

SWITZERLAND

Date of Elections: October 29, 1967

Characteristics of Parliament:

On October 29, on the normal expiry of the mandate of the previous Chamber, the Swiss electorate voted for the 200 members of the thirty-eighth Legislature of the National Council. Elected for a period of four years on a party-list system, with proportional representation covering the entire country and in accordance with uniform federal law, the National Council is one of the two Chambers composing the Federal Assembly. The other Chamber, the Council of States, is elected by uninominal majority ballot in two rounds by an electoral body and on the basis of a procedure which varies from canton to canton. Fifteen cantons and semi-cantons out of twenty-five had fixed the date of the federal elections to coincide with the election of 27 new members — out of 44 — of the Council of States.

Whereas the National Council ensures popular representation, the Council of States, the essential organ of a federal State, safeguards the rights of the cantons and guarantees their equality. The agreement of both Chambers sitting separately is required for the adoption of any legislative or administrative acts.

Electoral System:

1. *National Council*

Each canton or semi-canton forms an electoral constituency, making a total of twenty-five.

The number of seats allocated to each canton is fixed by law on the basis of a census of the resident population carried out every ten years. At present, one canton and three semi-cantons have

only a single seat each. Consequently, elections in these cases are held by a single ballot, on a uninominal, simple majority basis.

In two cantons and one semi-canton, moreover, the number of candidates did not exceed the number of seats to be filled; their re-election was therefore tacit.

Voters therefore went to the polls in twenty-two cantons and semi-cantons. All male citizens resident in Switzerland and aged 20 or over have the right to vote.

To express his choice, the voter has as many votes as there are seats to be filled. He also has various possibilities: he can combine them all on a party list and vote for the list as it stands; or he can split his votes by inserting the names of candidates from other parties in his list; or, finally, he can accumulate votes for his favourite candidate by repeating his name so as to improve his chances. If his ballot bears the name and number of a party, his personal votes constitute an order of preference for the candidates; any personal votes not expressed automatically revert to the relevant party. If he chooses a list without any heading, only the personal votes expressed are counted. Lists can be combined and joined together in the first distribution of seats; sub-amendments can even be made.

As regards the allocation of seats, a method is used which resembles that of Professor Houdt. The number of votes obtained by each party is divided by an electoral quotient which is itself found by dividing the total number of valid votes by the number of seats to be filled in each constituency plus one. Two or even three calculations may be necessary.

2. Council of States

In nineteen cantons and one semi-canton, the same electoral body designates both the National Councillors and the members of the Council of States (two per canton, one per semi-canton). But in two cantons and one semi-canton, women can participate in the ballot for the latter. Finally, in three cantons, the election takes place indirectly by means of the cantonal Parliaments.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections:

As regards the National Council, the four parties which, during the last Legislature, were associated in the Government — namely, the Christian-Social Conservative Party, Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Party (the Agrarian Party), Radical Democratic Party and Socialist Party — lost a total of 8 seats; 6 of these were won by the Independents who must therefore be regarded as the most successful in the election.

Though slight, this loss of popularity takes on particular significance in a country in which the stability of the electorate is a traditional feature and where the composition of Parliament therefore shows little change from one Legislature to the next. Notwithstanding this relative setback, the parties represented in the Government still hold 166 of the 200 seats in the National Council, as illustrated in the table below. These parties however do not, strictly speaking, form a coalition; their collaboration within the Federal Council, the collegial Executive, comes only after they have campaigned not on a common platform but often for quite different objectives.

The Socialist Party, for example, which is criticized by some for wishing to combine the advantages both of the party in power and of the opposition, had drawn markedly away from the bourgeois parties which it held responsible for the increased cost of living. It also came out in favour of a more energetic foreign policy and greater participation in the work of the major international organizations, without, however, compromising the country's neutrality.

Similarly, although the three other groupings stressed the achievements of the Federal Council and recommended the continuation of its policy, the Christian-Social Conservatives still campaigned vigorously for the repeal of constitutional measures containing exceptional provisions in respect of religious affairs.

This slight swing against the Government should not be interpreted as reflecting the appearance of any real opposition in Switzerland. Indeed, the parties that are not associated in the

Government remain relatively weak and divided. The Liberals, who defend cantonal prerogatives and private enterprise, support the Government most of the time. As for the Independents, whose campaign was based principally on the fight against an increased cost of living and on Government action in economic affairs, they have little in common with the other victor in the election, the Communist-inspired Labour Party.

It should also be noted that participation in the poll was a little higher than in the past, particularly in French-speaking Switzerland where the number of abstentions is generally considerable but where, this time, the electorate turned out to vote in larger numbers than previously. For the whole country, participation in the election came to 65.7 per cent as opposed to 66.1 per cent four years before.

In the case of the Council of States, in two cantons and one semi-canton — Basel-City, Geneva and Vaud — women voters were allowed to take part in the poll which is governed by cantonal law. An outstanding event for a country where a majority is still opposed to their participation in political life was the appearance of three women among the candidates. None of them, however, was elected.

While the Radical Democrats and Independents each gained one seat in the Council of States, the Socialist Party and the Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Party both lost one.

The political balance of this Chamber is quite different from that of the National Council. In it, the Socialist Party has only minimal representation and holds no more than two seats, while the Christian-Social Conservative Party, with 18 seats, and the Radical Democratic Party, with 14 seats, play a dominant role.

Readers will find below the results of the elections to the National Council.

Statistics:

1. *Results of the Elections to the National Council*

Number of registered electors	1,552,312
Voters	1,020,215 (65.7%)

Blank ballot papers.	10,014
Void ballot papers.	7,972
Valid votes.	1,002,229

Political Group	Number of Seats
Socialists.	50 (—3)
Radical Democrats.	49 (—2)
Christian-Social Conservatives.	45 (—3)
Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Party.	21 (—1)
Independents.	16 (+6)
Liberal Democrats.	6 (=)
Labour Party.	5 (+1)
Democrats.	3 (—1)
Popular Evangelists.	3 (+1)
Dellberg List (Dissident Socialists).	M+1)
Anti-Foreigner Movement	M + 1)
	200

2. *Distribution of Seats in the National Council and Council of States among the Parliamentary Groups*

D,, i,,,,, * ___n___,, Parliamentary Group •* r	Number of Seats in the National Council	Number of Seats in the Council of States
Christian-Social Conservative Group	45 (—3)	18 (=)
Radical Democratic Group.	49 (—2)	14(=)
Socialist Group.	51 (—2)	2 (—1)
Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Group	21 (—1)	1 (+ 1)
Independent Group.	16 (+6)	1 (+ 1)
Liberal Democratic Group.	6(=)	3(=)
Democratic and Evangelic Group.	6 (+ 1)	3(=)
Labour Party Group.	5 (+ 1)	—(=)
Unattached to any Group.	1 (=)	—(=)
	200	44

3. *Participatim in the Elections for the National Council*
(in per cent)

Cantons	1967	1963
Zurich . . . . .	.66.3	68.2
Bern . . . . .	.65.0	64.2
Lucerne. . . . .	.82.9	83.9
Uri . . . . .	.55.4	63.7
Schwyz	*	73.6
Obwald. . . . .	.26.3	57.7
Nidwald. . . . .	.77.8	43.7
Glarus.	*	*
Zug . . . . .	.58.3	*
Fribourg . . . . .	.69.3	66.8
Solothurn. . . . .	.81.0	85.3
Basel Town. . . . .	.50.1	60.0
Basel Country. . . . .	.60.8	59.4
Schaffhausen. . . . .	.85.5	87.2
Appenzell (Outer Rhodes).	*	*
Appenzell (Inner Rhodes). . . . .	.30.7	32.5
St. Gall. . . . .	.71.2	74.3
Grisons. . . . .	.66.7	71.0
Aargau. . . . .	.79.3	82.5
Thurgau. . . . .	.70.9	73.2
Ticino. . . . .	.68.8	68.4
Vaud . . . . .	.46.3	42.9
Valais . . . . .	.80.0	71.9
Neuchatel. . . . .	.56.5	45.4
Geneva . . . . .	.49.5	44.1
SWITZERLAND. . . . .	.65.7	66.1

* Tacit elections