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## Editorial



*The emblem of New Zealand greets the White cross in the red field.*

Happy Birthday to you "Mother Helvetia"!

I suppose we all agree that celebrating a birthday is usually a very happy occasion?

Very often it is also a thought provoking occasion. I think when it concerns our own birthdays we tend to look forward rather than backwards, but in the case of a country's birthday it seems to be reversed and we tend to look into the distant past. And so it is with our homecountry's

birthday.

Even though the event will have come and gone by the time I can read about it in the Swiss newspaper sent to me, I am always keen to read about the 'first-of-August Celebrations' held in Switzerland every year.

- Perhaps just like me you may have noted with some disappointment that in recent years in Switzerland the local celebrations in village centres or village/town squares (or in one of the Churches if the weather so demands) have been abandoned. The age old custom of listening to a podium-speech by a 'prominent public figure', as part of a community celebration has become unpopular. Volunteers willing to speak to the assembled crowd have apparently become hard to find and

if they can be found it is seldom the local mayor who takes on the task as the custom once was.

-In earlier years large crowds would gather in the evening of August 1. for a twilight celebration with input from all local organisations. Sad as the loss of such customs may be, sentiments are still expressed in and through the Swiss media and people will celebrate in various other ways especially since the first of August has recently been declared a public and paid holiday. The Swiss National anthem "Trittst im Morgenrot daher, seh ich Dich (Gott) im Strahlenmeer!" will still be intoned on radio and television in various ways and the rather idealistic words will be pondered upon by many..(I believe there has been a call for a new more 'appropriately-worded' version for our modern times, since, I suppose, so many people can't see God within the concepts of 'a Fatherland', let alone in their own lives).

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Reading through the address given to us, the Swiss abroad, by the Swiss Fed.President Cotti, (reprinted in this issue of *Helvetia*), we have to agree that recent historic research has uncovered some serious 'character-faults' in some sections within the Swiss population of past generations.

This fact accepted in recent months in a balanced assessment by the Swiss population, must, however, not be allowed to prevent us in recognizing the many proud achievements of our country of origin.

-Let us celebrate our common Swiss heritage in the best way we can by striving to be worthy citizens of our adopted country, New Zealand. By doing so we will be worthy ambassadors for our beloved 'old country'.

- As a birthday present to our 'Fatherland' let us ask for God's protection on Switzerland for the years to come. Let us hope that the many 'historic decisions' awaiting to be taken, (ratification of a new constitution - membership of UN and future relationship within or without EU ) will enable our country of origin to be a blessing to its own citizens and to the world at large as it has been in the past in so many ways.