which Oswald may or may not have been involved.

They are in instances guilty of the sin with which Mrs. Meagher charges the commission: "The Commission has used a premise to justify a conclusion and then used the conclusion to justify a premise."

Mrs. Meagher disposes of some evidence and some opinions of the commission which do not fit her theory as an "affront to logic." On the other hand, when her pattern is not filled out by evidence, she sees it as a "reasonable assumption" that such-and-such took place. Apparently she did no independent field investigation into the circumstances of the day.

Thompson did considerable personal investigation. But how much of his "new evidence" is new or old, valuable or valueless, fact or theory can be determined only when there is response from the commission.

THE OBJECTIVITY of both books is clouded by the conviction of the authors that the commission consciously directed its inquiry at Oswald and Oswald alone. Mrs. Meagher charges the commission with dishonesty and calculated deception. Thompson, almost as blunt, argues that vital evidence was ignored, disregarded or misrepresented by the commission.

Mrs. Meagher's charge is a damning indictment of the distinguished men who served on the commission. Since it is unsupported save by her own suspicion, it might better have been left unwritten. She raises enough questions about the conduct of the inquiry to blemish its

findings as hurried, sloppy and incomplete.

Prof. Thompson's reconstruction, while it does not "demolish" the report as one of his editors proclaims, nevertheless lends support to those who protest the seal which has been placed around the autopsy reports and pictures.

WITHOUT accepting the plot theory developed in the research and imagination of the authors, one is led to agree with conclusions of Max Lerner:

"The Warren Commission, whatever its detailed mistakes, made one massive blunder — that of closing its inquiry. It should have rendered an interim "Not Proven" report, and kept the inquiry open-ended until the pieces fitted into a better pattern than they did then or do now."

Book

Dec. 17, 1967

THE PLAIN DEALER, SUNDAY,

The Case of the Grassy Knoll