

**THE BRITISH  
EXPERIENCE 1945-1975**

by Peter Calvocoressi  
Pantheon, 1978  
253 pp. \$8.95  
L of C 77-90401  
ISBN 0-394-50067-9

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  
L of C 77-85563  
ISBN 0-691-05259-X

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

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in Trier, meant that the son "would have a score to settle for his father" against authority and governments; also, "obeying his father on one level required rebelling against him on another." Marx was graduated from the classical Gymnasium in Trier at 17 and went on to Bonn and Berlin for further schooling. As an adolescent, he embraced and then rejected the humanist philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel, turning in 1843 to the central role of the proletariat in history. Until his father's death, he was generously supported while earning his doctorate. After 1838, however, his mother refused him further funds, and he turned to journalism. From the time his friendship with historian Friedrich Engels began in 1844, Marx knew "where I'm going and who's going with me." The revolution of 1848 in Germany brought him to the literary and political forefront. But his moment of glory was followed by 34 years of exile and frequent isolation in London that plunged him into new cycles of gloom—and disabling attacks of carbuncles.

**MARGARET FULLER:  
From Transcendentalism To  
Revolution**

by Paula Blanchard  
Delacorte, 1978  
382 pp. \$11.95  
L of C 78-739  
ISBN 0-440-05314-5

Many Americans may remember one or more of the following facts about Margaret Fuller (1810–50): She was a friend of the most prominent men and women of her time, including Ralph Waldo Emerson; like him, she was a leader of the Transcendentalists and an editor (the first) of that group's famous magazine, the *Dial*. Her widely quoted statement, "I accept the Universe," prompted Thomas Carlyle to remark, "By Gad, she'd better." Other key details emerge in biographer Paula Blanchard's portrait of Fuller as brainy New England child, inspiring teacher, avid conversationalist, writer, editor (who wounded Henry David Thoreau by returning several of his *Dial* pieces for revision), and first American female foreign correspondent (for Horace Greeley's crusading *New York Tribune*). Blanchard's low-key feminist analysis of the contradictions in this formidable woman's life differs markedly from the Freudian approach taken by Mason Wade in *Margaret Fuller*: