

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 46 (2019)
Heft: 6

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Don’t worry, I will come to the federal elections of 20 October 2019 in a moment. But first I want to turn to the place where Swiss politics happens, the Federal Palace itself. Did you know that the colour of its dome roof was originally a shimmering copper red when the building was completed in 1902? The copper slowly oxidised over four decades, gradually giving the dome a turquoise-green patina. The artisans

who carried out necessary renovations to the roof in 2007 used artificially aged copper to preserve the oxidised colour to which the nation had become so accustomed.

Parliament itself will have a very different, distinctly green, appearance when it reopens for business, courtesy of the dramatic gains made by the country’s environmental parties at the ballot box. Superlatives are rare in Swiss politics, but we can use them now – this is a political shift of historic proportions. Never before in the last 100 years has a party gained more seats on election day than the Swiss Green Party. The resurgent Green Liberals also helped ensure this is the greenest parliament of all time.

The political green wave rolled in much faster than the pace of oxidation on the Federal Palace roof. The shift began before ballot papers had even been printed, as the previous parliament came around to supporting green ideas that no one thought would have had a chance at the beginning of the legislative term. For example, the National Council voted in favour of a climate tax on plane tickets this autumn. One year previously, the same National Council had vehemently opposed such a levy. Concerns surrounding the obvious impact of climate change have evidently hit home in Berne. The search for solutions is under way.

Not interested in elections? Perhaps we can engage you with our take on the crisis besetting savers. The Swiss virtue of putting money away for a rainy day is losing its lustre, because banks are barely paying interest anymore. Banks even charge savers fees for this zero-rate ignominy. Many in Switzerland shudder at the prospect of negative interest. No one really knows what the antidote is. “Swiss Review” has no answer either. But we hope you will enjoy and maybe even be enriched by our dedicated feature on page 16.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover picture: The Federal Palace on election day, cartoon by Max Spring, Berne; www.maxspring.ch

“Swiss Review”, the information magazine for the “Fifth Switzerland”, is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA).

