
THE PREDOMINANT form of private ownership in modern society is the public company; public in the sense that any citizen with sufficient means can become a part owner of the enterprise by buying shares traded on the Stock Exchange.

The number of part owners or shareholders in any one company may run into hundreds, or, in the case of the largest, many thousands.

With so many hundreds, or thousands, of part owners, how is singleness of purpose arrived at in the conduct of the company? This is achieved through the elected Board of Directors, who formulate and carry through company policy.

The common aim of all shareholders, big and small, is to obtain the maximum return on their investment, by way of income through dividends, or appreciation through capital growth.

If the Board of Directors continues to realise these aims it is seldom subjected to challenge or change in composition. Hence there is a pronounced tendency for Boards of Directors to become self-perpetuating institutions.

E. L. Wheelwright, in Ownership and Control of Australian Companies, showed that a minority of very large shareholders owned a big majority of the total shares in all companies. Furthermore, these large shareholders tended to exercise a controlling interest in the Boards of companies in which their capital was invested.

Where a large shareholder’s eggs are dispersed in more than one basket it is natural to find the same name appearing on more than one Board—multiple directorship. Where the companies in which this occurs are functionally related, as in the case of a supplier of raw materials or consumer of finished products, the multiple directorship acquires a new quality, that of interlocking directorship.

Not every multiple directorship is an interlocking directorship, nor is every multiple director necessarily a large shareholder. Mr. Raymont Moore, for example, is the holder of possibly the largest number of company directorships in Australia, a position due to his accountancy business, not to any interlocking investment interest. Mr. R. A. Irish is another accountant whose services are frequently sought as a director, particularly by companies faced with financial difficulties.

However, the pattern that clearly emerges from the carefully documented evidence in Hylda Rolfe’s book is that most multiple directorships in large Australian companies are interlocking directorships. Furthermore, this pattern conforms with conclusions drawn from a study of fifty of the top British companies by Michel Harratt-Brown and others, published in Universities and Life Review, London 1958, viz.:

“A network of interlocking directorates and connections ensures harmony between the different members of the capitalist power elite and between the different centres of economic power.”

Hylda Rolfe confined her study to the fifty largest predominantly Australian-owned companies, a sufficiently exhausting task for one research worker.

She found that the 302 directors of these companies between them held
750 directorships—348 of them in the fifty companies examined and 402 in 275 other companies.

The greater number (54) of multiple directorships held in the greater number (five and a half times) 'outside' companies infers a dominating influence of the fifty largest over the smaller companies.

Closer examination reinforces this inference, because 133 of the 302 directors of the top fifty companies held only one Board place each. This left 169 who share between them 617 directorships in 325 'outside' companies.

In delineating the interconnections of these interlocking directorships and in outlining, so far as was possible, the professions, education and social background of directors concerned, the author has provided valuable data from which significant conclusions can be drawn about whose class interests they represent and serve.

The author refrains from drawing any such conclusions, but marxists will find that her fully documented work confirms their views on the role and structure of monopoly capitalism in Australia.

E.W.C.

AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY
OF BIOGRAPHY.
Vol. 1, 1788-1850, A-H.

This is a book which should warm the cockles of Australian nationalism—particularly if one is tolerant towards the idea that the academics of Australia, particularly historians, have accepted a responsibility for the preservation of our culture.

The Editorial Board, the National Committee, the working parties from the various states are mostly historians. Of the 250 writers who contributed the 535 entries in this volume about half are academics, a few from universities in England, Holland or America, the majority from Australian universities.

Entries, some short, some long, depend usually on the significance in Australian history of the man or woman whose life is described. Some of the characters are English governors; some are ex-convicts; there are explorers, scientists, business-men, clergy, farmers, Aborigines. All had some influence on the development of the colony's life in the period to 1850, or were influenced by the colony in some way; so Charles Darwin has a page devoted to him, since the Beagle, with Darwin aboard as naturalist, was anchored at Sydney in 1836 for some weeks and "Australian flora and fauna gave Darwin some very valuable evidence on evolution".

It is a dictionary, and until the appearance of the other volume for this period, the reader is likely to be infuriated by cross-references to people whose surnames do not start with a letter from A to H. One gets good accounts of most of the governors, including the ill-fated Bligh, but naturally the two who probably contributed most, Phillip and Macquarie, must wait for the next time around. One finds oneself regretting that Marsden, Macarthur and Macquarie, all intimately connected in time, did not possess surnames starting with A, B or C, since these three men have remained controversial figures for historians to the present. But the absence of the M's and P's will soon be rectified and one should assess this volume with that thought in mind.

It is not 'Great Man Theory' stuff, though it is history in the form of the lives of individuals. The essence of good biography is the ability of the writer to show his subject in the
setting which helped to make him and which he helped to make. He is like an actor who is never alone on the stage. He is surrounded by others, some of whom have possibly more important roles to play than he.

Thus through the life of Bligh, who received, and deserves, four pages written by A. G. L. Shaw, the reader may learn a fair amount about the economic and social development in the penal settlement up to 1810. Similarly J. M. Ward, in his account of the life of Charles FitzRoy, governor until 1854, shows how the colony grappled with its political problems, the clashes between the conservatives and the more democratic forces (the urban middle and working classes) over the type of responsible government which was to be achieved, and the long-distance arguments between the British colonial hierarchy and the wild colonials.

There is a fascinating glimpse of FitzRoy's disagreement with "that acrimonious divine J. D. Lang, q.v." and a revealing passage about the character of FitzRoy himself: "He stood for no inconvenient principles. He genuinely sympathised with projects of colonial advancement, such as the railways, the university, and the growth of manufacturing. His sense of display and geniality commended him to the multitude. 'The lower classes' he wrote in 1853 'are too well off at present to trouble their heads about politics.'"

Both the entries quoted have helpful bibliographies. In general the bibliography work is sound throughout, but there are some poor patches—several authors merely quote their own published work as a guide to further reading! Some subjects get more space than they deserve, some less. The account of George Bass is not satisfying, omitting as it does any reference to the confirmation by Bass of the discovery of coal in the Illawarra district, not important in 1797 but of significance now.

Overall however, the first volume promises much for the student of Australian history. When the twelve volumes planned have been produced, two for 1788-1850, four for 1851-1890, and six probably, for 1891-1938, they will constitute an invaluable source of reference.

It is to be hoped that all secondary schools and all teachers will include The Australian Dictionary of Biography in their libraries, possibly as a first step towards an Australian section. It is unfortunately true that the history of our own country is but sketchily taught and even more sketchily learned in the schools.

M. W.

[The second volume has now appeared —Ed.]

A CONTINENT IN DANGER by Vincent Serventy, Andre Deutsch (Survival Books), 240 pp., 45s stg.

THIS BOOK is not to warn Australians about the yellow peril or the threat of black power (the daily press does that often enough), but about the less-publicized extermination of Australian wildlife, and the damage (in some places irreparable) to the Australian environment caused by "short-sighted greed". So there is plenty of politics in it, but like the destruction itself, the politics often remain unidentified by many of us.

Continent in Danger is the latest of an urgent series of books by scientifically honest and indignant biologists—such as Rape of the Earth, This Plundered Planet, The Quiet Crisis, and The Great Extermination, which condemn the indiscriminate destruction of man's natural resources under the guise of "development" and "the quick quid".
The author is Vincent Serventy, noted naturalist and wildlife photographer and lecturer, who is now the Editor of *Wildlife in Australia*, a quarterly magazine which every patriotic Australian should read, if only to learn what he and his descendants are losing.

Losing is perhaps too mild a word. Stewart Udall, Secretary of the United States Department of Interior recently stated that what is not saved (in USA) as nature reserves, national parks and wilderness areas in the 1960's, will never be saved. This estimate also applies to Australia, which since the Second World War has witnessed an accelerated destruction of most natural habitats—the Brigalow country in Queensland is an example. Out of some 21,000,000 acres of this type of landscape, no reserve or national park of typical Brigalow has yet been permanently saved from the bulldozer, the match, and the four-footed plough.

Does it shock or interest you (as a citizen of the world) to know that over a hundred species of birds and animals—evolved over millions of years—have, over the last century, suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth?

Does it disappoint you (as an Australian) to learn that already six species of marsupials, about 5% of the total, are now extinct, and that about 40% are on the verge of extinction?

“If there is an animal heaven,” says Serventy, “no doubt the native Australian animals already exterminated—as well as the passenger pigeon, the great auk and the dodo—look down in wonder, and ask: ‘Will humans never learn?’

It is a new twist to the folksong about when will we ever learn to stop misusing human energies and begin to live in peace.

Serventy’s book is a mine of interesting information about Australian wildlife. It is the fruit of a lifetime’s patient study of animals in the bush. As such, it deserves respect. The author is a knowledgeable enthusiast and a self-confessed optimist, even though he doesn’t see round all the corners. Who amongst us does? After detailing the reckless exploitation of our landscapes, and the disappearance of many of our beautiful and scientifically valuable animals, Serventy adds:

“I am an optimist and I feel that the tide in the affairs of men is running in favor of conservation. If we work now, success will be ours. Forces which appear formidable will melt away. We must face the opposition, not with abuse, but with reasoned argument. But with passion, too . . .”

Serventy does not see the conservation of wildlife as preservation from man, but as preservation for man. He goes on to say that “a farmer does himself a disservice when he blames wildlife for pasture deterioration. When he has finally destroyed wildlife, he may find it too late to remove the real cause of the trouble, overstocking and often incorrect cultivation methods, including the use of fire”.

Why is this? This is where Serventy falters: it is all caused by “the ignorance and selfish stupidity of man”. Although he sees all too clearly the ravages of exploitative land use in a gruesome detail which only an experienced naturalist can appreciate, he tends to dodge its sociological implications. He does not realise that the biological crisis which he so tellingly describes (caused by introduced sheep, cattle, goats, rabbits, etc., as well as more direct forms of habitat destruction such as clearing forests, ring-barking and burning) is part of the general political and economic crisis of our time. It’s a small world.
Sometimes he comes close to it: for example, in discussing the hazards of pesticides—first blown open by Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*—he somewhat cynically comments:

“When listening to experts it is always essential to demand the background of the person concerned. If they are connected with a chemical firm the opinions can safely be ignored. If employed by a Government Department, then most statements can be taken with a grain of salt, since Governments often blandly quote the head of a department as saying one thing while his whole staff may have the opposite opinion. Even University Departments, once the stronghold of honest and fearless opinions, have become timorous, now that so much of their money comes from governments, business or farming groups. There are, however, notable exceptions in Australia . . .”

Vincent Serventy is in no doubt about the neglect of ecological research—that is, research aimed at understanding our natural environment, so that when we interfere with it, we know what we’re doing, and it won’t “go bad” on us. He points out that the reduction of the rabbit population by myxomatosis since 1950 added millions of pounds to Australian woolgrowers’ cheques. Since the early 1920’s, research had aimed to introduce myxo as a biological control of the rabbit . . . “The money saved by this team of scientists is far more than all the money spent on scientific research since Australia was founded.”

Where do we go from here? Unlike many naturalists who know intimately their birds and trees, and who derive pleasure from bewailing their fate, Serventy does not hesitate to propose, in the last and tenth chapter, what he calls “A Plan for Action”. For example, we need many more National Parks. At present Australia has a grand total of some 5,000 square miles of National Parkland, which is one-sixth of one per cent of the total area of Australia. “An acceptable figure would be 5%, or 150,000 square miles.” We need proper public zoos (“It is time these were either closed or put under scientific management. Those that are intended merely as animal circuses should at least be moved . . .”); Federal control; proper management of parks; professional training of conservationists; more education; more camps . . .

This is a useful, pleasing and stimulating book, and one wishes for more of the author’s intimate photographs of animals which most of us city dwellers know only by name. (Ever seen a numbat?—no, not a wombat!)

It is also a sobering book. Will we learn to save in time? Serventy is an optimist, although he realizes that there is “no commercial value” in “a koala, an unpolluted river, a dinosaur footprint, a beach, a cave painting, an historic building, a stretch of wild coastline or forest wilderness.”

“When will we ever learn?” The protection of our natural resources—without which continued production at the highest level will be impossible—has now become a social responsibility, and a challenge to the understanding and activity for conservation of all sections of Australians.


*JOHN DONNE*, one of the great English poets of the seventeenth century, moved by his consciousness of the essential unity of the human race, once proclaimed that “no man is an island”. Yet today there are vast numbers of individuals who feel they are islands in a chaotic universe, who are
afflicted with a terrifying sense of spiritual isolation and loneliness. Though the majority of such people have neither the power nor the opportunity to express their sense of alienation, there are writers, artists and philosophers who can and do speak for them.

Among the ideas which consciousness of alienation has given rise to is the philosophy of existentialism, and it is the nature and history of this body of doctrine and its relationship with American literature which the American marxist, Sidney Finkelstein, examines in his book on the subject.

Like other ideas, existentialism has roots in the past, though it is contemporary social pressures which have been responsible for the wide and rapid spread of its teachings. Anyone who has heard of the French writers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, will have heard of existentialism, and in fact the increasing popularity of the existentialist philosophy throughout the western world during the last two decades largely stems from the initial publicity conferred by these two authors.

Although existentialist ideas are defended by their protagonists with great passion and sincerity, they do not form a clear cut system of thought, logical and consistent within itself, and for this reason some people doubt whether existentialism should be called a philosophy. However, despite its lack of systematisation, there can be no doubt that it presents a very particular and definite approach to life.

Finkelstein begins his historical analysis of existentialism by pointing out that the European thinkers of the eighteenth century, the 'Age of Enlightenment', believed that progress was a law of history. They saw the world as capable of rational explanation. But during the following century, industrial development intensified the contradictions of capitalist society to the point where some thinkers began to claim that there could be no such thing as progress for mankind, that life (as existentialists say today) was 'absurd'. A conclusion was that each individual must live for himself alone, and withdraw himself, in mind at least, from the problems of society and his fellow-men.

In their search for a philosophical ancestor, the existentialists have fixed on the Danish thinker and writer, Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and as Finkelstein demonstrates in his careful dissection of Kierkegaard's thought, their choice was logical. Kierkegaard totally rejected the concept of progress and proclaimed that 'subjectivity is truth'.

Finkelstein points out that the writings of Marx and Engels were beginning to appear at the same time as Kierkegaard's. While there was some truth in the latter's view of society, it was limited by its superficiality, whereas by making a thorough analysis of the way in which capitalist society functions, Marx and Engels were able to prove that the existing state of affairs was only temporary, and that in due course its contradictions would be resolved by a new and higher form of social organisation in which man would cease to be alienated and dehumanised.

Among the philosophers who have influenced existentialists is Nietzsche. Finkelstein's explanation of the contradictions in the latter's thought is most illuminating. Among other things he shows how some parts of Nietzsche's philosophy provided a basis for the ideas of German fascism.

One peculiarity of existentialism, which presumably derives from its lack of a systematic body of doctrine, is that its adherents may be either religious or atheist, as well as being either progressive or reactionary in politics. Sartre, for instance, is to
quite an extent in agreement with marxism, whereas Camus remained hostile to it until the time of his death. One of the German existentialists, Heidegger, is essentially a supporter of fascism, whereas another, Jasper, is much less reactionary in the political sense.

The title of the book is slightly misleading insofar as it deals with alienation in other literatures besides American. Apart from the French writers mentioned above, the significance of the work of Dostoievsky, Kafka and others in relation to the growth of alienation in literature is examined in some detail. Dostoievsky, it is pointed out, presents his alienated characters from an essentially humanist point of view, whereas Kafka projects his own alienation into his writing.

As the author puts it (p. 159), 'In such writers as Balzac, Tolstoi, Dreiser and O'Neill, who have depicted the process of alienation in bourgeois society, there is no accompanying alienation on the part of the writers themselves. As they depict it, alienation is a form of human suffering or self-destruction, and they thereby reveal the alienated themselves as understandably human beings through whom the reader learns something about himself . . .

"With the crisis in the 20th century, however, we enter a new stage where side by side with the humanised portrayal of alienated lives, a literature appears which expresses the writer's own alienation. These conflicting currents will often appear side by side in the same artist. Behind this expression of alienation lies a deepening subjectivism. The artist's absorption in his internal or subjective life begins to overwhelm his view of others, who take on a hostile, monstrous or fearsome appearance. The "humanisation" dwindles to the artist's own longings, fears and frustrations, often poignantly revealed, while his outer-world outlook reveals only what he is estranged from, finding in it no ties to or common ground with his own being."

Proceeding from this standpoint, the author makes an extremely interesting and capably argued analysis of various contemporary American writers. William Faulkner is shown to be a writer whose approach to literature was based on an idealised view of the former slave society of the southern States, and whose style is a compound of humanisation and alienation. Dos Passos' famous novel, U.S.A., comes close to being one of the great American social novels in conception and skill but fails because of its lack of humanism. Some writers, like Henry Miller for example, while not acknowledged existentialists, are very close to the existentialist position in their virtual rejection of the possibility of a rational explanation of reality. Others, like Norman Mailer and James Baldwin, seem to have been strongly influenced by existentialism, somewhat to the detriment of their literary work. Finkelstein is in no sense dogmatic in his treatment of the work of these writers, being careful to point out the positive features which exist even in the subjective naturalism of writers like Henry Miller, and to show that no writer is completely static in his approach to life or literature.

Altogether, Finkelstein's book demonstrates the power of marxism as a tool of thought, its ability to penetrate beneath the surface of things and discover the underlying essence of reality. No one who is interested in either philosophy or literature could fail to be completely absorbed by it, and it is to be hoped that some readers will be encouraged to inquire to what extent, if any, existentialism and alienation have influenced literature in Australia.
THE BANJO OF THE BUSH,

CLEMENT SEMMLER begins his foreword to The Banjo of the Bush by paraphrasing H. P. Heseltine, who wrote on the occasion of the centenary of A. B. Paterson's birth, that we have retained from his literary career a number of well loved poems, but not an image of the man who wrote them.

In the course of the 250 pages which follow Semmler transposes Heseltine's statement into the past tense: we now have a vivid image of Banjo, the man; and we have what Semmler lays claim to in the subtitle of the book, a record of "the work, life and times of A. B. Paterson".

It is all there. The book begins with two chapters about Paterson as both collector and author of bush ballads and his emergence as a leading exponent of the literary ballad of the nineties. Semmler then takes us back to the birth of Andrew Barton Paterson near Orange in 1864, to the pioneering days, his bush boyhood amongst the struggling cockies, and his growing up in Sydney with his grandmother at Gladesville. And so on.

With superb constructive skill, Clement Semmler takes us through Banjo's life, work and times, analysing Paterson's work in the social background of the nineties, following Paterson to the Boer war and sharply probing his attitude to the death of Breaker Morant. Paterson and his literary work continue to hold the centre of the stage but the background of London in the twenties and Sydney during the depression years is clearly etched in. Paterson's career as lawyer, journalist, war correspondent (1914-18) and editor are traced; his skill as horseman, his love of horses and horse racing are highlighted.

Banjo Paterson was a punter from way back. He rarely missed a race meeting. He wrote ballads, sketches, articles, a novel The Shearer's Colt, and an unpublished book which can only be described as an encyclopaedia of the gee-gees, titled Race Horses and Racing in Australia, all arising from his life long pursuit of 'the sport of kings'. Modern punters would be well advised to heed the message contained in Paterson's laconic comment: "If you back favorites you'll have no laces in your boots, but if you back outsiders you'll have no boots."

Paterson emerges as a most attractive personality: modest, with a dry laconic sense of humor, and deep strength of character. He spent most of his life in big cities but preferred the country and his verse is leavened with an obviously sincere desire to return to the good old droving days.

We see Paterson the young rebel reading Henry George, Mill and Adam Smith, writing a pamphlet vehemently arguing the necessity for land reform, and lashing out at the rich and powerful, complaining that the finest houses in Sydney belonged to "a man who inherited a huge fortune made solely out of the rise and rents of real estate . . . spends most of his time in England. He never did a day's work in his life, and yet can have every luxury while hundreds of his fellow countrymen have to toil and pinch and contrive to get a living." And there is Paterson the militant poet prophesying that the "tenants soon will carry arms on Kiley's run."

Then we see Paterson the conservative in his declining years, very much at home amongst the snobs in the fashionable clubs and badgering his publisher to get one of his books out "while the Prince is here (so) he and his entourage might take it home with them . . ." and deleting a reference to a gambling prince in the
book for fear of offending or even being sued by royalty. Clement Semmler comments: "How different the Paterson hanging on to the idea of royal patronage, from the Paterson who applauded Archibald's almost republican enthusiasms." However, Semmler makes it clear that Eric Butler's ambiguous reference to Paterson as an advisor of the New Guard in the thirties is absolutely without foundation.

Indeed, Paterson showed in his tribute to J. F. Archibald, that the old rebellious fire was not entirely put out. He described Archibald as "the first Australian to call the English bluff" at a time when "we were insulted by imported globe trotting snobs, exploited by imported actors and singers, mostly worn out and incompetent" and we hear the echo of his words coming up through the years to our present day Australia.

Inevitably Clement Semmler devotes a long chapter to the origins of Waltzing Matilda: "it is at once bush song, community-singing song, marching song, school song and folk song, and has frequently been described as Australia's unofficial national anthem." He makes out a detailed and logical case in favor of Paterson's authorship, refuting Oscar Mendelsohn's theory that Paterson did not write Waltzing Matilda but rather heard it as an old bush ballad in his boyhood and at the age of twenty-six recalled it and set the idea to the tune, played by Christina MacPherson on the autoharp at Winton. I, for one, was impressed by Mendelsohn's compelling point that Paterson never ever published Waltzing Matilda under his own name.

Banjo Paterson is undoubtedly the most read, quoted and loved poet who ever picked up a pen in this country; and threaded through this book is Semmler, the profound literary scholar, turning the various facets of Paterson's peculiar genius to the light, thus showing the source of the magic.

The Banjo of the Bush is a major work of biography but it is also a supremely readable book which can be enjoyed by any literate Australian who has not yet surrendered to the cult of the Yankee pop song or tired to the un-Australian ivory tower where The Banjo is dismissed as a writer of crude doggerel.

JOSEPH COLLINS.

N. M. AMOSOFF, RUSSIAN SURGEON, Translated by George St. George, Neville Spearman, $4.25.

THIS is no cosy 'Diary of a Doctor who Tells'. Rather, it is concerned with the harsh realities which confront the modern surgeon; with the way in which the growing sophistication of operating techniques means also a growing burden on the surgeon's shoulders. In this sense Amosoff is concerned with one of the central dilemmas of our time: for in a very real way technological advances have outstripped man's psychological make-up, his ability to cope fully with their significance and demands. And with the surgeon the problem is shown to be especially acute. His position makes it impossible for him to view the patient just as an inert object, there to have the wonders of modern medicine performed upon it. And so it is continually the question of human involvement, and human responsibility with which Amosoff deals.

Two of his patients, both young girls, die on the operating table; the second, in fact, because of a mistake on his part. And so the whole situation is paradoxical and tormenting. A couple of years ago, before the development of the heart-lung machine, neither of the girls would have
been operated on. But now that scientific and technological advances have made the machine possible, the operations can take place. But both girls die. “I represent science,” writes Amosoff. “I feel terrible.”

And it’s out of this paradox that we see the Russian surgeon emerge. On the one hand he is the man of science, offering his patients the chance of a miraculous recovery. But on the other hand, he is the man who finds every operation a harrowing experience, as the patient’s life throbs at his finger-tips, and as all too often the precision and efficiency of the machine cannot be matched by the surgeon.

The whole situation is well dramatised in the section dealing with the second girl, Maya, who dies after a five hour operation: the work is progressing well; the hole in her heart, which threatens to kill her naturally within a few years, has been found; and though her condition is complicated by an abscessed lung, Amosoff works steadily, hopeful of a large measure of success.

Suddenly there is a geyser of blood which hits me straight in the face. Instantly the hole is found by touch and plugged by my finger.

“Clean my glasses!”

For a second I’m blind. But no matter. My finger knows what to do.

“Keep mopping up the blood in the wound!”

The aneurism wall has burst. In one place I have cut too deep...

The final section of the book deals with an at least temporarily successful operation of a young scientist; and again it is the contrast between the efficiency and objectivity of science on the one side, and the all too human element on the other, on which Amosoff concentrates.

Sasha, the young man, is engaged upon scientific research into the structure of the brain, and especially the mind. He is trying to show that the whole thing works like a supercomputer, except for the fact that, unlike a computer, the mind forgets or makes mistakes. If only this can be overcome, then men will truly be able to live ordered and rational lives. Operations too, Amosoff points out, would be invariably successful; but in the meantime this operation, and the immediate post-operative complications, drain all his physical and mental energies for over twelve hours.

In all, Russian Surgeon is an absorbing and important book. And the fact that it has already sold over one million copies in the USSR indicates that it is of a much more general interest than the title perhaps indicates. And as one reads it, one wants continually to relate it to surgical practice and behaviour in western countries, to see in what way medicine in the Soviet Union reflects the different economic ethos. And Amosoff himself is aware of this issue as well, answering it not only indirectly by the extent of his humanity and involvement, but also by his description of an operation he saw in the USA:

“It was a very difficult operation with artificial blood circulation, very complicated, very troublesome. The patient was still in the room barely alive. And in the corner the surgeons and anaesthetists had gathered for a conference, speaking in low voices and writing something on a piece of paper. I asked the interpreter, a very nice fellow, what they were doing. The microphone was still connected, and he listened through his receiver. ‘They are dividing the fee for the operation’.”

Leon Cantrell