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Petra Gössi



Is she up to the job? When Petra Gössi was elected leader of the Liberals (FDP) in 2016, few people knew the then 40-year-old lawyer from the canton of Schwyz. Although she had been a member of the National Council for five years, Gössi had never marked herself out as a political heavyweight. This soon changed. In 2017, Gössi skilfully saw to it that the FDP faction leader and man sitting next to her in parliament, Ignazio Cassis, was elected to the Federal Council. Climate change then became an issue, driving tens of thousands of mainly young dissatisfied people on to Switzerland's streets. Their ire was partly directed at the FDP, which, together with the SVP, had watered down the proposed revision of the CO₂ Act in 2018. By the time election year came around, Switzerland's "business party" had run into a headwind. There was disgruntlement among an element of grassroots voters too. The party leader responded by pulling off a spectacular ideological volte-face. Suddenly, incentives such as a CO₂ tax on airline tickets were no longer taboo. The rank and file voiced support for their leader's U-turn, a survey of party members allowing Gössi to silence critics within the party who had accused her of opportunism in the wake of this policy reversal. The FDP consequently emerged relatively unscathed from last autumn's federal elections, despite the green landslide. Although the party lost more than one per cent, pre-election forecasts had suggested worse. Gössi is now firmly in charge, with party members having recently voted her in for another two years as FDP leader. She is one of Switzerland's longest-serving party leaders currently in office. The sceptics fell silent quite some time ago. Gössi is indeed up to the job.

THEODORA PETER

Attorney General of Switzerland Michael Lauber stands down

Amid growing political pressure, Switzerland's chief prosecutor, Attorney General Michael Lauber has resigned and is due to leave his post at the end of the year. Lauber has been accused of serious misconduct, having had a secret meeting with FIFA president Gianni Infantino despite the fact that he was investigating football's governing body at the time. Lauber's resignation is not the end of the matter. Impeachment proceedings against the Attorney General are still ongoing, while Swiss prosecutors opened a criminal investigation into Infantino in July. (MUL)

More emigration than immigration

Immigration from the EU is a major issue in Swiss politics. However, emigration from Switzerland outstripped immigration from abroad in the second quarter of 2020. There are two main reasons for this: the relative deterioration of the Swiss economy, and restrictions on people entering the country due to the pandemic. (MUL)

Crypto – federal prosecutors open criminal probe

For decades, Swiss company Crypto AG manufactured encryption devices that helped foreign intelligence services to snoop on other countries (see "Swiss Review" 3/2020). By allowing the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland to investigate, the Federal Council has now paved the way for criminal proceedings. The government can block any criminal proceedings that it believes would seriously jeopardise Switzerland's interests. Evidently, it has concluded that investigating Crypto poses no such threat. (MUL)

Crypto – successor company in trouble

Crypto AG has been defunct for years. Now successor company Crypto International AG (based in Zug) is also in trouble, having had to lay off 80 of its 82 staff this summer. This is mainly because Crypto International is currently banned from exporting its encryption devices. (MUL)

COVID-19 scuppers popular initiative

The "e-voting moratorium" popular initiative is now off the agenda. Its supporters have abandoned their attempt to collect the necessary signatures. According to the initiative committee, which includes the National Councillors Franz Grüter (SVP) and Balthasar Glättli (Greens), collecting 100,000 signatures in time was looking increasingly impossible. Social distancing and hygiene measures had complicated the exercise. (MUL)

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