

Will the U.S. stay in Britain's trap?

by Susan Welsh

While European support for Britain's escapade in the South Atlantic is crumbling and Latin America is rallying to the support of Argentina, the British are trying to compensate for these losses by tightening their hammerlock on Washington. Their loyal instrument is Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who reiterated May 18 that the British will get everything they need from the United States. Haig had just returned from a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg where he tried to bludgeon the European allies into fully backing Britain.

Without U.S. assistance, British military threats are a bluff. Thatcher's government has asked the U.S. to put a variety of military supplies and equipment in readiness in case Britain needs them, said Reagan administration officials quoted by the *New York Times* May 18. This is just the tip of the iceberg of what London is requesting: the British urgently need a U.S. aircraft carrier, and are maneuvering to achieve a direct U.S. military involvement, something President Reagan has so far flatly rejected. But if the battle turns dangerously against the British, Haig will certainly increase the pressure on Reagan to commit U.S. military might more directly.

Meanwhile Haig and his British cohorts are openly working to overthrow the government of Argentina. On May 18, Thatcher demanded the removal of President Leopoldo Galtieri, and Haig has deployed the U.S. Ambassador to Buenos Aires, Harry Schlaudeman, to meet with Argentinian opposition leaders. Senior government officials in Argentina have stated the "concern" of the regime that the United States is attempting to destabilize the government.

In Western Europe, the rumblings of dissatisfaction with the British which have been going on for weeks burst into open revolt during ministerial meetings in Luxembourg. Ireland and Italy bucked the pressure-tactics of Haig and British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym and refused to endorse the continuation of economic sanctions against Argentina voted by the European Community in late April. Ireland, the only EC member that is not also in NATO, had announced its intention to pull out several weeks before. Italy's break with the Anglo-American policy is all the more dramatic, since it is the key country for NATO's southern flank.

In two days of meetings, no EC decision could be reached. Haig, seeing how things were going, marched in and "appended" the May 17 EC foreign ministers' meeting to a meeting of NATO foreign ministers scheduled to occur across the street, insinuating himself into the deliberations of the European Community. In effect, the campaign for the EC sanctions was run by Haig and NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns—a highly unusual and quite illegal situation.

Haig spent an hour privately working over Italian Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo, but the latter could only repeat that all of Italy's major parties had voted in parliament to compel him to veto the sanctions, and if he supported the British his government would fall.

Revolt in Europe

The Italian official bucking of its European partners and the United States is unprecedented. But Italian

Prime Minister Giovanni Spadolini hinted in an interview May 19 with the daily *La Stampa* that the decision to defy the British was actually made in Hamburg, West Germany during a meeting between himself and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in mid-May. "Some people think that Italy has said openly what the French and Germans think but do not want to say," said the interviewer. Spadolini replied: "Our position in support of negotiations has found French and German supporters. And my recent trip to Hamburg has contributed significantly to defining this position."

West Germany has maintained its position of "solidarity" with Britain, principally out of fear of hurting its relations with the United States. But numerous West German officials have told *EIR* they are hoping for a shift in U.S. policy. "Tell Washington that the German government would be ready to follow the U.S. administration if it decided to implement the Monroe Doctrine," said a senior Bonn government source in April. "This is the only thing that will save both NATO and the European Community from disintegrating."

Perfide Albion

The actions taken by Ireland and Italy laid the basis for an ever greater blow to the British the following day at the EC Agriculture Ministers' meeting. The ministers voted to sweep aside traditional British veto power and raise farm prices by 11 percent, thereby maintaining parity prices for continental Europe's farmers. For two months the British had refused to allow this and were demanding huge rebates from the EC budget, citing the 16-year unwritten rule in the EC that a country can veto anything it considers vital to its national interest.

On May 18 the agriculture ministers abandoned that rule and they voted by simple majority (7 to 1, with 2 abstaining) to raise prices by the largest percentage in the history of the Common Market.

"Collective madness is ruling in London," commented West Germany's normally pro-British Deutschlandfunk radio station May 18.

British newspapers are screaming that there is a "constitutional crisis" in the EC, and British Agriculture Secretary Peter Walker denounced the European attitude as "cynical, incoherent, and ridiculous." Labour Party MP Peter Shore declared that his party had been right to say Britain should not have joined the EC in the first place.

NATO extension?

The European challenge to Britain, while a definite break from the pattern of the past weeks, is not enough to prevent the British from plunging the world into war. The British intend a restructuring of NATO for deployment "out-of-area" in the Third World, in service of British colonialist policy, debt collection, "population

wars," and confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The communiqué issued May 18 by the NATO foreign ministers repeated that such deployments can be important for NATO security and can "stabilize" governments outside NATO's sphere of Europe and the North Atlantic. NATO has given itself a carte blanche for interference in the affairs of any developing nation.

This concession to the Anglo-American line is a dangerous one, but its practical implementation is already being placed in question. The Spanish representative attending the meeting for the first time (Spain has not yet joined NATO) stressed May 18 that if Spain enters NATO now, this must not mean that its military bases could be used for NATO military operations into the Mideast. This was in fact a role Haig and the British had intended for Spain, and it may not be quite coincidental that Spain on May 19 cancelled Haig's scheduled visit there.

In Italy, the government's withdrawal of its support for sanctions against Argentina has sparked the patriotism of a country long battered by terrorism, economic crisis, and political destabilization. A columnist for the pro-British Italian daily *Il Giorno* complained in an article May 19 about Italy's new "fantasies of ancient grandeur" since it had the courage to "go it alone" against the British.

All Italy's major parliamentary parties voted against renewal of the European Community's trade ban, forcing the reluctant Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo to join the Republic of Ireland in opposition to London. The president of the Christian Democratic party (DC), Flaminio Piccoli, declared in an interview with *La Stampa* May 19 that "I am convinced that our position is more dignified than that of the other [EC] countries, which have extended the sanctions but only for one week. And so at last we can put an end to accusations that the DC is a slave to the United States and always ready to accept its positions." Former Prime Minister and DC leader Giulio Andreotti commented simply that the Italian decision had been "inevitable." DC foreign policy expert Luigi Granelli, interviewed in the Communist Party's newspaper *L'Unità*, called for Europeans to launch their own mediation effort in the South Atlantic conflict, and demanded that Great Britain cease its "dangerous escalation of acts of war, which could lead to incalculable results."

A crucial element is the influence of the Vatican, although the details of this are not known. The Christian Democrats are the political party most closely tied to the Vatican. Both Italy and Ireland, the countries that bucked the British, are Catholic countries, as is Spain, which is not yet a member of the EC and hence was not involved in the sanctions issue, but is the only Western European country that recognizes Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas.