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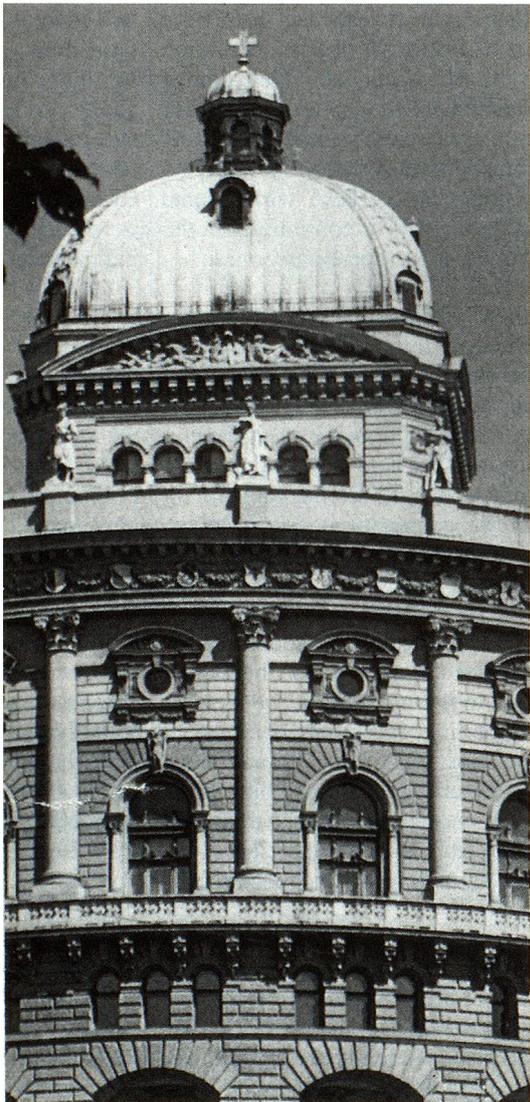
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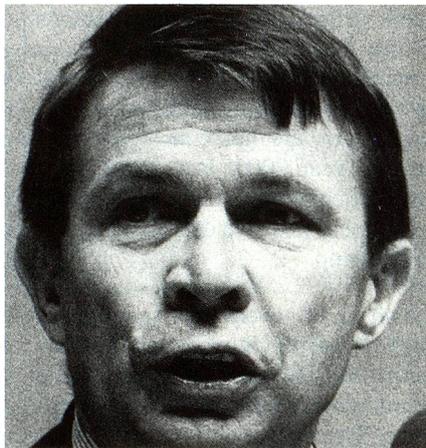
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Five questions to the leaders of the parties represented in the Federal Assembly

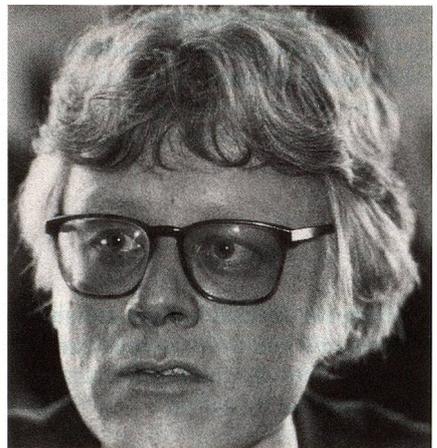


(Photos: Keystone/zvg)



Franz Steinegger

Liberal Democratic Party (FDP)
Seats in the National Council: 44
Seats in the Council of States: 18



Peter Bodenmann

Social Democratic Party (SP)
Seats in the National Council: 43
Seats in the Council of States: 3



Anton Cottier

Christian Democratic Party (CVP)
Seats in the National Council: 37
Seats in the Council of States: 16



Hans Uhlmann

Swiss People's Party (SVP)
Seats in the National Council: 25
Seats in the Council of States: 4

Five questions to the leaders of the parties represented in the Federal Assembly



Liberal Democratic Party

Election goal: To push voter participation up towards the 25% mark and remain the strongest party.



Christian Democratic Party

Election goal: To gain three extra seats in the National Council and one in the Council of States.



Social Democratic Party

Election goal: Voter participation above 20%, more women, more seats in the lower and 3 more in the upper house.



Swiss People's Party

Election goal: To maintain the present number of seats in both houses and if possible to increase them.



Green Party of Switzerland

Election goal: The Greens should remain the fifth biggest party (the biggest outside the governing coalition).



Liberal Party

Election goal: To maintain our position and make a breakthrough where we have candidates for the first or second time.

Why should the Swiss Abroad vote for your party in particular?

Because the FDP is both open to the world and tied to the homeland. 150 years ago it was the party that founded our state. Today it safeguards the valuable heritage of our forefathers but is at the same time determined that Switzerland should maintain its place in Europe and the world. So that it can take off once more.

As a coalition member and a party of the people the Christian Democrats (CVP) favour policies taking minority interests into account. This means that the party gives priority to the concerns of the Fifth Switzerland. With Elisabeth Hall-Zeller it has a Swiss Abroad on the CVP women's list in Canton St. Gall for the National Council elections.

We do not expect the votes of all Swiss Abroad. People in favour of a social, environmentally friendly and open Switzerland will vote for us. The Social Democratic Party (SP) is the only coalition member with a clear attitude towards European integration. It also has more women in the National Council than all three centre-right parties together.

A solid middle class is the main buttress of the survival and prosperity of our country. The SVP represents this middle class which is today being pressurised from all sides. In addition, the SVP is in favour of those values which are threatened in a society subjected to rapid change. This makes it particularly attractive for Swiss Abroad.

For the same reason that "the Swiss at home" vote for us: global, ecological and social problems need new solutions. The Greens represent the new ecological way of thinking. More green is needed in politics!

From the outset the Liberal Party (L) was in favour of giving the Swiss Abroad the right to vote. Rejuvenation, federalism, reconsidering the role of the government and of subsidies are pursuing an integration policy with the EU are our main political aims. In the next parliament most likely to interest the Swiss Abroad.

After concluding the bilateral talks should Switzerland start entry negotiations with the European Union?

The results must first be approved by voters. Afterwards both the decisions of the EU intergovernmental conference and the situation at home will have to be carefully analysed. Entry negotiations are not conceivable before the year 2000. But comprehensive participation in the development of Europe is possible only through EU membership.

The CVP supports the bilateral negotiations since we can use them as a good basis for further cooperation with the EU. After the conclusion of this agreement the opening up of our country will not yet be complete. Starting entry negotiations or a second referendum on the EEA will become possible as ways of continuing on the road towards European integration.

The difficult bilateral negotiations will give us less than the EEA would have done, and we shall have to pay for that. After these talks are concluded Switzerland will have to negotiate its entry into the EU. There will be voter majorities only if policies take account of the anxieties of people by means of Euro-compatible flanking measures.

The SVP cannot agree to the EU with the structures and objectives which it has today. For this reason we have inserted into our party manifesto this sentence: "Membership of the European Union is not a goal of Swiss foreign policy". The SVP supports the Federal Council in its efforts to reach a successful conclusion to the bilateral negotiations.

Yes. The bilateral road can provide solutions to individual problems. But comprehensive and binding international cooperation is needed for the future. We favour the immediate start of entry negotiations with the EU.

The Liberals think that once the results of the branch-by-branch bilateral negotiations have been assessed the next step is to decide the right moment to reactivate the request to join the European Union.

About the federal budget deficit: Where do you think money can be saved? How do you think extra revenue can be raised?

The share of government spending is much too high in Switzerland. For this reason the FDP is basically against the federal government raising extra revenue. The budget deficit must be reduced by savings measures: changing the financial offset system, thinning out the subsidy thicket, increasing efficiency at all levels of government.

For the CVP extra revenue can be considered only if the federal government shows clearly that it is serious about saving money. Our country has been much too perfectionist in its spending habits; only the best was good enough. We must change this mentality. If in future we choose second-best solutions, say in road building, we can save a great deal of money.

Switzerland could halve the cost of its army. This would save the state and the private sector three billion francs each every year. We would still have the strongest army in Europe for the size of the country. Today one billion is spent on butter and cheese. That is too much. The government could obtain goods and services more cheaply if it did away with the monopolies.

No further fleecing of the citizen is acceptable. The SVP is in principle against new revenue. It is in favour of sensible saving. There are possibilities for this, particularly in asylum matters, foreign relations/development assistance, abuse of the unemployment insurance scheme and government housing projects.

We support the Federal Council's aim of reducing the budget deficit: 50% savings, 50% new revenue. Savings in civil defence, road building, the military, atomic energy; more revenue mainly from increasing the tobacco and petrol taxes.

The Liberals believe that automatically prolonging federal subsidies should stop. There should be checks whether they are still necessary. Things that the federal government obviously must do (e.g. social security) should be more carefully targeted.

What measures would you take to ensure that the Swiss Abroad have access to the Swiss social security system?

The FDP believes that the excellent old-age insurance by international comparison which the Swiss Abroad have via the state pension scheme must be maintained in all future revisions. For this reason it defended Swiss Abroad interests strongly in the campaign for the tenth revision. We shall do the same for the eleventh.

The CVP principle, "No social security cutbacks", applies to the Swiss Abroad too. For example, we were in the front line in support of the new sickness insurance law. This addresses an important concern of the Swiss Abroad since it means that they will be able to re-enter the insurance system on their return to Switzerland.

Many problems can be solved within the framework of national law. Others require mutual recognition in the context of international agreements. One thing is sure: The best thing for the Swiss Abroad would be if the provisions of EU directives were applicable to them. Both inside and outside Europe.

The bilateral social security agreements should be supplemented. If the optional state pension scheme for the Swiss Abroad have to disappear as a result of EU membership, an alternative of equal value should be worked out in good time.

EU membership would for the most part solve this problem for Swiss Abroad living in EU countries. At the same time more far-reaching agreements and the possibility of remaining in the Swiss social security system should be envisaged.

In the framework of European integration the problem of coordinating different social security systems will have to be resolved. The important thing is to ensure that the Swiss Abroad have adequate security (particularly old-age pensions).

A Swiss citizen holding a foreign diploma and wishing to complete his education in Switzerland is often faced with almost insuperable problems. How would you help?

Switzerland must always be open to the Swiss Abroad. The FDP is in favour of equal admission conditions to our universities and the recognition of certificates obtained abroad. Also: FDP International provides information for the Swiss Abroad.

We are in favour of the gradual introduction of free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU. This should also ensure mutual recognition of diplomas. It is also in the interest of the Swiss Abroad wishing to complete their education in Switzerland or look for work here.

In many areas we are still on a high horse and have the impression that the education available in our own country is the only type which will satisfy the requirements of the future. This still applies even to many cantonal diplomas. Switzerland can take action here regardless of international agreements and European integration.

The aim should be to include provisions for mutual recognition of diplomas in international treaties. Not only should Swiss diplomas have validity abroad, but also equivalent foreign diplomas should be accepted in Switzerland. Where foreign certificates are not equivalent bridging courses or training leading to supplementary examinations should be made available.

Quite simply through less restrictive recognition regulations. Here EU membership would solve some of the problems. But progress is also possible without joining the EU. In principle, as few barriers as possible should stand in the way of education.

The Liberals recognise that there may be differences in the way diplomas are regarded in various countries. But there should certainly be a trend towards mutual recognition of the diplomas which may be considered of equivalent value.

Freiheits-Partei
Die Auto-Partei

LdU

SD 

 **EVP**



PdA

EDU

Freedom Party

National Association of Independents

Swiss Democrats

Evangelical People's Party

Ticino League

Labour Party

Federal-Democratic Union

Election goal: To win seats.

Election goal: To maintain the present number of seats or gain one more.

Election goal: To maintain their five present National Council seats and add two more.

Election goal: To increase voter participation and gain two new seats.

Election goal: Voter participation at 25% in Ticino, two National Council seats.

Election goal: To form a parliamentary group (minimum five seats).

Election goal: To maintain the present and get a second seat in Berne. In Aargau, Zurich and Vaud one seat each.

In our opinion the Swiss Abroad remain closely linked to Switzerland. The Freedom Party (FP) are in favour of the survival of the Confederation and the maintenance of the people's rights. We support an opening up of Switzerland towards the rest of the world provided it is based on mutual respect and acceptance.

Because the National Association of Independents (LdU) has always been in favour of a Switzerland open to the world and has once again proved this in European questions. Host countries are more likely to be positively disposed towards Swiss citizens if our country does not isolate itself.

The Swiss Democrats (SD) campaign for as much independence as possible and maintaining the neutrality of our country. The 20% of foreigners here, foreign influence and overpopulation must be reduced.

Because the Evangelical People's Party (EVP) has an open attitude towards Europe and the rest of the world. It campaigned in favour of joining the UN and the EEA. In view of the prevailing feeling amongst voters EU membership is not a subject of discussion at present. But the bilateral negotiations must be continued and a decision reached soon.

Ticinese Abroad (not Swiss Abroad) should vote for the Ticino League for two reasons: a) because they had to leave their much-loved homeland due to a politically and economically unfavourable climate; b) because the League campaigns to ensure that every Ticinese is able to work and live well in Ticino in freedom and democracy.

The Labour Party (PdA) represents policies which take into account the needs of all people throughout the world and are aimed at stopping the plundering of resources and the destruction of nature. As a contribution to such policies of solidarity we wish to strengthen the socialist movement in our country and fight for more justice for all disadvantaged people.

The Federal Democratic Union (EDU) is the only genuine independent party. In its thinking, speaking and behaviour it considers itself bound by the principles of the Bible only. It has a sense of responsibility towards all fellow citizens. It is of the opinion that the personal responsibility of the individual should not be replaced and taken away by government resources and action.

We support the bilateral negotiations and hope that they will be brought to a reasonable conclusion. But negotiations to enter the EU in its present form are out of the question for us! We believe that federalist thinking and safeguarding the people's rights are not yet developed in the EU of 1995 – or at least not enough.

In the National Council the LdU has proposed that entry negotiations should begin even during the bilateral talks. At all events they must take place after the bilateral talks have ended.

The SD/Lega group in the Federal Assembly has handed in a popular initiative "EU entry negotiations for the people to decide". We reject entry to the centralist and undemocratic EU. In spite of this, as a country open to the world we will remain economically and politically successful.

This question cannot be asked in all sincerity if the bilateral negotiations are to be taken seriously. First the results must be considered, and then the whole question will have to be reassessed. One thing is sure: Switzerland is part of Europe and cannot remain isolated permanently.

Good Lord! Switzerland is stronger than it is being made to appear in the bilateral negotiations. Do not forget that it is the seat of many public and private institutions, both foreign and national. Our economic power is big enough to keep us from being blackmailed. There should be no concessions.

Yes. Switzerland must join the EU, but at the same time it should campaign for renegotiating the Maastricht Treaties on a much more social basis and work against the concept of Fortress Europe and unequal development opportunities. The objective is a progressive and social Europe of regions, demilitarised and democratic.

No. Our country should be open to the world and not just bound to Europe. In the past Switzerland has shown solidarity with the whole world. This should continue in the future in the context of neutrality. The European integration envisaged contains great disadvantages: limitation of popular rights, only one foreign policy, separating Europe from the rest of the world.

There is potential for saving money in the administration, public transport, social security and so-called development assistance. For the FP there is absolutely no question of extra revenue before government activity has been reduced to the indispensable.

Subsidies could be simplified and tightened up. Big savings are possible by making public procurement more subject to market forces. Further opportunities exist in agriculture and road building.

The Swiss Democrats are against new and higher taxes and are in favour of consistent cost-cutting. Hundreds of millions of francs are squandered on asylum matters, and there is also a large potential for saving on uncontrollable multilateral development assistance.

The EVP supported the austerity proposals of the Federal Council (in contrast to the coalition parties). Savings potential is possible in subsidies (reduction of them all from the present high levels). Increased revenue from Value Added Tax (to improve state pensions, social security and maternity insurance) is possible only to a limited degree.

It would be better to talk about monetary policy. Public indebtedness should rise and interest rates should fall. If the Swiss National Bank were to print 10,000 franc notes and distribute them to all Swiss citizens the currency would hardly depreciate while domestic consumption would rise.

We see opportunities for saving money, particularly in the military. We demand a direct federal tax on the property of individuals and firms. Together with an effective struggle against tax evasion, this should provide the billions of francs required to safeguard social achievements and eradicate the budget deficit.

If all the present activities of the state are still to be covered, there are only very few or even no savings possibilities. A new definition of government tasks must be considered. The burden of taxation, levies and social security in Switzerland is becoming unbearable. Increasing taxes would be irresponsible.

It must remain possible for the Swiss Abroad to be members of the Swiss social security system. This seems to us particularly important with the state pension scheme. In addition, Swiss citizens living abroad should be able to "buy back" into the existing social security system if they finally return to Switzerland.

Following the tenth revision of the state pension scheme, the whole question of demographic development should be dealt with in an eleventh revision.

In parliament the Swiss Democrats were in favour of giving the Swiss Abroad access to the social security system, just as they were against discrimination against the Swiss Abroad on the revision of the Lex Friedrich.

A very complex subject which in the long term can be regulated only through discussions and agreements between the states concerned. But in principle the EVP wholeheartedly supports the inclusion of the Swiss Abroad in the existing social security network.

This is simple enough. All Swiss Abroad must be integrated completely into the Swiss social security and pension system.

For years we have been proposing a uniform general system of social security based on the principle of solidarity. It should function regardless of sex and marital status, and the present state pension scheme should be turned into a genuine people's pension scheme ensuring a decent existence for all, including those Swiss Abroad who participate.

A special fund for the Swiss Abroad (within the state pension scheme) should be set up. This would include a bridge permitting appropriate access to the second pillar (the occupational benefit scheme). This "supplementary state pension scheme" could be financed by a tax on foreign cash deposits in Switzerland.

Mutual recognition of diplomas is important and should be dealt with as soon as possible in bilateral agreements based on reciprocity. Of course the minimum requirements which the holder of a diploma must have should be defined!

Many of these problems would be solved by EU membership, which we want. We are in any case in favour of an open admissions policy – and not only for the Swiss Abroad.

The SD is not opposed to mutual recognition between foreign and Swiss education diplomas. A solution should certainly be found particularly for our own compatriots which excludes any kind of discrimination.

Standards must be mutually recognised internationally and through negotiations. This should be done as soon as possible. In addition, the education system should contain generous special provisions for the Swiss Abroad provided certain prerequisites are met.

Swiss Abroad should encounter no problems in continuing their education in Switzerland. Full stop. Let all the know-alls put that in their pipes and smoke it!

We are in favour of mutual recognition of equivalent diplomas regardless of the national origin of their holders. Naturally, the Swiss Abroad should also benefit from this.

Foreign diplomas should be recognised after examining the standard reached by the Swiss Abroad or foreign national in question. Where the foreign diploma itself has been assessed and found acceptable a further individual examination would not be necessary.



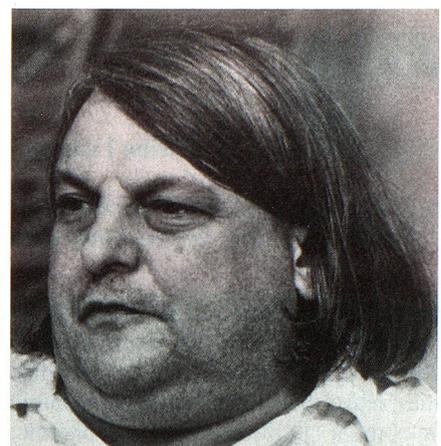
Hanspeter Thür

Green Party of Switzerland (Grüne)
Seats in the National Council: 14
Seats in the Council of States: None



Monika Weber

National Association of Independents (LdU)
Seats in the National Council: 6
Seats in the Council of States: 1



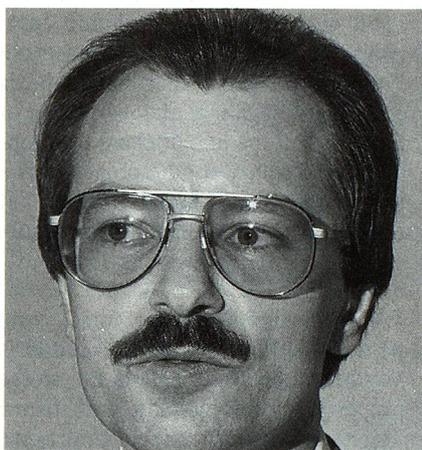
Giuliano Bignasca

Lega dei Ticinesi (Lega)
Seats in the National Council: 2
Seats in the Council of States: 1



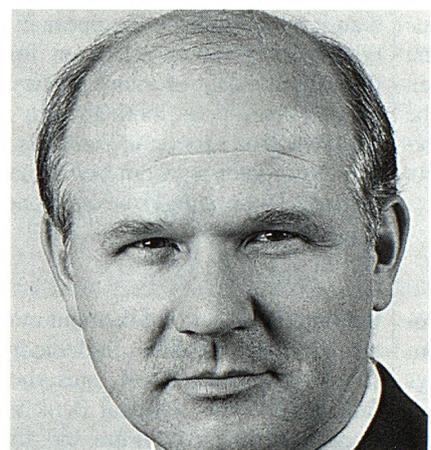
François Jeanneret

Liberal Party (LP)
Seats in the National Council: 10
Seats in the Council of States: 3



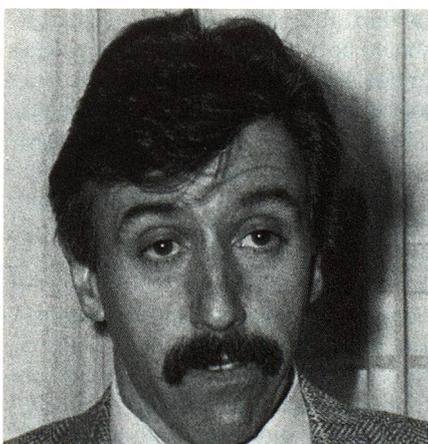
Rudolf Keller

Swiss Democrats (SD)
Seats in the National Council: 5
Seats in the Council of States: None



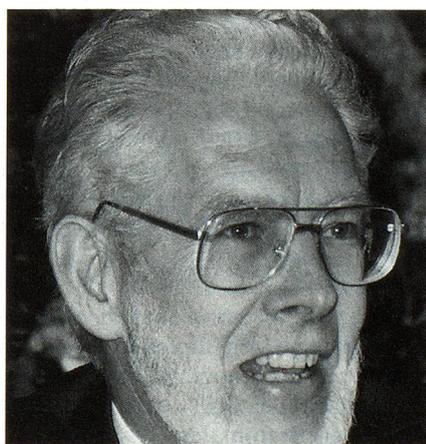
Jean Spielmann

Labour Party (PdA)
Seats in the National Council: 2
Seats in the Council of States: None



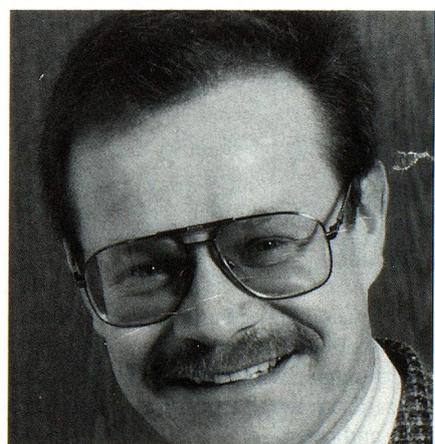
Roland Borer

Freedom Party (FP)
Seats in the National Council: 8
Seats in the Council of States: None



Otto Zwygart

Evangelical People's Party (EVP)
Seats in the National Council: 3
Seats in the Council of States: None



Christian Waber

Federal-Democratic Union (EDU)
Seats in the National Council: 1
Seats in the Council of States: None