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Kings in the quagmire

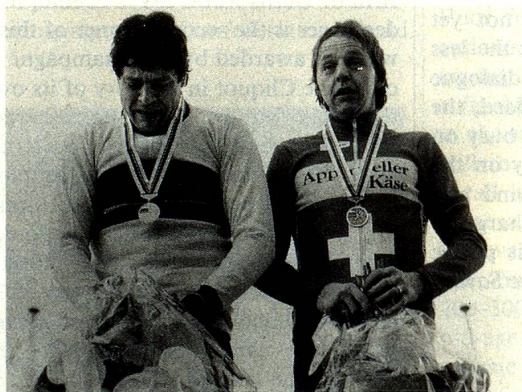
The weekend of the 30th January 1988 will go down in the history of Swiss cycling: twelve months after the debacle of Mlada Boleslav (CSSR; not a single medal), in Hägendorf, Switzerland, Swiss cross-country cyclists emerged as monarchs of the deep mud to pick up four medals – the best world cross-country championship result for 38 years. The winners of the medals: Pascal Richard (a gold with the professionals),

Beat Breu (bronze, professionals, picture: on the rostrum with winner Richard), Roger Honnegger (silver, amateurs) and Thomas Frischknecht who became the new junior world champion. Incidentally, Thomas is the son of the one-time professional Peter Frischknecht who raced for 22 years and who specialised in squirreling away places of honour.

Daniel Trachsel



Pascal Richard, the Swiss «Quagmire King». (Photos: Andreas Blatter)



Super Olympics



The 15th Olympic Winter Games of February in Calgary were a triumph for Switzerland: never before had our country won so many medals as this time – fifteen in all. Five golds (Pirmin Zurbriggen in the downhill, Vreni Schneider in the giant slalom and slalom, Hippolyt Kempf in the nordic combination and the four-man bob Switzerland 1), five silvers and five bronzes. With this result, Switzerland lies in third place

after the Soviet Union and the GDR. Big surprise: Hippolyt Kempf (picture) was the first Swiss ever to have won in a nordic discipline. At the finish, the overjoyed skier from Central Switzerland owned: «During the last two kilometres I only thought about our national anthem at the victory ceremony.» Also a recipe for above-average achievements...

(Photo: Keystone)

Taking the waters in Switzerland

Every year, well over 400,000 visitors stay for treatment and holidays in the 22 recognised Swiss spas. This amounts to 1.5 million overnight stays a year. To show how diversified a course of treatment in a well known health resort can be, the Association of Swiss Spas has published a new edition of its official countrywide resort handbook (Kurkatalog). This can be obtained free of charge from the Swiss National Tourist Office, PO Box, 8027 Zurich.

Telegrams

■ In 1987, 235,000 Swiss travelled to the USA. According to US tourist office forecasts, still more Swiss will go there this year.

■ Swiss Federal Railways on the go. Never before in its history has the SBB carried so many passengers as last year.

■ A Higher Technical School for Tourism has been opened in Canton Lucerne. Among other things, the institute will concentrate on the ecological aspects of tourism.

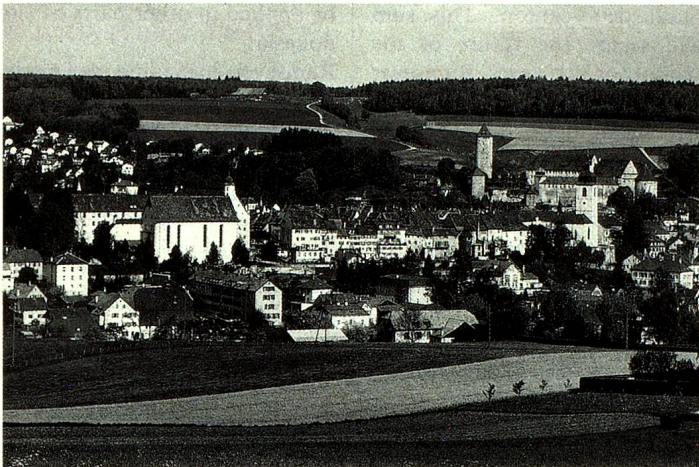
■ Every seventh Swiss man who got married in 1986 chose a foreigner as wife but only every twelfth Swiss woman concluded the bond of marriage with a foreign husband.

■ Big change in Swiss army uniforms. From 1993, the troops will be put into new battle dress and, in a second stage, will be given a new dress uniform.

■ The Pré-Giroud fortress, originally built for the defence of the Jura crossing, is to become a tourist attraction as from this summer: life in a fortress during the second world war will be portrayed therein.



High distinction for Porrentruy



The 1988 Wakker Prize, an award with a SFr. 10,000 endowment, will be presented to the small town of Porrentruy, Canton Jura, at a ceremony on 18th June. The Central Committee of the Swiss *Heimatschutz* (National Conservation League) thus honours the joint efforts of private persons, the economy and the authorities to preserve and care for the townscape. From 1582 to 1792 Porrentruy was a diocese of the Prince-Bishops of Basle, and a large number of its characteristic and imposing buildings date from this era. (Photo: Keystone)

Pilot school on Bali

«Basle thanks Bali.» That is the name of a Swiss Foundation which runs a trial school in Bali. It exists to help to promote traditional infrastructures threatened by tourism and so to foster a more culturally-adapted progress of modernisation. Behind the project is a Swiss ethnologist and sociologist, Urs Ramseyer.

«Here in the village we venerate Urs like a prince», says an old mask carver in Sidemen. Over many years of friendship he taught the Basle ethnologist Urs Ramseyer to appreciate his work, and is proud of the fact that in the Basle Ethnological Museum masks carved by his hand belong among the showpieces of the Bali Collection.

It all started with music

It was in 1972 that Urs Ramseyer, responsible for the S.E. Asia Department at the Museum, first came to Bali – to the district of Sidemen in the east of the island. Rice is the main crop here. The rice terraces lie, emerald green, in steep steps at the foot of the holy Gu-

nung Agung, a mountain held sacred by the Balinese, for the gods dwell on its mostly cloud-capped volcanic peak. Initially, Urs Ramseyer worked on a Swiss National Fund project aimed at ethnomusicology. «It all started with music», he relates, «Music was a good medium for making contact with the people, for building up a rapport». Soon, however, Ramseyer concentrated his interests on something else altogether: on an integral approach to a whole culture. Rice cultivation, ritual, votive offerings, music and dance are intertwined parts of a whole. And the whole was in danger of breaking into pieces.

By 1968 the so-called «green rev-

olution» had begun all over Indonesia. The government strove to achieve ever higher rice yields with fast-growing varieties, pesticides and fertilisers. The individualistic, commercial thinking resulted in making the rich richer and the poor poorer. The cultivation of rice was wrenched out of the traditional, religious view of life and edged out of a community of people starkly characterised by solidarity. Rice was degraded to the status of a marketable commodity. Even until the early 1970s the government was ready – even determined – to gain acceptance for its idea of agrarian exploitation, if necessary by military force. The rice farmers in Sidemen showed passive resistance and even determination to defend their old social structure with the kris.

Aim: no reservation

But it was not only the «green revolution» that threatened the traditional and very advanced Balinese civilisation. It was just as much the Muslim school system, centrally directed from Jakarta. The Koran ousted the Javanese, and thus Balinese, literature and script. But Ramseyer was lucky in so far as Islam was concerned: ten years ago, the Java-Muslim governor on Bali, the Hindu-oriented island, was replaced by a native brahmin. The social climate

changed. The time had come for the ethnologist to act – to help the farmers to bring the religious ritual back into their rice growing.

The idea arose of a school in which the various aspects of the cultural whole would be imparted. The motto was «Help for Self-Help». «We had no romantic model in the sense of a reservation in mind, but a modernisation with a culturally-adapted economy» says Ramseyer. This also creates an opportunity for the State, because agriculture rooted in tradition is also crisis-resistant. The Sidda Mahan School, set amid entrancing ricefields, opened its doors in summer 1987. Following completion of their nine years of normal schooling, ten female and forty male pupils of all four Hindu castes began their academic training in old Javanese and Balinese literature and script, religious song forms, rice cultivation and co-operative irrigation, traditional law, architecture, religion, ethics, Indonesian gamelan music, the cult of the dead, votive offerings and calendrical knowledge. But mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, English and economics, too, are on the programme. Instruction is given solely by Balinese teachers. Plans are for 500 pupils in five years from a catchment area of 30,000 people.



Urs Ramseyer takes part in a Balinese sacrificial ritual.



The founding of this school is something new in development aid and the credit for it goes to Urs Ramseyer. But he does not like to hear this and shrugs it off: «The project originated as a co-operative effort by the people of Sidemen. It was their idea and they finally realised it. I am the accompanist and not the monitor».

Who's going to pay?

The school is sponsored by a Foundation, called «Basle thanks Bali». It is all about gratitude for cultural enrichment in a long tradition of research. The Foundation's Board of Trustees hopes to have SFr. 100,000 ready soon, donated by private persons, the

chemicals industry and the development fund of the Basel-Stadt demi-canton. This sum will secure the future of the school for two years. Ramseyer explains that during the first five years the Siddha Mahan School in Sidemen should operate independently of the Indonesian state. Subsequently, the state is envisaged as the

sponsoring body. If the outcome is success, the model will be applied in other parts of Indonesia.

Ramseyer has quite definitely performed pioneering work in development policy. This should not have to founder on financial grounds.

Susanne Knecht



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