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Peaceful demonstration in Federal Square: on March 10 about 10 000 men and women demanded the election of a woman to the Federal Council. (Photo: RDZ)

IMPRESSUM

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 20th year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 298,000. Regional news appear four times a year.

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« In the last several decades many countries – all of which were patriarchal societies – have brought women into their governments. It started in Germany in 1961, then came Indira Gandhi in 1966, Golda Meir in 1969 and Margaret Thatcher ten years later. After that Iceland and Norway in 1980 and 1981, Germany again in 1985, Corazon Aquino in the Philippines in 1986, Mary Robinson in Ireland in 1990 and then Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua. And now we can add Poland, Liechtenstein and finally Switzerland. »

In international terms it was relatively late – 1983 – when the first woman tried unsuccessfully to get into the Swiss government. And after the election of Elizabeth Kopp as the first woman federal councillor in 1984 ten years were to go by before a second woman, Ruth Dreifuss, was elected on March 10, 1993. This happened after the original Socialists' choice, Christiane Brunner, virtually the political twin of Mrs. Dreifuss, had been forced to bow out. In spite of her undisputed qualities, Mrs. Brunner did not appeal to the mainly male parliament, nor indeed to quite a few lady members, because of her unconventional and sometimes abrasive manner. Another problem was seen in a curriculum vitae which was a little off-centre, although not untypical for a modern woman; and then there was the obligatory mud-slinging, from which of course men also suffer. But has anyone heard it said that a man failed to get a place in the government because of his CV or his manner?

The electors had not reckoned with the solidarity "from the

streets" which was mobilised during the week following Mrs. Brunner's rejection. They were forced to present a second woman candidate, to whom the duly elected Francis Matthey finally had to give way – in spite of his undisputed qualities.

This was how the defeat of one woman was turned overnight into the victory of another. And woman power was not confined to the federal level. In many cantons and municipalities women profited from the «Brunner effect» – which is the main subject of this Swiss Review – in both legislative and executive bodies. We shall have to wait and see whether this women's spring will carry on to become a fruitful summer.

Our society seems almost incapable of meeting such a challenge at a time of meteoric progress in all walks of life, sometimes leading to loss of direction. But this does not mean that women will again wait for years on the margins of professional and political life. Equality between the sexes does not mean that men and women will become the same; that would serve no one's purpose. What is needed is the integration of feminine qualities, thought processes and feelings into the world of men – and vice versa. Only in this way can the dangerous dichotomy of the male and female worlds be overcome and the enormous problems involved totally resolved by a gigantic joint effort.



H. Willumat

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