

# Home news

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1927)**

Heft 307

PDF erstellt am: **13.09.2024**

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# The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINGO, LONDON.

VOL. 7—No. 307

LONDON, JULY 16, 1927.

PRICE 3d.

## PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	3 Months (13 issues, post free) -	3/6
	6 Months (26 issues, post free) -	6/6
SWITZERLAND	3 Months (13 issues, post free) -	Fr. 7.50
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(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postcheck-Konton Basle V 5719.)

## TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

Reluctantly surrendering himself to the general desire for holidays, the Editor proposes to take a few weeks' respite. The publication of the 'S.O.' will therefore be suspended as from this issue, and the next number will appear on Saturday, August 20th. We trust that the faithful ones for whom the 'S.O.' has become an indispensable week-end diet will bear with us for this short period. The date of expiry of the prepaid subscriptions and advertising contracts will be correspondingly extended. Any correspondence or enquiries received in the meantime will be attended to as usual.

THE PUBLISHERS.

## HOME NEWS

Among the number of young diplomats who have been promoted by the Federal Council to "first class" secretaries of legation are included the names of Dr. Louis Micheli (London) and Dr. Emil Stutz (Paris, formerly in London).

With the assistance of the Federal authorities, a central office for the development of Swiss trade and commerce has been established; Dr. E. Wetter, the vice-president of the "Vorort," has been nominated president.

Judgment has just been pronounced in a law suit which has been pending ever since 1909 between the two chocolate manufacturers Lindt & Sprüngli in Zurich and A. W. Lindt in Berne. The latter firm is called upon to change its advertising matter and printed wrappers so as to exclude any possible confusion with the products of its older competitor, and is further mulcted in the payment of Frs. 800,000 for damages suffered by the former.

The administrative accounts of the canton of Zurich, just published, return the number of State employees as 5,978 and the amount paid in salaries, insurance, pensions, etc., well over 30 million francs.

The Communist Party has commenced collecting signatures for the referendum demand against the new Bill regulating civil service, whilst the Socialist Party, on the recommendation of Comrade Grimm, has decided to join hands with the other parties and to vigorously oppose the movement.

The municipality of Solothurn has received two anonymous donations of Frs. 30,000 and Frs. 50,000 towards the construction of a new hospital.

The amusement tax in Geneva—known as "droits des pauvres"—which is imposed exclusively for the benefit of benevolent institutions, is to be increased from 10% to 15%.

It is stated that Mr. Ulrich Wegelin, the cashier of the Council of Diessenhofen, has mysteriously disappeared, and that his accounts show a deficit of about Frs. 35,000.

Torrential rains, accompanied by thunderstorms, were experienced during last week-end in the western part of Switzerland. In several districts of the canton of Fribourg hail of the size of a chicken's egg caused considerable damage.

During army exercises in the Gotthard region, Corp. Gustav Hauert, in civil life a telegraphist at Berne, fell over a steep incline into the Reuss, and succumbed to the injuries sustained when his body rolled down the rocky slope.

The bodies of the three Zurich tourists, Hans and Fritz Barth and Heinrich von Allmen, who have been missing since last winter, have been discovered by a climbing party near the top of Mont Blanc.

Through negligent handling, a lotion containing ether exploded in a Solothurn hair-dressing salon, setting the whole establishment on fire; one of the customers, Frau Frieda Dreyer, perished in the flames.

During a thunderstorm the clock tower of the church in Cernier (Neuchâtel) was struck by lightning and collapsed, the fire brigades from the neighbouring villages succeeding in saving the body of the church from the fire which had broken out.

A collision between a heavy lorry and a motor cycle combination on the Col des Roches (Neuchâtel) resulted in the death of Eugen Müller, customs official, and Henri Cavin, railway clerk.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Un poste de gendarmerie peu banal.**—L'ancien bâtiment de cure de Crassier vient d'être transformé en poste de gendarmerie depuis le 1er juillet. L'immeuble comprend les bureaux du poste du chef de poste, du chef de la section militaire, une geôle et des appartements pour deux gendarmes mariés. A cette modeste maison se rattachent des souvenirs historiques. C'est là que naquit et résida Mme. Necker, mère de Mme. de Staël!

*Le Droit du Peuple, Lausanne.*

**Un tragique anniversaire.**—Il y a aujourd'hui 40 ans que la charmante ville de Zoug a été atteinte par une catastrophe: tout un quartier s'effondra dans le lac.

Vers 2 heures de l'après-midi, des crevasses se formèrent sur le nouveau quai. On en avait déjà remarqué en juin. De grosses bulles en sortaient. Puis le mur d'une maison voisine se fendit. Mais la population ne manifesta guère d'inquiétude. Plus tard, le bord du quai s'effondra sur la largeur d'un pied.

A 4 heures, au moment où un bateau à vapeur chargeait d'assez nombreux passagers, on entendit un craquement formidable, une nouvelle partie du quai disparut, une maison et un hangar s'abattirent. Les amarres du bateau sautèrent et le bateau fut projeté en avant dans le lac. Puis, successivement, jusqu'à 11 heures du soir, 38 bâtiments tombèrent comme des châteaux de cartes, 12 personnes furent noyées, n'étant pas arrivées à prendre la fuite à temps ou victimes de leur dévouement pendant le sauvetage. Environ 700 personnes se trouvaient sans abri.

Le lendemain, le lac montrait un aspect navrant: on voyait des toits émerger de l'eau, des meubles en masse flottaient à la surface.

Plus de quatre siècles auparavant, le 4 mars, 1435, une partie de la ville avait déjà disparu sous les flots, causant la mort de 60 personnes, et en 1591 un morceau du faubourg eut le même sort.

*La Révue, Lausanne.*

**Cernier.**—Mercredi, à 23 h. 20, au cours de l'orage qui se déclina avec violence sur la région, un formidable coup de tonnerre atteignit le clocher du temple de Cernier; il fracassa la pièce de bois qui forme le pignon de la toiture, et la partie supérieure de la charpente fut immédiatement enflammée. Attiré par un fort vent d'ouest, le feu prit aussitôt des proportions importantes, projetant de multiples gerbes d'étincelles et une vive lueur s'aperçut au loin.

Rapidement alarmés, les pompiers de la localité prirent leurs dispositions pour empêcher la propagation de l'incendie et éteindre le foyer. Ils furent contrariés dans leur travail par l'obscurité et par la chute des tuiles, qui se détachaient continuellement du toit. Et malgré l'emploi d'échelles, l'eau des hydrants atteignait péniblement le brasier dans sa partie supérieure, les jets étant au surplus déformés et déplacés par le vent; il fallut plus d'une heure d'efforts énergiques et soutenus pour se rendre maître de l'élément destructeur.

La clarté de l'incendie avait été aperçue des villages voisins et les pompiers de Fontainemelon, Fontaines, Chézard et Engollen vinrent se mettre à la disposition du chef de la défense. A l'exception d'une escouade de Fontainemelon, préposée à la manoeuvre d'une échelle à allonge, leurs services ne furent cependant point utilisés.

Le temple lui-même n'a pas souffert, à part quelques tuiles cassées, et l'eau n'a guère pénétré dans la partie principale de l'édifice. Les dégâts à la toiture de la tour doivent être plus importants qu'apparens; la charpente devra être en grande partie démontée et remplacée, le noyau central étant fendu et esquivé par la foudre qui l'a complètement abîmé. Le feu n'est pas descendu plus bas que la corniche du toit et toute la partie abritant les cloches est aboullement indemne.

*Feuille d'Avis, Neuchâtel.*

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

**July 20th, 1847.**—The Diet meets in Berne under the presidency of Ochsenbein and, with a majority composed of 12½ votes, declares that the "Sonderbund" is dissolved, at the same time appointing a committee of seven for the discussion of measures required to execute this decision.

**July 22nd, 1499.**—Battle of Dornach. Emperor Maximilian had asked the German princes and towns to assist in subduing the contemptible country folk. While threatening eastern Switzerland from Constance and thus holding up the principal force of the Confederates in the Thurgau, his commander-in-chief, Count Heinrich von Fürstenberg, invaded the Solothurn district from the Sundgau (Alsace) with a force of 14,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry. The Solothurn men, however, had sent out an appeal for help in good time. Reinforced by troops from Berne and Zurich to a total strength of 4,000 men, they surprised the enemy on July 22nd, 1499, at the castle of Dorneck in the Birsthal. Fürstenberg fell in the first onslaught, but the imperial troops made a gallant stand until the arrival of a reinforcement of 1,200 men from Lucerne and Zug decided the issue. Victory was snatched at the last moment, thanks to the efforts of Ammann Werner Steiner, from Zug, who inspired the already faltering Confederates to further attacks. Three thousand of the imperial forces were left dead upon the field, and among them many men of rank. A few days afterwards monks from Basle, acting on instructions from the bereaved families, demanded from the Confederates that the bodies of the dead knights should be handed over, but received for answer: "The nobles must lie with the peasants."

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### From the Courts.

After a prolonged hearing the War Compensation Court, London, reserved judgment in a case brought by Messrs. Gschwind & Co., of Deansgate, Manchester, to recover about £50,000 as compensation for loss of business due to the War Trade Department's refusal to grant them licences during the war to export cotton fabrics and material to neutral countries. The case, which has been reported and commented upon in the *Daily Mail* (July 1st) and the *Times* (July 2nd) presented some disagreeable sidelights; the head of the firm, Mr. W. G. Gschwind, presumably in order to relieve his feelings over the disappointment and supposed tort, had made scurrilous attacks on high Government officials and others which had landed him already in prosecutions for criminal libel. During the hearing, the president of the Court, the Lord Chief Justice, retired and left the room, stating that he preferred to take no part in adjudicating on this claim as the claimant had thought fit to make certain attacks on him during a particular period. It strikes me as an exceedingly strange case; there must have been scores of our compatriots who, of necessity, were deprived during the war of the facilities for—or, at least, considerably hampered in—carrying on their particular trades, but Mr. Gschwind is the first—and I believe the only one—who has made a claim on the English Government for damages.

### The Selzach Passion Play.

Here is another description culled from the *Observer* (July 3rd):—

A Passion Play but little known, yet dating back to the Middle Ages, is given yearly in the little village of Selzach, near Soleure. There are only about 1,700 people at Selzach, mostly engaged in agriculture and watchmaking, but about 400 of them spend the long evenings of a rigorous Swiss winter getting ready for the play, to be given from June to September. It is then played every Sunday, with three special performances on the festivals of July 16th, August 15th and September 3rd.

In the play there are choruses, prologues, tableaux vivants, and the drama itself. These entail much preparation and many rehearsals, all carried out in a very simple, devout fashion, much as at Oberammergau; there are two choirs and a very good orchestra, both admirably directed, while the tableaux vivants add considerably to the interest of the play. The Last Supper is a copy of Leonard da Vinci's master-