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Switzerland on the Eve of to its 700th Anniversary

As the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Swiss Confederation approaches, busy preparations are underway for celebrations all over the country. The official opening of the festivities is scheduled for 10 and 11 January 1991 in Bellinzona, and will be attended by the Federal Council and representatives of the cantons.

The anniversary celebrations, at which the Swiss Abroad will be represented, are based on the idea of a trilogy of festivity cycles. These cycles will be staged in Switzerland's different language regions and will each have a specific theme.

The festival theme in the German-speaking part, in Switzerland's three founding cantons, to be more precise, will be "The Swiss Confederation". French-speaking Switzerland is to stage a "Festival of Four Cultures", and celebrations in the Italian- and Romansh-speaking regions will feature the theme "Solidarity". The opening and closing ceremonies will both be held in Canton Ticino.

One of several planned highlights is the "Path of Switzerland", a footpath leading round the Urner See, the Canton Uri side of Lake Lucerne, from the historic Rütli meadow to the "Auslandschweizerplatz" in Brunnen.

The 700th Anniversary and the Swiss Abroad

The "Auslandschweizerplatz" which is to be inaugurated on 4 May 1991, the same day as the "Path of Switzerland", lies in the very heart of the historic cradle of Switzerland. It has been designed as a meeting place and will also provide the setting for events staged by members of the Swiss Communities Abroad. On 1 August, Swiss National Day, a party of some 2 000 people will travel to the Rütli. It will include all seven federal Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, cantonal representatives, guests

of honour, the entire Council of the Swiss Abroad and other members of the Swiss Abroad. On the way back, the party will stop at the "Auslandschweizerplatz", where the Swiss living abroad plan to hold a reception for the government.

In view of the anniversary cele-

brations, the Congress of the

Swiss Abroad will be brought

forward to 26 to 28 April and will be held in Lucerne. The city's central location will allow many Swiss from abroad to be present when the government visits the "Auslandschweizerplatz" on 1 August 1991. In anticipation the Secretariat of the Swiss Communities Abroad has already made reservations in Lucerne for between 600 and 800 participants of the Congress.

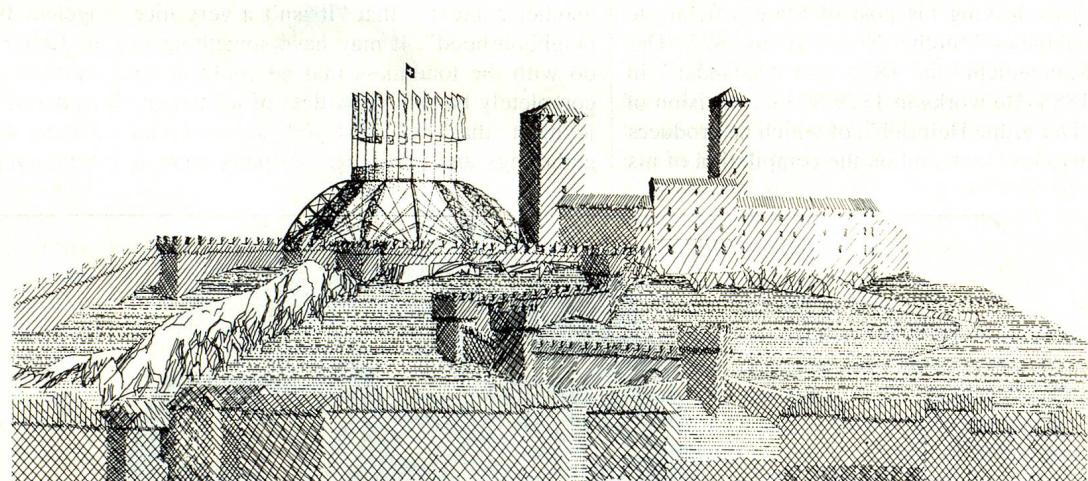
The traditional Sunday outing is likely to take congress participants to Brunnen, where they will have lunch at the "Auslandschweizerplatz".

Festivities for the Young

The Secretariat's youth camp for 15 to 25 year-old Swiss from abroad is also being organised with the 700th anniversary celebrations in mind. Two summer camps are to be held on the Rigi between 29 July and 22 August 1991, and their programmes will be planned to fit in with the festivities in Central Switzerland. These include "Youth Day", Swiss National Day, a People's Festival in Brunnen, and the "Mythenpiel" (drama) in Schwyz.

"Spiert Aviert" (open mind) is the theme of the "Youth Festival", which is to be staged in the Engadine between 1 and 9 September 1991. It will bring together 600 young people aged between 16 and 25 from all over Europe. Workshops will be organised encouraging participants to exchange ideas on various aspects of living together in Europe. Those taking part will include a class from the Swiss School in Rome.

Celebrations will of course not be confined to young people. A



The Botta tent will be used in Bellinzona for the first time.

brations, the Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be brought forward to 26 to 28 April and will be held in Lucerne. The city's central location will allow many Swiss from abroad to be present when the government visits the "Auslandschweizerplatz" on 1 August 1991.

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But the camps are not the only activities planned for young people. The exchange programme begun by the Secretariat for the Swiss Communities Abroad in conjunction with AFS Intercultural Programmes will continue in summer 1991. The programme, which is co-sponsored by the Swiss Foreign Ministry, is open to all young Swiss aged between 14 and 20 from at home and abroad.

The "Youth Day" festivities on the Rütli on 30 and 31 July will also be attended by a group of young Swiss from abroad, at the invitation of the holiday organisation responsible for that particular age group.

people's festival is to be held in Brunnen between 2 and 3 August. All Swiss from abroad in the country at that time are welcome to take part.

A discussion on the topic "Switzerland on The Threshold of The 21st Century" to be held in Canton Ticino will mark the end of the 700th anniversary celebrations. Participants will again include a delegation of the Swiss Communities Abroad.

If you are thinking of travelling to Switzerland to attend the festivities, please also remember to book your flight and accommodation well in advance.