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Inhaltsverzeichnis

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Contents

Federal Elections	3
Gruyères: a Living Museum	6
Holidays in Switzerland	6
Swiss Hopes for Sarajevo	7
Laufental sticks to Berne	8
Official Communications:	
– On the OAI/DI Front	9
– Sudden death of Willy Ritschard	9
– Federal ballots in 1984	11
Local News	12–16
Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad:	
– 62nd Congress of Swiss Abroad	17
– Hiking Camp 1983	18
– Results of UN Questionnaire	19
– 61st Congress of Swiss Abroad	20
– Solidarity Fund	21
– Spring Skiing Camps 1984	22

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Federal Elections in Switzerland

Three winners: the Right Wing, the Ecologists, the National Group for People and Fatherland

(G.Pb) Three winners from different camps: on one hand the Radical Democratic Party and on the other the Group for the Protection of the Environment and the National Group for People and Fatherland. The losers are almost entirely from the Left: the Social Democrats, the Autonomous Socialists, the Communists, and the Independent Social Christians. This is the outcome of the Parliamentary Elections which took place on 23rd October and it is both clear and yet ambiguous. There is, however, no cause for alarm – there were no real shocks. On the other hand, that does not mean that there were not one or two nice little dramas.

There were disappointments in several cantons for both parties and individuals.

A severe blow for the Social Democrats

The Swiss Social Democratic Party suffered something of a disappointment even though it was not so bad as had been expected. They have lost three seats in the Senate and another four in the National Council. Contrary to all expectations, the most depressing results came from the west of Switzerland. In Geneva the Socialists relinquished two of their four seats – and not unimportant ones at that: the stalwart Senator, Willi Donzé, and the National Councillor, Jean Ziegler. One of the two seats in the National Council has been lost in Freiburg because the president of the Social Democratic contingent in the Federal Parliament, Félicien Morel, is retiring. In the Jura, the die-hard Pierre Gassmann has had to surrender his seat in the Senate to a Radical Democrat. On the other hand, however, the Social Democrats have acquired a lady National Councillor, Valentine Friedli.

In general, the party has held its ground better in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, although the Socialists in Zurich mourn the loss of three of their seats – two out of ten in the National Council and one more in the

Senate. The only seat in Appenzell Ausserrhoden has gone, quite unexpectedly, to an Ecologist. In Basle, the result was a draw – a seat lost in the town is balanced by a seat gained in the rural area.

The end of the Communists

The Communists in the Swiss Party of Labour and the Workers' and People's Party have suffered a real tragedy. They are going to pieces. Neither Armand Forel from the Canton of Vaud nor Armand Magnin from Geneva has been returned to office. Roger Dafflon in Geneva is their sole survivor. The Autonomous Socialists have also lost ground. It is true that Werner Carobbio in Ticino has retained his seat, but Jean-Claude Crevoisier from the Bernese Jura is out. The Independent Social Christians' Party have also beaten a retreat in so far as their only representative, Gabriel Roy from the Jura, was not re-elected. Amongst the Left-Wing parties, the Progressive Organisation was the only one that defended its ground successfully, and its members did this by adopting a young, dynamic and clearly ecology-oriented programme. Ruth Mascarin in Basle and Andreas Herczog in Zurich have acquired the support of Barbara Gurtner from Berne, but this is insufficient to compensate the Left for its losses.