THE HIDDEN PEOPLE
Poverty in Australia,

JOHN STUBBS' estimate that there are at least half a million people in Australia living in poverty must be considered conservative.

It is based on his own observation and research, figures supplied him by voluntary organisations and meagre Government statistics.

The fact is that there has been little research in Australia into the extent and nature of poverty and, even where some Government departments have collected information, says Stubbs, "they actually refuse to reveal the information even to social workers and universities."

In America, where there has been extensive research into poverty, President Kennedy accepted that 32,000,000 people in that country were living "on the fringe of subsistence." Even allowing for varying conditions, says Stubbs, the American research would indicate that Australia could well have a million people living close to the subsistence level.

John Stubbs, who is a political reporter for The Australian admits that his is not a definitive study of the problem of poverty in Australia.

But he is a first-class reporter and he has set out the classes of people who suffer poverty in Australia, and has spelled out clearly what it means to them in terms of deprivation, misery and humiliation.

He has called his book The Hidden People because "our poor have been hidden by the increasing affluence of the rest of our society, and buried in the statistics . . . We have little contact with them . . . (because) they have been hidden by the suburban sprawl and changes in the structures of our major cities."

Who comprise the poor? About a quarter says Stubbs, are aged pensioners, many of whom are cold because they cannot afford heating, and are dirty because they are too ill or too weak to do their washing.

The rest are big families where the breadwinner is on the basic wage or less; the unemployed, Aborigines (their poverty statistics are close to 100 per cent.), widows and deserted wives, and derelict and homeless men.

He says: "Many, perhaps a majority, of depressed Australians are poor because they were born poor, for there is a vicious circle of poverty. Badly fed as children and badly educated, the poor seldom have the opportunity to learn a trade. Their will has been warped by their early suffering and rejection by the rest of society.

"Others are victims of the concept that there should be mobility in the work force and a pool of unemployed to reduce the pressure for wage increases.

"These include laborers who are getting old . . . too old to get a regular or decent job and not yet old enough to get a pension or die."

The chief sufferers of poverty are the children, says Stubbs, and his chapter on them—"The Young: The poor child's badge", makes tragic reading.

"Inadequate or ragged clothing is the badge the poor child is forced to wear," says Stubbs and he recounts the humiliations of children in this plight . . . of 10-year-old boys forced to wear their mothers' shoes to school or go barefooted . . . the boy com
sidered unruly and a trouble-maker who cried when he was given a new pair of shoes; they were his first.

Big families present special problems. The parents often have to choose between herding them into one, cheap-rent room so that they can have adequate food; or pay exorbitant rent for decent accommodation and live mostly on bread and margarine.

John Stubbs has collected most of his material in personal interviews with pensioners, derelict men, heads of families and charity workers, and he presents his shocking facts quite dispassionately. Perhaps too much so, for there is room for indignation and anger.

The author takes no political standpoint, except to emphasise that the responsibility for dealing with the problem rest squarely on the governments, Federal and State, who, he says, tend to regard the existence of poverty with callous indifference or ignore it, like sweeping dust under the carpet.

He says: "The time has come for a major review of Australia's social security system to enable the vast amounts of money available to be spent in the most effective way."

A forlorn hope without big social changes.

TOM LARDNER

ANDRE VOZNESENSKY: Selected Poems.

IN MOSCOW in December, 1962, I was one of the 15,000 fortunates who managed to get tickets to the now-famous poetry-recital in the Palace of Sports at Luzhniki. Outside, in some three inches of snow, hundreds of the less lucky were clamoring to get in, and scalpers were doing a roaring trade.

Inside, the atmosphere was electric. This was the time of the first major confrontation between the young, progressive writers and their older and conservative counterparts, soon to be fought out on the Party and Governmental level.

But the first half of the program was dominated by a battery of poets of the middle and older generation, whose very appearance was in sharp contrast to that of the predominantly youthful audience. They were received with polite deference, but little more.

When Robert Rozhdestvensky and Andrei Voznesensky eventually took their turns at the podium (Yevtushenko was in Cuba) the response of the huge crowd was incredible. Whereas the older poets had managed to recite only two or—if they were lucky—three pieces before the tepid claps died away, deafening rounds of applause brought both Rozhdestvensky and Voznesensky back for poem after poem.

And it was similarly instructive to note the difference in delivery: whereas most of the older poets relied on pure declamation in the best Russian bravura tradition—a style, incidentally, also favored by Yevtushenko—Rozhdestvensky stood casually with hands in pockets and breathed almost conversationally into the microphone, while Voznesensky excitedly rattled his poems off at machine-gun speed, his right hand pumping away uncontrollably at his side, like a nervous and inexperienced actor.

Yevtushenko, Rozhdestvensky and Voznesensky are the three outstanding representatives of that new wave of young writers who have revolutionised Soviet poetry and made it the mass artform of the age, as it was in the days of Mayakovsky—in a way ab-
solutely inconceivable in any capita-
talist country. Though Rozhdestvensky — a fine and sensitive poet — is still, regrettably, largely untranslated, Western readers have by now become reasonably familiar with Yevtushenko’s work, and now we have a substantial selection of Voznesensky’s verse, which illustrates both the depth in quality of the Soviet poetic revival and its range and variety.

This revival has been interpreted—correctly, I feel—as expressing the reaction of the younger generation to the Stalin period, reflecting their impatience with philistinism and bureaucratic strictures, their desire for a fuller and freer life and their demand for honest explanations of the past, together with their determination never to return to the negative features of that past. Yevtushenko, of course, is the laureate of the movement — the man whose verse, despite its frequent lyrical poignancy, trumpets from the public platform, giving immediate voice to burning issues in a direct and forthright form.

Voznesensky’s, on the other hand, is a more personal and private voice. He is agitated by and large by the same questions as motivate Yevtushenko, but his way of answering them is more individual and unorthodox — but for all that no less popular. The shaping influence in Yevtushenko’s work is obviously Mayakovsky; his imprint is plain on Voznesensky as well, but the dominant strain in the latter’s verse is without a doubt that of Pasternak, to whom he bears a great resemblance, particularly in his emphasis on metaphor and his belief in the special powers of the imagination — as in Anti-worlds, dealing with the inner realm of dream and fantasy:

“Long live those Anti-worlds!
Fantasists — into nonsense whirled.
But without fools there’d be no wise.
No oases without the deserts wide.”

And again, in his notes (entitled I Love Lorca) to his poem The Lenin Sequoia, which is heavily influenced by the great Spanish poet:

“Metaphor is the motor of form. The twentieth century is the century of transformations, of metamorphoses. What is a pine tree today? Perlon? A fibreglass rocket?”

His concentration on the association of ideas and images leads Voznesensky to a special awareness of the nature of the modern urbanised and industrialised society around him, which he captures in a series of hard, brittle and vivid metaphors, reminiscent of the Russian futurists, the French symbolists, Lorca (Voznesensky’s fine sequence on America, The Triangular Pear, recalls Lorca’s Poet in New York) and even the English Imagists:

“My self-portrait, apostle of the heavenly portals, my neon retort—Airport!
The duraluminum windows vibrate
Exactly like a soul’s X-ray...
The monument of the era’s
An airport.”

This is unusual and fiercely uninhibited verse, quite unlike that which we have come to expect from the Soviet Union, but it is contemporary in the best sense of the word and, above all else, uncompromisingly honest. Voznesensky recognises the unique role played by poets in fighting for truth, and, indeed, in suffering for their dedication. As he says in his notes on The Lenin Sequoia: “Poetry always means revolution. The songs of Lorca meant revolution to those hypocritical neo-inquisitorial jailors — for in them, all is internal freedom, abandon, temperament... Marx wrote that poets are in need of great endearment. What talk of endearment can there be when the naked heart of a poet is flayed with barbed wire...”
And in his poem *The Ballad of the Full-Stop*:

"... That the winds whistled, as through the stops of clarionets, Through the bullet-ridden heads of our finest poets."

Herbert Marshall's translations seem to do less than justice to the distinctiveness of the original, through an unnecessary eagerness to match it rhyme for rhyme. His preface and notes—discreetly acknowledged by the publishers not to have been authorised by Voznesensky himself—would do credit to any gutter-press kremilinologist in their inexplicable distortion of the admittedly very real conflict between writers and officialdom in the USSR. But for all that this volume is an important contribution in bringing to English readers one of the leading new literary figures in a country where poetry has attained the rightful place denied it in the capitalist world.

Roger Milliss


CRAIG McGRGOR, a journalist in his early thirties, previously collaborated with Midget Farrelly to write *This Surfing Life*. The influence of journalism, of his own age group and his knowledge of the surfing generation are all marked in *Profile of Australia*.

There is plenty of information, sometimes colorfully irrelevant but more often usefully interpretative of Australian attitudes and responses. Now and then it's inaccurate or repetitive, but basically it is carefully researched. A well-designed index is an asset. In a sense it impresses as a series of well informed newspaper articles rather than a basic analysis. It carries the weakness of journalistic style in that, for the sake of color, it sometimes overstates a case in a rather superficial way. About 4 or 5 pages, widely separated, dispense with women. Strung together are all the best known facts and legends but one understands little of what now leads more women to work, how this changes their own and their families' attitude or even the attitudes which society adopts in bringing women into the work force.

It is in Craig McGregor's approach and in his treatment of young people that the book assumes its major importance.

Here is recognition of the changing Australia in all its aspects and here is sympathetic intelligent treatment of the generation which has grown up since World War Two. Perhaps Craig McGregor's past experience and association with Midget Farrelly enabled him to so objectively portray prevailing attitudes amongst those who are often the despair of their elders but on whom future Australian development more and more rests.

But because Craig McGregor is caught up in the affluent, expanding post-war Australia, some of his reflections are less than objective.

He accepts the notion of class, sees class divisions and refreshingly demolishes the tiresome and reactionary theory that Australia is a classless paradise, yet his views of class are largely confined to perceived class attitudes.

It is important how people view themselves and one cannot but agree that traditional working class attitudes seem out of date to the growing and younger white collar strata. Yet class concepts do not arise only from subjective attitudes; exploitation creates its own opponents. The real question
is the issues on which one fights. One can bemoan a lack of radicalism, an old fashioned anti-intellectual labor party, an ineffective communist party, but this will neither explain the growing polarisation in Australian politics nor find the radical policies which Craig McGregor so obviously desires.

White collar growth is a fact, but Craig McGregor's interpretation of the facts are not always accurate. He claims there are more white collar workers than others, but even his own quoted statistics belie his view unless one plays the numbers game. One can count as white collar everyone in the categories of professional, administrative, clerical, sales and transport and make up a figure roughly equal that of craftsmen, production workers, laborers, service workers and miners, or change it around a bit and still it will be an over-simplification to assume that every little girl who pounds a typewriter or serves in Woolies is white collar and therefore middle class, or that all listed under transport, pilots to postmen, are identifiable as one class grouping.

Certainly middle class values assist to create fertile ground for the anti-image of a Calwell or the trade unions. Yet a Whitlam will not, at least on Vietnam, lead to a radicalisation. The point is surely that given greater material wealth the radicals, recognising continued exploitation of blue and white collar workers (in Australia but also in the world), must take their feet and their visions out of the depression era and formulate meaningful policies for those with new values.

Craig McGregor considers many of them, foreign policy, white Australia, education, transport, equal pay, and he implies, too, the frustrations of association with impersonal power, the growing authoritarianism and the whittling away of democracy. A some-what black and white view of the ALP, of the trade unions and the communist party, a general under-estimation of the left does not serve to explain, for example, the 10,000 people, intellectuals, students, old and new type unionists, ALP, communists and even liberal supporters who demonstrated against Johnson in Sydney and who show considerable disquiet at the direction of Australian foreign policy.

Just as the second World War was a watershed for the growth and development of attitudes, so the Vietnam involvement brings more sharply to the fore the growing contradictions in Australian society. It must be said that this book was written before Vietnam had fully impacted itself on the Australian political scene. A future edition may expand on the growth of both the articulate left, and, unfortunately, the right, in this situation.

One may quarrel with many opinions in Profile of Australia, but it is a stimulating and honest attempt to express in perspective the changing face of Australia.

Since a profile is "an outline of a face seen from the side" one may hope that Craig McGregor, with his highly readable style, may soon give us a full face portrait in depth.

MAVIS ROBERTSON.

FREEDOM IN AUSTRALIA
by Campbell & Whitmore.
Sydney University Press, 298 pp., $7.00.

THIS BOOK can be read with profit by lawyers as well as non-lawyers, for it is a critical analysis of a wide range of Commonwealth and State laws affecting the liberty of the individual in Australia.
The width of this range is shown by its contents, which consist of four parts: Personal Freedom, including personal freedom and the criminal law, police powers, treatment of the sick, and freedom of movement; Freedom of Expression, including public meetings, radio and television, theatre and cinema, the press, obscenity, defamation, contempt of court and contempt of parliament, security of the state and freedom of speech, and freedom of religion; Economic Freedom, including freedom to work and freedom of property; The Individual and His Government, including Aborigines, the discretion to prosecute, and protection from power.

On the whole, the authors adopt a liberal attitude to the rights of the individual, and, although they specifically state that their aim has been to present a balanced view and that they do not claim to be champions of civil liberties, they conclude their preface to the book with these challenging words: "Australians have no grounds for complacency on questions of freedom. Some hard-won victories of past centuries have been eroded away by Australian legislation, and even by decisions of the courts. There has been little effective protest. It is our hope that this book may play a part in stimulating protest in the future."

A careful study of the book will certainly increase considerably the number of those who want to assist this protest, for the authors rely not on vague, general criticisms of the law relating to individual freedom in Australia, but on a detailed statement of the relevant laws and court decisions.

In a short review, it is impossible to set out even a small part of the facts and arguments adduced, but a few of the authors' conclusions on the need for law reform gives some indication of their stand.

Vagrancy laws should be thoroughly reviewed and should not be used as an excuse for arresting persons suspected of other offences.

The censorship laws should be repealed and placed on a more sensible basis. Too much uncontrollable power is given to government officials and government and semi-government administration boards and commissions. The unsatisfactory law regulating the relation between these boards and the ordinary citizen should be replaced by a system of law which would enable the citizen to ascertain his rights by a simple non-technical procedure. Appointment of Ombudsmen and extension of legal aid would greatly assist the citizen.

Public servants should be given greater freedom to publicly criticise government policy and administration, for administrative efficiency and integrity in government depend upon free and open discussion of public issues.

The present law, which gives Parliaments and Courts the right to be both accuser and judge in cases of contempt is a relic of the past, and is the very antithesis of freedom of the individual.

The many merits of the book, however, must not blind us to its defects. For example, it seems to adopt a defeatist attitude in the fight for the right of public servants to publicly criticise government policy and administration, when it suggests that the only possible reform is the introduction of the careful use of the American Congressional Committee system for the purpose of questioning officials. The value of this system, however, depends entirely on the ability, outlook and sincerity of the committee members, and its record since the end of the second world war does not inspire much confidence. Too often it became an instrument to stifle freedom.
Apart from some exceptional cases, the right of the public servant to criticise both policy and administration is essential to an efficient democracy, and Australians must not rest content until this right becomes part of the law of the land.

Finally, in spite of its liberal treatment of its theme, the book nowhere analyses the law from the point of view that Australia is a capitalist, class society and that, therefore, the freedom of the individual cannot always be correctly analysed without taking this into consideration.

True, it could hardly be expected that such a question would figure in a book already of such wide compass. However, there is not even the recognition by the authors that there is an alternate structure of society based on public instead of private ownership, and that an examination made in this light would fundamentally alter many of the problems posed and solutions examined.

A LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

Three biographies in the Pelican series "Political Leaders of the Twentieth Century".

"KHUSCHEV", by Mark Frankland, 213 pp., 80c.


"MAO TSE-TUNG", by Stuart Schramm, 352 pp., $1.20.

All these biographies will repay reading for the light they throw on present events.

Kruschev is the least researched and weakest of the three. Nevertheless, it is very readable, and the author's main conclusion is valid enough:

"Kruschev's rule was a transition period from something he clearly wished to abandon to something he could not properly imagine. He understood the need for change, but not the implications of that change" (pp. 208-92).

Stalin was first written in 1948, which adds to its merit.

While denouncing all the crimes, the author completely rebuts those who unthinkingly compare Stalin with Hitler:

"Not in a single field has Hitler made the German nation advance beyond the point it had reached before he took power . . . The Germany Hitler left behind was impoverished and reduced to savagery" (pp. 551).

Under Stalin (1948) "Russia is now the first industrial power in Europe and the second in the world . . . The whole nation has been sent to school . . . Its avidity for knowledge for the sciences, for the arts, has been stimulated to the point where it has become insatiable . . . of Stalinist Russia it is even truer than of any other revolutionary nation that 'twenty years have done the work of twenty generations'" (pp. 553-4).

Mao Tse-tung is a minutely researched and penetrating biography, specially useful at the present time.

Among the major traits of his subject he designates Mao's view that "the subjective creates the objective".

This can be the driving force for mighty deeds of heroism and fantastic achievements in one set of circumstances, while leading to ignominious failure and even farce in another—both to be clearly seen in Mao Tsetung's China.

E.A.