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A short trip through the Canton of Neuchâtel

We continue our tour of the regions of Switzerland. After Ticino, we present – in cooperation with Pro Helvetia – the Canton of Neuchâtel where the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad will take place in August this year.

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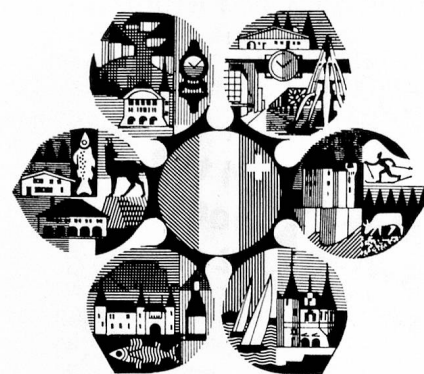
The author about herself: Anne-Lise Grobéty was born in La Chaux-de-Fonds in the early days of 1949. She went to school there right up to matriculation. University life proved in her eyes a failure: "I had the choice of either playing a role in society which believes in the distinction of a degree, or of admitting that this system was not for me." She went into journalism. At the age of 19, she wrote her first novel "Pour mourir en février", which was already out of print a few months after publication. It was reprinted, and translated in Germany. Today, she lives with her husband Gil Stauffer in a house surrounded by meadows in the centre of the Val-de-Ruz. She continues to write stories and radio scripts and at the moment she is working on her second novel.

In the Neuchâtel elections of 1973, she was elected by the Socialist Party – to her own great surprise! – and, at 23, became the youngest woman member in the Grand Council.

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"High" and "Low"

The Canton of Neuchâtel, like a weighty package, has a "top" and a "bottom". Many call it a front and a back, which is much the same. What is important is the strange mountain ridge, by which nature stresses the contrast (very friendly!) between the two parts of the



region. The mountain ridge, the "Vue des Alpes", separates the Highlands from the Lowlands by way of a great big hunch. However many years pass, and however politicians may try to reach agreement: one comes from the Highlands, one comes from the Lowlands. . . .

The Highlands, that means the fir trees which grow on pastures higher and higher up, it means the two towns of Le Locle and La Chaux-de-Fonds which preferred to remain in the country, as they say. It is the Jura, the mountains, the short summer and long winter (when the magnolias begin to bloom on the shore of the lake, the crocuses in the fields of the Vue des Alpes passes just begin to peep timidly through the snow. . . . "Oh yes, but at least up here we have no fog in the winter!")

These remarks about weather and fog seem unimportant; but as soon as you talk to the people, you realise that in this there is a fundamental difference between the Highlands and the Lowlands, even a bone of contention. It is between the inhabitants of the Highlands who have to wait a long time for