

Middle East Report by Nancy Coker

Israel, Argentina, and Great Britain

Ariel Sharon—and Britain—seem to be on the outs these days in Israel; is it only pragmatism?

It is not by chance that the current decline of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's fortunes in Israel coincides with a healthy rise of anti-British sentiment. As Sharon's adventurism is being called into question by top government officials in Israel, so too is Britain's provocative behavior in the South Atlantic theatre.

Soon after the start of Argentine-British hostilities, a rift arose between Israel and Britain. The latter complained about Israeli arms shipments to Argentina, including a recent delivery of Israeli-made Dagger jet fighters to Buenos Aires. Argentina has also bought at least four patrol boats from Israel and a significant number of ship-to-ship and air-to-air missiles. Intelligence sources say that Israel's support for Argentina goes far beyond what has been publicly reported.

In response to Britain's complaints Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir declared that despite British pressure, Israel would honor all previous contracts with Argentina and continue to deliver arms on schedule, although no new deals would be made.

London was enraged.

Those who have dismissed Israel's dispute with Britain over Argentina as "tactical differences" are badly mistaken. The tiff signals a much more fundamental disagreement.

Despite the fact that Israel has long been willing to serve as a pawn of British imperial politics—the

Balfour Declaration, which founded the Zionist claim to Israel, was a British stratagem—there is a potentially healthy basis for an Israeli conflict with London; the fact that British finance capital and political intelligence supported the rise of Hitler's Nazis. Many Israelis, including intelligence officers, have recently told *EIR* that Israel still blames England for Hitler's Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews died.

The latent antipathy to and suspicion of the British reportedly go beyond the old Irgun die-hards and include well-placed government officials from a broad political spectrum.

On May 7, Uruguayan Foreign Minister Estanislao Otero Valdes arrived in Israel for an unprecedented five-day visit in which arms were reportedly discussed. Uruguay, located just to the north of Argentina, is an important nerve center of banking and political intelligence networks linking Israeli, Swiss, and Italian interests, and Latin American power centers.

It is within this low-keyed but palpably anti-British context that Ariel Sharon no longer finds himself the fair-haired boy of Israel's ruling coalition.

In recent weeks, Sharon has fallen further out of favor with Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who has been blocking Sharon's efforts to ignite a full-scale war over Lebanon, knowing that his Defense Minister intends to use a military conflagration in Lebanon to cata-

pult himself into power. Begin, as *EIR* has reported, is said to be the *éminence grise* behind a "Stop Sharon" clique in the Israeli cabinet including David Levy, Yitzhak Shamir, and Yoram Aridor.

At the root of the Begin-Sharon fight is internecine intelligence warfare. Earlier this month, after months of infighting and despite Sharon's opposition, Begin appointed Yekutiel Adam to head the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency—a move seen by analysts as another effort to block Sharon.

Sharon's own appointments to key positions are still drawing fire. At the beginning of May, Sharon appointed as his press adviser Uri Dan, the official biographer and ardent admirer of organized crime kingpin Meyer Lansky. Former chief of staff Mordechai Gur fought the appointment on grounds that Dan, who was stripped of his journalistic credentials for revealing sensitive military intelligence, is a traitor and a security risk.

The fight around Sharon is a mere reflection of the unsettled political situation inside Israel, where back-stabbing among ministers and rumors of cabinet defections abound.

With the collapse of national unity talks with the Labour Party, Begin is at the mercy of religious parties in his coalition. Hence, his decision to shut down Israel's national airline El Al on the Sabbath. The decision may backfire—and early elections could ensue—following the high court's recent legal challenge of the cabinet on this issue.

Then, the scramble around Sharon—and the British—could come out in the open.