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# Dear Fellow Citizens

July 13, 2010 was a very special day, not only for my youngest son, who turned five that day, but for all of my family, setting foot for the first time in New Zealand. What a big change it was! From the heart of Europe to the end of the world; from summer to winter, from night to day, from an ascending moon to a descending moon, from driving on the right side to driving on the left side – but no people walking on their hands, as I had jokingly told my children.

A great change for us – but how great a change must it have been for you? You, who came on your own to a country that some of you had not even seen before. When I learnt last year that we would be transferred to Wellington, one of the first things I took an interest in was you, the Swiss living here. What were the reasons that made you emigrate? Why New Zealand? I could not find many answers, and it seems that not much research has been done, apart from Helen Baumer and her "One-Way Ticket to New Zealand, Swiss Immigration After the Second World War" (Frankfurt a.M., 2003). This is a pity, but also a stimulus to reach out and meet as many of you, my fellow citizens, as possible, learning about your lives and your adventures.

Baumer writes, much to my surprise, that almost half of the people she interviewed had given preference to go to another country before choosing New Zealand. New Zealand only second best? In our case, New Zealand was not on our radar for the simple fact that here is no German school. But when New Zealand became an option, we certainly did not need to do a lot of thinking to decide to go and so far we have not been disappointed! We were very warmly welcomed to this country and the easy-going lifestyle and friendliness of the New Zealanders have made settling in easy.

Let me tell you a bit about my family and myself: I was born in Zurich in 1964, and by then my dad had been naturalized. He grew up in Germany until the age of 13. The Soviets occupied the Eastern part of Germany, and when they sent my grandfather to the Konzentrationslager in 1946, my grandmother decided to flee. My grandmother's father, my greatgrandfather, taught at the time at the University of Zurich, and this is why my grandmother fled with my father and his three siblings to Switzerland and settled in Zürich.

I went to school in Zürich and at the age of 16 I thought that Switzerland was too small and boring and that I wanted to see the world. I applied to go on a student exchange program and spent one year in Connecticut, USA. It was a wonderful experience and a real eye-opener for me. It changed my way of looking at almost everything. After the US year and the baccalaureate I studied law in Zürich and worked for some years as a court clerk at different courts and later as a legal secre-

tary at the Directorate of Education of the Canton of Zurich. However, I had always wanted to become a diplomat and in 1994 I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs. I was sent to Tel Aviv on my first posting. Back in Bern I worked on refugee policy issues within the Department of Foreign Affairs, dealing mainly with Bosnians having to return to their home countries. I loved my job, but I was longing to go abroad again. The Department gave me two years leave of absence to work for the International Committee of the Red Cross and it was for them that I went to Rwanda and Tunisia. I returned to Bern and the Depart-

ment and was in charge of bilateral relations with Southern, Central and East Africa for three years. Thereafter followed a posting to Washington, D.C., which brought me closer to my American family and where Nikolai, my youngest, was born. Upon our return to Bern shortly before Christmas 2005, I assumed the function of deputy head of personnel of the Department. And this July, it was finally time to set off again – and here we are!

My husband Waldemar was born in Altdorf, in 1964. And despite his Polish name, he is much more Swiss than I am! His greatgrandfather lived in Poland and was deported to Siberia by the Russians. From Siberia the greatgrandfather managed to flee to Switzerland. He was a medical doctor, and when in 1872 the Gotthard-railway was built, he came as their medical doctor to the Canton of Uri and was eventually naturalized. One of his sons, a granduncle of my husband, was Ladislaus Krupski, better known as Hans

Indergand, the famous composer of *Gilberte de Courgenay*. Waldemar went to school in Altdorf and was trained there in his first profession, electrician. Waldemar worked for quite some years all over Switzerland, and there are not many cable cars that he has not seen, revised and fixed! However, what he enjoyed most of all was teaching the young electricians. One day it became clear that he wanted to study again. He enrolled at the university of applied sciences in Zurich and graduated with a bachelor in Social Work. He worked as a youth worker, placing children and teenagers in difficult life circumstances in host families until we left for New Zealand.

Waldemar and I have 3 wonderful children: Kasimir, 9 years old, Janina, 7, and Nikolai, 5. Despite having to wear a school uniform, they all think school in New Zealand is much cooler than in Switzerland.

My family and I are very much looking forward to meeting as many as possible of you Swiss living here in New Zealand. In the coming months I plan to visit the different Swiss clubs and I am positive that this will give great opportunities to get to know you. I would very much like to be *your* Ambassador, so please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

*Ambassador Marion Weichelt Krupski*

