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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The elections for members of both the legislative (Grosse Stadtrat) and the executive (Kleine Stadtrat) councils of Zurich took place over the week-end; on the former the Socialists practically maintained their former control, whilst on the latter they captured one of the two liberal mandates by unseating Dr. Häberlin. About 90% of the electorate recorded their votes, so the result may be considered to accurately represent popular wishes, but the Socialist candidates along the whole line had a considerably higher number of votes to their credit than their opponents. In the Grosse Stadtrat the Socialists gained four seats from the Communists and, with the five of the latter, now hold 64 mandates against 61 of the Bourgeois parties, the relation in the old council having been 65 and 60. Of the nine seats in the Kleine Stadtrat, five (four before) are held by the party of the Left and the new president is Dr. Klöti who, about 20 years ago, as a man of 30, scored the first notable success for the Socialist Party. An intense electioneering campaign preceded the poll, and it is stated that more than Frs. 200,000 have been spent on posters and other propaganda matter.

A somewhat animated discussion preceded the election of Dr. F. Wieser, the well-known Swiss Communist leader, as president of the Basle Grosse Rat, his colleague, National Councillor Dr. Welter, threatening serious reprisals if the members declined to adhere to the traditional custom of advancing him, as the present vice-president, to that post. The Socialists on this occasion supported the Communists and the whole of their combined votes of 58 were given to Dr. Wieser, whilst the 61 members belonging to parties of the Right only succeeded in securing 54 votes for their own candidate. The reproach that Dr. Wieser received his instructions from Moscow was met with the assertion that the Catholics followed the lead given by Rome and that the many Swiss politicians accepting and wearing illegal decorations were admittedly under foreign influence. The new vice-president—Statthalter—is the Socialist M. Stohler, who was elected without opposition.

By a decision of the Fribourg Conseil d'Etat all banking institutions in the canton which invite deposits from the public will be subject to Government control.

During rowing practice of the Seeklub Uri three of the ten participants lost their lives last Sunday. The boats were caught by a violent Föhn gale and swamped near the dreaded Axeneck not far from Flüelen. Fortunately, two passenger steamers were able to render assistance. Two of the victims were students of the college at Altdorf, their names being Oskar Stalder and Walter Frischknecht; the third one was Martin Wipfli, aged 30, an official of the club and accountant at Altdorf.

A terrible motor accident took place last Saturday in the heart of Lengnau (Berne). A car was entering the village at an excessive speed and pinned one of three men, who were standing in front of the "Löwen," between the radiator and the mudguard, carrying him for a distance of 1,200 metres, though his two companions ran after the car shouting in a vain endeavour to attract the attention of the driver. When finally the engine came to a standstill the unfortunate victim was past human aid and succumbed soon afterwards to internal injuries. He was a local resident named Fritz Spahr, age 42, and father of four children. The driver and only occupant of the car was Mr. Ernst Lanz, a garage proprietor in Riedholz (Solothurn) who seems to enjoy a reputation for reckless driving.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**La population des principales villes suisses en 1927.**—Les chiffres suivants permettent d'établir d'intéressantes et fort instructives comparaisons entre nos principales villes suisses. Ils nous procurent en outre de très utiles données sur le mouvement de la population de chacune d'elles, en 1927, comparativement à l'année précédente. (Les chiffres relatifs à l'année 1926 sont indiqués entre parenthèses).

L'augmentation de la population de nos plus grandes villes est due presque uniquement à l'immigration dans ces villes, celle-ci est du reste assez minime actuellement, puisque de 1926 à 1927, la plus forte augmentation de la population n'est que de 2,45% à Zurich, tandis qu'elle est de 2,26 à Lausanne; de 2,22% à Bâle; de 1,1% à Berne; de 0,08% seulement à Genève, et de moins 1,66% à St.-Gall.

Ce n'est, en effet, malheureusement plus par un normal excédent des naissances sur les décès—soit par une augmentation naturelle de leur population—que se recrutent actuellement nos villes, mais seulement par l'immigration, essentiellement de campagnards ou d'étrangers. Voici en nombres absolus—trop minimes pour être calculés proportionnellement à la population—ces excédents des naissances sur les décès, en 1927 (et en 1926): à Zurich 620 (contre 798 en 1926); à Bâle 153 (225); à Genève moins 569 (moins 439); à Berne 303 (430); à Lausanne moins 93 (moins 69); à St.-Gall 68 (158). On remarquera que ces "excédents" sont même négatifs dans nos deux plus grandes villes romandes! Il y a lieu de souligner ici cette constatation, fort inquiétante pour l'avenir économique de notre pays et de nos villes que cette diminution constante et générale de l'excédent des naissances est due presque uniquement à la limitation consciente du nombre des enfants, en conséquence des nouvelles conditions économiques créées par la guerre. Cela résulte en effet de la constatation faite que le nombre des mariages est en augmentation assez constante, inversement à celui des naissances. Dans nos grandes villes également, sauf à Bâle, le nombre des naissances est resté stationnaire ou a même considérablement diminué de 1926 à 1927. Voici ces nombres, pour 10,000 habitants de chacune de nos six plus grandes villes: Zurich 133,7 (137,1); Bâle 124,2 (119,7); Genève 91,6 (91,2); Berne 129 (145,4); Lausanne 98,3 (101,9); St.-Gall 122,1 (127).

Les nombres proportionnels des décès sont en augmentation dans toutes nos grandes villes, sauf à Berne et à Lausanne, en partie par le fait de l'épidémie de grippe du printemps, en 1927. Voici ces chiffres, par 10,000 habitants: à Zurich 104,5 (98,6); à Bâle 113,4 (103,4); à Genève 136,7 (126); à Berne 102,1 (105,5); à Lausanne 110,7 (111,3); à St.-Gall 111,7 (103,2).

Excepté à Genève, partout aussi on constate une augmentation, en 1927, de la mortalité des nouveaux-nés au cours de leur première année d'existence; soit, sur 100 naissances, une mortalité de 3,8 (3,5) à Zurich; de 5,6 (4,8) à Bâle; de 3,8 (5,5) à Genève; de 4 (3) à Berne; de 5,6 (4) à Lausanne; et 4,9 (4,6) à St.-Gall.

Pour terminer ces quelques données statistiques, nous crovons intéressant de permettre la comparaison entre les villes des nombres proportionnels de décès —en 1927 et 1926—par 10,000 habitants de chaque ville, provenant de suicides, d'accidents, de maladies tuberculeuses et du cancer.

C'est à Lausanne que cette proportion des suicides a été la plus élevée en 1927, et à Zurich et Bâle la plus faible: à Zurich 2,3 (2,7); à Bâle 2,3 (3,3); à Genève 3,2 (3,7); à Berne 2,7 (4,2); à Lausanne 4 (3,7); à St.-Gall 2,9 (3,5).

Les accidents mortels ont été les plus nombreux à Zurich (102) et à Genève (62); tandis que St.-Gall n'en accuse que 25. Par 10,000 âmes de population, nous avons les proportions suivantes de décès par accidents: à Zurich 4,8 (4,3); à Bâle 3,4 (3,5); à Genève 4,9 (3,3); à Berne 3,8 (6,2); à Lausanne 4,5 (3,1); à St.-Gall 3,8 (4,2). Comparativement à l'année précédente, Genève et Lausanne accusent une assez forte augmentation d'accidents mortels, tandis que Berne en note une très rotatable diminution.

Les décès dus aux maladies tuberculeuses varient aussi de ville à ville et quelque peu d'une année à l'autre. En voici les chiffres proportionnels, par 10,000 habitants: à Zurich 11,6 (11,9); à Bâle 14,8 (13,1); à Genève 19 (17,9); à Berne 13,9 (14,7); à Lausanne 15,7 (19,1); à St.-Gall 12,1 (15).

Les nombres de décès résultant du cancer ont été les suivants, en 1927 (et en 1926), par 10,000 habitants de nos villes: à Zurich 15,9 (14,3); à Bâle 16,1 (15); à Genève 17,5 (16); à Berne 12,5 (11,7); à Lausanne 11,7 (11,3); à St.-Gall 18,4 (16,3). On voit par là que le cancer a continué à causer un nombre croissant de décès, en 1927, dans nos plus grandes villes suisses; il ne faut cependant pas oublier que le cancer étant une maladie de la vieillesse essentiellement, les décès qui en résultent suivent la même augmentation que celle que l'on constate dans l'effectif des classes les plus âgées de nos populations citadines.

—Feuille d'Avis de Lausanne.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

There is very little in this week's Press cuttings of general interest to our readers. The fanciful assertions, uttered by the directors of the **Basle Mission**, have carried very little weight, as the British Cabinet seems to have definitely decided to carry out its original intention of returning the property in Africa to its rightful owners. The demand for a public enquiry has fallen on deaf ears. *Truth*, in its issue of April 4th, has a long article dealing with the "explosion of Mr. Lionel Curtis," which has also drawn a rejoinder from the *Nation* and the *Athenaeum* (April 7th) which we reproduce herewith:—

"The speech delivered by Mr. Lionel Curtis at an extraordinary general meeting of the Commonwealth Trust Limited, on March 27th, must have been, in some respects, the most remarkable speech ever published in the advertisement columns of the *Times*. The circumstances giving occasion for the meeting are, briefly, these: The Commonwealth Trust was created in 1918 to take over the assets and responsibilities of the Basle Mission and Trading Company, a mainly philanthropic body which for many years had done business in India and Africa, restricting itself to a fixed return on capital and dedicating all surplus profits to the welfare of the natives. Under the impression, apparently, that this was a German concern, the British Government sequestered its property during the war, and was on the point of selling it to traders who had no such scruples as the Basle missionaries, when the Commonwealth Trust intervened. It turns out, however, that the Basle Mission was not German but Swiss, and the Government has now, somewhat belatedly, announced its intention of returning the property to its rightful owners.

Mr. Curtis, as a director of the Trust, is not unnaturally perturbed at this decision, and we should have every sympathy with him if he devoted himself to an attempt to get the best possible terms for the Trust out of the British Government. He has chosen, however, to demand an enquiry, and to back his demand by the most violent attack upon the motives of those who have urged the Government, through Parliament and the Press, to restore the sequestered property. Lord Templeton and Mr. J. H. Harris have been most prominent in advocating this course, and upon them, accordingly, has Mr. Curtis's ire fallen most heavily. Anyone, however, who has ventured to say or write a word on the subject comes in for a share of censure, and even *The Nation* does not escape. "In the interests of the British Press" Mr. Curtis demands "that the editors of *Truth* and *West Africa*, and we must add *The Nation* and *Athenaeum*, should explain whether they have had communications, written or verbal, with Mr. Harris on this subject."

It so happens that until this week we have not written a word on the subject. "Kappa," however, has referred to it in "Life and Politics," and this is no doubt sufficient to condemn us in Mr. Curtis's eyes.

One further point. In his speech on March 27th Mr. Curtis declared that the Swiss Government "would do well to advise Herr Preiswerk-Imhoff that it is not for a Swiss citizen to attempt to influence the Parliament, Press and public institutions of England, even in time of peace." If this is a temperamental appeal to anti-alien prejudices, it astonishes us in a man of Mr. Curtis's character and way of thinking; but if it represents his considered opinion, it astonishes us no less in a careful and lifelong student of our institutions. A foreigner is debarred by law from voting in our elections, nor should he interfere in them in any other way; similarly we would deprecate a foreigner owning or controlling a political paper in this country. But a foreigner resident or owning property in any territory controlled from Westminster and Whitehall, if he considers himself injured by our Government, has as good a right to put his case before any Peer, M.P., or editor, and to place it through them before the High Court of Parliament or the forum of public opinion, as he has to bring it into our law courts. If, however, Mr. Curtis means to suggest that Herr Preiswerk-Imhoff has pursued these perfectly legitimate aims by illegitimate methods, he had better discuss Herr Preiswerk-Imhoff's methods and not his nationality; for foreigners and denizens enjoy the same rights, and are subject to the same limitations, in appealing for justice. Nor should we wish foreigners to think that