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evidence.

At his two-day hearing last month, before the Geneva Appeals Court, Jaccoud argued that the victim was not killed over an affair of the heart, but in connection with the Algerian Liberation War. His lawyer also contended they had evidence to prove that a Moroccan dagger could not have been the weapon used to murder the father of his rival in love. They said they had unearthed new evidence showing another man had an appointment with the victim on the night he died and claimed Zumbach, a businessman, was murdered in connection with arms trafficking linked to the Algerian war of 1954-62. They also said that medical experts at the 1960 trial were mistaken about the murder weapon and that there were grave gaps in the evidence that misled the original jury.

Now grey-haired and bearded, Jaccoud sat behind his lawyers with thick files and documents around him. He made notes briskly before the hearing began, ignoring swarming photographers, then listened with arms folded to his lawyers' speeches, nodding approvingly at some passages.

Impervious to this plea, the public prosecutor, Jean Eger, told the three judges there was no reason for a re-trial and denied that the defence team had any fresh evidence to back their claim. Mr. Jaccoud, who now works in a Geneva lawyer's office, will have to wait a few more months for the court's decision on the question of a re-trial. Legal sources said the court could reject Jaccoud's appeal, order a new inquiry, overturn the earlier decision and order a new trial, or completely acquit Jaccoud.

SWISS EVENTS

IMPORTANT VOTE ON NEW UNIVERSITY

After having been a theme of discussion for years, the "University of Central Switzerland" planned to be built in Lucerne, has now been given its first legal foundation. The Great Council of Canton Lucerne has decided by a majority of 85 to 46 to start a debate on the law that would give birth to the University and open the way to the agreement with neighbouring Cantons that would give the university a truly regional character.

The university, as its plans stand today, will cost from 65 to 77 million francs to build. It will cost 3.6 million francs to run in its first year of operation and reach a ceiling of 18.5 million francs six years later. These plans have been accepted by the State Council of Lucerne and accepted by the local parties, with the exception of the Independents.

The promoters of the project say they do not wish to compete with other Swiss universities, but only serve the interests of Central Switzerland. The future university will embody a theological faculty already existing in Lucerne, and give emphasis to teacher training, social sciences and ecology.

An intercantonal agreement (Concordat) has already been signed by Lucerne and the neighbouring Cantons. According to this agreement - which will eventually have to be ratified by the people of the cantons concerned - Lucerne would initially bear two-thirds of the costs. The remaining third would be shared by all the parties to the Concordat in the following way: Lucerne 72.55 per cent; Uri 3.83 per cent; Schwyz 10.34 per cent; Obwald 2.72 per cent; Nidwald 2.88 per cent and Zug 7.65 per cent.

It is only now that the Lucerne Parliament has begun to discuss the issue that one can talk of the possibility of a popular vote. The first to be called to the polls over the university will of course be the people of Lucerne, who, if they agree, would be followed by the citizens of the parties to the Concordat. Building can only begin with the assent of the people of Central Switzerland, and there is still some way to go before this is given. Without it, the Central Swiss University will have to remain the dream of a few.

Birds cause air crash

A flight of gulls was responsible for the crash of a Mirage 111S jet fighter at Payerne air base. Captain Peter Hulliger, from Zurich, had just become airborne and was gaining height, 15 yards above the runway, when several gulls were caught in his air intake. The reactors stopped and the aircraft glided back to the ground as Captain Hulliger attempted in vain to get them re-started. He managed to eject himself in time, but was seriously injured before the plane crashed and caught fire. It was the third of Switzerland's 55 original Mirage jets to be destroyed.

In another crash, a small C36 trainer made a belly landing on Lake Lucerne and sank immediately as its pilot swam safely to the shore at Herthenstein. The plane was later salvaged.

THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE OF TWO HUNGARIANS

Two Hungarians were discovered on Monday, 21st October, in the municipal rubbish dump of Moutier (Jura) where they were eking out some food. They had fled their country on 2nd May.

The man and the woman, aged 54 and 62 respectively, had crossed Austria, Germany and Switzerland on foot, nearly always at night, to seek political asylum. They were discovered by the police after having puzzled a farmer who had given them a cup of coffee and who, surprised at seeing them on his land two hours later, had called the authorities. Both were dressed in rags. They weighed about 50 kilogrammes each and had sustained themselves almost exclusively by digging

through rubbish dumps. They were terrified by the approach of the police and agreed in broken German to surrender on the condition that they would not be sent back to the Soviet Union.

They explained that they were Hungarians and had escaped from a Russian forced labour camp. They had crossed into Switzerland at Basle on 8th October, without being checked by the customs. They carried with them all their savings, amounting to 800 francs, and hadn't apparently realised that they were in Switzerland at the time of their arrest. They were fed, given new clothes and detained at the Cantonal Police Headquarters in Berne while a decision was being made on their application for asylum.

THE LOT OF OLD PEOPLE TEND TO GET WORSE

Switzerland's population has tended to grow older over the past fifty years. In a report on the fate of old people, the Federal Statistical Office noted that this trend - also shared by all industrial countries - was particularly noticeable in Switzerland. Whereas only about one person in eighteen was above 65 in 1900, this proportion has risen to about one in eleven in 1970 and is expected to rise to more than one in ten at the end of the present decade. But the proportion of young people aged twenty and under has dropped from 41 per cent of the population in 1900 to 31 per cent in 1970. This trend is the opposite to that observed in the developing countries, which account for most of the world's population.

The Statistical Office believes that despite the growing efforts by the authorities to improve the life of old people, they do not enjoy all the benefits of prosperity. The report considers them as a "vulnerable" group because their "use" has become "questionable". The documents add that their lower economic utility is concurrent to a growing life-span. Old people are not considered as an important part of the electorate and tend to be forgotten by the established power groups, it says. Their rights are thus inadequately protected and so they are trapped in a marginal area of society.

To these sad reflections on our society, the report adds that there is a growing discrepancy between the dying-age of the sexes. Women outlive their men to a considerable extent. In 1900, for every thousand men over 65 there were 1,184 women in the same age group and 1,465 in 1970. For every thousand men over 80, there were 1,228 women in that group in 1900, and 1,828(!) in 1970. As no factors seem to favour a reversal of the trend, the Statistical Office reckons that the situation for men will even get worse.

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A POET ON TRIAL IN BASLE

The inquisition never reached Switzerland but the Basle Penal Court was recently called to try a case with strong Middle Ages flavour.

A young poet, Frank Geerk, 28, was accused of publishing a blasphemous poem in *Poesi, Zeitschrift für Literatur*, a review which he edits and hands out to a selected public of 500 subscribers, and another in *Prothese*, a similar publication. The two poems, which we translate below, are "The Pastoral Epistle" and "Juergen Bartsch celebrates Christmas". They were picked out by the irate editor of a free advertiser with a circulation of 250,000 in the Basle area. This editor printed Geerk's two incriminating poems calling on his readers to bring the poet to court for insulting the Christian faith and flaunting the freedom of belief. As it happened, there was no response from the readers and it was a Christian Socialist National Councillor, Mr. Albin Breitenmoser, who instituted proceedings against the young poet.

It should be noted that the churches did not react at all to the case, and that the editor of the advertiser was already well known for his religious conservatism. He had previously sued the writer Werner Duggelin for the unconventional graphics of a poster advertising a play by Horvath in a Basle theatre.

The trial came to a surprising conclusion. Geerk was acquitted but ordered to pay costs of 750 francs, and the editor was almost charged with having initiated an unwarranted case. The attorney asked for a fine of 300 francs, but the judge opted for acquittal and said that, the whole matter being a "question of interpretation," the editor could consider himself lucky to live in the 20th century. Had the affair been brought to the court in the Middle Ages, he might have been burnt at the stake!

Geerk's lawyers stressed that their client's writings had only been aimed at a very small readership and that the real culprit was the editor of the advertiser who had published these works for a very large public.

As for the accused, he said that he had never wanted to hurt Christian beliefs. Being a convinced Christian himself, he had on the contrary wished to shake Christians away from their materialism. His "Pastoral Epistle" was an attack on the modern man's inordinate attachment to the motor car while his "Juergen Bartsch" (named after a German convicted of child murder) was inspired by the scene of a crowd of Christmas shoppers in Basle stepping on a picture, which was lying on the pavement, of a starving Biafran child.

The poem "Pastoral Epistle" runs something like this:

Should you return, Lord Jesus,
We would tie you to the bridge of a
motorway without ceremony.
We would scrub your body to whiteness
with parsley,

We would hoot till your ears came to
burst,

We would cut off your ears and your
hairs for the benefit of relic
collectors.

Sure of being excused, we will pump your
blood in our engine and take leave
with humble gratitude.

Our translation of "Juergen Bartsch
celebrates Christmas" would be as
follows:

He said to himself: today a child will be
born — when so many of them are
already running around sadly.

That is why he caught a lost child by the
neck, roughly,

And in the lovely scent of a candle
covered him with kisses and peeled
him like a hard-boiled egg.

He had the feeling that it was Christmas
as he cut him up like a Christmas
turkey,

Just like Juergen Bartsch when he said to
the Judge:

My motives were love for my fellow men,
believe me, and I was happier than
you, Sir.

One knew then that he was telling the
truth.

The distinguished French paper *Le Monde* took the story up and asked a Protestant poet, Pastor Kurt Marti, what he thought of these pieces.

"These are not Geerk's best poems," said Pastor Marti, "but they take the Gospel's 'Ecce Homo' seriously in reducing the historical distance separating us from Christ. The first text actualises the crucifixion by a symbol — the bridge on the motorway — which is far more significant of our society than the cross. We should not forget that Jesus was also accused of blasphemy, and this should prevent us, Christians, from ever starting proceedings of this kind."

THOUGHTS ON CHRISTMAS

by a Non-Theologian

To me, the simple story of the Birth of Christ is one of the basic facts of my Faith. To me, one either believes or does not. In the first case the person would be a Christian and in the second a non-Christian. This of course is not to imply that the latter could not be a good person, nor for that matter that the former would necessarily be a good person. But the fact remains that Christ's birth must be believed for anyone to be a Christian, and that, by his birth, the Son of God came to this Earth.

There is so much "fog" emanating from learned theologians these days that to the ordinary layman it is difficult to know where it is all leading. Personally I believe that all this questioning of the narratives in the Book can only undermine the faith of those who perhaps have not such strong beliefs as some others. If they see, read and hear people of the Church and theological scholars questioning almost every accepted concept, what is the average person to think. Does he or she keep a steadfast faith as written in the Bible or quest some alternative answers. I think that quite a number of people give up the struggle and just lead ordinary decent lives, but exclude the Church (no matter of what denomination) altogether, except for the occasional visit on festival occasions and suchlike and even then they go for the wrong reasons, they like the music, get an emotional uplift and so on. It is strange really that churches are normally, even in these days, packed with people at the midnight services on Christmas Eve. I am convinced in my own mind that the poor

attendances at the normal Sunday Services can be placed to quite a large degree at the door of the questioners and their failure to provide any answers.

I am not advocating a blind faith in everything the Church says, but rather a faith in the original concepts; these have lasted for some 1,974 years and cannot be cast lightly aside.

I am a firm believer in the fact that everyone is an individual and should firmly hold on to individual ideas of the Birth of Christ himself and also of God. God to me is not just "something out there", he is a firm, but loving Father, one to whom I can take my troubles in the sure knowledge that he will hear me and help me. So if I look on God as my Heavenly Father, does it not follow that I can look on Christ as my Heavenly Brother?

As I see it, the message of Christmas is that God saw fit to send his Son on to this Earth that men might be saved from their own bedevilment, that they might have a Faith to which they could cling in spite of all the trials and tribulations of the world. Many, over the centuries, have tried to stamp out this faith, others have abused the love of God and carried out shameful deeds in His name, but still the simple faith remains.

Let all men recover and rediscover this faith, love one another and not try to solve all the ills of this world without God's help, I am sure they are not likely to succeed.

A very Happy and Joyous
Christmas to Everyone.

H.J.T.