

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1977)  
**Heft:** 1728

**Artikel:** The canton of Basle  
**Autor:** Suter, Rudolf  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689485>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 31.07.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Contents

The Canton of Basle	2
«Fête des vigneron», Vevey 1977	7
Official Communications:	
— Memorandum on the political rights of the Swiss abroad	11
— Ensuring the continuance of Switzerland's cooperation with the developing countries	11
— OAI/DI: Delays in fixing pensions	12
— The federal authorities in 1977	13
Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad:	
— Diagram explaining the exercise of political rights at federal level by the Swiss abroad	15
— Vocational Training in Switzerland of Young Swiss from abroad	16
— Summer Camp 1977	17
— Association Joseph Bovet	17
— Assembly of the Swiss abroad 1977	17
— Muba 1977	17
Solidarity Fund of the Swiss abroad	19
Looking back on 1976	21
Local communications	23

### Marriage of a Swiss woman

A Swiss woman wishing to retain her Swiss nationality on marrying a foreign national **must** make a declaration in writing to that effect, **before the marriage**, on a form obtainable from the Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

## The Canton of Basle

### Curriculum vitae of Rudolf Suter

Born 1920. Studied German Philology and History at the University of Basle. Doctorate in 1947 on Basle dialect poetry before Joh. Peter Hebel. Contributor to Radio Basle until 1955. Editor of «Basler Nachrichten» from 1956 to 1971. Since 1972 Lecturer on German at the Engineering College of Baselstadt and Baselland and Vice-President of the Basle State Commission for the Protection of the Homeland. Published numerous writings on Basle history, architecture, art and language. Author of the first grammar in Basle dialect in 1976.

### A look into the past

Excavations in and around Basle have brought to light remnants of settlements dating back to the stone age, to Celtic and Roman times. Especially the triangle between the Rhine and the Birsig offered itself to the Romans as a strategically favourable spot for fortification and colonisation. This is where the cathedral stands today, still dominating the old town of Greater Basle. Basle was first mentioned in 374 A.D., at a time when the Roman administrative centre had already been moved from Augusta Raurica (founded 44 B.C. by the commander-in-chief Munatius Plancus) to Basle. Later, at the very latest at the beginning of the 7th century, Basle became a bishopric. After having been destroyed by the Hungarians in 917, the town flourished again. From the beginning of the 13th century, it gained more and more importance, especially thanks to the construction of a bridge in 1225 which, for centuries, was to remain the only firm crossing of the Upper Rhine.

In the middle of the 14th century, two dreadful catastrophes befell Basle: the plague epidemic of the 1340's and the earthquake of 1356 with the ensuing mighty fire. It is due to the latter as well as to a further fire in 1417 that hardly any secular buildings from the High Middle Ages have been preserved. All these afflictions did not manage

to curb the enterprising spirit and industrial activity of the Basle citizens; on the contrary, the town constantly increased in riches and respect.

It was in that period that the battle of St. Jakob an der Birs took place (1444) directly outside the walls of Basle. This battle and the Swabian War in 1499 showed Basle, which was subject to the emperor only, the uncertainty of a closer relationship with the German Empire, all the more so because Burgundy and Austria were dangerous neighbours. All these factors motivated the Basle people to join the League of the Confederates with whom they had already had earlier ties. This alliance was achieved not without misgivings on both sides. Within the new partnership, Basle played a beneficial part as mediator, especially during the denominational altercations in the 17th and 18th centuries. Even after the humiliating separation of the Canton in 1833, Basle always did its duties to the Confederation most loyally and in addition helped to consolidate the structure of the new State in 1848, by providing clever men, especially in the field of finance and customs, post and communications. Over and above it gave the whole of Switzerland many vital impulses by the revival of Rhine navigation at the beginning of the 20th century, the creation of the Swiss Industries Fair (1917) and by its epoch-making social legislation, not to speak of the achievements of science and research.

Science and research crystallized themselves in the university founded in 1460, following the *Konzil*. The university's beginnings coincided with the golden age of Basle printing and humanists like Erasmus of Rotterdam coming to Basle. Together with native scholars, they stimulated spiritual life in the town. The tolerant Basle attitude goes

# Features

back to that period, a disposition which resulted in the acceptance of innumerable refugees who in their turn enriched the economic and cultural life of the town.

## *Communications, trade, industry*

Today still, just as it was in the Middle Ages, Basle is a town of transit and goods traffic. Most of Swiss imports and exports go *via* Basle railway stations, Rhine ports and the intercontinental airport Basle-Mulhouse. The Rhine ports, the largest installations of their kind in our country, are a real attraction for «inlands Swiss», for a breath of sea air and the big wide world wafts into the country from there. The impression heightens with a visit to the Museum of Navigation in the dock area or when climbing the silo tower from which one has a magnificent view over the whole space of the *Dreiländerecke*, the point where three countries meet.

Today, the backbone of Basle's economic life is industry, first of all the chemical one grown out of undertakings started for the production of textile dyes which were needed at one time for the famous Basle silk-ribbon production. Changes of fashions resulted in the decline of the silk-industry and forced the chemical factories to put emphasis on other fields of pro-

Near Basle, the place where the borders of three nations meet.



duction. Nowadays, it is pharmaceuticals which dominate and enjoy great demand all over the world. Apart from the chemical industry, electro-, machine, metal and textile industries contribute towards Basle's economic potential.

Closely connected with transport, communications and industry, are forwarding, banking and insurance. It is not by accident that Basle is probably the most important inland centre of forwarding and shipping in Europe. It is also a centre of banking and stock marketing *par excellence*. It is the town chosen by the Bank for International Settlements and the Swiss Society of Bankers for their headquarters. And finally, the many representative buildings of insurance companies have become so much part of the general aspect of the town that one can't imagine it without them.

The role of mediator also in the economic field, which has grown out of Basle's historical development finds its special expression in the Swiss Industries Fair. Not only is this annual event in April self-confirmation and presentation of Swiss economy, but also a buying centre for international trade. The giant exhibition area in Kleinbasel is not idle either during the rest of the year: it serves as venue for international specialist fairs which are held in Basle in ever growing numbers. Inevitably, conferences go with such fairs; Basle's position is eminently suitable for congresses of every kind.

The supply of hotels and eating places is correspondingly large. More and more, these also serve tourism.

In spite of the small number of inhabitants in the Canton – there will probably be no more than 240 000 in the future – this smallest State of Switzerland (in size) is at the same time the one with the highest *per capita* income and the highest percentage of federal taxes.



The «Spalentor» in Basle, the largest and most beautiful gate from the ancient city fortifications, built before 1398.

## *Cultural life*

The University still has pride of place in this old merchant town. At all times, and never more than at the beginning of the 19th century, its citizens have made considerable sacrifices, on one hand out of a sense of responsibility towards the humanistic heritage, and on the other out of the realization that there exists a practical need for well-trained rising generations. Accordingly, cooperation in the field of research has become closer between University and industry. The latest upshoot of such cooperation is the Bio-Centre which serves biological research. In similar manner, the Medical Faculty is connected with the Cantonal Hospital (*Bürgerspital*).

Also to the sphere of research and tuition belong the numerous collections and museums, at the head the University Library open to everybody, which contains an enormous selection of manuscripts and early printed documents, the Ethnological Museum and its exhibits from New Guinea, the Southern Pacific and Old America, and then the Art Museum with its beautiful collection of old masters (e.g. Hans Holbein the Younger) and its excellent department of



# Features

modern art (e.g. Picasso). One could enumerate a further twenty museums, amongst them the unique Museum of Pharmaceutical History and the Swiss Museum of Gymnastics and Sports. Near the collections and research centres we find the new Botanical Gardens and above all the outstanding Zoological Gardens, famous for its breeding successes.

With justification, Basle has a reputation as an important music centre. It boasts an Academy of Music (to which a collection of old instruments is attached) and an imposing offer of concerts. Music at home is widespread, too. Theatre life takes place mostly at the Municipal Theatre and the Comedy Theatre allied to it. As far as graphic art is concerned, Basle marches at the head of all Switzerland; in the field of applied art Basle graphic artists have been pioneers in the whole of Switzerland and also beyond its frontiers. In addition, patronage of the fine arts, both public and private, is very extensive.

## *The general aspect of the town*

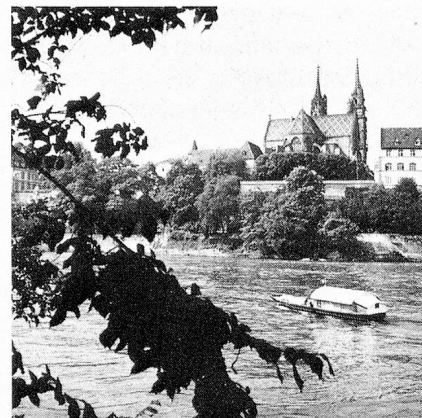
The beauty of Basle has always been praised. Its fame stems from the harmonic adaptation of what man made to the splendid landscape whose life-blood is the Rhine. The river turns in a majestic swoop from West to North right within the precincts of the town. On the highest spot on the bank of Greater

Basle stands the Cathedral built of red sandstone, at one time the sign of episcopal sovereignty. The Bishop and his retinue resided on the Münsterhügel; this is where the most representative buildings of the time originated – the Gothic «Bischofshof» at the Rittergasse reminds one of that period and also the beautifully harmonious Münsterplatz which is amongst the finest squares in Europe. Along the Birsig at the foot of the hill, it was the artisans and merchants who soon acquired power and recognition and who were to make a guild and merchant town of Basle. That is the reason why the aspect of Basle is characterized by citizens' town houses. At the same time, churches and monasteries remind one of the former role as a spiritual centre.

Every town has its fortifications. The outlines of Basle's ramparts can easily be recognized even today. Three town gateways have been preserved; one of them, the «Spalentor», belongs to the most beautiful defence structures of the Late Middle-Ages.

## *The Basle Villages Riehen and Bettingen*

After the separation of the Canton in 1833, the villages on the right bank of the Rhine Kleinhüningen (a fishing settlement long since part of the town), Riehen and



View of the Minister in Basle.

Bettingen were granted to the Half-Canton of Basel-Stadt.

Apart from stately farms, Riehen has more than a dozen remarkable country-seats in spacious grounds from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Although Riehen has a population of over 20 000, it deliberately wants to remain a village. Christian Friedrich Spitteler had a home for deaf-mutes built in 1837 and a home for members of a Protestant nursing order in 1852. In the meantime, agriculture has declined; yet even now, the early cherries are a speciality much in demand. They have pushed back the once extensive vineyards to the grounds of the «Schlipf» on the Tuellinger Hill.

Bettingen which lies above Riehen in a charming and sheltered hollow, became part of the town in 1513; it has been able to keep its purely rural character far longer. But today, large country houses and small dwellings surround the attractive centre of the village.

## *Basel-Landschaft*

Large forests, steep rocks, romantic corners, charming valleys, spacious orchards, wide fields, idyllic hamlets, lonely farmsteads, castles and strongholds, villages grown into towns, factories, harbour installations and power stations – all this and much else may be found in the Canton of Baselland, the link

## **A few figures**

Surface area:	465.3 km <sup>2</sup>
Population:	445,700 inhabitants in 77 communes (201,000 in the town of Basle)
Denominations:	241,910 Protestants 175,757 Roman Catholics 22,167 other religions
Language:	German
Agricultural estates:	2,190
Tourism:	139 hotels (5,379 beds)
Industrial undertakings:	622 (72,701 employees)
Limited companies:	4,683
Net of roads:	2,084 km
Total of engine-vehicles:	127,580

# Features

between the town of Basle and the rest of the Confederation.

The Baselbiet (the countryside of Basle) with its 427 square kilometres is 11½ times as large as the Canton of Basel-Stadt. It has always been a transit region which connects the Oberrheinische Tiefebene with the Midlands and the Alpine passes by way of the two Hauenstein Passes. The North-Western part of the Canton slopes down towards Basle and the level of the Rhine, and its structure reminds one of the neighbouring hills of the Sundgau in the West. The North-Eastern part is marked by the gentle ridge of hills of the Tafeljura, and the South is characterized by the chains mounting up to over 1000 metres of the Faltenjura.

The whole of the lower part of the Canton and the bottom of the valleys of the upper part are blessed with a remarkably mild climate similar to that of the Oberrheinische Tiefebene and Basel-Stadt. This allows the growing of vines and tobacco plants amongst others. Over one-third of the Canton's area is wooded, and a mere 18 square kilometres are non-productive.

The Canton is divided into four administrative districts named after their main towns or villages, i.e. Arlesheim (Lower Baselbiet), Liestal (Middle Baselbiet), Sissach and Waldenburg (Upper Baselbiet). Liestal is at the same time the capital of the Canton.

73 Communes carry the political life, amongst them some very small and some very large ones. The economic emphasis and the densest population areas are in the Lower Baselbiet; the district of Arlesheim has considerably more inhabitants than the rest of the Canton put together. As the hilly terrain increases, the density of population necessarily decreases.

## *Economic development*

From antiquity up to modern times,

the two main pillars of Baselbiet economy were agriculture and transit traffic over the Hauenstein Passes. Today, agriculture provides work and bread for only a small fraction of the population; yet large tracts have an altogether agrarian character. The yield, both in quantity and quality, has been increasing steadily thanks to improved methods of cultivation and rationalisation. A modern agricultural college at Sissach provides a capable rising rural generation.

Traffic across the passes lost some of their importance already in the 19th century due to the introduction of the railways. Not all the labour thus released could be employed in agriculture; they found welcome work in the *Posamenterei*, that is the cottage industry of weaving silk ribbons for the large textile undertakings in Basle. Even when the silk ribbon industry collapsed, some of the home industry remained; its capacity was taken over by the watch industry which had been started in the Waldenburg Valley, at the time when the railways deprived the population of its livelihood in pass traffic. Nowadays, nearly three dozen watch factories exist in the upper part of the Canton.

It is typical of the Baselbiet industry that it consists to a large extent of widely scattered small- and middle-sized firms which now not only

make watches, but also manufacture precision instruments and machinery. Although it must be said that heavy industry, too, has been developing vigorously above all in the lower part of the Canton bordering on to Basle. Its actual heart is Pratteln to which a number of chemical production centres have been removed from Basle which is lacking in space. Already in the middle of the 19th century, large salt deposits were discovered nearby: The salt-works of Schweizerhalle still provision the whole of Switzerland with salt. There are other branches of industry which should be mentioned, such as pottery, brick-making, cloth-weaving, brewing; though it is the metal industry which has developed most extensively. All told, Basel-land is one of the most industrialized Cantons.

## *Cultural life*

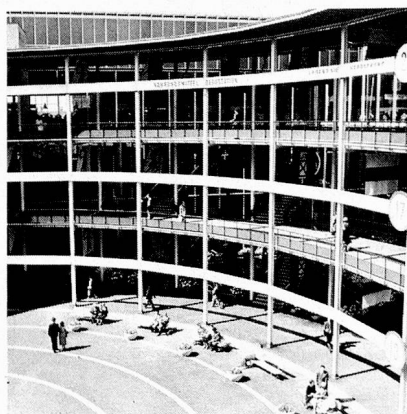
In spite of dependence on the town lasting for centuries, the young Canton Basel-Landschaft has developed a completely individual cultural life. It did it with the same verve as it showed in growing into its political independence.

General education was one of the first important aims of the new State, and thus right from the beginning, schooling was tackled in an exemplary way; even today, commendable driving force characterizes the Baselbiet schooling policy which shows itself not least in a number well-conceived modern school buildings; such as at Binningen and Aesch. The arts are by no means neglected: a special type of grammar school section was created, and in addition, Canton and Communes spend considerable sums on music training. Another joint undertaking is the Technical College of both Basles at Muttenz.

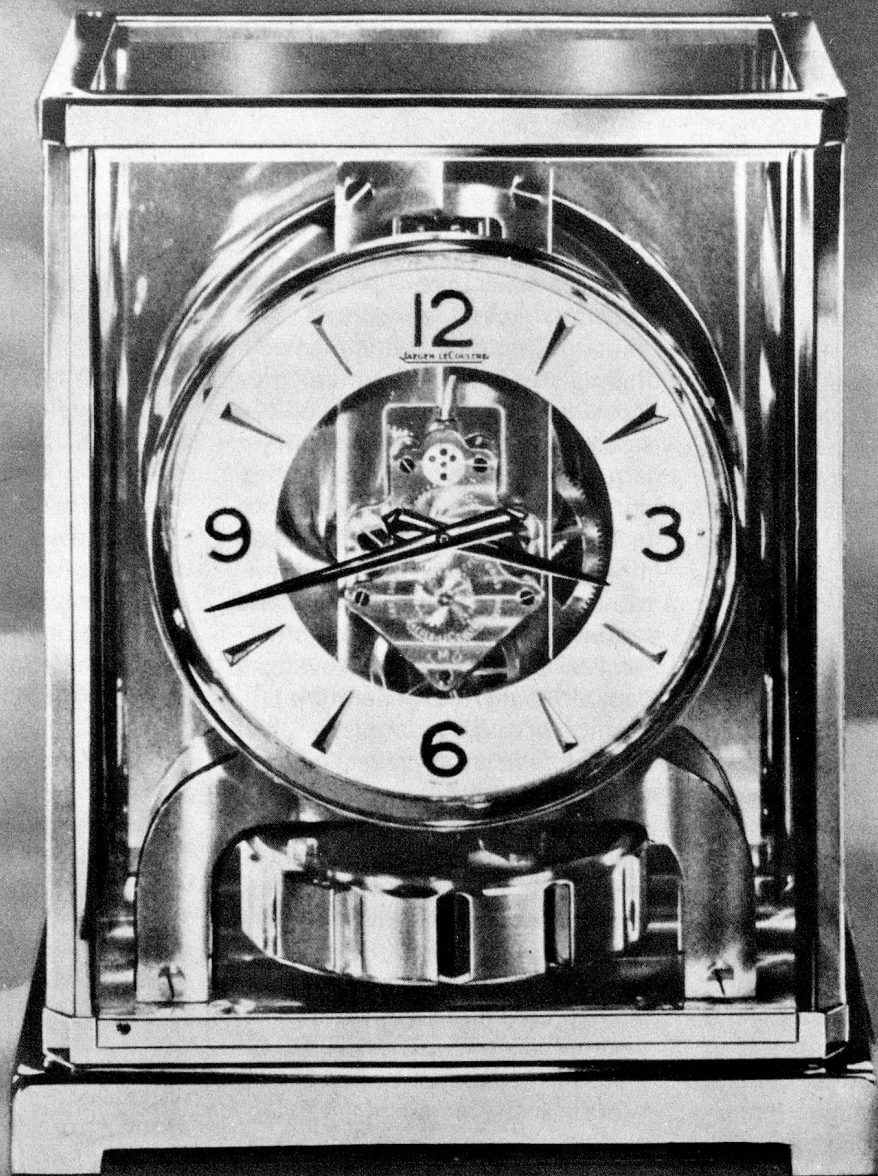
## *Worthwhile excursion territory*

The Baselbiet contains a host of places of interest. Yet it is not considered a proper traveller's

A look at the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle.  
(photos SNTU)







## **JAEGER-LECOULTRE ATMOS CLOCK**

### **the clock that lives on air . . .**

There has been a near-miracle in the craft of clock-making. Jaeger-LeCoultre, with characteristic pioneering genius, have created a clock that operates without human agency: it needs no winding, no batteries, no electricity.

Its name is the ATMOS and it derives its power from the constantly changing temperature. In short, the ATMOS runs on air. It is calculated that after 300 years the ATMOS would show no more wear than would a watch in 12 months. With arresting good looks to match mechanical perfection the ATMOS is a perpetual source of pride and satisfaction.

Jaeger-LeCoultre Products available from:

Asprey & Co Ltd. New Bond St, London W.1. • Garrard & Co Ltd. 112 Regent St. W.1.  
Watches of Switzerland Ltd. 16 New Bond Street, London W.1.  
Harrods, Knightsbridge, London S.W.1. • And all Leading Jewellers

*Send for illustrated brochure to:*

Jaeger-LeCoultre, 92 Oldfields Road, Sutton, Surrey W6 8BR. Telephone: 01-644 0105/7

# Features

country and thus has not been flooded by tourists; everyone may explore quietly and undisturbed away from the crowds.

The wanderer finds some lovely parts, whether he wends his way to the attractive Birseck and its castle ruins or to the changeable and rich heights of the Jura, whether he wishes to contemplate unspoiled villages or whether he prefers to enjoy the strange magic of the industrial landscape on the Rhine. He who is interested in old types of settlements profits greatly. He will discover almost completely preserved villages like Oltingen or Rothenfluh in the upper part of the Canton: stately, mostly detached farm houses are grouped round medieval churches with «Kaesbissen» towers. Or again he comes upon villages built along the old transit roads, with terraced houses often of urban character.

The friend of art and history will find his excursions most rewarding, too. The Roman world comes to life in the ruins and excavations of Augusta Raurica near the present village of Augst and at its Roman Museum, and then again at Munzach near Liestal where he is given an excellent impression of Roman villas. He will also meet remnants of the medieval feudal and ecclesiastical reigns. Near Langenbruck, he will come upon the most ancient sacred building of the Canton with one of the oldest Romanesque portals in Switzerland, the monastic church of Schoental. Many churches remarkable for their architectural beauty contain frescoes from the Late Middle-Ages, so those of Ziefen, Ormalingen and Oltingen. Castles and strongholds are also quite numerous, some of them still inhabited like Wildenstein and the

«Wasserhaus» at Bottmingen. A breath of medieval urban life is noticeable in Liestal and at Waldenburg, whilst the neo-classic palace of «Ebenrain» near Sissach – today an agricultural centre of the Canton – and other patrician houses remind one of the Basle architects of the 18th century. The beautiful Baroque *Domplatz* at Arlesheim brings back another world, that of the sovereign bishops and canons.

The attraction of the diverse landscape, be it gentle or austere, with what has been made by man reaches a harmony of great beauty in the Baslebiet, which long remains with the visitor as a happy memory to be treasured.

*Rudolf Suter  
from «Les Cantons suisses»,  
Editions Panoramica*

## «Fête des vignerons», Vevey 1977



Swiss who live abroad – like so many nationals of one country who have made a new life for themselves elsewhere – keep a home-grown vocabulary that is part of their ethnic heritage. For many Swiss, terms like «Vendemmia», «Winzerfest» or «Fête des Vendanges» evoke autumn leaves, sweet, ripe grapes and the harvesting of next year's wine. Explaining the «Fête des Vignerons» of Vevey is difficult, unless

they realize that this Festival has very little in common with a traditional grape harvest celebration. The event takes place not in autumn, but in summer. What is celebrated here is not the birth of the new wine, but the end of the labour of love that gets the vineyard to the point where it will – God and weather permitting – produce the kind of grape which guarantees a good wine.

The Festival has grown out of a centuries-old quality control of the vinegrower's work. And although the Festival, now celebrated only once in a generation, has long been an artistic event with a set of values of its own, its origins and its setting as a summertime event have remained unchanged.

When the grapes begin to ripen on the well-tended vine-stock – and

that is in summer – the vinegrower's responsibility, so to speak, comes to an end. Of course, he will do his utmost if hail should threaten

The 1977 stage will offer an open view on the Lake of Geneva and the Alps (photo Ed. Guignard)

