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Editorial

Switzerland and it's recent past! This was and is the theme of many a discussion among politicians and people in our Country of origin.

The ordinary Swiss citizen is posing the question why, after 50 years, do we have to face all these accusations in connection with immoral banking and trading practices during World War two. Why only now after such a long time and why is Switzerland singled out, a country that took no active part in the holocaust?

- Swiss people in general (including some of us dual-Nationals) feel a sense of loss-of-pride and a sense of anger that a 'shadow' over the image of Swiss history has been uncovered, without our knowledge that such a 'shadow' had ever existed.

- In accord with the official reaction from today's Swiss Government we

are forced to acknowledge the moral and ethical shortcomings of Swiss bankers, Politicians and Industrialists during those most difficult years of World War two.

- A quotation in my dictionary reads; "Even God cannot change the past" and so our Country of origin can but try to make amends as best it can.

- A process of restitution with apology and compensation is well under way. Recently (May 98) some Swiss Politicians, led by the Foreign affairs Commissioner of the House of Representatives, met with the Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Mr. Israel Singer, in Bern. - It appears that a consensus was reached and Mr. Rolf Bloch, the holocaust fund's president announced that a further pay out of 60 million Francs will go to approx. 30 to 40,000 people (survivors and their heirs) in the USA. - A further 15 million Francs will go to survivors in Eastern Europe. It was also agreed

that funds should for the first time be made available to wartime political prisoners.

- With all of these news in mind it is easy to allow a sense of guilt to take hold of the ordinary person in Switzerland.

However by doing so the Swiss of today (including us Swiss Kiwis) have cause to balance such guilt feelings with proud memories of the heroic efforts by the Swiss Army and the general population of the 1940's. Willing to resist, at all cost and with great personal sacrifice of the individual the ideology of the "Third Reich" was rejected in order to defend freedom and democracy.

- Having been shielded from the consequences of direct involvement in the war itself, we owe a sense of gratitude to our forbears and it is timely to be reminded of some heroic action by two of many Swiss citizens of those days.

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Maybe the names of Paul Grüninger and Maurice Bavaud do not mean anything to you, but please allow me to express my admiration for these "victims of compassion and civil courage".

- **Paul Grüninger**, the Police Commandant of St.Gall lost his job in disgrace when it was discovered that in 1938/39 he allowed many hundreds of Jewish refugees to enter Switzerland illegally during the time of the Nazi regime in Germany. A year after loosing his job in 1940 Grüninger was condemned for disobeying orders and falsifying official documents. He died a disgraced man in the early 1970's.

In recent times and for some years now family and friends of Grüninger have tried to have him post humously rehabilitated. (Rehabilitation according to my dictionary means "to re-establish in the esteem of others")

Not only did they succeed by having Grüninger officially rehabilitated in 1995, but now the Cantonal Parliament of St.Gall has granted a credit of 1.3 million Francs to establish a "Grüninger Foundation" with the aim to rewarding people acting selflessly in the interest of others. This foundation has a further mandate to counteract racism and anti-Semitism.

Maurice Bavaud, a young student