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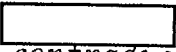
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ISRAEL: Political Pressures

 Israeli Prime Minister Begin has come under new and contradictory political pressures from the rightwing Gush Emunim

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settlement organization and the moderate Democratic Movement for Change, reflecting these groups' growing restiveness with his foreign policy.

[] The ultra-conservative Gush Emunim has steadily increased its pressure on Begin during the past few weeks to lift the moratorium on establishing new settlements on the West Bank and to set aside new areas for settlement projects, including land near large Arab population centers. Gush leaders threaten to mount a major propaganda campaign and may seek to mobilize their supporters in Begin's rightwing Herut faction of Likud and the hawkish youth wing of the National Religious Party to achieve this end.

[] On the other side of the political spectrum, the executive council of the Democratic Movement for Change, the largest group in Begin's ruling coalition next to his own Likud bloc, overwhelmingly adopted a resolution earlier this week indicating that the party would review its participation in the government if it concluded that intransigence on Begin's part had obstructed chances for peace.

[] The Democratic Movement argues that Israel's negotiating position should be based only on security considerations and concern for preserving the Jewish and democratic nature of the state. The party's resolution states that the government should not engage in "activities likely to create an atmosphere of mistrust" while peace talks are going on--a thinly veiled criticism of the government's mishandling of the settlements issue earlier this year--and that a resolution of the West Bank problem should not lead to a separate Palestinian state.

[] The resolution was proposed by Transportation Minister Meir Amit, who has staked out a position as peacemaker between moderates and the Democratic Movement's more phlegmatic senior leadership. Amit, in fact, is seen by some in the party as a possible alternative to party leader Yigael Yadin.

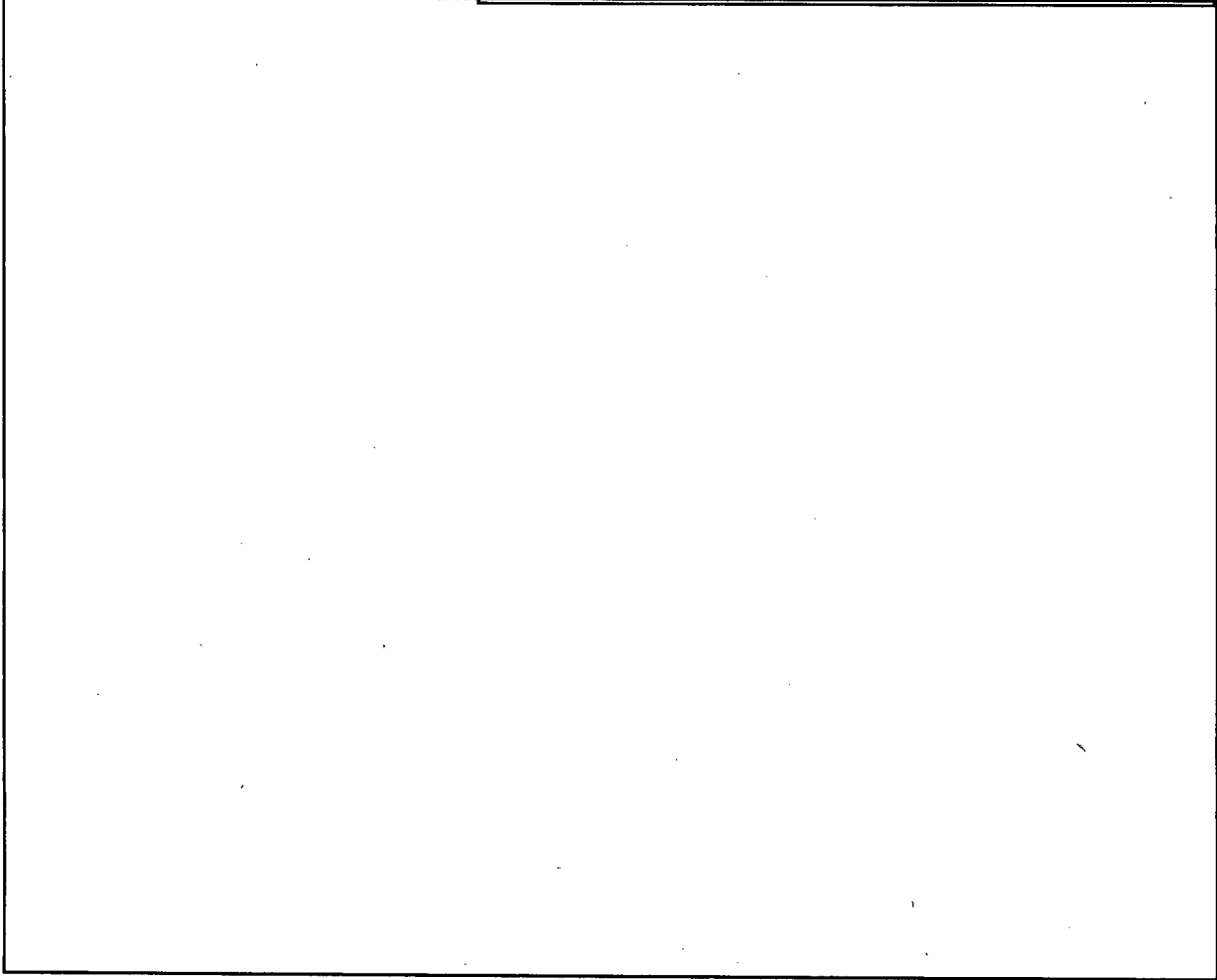
[] The party's resolution reflects growing dissatisfaction among party moderates with Begin's hard line on peace negotiations and also with Yadin's unwillingness to take a more assertive, moderating stance on peace issues. The resolution also represents an effort to restore the Democratic Movement's drastically eroding popularity. Indeed, a recent public opinion poll indicated that the party was supported by only 3 percent of the electorate, a sharp and potentially disastrous drop from the nearly 12 percent it won in the national election last year.

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[] The language of the resolution nevertheless is relatively general and restrained. It does not appear to augur an early defection from the coalition, at least not before the party's internal election later this month at which the moderates hope to score significant gains.

[] Yadin, for his part, abstained from voting on Amit's resolution, although he has stated publicly that he and other Democratic Movement cabinet ministers would resign from the government if Begin rejected Arab peace offers that the party considered reasonable. Yadin's remarks are in part probably a response to party pressure that he take a more assertive stand on negotiation matters. []



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