ART AND REVOLUTION: 
Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of the Artist in the USSR, 
by John Berger. 
Penguin, 191pp., $2.10, illustrated.

EVEN in his surname there is an irony of particular aptness for such a man as Ernst Neizvestny: its literal meaning is "unknown".

Today, this sculptor who might in all modesty claim a front-line place in the ranks of Soviet art is virtually "unknown" in his own country. One of the few artists to have stood up defiantly to a Soviet Premier to his face and got away with it, he has been reduced almost to anonymity through his suspension from the Artists' Union. Membership of that Union is essential for any professional artist in the USSR, perhaps more so for a sculptor than a painter. Through the Union he obtains a studio, official commissions and, most importantly, materials. A painter can buy most of his requirements in a shop, but if a sculptor cannot get his stone or bronze through official channels, then he will have to obtain it illicitly — even on the black market — as Neizvestny has been forced to do. In addition, the Union is the only avenue through which exhibitions can be arranged. Without membership of the Union, then, an artist is virtually unable to communicate with a mass public.

Lacking the facilities and privileges endowed upon members of the Artists' Union, Neizvestny uses as a studio a tiny disused shop in a back street off Marx Avenue in the centre of Moscow. I visited him there with a Russian friend when I was in Moscow some years ago, shortly after his dispute with the Artists' Union. The place was cluttered with carvings, plaster casts and models; at the back was a small furnace in which he made his bronze castings, the bigger ones in many parts.

There is a second and even more poignant irony about Neizvestny's name. In 1942, at the age of 16, he volunteered for the army and became lieutenant of a commando platoon which was dropped behind German lines. He was gravely wounded by a bullet which exploded in his back and was left on the battlefield for dead. Twenty years later he was awarded the order of the Red Star for his part in the battle. As John Berger says, in this first account and analysis of Neizvestny and his work for the English-speaking public, "In the intervening years no one had made the connexion between Lieutenant Neizvestny — missing patriot, presumed dead — and a notorious, officially condemned, decadent and 'unpatriotic' sculptor of the same name," Andrei Vosnesensky, a close friend of Neizvestny, seized upon the significance of the incident in his poem The Unknown Soldier a couple of years ago.

Many stories embellish the circumstances of Neizvestny's confrontation with Khrushchev over the famous "abstract" art exhibition at the end of 1962. Berger gives a full and authentic account of this extraordinary episode, which could have happened only in the Soviet Union. A group of young experimental artists had arranged an exhibition of their work, containing by Western standards nothing particularly daring, under the auspices of the Moscow City Soviet. After a few days the exhibition was closed by the Artists' Union and moved to a small annex in the huge Manege building near Red Square, where a vast and comprehensive retrospective display of the work of Moscow artists over the previous 30 years was on show.
Khrushchev and other government and party leaders came to "inspect" the "abstract" exhibition at the invitation of conservatives in the Artists' Union, who led the Soviet leader and his entourage around the hall, pointing out what they considered to be the most offensive items. The artists were lined up beside their works and Khrushchev abused them in the most insulting personal terms, most of them cringing before the lash of his tongue. When he got to Neizvestny, who was branded as the ringleader of the project, the sculptor stood his ground, telling the burly statesman: "You may be Premier and Chairman but not here in front of my works. Here I am Premier and we shall discuss as equals". A minister with Khrushchev threatened to send Neizvestny "to the uranium mines" and two security men seized his arms. The sculptor then announced: "You are talking to a man who is perfectly capable of killing himself." As Berger says, "the formality of the statement made it entirely convincing": Neizvestny was released and he and the Soviet Premier engaged in a reasonably dispassionate and rational discussion.

Why has Soviet art officialdom adopted such a hostile attitude to Neizvestny? According to Berger, it is not because he counterposes "private" and "public" art. In fact, he does not: he believes profoundly in sculpture as "monumental" art, being intended for wide, open spaces and constant public perusal. Rather, says Berger, they see a threat to themselves in both the nature of his work and the way in which he goes about it. It is his general refusal (there are exceptions) to adopt a conventionally declamatory and rhetorical style and his pursuit of his own individual themes — as well as his indifference to the bureaucratic system of the official art world — which irritate the powers-that-be.

Berger traces the roots of this official attitude through the development of Russian and Soviet art, culminating in the emergence in the late 20's and early 30's of an artistic orthodoxy which destroyed completely the revolutionary dynamism and experimentalism which put early Soviet art in the forefront of world art. The establishment of the Soviet Academy of Fine Arts — an elite body of some 30 members — and later of the Artists' Union itself in the early 30's enshrined this orthodoxy in the mystique of "Socialist Realism" — which Berger regards as little more than an extension of the traditional Russian naturalism of the 19th Century.

In effect, what Berger is challenging is the whole system of patronage of the arts and literature in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. This system has indeed brought the arts down from their ivory tower, has made culture the property of the people and has created a vast new literate and, in varying degrees, educated public brought up to regard art and the artist with hitherto unknown respect and even veneration.

The material security which socialism has provided for practitioners in the arts has not yet solved the question of artistic freedom; in many respects it has obscured and complicated it. And until socialism can guarantee the writer or artist not only the freedom to write or paint what he likes but also the opportunity to publish or display his product, the tensions and conflicts which have plagued the arts under socialism for the last 30 years will remain and we can only unhappily expect more examples of the tragic Pasternak, Kuznetsov and Neizvestny kind.

The most interesting and certainly the most controversial sections of Berger's book are those in which he assesses Neizvestny's work and its significance. By contemporary western standards, he writes, and even by those of Soviet sculpture in the 1920's, there
is nothing innovatory or way-out in Neizvestny's style (this in itself makes the hostility of the Soviet art establishment to him even more incomprehensible). Rodin is obviously one of his major influences, and the nearest western parallel Berger can draw is with Henry Moore. In fact, he considers that, historically, Neizvestny's style could be placed in the period of 1915-25. He thinks, too, that there is a considerable unevenness in the sculptor's work and that often it is unsuccessful and unsatisfactory. But Neizvestny's peculiar significance he sees as lying in his attitude to death. Berger contends that his hair's-breadth escape from its clutches made Neizvestny see death as not an end but a "starting-point" — in other words, that life is to be measured not by its proximity to death, but its distance from it. In the bulk of his work, exemplified by the torments and conflicts wracking the bodies of his figures, Neizvestny is basically concerned with the struggle to stay alive, to survive: his theme "is the theme of endurance", says Berger, and again: "Today the hero is the man who resists being killed".

Berger concludes from this that Neizvestny's sculpture represents "a phase in the struggle against imperialism". Though he covers himself by allowing that Neizvestny's art also "reflects both his own personal experience and a general situation in the U.S.S.R.", and does not attempt to maintain that Neizvestny himself is consciously aware of the relationship of his art to the struggle of the third world, nevertheless the statement is too sweeping. Rather it could be said that what Neizvestny has succeeded in portraying are the dilemmas, conflicts and suffering of people everywhere, whether caused by the pressures of frenetic capitalism, the naked plunderings of imperialism, or the bureaucratic aberrations of the contemporary socialist states. It is this universal agony it seems, and the endurance and determination necessary to overcome it, that Ernst Neizvestny, unknown and unsung, records and celebrates.

ROGER MILISS

NEO-CAPITALISM IN AUSTRALIA, by John Playford. Area Publications, 55 pp., 85c.

THIS EXCELLENT empirical survey reads as if it were written with two wellknown injunctions of Lenin in mind: "politics is the concentrated expression of economics . . . politics cannot but have precedence over economics" ("Once again on the Trade Unions," S.W. New York Vol. 9, p. 54), and "few questions have been so confused deliberately and undeliberately, by representatives of bourgeois science, philosophy, jurisprudence, political economy and journalism as the question of the State" (A Lecture on the State). Indeed after reading Playford one is tempted to conclude that members of Australia's power elite work on the principle enunciated by Mao Tse-tung that "political work is the lifeblood of economic work, this is particularly true at a time when the social and economic system is undergoing fundamental change." (Quotations p. 35).

What are Playford's own views on these questions? In the first place, he is convinced that Australian capitalism has definitely entered a new phase: a corporate system interlocked with the state machine which if unchecked will see the creation of a consensus which includes only the powerful and the ruthless. True, the new phase — "neo-capitalism" — is relatively underdeveloped by comparison with France, but it has a strong ideological backing — from both Gorton and Whitlam, with their obsession with "modernisation" and centralisation. Moreover, neo-capitalism is flourishing in the fertile seedbeds of a non-revolutionary tradi-
tion, early embourgeoisification of the majority of the working class, and the complexity of modern public administration and economic planning.

In the second place, Playford is particularly scornful of the "social-democratic" theory of its State. As he says, "the achilles heel of the social democratic theory of the state is that it separates politics from economics. Labor leaders present a false picture of two contending social forces — economic power concentrated in the hands of a small group of people not responsible to public control, and democratic political power to be found in Parliament, Cabinet and the Public Service." Playford does two things to this theory. He demonstrates that when Whitlam talks about the Labor Party "getting into power" he is really talking only about "getting into office." Power lies not with parliament, but with the various sectors of the economic power elite which run neo-capitalism. Second, he shows that economic power dominates political power. Here, however, he does not relapse into a crude view of the state as simply the "Executive committee of the ruling class." Rather, as Marx and Engels both pointed out, there are periods in which the State bureaucracy exercises a fair degree of autonomous power, and that in certain situations the public service can obtain support from trade unions to implement policies which may meet the disapproval of corporate capital. One quotation from Karl Marx would have been very useful to guide Playford's analysis at this point:

"Bureaucracy is a circle no-one can leave. Its hierarchy is a hierarchy of information. The top entrusts the lower circles with an insight into details, while the lower circles entrust the top with an insight into what is universal, and thus they mutually deceive each other . . . the universal spirit of bureaucracy is the secret, the mystery sustained within bureaucracy itself by hierarchy and maintained on the outside as a closed corporation." (K. Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State" (1848) in L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy, and Society, p. 185).

What Playford's work shows is that a theory of the state today, while in its essence complying with Lenin's view that politics is the concentrated expression of economics, needs to cover situations of fluidity in relations between the corporate bureaucracy and the state machine. This involves a judicious mixture of the best insights of Marx, Lenin, C. Wright Mills (on the Power Elite) and J. K. Galbraith (with reservations, on the New Industrial State). What this means in practice is that despite Playford's impressive empirical contribution as set out in this monograph we still lack a sophisticated study of Australian bureaucracy in sociological terms. Whoever embarks on this project will have the benefit of Playford's monograph as well as Caiden's Commonwealth Bureaucracy. The missing link, so far as the internal economic system is concerned, is the analysis of the detailed account of the working of individual organs of the state bureaucracy in their relationships with corporate and trade union bureaucrats, as well as the many quasi — legal "islands" such as tariff board, various boards and commissions, etc.

This is not to deny that Playford has got a fair way along the road to a full analysis. In parts 4 to 7, he sketches the growth of "co-ordinating" and "advisory" committees with membership drawn from the main echelons of monopoly-capital, encouraged by Commonwealth aggrandisement and pre-emption.

This is a piece of research on which the author is to be warmly congratulated. But the volume as a whole still stops short of being a full Marxist or neo-Marxist analysis of "neo-capitalism" in
its analytical aspect. What importance for example, are we to attach to the notion of a "rising surplus" in the corporate sector? How is the level of surplus determined and how is it distributed among industries? Since Playford does not like Galbraith's notion of a leading role of the "technostructure", with what would he replace it under Australian conditions?

Playford has been criticised by Ted Wheelwright (Outlook, October 1969) for giving insufficient attention to the penetration of the Australian economy by foreign capital and the consequent exertion of pressure on government from foreign capitalists. Certainly such pressures exist, as Jack Kelly's Struggle for the North demonstrates in the case of the Vestey meat empire. It is also true that in the future, a great deal of state action will be directed towards guaranteeing monopoly surplus profits for foreign corporations. However, considering that Playford has been concerned mainly with bringing the story of neo-capitalism up to the present time, this is not an important criticism, since the new system is as yet underdeveloped. Australia still has many aspects of the traditional system of vested interest group organisations operating on a number of central economic command posts and on ad hoc agencies of regulations. These are still the hub of the system. True, the development mentioned by Wheelwright is now growing up, side by side with this system. But the older system still persists and Playford was right, as a political scientist, to concentrate on it.

Playford has returned to the high tradition of Smith, Ricardo and Marx in joining economic and political concerns into political economy. Students of economics who are tired of fashionable economic toys ("multipliers," accelerators etc.) will learn more about the Australian economy from this monograph than from more fashionable and esoteric studies in quantitative methods.

In the coming months there is likely to be considerable discussion in this journal and elsewhere of a new program of the Communist Party. One section of this analysis considers modern capitalism and another discusses the state and political power. From this angle, Playford's Neo-Capitalism in Australia is absolutely essential background reading — and not only on the "empirical" front.

Robert Kirk


In the general view, Karl Marx is the founder of the present social systems of the communist world. Most of those calling themselves "Marxists" know only the vulgarisations of marxism constituting the official communist ideology of "Marxism-Leninism" or Dialectical Materialism. If Marx is read, it is often against this background.

The writings of the "young" Marx, which have only recently become widely known, show Marx as the true heir to Hegelian thought. Marx's concern here is with a philosophy whose realisation demands its abolition, with a class of alienated men whose own emancipation means the emancipation of all. The dogmatic marxist ideologists claim that Marx was not then yet a marxist, and that it was only with the Communist Manifesto that Marx attained maturity. In this way the "young" Marx can be neatly tacked on to the "mature" Marx some of whose writings, together with annotated selections from Engels and Lenin, form Marxism-Leninism.
In the book under review, Dr. Shlomo Avineri, a well-known Hegel and Marx scholar, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, conclusively shows to be false the bifurcation of Marx into a young, humanist liberal and a revolutionary devoted solely to the study of political economy. Avineri demonstrates that Marx's change in emphasis from philosophy to critique of political economy indicated the fulfilment of a plan sketched out in his early writings. In 1843, Marx wrote his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* in which the distinctive patterns of his later work were evident. (Avineri provides the first major discussion of this *Critique* to be published in English.) According to Avineri, Marx, in this work, made much use of Feuerbach's "transformative method" which substituted "man" for "God", immanence for Hegel's transcendence, thereby turning Hegel on his head.

However Avineri overrates the importance of Feuerbach in the development of Marx's views since Marx had used "Feuerbach's transformative method" two years before he became acquainted with Feuerbach's work. In Marx's *Letter to his Father* (1837) Marx wrote — and this passage is actually quoted by Avineri — "If the Gods have dwelt till now above the earth, they have now become its centre." (p. 8)

The aim of the *Critique* is, according to Avineri, "to prove that Hegel's inverted point of departure made it impossible to reduce theory to practice" (p.14) Marx finds that "the need to look into the contradictions of social life is a direct outcome of the inner contradictions of Hegelian philosophy as they come to light through transformative criticism." (p.16).

The primary criticism of contemporary society for Marx is that man's relations are reified — a man is first a "capitalist", "labourer", "scientist", etc., who incidentally is also a human being. Marx writes, "Man is not a subject (in modern society), but is being identified with his predicate class." Avineri adds, "Marx has thus arrived at the discussion of social class purely through a Feuerbachian critique of philosophy." (p.27)

Where Hegel rationalises the modern state through the agency of a "universal class" of bureaucrats, as embodying the interests of everyone, Marx finds in the bureaucracy a licence for particular interests. The section of contemporary society which does embody man's universal interests is the "class of concrete labor" — the proletariat. For Marx, says Avineri, "the proletariat was never a particular class but the repository of the Hegelian universal class". (p.62) In his later writings this view remains. For Marx, "What was at the outset a philosophical hypothesis is verified by experience and observation. The universalistic nature of the proletariat is a corollary of the conditions of production in a capitalist society which must strive for universality on a geographical level as well." (p. 61).

Labor, in Marx's view, is man's specific attribute. Future society will not abolish labor, but alienated labor, which is the subsumption of man under the conditions of work. Avineri points out that "even if the division of labor will after all be necessary, one man can find joy and satisfaction in another's occupation, provided the social structure is oriented to such possibilities." (p.232) Man is a social animal. The relationship of lovers in which the satisfaction of the one is dependent on that of the other, may represent in microcosm the eroticisation which will be man in communism.
Avineri's discussion on Marx's attitudes to revolution is most instructive. Marx opposes terror, which is, to quote Avineri, "less a means towards the realisation of a revolutionary aim than a mark of failure." (p.188) The communist revolution will abolish civil society by realising that universality which civil society itself cannot realise. Jacobinism, however, only negates civil society since it does not totalise its achievements. Marx viewed the substitution of one elite no matter whether it called itself "socialist" or not, for another, as no advance towards communism since man and society are still juxtaposed to one another.

Marx opposed the Paris Commune which he considered "in no way socialist, nor could it be," although he called it an epoch-making breakthrough in organisation. Unlike Engels, Marx never called it a "dictatorship of the proletariat." Avineri's description of the stand Marx, as a leader of the International, took on practical issues shows Marx to be a far more cautious revolutionary than his present "disciples" might believe. In fact the relation between marxian theory and its practical implications is seen by Avineri to point to a basic weakness. The theory which called for a proletarian movement could not guide it without vulgarisation of the theory. The political movements "had to emancipate themselves from many of the most outstanding and brilliant of Marx's intellectual achievements and replace them by simplified vulgarisations and a wholly uncritical reverence towards the father of the movement." (p.251) But Avineri is right here only if Marx is wrong about man. Authoritarian political structures cannot bring socialism, but are these the only possible structures for revolutionaries whose associations with one another should represent those of the state of affairs for which they strive?

Despite its price this book should be read by all considering themselves "marxists." Avineri looks afresh at what Marx actually wrote, without confusing his work with that of his disciples such as Engels. Avineri through a fascinating and thorough examination of Marx's work (including the Grundrisse as yet untranslated into English), has found in it an essential unity.

DOUGLAS KIRSNER.

FROM ODESSA TO ODESSA, by Judah Waten. Cheshire, 198 pp., $4.75.

JUDAH WATEN was born in Odessa, in what was then Imperial Russia, in 1911. When he was a fortnight old his parents migrated to Palestine and then, three years later, to Australia. The family settled in Perth and Judah Waten has been an Australian ever since. For some time in the 1930's he lived in London and in 1958 he visited the land of his birth for the first time, as a member of an Australian writers' delegation. Professor Manning Clark, one of the other members of that delegation published his impressions some years ago in a book called Meeting Soviet Man, and now Mr. Waten, who has since 1958 revisited the USSR several times, has published a sort of composite account of his Russian experiences.

From Odessa to Odessa describes the Waten's journey to the USSR, the long train journey from Berlin through country-side that still shows the scars of the German advance and retreat in the last war, their experiences in Moscow: the meetings with Yevtushenko and Ehrenburg, the visits to the theatre and the lunches at the Writers' Union. The rest of their trip to Odessa is recounted via Leningrad and Kiev, and again they meet and talk with writers and prominent Jewish intellectuals. Obviously the visiting Australian writ-
er was something of a celebrity in the USSR, and this sentence, describing the Watens' arrival in Kiev, is a good indication of the sort of people they met: "Quite a delegation was waiting for us, including Mr. Kazimirov from the foreign department of the Ukrainian Writer's Union and Yechiel Falikman the Yiddish novelist." A few pages later a conversation between Waten, a Ukrainian journalist and Kazimirov is recounted:

"The poet-journalist said rather angrily: 'Yevtushenko's Babi Yar is a memorial, a finer more living memorial than a monument. Everybody can see it, in all lands. Where in the West has a famous poet mourned the loss of five million Jews? If I am not wrong the much celebrated English poet T. S. Eliot wrote an anti-semitic poem before the war. Didn't he write:
The rats are underneath the piles
The jew is underneath the lot.

Kazimirov said:
'There is a new book written about Babi Yar by Anatoly Kuznetsov.'
'I had not heard of Kuznetsov. He was very talented the poet-journalist said. We must look out for his book.'

In view of what has happened to Kuznetsov presumably since this book went to press, this is a quite remarkable passage. The defection to the West, the widely publicised and bitter denunciation of conditions under which Soviet writers must work, these events are not foreseen by such a passage; nor, in fact, by the book as a whole.

There is a discussion of a young poet, Joseph Brodsky, "who had first been sentenced to five years forced labor and exile and later released after serving less than eighteenth months", and Mr. Waten speaks strongly of the sort of anti-Communist effect such actions produce in the West, even among leftist elements. Unfortunately we are not told why Brodsky was sent to prison or to what extent the charges against him can still be regarded as viable; simply that "it isn't good policy to jail promising poets who happen to be unorthodox."

There is no mention of Sinyavsky and Daniel, the two most widely publicised jailed writers, at all. Perhaps their case wasn't "good policy" either, but they are still in prison.

As Mr. Waten says at the end of his book: "I did not think that the Soviet Union had solved the problem of the relationship that should exist between a Socialist society and its creative artists."

LEON CANTRELL


SEVERAL YEARS AGO a young American radical scholar Gabriel Kolko briefly held a lectureship in economic history at the University of Melbourne. Rather strange developments were then taking place in the department and he soon resigned to return to the United States where he has since emerged as one of the New Left's most brilliant historians. His Wealth and Power in America, (1962) effectively challenged and demolished the "income revolution" myth celebrated by such well-known bourgeois economists as J. K. Galbraith and Simon Kuznets.

Unfortunately, it was in a few places marred by the pathological anti-Communism of the American social-democratic group around Dissent with which he was associated at the time. The extensive bibliography did not refer to the work of any Marxist or Left social scientists who had previously covered the same ground, e.g. Victor Perlo's The Income 'Revolution' (1954) and C. Wright Mills' The Power Elite (1956).
His *The Triumph of Conservatism* (1963) demonstrated that big business was one of the main driving forces of the statist dynamic in twentieth-century America. More recently, in *The Politics of War* (1968), Professor Kolko presented a brilliant critique of the liberal accounts of the origins of the postwar Cold War put forward in the past by D. F. Fleming, Frederick L. Schuman et al.

In *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* Kolko has demonstrated that American barbarism in Vietnam can only be comprehended in the larger context of the relations of the United States to the Third World. Superfluous notions of capriciousness and chance as the causal elements in American foreign and military policy must be eliminated from the analytic framework of the scholar. The logical and deliberative aspects of American power at home and its interest abroad show the irrelevance of the notions of accident and innocence in explaining the applications of American power throughout the Third World.

To understand policy one must know the policy-makers and define their ideological view and their background. This Kolko does superbly in Chapter One where political power in American society is shown to be an aspect of economic power. Bourgeois pluralist theory, stressing the diversity and conflict within the ranks of business and politicians, simply leads to amoebic descriptions of the phenomenon of inter-business rivalry in a manner that obscures the much more significant dimensions of common functions and objectives. The American ruling class controls the major policy options and the manner in which the state applies its power. That disagreements on the options occur within the ruling class is less consequential than that they circumscribe the political universe. This dominant class determines the nature and objectives of power in America. It is the final arbiter and beneficiary of the existing structure of American society and politics at home and of United States power in the world.

In Chapter Two it is shown how the economic ruling class have utilised the Military Establishment as a tool for advancing their own interests. Businessmen and their political cohorts have defined the limits within which the military formulates strategy, extending their values and definitions of reality over docile generals. The sources of American foreign and military policy are not a mythical "military-industrial complex" but civilian authority and civilian-defined goals. C. Wright Mills and other radicals who popularised the notion of the "military-industrial complex" were seriously at fault in not realising that the military conforms to the needs of economic interests. Of course, other Left critics of Mills, such as Paul Sweezy, have previously shown that the military serves the purposes of capitalists and politicians but Kolko’s critique is more fully worked out and richly documented.

A discussion of the United States and world economic power follows in Chapter Three. It is shown that American objectives and interests lead to global interventionism. This gives some rational basis for understanding the objectives of the United States in Vietnam which is dealt with in Chapter Four. Vietnam grotesquely highlights the interests and objectives of the men of power who direct America’s foreign policy. It is, to quote the author, "a futile effort to contain the irrepressible belief that men can control their own fates and transform their own societies, a notion that is utterly incompatible with an integrated world system ordered to benefit the United States' material welfare."

This work is polemical scholarship at its best.

John Playford