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From



Washington

Intifada reverberations

FRANKFURT

THE reverberations of the Palestinian Intifada are far and wide, especially among Jews it seems.

It was a bit startled the other day to find this the case even in Germany, a country where the Jewish community is very small, emotionally insecure, and politically weak; and a country where criticism of Israel is still a taboo.

Nevertheless, in a suburb of Frankfurt, in a small townhouse, a German Jewish publisher together with a born-in-Austria Holocaust survivor as editor, publishes a new magazine.

Semit they call it. And though its circulation is rather small its already creating quite a sensation among some Jewish circles in Germany.

Take for instance the most recent cover which has cost them some 70 Jewish subscribers it seems — quite a chunk when your subscription base is measured in less than a few thousand.

The cover is a drawing picturing Israeli Prime Minister Shamir in a cowboy outfit complete with six-shooter pistol and Jewish star on his cowboy hat. In the background there is a collection of bearded Israeli settlers in the traditional European Jewish black Hasidic garb with rifles at the ready.

And the cover caption reads: "Izzy the kid: and the wild West Bank."

It should be uplifting to the leaders of the Intifada just how far their message of creative and committed confrontation has gone. Throughout the US and Europe the Intifada has brought about a rebirth of progressive thought and action among Jews as well as Arabs.

In the US for instance, a number of new Jewish groups have come forward. One is called the "Jewish Peace Lobby" and works on Capitol Hill to promote the two-state settlement. A front-group for the Israeli left establishment (elements in Mapam and Labour) as well as Reform Jewry in the US, and consequently unwilling to challenge American aid to Israel, this group works closely with the PLO in advocating Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and a demilitarised Palestinian state.

Friends of Peace Now in the US have also become much more active, including a regular newsletter and the services of professional telephone fund-raisers who call up prospective contributors to tell them Peace Now is working for Israeli-PLO talks.

And, of course, the Jewish Committee On The Middle East (JCOME, with

which this writer is associated) has taken a far bolder position publishing advertisements recognising the Palestinian declaration of Statehood, calling for an end to the special relationship with Israel, and advocating a major reduction of American military and economic assistance to Israel until the Israelis agree to withdrawal from the occupied territories and accept a truly independent Palestinian state.

But back to Germany, which everyone knows is a very special case for Jews and for Israel.

Semit is a rather slick new publication — it looks a bit like *Time* magazine from the cover. Inside it is highly intellectual, a bit irreverent, and certainly the only

publication of its kind published by German Jews willing to take on the Zionist myths and speak up loudly against Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.

The publisher, Abraham Melzer, was actually born in Israel after his parents fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s. He returned at the age of 15, some 30 years ago, when his father decided to come back to the country of his birth and found a small publishing company specialising in publications of interest to the remnants of the Jewish community in Germany and surrounding countries.

I asked Melzer when I recently visited with him about the Intifada. And he surprised me by telling me without hesitation that without the Intifada there

would not be a *Semit*. Indeed, a significant part of each issue so far deals with subjects relating to the Intifada.

"Till the Intifada," Melzer told me in his broken English (he speaks German as well as Hebrew fluently), "I was not a very strong Zionist, but I was a Zionist, and I was willing to excuse everything that Israelis would have done believing that they were forced to do it."

"But the Intifada opened up my eyes to see what Israeli people and Jewish people were doing," Melzer continued. "And I didn't believe it, that they could behave in such ways to the Palestinian people and that a lot of Israelis and Jews thought it was OK."

"So, thinking about it, and reading about it, and seeing the television about it, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to do something about it, that I cannot just sit in my home and look at television and say 'Oh, what are they doing, it's not good' but not doing anything about it."

"It took me at least a year to start *Semit* magazine. And this is what I can do. I know we are not yet a political influence, but at least we are doing something and trying to inform people about what is going on."

"Of course, the articles in *Semit* are not only about the Intifada," Melzer added. "But the Intifada, or at least the Arab-Israeli conflict, are at least 50 percent of the articles in the magazine, and the other 50 percent are articles about Jewish problems in Germany and other countries."

The other key person at *Semit* is the editor. Professor Oswald LeWinter has spent most of his life in the US and has many American characteristics. But he was born some 60 years ago in Austria and had to flee as World War II approached. He returned to Germany just a few years ago when he got married to a younger German woman. And then he ran into Melzer just at the time *Semit* was getting launched and needed an energetic editor.

Semit is a kind of fly-by-night operation at the moment. Melzer and LeWinter are struggling to finance each issue which comes out every two months; putting too much effort into funding and thus a bit too little into journalism for their tastes. Still, they've done remarkably well so far. They print only 15,000 copies, most of which are sold on news-stands, but they've had a new subscriptions coming in daily.

The reverberations of the Intifada are indeed both far and wide.



Cover of *Semit* magazine which reads: Izzy the kid and the wild West Bank.

All is not well in Kansas

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