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Election campaign speeches

- 5 Mailbag
- 5 Books
A Swiss writer in Iceland
- 8 Focus
A look back at four years in politics
- 13 Column
Georg Kohler on the magic formula
- 14 Politics
Survey amongst the political parties
- Regional news
- 17 Literature series
Silvio Huonder: a native of Grisons in Berlin
- 18 Politics
Who voted for and against the issues that concern the Swiss Abroad?
- 22 Voting instructions
- 24 Sport
Timea Bacsinszky enjoys sudden success
- 26 OSA news
- 28 Notes from Parliament
- 30 Little gems and echo



Today is 1 August and Swiss National Day. It is raining. Sitting at one's desk to work is not a chore. It is not exactly torrential rain outside nor a summer thunderstorm. Just gentle rain from a grey overcast sky. It is as though the heavens are weeping.

Lots of eloquent, patriotic and clever speeches will almost certainly be made in Switzerland today. Many of them will have already been forgotten by the time you receive this magazine in a few weeks' time. Perhaps more speeches will be made this year than usual. After all, there is an election campaign going on and Switzerland finds itself in a state of profound uncertainty.

"OECD predicts negligible growth for Switzerland," was one headline a few days ago. Another read: "SECO lowers its projection for the Swiss economy". Yesterday's "20 Minuten" reported: "A foreigner enters Switzerland every 3.6 seconds." That is 24,000 a day. The commuter newspaper "20 Minuten" has 535,000 daily readers. "Asylum chaos" and the "influx of refugees" have been reported on 210 times by Swiss newspapers over the past month. Immigration is a major issue in this election campaign. One side is calling for rigid isolationism while the other is desperately pointing to our humanitarian tradition. Everyone is aware that the issue is only going to get bigger in future. Neither border fences nor starry-eyed idealism can prevent that.

We do not cover immigration in this edition but will undoubtedly return to the issue in future. However, we have invited two foreign journalists living in Switzerland to share their views on Swiss politics and the election campaign with us in this issue. Their articles can be found on pages 8 and 9, accompanied by analysis from a Swiss political scientist.

The question that will concern the Swiss Abroad in the run-up to the elections will almost certainly be which party and which candidates can I expect to represent my interests as a Swiss citizen abroad? A look back at the work of Parliament over the past four years may prove insightful in this respect, so we have examined the voting behaviour of the parliamentary groups on all proposals relevant to the Swiss Abroad. You will find our analysis on page 18. We hope it inspires you to vote and makes your decision easier.

BARBARA ENGEL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Cover photo
The highly secure entrance to the Parliament building in Berne.
Photo: Alessandro Della Valle