



**OUR MAN
IN HAIFA
CARL ALPERT**

Election in Israel

BY CARL ALPERT

HAIFA -- Now that the balloting in the U.S. is over, Israelis can concentrate on their own forthcoming elections, and the fever is already mounting. There is still much that must crystallize but certain scenarios may already be sketched. The first major condition to be faced is that of timing.

If the Knesset votes lack of confidence in the present Government the elections will be held in the spring. This will be a classical confrontation between Likud and Labor in which the two groups will offer the following platforms:

Likud will ask for the voters' support because it brought peace with Egypt, maintains national security and struggles to keep a strong foothold in the West Bank for the sake of that security. It will explain the nation's economic problems in terms of world conditions, in large part the price of oil.

Labor will contend that the Camp David agreements signed away too much, and we still have no agreement on the West Bank. Likud policies have caused economic catastrophe, and the country needs a new deal, with more attention to human needs.

The usual 15 or 20 smaller parties will yap around on the fringes and between them pick up enough votes to fragment the Knesset and make a national coalition necessary, with all its bargaining and concessions.

But if the Begin government lasts out the winter and spring, then a whole new scenario is possible. The elections will take place in the fall, and by then there would be sufficient time for one or more new parties to emerge from the wreckage and disillusionment of others. Despite the political failure of the Yadin-led Democratic Movement there is still a vast electoral yearning for a new party, free from the dogmas and taints of the old, and offering a middle course program between the two extremes. If they could find common ground solid enough for them to stand on together, such a party would be led by Moshe Dayan, Yigal Yadin, Ezer Weizmann and other politicians not as well known abroad. Some of the smaller parties would be prepared to merge into it. Others would join as opportunists, hoping to get on a successful bandwagon. The trouble is that such a party, like the ill-fated Democratic Movement, would be a coalition to begin with, and the cracks would begin to show whenever the party was faced with stresses based on issues or personalities.

There is one other possibility, and everybody in Israel knows it. Everybody agrees it could succeed. It is simple and logical and popular, but it flies in the face of traditional politics, and so the party bosses won't agree. This scenario calls for Yitzhak Navon to resign from the Presidency now, a year in advance

of the elections, so that he could be a candidate for the premiership after a proper cooling-off period from his present post. The Labor Party would recognize his potential; both Peres and Rabin would shelve their ambitions and their feud and step aside in favor of Navon. The usual party machines behind Peres and Rabin would yield to the new leadership of Navon.

There is not a political pundit in the country who can deny that a Navon-led Labor Party would, for the first time in Israel's history, command a clear majority of the nation's voters, would control the Knesset comfortably, and could govern without the need for a coalition with any minority parties.

It is clear and logical, but there seems little hope at this time that the main-line politicians, nor their underlings who drink at the trough, are prepared to forego their ambitions or their petty powers. And unless an agreement is reached in the weeks immediately ahead, and Navon severs his connection with the Presidency now, it will be too late, for he is both legally and morally bound not to trade on the prestige of the presidency as an immediate springboard into active politics.

Navon will not seek party leadership. He will not campaign for it. He will not lift a finger even to encourage others to negotiate it for him. But if a united Labor Party were to have the intelligence to see that this would be both in their interests and in the interests of the national welfare and if they would place his name at the head of their list and pledge him their support -- they would breeze to an unprecedented victory in next year's elections.

Does God Hear Jews?

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

A number of readers of this column wrote or telephoned me last week to express approval of my criticism of Rev. Bailey Smith's absurd statement that "God does not hear the prayer of a Jew." One reader wrote, "We appreciate your comments, but why have Southern Baptists and other Christians remained silent?"

Well, they haven't, and the outpouring of their protests is one of the encouraging signs that Jewish-Christian dialogues have led to real friendship and mutual respect. Some examples:

In Fort Worth, Texas, Dr. Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, told the press, "I'm sure Bailey Smith's views do not represent the position of most of the 13 million Southern Baptist Christians. God listens to the needs of every person who calls on him."

Rev. John Laney, Baptist minister of Rockville, Maryland, wrote that "Bailey Smith posits a God who could have listened to silent Christians in Nazi Germany while turning a deaf ear to millions of Jews who cried out from the concentration camps and gas chambers of the Holocaust. I cannot conceive of a God who would eagerly listen to Jerry Falwell and Bailey Smith but who would not tolerate a prayer from such great souls as Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel."

And finally, Prof. William Angell of Baptist Wake Forest University, "I do wish Dr. Smith would pause at least long enough to realize that Jesus was a Jew -- a loyal and faithful Jew. Does that mean that God would not hear him?"

BONN (WNS) -- The ruling Social Democratic Party and its coalition partner, the Free Democrats have agreed on a draft law prohibiting the import of neo-Nazi propaganda material into West Germany. The law would make it difficult for the neo-Nazi movement to spread books and periodicals denying the existence of gas chambers during the Hitler era. It would also ban some of the propaganda material the neo-Nazi movement has been receiving from the Palestine Liberation Organization.

UNITED NATIONS (WNS) -- Israel has proposed a draft resolution for the United Nations General Assembly to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The resolution calls upon "all states of the Middle East to convene at the earliest possible date a conference with a view to negotiating a multilateral treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Mideast." The resolution was only the third submitted by Israel since it became a member of the UN on May 11, 1949.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- The Jewish Theological Seminary of America has announced plans for an \$18 million building and campus expansion and renovation program which will include construction of a library for the Conservative Movement's institution to replace the one destroyed by fire in 1966.

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