

**THE BRITISH
EXPERIENCE 1945-1975**

by Peter Calvocoressi
 Pantheon, 1978
 253 pp. \$8.95
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Empire was external to the lives of most Englishmen, writes Calvocoressi, a London publishing executive, in this provocative socio-economic study of Britain since the end of World War II. Only for a few did the post-1945 loss of empire connote loss of purpose and perspective. But Britain's postwar drive—to build a welfare state that could end glaring inequalities of income and opportunity—proved far more expensive and inefficient than anybody had imagined. In time, the disappointments of welfarism, coupled with economic slumps, left a good many Britons with an uneasy sense that the nation did indeed lack purpose. "The principal weaknesses of postwar Britain," Calvocoressi writes, are continuing "unequality" and official "secretiveness." Secrecy, he believes, denotes mistrust and has no place in a society genuinely free of tyranny. But he remains optimistic. Britain's post-imperial goals were good ones, and, though reasonable men may differ about the causes of the failures, what matters most is that "British democratic instincts and institutions remain intact."

**MARX'S FATE:
The Shape of a Life**

by Jerrold Seigel
 Princeton, 1978
 460 pp. \$16.50
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As husband and father, Karl Marx's "life was one of recurring suffering, privation, and sorrow." He once confessed that his idea of happiness was "to struggle" and his idea of misery "to submit." Struggle and submission, egoism and self-sacrifice, activism and withdrawal—these were the dialectics that ruled his life. Karl Marx (1818-1883) has had many biographers, none better or more succinct than Isaiah Berlin (*Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, 1963). But Seigel delves more deeply than earlier writers into the attitudes behind Marx's "alternation between political commitment and withdrawal," including his failure to finish *Das Kapital*, and the extraordinary amount of time he devoted to political and literary feuding. He effectively (if somewhat ponderously) describes the stresses of Marx's seemingly comfortable German middle-class childhood: His father's conversion to Christianity before the boy's birth, as a condition of being allowed to practice law