
**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

more fearful of American strength than are the "realists," who detect weaknesses and divisions within the United States. The realists believe that the growing power of American public opinion (exemplified by resistance to the Vietnam War), disagreements among U.S. leaders, and recognition of new Soviet strength have caused a "retrenchment of American influence throughout the world." The realists are clearly the more sophisticated, but Lenczowski discerns a basic "harmony of interests" between the two groups, stemming from their common need to justify the Soviet state and its role in global affairs. With their major analysts in fundamental ideological agreement, Kremlin leaders are unlikely to abandon their Marxist-Leninist program. Thus Lenczowski has little hope for reconciliation between East and West.

Arts & Letters

THE FAMILY IDIOT:
Gustave Flaubert,
1821–1857, Vol. I
 by Jean-Paul Sartre
 translated by Carol Cosman
 Univ. of Chicago, 1981
 627 pp. \$25

SARTRE & FLAUBERT
 by Hazel E. Barnes
 Univ. of Chicago, 1981
 449 pp. \$25

With Gustave Flaubert (1821–80), the novel in France came to its culmination—or, as some critics lament, to its end. The author of *Madame Bovary* (1857) strove to create fiction in which style was all, believing that the perfect work of art would be about "nothing." It was partly this retreat from the real to a purely imaginary world, and the effect of this aestheticism on subsequent French literature, that prompted Jean-Paul Sartre (1904–80), advocate of the politically "engaged" writer, to devote his last major intellectual effort to a biography of Flaubert. In Volume I (the first of four to be translated into English), Sartre analyzes the young Gustave: his tardy intellectual development (marked by possible autism, uneasiness with language, inability to read until age seven); his passivity (probably resulting from his mother's disappointment at not having had a daughter); his sense of inferiority to his brother, the bright sibling who so easily fulfilled their physician father's expectations. Sartre shows how the "family idiot" transformed his sense of inadequacy into an artistic strategy. Flaubert anes-