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Studies in Political and Social Processes

At the Polls

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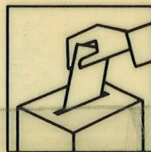


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Switzerland at the Polls

The National Elections of 1979

Edited by Howard R. Penniman



B. S. E. S.



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Turnout, Stability,
and the Left-Right Dimension

Dusan Sidjanski

By American standards, Swiss election campaigns are low-key, and the 1979 campaign was no more conspicuous than most. Nevertheless, it was distinctive in several ways. For one thing, the parties gave more attention than usual to the content of their platforms and made greater efforts to see that voters read them. The Social Democrats (SPS) stressed the need for a socialist system in Switzerland, the Radicals (FDP) their wish to restrict state involvement in the economy while retaining social reforms. The Christian Democratic party (CVP), the "dynamic center," proposed spending reductions and an increase in training, health, and youth employment programs. And the Liberal party (LPS) advocated individual initiative and responsibility as well as restricted state intervention, while some prominent Liberals like Monique Bauer-Lagier and Jean-François Aubert spoke for environmental protection.

Despite the parties' emphasis on their platforms and the consequent trend toward polarization of left and right, the apathy that has long beset the Swiss electorate continued: turnout fell from 52.4 percent in 1975 to 48.0 percent in 1979. The pattern in 1979 varied from canton to canton. Fribourg and Schaffhausen saw slight increases in voter participation: Fribourg's turnout rose from 47.6 percent in 1975 to 48.9 percent in 1979, and thanks to a series of administrative measures Schaffhausen had the highest turnout in the country, 75.1 percent in 1979, up from 74.1 percent in 1975. Electoral participation was also higher than average in Ticino (59.6 percent) and Valais (65.7 percent) but showed a slight decline since the last election

in Valais, despite an unusual, hotly contested race. In the larger cantons, too, participation declined: by 4.5 points in Bern, 4.2 points in Zurich, 8.3 points in Saint Gall, 7.8 points in Geneva, 6.3 points in Vaud, and so on. Only a few small cantons, suddenly offered greater choice than in the past, saw an increase in voter turnout: Uri (56.2 percent, up from 47.3 percent in 1975), Obwalden (42.3 percent, double the 21.2 percent of 1975), and Nidwalden (59.7 percent, up from 38.9 percent in 1975).¹ The canton of Jura, which was participating in a federal election for the first time, had a turnout of 58.6 percent.² One study summed it up this way:

The increase in campaign expenditures, particularly heavy in the last two weeks, was unable to stem a growing trend toward abstention. If one can believe the studies done on the formation of opinion, 60 percent of the voters had already made up their minds more than two weeks before the election. Only 10 percent of the voters switched, and of this number, more than half did so before the final stretch. Only a few people, all of them party supporters, knew their party's slogans. It should also be pointed out that the bourgeois government parties were more successful than the SPS at mobilizing their supporters.³

The Problem of Switzerland's Turnout

Low and declining turnout is nothing new in Switzerland, although the trend has been accentuated in the last few years. According to Jean-François Aubert, voter turnout for all federal balloting (elections, referendums, and initiatives) averaged 58 percent between 1880 and 1913, and 61 percent between 1914 and 1944. After that it declined—to 54 percent for the period 1945 to 1959, 43 percent for 1960 to 1969, and 42 percent for 1970 to 1977. Aubert writes:

In all of our history we have exceeded 80 percent turnout on only five out of nearly 200 Sundays of referendums: in 1872 and 1874 for revisions of the constitution; in 1922 for the capital gains tax; and in 1933 and 1935 for the economic policies of the depression. The last large turnouts were for the referendum on the AVS, the obligatory General Pension

¹ Dominique von Bur, "Nos députés ne représentent plus la majorité..." [Our deputies no longer represent the majority], *Tribune de Genève*, October 22, 1979.

² These figures are taken from *L'Annuaire statistique suisse, 1980* [Swiss statistical annual, 1980] (Bern: Federal Statistics Bureau, 1980), p. 541.

³ *L'Année politique suisse, 1979* [The Swiss political year, 1979] (Bern: Center for Swiss Political Research, University of Bern, 1980).

The author wishes to express his thanks to the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research for its grant for the 1976 Swiss survey and to Eugene Horber who helped analyze the data and construct some of the tables for this study.

TABLE 4-1
DISCUSSION OF POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES
AND WESTERN EUROPE, 1973-1976
(percent)

Country	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Austria	12.6	31.6	30.7	25.1
Denmark	13.5	29.6	30.8	26.1
Finland	14.6	36.0	31.1	18.4
Italy	15.0	21.8	21.5	41.7
Netherlands	16.5	35.2	27.3	21.0
Switzerland	15.5	33.1	31.1	20.3
United Kingdom	15.8	30.8	23.5	30.0
United States	27.4	37.3	24.2	11.1

SURVEY QUESTION: How often do you discuss politics with other people?

SOURCE: *Political Action: An Eight-Nation Study, 1973-1976* (Cologne: Central-Archive, University of Cologne, 1979), p. 163.

Fund (nearly 80 percent) and for the antiforeigner initiatives in 1970 and 1974 (74 and 70 percent). In 1977 the abortion issue attracted only 51 percent of the citizens and the civil service question 38 percent. But then a referendum on forestry legislation that would leave a lasting mark on our country brought out 38 percent of the voters, and that was in 1897.⁴

Voter turnout is not much higher in the United States than it is in Switzerland, and analysts have wondered what low turnout means in both countries. To shed light on this question, they have examined other evidence of the electorate's interest and participation in politics—how attentive people are to newspapers and the broadcast media, for example, how much time they spend discussing politics and trying to persuade others to their point of view, how often they go to political meetings or contact politicians or work in campaigns. By all these measures, participation in Switzerland is relatively high—and comparable to that in Western democracies like Great Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Finland. Moreover, the United States comes out ahead by all of these measures of political participation with the exception of attendance at political meetings (see table 4-1), and the Swiss are second only to the Americans in the amount

⁴ Jean-François Aubert, *Exposé des institutions politiques de la Suisse à partir de quelques affaires controversées* [An account of the political institutions of Switzerland in the light of several controversies] (Lausanne: Payot, 1979), pp. 264-65.

TABLE 4-2
POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES
AND EUROPE, 1973-1976
(percent)

Country	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Austria	2.4	3.0	6.9	87.7
Denmark	2.4	5.9	12.6	79.0
Finland	2.6	4.1	6.0	87.3
Italy	2.5	4.2	5.9	87.4
Netherlands	0.9	2.3	5.8	91.0
Switzerland	3.0	7.3	13.4	76.3
United Kingdom	1.4	3.9	3.0	92.2
United States	2.3	12.0	15.3	70.4

SURVEY QUESTION: How often do you spend time working for a political party or candidate?

SOURCE: *Political Action*, pp. 168-69.

of time they spend working for political parties or candidates (see table 4-2). As in other Western democracies, in Switzerland the overall political participation of women is lower than that of men and varies, as does men's, according to age, education, and income. On the other hand, there are no significant differences in the levels of participation of urban and rural Swiss or French-speaking and German-speaking Swiss.

The same variables that affect political participation generally also affect electoral turnout. Jacques Nicola has found that abstention is relatively high among Swiss between twenty and thirty years old or over seventy, among those who do not belong to any professional organization, among those with low education and income, and among unskilled and semiskilled workers. Abstention is highest among women with only a primary education. In addition, controlling for three factors—knowledge, satisfaction, and efficacy—brings out the importance of the individual's sense of efficacy: 80 percent of the men who believed their vote made a difference said they had gone to the polls both in 1967 and in 1971, whereas half of the men who considered voting futile had abstained twice. Findings like these suggest that a psychological approach is an essential ingredient of any sociological explanation of low turnout.⁵

⁵ Dusan Sidjanski and others, *Les Suisses et la politique: enquête sur les attitudes d'électeurs suisses* [Switzerland and politics: inquiry into the attitudes of Swiss voters] (Bern: Lang, 1975), pp. xi and xxi.

TABLE 4-3
PARTICIPATION IN THE 1967 AND 1971 FEDERAL ELECTIONS,
BY SEX AND PARTY PREFERENCE

Party Preference	Men, 1967 and 1971				Women, 1971		
	Voted twice	Voted once	Abstained twice	N	Voted	Abstained	N
PDA and SPS	71	13	16	(120)	55	45	(143)
LDU	71	15	15	(34)	68	32	(38)
FDP and LPS	75	15	10	(93)	58	42	(129)
CVP and PICS	78	10	13	(136)	63	37	(146)
SVP	89	7	4	(57)	65	35	(68)

NOTE: The 1971 federal elections were the first in which Swiss women voted.

SOURCE: Survey conducted by the department of political science of the University of Geneva under direction of Henry Kerr between December 1975 and May 1976 (hereafter cited as 1976 Swiss survey).

According to the same survey, the rate of abstention for the whole population was 40 percent in 1971, 38 percent for German and Italian Swiss but 49 percent for French Swiss. In 1979 the rate of abstention was more than ten points above the national average in the French-speaking cantons (Geneva, Vaud, and Neuchâtel) where in Fribourg and Bern abstention was slightly under the national average and in Valais and Jura more than ten points below the national average. Returning to the 1972 survey data and the question of sex, one finds a striking difference between men's participation and women's participation in the first federal elections after the enfranchisement of women: 60 percent of those surveyed reported that they had voted—72 percent of the men but only 49 percent of the women.⁶ (Since the actual turnout in 1971 was 56.9 percent, turnout among women was probably slightly higher than the survey suggests.) Abstention of male voters had a mildly adverse effect on the left and the Independents party (LDU) in 1971; the abstention of women damaged the left and to a lesser degree the Radical and Liberal parties (see table 4-3).⁷ Since 1971 turnout generally has continued to decline, but the difference between men and women has narrowed. The turnout rate for the electorate as a whole fell from 56.9 percent in 1971 to 52.4 percent in 1975 and 48 percent in 1979. In 1976,

⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

⁷ Jacques Nicola, "L'abstentionnisme en Suisse" [Abstentionism in Switzerland], in Sidjanski and others, *Les Suisses et la politique*, p. 194.

TABLE 4-4
PARTICIPATION IN THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS OF OCTOBER 26, 1975, BY SEX
(percent)

	Men	Women	Total Sample	
			%	N
Voted	61	46	53	(739)
Did not vote	38	54	46	(640)
N	(690)	(702)		

NOTE: Thirteen persons responded "don't know." This is approximately 1 percent of the 1,392 respondents interviewed.

SOURCE: 1976 Swiss survey.

53 percent of those interviewed in one survey said they had voted in the federal elections of 1975, and 46 percent said they had not; the figures for men and women were 61 percent and 46 percent respectively (see table 4-4).⁸ Male abstention was distributed evenly among the three major parties and the People's party (SVP), but female abstention was considerably lower among Radical party supporters than among any other group (see table 4-5). Indeed, the FDP had a clear and unexpected advantage in its high turnout rate among both men and women. Low turnout among women hurt the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats, and above all the SVP: only 41 percent of women SVP supporters went to the polls in 1975, whereas 71 percent of male SVP supporters voted. In principle, then, an increase in male voter participation would not affect the major parties at all, but an increase in female participation would tend to favor the Socialists, the Christian Democrats, and especially the SVP.

Many explanations have been offered for Switzerland's high rate of abstention. One is the frequency of elections, which some claim tires out the voters and lessens their interest. The citizens are called to the polls an average of five times a year for referendums or elections at the federal level, and the cantons and communes hold additional elections and referendums. Another explanation is the perceived complexity of political matters. Thirty-nine percent of Swiss

⁸ This survey, which will be cited hereafter as the 1976 Swiss survey, was sponsored by the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research. It used a random sample of 1,392 individuals and was conducted between December 1975 and May 1976 by the department of political science of the University of Geneva under the direction of Henry Kerr. Some of the data have been published in *Political Action: An Eight-Nation Study, 1973-1976* (Cologne: Central Archive, University of Cologne, 1979).

TABLE 4-5
PARTY PREFERENCE AND ABSTENTION IN 1975, BY SEX

Party	Party Preference of Total Sample				Rate of Abstention among Partisans, 1975	
	Men		Women		Men	Women
	%	N	%	N		
None	14	(93)	14	(101)	62	77
LDU	6	(41)	4	(25)	34	40
SVP	7	(45)	6	(41)	27	59
CVP	9	(63)	9	(64)	29	42
FDP	16	(110)	11	(80)	29	28
SPS	24	(164)	16	(112)	29	38
Don't know	9	(63)	23	(159)	71	72
Total	100	(690)	100	(702)	38	54

NOTES: This table records the responses to two questions included in the 1976 Swiss survey. Question 32 asked whether or not respondents had participated in the 1975 federal election. Question 30 asked respondents to state their party preference during that election. "Don't know" responses account for the columns that do not total 100 percent on that question.

Parties with *N*s less than 5 were not retained.

SOURCE: 1976 Swiss survey.

respondents interviewed in 1976 "strongly agreed" that political matters were complex, more than in any other of the eight nations surveyed, and an additional 31 percent "agreed," while only 30 percent "disagreed."⁹ It is also worth noting that more than 63 percent of the Swiss electorate feel that voting is not the only way that people can have a say in how the government runs things; also that interest in politics generally is low. Twenty-five percent of those surveyed said they were not interested in politics at all, and fully 38 percent expressed only a slight interest (the comparable figures for the United States are 9 percent and 22 percent).

Meanwhile, satisfaction with life in general and trust in government are high. According to one survey, 87.6 percent of Swiss voters indicated that they were "satisfied" or "completely satisfied" with their life on the whole (as did 80.0 percent of Americans and 67.8 percent of Italians), and 76 percent said they trusted the govern-

⁹ For a discussion of the Swiss people's satisfaction with government, see *Political Action*, pp. 9-10; political interest, pp. 16-17; views on the complexity of government, pp. 176-77; and trust in government, pp. 184-85.

ment "almost always" or "most of the time" (as did 35 percent of Americans and 14 percent of Italians).¹⁰ When it is coupled with the frequency of elections and with the public's lack of interest in politics and sense that the issues are complex, this widespread trust in government makes Switzerland's turnout intelligible. In the end, it is probably the Swiss electorate's particular combination of negative and positive attitudes toward government and society that best explains why turnout is low.

The Swiss public's trust in government is reinforced by two characteristics of the Swiss political system: stability and the absence of an effective opposition. Since 1947 there has been little change in the electoral strength of the political parties. Moreover, the composition of the federal executive body has not changed since 1959: for more than twenty years the Federal Council has comprised two Radicals, two Social Democrats, two Christian Democrats, and one member of the People's party (before 1971, the Farmers, Artisans, and Burghers party). These four parties took 81.6 percent of the votes and 169 out of 200 seats in the National Council in the 1979 election. As a result, it could be said of Switzerland—and of no other Western democracy—that elections do not directly affect the party composition of the federal executive. A weak opposition is simply incapable of overturning and replacing a government founded on cooperation among the three major parties.

1979 Election Results: Continued Stability

Since the Second World War, the Swiss electorate has been characterized by remarkable stability, and the balance of forces between the parties has barely fluctuated (see table 4-6). The largest party, the Swiss Social Democrats, enjoyed the support of more than 26 percent of the electorate until 1963; its strength fell below 24 percent in the 1967 elections and reached a low of 22.8 percent in 1971 before climbing back over the 24 percent mark in 1975. During the last forty years, support for the Radicals, the second largest party, has fluctuated between 20.8 percent and 24.1 percent, and the Christian Democrats have hovered between 20.8 percent and 23.4 percent except in 1939, when they dropped to 17 percent. The fourth largest party, the People's party, has stayed between 9.9 percent and 12.6 percent, again with the exception of 1939, when it took 14.7 percent. By this standard, the Independents party, which burst onto the political scene in 1935 with seven deputies in Zurich, Bern, and Saint Gall,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-85.

TABLE 4-6
ELECTION RETURNS, NATIONAL COUNCIL, 1939-1979
(percent)

Year	Social Democrats	Radical Democrats	Christian Democrats	People's Party	Independents	Liberals	PDA	Democrats	Evangelical Party	Other	Total
1939 ^a	25.9	20.8	17.0	14.7	7.1	1.6	2.6	2.7	0.9	6.7	100.0
1943 ^b	28.6	22.5	20.8	11.6	5.5	3.2	ⁱ	3.4	0.4	4.0	100.0
1947 ^b	26.2	23.0	21.2	12.1	4.4	3.2	5.1	2.9	0.9	1.0	100.0
1951 ^c	26.0	24.0	22.5	12.6	5.1	2.6	2.7	2.2	1.0	1.3	100.0
1955 ^c	27.0	23.3	23.2	12.1	5.5	2.2	2.6	2.1	1.1	0.9	100.0
1959 ^b	26.3	23.7	23.3	11.6	5.5	2.3	2.7	2.2	1.4	1.0	100.0
1963 ^d	26.6	24.0	23.4	11.4	5.0	2.2	2.2	1.8	1.6	1.8	100.0
1967 ^e	23.5	23.2	22.1	11.0	9.1	2.3	2.9	1.4	1.6	2.9	100.0
1971 ^f	22.8	21.5	21.0	10.0	7.6	2.1	2.5	0.8	2.2	9.5	100.0
1975	24.9	22.2	21.1	9.9	6.1	2.4	2.4	^h	2.0	9.0	100.0
1979 ^g	24.4	24.1	21.5	11.6	4.1	2.8	2.1	^h	2.2	7.2	100.0

^a Uncontested elections in Lucerne, Schwyz, Zug, Solothurn, Appenzell-Outer Rhodes, Ticino, Vaud, Valais, and Neuchâtel.

^b Uncontested election in Appenzell-Outer Rhodes.

^c Uncontested elections in Glarus, Schaffhausen.

^d Uncontested elections in Glarus, Zug, and Appenzell-Outer Rhodes.

^e Uncontested elections in Schwyz, Glarus, and Appenzell-Outer Rhodes.

^f Uncontested election in Zug.

^g Uncontested election in Appenzell-Outer Rhodes.

^h Not applicable.

ⁱ PDA was prohibited during the war.

SOURCE: *Annuaire statistique suisse, 1980* [Swiss statistical annual, 1980] (Bern: Federal Statistics Bureau, 1980), p. 541.

has experienced considerable fluctuations, with a high of 9.1 percent and a low of 4.1 percent. On the other hand, the Liberal and Communist votes have been very stable.

Some of the liberal or independent cantonal parties in Glarus, Saint Gall, Graubünden, Thurgau, and Zurich as well as the Saint Gall Popular list and the Neuchâtel National Progressive party declined from 1959 on and then either disappeared from the federal scene or allied themselves with other parties. The Graubünden Democrats, for example, joined the People's party. After fluctuating around 1 percent for a number of years, the Protestant parties stabilized around 2 percent in 1971. The same year, other parties registered a maximum strength of 9.5 percent, coinciding with the appearance of James Schwarzenbach's Republican Movement (REP) and its ally, National Action (NA).

In 1970 Schwarzenbach launched an initiative bearing his name that was aimed at limiting the number of foreign workers in Switzerland. The REP and the NA succeeded in attracting widespread support for this initiative, which, despite strong opposition from the major parties, was endorsed by 46 percent of the voters.¹¹ Though not the majority required for passage, this amounted to a victory of sorts, and the Republican Movement and the National Action party took a surprising number of votes in 1971 and 1975. These "traditionalist" movements stress the need to defend Swiss society against foreign immigration and encroachment. They account for the vast majority of the voters listed under "other" in surveys of party preference. Nevertheless, their support fell from 5.5 percent in 1975 to 1.9 percent in 1979, proving the difficulty of sustaining a new political party in a long-established party system and the impossibility of transforming a strong showing on an initiative into success in national elections. In fact, these parties lost their popular support as the problem of foreign workers was gradually resolved. Of the eleven Republican Movement and National Action deputies elected in 1971 and the six elected in 1975, only three remained in 1979, one a member of the Vigilant party from Geneva, which is allied with the Republican Movement, and two National Action members, one from Bern and one from Zurich. The Republicans virtually disappeared following the retirement of their leader, James Schwarzenbach, in December 1978.

¹¹ Ronald Inglehart and Dusan Sidjanski, "Dimension gauche-droite chez les électeurs suisses" [The left-right dimension and Swiss voters], *Revue française de science politique* (October 1974), p. 1007. See also "The Left, the Right, the Establishment and the Swiss Electorate," in Ian Budge, Ivor Crewe, and Dennis Farlie, eds., *Party Identification and Beyond* (London and New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), p. 230.

TABLE 4-7
DISTRIBUTION OF THE VOTE IN NATIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS,
BY CANTON AND PARTY, 1975 AND 1979
(percent)

Canton	SPS		FDP		CVP		SVP		LDU	
	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979
Zurich	23.9	26.5	18.5	22.4	9.4	9.7	11.3	14.4	15.6	11.2
Bern	31.0	30.5	17.6	18.0	5.3	2.5	27.1	31.5	4.7	3.1
Lucerne	13.4	12.5	29.1	31.7	50.1	50.5	—	—	5.3	—
Uri	—	23.0	76.0	39.0	18.6	34.9	—	—	—	—
Schwyz	29.3	22.6	21.3	28.0	46.4	49.4	3.0	—	—	—
Obwalden	—	—	—	—	97.1	95.7	—	—	—	—
Nidwalden	—	10.6	—	39.0	97.6	49.5	—	—	—	—
Glarus	64.7	—	—	14.4	—	—	—	81.8	—	—
Zug	35.7	30.9	23.1	32.8	39.4	34.1	—	—	—	—
Fribourg	25.7	30.7	22.1	23.0	46.9	39.9	4.3	6.4	—	—
Solothurn	31.4	28.4	38.7	39.0	26.0	27.6	—	—	—	—
Basel City	33.3	33.3	11.4	14.1	12.1	13.9	—	—	9.9	7.6
Basel Country	30.3	31.4	23.9	26.7	13.3	11.5	10.6	10.5	11.2	7.8
Schaffhausen	37.2	35.3	40.1	32.3	—	—	—	21.1	16.6	—
Appenzell-Outer										
Rhodes ^b	40.1	—	45.8	—	14.1	—	—	—	—	—
Appenzell-Inner										
Rhodes	—	—	—	—	98.3	97.2	—	—	—	—
Saint Gall	15.1	18.0	25.1	27.6	43.3	44.1	—	—	8.0	8.2
Graubünden	15.2	20.5	18.1	22.9	35.9	35.4	26.9	21.2	—	—
Aargau	24.2	27.7	17.7	20.5	20.7	22.5	12.8	13.9	6.6	5.5
Thurgau	21.6	22.4	14.4	16.9	22.3	24.6	25.1	26.5	6.6	5.3
Ticino	13.9	15.2	39.1	36.3	35.7	34.1	—	2.3	—	—
Vaud	27.6	24.9	25.6	27.1	4.6	5.1	8.0	6.8	1.6	0.8
Valais	17.4	11.6	18.9	22.7	59.7	58.8	—	—	—	—
Neuchâtel	38.9	37.4	22.4	20.6	—	—	—	—	—	4.8
Geneva	22.6	21.5	16.6	14.7	14.7	14.0	—	—	2.4	—
Jura	n.a.	—	n.a.	30.9	n.a.	37.7	n.a.	—	n.a.	—
Switzerland	24.9	24.4	22.2	24.1	21.1	21.5	9.9	11.6	6.1	4.1

NOTE: Percentages are based on candidates' totals.

Dash (—) = negligible.

n.a. = Not available.

The outcomes of most Swiss elections illustrate both the stability of the party system and its tendency to reinforce the major parties, and 1979 was no exception (see tables 4-7 and 4-8). In the 1979 National Council elections, the SPS and the FDP each secured fifty-one seats, followed by the CVP with forty-four, down from forty-six in 1975. The SPS lost four seats and the FDP gained four; neither gained at the expense of the other except in Schwyz and Zug, where in each case the SPS lost a seat to the FDP. In other districts, how-

Canton	REP		NA		PDA		LPS		EVP		Prog. ^a		RML		Other	
	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979
Zurich	6.2	0.9	4.4	2.5	1.1	1.2	—	—	5.4	5.7	1.5	2.3	0.2	0.3	2.5	3.0
Bern	2.4	0.2	3.4	3.6	0.6	0.3	—	—	3.5	3.4	0.5	1.4	0.2	0.2	3.8	5.4
Lucerne	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.8	5.1	0.4	0.2	—	—
Uri	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5.4	3.1
Schwyz	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Obwalden	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.9	4.3
Nidwalden	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.4	0.9
Glarus	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35.3	3.9
Zug	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.8	2.2	—	—
Fribourg	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.3	—	0.6	—
Solothurn	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basel City	—	—	8.2	3.9	4.6	4.7	11.6	11.2	4.0	—	4.2	10.3	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.1
Basel Country	—	—	5.6	—	1.8	1.0	—	—	—	3.9	3.3	7.1	—	—	—	—
Schaffhausen	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6.3	6.1	4.1	—	0.9	—	—
Appenzell-Outer																
Rhodes ^b	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Appenzell-Inner																
Rhodes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.7	2.8
Saint Gall	5.4	—	2.2	—	0.4	—	—	—	—	2.1	0.5	—	—	—	—	—
Graubünden	—	—	3.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.3	—
Aargau	6.5	2.1	3.5	1.6	—	—	—	—	4.6	5.0	0.6	—	0.6	0.9	2.3	0.2
Thurgau	7.6	2.0	2.5	1.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.4
Ticino	—	—	—	—	3.6	2.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7.8	9.4
Vaud	3.1	—	1.6	—	10.7	9.3	13.6	16.7	—	—	—	—	1.6	1.3	2.0	8.0
Valais	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	4.0	6.2
Neuchâtel	—	—	—	—	9.8	7.7	22.1	26.4	—	—	—	—	1.4	1.7	5.5	1.5
Geneva	6.9	6.6	1.7	0.6	18.0	19.9	16.0	21.3	—	—	—	—	1.1	1.5	—	—
Jura	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	n.a.	31.4
Switzerland	3.0	0.6	2.5	1.3	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.8	2.0	2.2	1.0	1.7	0.4	0.4	2.2	3.2

^a Progressive organizations.

^b Election uncontested in 1979.

SOURCE: *Annuaire statistique suisse*, 1980, pp. 542-43.

ever, the two parties registered gains—in Zurich, for example, one seat for the SPS and two for the FDP. Gains and losses, nowhere very big, were distributed unevenly through the cantons. The SPS's loss of two seats in Bern and the drop in the Socialist vote, for example, was partly compensated by the growth of the Autonomous Socialist party (PSA) in Jura-South, where it gained a seat on the National Council. The PSA also gained one seat in Zurich and the SPS lost one each in Schwyz, Glarus, and Zug.

TABLE 4-8
DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL SEATS, BY CANTON AND PARTY,
1975 AND 1979

Canton	SPS		FDP		CVP		SVP		LDU		LPS	
	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979
Zurich	9	10	7	9	4	3	4	5	6	4		
Bern	11	9	6	6	1	0	10	10	1	1		
Lucerne	1	1	3	3	5	5			0			
Uri ^c		0	1	1	0	0						
Schwyz	1	0	0	1	2	2	0					
Obwalden ^d					1	1						
Nidwalden ^d		0		0	1	1						
Glarus ^d	1			0				1				
Zug	1	0	0	1	1	1						
Fribourg	2	2	1	1	3	3	0	0				
Solothurn	2	2	3	3	2	2						
Basel City	3	3	1	1	1	1			1	0	1	1
Basel Country	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Schaffhausen	1	1	1	1			0	0				
Appenzell-Outer Rhodes ^e	1	1	1	1	0							
Appenzell-Inner Rhodes ^d					1	1						
Saint Gall	2	2	3	3	6	6			1	1		
Graubünden	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1				
Aargau	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	2	1	1		
Thurgau	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	0	0		
Ticino	1	1	3	3	3	3		0				
Vaud	5	5	5	5	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	3
Valais	1	1	1	2	5	4						0
Neuchâtel	2	2	2	1					0	1	2	2
Geneva	3	3	2	2	1	1			0		2	2
Jura	—	0	—	0	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Seats	55	51	47	51	46	44	21	23	11	8	6	8

NOTE: The "turnout" column shows electoral participation.

Dash (—) = Not applicable.

Blank = No party list submitted in canton.

^a PSA in the canton of Ticino; Progressive Organizations in the other cantons.

^b In the canton of Geneva: Vigilance.

^c Majority system elections without the official participation of the CVP.

The FDP gained seats in Zurich (two), Schwyz (one), Zug (one), and Valais (one) but lost votes and one seat in Neuchâtel. The CVP lost one seat in Zurich despite a slight increase in votes; and in Valais it lost a seat to the FDP, this time with a drop in its vote. The strength of the People's party continued to be concentrated in the canton of Bern, where it held onto its ten seats and expanded its

EVP	POCH/ PSA ^a		PDA		NA		REP ^b		Others		Total		Turnout (%)				
	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979	1975	1979			
2	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	35	35	50.4	46.4		
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1 ^f	31	29	54.3	49.8		
		0	0								0	0	9	9	63.9	59.2	
											0	0	1	1	47.3	56.2	
													3	3	53.3	48.6	
											0	0	1	1	21.2	42.3	
											0	0	1	1	38.9	59.7	
											0	0	1	1	33.4	35.4	
											0	0	2	2	58.9	55.9	
											0		6	6	47.9	48.6	
		0	0		0						0		7	7	64.1	56.9	
0		0	1	0	0	0	0				0	0	7	7	43.8	39.4	
	0	0	0	0	0	0							7	7	48.3	43.0	
	0	0	0									0	2	2	74.1	75.1	
													2	2	44.2	^e	
											0	0	1	1	29.6	24.0	
	0	0		0		0		0				12	12	53.5	45.0		
						0						5	5	49.6	45.9		
0	0	0				0	0	1	0	0	0	14	14	50.7	45.6		
						0	0	0	0			0	6	6	56.6	48.3	
		1	1	0	0								8	8	64.7	59.6	
				2	1	0		0				1 ^g	16	16	43.5	37.3	
												0	0	7	7	66.6	65.7
				0	0							0	0	5	5	47.2	43.3
				2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	11	11	45.4	35.4		
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 ^h	—	2	—	—	58.6	
3	3	1	3	4	3	2	2	4	1	0	3	200	200	52.4	48.0		

^d Majority system elections.

^e Elections in which candidates ran unopposed in 1979.

^f Jura-South PSA.

^g GPE (Environmental Protection Group).

^h Socialist Christian, elected from a joint list with the SPS.

SOURCE: *L'Année politique suisse, 1979, p. 41.*

vote by more than 4.4 percentage points. The SVP is the leading party of the canton in terms of both electoral support and parliamentary seats. In Switzerland as a whole it strengthened its position, moving from twenty-one seats on the National Council to twenty-three.

Several of the minor parties also gained. The Liberal party, with

one new seat in Neuchâtel and another in Vaud, brought its total to eight seats; despite a fine showing in Geneva, where its support rose from 16.0 percent to 21.3 percent, it did not add to its two seats. The Protestants kept only three of their four seats despite a slight increase in votes. The progressive parties of the left increased both their electorate (from 1.4 percent to 2.1 percent) and their seats (from one to three); POCH secured a seat in Zurich and another in Basel, and the Ticino PSA retained its seat. In Bern, the Jura-South PSA (listed under "other" in the tables) doubled its support and gained a seat. Finally, a member of the Environmental Protection party (GPE) was elected in Vaud.

On the other hand, the Independents party and the "traditionalists" continued to lose both votes and seats. The Independents lost 4.4 percentage points and two seats in their former stronghold, the canton of Zurich, as well as 2.3 percentage points and one seat in Basel City. The Republicans did not place at all in Zurich and Aargau; National Action held onto its seat in Zurich, despite a 1.9 percentage point decline in votes, and its seat in Bern, where its support increased slightly. To sum up, three government parties—the FDP, the CVP, and the SVP—increased their overall electoral support, whereas their partner, the SPS, registered a slight decline. The FDP and the People's party added to the seats they held; the SPS and the CVP both lost seats. The right wing of the government strengthened its position, whereas the center-left was weakened. Why?

For the CVP, the explanation lies above all in the distribution of its electorate and of its seats. It lost one seat in Zurich while increasing its electorate there, and one seat in Valais, where its support declined from 59.7 percent to 58.8 percent. The concentration of the SPS's electorate had a more marked effect on the seats that party held. Some have seen this as evidence that a drop in voter turnout hurts the left-wing parties most; this is doubtful, however, in light of the 1976 survey, although higher abstention among women may have affected the outcome. Others attribute it to the well-known fluctuation between left and right; but overall, the leftist parties, including POCH and the PSA, slightly increased their share of the electorate. Moreover, the gains made by the small parties of the extreme left partly made up for the seats lost by the SPS and the Labor party (PDA). The principal explanation for the decline could be the ambiguous position of the SPS, which, although it participates in the government, frequently opposes its partners on major issues such as federal finances. Given this, uncommitted voters on the left may prefer the unequivocal positions of the minor opposition parties. In fact, the shifts in party strength in the cantons seem to explain

most of the losses, as long as one keeps in mind that at the cantonal level the factors mentioned earlier in this paragraph might also have come into play. In Bern, the two seats lost through the creation of the canton of Jura actually went to a Jura-South PSA candidate and to a candidate from the joint Christian Social-SPS list.¹² Nevertheless, the SPS lost to the People's party the preeminent position it had held in Bern since 1943. The single seat representing Glarus went to the SVP. The FDP gained one seat in Schwyz and one in Zug, where SPS support declined by seven points and five points respectively. These five seats lost by the SPS were only partly compensated by the one seat gained in Zurich. Thus, a few voters in small cantons made a significant difference.

Given overall political stability, these changes may seem insignificant. It is worth noting, however, the simultaneous advances made by the parties on the right and on the extreme left. This polarization is also reflected in the higher percentage of first-term deputies (33 percent in 1979, 25.5 percent in 1975), who tend to gravitate toward the two poles. Several first-term Social Democrats were combative left-wingers, and several of the newly elected Radicals had clear business leanings.¹³

The percentage of national councilors who were elected for the first time varied widely from canton to canton. Outside the smallest cantons, Neuchâtel had the highest figure, three newly elected councilors out of a total of five.¹⁴ The figure was 50 percent in the cantons of Thurgau and Ticino, 42.8 percent in Aargau, Basel City, and Valais. The canton of Bern was also above the national average, with a rate of 41.4 percent, twelve first-term national councilors out of twenty-nine. Among the cantons that placed below the average were Basel Country and Solothurn, Geneva, and Fribourg. Vaud, with five new councilors out of sixteen, and Zurich, with nine new councilors out of thirty-five, were near the national average.

For the Council of States, where each canton has two representatives, the election results showed gains for the Social Democrats and the Liberals (see table 4-9). The Social Democrats took four new seats, bringing their total to nine and thus continuing to improve

¹² With the creation of the canton of Jura, Bern lost two deputies. The CVP also lost a seat but made up for it by winning another in the new canton.

¹³ *L'Année politique suisse, 1979*, p. 39. Among the first-term deputies were Heinz Allenspach (FDP, Zurich), director of the Central Union of Swiss Employers Associations, and Willy Messmer (FDP, Thurgau), president of the Swiss Society of Businessmen. For the business interests and holdings of the councilors, see *Unser Parlament, 1979-83* [Our parliament] (Zurich: Tages-Anzeiger, 1980).

¹⁴ In the small cantons of Uri (one seat), Nidwalden (one seat), and Zug (two seats) all the councilors were new.

TABLE 4-9
DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN THE COUNCIL OF STATES, BY PARTY,
1975 AND 1979

Year	Total Seats	SPS	FDP	CVP	SVP	LPS	LDU	Other
1975	44	5	15	17	5	1	1	0
1979	46 ^a	9	11	18	5	3	0	0
Change		+4	-4	+1	0	+2	-1	

^a New canton of Jura included.

SOURCE: *Annuaire statistique suisse*, 1980.

their representation in the Council. The upper house is heavily dominated by a coalition of bourgeois parties from various cantons. In the past this coalition has always blocked the Social Democrats and prevented them from achieving representation more in line with their electoral standing throughout the nation. The Social Democrats have installed themselves in particular in Schaffhausen, Basel Country (where they are represented by Eduard Belser, rector and leader of the opposition to nuclear power plants), and Fribourg. They retained the seats they had gained in 1978 in Neuchâtel and Zurich but lost their seat in the canton of Vaud. The Liberals tripled their strength with two new seats—one in Neuchâtel, where Jean-François Aubert outpolled the Radical candidate, and one in Vaud, where Hubert Reymond defeated the Social Democratic candidate. The third seat they retained in Geneva thanks to the victory of a new state councilor, Monique Bauer. The CVP gained one seat, and the SVP remained stable with five councilors, including Peter Gerber, president of the Swiss Farmers Union, in Bern. The Independents party did not run. Surprisingly, 39 percent of the state councilors—a larger figure than for national councilors—were freshmen.

As to women members and younger members, the profiles of the two houses changed slightly. The number of women national councilors increased from fifteen (7.5 percent) in 1975 to twenty-one (10.5 percent). Their party affiliations are shown in table 4-10; they were distributed among the cantons as follows: Zurich five; Basel City, Saint Gall, and Vaud two each; and one from each of the ten cantons Bern, Lucerne, Schwyz, Fribourg, Solothurn, Aargau, Ticino, Valais, Neuchâtel, and Geneva. State councilors have tended to be older; Switzerland's Senate, the Council of States, has traditionally

TABLE 4-10
WOMEN NATIONAL COUNCILORS, BY PARTY, 1975 AND 1979

Party	1975	1979
SPS	5	8
FDP	4	8
CVP	5	4
POCH	0	1
LPS	1	0
Total	15	21

SOURCE: *Annuaire statistique suisse*, 1980.

been composed of mature members at the height of their careers. In 1979 its two youngest members (both thirty-eight) were newly elected Social Democrats from Basel Country and Fribourg, and its four oldest members were only sixty-four. They represented the three major political parties and came from Appenzell-Inner Rhodes, Geneva, Thurgau, and Schwyz.

Polarization and the Left-Right Dimension

The 1979 election returns provided some evidence that political polarization had increased. On the right, the three government parties had gained in strength, especially the Radical Democrats and the SVP. The Liberal party also gained. On the far left the progressive organizations (POCH and the PSA), though still tiny, jumped from 1 percent to 1.7 percent, partly at the expense of the PDA. In addition, among the newly elected candidates there seemed to be more than usual with sharply defined positions. Among the Social Democrats, for example, were several representatives of the most intransigent elements of the party's left wing, those least willing to compromise; and several of the freshmen Radicals had close ties with industrial management.¹⁵ In general, there was also an increase in the number of national councilors affiliated with business and interest groups. That the Parliament was gaining relevance for these organizations might also suggest that its role and influence in the Swiss system were growing.

What accounts for the polarization observed in 1979? First, it might be that the increase in abstention was concentrated in the

¹⁵ *L'Année politique suisse*, 1979, p. 39.

TABLE 4-11
LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT AND INTEREST IN POLITICS, 1976
(percent)

Interest in Politics	Extreme Left	Center Left	Center Center	Center Right	Extreme Right	Don't Know
Little or none	2	7	20	11	4	22
Some	1	8	14	8	3	
All voters	3	15	34	19	7	22

NOTE: $N = 1,392$.

SOURCE: 1976 Swiss survey.

political center. It appears, however, that voters with little or no interest in politics who are asked to indicate their position on a left-right continuum actually distribute themselves in more or less the same pattern as those who are interested in politics (see table 4-11). Since citizens who are indifferent to politics are presumably those most likely to abstain, this finding suggests that the answer does not lie in increased abstention.

Taking a different tack, one might ask whether the tendency toward polarization shows up in surveys of the electorate as well as in the election returns. Sure enough, a comparison of the voters' self-placement on the left-right continuum in 1972 and 1976 reveals increases in the strength not of the extremes but of the center-left and center-right at the expense of the center (see table 4-12). Despite a slight decline on the extreme left, the left as a whole grew from 15 percent in 1972 to 22 percent in 1976, while the right grew from

TABLE 4-12
LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT OF SWISS VOTERS, 1972 AND 1976
(percent)

Year	Extreme Left	Center Left	Center Center	Center Right	Extreme Right	Total	All Voters	N
1972	5	10	53	21	10	100	58	(1,111)
1976	3	19	44	25	10	100	78	(1,086)

NOTE: Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: 1972 and 1976 Swiss surveys.

TABLE 4-13
STRENGTH OF THE SWISS PARTIES, 1979
(percent)

Party	Strength, 1979 Elections
Left	
PDA, progressive and Marxist organizations	4.2
Socialists	24.4
Total left	28.6
Right	
FDP	24.1
CVP	21.5
SVP	11.6
LPS	2.8
Total right	60.0
Other	11.4

SOURCE: Author.

31 percent in 1972 to 35 percent in 1976. Even with these increases, of course, the Swiss voting population remained essentially centrist (53 percent in 1972, 44 percent in 1976).¹⁶

The election results only partially reflect this trend, both because turnout is so low and because the party continuum does not coincide precisely with a simple left-right continuum (see table 4-13). The parties on the so-called right, which represent approximately 60 percent of the people who voted in 1979, draw their support mainly from the centrist electorate, and some voters who think of themselves as centrists support parties on the left. Table 4-14, which shows the distribution of each party's supporters along the left-right continuum, illustrates this point more clearly. The small PDA electorate, for example, is concentrated in the extreme-left, left, and center areas. Nevertheless, a fraction of the PDA supporters place themselves on the right, even on the extreme right. In all likelihood these are voters who are unable to express effectively their opposition to the government parties. They refuse to support National Action or the Republican Movement, which take a traditionalist and anti-foreigner

¹⁶ A breakdown by sex of the left-right self-placement data suggests another interesting trend: the rapid political socialization of women. Of the 702 women surveyed in 1976, 71 percent placed themselves on the left-right continuum, up from 45 percent in 1972. Of the 690 men surveyed in 1976, 86 percent placed themselves on the left-right continuum; 72 percent did so in 1972.

TABLE 4-14

LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT OF THE MAJOR PARTIES' ELECTORATES, 1976
(percent)

Party	Extreme Left	Center Left	Center Center	Center Right	Extreme Right	Total	N
PDA	21	31	31	10	7	100	(29)
SPS	6	47	33	12	3	100	(254)
CVP	2	8	30	36	24	100	(112)
PICS	0	15	34	32	19	100	(47)
FDP	0	7	47	34	12	100	(174)
SVP	1	7	49	33	9	100	(77)
LPS	2	5	49	27	17	100	(41)
NA/REP	2	6	66	20	6	100	(42)
LDU	0	24	55	19	2	100	(58)

SOURCE: 1976 Swiss survey.

stance, so they set aside their ideological objections to voting Communist.

The Social Democratic voters are spread in a more predictable fashion along the left-right continuum. Fifty percent place themselves on the left (though only 6 percent on the extreme left), about 33 percent place themselves in the center, and a small portion express a sense of identification with the right. The vast majority belong to the left and center. The parties of the center-right—the Radical Democrats, Liberals, and the People's party, at any rate—find half of their supporters in the center and approximately one-third on the right (though slightly more Liberals place themselves on the extreme right). The proportions are similar to those within the Social Democratic party, but the whole electorate is further to the right.

As for National Action and the Republican Movement, their supporters consider themselves centrists above all: about 67 percent place themselves in the center, 20 percent on the right, and only 6 percent on the far right. These two parties represent an anomaly in Swiss political life, a wave of nationalism and isolationism precipitated by what is seen as a foreign menace to Switzerland. This movement is already being assimilated into the ideological mainstream and can be better explained by the modern-traditional dimension than by the left-right dimension.¹⁷ In fact, its chief motivation is the wish to defend a certain traditional conception of Swiss society.

¹⁷ Inglehart and Sidjanski, "Dimension gauche-droite," p. 1019.

The Left-Right Dimension and Religion. By comparison with the other Swiss parties, the Christian Democrats and Social Christians are distributed widely along the left-right spectrum. They win more votes on the left than do the FDP, SVP, and LPS, and their support is distributed more evenly through the center (one-third), the right (another third), and the extreme right (almost one-quarter). It is worth noting, however, that the left-right dimension entirely obscures the pattern that emerges when the same parties are lined up on the religious-secular dimension, where traditionally the two Catholic parties and the Radical and Liberal parties have occupied opposite extremes. Moreover, the religious dimension is salient among the electorates of the traditional parties and plays an important role in determining their party choice. The religious convictions probably explain why some voters supported the Christian Democratic party but all the while considered themselves to be on the extreme right or even on the left. Though this dimension is not as important for the Swiss electorate as a whole as it is for the two Christian parties, it must be considered along with the left-right dimension and the traditional-modern dimension when one attempts to interpret Swiss politics.

In recent years the religious dimension has been reflected in two major issues: abortion and the prohibition of Jesuit activities in Switzerland. The government's proposal to repeal the Jesuit prohibition established by the Constitution of 1848 was ratified by a referendum on May 21, 1973. The turnout was 40.3 percent; there were 791,076 votes for repeal and 648,924 against; sixteen and one-half cantons voted "yes," five and one-half "no."¹⁸ In addition, our 1972 survey revealed that nearly one person in four (24.5 percent) was not interested in the question; among those who were, the vast majority (nearly 70 percent) were in favor of repealing the prohibition. In view of these findings, it seems likely that turnout was higher among those who opposed repeal than among those who favored it. Opposition was strongest in the cantons with large Protestant majorities, and the strongest support came from the Catholic cantons. In Fribourg, Lucerne, Uri, Saint Gall, and Graubünden, for example, more than 90 percent of the votes cast were in favor of repeal. However, it must be stressed that fewer than 10 percent of the Swiss people consider themselves hostile to Catholics. This suggests that the referendum on this issue did not rekindle religious antagonism along the Catholic/anti-Catholic cleavage. Moreover, the issue does

¹⁸ The cantons voting "no" were Vaud, Neuchâtel, Bern, Zurich, Schaffhausen, and Appenzell-Outer Rhodes.

not interest the young. It was respondents born before 1900 who indicated that they were most opposed to repeal, and more than 40 percent of those who could remember the times of religious conflict wanted the article to stand. Respondents born after 1900 had little interest in the problem and were in favor of repealing the article.¹⁹

Abortion became a hot issue in 1977 when a popular initiative that would have legalized abortions performed in the first twelve weeks of pregnancy was brought before the voters. Partly as a result of a very intensive campaign, the turnout was relatively high (51.9 percent).²⁰ The initiative was supported by the left and the extreme left and vigorously opposed by all of the parties committed to religious values. Some of the secular parties like the FDP, the SVP, and the Liberal party were divided. The fundamental argument in favor was that women should have the right to choose; the arguments against were grounded in Christian ethics. Although one poll had registered support for the initiative at 61 percent in June, it was defeated on September 25, 1977, with 51.7 percent of the voters and seventeen cantons opposed.²¹

Three months before the vote on the initiative, the Federal Assembly had passed a proposal for a law that would legalize abortions deemed necessary to prevent extreme physical or "social" harm to the mother or to prevent the birth of babies with severe birth defects or conceived through rape or incest. After the defeat of the initiative, this proposed law was submitted to a referendum. Many of the parties that had opposed the initiative, notably the CVP, campaigned in support of a "yes" vote, hoping that this more cautious formulation would settle the abortion question once and for all. This time opposition came from parties like the FDP, the SBS, and the Liberals. The left opposed the proposal on the grounds that it made any abortion not in the stated categories a criminal act. Many traditionalists, meanwhile, objected to the inclusion among the legal grounds for abortion a threat to the social welfare of the mother. On May 28, 1978, the referendum was defeated by a large majority—68.8 percent "no," 31.2 percent "yes"—with a turnout of 48.8 percent.²²

¹⁹ Inglehart and Sidjanski, "Dimension gauche-droite," p. 1018.

²⁰ *Année politique suisse, 1977*, pp. 129-30.

²¹ *Annuaire statistique suisse, 1977*, p. 557. The eight cantons that voted "yes" were: Geneva (78.7 percent), Vaud (76.4 percent), Neuchâtel (75.1 percent), Basel City (66.4 percent), Zurich (60.2 percent), Basel Country (59.7 percent), Schaffhausen (52.4 percent), and Bern (50.5 percent). All of the French-speaking cantons except the two that are Catholic (Valais and Fribourg) accepted the initiative.

²² *Année politique suisse, 1978*, p. 126.

As a result, all abortions remain illegal in Switzerland and public opinion is divided. According to a survey carried out in the spring of 1977, only 8.4 percent of the Swiss opposed abortion categorically, 26.8 percent thought it should be legal when the mother's life was in danger, 9.3 percent would allow it for any medical reason, 22.7 percent would countenance it for medical and social reasons, and 32.8 percent were in favor of a still more liberal solution.²³

Ideology, Organization, and Regional Support. In some cases, a wide range of ideological orientations within a single Swiss party is due to the federal structure of both the political system and the party. Although they are members of the same federal organization, the cantonal parties, like local parties in the United States, can differ widely one from the other. For example, the Independent Christian Social party of Geneva (PICS) is diametrically opposed to the Catholic Conservative party of Valais and to its counterpart in Fribourg, yet these three parties are all cantonal parties within the Swiss Christian Democratic party. The ideological distance that separates their voters can be seen in the parties' wide distribution over the left-right continuum at the national level. The same holds true for the two major parties of the left. In the Socialist party, the Social Democratic tendency heavily predominates: 80 percent of the Socialist electorate leans either to the left (47 percent) or to the center (33 percent). Given the leanings of the Socialist party in Geneva and its electoral base, one can safely assume that its voters are mainly leftists, even extreme leftists; but the Socialist party in Geneva is atypical. In both Basel City and Zurich, extreme leftists were able to elect POCH candidates, increasing by two the number of seats held by the left in the National Council. In this way, the ideological spread of the parliamentary representation of the left was extended in 1979. Although only a slight increase in the polarization of the electorate was found, it remains to be seen whether the leaders of the SPS will seek to minimize or to accentuate it. For the time being, they seem to have chosen the latter route—witness their platform, the direction taken by their convention in Geneva, and their positions on various referendums and initiatives. If this trend continues, the SPS will eventually be forced to choose between participating in the government and opposing it.

²³ Supplement to the 1976 Swiss survey using the same sample and carried out by questionnaire. Fifty-three percent in this sample failed to return the questionnaire and for another 4 percent the data are missing. The data are held by the department of political science, University of Geneva.

The other parties of the center-right have more homogeneous and concentrated electorates. Eighty-two percent of SVP votes come from only eight cantons. Eighty-one percent of the supporters of the Swiss Radical party are found in the center and center-right. The Liberal party has representatives from only four cantons (Basel City, Vaud, Neuchâtel, and Geneva); 76 percent of its electorate is in the center and on the center-right, with another 17 percent on the extreme right. Most heavily centrist of all is the rapidly diminishing electorate of the Republican Movement and National Action, which retained only three representatives in 1979 (down from six in 1975), from Zurich, Bern, and Geneva: 86 percent of their electorate place themselves in the center (66 percent) and the center-right (20 percent). Next to most of the other parties' electorates, the supporters of the Independents party—closely tied to the MIGROS chain of cooperatives—place themselves strongly in the center (55 percent), with another concentration on the left (24 percent). But this party too is small and declining.

Multiparty Systems and Government Stability. Like most multiparty systems, the Swiss system has a relatively wide range of electorates and parties. Variety is all the greater in that the party organizations are principally cantonal organizations, and federal election campaigns actually consist of the various cantonal campaigns and platforms with some coordination between them and overall federal direction.

With more than ten parties, Switzerland can be classified as an extreme multiparty system in Giovanni Sartori's global typology.²⁴ Despite the multiplicity and diversity of federal parties and the variety of cantonal parties within them, however, more than two-thirds of the Swiss who go to the polls vote for the three major national parties—the Social Democratic party, the Radical party, and the Christian Democratic party—all of which participate in the federal government. A comparison of their electorates' positions on the left-right continuum, presented in table 4-15, is pertinent at this point.

The majority of these voters are concentrated in the center, the center-right, and to a slightly lesser degree the center-left. Thus, the electoral support of the government comes from a relatively wide range of voters and is marginal only at the very ends of the left-right spectrum. According to Sartori's hypothesis, an extreme multiparty system (one with more than five parties) generally coincides with a political climate in which extremism weighs heavily on the function-

²⁴ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 125.

TABLE 4-15
LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT OF MAJOR-PARTY VOTERS, 1976
(percent)

Party	Extreme Left	Center Left	Center	Center Right	Extreme Right	Total	N
SPS	6	47	33	12	3	100	(254)
CVP	2	8	30	36	24	100	(112)
FDP	0	7	47	34	12	100	(174)

NOTE: Rows may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: 1976 Swiss survey.

ing of democracy. This hypothesis is not currently borne out by the Swiss system which, overall, is characterized by a high degree of mutually reinforcing moderation and political stability. Left-right polarization is less marked in Switzerland than in other Western countries with multiple parties, such as the Netherlands and Italy, each of which has a rather wide ideological spectrum (see table 4-16). The Netherlands enjoys remarkable stability, with 10 percent of those who actually vote situated at each extreme and another 50 percent evenly divided between the center-left and center-right. And the voting Italian electorate is the most leftist in Western Europe: 26 percent of the voters are on the extreme left, 26 percent are on the center-left, 34 percent are in the center, and the center-right and extreme right

TABLE 4-16
LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT OF VOTERS IN SELECTED DEMOCRACIES,
1974-1976
(percent)

Country	Extreme Left	Center Left	Center	Center Right	Extreme Right	Total	N
Italy	26	26	34	9	5	100	(1,031)
Netherlands	10	24	30	26	10	100	(979)
Switzerland	3	21	42	24	10	100	(873)
United Kingdom	9	19	37	24	12	100	(1,093)
United States	4	13	48	25	10	100	(985)
West Germany	4	23	39	25	10	100	(1,435)

SOURCE: *Political Action*.

claim the remaining 14 percent. Contrary to the thesis that multiparty systems reflect extreme polarization, the distribution of the Swiss population along the left-right continuum bears a striking resemblance to the distribution found in a two-party system such as that in the United States or in the two-plus-one party systems in Germany and Great Britain, with a large number of voters in the center and fewer at either end of the continuum.²⁵

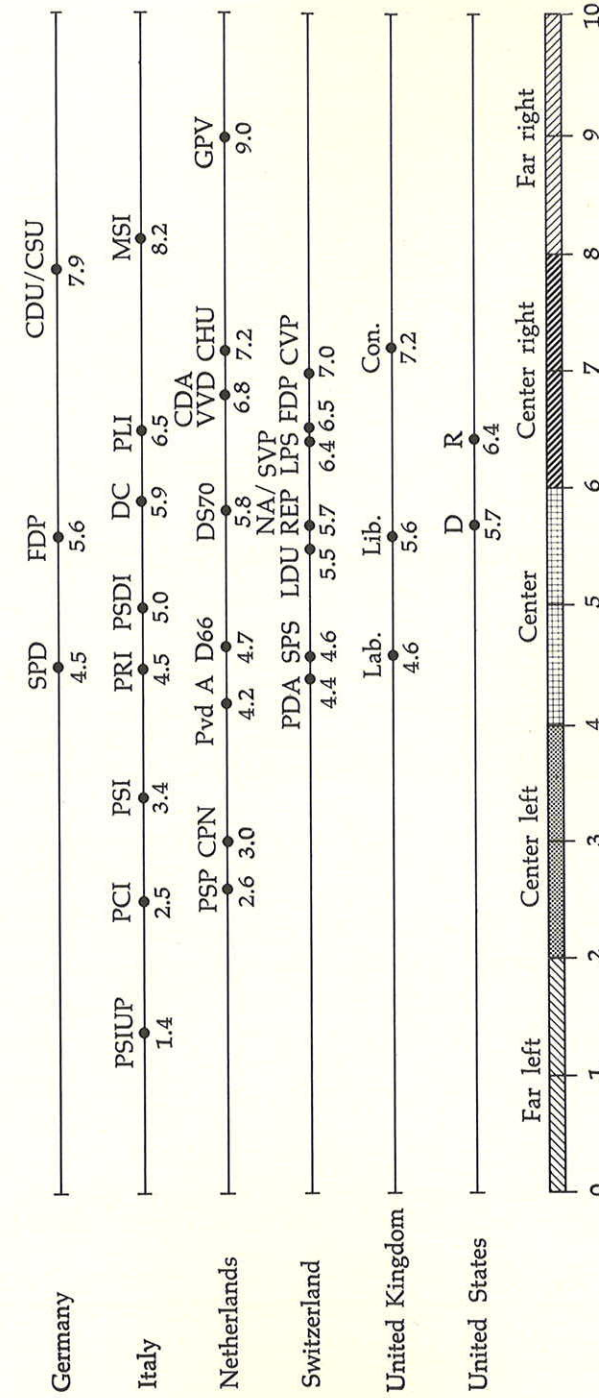
This pattern shows up again when one charts the positions on the left-right continuum of the political parties in various countries. Figure 4-1 shows the average positions chosen by party identifiers in six democracies. The Swiss party system resembles the Italian and Dutch systems in the number of parties, but it is much more like the British system in the total ideological space represented by the parties (see table 4-17).²⁶ If, on the other hand, one compares the ideological distance between the two or three major parties (as there is a good case for doing where the largest parties take the overwhelming majority of the vote), Italy and the Netherlands seem far less different from Switzerland. The distance from the SPS to the FDP and the CVP is 2.1—quite a lot considering those parties' long collaboration on the Federal Council—while the space between the major Dutch parties (which took 83.6 percent of the vote and 93.0 percent of the seats in the 1977 elections) is 2.6. It seems, then, that the multiplicity of parties in Switzerland does not reflect a high degree of ideological fragmentation. As for the meaning of the slight increase in polarization observed in 1979, it remains ambiguous, precisely because the principal representatives of the two poles continue to work together in the federal government. Their limited conflicts over issues are generally put to a popular vote without damaging their cooperation in the Federal Council or threatening the stability of the government. Nevertheless, if antagonism between the major parties were to grow, Switzerland's "magic formula" would be in jeopardy.

Under the magic formula, open conflicts are prevented by the general willingness of the Swiss to work for compromise in politics. Since 1943 the three major parties and the People's party have cooperated to give Switzerland a decision-making process based more on

²⁵ For an explanation of the method used, see Dusan Sidjanski, *Europe élections: de la démocratie européenne* (Paris: Stanke, 1979), p. 285 ff, and Ronald Inglehart and Hans Klingemann, "Party Identification and the Left-Right Dimension among Western Mass Publics," in Ian Budge, Ivor Crewe, and Dennis Farlie, eds., *Party Identification and Beyond* (New York: Wiley, 1976), pp. 243-257.

²⁶ It should be noted that the 1976 Swiss survey did not reflect the strengthening of the extreme left recorded in the 1979 election. For further evidence that the polarization of voters in Switzerland is moderate compared with the polarization of voters in France, Italy, and Denmark, see Sidjanski, *Europe élections*, p. 286.

FIGURE 4-1
LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT OF PARTY IDENTIFIERS IN SIX WESTERN DEMOCRACIES, 1976



NOTE: Entries are averages of the positions on the left-right scale chosen by respondents who identified with each party. Arrows indicate the major parties farthest to the left and right ends of the scale. See also table 4-17.
SOURCE: *Political Action*.

TABLE 4-17
 IDEOLOGICAL PROFILES OF PARTY SYSTEMS
 IN SELECTED DEMOCRACIES, 1974-1976

Country	Average Self-Placement, All Party Identifiers	Distance Spanned by Party System		
		Total	Minus extremes	Between major parties
Germany	5.8	3.4	—	3.4
Italy	4.3	6.8	5.7	3.4
Netherlands	5.9	6.4	4.6	2.6
Switzerland	5.8	2.6	—	2.1
United Kingdom	5.7	2.6	—	2.6
United States	5.9	0.7	—	0.7

Dash (—) = Not applicable.

NOTE: This table summarizes some of the information contained in figure 4-1. For identification of the major parties and the left-right scale presented to respondents, see that figure.

SOURCE: *Political Action*.

amicable agreement than on majority rule.²⁷ This method of decision making has distinct advantages in a fragmented society, where the rights of linguistic and religious minorities might be abridged by the will of the majority, and where prolonged domination of the minorities by the majority can lead to "autonomist" actions such as those taken in Jura. In addition, governmental cooperation means that the parties rarely announce coherent platforms that would make their differences explicit. The 1979 elections were unusual in that the parties' platforms outlined clear alternatives. Through the years, of course, some choices have been presented to the voters, but usually in referendums, on which the major parties have taken sides. It should also be pointed out that the parties in neighboring countries seldom offer the voters a wide range of choices—and that Switzerland's parties are currently trying to clarify their identities through their leaders' speeches and

²⁷ The Socialists did not participate in the government from 1954 to 1959. See Jürg Steiner, *Amicable Agreement versus Majority Rule: Conflict Resolution in Switzerland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973) for a description and analysis of the Swiss decision-making process. See also Dusan Sidjanski and David Handley, "Note de recherche sur les partis politiques et le processus de décision" [Research note on political parties and the decision-making process], *Annuaire suisse de science politique*, vol. 9 (1969), and Dusan Sidjanski, "Interest Groups in Switzerland," in *Interest Groups in International Perspective*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (May 1974), special edition published by Robert Presthus.

their stands on certain issues. However, Swiss politics is still characterized by an exceptionally low level of conflict. This phenomenon, in turn, could be due to the relatively low polarization of the electorate as well as to the other factors that, we have seen, contribute to the remarkable political stability of Switzerland.

Furthermore, stability is fostered by the high level of trust in the federal government that has been an enduring characteristic of the Swiss electorate. In our 1976 survey, 76 percent of the 1,052 respondents said that they "almost always" or "most of the time" trusted the federal government, and only 3 percent indicated that they "almost never" did (see table 4-18).²⁸ Among the 11 percent who said that they "almost always" trusted the government, the proportion of centrists is the same as in the sample as a whole. This is also true for the other categories: centrists are 44 percent, or slightly less, in the "most of the time," "only sometimes," and "almost never" groups. As might be expected, the center-right and extreme right are the choice of a higher proportion of those who usually trust the government than of the other groups. However, supporters of the extreme right, who constitute 9 percent of the total sample, also constitute similar proportions of those who trust the government "most of the time" (9 percent), "only some of the time" (8 percent), and "almost never" (7 percent). Clearly the extreme right contains its own oppositionists.

The center-right voters present a very different picture. Twenty-four percent of the sample as a whole, they constitute higher proportions of those with high political trust and lower proportions of the skeptical groups. Exactly the opposite is true for the extreme left and the center-left: only 1 percent of those who "almost always" trust the government place themselves on the extreme left and only 2 percent of those who trust it "most of the time" do so, whereas 6 percent of those who trust it "only sometimes" (twice the figure for the sample as a whole) are far left. Finally, of those who "almost never" trust the government, a record 15 percent—five times the figure for the total sample—place themselves on the extreme left. Though the contrast is less striking, it is also true that the center-left is proportionally stronger as the level of trust declines. This fact helps explain the sometimes ambiguous position of the SPS, which, while participating in the Federal Council, occasionally opposes policies advocated by the federal government. This periodic opposition has very little effect, given the high level of political trust throughout the country.

²⁸ In 1972 the figures were: "Almost always" 11 percent; "most of the time" 59.8 percent; "sometimes" 27.4 percent; "never" 1.2 percent. In 1972 the "don't know" category accounted for 9.3 percent of the responses. Those who did answer (1,738 of the 1,917 persons surveyed) represented 90.7 percent of the total survey group.

TABLE 4-18
LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT AND TRUST
IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, 1976
(percent)

Trust	Extreme Left	Center Left	Center	Center Right	Extreme Right	Total	%	All Voters N
Almost always	1	10	44	32	13	100	11	(120)
Most of the time	2	19	44	27	9	100	65	(682)
Only sometimes	6	27	43	16	8	100	21	(223)
Almost never	15	30	41	7	7	100	3	(27)
All voters	3	20	44	24	9	—	100	—
N	(31)	(207)	(460)	(257)	(97)	—	—	(1,052)

Dash (—) = Not applicable.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: 1976 Swiss survey.

TABLE 4-19
POLITICAL TRUST IN SELECTED DEMOCRACIES, 1974-1976
(percent)

Country	A	B	C	D	Total	A + B	C + D
	Almost Always	Most of the Time	Only Sometimes	Almost Never			
Italy	3	11	45	41	100	14	86
Netherlands	7	39	45	9	100	46	54
Switzerland	11	65	23	3	100	76	24
United Kingdom	7	33	50	10	100	40	60
United States	5	30	51	14	100	35	64
West Germany	10	42	41	7	100	52	48

SURVEY QUESTION: How much do you trust the "government" to do what is right?
NOTE: Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: *Political Action*, pp. 184-85, and department of political science archives, University of Geneva.

Even in countries whose governments have been stable since the Second World War, the level of trust in government cannot be compared to the virtually unfluctuating high level found in Switzerland (see table 4-19). In Germany, 52 percent of respondents trust the government "almost always" or "most of the time," and 48 percent trust it "only sometimes" or "almost never"; the figures for Switzerland are 76 percent and 24 percent. In the Netherlands trust is slightly lower than in Germany, and in the United States it drastically declined following the Vietnam war and Watergate. This indicator reflects a government's credibility as well as its authority and stability; it gives a reading of support for the government and is related to general support for the political community and the democratic regime. Not surprisingly, therefore, in Italy, where the government's credibility has been almost destroyed, 41 percent of the voters "almost never" trust their government, and 45 percent trust it "only sometimes." This situation is the reverse of that found in Switzerland.

The Swiss express both political trust and satisfaction with the material side of life; the level of material satisfaction (87.6 percent) is more or less comparable to the level of trust (76 percent). By contrast, in all the other countries studied the level of material satisfaction is significantly higher than the level of political trust. The Dutch are the most satisfied with their standard of living (80 percent), but their level of political trust is only 46 percent. Some 61 percent of Ameri-

cans say they are satisfied with the material aspects of life, but only 35 percent express trust in their government.

The fact that the major Swiss parties all participate in the Federal Council and face only slight or sporadic opposition fosters confidence. Even so, the high level of trust in government is surprising when one considers the various divisive forces at work in Swiss society—the multiplicity of levels of government under federalism, the linguistic and religious cleavages, the presence of minority groups, and the tensions expressed in the violent protests of youth that disrupted Zurich and Lausanne in 1980. Despite all these, a stable party system and a people that trusts its government have combined to keep the evolution of the Swiss political system slow by the standards of most Western democracies.