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Middle East- Africa

ISRAEL

Prime Minister Begin's ruling coalition gained a much more comfortable majority in the Israeli Knesset this week when the moderate Democratic Movement for Change joined the government, boosting its margin from four to 19 seats. The broadening of the coalition, which was previously limited to Begin's right-wing Likud grouping and two religious parties, should strengthen the ability of Begin and Foreign Minister Dayan to control Israel's tactical approach to peace negotiations. Begin will have to contend with more friction within the coalition, however.

Objections by the Democratic Movement to Begin's hard line on peace negotiations and the desire of the party's leader, Yigael Yadin, for a strong voice in foreign policy had been particular stumbling blocks in intermittent discussions since last May of terms under which the Democratic Movement would join the cabinet. In recent weeks, however, Yadin reportedly became favorably impressed by Dayan's handling of negotiations with the US and convinced that the government had taken the right approach to peace issues.

Last week, Democratic Movement councils voted—not without some dissent—to join the government, and on 24 October the Knesset formally approved the appointment of Yadin and three other members of his party to the cabinet; Yadin became Deputy Prime Minister. At the same time, Begin brought in two additional Likud members, apparently to



Prime Minister Begin (r) with Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan

dilute the change in the cabinet's internal balance resulting from the inclusion of the Democratic Movement.



Hard-liners in Likud, especially in Begin's own Herut faction, are probably disturbed over the strengthening of the more moderate forces in the cabinet. They believe Begin and Dayan have already

skirted dangerously close to compromising on vital substantive issues in accepting the US-Israeli working paper. On the other hand, Likud's somewhat more moderate Liberal faction was anxious to have the Democratic Movement join the government in order to strengthen the Liberals' voice in policy matters and to reduce the coalition's heavy dependence on the hard-line religious parties.

For his part, Begin will probably use the inclusion of the Democratic Movement to strengthen his claim to represent a broad consensus on negotiating issues.

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He can now argue that his flexibility has netted two important benefits for the coalition: a strengthened ability to resist further US pressure and the effective isolation of the opposition Labor Party.



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