endemic.” And there is an attempt to grap
ple with the largest questions, such as the
meaning of war: “Not all instances of armed
conflict between nations have been consid-
ered to be war either under the principles
constitutional law or under international
law….Further, a legal state of war may
exist without the conduct of hostilities, just
as hostilities may be conducted in the ab-

lence of a legal state of war.”

The strongest parts of the book examine
the battles between the executive and judi-
cial branches of government. Students of
the presidency have long studied the contest
between the president and the Congress for
power in foreign affairs—and, indeed, the
Thomases address this ongoing struggle in
something akin to a (partially outdated)
review chapter. They tread ground far less
familiar to students of the Executive Office
in a chapter entitled “Constitutional and
International Law Issues.” In this long piece
they engage in the valuable exercise of re-
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The War-

Making Powers of the President offers a
number of provocative questions and some
timely reminders of events past for those
with a special interest in the subject or for
those made watchful again in the summer of
'83. WY

THE CHANGING ANATOMY
OF BRITAIN
by Anthony Sampson
(Random House; 476 pp.; $17.95)

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS:
BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY
IN AN AGE OF ILLUSION
by Anthony Verrier
(W.W. Norton Co.; 385 pp.; $18.50)

Larry Tool

For over two centuries Britain has been the
very model of a modern industrial nation.
The continuing avalanche of books debating
or lamenting British decline reflects a con-
cern not only with the relative influence and
prosperity of the British people but a broader
concern for the fate of the modern project
as a whole. In the face of obvious British
idiocracy there remains a vague but
widespread belief that the British future
foreshadows that of all modern nations.
The Falklands victory has intensified but
did not settle the “Whither Britain?” de
bate. To Mrs. Thatcher and her supporters it
symbolizes a welcome resurgence of the na-
tional will. In view of her recent triumph
at the polls, she can hardly be blamed for
believing that this new resolve will soon be
translated into economic recovery. She
stands foursquare upon the irresistible
human hope that hard work and sacrifice will
restore vanished fortune.

To the legions of critics and skeptics,
however, the Falklands war only illustrates
the bankruptcy of policy based on imperial
nostalgia. Sending the fleet south, they con-
tend, was a foolish self-indulgence that
squandered lives, weakened NATO, and
will drain the treasury for years. They view
Thatcher’s resolve not as a sign of hope but
as an indication that Britain is failing to
adjust to her contemporary predicament.

The real issue is the price of adjustment.
Both the government and its critics seek
national solvency and survival. They quar-
rel about whether it is international prestige
or social justice that should be sacrificed
to attain it. On the economic front the critics’
case remains persuasive: The fleet cannot
be launched against Japan, and rumors of
Gurkhas will not stymie unions, banks,
and corporations. Yet Thatcher’s re-election
has left Labour prostrate and the new Ali-
ance still singing in the wilderness. Power
has been awarded for resolve, not for eco-

nomic logic. Even many of the unemployed
seem willing to place prestige ahead of self-

interest. Clearly each side in this debate has
much to learn from the other. Two recent
critical books suggest what some of the les-
sons might be.

Twenty years ago Anthony Sampson
published Anatomy of Britain, in which he
sought the roots of British decline in the
obsolete institutions and privileged person-
nel of Britain’s ruling elites. Twice up-
dated, the book has now been completely
rewritten. In The Changing Anatomy of
Britain, Sampson offers a more focused and
sure-footed analysis, but one that threatens
to overwhelm his original reformist per-
spectives. The 1962 format remains, but
the message is new; twenty years of ob-
servation has transformed this anatoniist
into a political commentator and unwill-
ing ironist. Where, for example, the earlier
book damned the monarchy as expensive and irrelevant,
the new version extols the diplomatic utility of the
title, and portrays Prince Charles as a
creative populist. At each stop on his in-
formed and sophisticated tour of the cor-

choose hope!

What Are They Saying About The End of
The World? Zachary Hayes, O.F.M.
Takes up the question of Christian
thinking about the future of the world,
and its relation to the Christian under-
standing of history itself and its polit-
ical processes, human hope, and
what will happen to it. Paper $3.95

BRINGING FORTH IN HOPE. Being Creative
In a Nuclear Age, Denise M. Priestley.
Examines the basis for hope in a
seemingly hopeless world of nuclear
contonatior

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ridors of power, Sampson is now alert to the strengths and flexibility of traditional institutions. Like the new Social Democratic party to which he belongs, he is no longer confident that the democratization and modernization of elites will arrest Britain’s decline. In domestic affairs, at least, his *Anatomy* points to the need to adapt traditions rather than abolish them.

In foreign affairs, however, Sampson’s new book is still haunted by the Falklands-crisis and, behind it, by the example of Imperial Spain, another great power that failed to navigate a “primitive basis” of society. Sampson cannot believe that the Falklands spirit is transferable to industrial innovation, let alone social progress. Spooked by martial elanor, he ends with a vague appeal to “new kinds of people outside the old classes, who are aware of new opportunities, innovations, and new markers abroad”—a prescription that could just as well refer to Mrs. Thatcher herself.

A cooler and more detailed critique of British foreign relations is offered by Anthony Verrier in Through the Looking Glass, an episodic history of postwar diplomacy. Also an experienced journalist, Verrier is similarly disturbed by the exuberance of the Falklands war. The Argentine invasion of the islands came as a surprise to the British Government, he argues, because of a long history of British self-delusion and make believe. (His title recalls both Lewis Carroll and John Le Carre.) Too many officials were still living in the world of George Smiley and James Bond, where “lesser breeds” do not light or where a growl from the lion will suffice to scare them off. “The imperial sentiments remain in Mrs. Thatcher’s breast,” Verrier writes, “but imperial resources have gone.”

Verrier’s focus is the relation between the permanent administration—the Foreign Office and especially the secret intelligence services—and the succession of elected governments. The intelligence services inherited from Victorian times a preoccupation with the Empire and particularly with the “great game” of containing Russia in Asia. After 1945 they failed to adjust to Britain’s diminished role, becoming instead a kind of national “subconscious” charged with the promotion of great power illusions. Over the years a schizoid foreign policy developed, one that paid lip service to British weakness but remained covertly dedicated to making big moves on the big board. Verrier examines operations in Albania in 1949, Suez in 1956, Kuwait in 1961, the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, Nigeria in 1967, and Ireland and Rhodesia in the 1970s. In each case he shows the general accuracy and realism of actual intelligence-gathering, the ways in which that work was ignored or misused by elected officials, and the futility of diverting intelligence energies into quixotic operations. Reasoning from conservative premises, Verrier often arrives at liberal conclusions. He comes down particularly hard on Anthony Eden and on the architects of “strategic independence.” He makes surprising claims for the role of SIS in the Cuban crisis. Especially welcome is his dispasionate view of the Irish tragedy, where Britain has lost the capacity to rule yet refuses to relinquish the commitment to do so. The intelligence services, he concludes, have through time and error learned the nature of the contemporary world and of Britain’s place in it. When will elected governments begin to profit from that knowledge?

If the struggle for the British future is waged on the same thoughtful plane as these recent critiques, Britain may be expected to muddle through with her historic freedoms and her social commitments substan-

tially intact. In any event, scoffing citizens of younger and richer states should remember that ancient communities may have unexpected reserves of ingenuity and morale. We may once again find ourselves turning to our old model for courage and inspiration. W.T.

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