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No interest in the people

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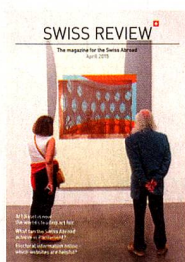
The election campaign in Switzerland is now underway and you cannot help but rub your eyes in astonishment. This is because the parties are primarily concerned with themselves and with apportioning blame and defaming imaginary enemies. What they have revealed so far has nothing to do with the issues that concern the people and hardly inspires confidence amongst the electorate. First example: in the 10-point

election manifesto of the Social Democrats, adopted by the party in mid-February, there was talk of “pay parity”, “minimum quotas for social housing” and “traffic-calmed areas in every urban commune”, but no mention of the SP’s position on Switzerland’s relationship with the international community, and the EU in particular. This is an issue that currently concerns the Swiss more than virtually any other. Second example: the president of the Free Democrat-Liberals, Philipp Müller, has been addressing his Swiss compatriots in full-page advertisements in the Sunday press. Here he has outlined at length what he believes is wrong with the SP’s proposals. However, there is no mention of the ideas of the FDP-Liberals. “We are Swiss dynamos. Our common success is determined by the courage we show,” one can read online in the FDP’s strategy on the future. OK, then. Third example: SVP President Toni Brunner intends, as he also announced in the Sunday press, to re-establish a “conservative majority” in the Federal Palace. The reality is that the conservatives already have a majority today both in Parliament and in government. There is not and nor will there be a powerful left-wing alliance or a centre-left coalition: 70 % of Swiss people lean towards the right of the political spectrum. The SVP is conducting its election campaign on a spurious basis.

The resolution of issues, compromise proposals and the search for consensus, which have long been the hallmarks of Swiss politics, clearly count for little in this election campaign. It is about who makes the most noise, shows least restraint in attacking their opponents and simplifies issues in the coarsest terms. Demagogy rules. What matters to the electorate is purely incidental.

In this issue we feature an article which outlines where good information on the elections and the candidates can be found online. In addition, Jürg Müller looks at who can best represent the Swiss Abroad in politics and Parliament in our focus article. The only two Swiss Abroad ever to have sat on the National Council also share their thoughts.

BARBARA ENGEL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Cover photo: Visitors to Art Basel in Miami Beach in 2014 in front of a painting by the Chinese-American artist David Dia.
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