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**BRITAIN AGAINST  
ITSELF:  
The Political Contradictions  
of Collectivism**  
by Samuel H. Beer  
Norton, 1982  
231 pp. \$18.95

One of the few growth industries in Britain in recent years has been the business of diagnosing the national malaise. To the already burgeoning literature, Beer, a Harvard political scientist, contributes this balanced assessment of the contradictions running through British society and politics. He also challenges many of the current clichés. The failure of the political parties to cope with a souring economy—particularly during the 1960s—was due not to extreme policy differences but to their ideological convergence, which gave rise to opportunistic bidding for votes with costly social welfare measures. The trouble with unions is not so much their strength but their internecine rivalries: Competing with each other during the 1970s to maintain their members' relative incomes, union leaders fueled inflation (creating a wage-wage as well as a wage-price spiral) and burdened both Labour and Conservative governments with an intractable economic crisis. Beer describes a breakdown of the traditional class basis of the major parties and the rise of a populist movement threatening the traditional practice of deference to party leadership. The new populism is largely responsible for opening up the leader selection process within the parties (Margaret Thatcher, an outsider, would not have been chosen under the old Tory system), and for spurring a number of disillusioned Labourites to found a new party—the Social Democrats.

**SOVIET PERCEPTIONS  
OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**  
by John Lenczowski  
Cornell, 1982  
318 pp. \$25

During the 1970s, the era of détente, the Soviet Union achieved "strategic parity" with the United States. One consequence was a surge of interest among Soviet scholars in American foreign policy. Lenczowski, a University of Maryland political scientist, divides these America-watchers into two groups. The "traditionalists," who share a "ritual optimism" about the inevitable triumph of communism, see the United States as an economic and ideological monolith, controlled by 500 corporations. Yet they are actually