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Cover

On June 19th 1999 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will decide where the Winter Olympics after the next are to be held. Switzerland is in the running with its Sion 2006 project. Its candidature is seen as a unique opportunity for this country. (Photo: Keystone)

I M P R E S S U M

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« If you really love someone and discover that he has done something rotten, you don't stop loving him... but it hurts. » It was with this image that Bernard Crettaz, the conservator of the Geneva ethnographic museum, answered the question put to him by the magazine "L'Illustré": whether he was proud to be Swiss.

I put this quotation at the very beginning of my last editorial for the Swiss Review – at the end of the year I shall be handing over the editorship to Lukas M. Schneider. That is because we journalists who, day in, day out, are deeply involved in Swiss issues, feel the same. We come across things which we do not like, which seem perhaps wrong or unjust. But even if we criticise Switzerland on these grounds, we retain great respect for our country and its people.

I shall go further than that. It is precisely because our country is dear to us that it is our duty to speak out about any negative aspects. We owe it to ourselves and to our readership not to paint an over-simplified picture of Switzerland, but one reflecting its complexity – and the contradictions which that complexity generates – as well as its strengths, weaknesses and the mood of the moment.

What I have just said is especially true of the Swiss Review. It is the only medium which reaches all of the 560,000 registered Swiss Abroad, and so must take particular care over the picture of Switzerland which it conveys to the wide world.

The question of our country's image has been an issue for some time now, especially in connection with its role in the Second World War. And the media – among them the Swiss Review – are sometimes accused of standing on the side of the detractors, and of helping to discredit Switzerland internationally.

There may occasionally be articles which go too far, or which have not been seriously researched. But it is not the fault of the media if Switzerland has been reluctant to look its past directly in the eyes, and to recognise what historians discovered some time ago now: that Switzerland's behaviour in the Second World War was not always as upright as we could have wished. Just as we have to unmask false accusations and unjustified demands and to look at events in their context, we in the media must also point out the areas where Switzerland behaved dubiously.

This is the approach which we at the Swiss Review have adopted, not only in relation to recent history but in all our articles. Sometimes we hurt for Switzerland, and in the last analysis for ourselves. But we do not stop loving our country.



René L.
René Lenzin