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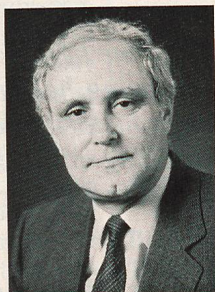
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Pictured here at the opening of the 700 year anniversary celebrations in Bellinzona's Castel Grande, the tent designed by Ticino architect Mario Botta gives the impression of a light-filled cathedral. (Foto Alo Zanetta)

Editorial

Dear Fellow-Citizens all over the world,



This year the Swiss Confederation is looking back over the 700 years of its existence. Switzerland is also able to celebrate this anniversary because our fellow-citizens – men and women alike – living abroad have made a major contribution towards shaping the Switzerland of today.

At the time of its foundation, the Confederation was mainly concerned with its own pressing problems. In the course of time this situation has changed greatly: technology has made the world smaller and has welded mankind into a community – a community which shares the same destiny. Thus the problems of present-day Switzerland are also the problems of the rest of the world, and vice-versa. Consideration, openness and a sense of solidarity should, therefore, be the milestones on the road along which Switzerland, in company with Europe and the rest of the world, wishes to travel.

With an international festival as part of the Festival of Solidarity to be held in Canton Grisons in August, the present-day Confederation demonstrates its openness towards the cultures and concerns of others and its readiness to treat them with respect and tolerance. By so doing we also show our awareness of being an integral part of a worldwide network of relationships. For this network to remain effective we must also take part in the work of keeping it in good repair, in concert with all the others.

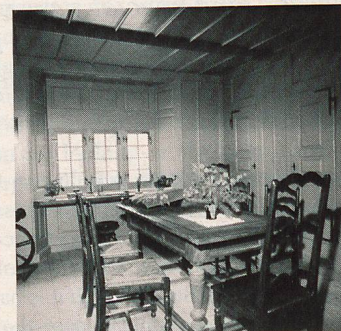
My wish is that our anniversary celebrations, and especially the Festival of Solidarity, will not only build bridges between the four cultures within Switzerland itself but will also make us Swiss more receptive to other cultures and to other peoples and their problems. Let us, my compatriots living in other countries, rejoice in the diversity of characteristics which history has brought forth in our valleys and regions in the course of these 700 years and which will be highlighted during the events and festivities which will be held throughout the country. But throughout all these festivals and rejoicings let us not forget that we are not only Swiss but at the same time Europeans and citizens of this world.

Flavio Cotti, President of the Confederation

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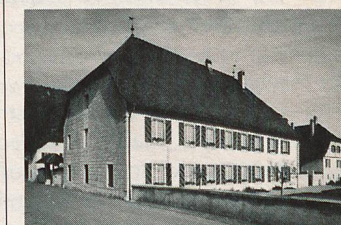
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