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# Life with the «Magic Formula»

Oskar Reck was born in 1920 and spent his childhood in the Canton of Aargau. He studied in Zurich (Journalists' Training College of the University) and Geneva and Berne (political economy).

Since the end of the Second World War, Oskar Reck has been a journalist. He was editor-in-chief of the «Thurgauer Zeitung» and later of the «Basler Nachrichten». He was a member of the federal commission of experts for total conception of the media and is at present president of the independent complaints body for radio and television. For ten years, he was a member of the Thurgau Parliament and Central President of the New Helvetic Society from 1964 to 1969.

Has Switzerland, whose existence nobody doubts and which is still in a comfortable economic and social position, remained an Elysium? Foreign observers are inclined to agree. There is little of excitement to report from Switzerland, possibly the banking secrecy or contested chemical products. In our own media, one gets excited mostly about matters of minor importance, for it is only exceptionally that there is something to report which is above average.

Yet this picture of calm is deceptive. For it is the result of our scant readiness to follow the social and political developments when they undergo only inconspicuous change. Switzerland is neither an immovable country nor does it offer the slightest guarantee for continued well-being. Within just a few years, we ask ourselves with amazement why we never noticed the many signs of recognizable change. The answer is simply because we did not want to see them.

When, three years ago, the Zurich youth disturbances calmed down as if they had only been a nasty phantom, we had nothing more urgent to do than to return to

normal. Yet it was obvious that under the calm Swiss surface, a very alarming state of the country was hidden. The same can still be said of the Social Democratic Party Conference last February. Its theme was whether this second-largest party – after the Radical Liberals – should remain in the Government or leave it. Once it was decided to continue the present practice, the media immediately lost all interest and nothing more important seemed indicated than to return immediately to Helvetic everyday life. That is where one was again amongst the like-minded with regard to the importance of problems.

It is a fact that a quarter of a century under the «magic formula» is unequalled in any country's political life. No other democracy shows so much practical continuity. But we should not pretend that the Ruetli Oath was re-enacted in 1959, and that, in 1984, Social Democratism had done nothing short of saving Switzerland from disaster just in time. The «magic formula» had nothing to do with a miracle when it was introduced. It was simply time to include the Social Democrats in the Government, up to then only «buergerlich». In the middle of economic boom and development of the welfare state, this was the simple consequence of political development. The result was not a coalition on a foreign model nor a solid governmental alliance. Each party was free to decide on any political matter according to its own conscience.

Since 1959, this practice has simply been continued, for it is not in the federalist character of Switzerland to engage in the politics of majority and Opposi-