

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 64 (1998)
Heft: [7]

Artikel: The 1998 August 1 speech by President of the Swiss Confederation, Flavio Cotti, to the Swiss Abroad
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-945653>

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**The 1998 August 1 speech by
President of the
Swiss Confederation,
Flavio Cotti, to the Swiss Abroad.**



*Federal President, Flavio Cotti and his wife
Renata.*

Dear Fellow Countrymen and women around the world,

It is my privilege as President of the Confederation to address the Swiss Abroad on our national day. Sincerely and with wholehearted pleasure, I offer you the greetings and best wishes of the Federal Council. It is a moving sign of solidarity and our sense of national cohesion that so many of our citizens all over the world celebrate the birthday of the Swiss Confederation. We, at home, feel a special sense of kinship with you our fellow countrymen and women abroad on this holiday. We are grateful to you for your hard work, competence, helpfulness and fair-mindedness as well as your love of your home country. Through these qualities you have made a decisive contribution to Switzerland's reputation. And now at this time, when the previously untarnished image of our country has suffered as a result of criticism, at times even untenable and unjustified criticism, your contribution is very highly valued. For this very good reason, you are known as our country's best Ambassadors to the world.

Switzerland is celebrating a special anniversary this year - the 150th anniversary of our modern constitution. Our federal state as we know it today came into existence in 1848. Confident within their borders, our ancestors created a federal structure which has not only given cohesion to our quadrilingual country but has also allowed the development of

our own special political culture. We are profoundly grateful to our forefathers for establishing, developing and defending our federal state. In this context, I would especially like to mention the generation which, under very arduous conditions, endured the Second World War. To all citizens of that generation who are listening now, I say thank you with all my heart.

Dear Swiss people abroad

One of the characteristics of this federal system is the active participation of the people in national decisions. In our referendum democracy, the people not only have the final say, they can also, through initiatives, raise issues and put them to the vote. You, our fellow citizens abroad, can also exercise these rights. Since 1992, when the right of the Swiss Abroad to vote was introduced, an increasing number of you have actively participated in the decision making process of your country. I would like to encourage you wholeheartedly to make more use of these rights.

Dear fellow citizens, let's look for a moment at our history: in 1848, Switzerland was transformed into the most progressive and courageous democracy in Europe. 150 years later, we are still proud of these qualities. It is, therefore, as important now as it was then that we should shape our future with both courage and creativity. The successes of the last 150 years make it our duty, at this time of economic globalisation, to ensure that we pass

on to future generations our democratic heritage, the achievements of our social market economy and our unchanging and fundamental values. With confidence, self-awareness, openness and solidarity, I am convinced that we can meet these challenges. I say 'with self-awareness' deliberately. At this time of uncertainty and even of self-reproach, it seems to me that self-awareness will be an increasingly important element of the thoughts and actions of all Swiss people in the future.

Dear fellow citizens abroad

Be assured that we will not forget you. Whatever reforms we face at this time of rapid change, I regard it as a moral obligation of our country always to consider the needs and problems of our citizens abroad. Dialogue between our small, closely knit country and our citizens around the world is essential if we are to find satisfactory solutions to the problems that confront us. The organizations of the Swiss Abroad, to whom I would like to express my thanks and acknowledgment, will play an especially important role in this process.

Dear Fellow Citizens

I thank you for your loyalty to our country, and I wholeheartedly wish you, your families and friends happiness and God's blessing in your lives and work wherever you are. Switzerland, your home country, is proud of you.



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