27 NOVEMBER 1966

Meths and weak tea

THEATRE/**HAROLD HOBSON**

The Silence of Lee Harvey Oswald, by Michael Hastings (Hampstead Theatre Club), supports the theory that the farther away from fact the Theatre of Fact gets, the better (or less bad) it is. The selected portions of interrogation which make up part of this play, whether wheedling or minatory, seem indistinguishable in manner and atmosphere and, as far as I am concerned, in boredom, from those to which we have become accustomed in documentary drama. But when Mr Hastings leaves the printed facts aside and uses his imagination, when he tries to penetrate into the private life and associations of Oswald and his Russian wife, the tension increases and the interest mounts.

Mr Hastings does not say whether he believes that Oswald shot Kennedy; he is more fascinated by Oswald's character than by what he may or may not have done. He presents him as an unbalanced and most unhappy man, driven into terrifying rages through incoherent and thwarted ambition. The misery and violence he brought into his household are quite searing, and Alan Dobie's Oswald is a startling combination of sullenness and ferocity. Sarah Miles as the long-suffering wife endures bullying, beating, and bawling out with inexhaustible patience, and Bessie Love as the local chatterbox is often amusing.