

Zeitschrift:	Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber:	Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band:	10 (1983)
Heft:	4
Artikel:	Federal elections in Switzerland : three winners: the right wing, the ecologists, the National Group for People and Fatherland
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-906872

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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 Herzog in Zurich have acquired the support of Barbara Gurtner from Berne, but this is insufficient to compensate the Left for its losses.



Assembly room of the National Council.

The Ecologists make a breakthrough and the Radical Democrats get stronger

The only party that can, to some extent, make up for these setbacks is the Group for the Protection of the Environment. They have improved their overall position from one to five National Councillors. Daniel Brélaz from Vaud has been joined by Laurent Rebeaud from Geneva, Arnold Müller from Zurich, Leni Robert (a dissenter from the Radical Democratic Party) from Berne, and Herbert Mäder from Appenzell (who was tempted to join forces with the Independents). They all belong to the moderate wing of the «green» movement. They understand each other.

The real winner in these elections is the Radical Democratic Party and hence, the Right Wing. They have gained three seats in the National Council and the same number in the Senate. In the west of Switzerland the results they achieved were magnificent; in Geneva, Robert Ducret removed a Socialist, Willy Donzé. In the Canton of Vaud, the number of their representatives in the National Council rose from five to seven. In the Jura, they are even stronger: two out of four of their representatives for the Canton are in

the Federal Assembly – Gaston Brahier in the Senate and Pierre Etique in the National Council. This is certainly one of the biggest successes of 23rd October.

The changes in German-speaking Switzerland are not so great: the loss of a National Councillor in Berne is balanced by a gain in St. Gall; however, the fact that Rico Jagmetti, a professor of Law from Zurich, has been voted into the Senate must also be taken into consideration; he may be one of the influential new voices in the Parliament. There has been an exchange of blows in Ticino: the Radical Democrats have retained three National Councillors, but the left wing has won all the seats and

Assembly room of the Council of States (Senate). (Keystone)



thus dealt the right wing a serious blow.

The National Group for People and Fatherland revives

The Christian Democrats have lost one National Council seat in each of the cantons of St. Gall and Jura, but they can win these back again in four years' time. The other parties in the middle-class and liberal group have just about been able to hold their own: the Swiss People's Party has lost a seat in Berne and won one in Freiburg with Joseph Cottet; for the Liberal Party, a journalist from Geneva, Jacques-Simon Eggly, takes the place of a representative from Basle; the Independents have lost a seat in Basle (rural) whereas Basle (urban) has gained Hansjürg Weder, an ecologist and opponent of atomic power stations.

The third big winner, after the Radical Democrats and the Ecologists, is the anti-foreigner group, the National Group for People and Fatherland and the Vigilance. They have increased the number of their seats in the National Council from three to five. The Vigilance has managed to consolidate Mario Soldini's seat in Geneva. The National Group for People and Fatherland have doubled the number of their representatives in Berne and in Zurich. However, they still have a long way to go to reach the level they attained in 1971 (eleven representatives altogether).

Rassemblement jurassien: collapse

On top of everything else – a heavy defeat for the Rassemblement jurassien in the cantons of Berne and Jura. Berne: the Autonomous Movement has lost its only representative in that splendid Autonomous Socialist, Jean-Claude Crevoisier; Jura: half the Movement's representatives in the federal councils are out; there remain only the Senator

Roger Schaffter (a Christian Democrat) and the National Councillor Valentine Friedli (a Social Democrat). Both the other seats have gone to the hitherto anti-separatist formation of the Radical Democrats. Schaffter is the sole survivor from the legislative period 1979–1983. This failure is due to differences of opinion within the parties of the Rassemblement jurassien and the Christian Democrats. Jean Wilhelm was barred from the Christian Democratic Party and campaigned on a list of his own. The only Social Christian, Gabriel Roy, has also lost his mandate.

The number of representatives from the French-speaking part of Berne has fallen slightly from six to five (in comparison with 29 Bernese elected) whereas strict proportion would actually entail a total of three seats. It is something of a mixed bag with Jean Clivaz, a Socialist from Valais and President of the Swiss Union of Railway Employees, next to Bernese Radical Democrat

Raoul Kohler, and three Anti-separatists from the Bernese Jura: Jean-Paul Gehler from the Swiss People's Party, and Marc-André Hounard and Geneviève Aubry, both Radical Democrats.

Other changes

Two staunch Anti-communists have arrived on the scene – a Radical Democrat from Zurich, Ernst Cincera (who set up a private archive of people suspected of subversion), and a Bernese, Peter Sager, from the People's Party (Director of the Swiss Eastern Institute).

The number of lady representatives remains the same. There are 25 women altogether – 22 in the National Council and 3 in the Senate. During their first three periods in office, they gained continuously – 11 in 1971, 15 in 1975 and, finally, 24 in 1979. Today they are on firm ground. Leni Robert from Berne, previously a Radical Democrat and dedicated ecologist, is one of the most astonishing newcomers. For the ladies this is only a pause for breath.

Georges Plomb

The new distribution of power

(G.Pb) The Government and the Parliament are now shared amongst thirteen political parties and groupings, as opposed to fourteen up to now, as a result of the federal elections of 23rd October.

	Federal Council	National Council	Council of States (Senate)
Parties in power			
Radical Democratic Party	2	54 (+ 3)	14 (+ 3)
Christian Democratic Party	2	42 (– 2)	18
Social Democratic Party	2	47 (– 4)	6 (– 3)
Swiss People's Party	1	23	5
Other parties in Parliament			
Liberal Party		8	3
Independent Union		8	
Evangelical Party		3	
National Group for People and Fatherland		4 (+ 2)	
Vigilance (Geneva)		1	
Progressive Organisation		3 (+ 1)	
Communists (Party of Labour)		1 (– 2)	
Autonomous Socialist Party		1 (– 1)	
Group for the Protection of the Environment		5 (+ 4)	
Independent Social Christians' Party		0 (– 1)	
Total	7	200	46

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