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Features

it carries the signs of dignity: the Castle and the Collegiate Church on the hill, side by side for eight centuries. Today, the Castle is the seat of the cantonal administration, and typewriters rattle away in the old rooms.

Everywhere in the streets, one finds signs of a flourishing past. Buildings in French style, the Hôtel du Peyrou of the 18th century, the Council Hall built shortly before the *Empire*, the Maison des Halles in Renaissance style on the market square. Most of the large buildings in the centre of the town were constructed of the yellowish stone from Hauterive. Hence Alexandre Dumas, the Elder's statement when visiting the town "just like a giant toy carved from butter...".

Whichever way you stroll through the town, somehow you will always get back to the lake. On fine Sundays, its light and glittering surface is sprinkled with the white of sails, and on the shore people meander happily. The Neuchâtelois treasure their lake fervently. That is why tempers rise the moment the National Highway 5 is mentioned; for years, the authorities have been at their wits' end trying to find a solution which would not in any way spoil the aspect of the town nor the lake shore.

They say that it is in this town where the purest French is spoken. This reputation has always attracted large numbers of young foreigners every year. They come to attend schools, but above all the university which was opened in the middle of the last century. In 1948, there were 372 students. Today, there are over 1600 studying at the faculties of literature, natural sciences, law, economics and also theology.

In spite of this considerable expansion, the University of Neuchâtel is still the smallest one in Switzerland. No doubt, this has great

advantages: the student does not disappear in mass activities; he can keep in personal touch with his professors; he can express his opinion regarding the running of the University. On the other hand, he is not denied the advantages of a large university: instruction is excellent, the Cité Universitaire, one of the best appointed, offers quite a great deal also in the cultural field.

Thanks to its printing works and publishing houses, Neuchâtel also has political radiation. Situated near the French frontier, it served people and ideas banished from neighbouring France. Thus it happened that, during the French Revolution and when the Germans occupied France, voices which were no longer able to make themselves heard there, could be expressed in print here without obstacle. And how many authors have left traces in their works of the time spent in Neuchâtel: Mirabeau, Benjamin Constant, Chateaubriand, Shelley, Lamartine,

André Gide, Sénancour, who had a "small weakness" for the wines from Cortaillod.

Many have been surprised to find the famous robots of the Jaquet-Droz, the almost life-size mechanical puppets which can imitate human movements and which amaze visitors of the Historic Museum ever and again. They also bring to mind that talented inventors made the Canton the land of precision work.

Between "High" and "Low"

I am a daughter of the Highlands and spent a few years in the Lowlands. And now, in order to reconcile the two poles so to speak, I have moved nearer the Highlands without leaving the Lowlands completely: I have chosen the Val-de-Ruz as my residence, that fine valley which spreads like a giant leaf and which overflows every year with wheat, oats, rape and maize.

Anne-Lise Grobéty

Sport

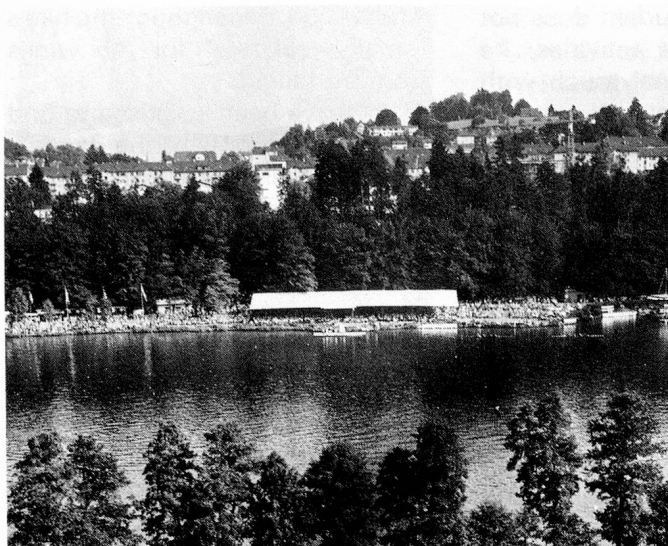
Rowing Championships 1974 in Lucerne

The Fourth World Rowing Championships will take place in Lucerne from 28th August to 8th September next. Competitors from five continents will try to gain the coveted medals on the famous Rotsee.

There will be five different boat categories for ladies and eight for men. As usual, the distances will be 1000 and 2000 metres.

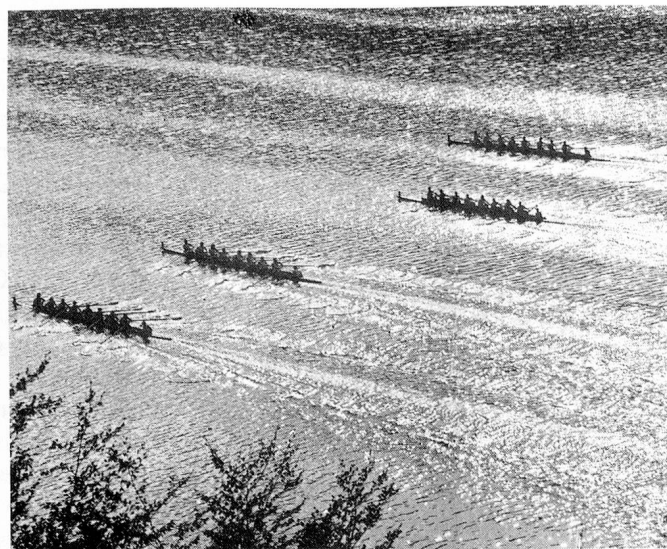
In order to learn more about these championships and rowing in general, we talked to the young Neuchâtel lawyer Denis Oswald who has been Swiss champion already eleven times. He has taken part as member of the Swiss national team in all championships of the International Rowing Federation since the Olympic Games in Mexico where he gained the bronze medal for coxed fours.

Features



The starting line on Rotsee.

(photo ONST)



The culminating moment of the Rotsee regatta: an eight's race is ending this day.

(photo ONST)

Denis Oswald, why has the Rotsee once again been chosen as venue for the rowing championships?

The Rotsee is considered the best rowing basin in the world, and I believe the reputation is justified. It is a small and always calm lake, protected from winds, and it really offers the same conditions for all starting lanes. In addition, the surroundings are exceptionally lovely, and excellent technical equipment is available.

It will be the first time that women take part in the world championships?

Indeed, the last week in August will be devoted to the ladies, whilst the men will be in action in the first week of September. Rowing for women has recently been accepted as an olympic event. Its popularity is widespread in countries of the East, in West Germany, the Netherlands and France. In Switzerland, on the other hand, there are only few supporters, though its popularity is growing steadily.

Where can the Swiss oarsmen be

classified on the international scene?

Rowing is a sport in which Switzerland has always excelled. Competition has, however, become stronger over the past few years, and we have some difficulties in not falling behind with the best oarsmen, especially the East Germans and the Russians. Nevertheless, Switzerland is still in seventh place in the world. In addition, it must be said that rowing in Switzerland is mainly done by students who, in spite of all the support they receive nowadays, are not willing to forfeit their professional future by making rowing their main occupation for a time. They realise that they, unlike certain foreign competitors, will not get compensation for their sacrifices in their professional life once their rowing career is over. Under these circumstances, even to qualify for finals may already be considered a success.

Rowing is a sport which demands much discipline, but which provides also great satisfaction.

An oarsman of international class

has to undergo very tough training. I myself spend two to three hours a day, summer and winter, in preparation. I have practically no leisure, and I often have a funny feeling that I devote myself too much to one thing. Some foreign athletes undergo even harder training. The satisfaction, however, which I get from rowing, lets me forget the troubles of competitive training. The taste of combat and of effort allows me to get to know myself better in victory and defeat. In addition, I love to get together with foreign sportsmen, an experience which is most enriching, especially since rowing knows no commercial and financial problems. Those who follow it, do it really out of love.

It is to be hoped that this sporting spirit without economic interest will prevail also at the World Rowing Championships in Lucerne and that the Swiss oarsmen who will be allowed to welcome the foreign competitors, will also be competing for the final honours. (B.C.)