Death's Forwarding Agent

JUSTICE IN JERUSALEM by Gideon Hausner. 528 pages. Harper & Row. \$12.50.

The wine flowed freely, and the old Nazi cronies, safe in Buenos Aires, reminisced about the great days under the Führer. "I am no longer being pursued," boasted one Ricardo Klement.

Klement was wrong, and fatally in-



PROSECUTOR HAUSNER "Klement" was wrong-fatally.

discreet. A tape recorder was taking it all down (the cronies wanted a record of their thoughts). A transcript fell into the hands of the Israeli secret service, and early in 1960 an Israeli agent arrived in Buenos Aires to look Klement over. Pretending to represent a British sewing-machine company that was seeking a factory site, the agent called on the Klements' neighbors. Yes, the lady there was interested in selling her property. The agent wondered if the people next door might also be interested. Unexpectedly, the woman jumped to the window and shouted, "Señora Klement, would you sell your house for a sewing-machine factory?

When Klement heard about this from his wife, he grew suspicious, for the neighborhood was remote; why should anyone choose it for a factory? In the end, he put aside his doubts. The Israeli agent secretly photographed him, and from these pictures came convincing identification. In April 1960, other Israeli agents carried off the celebrated kidnaping that delivered Adolf Eichmann to Jerusalem.

No Room for Morality. Gideon Hausner was prosecutor for Israel in the Eichmann trial of 1961. In this powerful panorama of the courtroom scene, he prosecutes Eichmann still. The enormous Israeli effort that went into

the preparation of the case against him, the painstaking attention to legal detail and justification, the wrenching attempt to be fair while partisan in judging and convicting the man-all of it is replayed in Hausner's tautly written pages. He admits his purpose plainly: neither the Jews nor the rest of the world should rest easily as long as the Nazi impulse still festers among men. And it does fester. Hausner quotes letters in his files from people around the world, including the U.S., applauding the likes of Eichmann.

From the moment of his "arrest" in Argentina by the Israeli body snatchers until the gallows trap in Jerusalem was sprung on him, Eichmann displayed "no room for morality" in his makeup -at least none detectable to Hausner. "Might was right; power was virtue; the greatest sin was weakness." To obey had been Eichmann's highest object. Hausner's epitaph is that Eichmann died "as he lived—a pagan, a polished, finished and unalloyed product of the Nazi system.

Something Soulless. In Jerusalem he fought cunningly to minimize his role. He did not have the ideological courage to admit what he had once said to his friends in Argentina: that he had taken "uncommon joy" in catching these enemies and transporting them to their destination. "I lived in this stuff, otherwise I would have remained only an assistant, a cog, something soulless." Now he disclaimed responsibility, insisted that he had indeed been a cog, merely transmitting orders. But the evidence was crushing that he had acted, as witnesses put it, as "the great forwarding agent of death," the efficient zealot who directed the action phases of "the final solution.'

He versed himself in Yiddish and Zionism to confuse Jewish spokesmen. He found the transport to ghettos and crematoriums. Nothing personal, he testified. He came from an ordinary Biblereading Protestant family, and had had Jewish friends during his Austrian boyhood. In transmitting orders, he never persecuted "individuals"—"it was a matter of a political solution. For this

I worked 100 percent.'

It remained for a seemingly minor incident in Jerusalem to illuminate the quality about Eichmann that Historian Hannah Arendt has characterized "the banality of evil." One day after a court session, Eichmann was shown a film: here were Jewish victims packed like cattle into trains; here were Nazi execution squads shooting down rows of naked men, women and children, who fell writhing into trenches that they themselves had dug; here were literally thousands of corpses being bulldozed into mass graves. Suddenly, in the darkened room, Prosecutor Hausner heard Eichmann stir. Hausner wondered if the ice-cold technician of the final solution

was objecting to the evidence in the film or was he showing remorse at last?

Not at all. Eichmann had just noticed that some journalists were sitting near by. Had he been told the press would be present, he complained, he would have worn his blue suit instead of his slacks and sweater.

Food for the Suspicious

INQUEST: THE WARREN COMMISSION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUTH by Edward Jay Epstein. 224 pages. Viking.

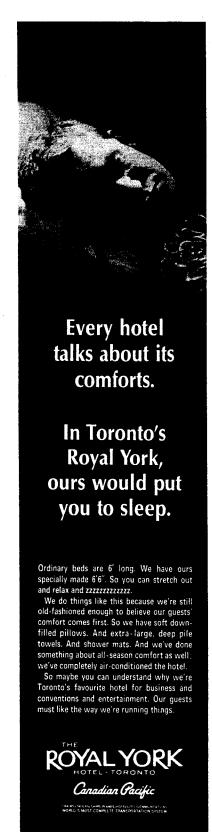
Just as it is true that the mind can con ceive unending webworks of intrigue, so it is that the Kennedy assassination will forever evoke suspicions, claims, counterclaims and new theories. He was shot with one bullet-no, two. He was killed by one man-no, two, or maybe three. The fatal bullet entered his neck -no, his back. Lee Harvey Oswald was a Communist-no, a right-winger. Kennedy ordered his own assassinationno, Lyndon Johnson did.

Despite the thoroughness of the 26volume Warren Commission report, many people in the world prefer to ignore rational explanations when the irrational can be made to seem so much more melodramatic. Edward Jay Epstein's book will certainly help feed the grimly suspicious. Inquest is the enlargement of a master's thesis that he wrote at Cornell. It has much thesis, but little that is masterly.

After diligently scanning the public record, sifting through an accumulation of evidence in the National Archives, and interviewing five of the seven members of the Warren Commission and ten of its top staffers, Epstein concluded that the commission was "extremely superficial" in its investigation of the President's murder. He bases some of his criticism on the fact that the commission members actually heard little of the testimony in person, but he fails to mention that all members received a full



STUDENT EPSTEIN The thesis was enlarged—unmasterly.



transcript of each day's proceedings and were free to ask questions or raise points when they felt it was necessary.

Moreover, he says, the commission acted hastily, even slovenly, in deciding that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin. "There is a strong case that Oswald could not have acted alone," he charges. "Quite clearly, a serious discussion of this problem would in itself have undermined the dominant purpose of the commission, namely, the settling of doubts and suspicions... In establishing its version of the truth, the Warren Commission acted to reassure the nation and protect the national interest."

Nowhere in the book does Epstein offer any indication, however slight, of a link between Oswald and a collaborator. His chief argument is that the commission placed entirely too much credence in the theory that one bullet hit J.F.K. in the back and emerged from his throat to strike Governor John Connally. He suggests that Connally must have been hit by a second bullet, since Oswald could not have fired twice in the 1.8 seconds that elapsed between the time Kennedy was hit and Connally fell. Therefore, says Epstein, if the same bullet did not strike both men, there had to be a second assassin. He cites two unpublished FBI reports that seem to cast doubt on the single-bullet theory. Those reports said that the first bullet did not pass through Kennedy's body at all. But Epstein ignores the fact that the FBI has long since acknowledged that it was in error on that point. The reports were based on inadequate information, hurriedly collected before the autopsy was completed.

This and countless other examples of superficial scholarship scarcely make *Inquest* the compelling work that Epstein's publishers claim it is.

Little Memsahibs

TWO UNDER THE INDIAN SUN by Jon and Rumer Godden. 240 pages. Knopf, Viking. \$5.50.

Fifty years ago, eight-year-old Rumer Godden began to write a novel. "Peggy," read one memorable sentence, "looked round and saw a tigiger and a loin roring at her."

"But she was in the garden," protested Rumer's kibitzing nine-year-old sister Jon. "There wouldn't have been a tiger or a lion."

"It doesn't matter," said Rumer. "This is writing."

The Godden sisters are now successful British novelists, and when Rumer (Black Narcissus, The River) and Jon (The Seven Islands, The Peacock) use India as a locale, reality still does not impinge on the writing. Seen through their eyes, the vast Asian subcontinent becomes a setting instead of a place, muddy rivers are transformed into revered waters, reeking slums smell of curry and spice, and lacerating poverty is unflinchingly accepted.

This collaborative childhood autobiog-



RUMER & JON GODDEN
Writing unimpinged on by reality.

raphy evokes dreamy days in a sprawling house in East Bengal, where the Goddens' father was a steamship agent, and where, as petted and pampered little memsahibs, they had syces to care for their pony, dirzees to whip them up frilly frocks, ayahs and bearers to care for them. But the sisters were perceptive little girls, and if life was mostly a carefree and sheltered idyll, there was also an awareness of spuming life outside their garden wall. They recall with remarkable clarity the sights and sounds of the bazaars, of steamer trips through the river jungle of the Ganges Delta, of the slow cycle of the Indian year, from Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, back again to the Moslem festival of Muharram. In a muted way there was tragedy, too. The sisters tell how Nitai, their meek sweeper, killed his beautiful daughter in a jealous rage after she moved in with Guru, the Godden family's gatekeeper.

It was not an ordinary childhood, and for all its special moments the sisters later agreed that it might have been better if they had been reared differently. "Better," said Jon, "but not nearly as interesting." Readers of this perhaps too romanticized, but still captivating memoir can agree. And they will also understand why it is that old Mother India never seems to let her adopted children go.

The Wane in Spain

I, THE KING by Frances Parkinson Keyes. 351 pages. McGraw-Hill. \$5.95.

They say in the book trade that Frances Parkinson Keyes learned to type on the cash register. This is hard to refute. Mrs. Keyes (rhymes with eyes) is a very nice old lady of 81 who sells all the books she can write. Of the 47 that she has published since 1919, not counting this one, nearly half have