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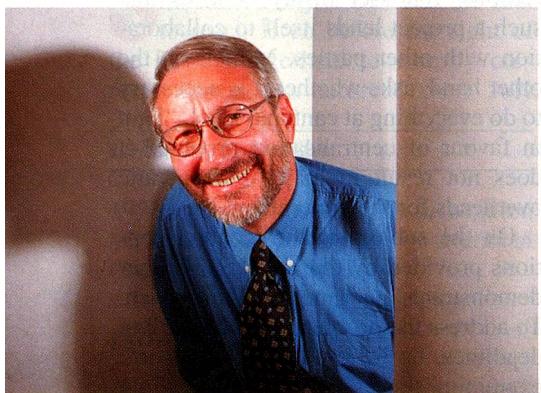
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Interview with National Council candidate Pierre-Alain Bolomey

“I want to represent the interests of the Fifth Switzerland”

As well as being entitled to vote by correspondence in the National Council elections, Swiss Abroad also have the right to stand as candidates. Their chances of election, however, are relatively slim. What motivated you to stand for election nonetheless? The chances of a Swiss Abroad being elected have never been so good as at



(Photo: ZVG)

Pierre-Alain Bolomey is 50 years old and is the general representative of SBB Cargo in Brussels. He has been a member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad since 1992.

present. The reasons behind my decision to stand as candidate are firstly my conviction that a Swiss Abroad can bring fresh impetus to Swiss politics and devote his energies to opening up Switzerland more to the world (UNO, EU). Secondly, I feel it is necessary to defend the interests of the Fifth Switzerland, which in particular harbours some expectations with respect to social security (voluntary AHV/IV) and the mobility of the younger population.

I assume you decided to stand in the canton of Vaud because you were born there. Is that the only reason?

Like all Swiss I have deep roots in the city of my birth, in my case Lausanne, which is also where I studied. I have relatives, friends and business contacts there. I am also a dyed-in-the-wool Vaudois, as my name indicates.

You are standing as candidate on a Social Democrat list. Yet that party

has never shown any particular awareness of the problems of the Fifth Switzerland ...

I admit that the parties are still not active enough in addressing Swiss Abroad problems. Targeted efforts are required to raise their level of awareness, and it is the aim of myself and other colleagues to promote the interests of the Fifth Switzerland within the SP.

How would you convince a Swiss expatriate that he should vote for you?

Above and beyond any party-political agendas, I am first and foremost a candidate for the Swiss Abroad, a member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad, and of the "Swiss Review" programme committee. Our country must be able to count on its compatriots abroad in order to enhance its image and initiate a policy of openness which will benefit all – the economy as well as the man in the street.

At the federal level Swiss Abroad are primarily worried about the reforms to the voluntary AHV/IV. What is your view on the Federal Council's new proposals?

These proposals are unacceptable in their present form; they are neither clear-cut nor based on credible statistics. I am not against a change in the voluntary AHV/IV, but this insurance must address the actual needs of our compatriots abroad, particularly in terms of promoting mobility.

I know that you are a firm believer in Europe and support the ratification of the bilateral agreements. But there is a need for accompanying measures to safeguard against social dumping and in the area of transportation ...

The bilateral agreements are an essential prerequisite for our rapprochement with the EU. Adequate measures in the field of personal mobility and the overland transportation of goods are required in order to achieve the set goals and facilitate their acceptance within Switzerland. The Federal Council and parliament are aware of this need. We must prevent any abortion of the agreements

as happened in 1992 with the project to join the EEA.

Should you be elected, your parliamentary activities would take up more than 50 percent of your time. Would you actually be able to exercise your mandate, particularly in view of the travelling time between Brussels and Berne?

It's all a matter of organisation! I have the full support of my family and my employer, and if I am elected I am prepared to fulfill my mandate 100 percent. To me, attending parliamentary sessions in Berne is no more complicated than a Finnish member of the European Parliament attending sessions in Strasbourg ...

Any conscientious member of parliament tends to specialise in two or three areas. What would you focus on?

I am particularly interested in foreign policy (EU, UNO) and the problems associated with Switzerland's asylum policy. In my capacity as a transportation expert I am keeping a close eye on the moves to co-ordinate transport policy (rail/road) in Europe. And as a resident of Belgium, a land where differences of opinion between the various segments of the population is the order of the day, I am also very much committed to the preservation of Switzerland's national and social unity.

How would you rate your chances of election?

My candidature has found very positive acceptance. Witness the fact that the SP delegates for Vaud placed me in fifth position in their list of 17. I am an optimist by nature, not afraid of confrontation, and speak fluent Swiss-German. My message to the 7000 or so Swiss Abroad who are registered on the electoral roll of the canton of Vaud is, "Exercise your civil rights in the federal elections this autumn. And if you want it, you could elect the first Swiss Abroad from Vaud to the National Council!"

Interview: Pierre-André Tschanz ■