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Proud of Swiss roots

In the last issue of Swiss Review, Tim Kaeser wrote about his Switzerland. Three young compatriots from abroad took him up on it: in a triologue they expressed their opinions on Tim's thoughts and on their Switzerland.

As announced in "Swiss Review" 2/98 we have sought young Swiss abroad to react to the thoughts of 17-year old Tim Kaeser on their relationship with Switzerland. Sandra Aubert de la Rüe (18) from Sweden, Elisabeth Malleson (22) from South Africa and Steve Hurschler (26) from Canada took up the challenge. They met over Easter in a winter sports camp in Switzerland (see box), and spoke about their relationship to Switzerland.

Steve: Even though Tim Kaeser cites

greed. I find it ironic that the countries that shout the loudest and point the most fingers are those that really don't have such a rosy past themselves.

Steve: I think you are right. I would like to think that even in those countries justice will eventually be served in each case.

Elisabeth: Each country should acknowledge the faults of its past and more importantly build on its future.

Sandra: As a Swiss abroad, I don't see problems. I'm not involved in politics, I only see good things like culture, four different languages in one country, and the things that Switzerland is famous for, such as chocolate, watches, skiing and banks.

Steve: For me, I see Switzerland for its great history, culture and people. I see its government as a role model in governing people.

Elisabeth: Yes – I think the Swiss Federation is good because it allows people to be individuals and keep their own identity. Countries like South

anything special, but when I tell people I am from Switzerland, I get a positive response.

Elisabeth: I'm also proud to have roots in Switzerland. Swiss traditions have always played an important role in my life, especially at Christmas and Easter time.

Steve: What is your impression of young Swiss people?

Sandra: My impression is that even though young kids in Switzerland listen to hip-hop and do other "non-Swiss" things, they are still very Swiss. I think that they are intelligent, and they are well prepared for work at an earlier age than in Canada. I do believe that some things in Switzerland are old-fashioned. Older people have to adapt to newer ideas but the younger people need to be more interested in where Switzerland came from – its history and its culture.

Elisabeth: Maybe certain things seem old-fashioned but are important to them as a part of their tradition and culture?

Sandra: I agree – we can't criticize things that people do in Switzerland because it is not so much part of our every day life.



Elisabeth, Sandra and Steve (from left) are proud of their Swiss roots, but they have critical thoughts about Switzerland. (Photo RL)

the Nazi Gold issue as something bad in Switzerland's past, I think Switzerland still has an excellent reputation in the world.

Sandra: In Sweden, I have heard about the Nazi Gold issue but I don't think it is a big problem. It is evident that every country in Europe was involved in the war.

Elisabeth: Every country in the world has something bad in its past, which is probably because of human nature and

Africa could learn a lot from Switzerland in this respect.

Sandra: I see Switzerland as a special nation. I feel I'm part of something special, something great. I don't get the same feeling being Swedish.

Steve: I am very proud to tell people in Canada that I am Swiss. I think they are impressed also.

Sandra: I have friends that come from different countries, but when they say where they are from, people don't think

Youth camps in Switzerland

Sandra, Elisabeth and Steve were among the about 220 young people from 15 to 25 years old who participate every year in one of the three youth camps of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad. At Christmas and Easter there is a winter sports camp and in the summer there are two multi sports and culture camps. In July and August of this year the young people are coming together in Baden (Aargau). Further information may be obtained from the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16 Tel. ++41 31 351 61 00 Fax ++41 31 351 61 50 E-mail: post_aso@aso.ch