

Sharon's 'Squadristi' Launch Anti-Arab Pogrom

by Dean Andromidas

Radical Israeli settlers, the fascist *squadristi* of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, have begun to launch anti-Palestinian pogroms. On July 28 in the West Bank city of Hebron, Jewish settlers ran riot throughout the city, which was under strict curfew, firing Army-issued M-14 assault rifles, breaking into Palestinians' homes, destroying cars, and looting shops. A 14-year-old Palestinian girl was shot dead and her brother wounded when the settlers fired indiscriminately into Palestinian homes. Even Israeli soldiers and police were brutally assaulted when they tried to bring the riot under control.

The rampage occurred during the funeral march for a soldier, Elazar Liebowitz, who had been killed in a Palestinian attack two days before. Liebowitz had been a resident in one of the Jewish enclaves in Hebron, one of the West Bank's largest cities. These enclaves, along with the settlement of Kiryat Arba just outside the city, are the center of the most radical fascist settlers. It is from here that Dr. Baruch Goldstein, in 1994, killed at least 26 Palestinians at a mosque, and these were the same settlers who helped incite Yigal Amir to assassinate Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

'No Provocation From the Palestinians'

An eyewitness report by Col. (res.) Moshe Givati, an adviser to Public Security Minister Uzi Landau, in the daily *Ha'aretz*, was hair-raising. He called the riot "a pogrom against the Arabs of Hebron, with no provocation on the Palestinian side." He had attended the funeral in his capacity as liaison between the settlers and the Ministry of Public Security.

Givati said that violence began when a group of Jewish youths invaded a Palestinian house in the city and burned and vandalized its possessions. Police and border patrol arrested three youths, including two of the dead soldier's brothers.

Givati said that "there were 20 or 30 people, who were mostly not from Hebron," and that he suspected the thugs were from outposts in the area of Itamar and Yitzhar. "For some reason they were all carrying Army-issue weapons, and they charged into the Palestinian houses. That's when the fracas began. I saw everything from very close range. There were long bursts of fire by the Israelis—into the air and at the houses. . . . Dozens of thugs, including youths from Hebron, burst into Arab houses for no reason. They broke windows,

destroyed property, and threw stones. These people were there for the purpose of making a pogrom. . . . Police officers were beaten." In Givati's view, the police and Army "were too restrained. Considering the events, much more force should have been used. We cannot allow such harm to the rule of law. It's inconceivable that soldiers and police be cursed that way."

Colonel Givati's rage against these settlers is not unique; the vast majority of Israelis see these particular settlers as the murderers of Prime Minister Rabin. Givati was dismissed as commander of the Hebron Brigade at the end of the 1980s, because he was using helicopters to hunt down Palestinians, in the same way that poachers hunt down wild animals in Africa. But for Givati and others on the right, the "rule of law" reserves such operations for the military and the state. If Sharon's *squadristi* are allowed to run rampant, then the whole facade of the "legality" of official Israeli actions would collapse.

This does not say that these thugs are not supported by official circles. On the contrary, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) high command, which was in charge of securing the funeral march in conjunction with the settlers, seems to have played an ambiguous role.

"The Israeli forces in the field are prepared to defend the Jewish settlement area from attacks by the Palestinians, but they find it difficult to defend those that the Jews themselves attack," a senior commander in Hebron was quoted saying. Not one settler has been charged in this riot, even though Israeli police officers and soldiers had been brutally beaten.

U.S. Official's Step-Son Beaten

Another reason for Givati's outrage could be because of the diplomatic fallout caused by this anti-Arab pogrom, especially given that one of the victims was Benjamin Lowry, the step-son of U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Dov Zakheim. Lowry was a photographer who was in Hebron at the time, working on a project on life in mixed cities. According to a report in the Aug. 1 *Ha'aretz*, "Lowry was on the edges of the funeral procession when two kippa-wearing thugs walked up to him and forbade him to photograph. Lowry didn't manage to get a word out when a fist landed in his face and one of his valuable cameras was ripped from his neck and smashed to pieces. An [Israeli] policeman who tried to get him into one of the alleyways, out of trouble, ran for his own life when a dozen settlers joined in on the rumble against the photographer. Lowry was knocked to the ground, kicked in the ribs and head. Someone grabbed the camera straps around his neck and began strangling him." He was eventually rescued when soldiers arrived.

It is not clear whether Zakheim will tell his colleagues at the Pentagon, such as Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, a promoter of a Clash of Civilizations, "a thing or two about a kind of terror that the conservatives in the building probably know nothing about," as *Ha'aretz* put it.



From the “lunatic fringe” which murdered Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995—the crime against the Israeli nation for which the responsible forces have never been investigated or punished—fascist crimes are now being committed which appall even IDF generals, and threaten the breakdown of society.

The Sharon Connection

These fanatics are often referred to as the “lunatic fringe,” and even the broader settlers movement often distances itself from them. But this is a dangerous assumption. This was underscored by Yoel Marcus, in *Ha’aretz* on Aug. 2 in a commentary entitled “A Green Light for the Next Murder.” “These people,” he wrote, “the likes of whom we also saw this week in Hebron, running wild and coming to blows with Israeli policemen, go from funeral to funeral spreading fear and panic, and most of all hatred. They are referred to as the ‘lunatic fringe,’ but in practice, they set the tone. They terrorize the state and their impact on the national atmosphere threatens Israel’s democratic character.”

Reminding his readers of the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, Marcus wrote, “The atmosphere of today is even more poisoned than it was in the last month of Rabin’s life. The poster of Rabin in an SS uniform held aloft at Zion Square; the non-stop personal incitements of Prof. Hillel Weiss of the Professors for a Strong Israel who explored the possibility of prosecuting Rabin as a traitor—in the end, all produced a murderer.” Marcus concluded that it is intolerable that “this minority should infect an entire nation with its messianic disease, and use freedom of expression and the weakness of the law enforcement system to give a green light for the next murder.”

Sharon’s squadristi are ideologically controlled by a network of extremist fascist rabbis such as Moshe Levinger, founder of the radical settlers movement Gush Emunim. Levinger is the founder and resident rabbi at the Hebron settlements. His son was arrested in April for participating in an

attempt to bomb a Palestinian girls school (see “Jewish Terror Plot in East Jerusalem,” *EIR*, May 31, 2002). Levinger worked closely with Sharon for over three decades, building settlements inside the occupied territories.

Sharon controls this grouping through his man on the scene, Ze’ev Hever, whom he refers to as “my friend, Zambish.” In December 2001, Sharon presented Hever with the “Menachem Begin Award.” They meet several times a week to discuss the Jewish settlements, a practice they have kept for over 15 years.

In 1982, Hever was sent to prison as a member of the infamous Jewish Underground terrorist organization, which targeted Palestinian political figures for assassination. One of its members, an Air Force pilot, was arrested in the 1980s for planning to destroy the al-Haram, al-Sharif/Temple Mount by flying a plane full of explosives into one of Islam’s most holy sites, the al-Aqsa Mosque, atop al-Haram

al-Sharif. Hever spent 11 months in prison for attempted murder, after he and his accomplices tried to plant a bomb under the car of a member of the Palestinian National Guidance Committee. He lives in the Kiryat Arba settlement, outside of Hebron, which was home to mass-murderer Baruch Goldstein. This settlement is the headquarters of the so-called lunatic fringe.

Hever is a religious Zionist and close to Rabbi Levinger. While the latter is of the first generation of Israeli fascists, Hever, 48 years old, is of the second, and is now responsible for the rising third generation, which conducted the pogrom in Hebron. He is the secretary general of Amana, the settlement arm of Gush Emunim, and is responsible for all the illegal settlement activity. According to media reports, nothing happens in the settlements unless Hever approves. This includes all the so-called outposts, which are manned by the lunatic fringe. Forty-four of these outposts have been created since Sharon came to power.

Danny Yatom, former head of the Mossad, told *Ha’aretz*, “If you don’t pay attention, he builds new roads without authorization of the head of Central Command, and if he doesn’t get authorization, he tries to create facts on the ground.”

Although Hever is said to stay in the shadows, he is the most powerful leader on the Yesha Council of settlements. Uri Elizut, the editor of *Nekuda*, the journal of the Yesha Council, told *Ha’aretz* on July 12, “When he speaks, everyone listens quietly.”

Selling to the Enemy

Only a few weeks before the pogrom, Israeli authorities

arrested a network of soldiers who sold over 50,000 rounds of ammunition to Palestinian militants. The soldiers were from the settlements of Adura and Telem, also outside of Hebron. These settlements were initiated by Sharon in 1982, who deployed members of Betar, a right-wing organization linked to the Sharon's Likud party, to occupy them. The Adura settlement was the site of a Palestinian attack earlier this year, which left three settlers dead and several wounded.

Some of the arrested soldiers were indicted for driving Palestinian vehicles through Israeli checkpoints for \$20 a vehicle. Did those vehicles contain explosives or suicide bombers?

Those arrested were all reservists or on active duty, including one major, and were from elite units, including the paratroopers. One was a member of the Border Patrol. Their arrest reportedly sent shock waves throughout the settlements, as it is possible that Israelis who have been killed or wounded could have been hit with ammunition supplied by members of the same settlements.

One obvious implication of this case is that Israeli extremists, starting with Sharon, are encouraging Palestinian violence for their own political purposes. Sharon provokes Hamas to undertake terror attacks, and when he came to power, he told the settlers, "Israel will do things that we will never admit to" in order to crush the Palestinians.

It has not been learned whether those arrested are linked

to Sharon's squadristi; the details of the cases are still under wraps. Nonetheless, the case reflects the intense corruption and criminality that is spreading throughout Israeli society as a result of Sharon's war of attrition. One Israeli intelligence source pointed to the degeneration of Israeli society because of the war and impoverishment. "Under these conditions, where we have one of the most corrupt governments ever, people will begin doing things like this. Look, if you're unemployed, \$20 for driving a car through a checkpoint is a lot of money."

This is reflected in the two settlements themselves. Both are inhabited by who support Sharon's hard-line policies. Some were still suffering from the wounds of previous Palestinian attacks. Yet these two settlements, like many others, are on the verge of collapse, not because of the security situation, but because economically they are failures. Most of the residents have left, and are seeking work within Israel proper. Those who remain, have jobs that are related to maintaining the settlements, such as municipal and medical workers, and are subsidized by the government. Most of the young people, who see no future in "settling the land" of Greater Israel, have also left.

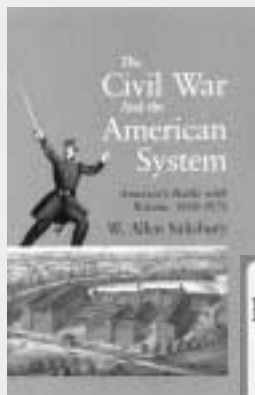
Unless Sharon is stopped, the situation can only get worse. In the shadow of an American attack on Iraq, Sharon will deploy his army and squadristi to force all the Palestinians out of the West Bank.

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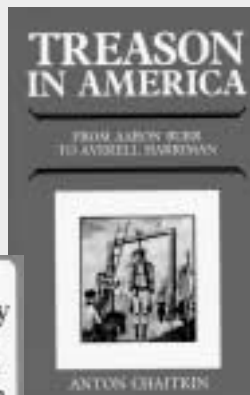
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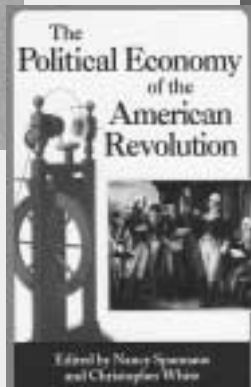
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