



by Mark Bruzonsky

## “IZZY THE KID: AND THE WILD WEST BANK”

### *Intifada Reverberations*

**Frankfurt - February 4, 1990 --** The reverberations of the Palestinian intifada are far and wide, especially among Jews it seems.

I 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 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, publish a new magazine.

SEMIT they call it. And though its circulation is rather small it's 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 Hassidic 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 United States and Europe the Intifada has brought about a

rebirth of progressive thought and action among Jews as well as Arabs.

In the United States, 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 Labor) 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 demilitarized Palestinian State.

Friends of Peace Now in the U.S. has 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 recognizing 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 withdraw from the 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 abit like TIME

magazine from the cover. Inside it is highly intellectual, abit irreverant, 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 toward the Palestinians.

The publisher, Abraham Melzer, was actually born in Israel after his parents fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s. He returned at age 15, some 30 years ago, when his father decided to come back to the country of his birth and found a small publishing company specializing 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 Israel 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 alot of Israelis and Jews thought it was OK.”

“So, thinking about it, and reading about it, and seeing the television about it,

## Behind The Scenes

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 U.S. 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. Despite his years LeWinter fit right into the job.

SEMIT is a kind of fly-by-night operation at the moment. Melzer and LeWinter are struggling to finance each issue which they publish every other month; 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 newsstands, but they've had new subscriptions coming in daily.

The new subscriptions and letters of praise are coupled, of course, with a barrage of abuse. It's not easy to do what Melzer and LeWinter are doing; but it's a labor of love for them ... a labor of necessity as well.

And so, here in Frankfurt, there is a new Jewish magazine, SEMIT, that is another result of the Intifada. Just as the play "Seeing Double" that has been touring the U.S. and which so humorously yet seriously promotes the two-state solution. Just as Dan Almagor's unique poems. Just as JCOME and the Jewish Peace Lobby, et.

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

**\*\*European Security services received information that "Siantex" substance has been smuggled to Europe via an oil shipment from Lebanon. A circular was issued to all airports to be on the lookout to thwart any expected terror act in Europe in the next few months.**

**\*\*Amal is at loggerheads with the Syrian government. Qaddafi has recently asked the Syrians to disarm Amal. The same request was made by many Lebanese elements in an effort to eliminate the militias opposed to the Ta'if accord.**

**\*\*Reza Pahlevi, son of the late Shah of Iran, has recently renewed his political activity. He visited London, among other European capitals, to take part in a conference arranged by parties and royal organizations. He still cherishes the hope of returning to the throne.**

**\*\*Differences have emerged in the ruling bodies in Algeria. Many resignations, especially in the army, were tendered. These resignations will enhance the position of President Bin Jadid.**

**\*\*Iranian security officials have recently intensified their tours of European capitals. The aims of such tours raised many questions.**

**\*\*The Algerian government has issued permits to many parties for free political activity. Among them are the democratic party of Arab-Islamic unity led by Belhaj Khalil Hirfi and the Party of the Popular Society for unity and labor led by 'Alalo al-Mahdi. Other parties are expected to be allowed to work in the context of the openness policy of the president.**

**\*\*Contacts and efforts are still being made to effect the release of Western hostages believed held in the Beka'a valley in Lebanon. The Syrian government which knows their location hasn't given the green light to the European governments to raid**

**the location for fear of jeopardizing the lives of the hostages.**

**\*\*Many circles expect a reshuffle in the Sudanese government. They also expect the fighting in South Sudan to intensify. Ethiopia is doing this in retaliation for Arab support to the Eritrian rebels.**

**\*\*Many Gulf states are having talks with China to secure sophisticated offensive weapons at high prices.**

**\*\*Iran has recently received advanced weapons from the Chinese Air Force. Arab countries asked China to place conditions on the sale of arms to Iran.**

**\*\*The Kuwaiti minister of interior called upon Kuwaitis eligible for voting to have their names registered. Observers believe this is a step towards restoring the parliament.**

**\*\*Many European countries are practicing political pressure on the U.S. to have it agree with the Soviet Union on finding a quick solution to the Middle East conflict. They don't want Europe to be the scene of conflict.**

**\*\*The Tunisian President Zein al-Abideen bin Ali received an official invitation to visit Saudi Arabia and he will go in the summer. He is seeking financial assistance to bolster his faltering economy.**

**\*\*Many European countries have verbally warned General Michel Awn urging him to reach an agreement with the Lebanese forces to prevent further bloodshed and to reach a final solution.**

**\*\*Walid Jumblatt, the leader of the Socialist Progressive Party, is facing pressure from Syria and the Arabs so that he might support the Ta'if accord. This pressure, says Jumblatt, is the beginning of strained relations with Syria.**