

Elections : SVP finds less favour with Swiss abroad

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SVP finds less favour with Swiss Abroad



Miguel Spinedi, a Swiss living in Buenos Aires, regularly casts his vote at federal referenda and elections.

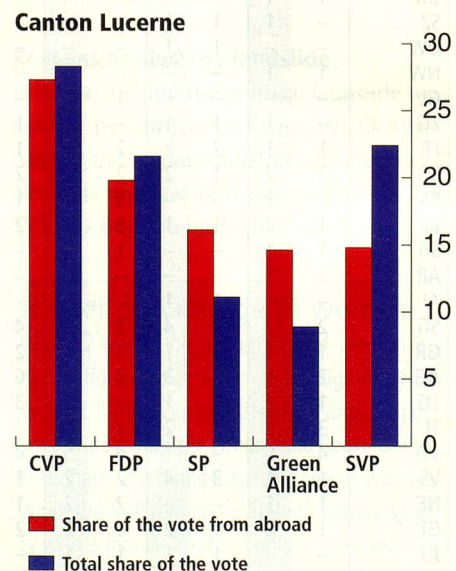
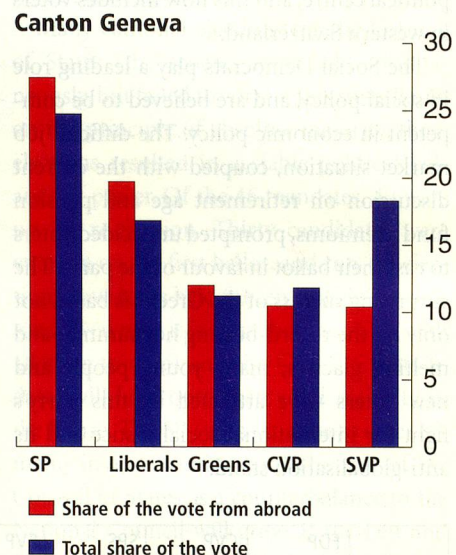
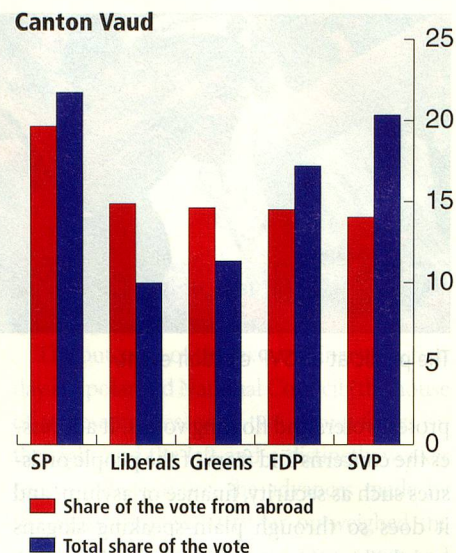
The Swiss People's Party (SVP) won some sympathy among Swiss Abroad, though less than at home. By contrast, the Left scored higher votes.

GABRIELLE KELLER

ONLY THREE CANTONS count votes from abroad separately: Geneva, Lucerne and Vaud. The results clearly show that the People's Party has also gained ground among voters abroad, though to a lesser

extent than at home (the difference varied between 6.3 percent in Vaud and 7.9 percent in Geneva). Despite this, all three cantons showed a clear rise in SVP votes.

As predicted by the GfS survey (see "Swiss Review" 04/2003), Swiss Abroad in these three cantons tended to vote Social Democ-



rat or Green, though to a lesser extent than assumed. This trend was particularly marked in Lucerne, where 30.7 percent of Swiss Abroad voted Red and Green compared to the cantonal average of only 20 percent.

Low turnout

The turnout among Swiss Abroad was 42.7 percent in the cantons of Geneva and Lucerne (compared to 46 and 49.1 percent respectively for voters at home), and 39.3 percent (4.7 percent) in Vaud. In Geneva and Vaud the turnout was higher than in 1999 (35.4 and 33.5 percent) but slightly lower in Lucerne (43.5 percent). But the fact that at least 15 Swiss Abroad candidates stood for election shows how awareness of the political power of the Fifth Switzerland has risen, at least among the political parties who included expatriate candidates on their list.

Missed target

The Swiss Abroad candidate who won the largest number of votes was Rolf Schudel, a businessman resident in South Africa. Since the People's Party presented a Swiss Abroad list in canton Basle with Schudel, a member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad, at its head, he was in a relatively good starting position compared to the other candidates. Nevertheless he won only 730 votes, missing his target by over 20,000 votes. Schudel's comment: "Naturally it's difficult to run a campaign abroad as well as at home, and we simply lacked the necessary funds." But he is a good loser: "The campaign was most enjoyable, and I'll be back in four years time."

Four years ago the OSA gave Social Democrat Pierre-Alain Bolomey, also a member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad, the greatest chance of success. Only 2000 votes stood between him and a seat in parliament.

To date, no Swiss Abroad has ever succeeded in winning a seat in parliament. During the past legislature there were two Swiss Abroad in parliament – man and wife Ruedi and Stephanie Baumann – but they were not elected as such and did not stand for re-election. During their term of office they emigrated to the south of France to run an organic farm.


Fighters for the Fifth Switzerland

There were successes for many members of parliament who live in Switzerland but ac-



Rolf Schudel, the unsuccessful SVP National Council candidate from South Africa (r.), with SVP faction president and National Councillor Caspar Baader, both campaigning for Basle Country constituency.

tively represent the interests of Swiss Abroad. Chief among them was OSA Vice President and National Councillor Jacques-Simon Eggly (LPS/GE), whose efforts were rewarded with 34,709 votes (including 1753 from abroad). The following members of the Council for the Swiss Abroad were also re-elected to the National Council: Yves Guisan (FDP/VD), Remo Gysin (SPS/BS), Johannes Randegger (FDP/BS) and Rosmarie Zapfl (CVP/ZH). In a second ballot, Filippo Lombardi (CVP/TI) was re-elected to the Council of States.

Despite his commitment, member of the Council and AJAS President Remo Galli (CVP/BE) failed to be re-elected. Likewise Sylvain Astier (FDP/BE) lost his seat. 

Translated from German.

INTERNET

www.aso.ch, www.parlament.ch, www.gfs.ch, www.admin.ch, www.ch.ch, www.vd.ch, www.swisspolitics.org, www.lu.ch, www.ge.ch

"On the way to Haiderism"

Most European media reported objectively, though with regret, on the advances made by the SVP in Switzerland's recent general election. Political observers from further afield reacted more critically.

The Russian media talked about a victory for "far-right nationalists", while the Algerian, Peruvian and Australian press went so far as to cast doubt on our country's humanitarian tradition. Reactions in Europe were more muted, with the exception of the "Independent" which questioned whether, under the

circumstances, Switzerland could continue to be regarded as a haven for asylum seekers. The report in the French daily "Le Monde" was a little more critical. Under the headline "A racist Switzerland", it described the SVP as "an anti-European party which fought an anti-foreigner election campaign". The left-wing daily "Libération" wrote of a "threat to Switzerland's political stability". The Italian media also expressed concern about Switzerland's political balance of power. "La Repubblica" decried the growing trend towards political polarisation in our country. Spain's "El Mundo" commented that "Switzerland has taken another step closer to Haiderism" while the Austrian "Standard" gave an objective report but described Christoph Blocher without comment as a "political dinosaur". gk