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Address by the President of the Swiss Confederation Moritz Leuenberger for the Swiss National Day 2001

Dear fellow Swiss all over the world -

What you have just heard was the sound of Alphorns, of drums and of an accordion. (The message is spoken on tape. Ed.) This time there were no church bells, even though traditionally this speech is opened by the sound of the "bells of home". Don't worry: the churches of our homeland still have their bells. You will see that the next time you visit Switzerland. But new things have been added.

- The repertoire of the "Swiss Orchestra" has become wider and has more to offer in terms of sounds, instruments and compositions.

- Switzerland is changing.

- This irritates many people. They look back with rose-tinted spectacles. Their vision of their homeland is tinged with nostalgia, with memories of what is past and lost. The picture of their homeland can become an illusion in the same way that we, who live and work here in Switzerland, also have longings and fantasies about countries we would love to move to.

- Nobody knows this better than you.

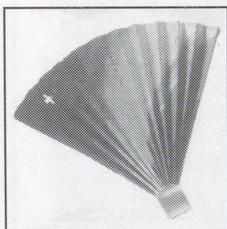
- You or your forefathers - once packed your cases and risked something new. You set off and bravely went out to meet and shape the future. You questioned traditions and remodelled them, giving them a new content and your own imprint. In this way you created a new homeland and: you kept alive Switzerland as your homeland. - The same is true of many who move to Switzerland today and help to shape it.

Today you are celebrating the first of August keeping up the tradition of commemorating the Swiss homeland. Some of you take the liberty of not doing this on the first of August, but on some other summer (or winter) evening. In doing so you show that what matters about the first of August is not the external form, but the spirit of the Confederation, Switzerland's inner values so to speak,

- the value of living together with different cultures and languages in peace and mutual respect;
- the value of living in social justice and solidarity with one's neighbours and also with the world;
- the value of enabling all people - including those who come after us - to live in an environment which is worth living in, and to feel safe and at home.

We want to uphold these values! And we can only do that if we develop or alter traditions. This is the only way of maintaining the substance because: only what changes, remains true to itself.

- In future Switzerland's tradition of solidarity will increasingly include openness to the world. Switzerland will take on new roles in the community of states, for example as a member of the UN; it will thus add a new instrument to the world orchestra, that of Switzerland. For this very reason it can and will remain Switzerland. - I look forward, dear fellow Swiss all over the world - wherever you are - to your contribution to shaping the new sounds of this new Switzerland.



1 August emblem
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change and for the
upkeep of various
chapels in Canton
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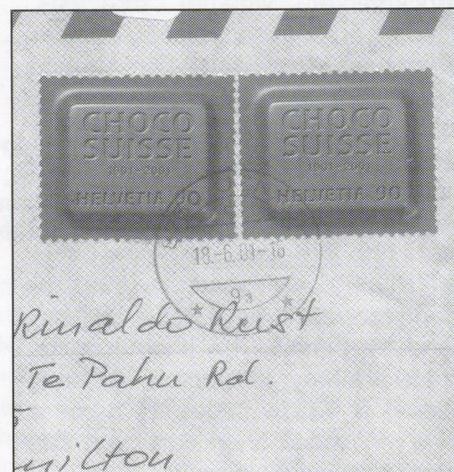
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