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Moshe DAYAN
(Phonetic: daYAHN)

ISRAEL

Minister of Foreign
Affairs (since June 1977)

Addressed as:
Mr. Minister



The charismatic and flamboyant Moshe Dayan has long been a familiar figure in Israeli politics. For many years he played a major role in Labor Party-led governments; and since his highly controversial crossover to Prime Minister Menachem Begin's rightwing Likud coalition in 1977, he has been one of the most important members of the government's inner circle. When he first joined the Likud administration, Dayan was considered a possible successor to Begin, should the latter be forced to step down because of illness. Because he lacks a strong, independent power base and, for many of his countrymen, bears a major responsibility for the Israeli failure in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, however, he has little chance to succeed Begin. He nevertheless remains an important member of the government. Although Begin retains tight control over foreign policy decision making, he relies on Dayan for tactical advice and clearly values his ability to make carefully crafted, ambiguous formulations that are often acceptable to hardliners and moderates alike. Dayan is a member of the key Ministerial Committee on Security.

Now listed as a one-man faction in the Knesset (Parliament), Dayan was brought into the government largely because of his close ties to Jewish communities in Western Europe and the United States and because of his extensive experience in dealing with foreign leaders--particularly with Arabs and Americans on the peace issue. [redacted]

[redacted] he is well remembered for his role (as Defense Minister after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war) in initiating the "open bridges" policy with Jordan, enabling thousands of Arabs to move in and out of the West Bank during the

[redacted]

last 11 years--a policy he insisted on against the wishes of most of the military and of the Cabinet. A firm advocate of nonwithdrawal from and increased settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Dayan supports many of the features in the limited self-rule plan proposed by Begin in December 1977. During the past few months, however, he has tried to persuade Begin to modify his rigid position on these territories in an effort to give some flexibility to the Israeli negotiating stance: accepting a larger Jordanian role in the West Bank autonomy scheme might get the peace process moving again.

Early Life and Career

Born on a kibbutz, Dayan joined the Jewish underground military organization Haganah at 18. In 1941 he fought with the British against the Vichy French in Lebanon, where he lost an eye--he still suffers pain from this injury. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, he commanded the Jerusalem District. Dayan served as Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces from 1953 until he resigned from the army in 1958 to enter politics. A member of the Knesset since 1959, he joined the government that same year as Minister of Agriculture and served in that capacity until 1964. He helped found the Rafi (Israel Workers' List) party in 1965. Dayan was Minister of Defense from June 1967 until mid-1974. As such, he was both the hero of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the object of criticism after the 1973 war.

[redacted] Prior to the war, he was the sabra (native) generation's fair-haired boy, despite his unorthodox ideas [redacted] and he enjoyed widespread adulation in Israel. Most observers believe he accepted the appointment to the Begin Cabinet primarily to retrieve his place in history, even though it also meant censure by many lifelong colleagues.

Personal Data

Dayan, 63, [redacted] He speaks English, Arabic and some Russian. He is the author of numerous articles and four books, including his autobiography. The Foreign Minister has been married three times; he has three children by his second wife. Dayan has back problems.

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