

January 26, 1968

Dear Mr. Stiefvater--

As editor of Sylvia Meagher's book ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT, I'll attempt to answer some of your questions. I do not feel free, however, to discuss sales figures and costs, except in a general way, but perhaps that will be sufficient for your purposes.

1. When I read Mrs. Meagher's manuscript, I was aware that at least three books on the subject -- Epstein, Lane, and Weisberg I-- would be published long before it would be possible for us to publish ACCESSORIES. I had had, in fact, access to both the Lane and Weisberg manuscripts. To my mind ACCESSORIES was the best book on the subject; another reader here agreed. Neither of us being authoritative on the Report, we decided to ask Leo Sauvage to do a professional reading for us, as a consultant. His opinions confirmed ours, and we decided to publish the book despite the competition created by books which would appear earlier; to repeat, the decision was based on the book's obvious quality.

2. I suggested certain stylistic revisions: choice of words, sentence structure, juxtaposition of the press appendix -- it had been part of the forward; nothing extensive.

3,4,5. We've sold under 10,000 copies of the book; it is expected to sell slowly but steadily over a long period of time. While not a bestseller, it has sold well enough to economically justify its publication.

6. Because of the book's length (particularly) and scholarly seriousness it is not likely to have an immediate paperback edition. I'd hope that as it accumulates a reputation, a market will be created, and a reprint publisher will want to take it on.

7. As you know, it is Mrs. Meagher who checked many critics citations. I didn't even try to find someone to check hers; to my mind she is the expert (who would I ask to check out Norbert Weiner's math?) Naturally, many people read parts of the manuscript while it was in progress, so my confidence was not unfounded.

8. Most of the interchange between Mrs. Meagher and myself took place in person or on the telephones.

9. As I mentioned above, I originally submitted the manuscript to Mr. Sauvage for a professional reading. He was my choice, based on his own work and clear independence. Mrs. Meagher and several others read his introduction. It was based on his original reading of the manuscript.

Some miscellaneous points. It is customary for publishers and authors to divide paperback reprint proceeds 50-50. The monies involved vary with individual books, and there is no way of determining what a book will bring until negotiations begin. I don't fully understand your question (3) about editions, so I'll overanswer. A first printing constitutes a first edition. If additional copies are needed, a second (third, fourth, etc.) printing is made; these may include minor changes (typographical errors corrected and the like.) After a certain amount of time, if both the author and the publisher feel that a thorough revision of a book is desirable -- incorporating new information -- a second, or revised, edition will be made. Again, this is unpredictable, time, new material, and demand being the key factors. ACCESSORIES in the first printing

As an aside, I'd like to add that your letter gives me the impression that your book will attack the critics, including Mrs. Meagher. I can't imagine the usefulness of the information you've asked except in that context. I have taken the time to answer you at this length because of the allegations that have been made about other critics in the past (For example, that they did it for the money, which is amusing, since even Mark Lane has not made as much from his book as he would have had he spent the same amount of time conducting a legal practice; it has also struck me as ironical that in this business-minded culture people should be singled out for doing things for money.) The questions that you ask do not seem relevant to me. They deal with the minutia involved in the publishing of a particular book. Would the questions surrounding the assassination be answered if all of the critics' books made a fortune or lost money? If editors entirely rewrote the

critics' books? If all of the critics, and, for that matter, their publishers, conspired together or were part of some larger conspiracy? No, better to ask other questions, among them why -- since the majority of Americans have doubts about the Warren Report and its conclusions -- are not the doubts answered with analysis and methods as painstakingly scrupulous as Mrs. Meagher's. How is it that the Warren Commission, with the entire machinery of the government behind it, cannot produce a document about the assassination as unassailable (if one excludes faith as a method for reaching logical conclusions) as ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Ockene  
Editor

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RMO/bp

cc to Sylvia Meagher