

**OUR MAN
IN HAIFA**



CARL ALPERT

American Import

HAIFA -- Could this be a new appeal to stimulate American aliyah? Immigrate to Israel and become mayor of a city! That's what happened to young David Levene from Jersey City, N.J. He came to Israel in 1968 at the age of 27, and 10 years later was elected mayor of Pardess Hannah, a pleasant town in the Sharon Coastal plain.

The Mayor chuckled at the idea when I suggested it to him but he hardly recommended that the new olim depend on the possibility. His own story was unique, though of course it could be repeated again under various circumstances.

David Levene is an ordained rabbi, but few in Pardess Hannah call him by that title. Neither is he "Mr. Mayor" or any other similar appellation. Perhaps the secret of his success, politically, personally, and administratively may be found in the fact that to almost everybody he is simply David.

His yeshiva and rabbinical background did not hurt; neither did his Brooklyn College degree in political science. When the young American and his bride came to Pardess Hannah he taught at the Midrashiat Noam, and then organized a religious vocational high school which he headed for 6 years. His interest in the children, in their parents, in their family problems, and his sincere desire to extend help wherever needed caught the fancy of the local population. When election time came in 1978 delegations from several of the political parties called on him in turn and asked him to serve as head of their slate.

"Obviously they had no one else," he said, "I had no interest in politics and not the slightest idea what the duties of a Mayor were. The politicians persisted, and two of the parties (National Religious and Likud) agreed to join hands if Levene would run. He relented, and when the votes were counted, he had polled 56%, running far ahead of others on his slate seeking seats in the Municipal Council. For the first time in its history Pardess Hannah had a non-Labor Mayor.

Why did people vote for him? For one thing, he suffered from no previous political taints whatever. The worst his opponents could say was that he lacked experience, and in view of the records of some of his predecessors, the public liked that. Further, the fact that he was an American helped. The local voters reasoned that he must know everything, or at least know everybody. His campaign was conducted almost exclusively at parlor meetings, where local residents had a chance to meet, shake hands with and ask questions of the smiling, personable young man who spoke an excellent Hebrew with an American accent. Even the non-religious community supported the candidate with the yarmelke.

The fact that he was the grandson of the saintly Reb Aryeh Levin, who had been a tower of strength to the underground fighters of the Irgun in the pre-State days, helped too.

What has he accomplished? There is a new

look and a new spirit in the town. Housing, schools, recreation and sport facilities, roads, dedicated attention to citizens' problems, all have characterized the Levene administration. People think he can do everything, and with a characteristic grin he added that he also gets credit for a lot of good things that he had nothing to do with. He is probably more popular today than he was when first elected, but a price has to be paid for such popularity. The Mayor, that is David, is expected to attend every wedding, Bar Mitzvah, Brit Milah, sport event, anniversary party or school celebration, and in a town of 18,000 inhabitants the number of such events adds up. He has little time for his family.

There is still much more to be done. He has not yet licked the typical Israel bureaucracy practiced in public offices, but neither has he succumbed to it personally. If he serves a second term there will be many more changes. Will he run? Municipal elections are to take place next year, but David had not yet decided what he will do. Does he have an eye on national politics, the Knesset, the Government? He does not dismiss the possibility. His views on national policies? He endorses the nationalist line of Menachem Begin; religiously he is orthodox, but as an American he apparently finds it difficult to justify religion in politics. He believes all young people should serve in the army, irrespective of religious beliefs, or in extreme cases, at least render some form of national service.

The Mayor's wife, the rebbetzin, seems to have mixed feelings about his political career, but she is obviously proud of him. Also American-born, she knew what she was getting into and exacted her own price as well. When they were married David made it clear to Hava that she would have to come to Israel with him. And she responded that he would have to agree to have lots of children. Both had their way; thus far there are eight children in their Pardess Hannah home.

How Israel Voted

BY MOSHE BEN YOSEF

The Democratic Movement for Change (DASH) headed by Professor Yigael Yadin, which won 15 seats in the last elections (1977) did not fight this time. Shinui, which was a part of Dash, ran on its own ticket and won 2 seats.

Its orientation is toward the Alignment rather than the Likud. Of the other new lists, the Tami (Abuhatzzeira), Sephardi break-away from the N.R.P., is a partner for Begin's coalition; the Tehiya (nationalistic) faction and Moshe Dayan's Telem did not, at the time the election results were announced, appear to be coalition candidates. There may, however, be issues on which they might support a Begin coalition. The Communists will continue to oppose Begin unconditionally.

The following lists failed to be reelected: Sheli (left wing) which had 2 mandates in 1977; Independent Liberal Party (Centrist - I); Poalei Agudat Yisrael (I); United Arab list (I); Flatto Sharon (I).

It is significant that in these elections the Likud and the Alignment, the 2 major blocs vying for power, won no less than 79% of the total vote. With Shulamit Aloni joining the Alignment after the elections, the blocs are of equal size, with 48 seats each. The formation and stability of the government still depend, therefore, on agreements with the smaller parties.

AMSTERDAM (WNS) -- An advertisement to plant trees in a Jewish National Fund forest in Israel in sympathy with the victims of the terrorist attack on the Vienna synagogue has appeared in the Dutch press it was reported here. It was signed by parliamentarians of most of the Dutch political parties and by representatives of the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches and others. The initiative was taken by the Amsterdam Protestant cleric, Rev. Arnold Spijkerboer.

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