

Aspects of EC election results

HERE is a summary of significant aspects of the European parliament election results in the 12 European Community countries.

West Germany — The extreme-right Republicans took 7.1 percent of the vote, most of them at Chancellor Helmut Kohl's expense, to grab six seats. Kohl's Christian Democrats suffered a dramatic drop but they emerged as the biggest party.

France — The governing Socialist Party was the main casualty in elections which saw record abstentions and strong support for fringe parties. The main victor was former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, whose RPR-UDF list from the right-wing opposition came top of the poll.

Britain — The opposition Labour Party dealt Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives a series of humiliating defeats and the environmental Green Party piled on the political agony.

Belgium — Green parties performed strongly and the far-right Vlaams Blok siphoned off support in Flanders from the Dutch-speaking Socialists and the Flemish Nationalist Volksunie Party. But the centre-left government's stability was not threatened.

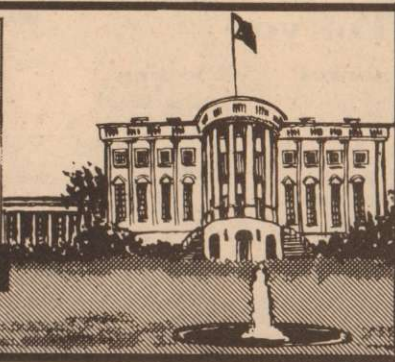
Italy — The dominant Christian Democrats suffered a severe setback and the opposition Communists halted a disastrous five-year decline but the third-largest party, the Socialists, failed to make the strong gains. Analysts said this reduced the chances that Socialist leader Bettino Craxi would push for an early general election.

Spain — The ruling Socialists reaped the largest number of votes despite losing the support of their trade

From



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Washington

The life of 10,000 descendants of Palestinian survivors of 1948 massacres

MORE than 40 years after the birth of Israel, Deheisha refugee camp is like a moral scar nagging at Israel's soul.

This is the primary reason the Israelis have already done everything they could to isolate this place; attempting to "protect" themselves from having to deal with, psychologically and politically, what Deheisha symbolises.

The residents of Deheisha themselves call their camp a ghetto and sometimes even refer to it as a zoo. But for a visiting Jew like myself the analogy of a concentration camp seems to have become more accurate in recent months: especially as one hears stories about the army patrols that daily break into homes, shooting and beating as they go.

The Intifada has, of course, brought much more oppression down on all the residents of occupied Palestine — oppression which is actually being stepped up in many ways these days under a kind of political camouflage purposefully created by Yitzhak Shamir with his "elections" charade.

But it is especially in the teeming refugee camps in Gaza, and places like Deheisha on the West Bank, that the misery is most evident and the oppression unrelenting, ever-present and still escalating. These are the places where the heartbeat of Palestinian nationalism is strongest. And thus it is especially these places that the Israelis are targeting for current isolation and eventually — when historical and political circumstances allow — for possible destruction and "resettlement".

Founded quite literally on a

erations — if the term accommodate is understood to mean the housing of families that can include a dozen or more persons in two or three small rooms.

During the 1970s the Israelis began to do what they could to totally separate places like Deheisha from themselves — both physically and spiritually. But looking back those were relatively tranquil times and the Israelis were more preoccupied with settling the territories than with worrying about controlling the seemingly docile and acquiescent population.

In more recent years Deheisha has been physically transformed into an isolated zone physically separated even from the surrounding areas and with a burgeoning population of nearly 10,000 compressed into worsening conditions purposefully designed to bring them into submission or to force them to flee.

A huge chain-link fence today separates Deheisha from the nearby road to Bethlehem, the road itself now guarded by the Israeli army nearly all the time. One of the reasons for "Road #60", which I wrote about in the previous column, is to make it even unnecessary for the Israelis to drive by this Deheisha ghetto and thus be reminded of the

human cost and political realities of their continual colonisation of the territories.

There is now only one entrance left through the fence to the camp, a small gate that the army can easily lock whenever the camp is to be placed under curfew. All other normal entrances have been sealed with arrays of oil drums and barbed wire.

The huge five-metre high chain link fence itself dividing Deheisha from the Bethlehem-Hebron road extends for a number of kilometres and is reinforced with tangles of barbed wire in many locations to prevent camp residents from cutting their own holes.

Armed and often brutal soldiers patrol the twisting streets of Deheisha, so much so that the children are now sent out in advance to scout the way anytime visitors want to move from one home to another. Indeed, more and more the residents of Deheisha are feeling like caged animals.

The few shops that once served passers by on the main road are all closed now. Of course there are no restaurants, no movies, no public areas. The few stores that exist are but rooms with a few scarce items on

The soldiers break into homes at any moment — beating, shooting, killing. Often water is available only a day or two a week. Curfews extent into many days with food scarce even in normal times. Army snipers pick-off people at random. Soldiers throw without reasons lethal forms of teargas designed only for use outdoors into homes. This is not a description of a scene from the Warsaw ghetto. This is Deheisha administered as such by the survivors of the holocaust.



SHAMIR

the shelves where you can get a bit of bread, or some cigarettes, or a candy bar.

Deheisha certainly seems something of a no-mans-land for outsiders. And yet, for the throngs of children usually playing in its muddy or dusty streets and for the old-timers who remain always ready to tell their stories — and to do so with a traditional hospitality coupled with a kind of cynical, earthy humour — this is the only home they know and there is nowhere else for them to go...but to Palestine that is.

Who would have thought that after some two generations the same UNRWA that was established after the 1948 war to provide tents and food to Palestinian refugees would still today symbolise the peculiar responsibility of world society for the Palestinian predicament which Deheisha so vividly portrays.

There is also a growing divide between Hamas, the Islamic Right, and the secular Left — a polarisation likely to continue in the future as the Israelis accelerate their efforts to quash the Intifada by sowing division and confusion and to accelerate still further as the initial hopes spawned by the Arafat peace initiatives degenerate into a new more hardened bitterness.

Deheisha is in many ways a naked paradigm for the Palestinian predicament itself. In Deheisha the residents are more and more imprisoned in their own homes, encased behind fences and barbed wire, always listening for the knock at the door. Similarly, as each week passes the whole population of the West Bank and Gaza is now in danger of such imprisonment as the Israelis squirm to hold onto their gains increasingly aware that their choices, to quote senior army officer, Dan Shamron, are narrowing to "mass expulsions, starvation or genocide".

Yet the UNRWA flag still flies just inside the high fence clearly visible from the road; and the children still carry UNRWA ration cards lining up daily for their meagre meals; and UNRWA still provides a modicum of schooling if and when the Israelis allow even this.

Will the Americans tolerate savage killing of 168,000 of their countrymen in 18 months? Never! Based on the ratio to the US population the death toll in Deheisha is that high!



The leadership of the future Palestinian struggle is being trained by circumstances in prisons and in camps. It is a training by brutalising experience in the schools of the street. A new generation of Palestinians is learning to stand up to gun and torture and preparing to take over from the failures of the elders.

Deheisha

Psychologically Deheisha, and other camps like it scattered throughout occupied Palestine hardly exist for Israelis; only a handful have ever stepped foot here. The very name "Deheisha" elicits noticeable fear from nearly all Israelis, a fear you can quite literally see on their faces and in their voices.

Yet, of course, it is in camps like Deheisha that the Intifada is being layed out with the greatest ferocity. Residents here are politically very savvy, and tough. The DFLP and Hawatmeh are strongly, but cautiously, supported; though for outsiders it's the PLO as a unified whole that gets the nod.

Lawlessness and savagery are not only ever-present now, they are on the rise. And so is the hatred and the planning for revenge.

Since the Intifada began, seven of the approximately 10,000 Deheisha residents have been killed; hundreds injured; many times that number beaten. The number seven may seem few. Yet based on the ratio to the population in the United States, for instance, this number is the equivalent of an astounding 168,000 Americans killed and many millions beaten and injured!

And this is only one of many refugee camps throughout occupied Palestine!

Whatever normalcy of life existed before the Intifada is gone now. The daily confrontation grows harsher all the time between the defenceless and the armed, increasingly brutal, and increasingly scared; soldiery of Israel.

And so the prime minister of Israel now has begun saying that he wants to "eliminate" Deheisha and other camps like it; and he wants the world, especially the Americans, to pay the bill. That indeed is what he had his Foreign Minister Moshe Arens discussed in Washington recently with Israel's loyal "friends" at the State Department and White House.

It's but another part of Israel's new plans to undermine the Palestinian struggle and eventually subvert those who survive to Greater Israeli designs. For the Israelis are aware enough to realise that it is in camps such as Deheisha, and in the prisons which nearly all Deheisha men visit with regularity, that the leadership of the future Palestinian struggle with the Israelis is being trained.

And it is a training by tough, brutalising experience — the schools of the street, of the prisons, are far more radicalising than the schools of books, which the Israelis have ordered closed, could ever be. The daily humiliations and brutalities are bringing a new Palestinian generation forward, a generation which will have learned to stand up to the gun and to the torturer, and a generation which is already preparing itself to take over from the failures of its elders whose pitiful diplomatic dances failed us all.

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union allies. But the Communist-led United Left coalition failed to build on popular discontent and the Conservative Popular Party and centrist Social and Democratic Centre both lost ground.

Ireland — The ruling Fianna Fail Party looked set to lose three of its eight seats. Left-wing groups and the Green Party made solid advances, another bitter pill for Prime Minister Charles Haughey.

Greece — The scandal-ridden Socialist government came a distant second in general elections but Prime Minister Andreas Papan-dreou planned to try to retain power with the Communists. The European voting reflected a similar pattern.

Denmark — Prime Minister Poul Schluter's Conservatives lost two of their four seats while the opposition Social Democrats gained one. The popular movement against Danish membership of the EC held on to its four seats, one quarter of Denmark's 16 seats in Strasbourg.

Luxembourg — All three of the main political parties were snubbed in general elections as voters opted for a new party. But the Christian Social Party kept most of the vote and looked unlikely to switch coalition partners. In voting for the European Parliament, the big three again shared the six seats.

Netherlands — The opposition Labour Party's hopes of emerging victorious in September's general elections were dented by losing almost three percent of support, mostly to the Centrist Christian Democrats of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and left-wing environmentalists. Labour could be forced to take a junior role in a new coalition under Lubbers.

Portugal — The ruling Social Democrats emerged almost unscathed from the mid-term doldrums, losing only one of their ten European seats in elections ignored by half the voters. Both the Socialists and the Communist-led United Democratic coalition seem certain to gain a seat each next week when final results are announced, and the Greens should get their first deputy. — Reuter

barren hillside of rocks by Palestinians fleeing the massacres of 1948, Deheisha is just a few moments south of Bethlehem on the way to Hebron, just 15 minutes or so from Jerusalem.

In the early years those who fled their homes and villages lived in UN-provided army-type tents, freezing in the cold winters, and boiling in the steamy summers. The tough ones survived. Gradually the initial UN-built concrete rooms expanded to accommodate the new gen-



These are not fanciful alternatives; however, much we might like to dismiss them as such. For many Israelis the people of Deheisha are, as former Israeli chief of staff Rafael Eitan has said, "like drugged cockroaches in a bottle". This fascistic racism and moral debauchery partially explains the viciousness with which the army patrols shoot and beat the people of Deheisha daily, including little children and old women.

Quite literally the people of Deheisha are helpless and de-

And so places like Deheisha take must be understood to take on a special significance because they now symbolise — in the most brutal and naked manner — the hatred that is growing between the new generation of Israelis and Palestinians, no matter what the politicians on both sides are saying in front of the cameras. This is the realpolitik of the situation which Deheisha so well represents.

Furthermore, of course, this ghetto-cum-concentration-camp is "administered" by the survi-

So while the Israelis are planning to take more steps to destroy Deheisha if they can, first in spirit and then in reality, the Palestinians are learning more and more ways of resistance. This is a struggle entering, in all likelihood, not a peaceful conclusion based on reasonable compromise, no matter how much many of us wish it were so. It is a struggle being transformed before our own eyes into new forms, more dangerous methods, and ever more deadly cycles of violence.

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Gazette European Correspondent

Labour gains in Euro parliament

IN the British elections to the European parliament, for the first time in ten years, the Labour Party has gained over the Tories, and are likely to have a majority of the British seats at the EEC parliament in Strasbourg. The environmental party, the Green's, have won 15 percent of the votes, but unlike their European counterparts, they have not won any seats.

The new direction of the European Parliament appears to have moved to the Left, but the voting results in the community's twelve counties, declared last night, leave the Centre-Right parties—which had a narrow majority in the last parliament—now running neck-and-neck with the Left.

But one outcome that all politicians have suddenly jumped to attention over, is the Green Party—which recorded net gains across Europe and could now hold the balance of power.

In Britain, however, the swing to the Left was considerable, and once all the votes will be known, Labour looks set to take over from the Tories as the biggest British party in Strasbourg. And, as members of the Labour Party have been quick to point out, their gains—translated into British parliament terms—would give them the majority in Parliament with Neil Kinnock as the majority leader.

For the moment, Labour has 40 percent of the vote, compared with the Conservative's 34 percent, which means that Labour has gained ten seats from the Conservatives. Significantly the Tory Party has also lost the constituency which includes the Prime Minister's Westminster seat at Finchley, where London North was lost.

As can be predicted, Kinnock, the Labour leader, was overjoyed at Labour's victory. "We have been rewarded for showing that we are fit to face the future and that we are ready to build economic efficiency and social justice.

It is the first time that Mrs Thatcher has lost a nation-wide election since she became head of the Conservative Party 14 years ago. Some Conservatives blame the way the campaign was run by the party chairman, Peter Brook, who has already declared that he is ready to admit mistakes. "I'm perfectly happy to take responsibility for any mistakes that I made in terms of the campaign itself of the period running up to campaign. I don't think myself that there will be an immediate reshuffle in the prime minister's government,

but we will see," he announced rather gloomily.

Among Conservative critics, the former Tory Prime Minister, Edward Heath, was absolutely certain he knew where the blame lay: "The campaign itself was very badly handled. First of all, I think the reason is that the prime minister has always underestimated the importance of the European parliament, which she has always treated with contempt, also she never really bothered with the general election campaign for the European government. In these cases the prime minister, as leader of the party, must always be held responsible," he added with hindsight.

Recriminations have already begun among top Tories, and many MEP's (Members of European Parliament) may privately agree with Heath that their campaign was badly handled. Their disunity worsened with Labour's well-planned strategy of making the campaign a referendum on rejecting the government's domestic policies of badly handling the economy, its plans for cut-backs on the National Health Service, the much-disputed poll tax, and water privatisation, plus "the contempt", as Kinnock described it, of Mrs Thatcher's own attitude towards Europe.

First there was a much publicised clash between Mrs Thatcher and Heath, who was responsible for bringing Britain into the EEC, over her criticism of the Community for what she called "meddling" in Britain's domestic affairs.

This was followed by what the British press called "a public row" over the exchange rate policy between Mrs Thatcher and her Chancellor of the Exchequer (or Finance Minister) Nigel Lawson, who specifically wants to float the British pound with the European Monetary Exchange market.

Apart from Labour's success, the other major leader to emerge from British elections were the Greens. They took about 15 percent of the vote, pushing Paddy Ashdown's SLD party into fourth place in most constituencies. The problem is that Britain is the only country in Europe that

does vote by proportional representation, therefore, the Greens were unable to win even one seat.

They are, as one can understand, more than dismayed over this result. Their spokeswoman, Jeanne Lambert said, "Obviously we're overjoyed with the percent of the vote that we've got, but I can also say that we're extremely angry that—having got probably the largest vote of any of the Green parties in the EEC in this election—we get no representation for it at all...so there will definitely be some fireworks over that," she explained.

As the elections were fought largely on domestic issues, it is difficult to speak of any "Euro trends" as a result. Although the increase of Socialist support may place greater emphasis on the Socialist's charter of worker's rights. This charter is bitterly opposed by Mrs Thatcher but is seen by many countries and political parties as a crucial part in the completion of the Single Market by 1992. The loser in this election has been the Social Liberal Democrat Party, who won only six and a half percent of the vote. Their leader, Paddy Ashdown, was asked Monday morning whether he thought his party had been hard hit by their noisy disagreements with David Owen's Social Democratic Party. "We know in our party that we've had a very, very tough year, but we're patiently but very determinedly rebuilding our party and although these results are disappointing, they will not cause us to loose our nerve."

The Scottish National Party (SNP) did well in Glasgow and the rest of Scotland and will probably hang on to the Highlands, while the Conservatives may be left without a single Scottish seat.

Although the turnout in Britain was four and a half percent higher than the last European elections five years ago, it was still the lowest in the European Community. Thus with 81 British seats all total, Labour so far has 39, and the Conservatives 28. Computer predictions say Labour will end up with 46 seats and the Conservatives 31, which is almost a reversal of the position in the last parliament elections.

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