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Comment

THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITY OF THE DAY

Consumer Protection being one of the rare subjects not covered by our wide-ranging Constitution, it is not surprising to learn that the Federal Council has recently submitted a draft article on the matter to the main economic and political organisations. We have to admit, however, that the contents of the draft are unknown to us. The idea of such an article was first raised by Mr. Hans Schaffner, former Head of the Department of Public Economy, in the days when Switzerland's war against economic overheat first had to be waged in earnest, in the early sixties.

Consumer protection was then viewed from an economic angle, as a means of fighting inflation. The buying urge can indeed override considerations of thrift in the face of our rampant inflation. Consumers may well complain against the rise in prices but pay up all the same whether the increases are justified or not. On the other hand, firms can conceivably use an inflationary situation to their advantage by using inflation as a cover for excessive increases. Protecting consumers can thus be viewed as one of the means of reducing their spending and hence stemming inflation.

However, as laws already exist in various fields on consumer protection, mainly the laws on restrictive practices, product quality, retail price maintenance and trades description, one wonders in what way the Constitution will add to this vast body of legislation. But by proposing to inscribe the matter in the Constitution, the Government is stating the fundamental importance of "consuming" in our ordinary lives and in our modern society. Since consumption of all kinds is perhaps our most important activity it deserves, all told, to be remembered by the Constitution.

But the Constitution should really contribute to *reduce* the importance of this activity, because consumers wouldn't need so much "protection" any more.

The importance of consumption is the result of those tremendous pressures

acting on men and women in our industrial society. Many of these pressures originate in the need for companies to sell their goods and hence foist them on their potential customers by an appetite-whetting publicity, which of course creates new consumer habits, new desires and new values. This is the law of our system.

Children are submitted to it very early on, and not only from television and street posters, but from their own parents' veneration for material things. The child's consumer mentality automatically develops along the path set by his parents. It is not only tied to acquisitiveness and the impulse to conserve, but also to competition. A child will for example envy his friend's better windcheater or the fact that his friend's parents have a tennis court in their garden. Comparisons of this nature are made at school and can develop, as they do in middle-class America, in a lamentable race for material one-upmanship where everything that is possessed — cars, cameras, spin-drier, antiques — is compared with the goods of the kind owned by one's friends and rivals or proposed in their latest versions by an invading publicity.

The future article should perhaps protect children against this sort of thing, otherwise they will find their only answer in revolt and marginal existence, a solution which we know is being chosen by an increasing number of disillusioned young people.

All this must be set in the worldwide context of an inevitable diminution of consumption and an increased sharing of the goods that will be available. In this respect, the Constitution should certainly have something to say after all.

P.M.B.

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SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

INTRODUCTION OF MEASURES TO STABILISE THE FOREIGN WORK-FORCE

New federal regulations on the numerical strength of the foreign labour force were enforced on August 1st. They are in line with previous regulations to steady the foreign population of Switzerland before the end of the seventies and aiming at a decline of this population thereafter. The main new element is found in the emphasis given to hospitals. The allocation of new manpower to individual cantons has been calculated following a different set of rules giving priority to hospitals and schools. Deliveries of annual residency permits are limited to 20,500 a year, 18,000 of which are distributed among cantons and 2,500 awarded to special or individual cases. The larger cantons have a greatly increased "intake" respecting the fact that their hospitals, for example, handle patients from neighbouring cantons. Thus Zurich's "quota" is increased from 2,808 to 3,172 new workers, Vaud's from 1,782 to 2,136 and Geneva's from 1,260 to 1,436.

Official figures indicate that the foreign resident manpower in Switzerland had increased by only 0.1 per cent during the 12 months to last April, showing that the Federal Council's stabilisation policy is succeeding. A high number of foreigners received permanent residency status for having lived for over ten years in Switzerland but this was offset by a sharp fall in yearly permit holders. There has, on the other hand, been a spectacular drop in the seasonal work force. It has been cut by 26,787 men and women, or 18.1 per cent during the period under consideration. This development is almost entirely due to the slump in the hotel and building industry.

The new combat plane: Swiss experts satisfied with the "Tiger"

The four Army test pilots sent to Williams Air Base in Arizona to test the Northrop F 11-5E Tiger jet fighter considered as the most likely replacement candidate to Switzerland's ancestral Venoms have returned home fully satisfied with the plane's performance. The pilots said they were convinced that the Tiger was adapted to the tasks planned for it by the Air Force and that no structural modifications would be required, such as the possibility of folding the wings to enable the machines to enter nuclear-proof alpine caverns. Two

versions of the Tiger are to undergo a further series of trials in the Alps during August and September and it is expected that the Federal Council will be presented with a report on which to base its decision before the end of the year.

Mr. Pierre Gruber goes to Peking

Mr. Pierre Gruber, Head of the Political Department, was awaited in Peking on August 7th for the opening of the first exhibition of Swiss industrial goods in Communist China. This exhibition is one of the largest of its kind ever staged by Switzerland abroad and will be seen by an expected 150,000 visitors until its closure on August 20th. 200 firms are taking part in the event.

SOCIAL

FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN ST. GALL COMPLAIN ABOUT THE "SPECIAL CLASSES" CREATED FOR THEIR CHILDREN

Some 4,000 parents of Italian children in the Canton of St. Gall have sent a petition to the authorities complaining about the special classes that have been set up in schools for their children. These classes, which are intended to speed up the assimilation process of Italian children, have in fact caused a split in the Italian community because many believe that the result is opposite to the original aim. In their petition, the 4,000 parents claimed that the authorities were "ruining" the chances of their children to integrate and that they had violated a 1972 Swiss-Italian agreement.

The Council of State of St. Gall has, however, no intention of abandoning the classes which it considers as successful so far. They believe that these classes are necessary in towns and villages with a high proportion of foreigners. In some communes, foreigners account for up to 50 per cent of the resident population.

These classes follow the same curriculum as normal classes for Swiss children but devote more time to German. It has been found that although most Italian children speak Swiss-German, they are unable to read and write in German. The classes are planned to bring children to the level of normal courses within two or three years.

THE SUMMER EXODUS IS WELL ON ITS WAY

Over 1.7 million Swiss were expected to go on holidays abroad during July and August. It is estimated that half of the Swiss people take holidays, 2.5 million go abroad and that 70 per cent of them leave in July and August — mainly for the sun. Italy is by far the most popular country followed, quite far behind, by Spain and France. Statistics

for 1972 show that Swiss tourists spent 11.5 million nights abroad. 10.5 million of these were in Europe, of which 4 million were in Italy, 1.7 million in Spain and 1.5 million in France. The majority of Swiss vacationers still prefer to go abroad by car and package holidays with inclusive flights are not yet as popular as they are in Britain.

Switzerland is a tourist deficit country despite its reputation. This deficit will probably reach a record level this year because of the fall in foreign visitors. After fifteen years of good business, Swiss hoteliers had a disastrous early summer season and were hardly optimistic about a change of trend. With the strengthening of the Swiss franc in comparison to some other currencies, there has been a sharp drop in the number of American, British, Italian and French tourists. Engelberg recorded an 86 per cent fall in its usual inflow of British visitors and a 50 per cent fall in American tourists. Davos suffered a 40 per cent fall in foreign tourists and Gstaadt, with its hotels only half full at the height of the season, registered a 30 per cent fall. Similar percentages have been reported in the resorts of the Valais, while Adelboden has catered for more Swiss than foreign visitors. Owing to its position, the Tessin was particularly badly hit by the fall in Italian tourists. Crans-Montana offers the sight of holiday apartment blocks with only two or three of their 50 to 80 flats occupied. A trend towards the rental of chalets appears to have added to the hoteliers' hardships.

Less affected by the fall of money, the Germans, Dutch and Scandinavians are visiting Switzerland in roughly equal numbers to last year.

GENEVA BOSSES WARN OF DANGERS OF THE THIRD ANTI-FOREIGN INITIATIVE

Holding their Annual General Meeting early last month, the management association of Geneva's mechanical industry warned of the disaster that would follow for the Canton's economy if the Swiss people voted in favour of the third anti-foreign initiative in the forthcoming referendum.

An acceptance of this initiative next October would entail, for Geneva alone, the forced departure within three years of 45,000 foreigners and 8,000 border workers. Although 15,000 flats would be vacated, this would be a Pyrrhic solution to Geneva's housing shortage as the accommodation would no longer be required and the town would suffer an economic slump. The labour force in the Canton's mechanical industry would be lowered from 13,000 to 10,000. Several firms would be hit so hard by labour shortages that they could just not continue to stay in business. The meeting was told by the Association's President that a great many firms had already rationalised to the limit of their financial means and that there was no way for them to compensate for the loss of manpower by new investments.

The President said that the decision of voters would be primarily motivated by emotional considerations. This, he said, made the situation all the more critical and ominous.

SWISS ABROAD

37 SWISS ABROAD ARE UNDERGOING "REKRUTENSCHILE" THIS YEAR

Thirty-seven "genuine" young Swiss abroad are coming this year from every continent to carry out an optional stint in the Swiss Army. By "Genuine" Swiss abroad it is officially understood that these are compatriots that come to Switzerland for the express purpose of undergoing military service, and not those who are either students or temporary residents in the country.

Young Swiss abroad who are recognised as fit for service must submit to three conditions to be accepted in a recruit school: they should not be double-nationals, must have a fluent knowledge of one of the national languages, and have no criminal record. Exceptions are allowed to the first rule after examination of individual cases. Double-nationals occasionally serve in the Swiss Army, but those that have already performed national service in their country of residence are not required to repeat it in their country of origin. It is doubtful, however, that the military authorities are faced with many applications of this kind!

For a young Swiss abroad who has never seen his motherland, the scheme offers a chance to do so completely free of charge. A young Swiss abroad availing himself of the opportunity to serve in the Army and who lives in Australia costs the taxpayer at least 10,000 francs. His air ticket alone costs 3,416 francs (paid by the Political Department), while his four-month basic training as an infantryman (the cheapest section of the armed forces) costs about 6,000 francs, including personal equipment.

The Swiss abroad who serve in the Army face the same obligations as their compatriots at home and must complete their basic training. They may apply for a dispensation to undergo yearly repetition courses, but would be called-up in wartime if they are still in the elite or Landwehr age group.

New aid to Swiss schools abroad

Parliament will probably be asked to vote on the new budget of Swiss schools abroad when it meets again next September. In a message to both Houses published last March, the Federal Council called on an increase of 2.5 to three million francs of the six million francs of

federal money spent on these schools in 1973. This increased support would help carry out the recommendations contained in the Message towards assuming more financial responsibility for the survival of the schools, of which there are nineteen at present. Eight of them are in Italy (Catagnia, Firenze, Genoa, Luino, Milan, Naples, Ponte San Pietro and Rome). Spain has two (Barcelona and Madrid). Latin America has six (Bogota, Lima, Mexico, Rio, Santiago and Sao Paulo). The others are in Ghana (Accra), Thailand (Bangkok) and Singapore. The two schools founded in the 1920's in Cairo and Alexandria, and which were at one time very important, have been closed down because of the disappearance of the Swiss colony in Egypt. The Cairo school closed in 1970 and the one on Alexandria the following year.

Provisions concerning these schools have so far linked annual subsidies to the Swiss staff they employ. This has proved completely inadequate. The Government now would like the Confederation to pay for these teachers entirely and enable them to return to the Motherland periodically.

ANGLO-SWISS

HEIDI AND THE BBC FILM THAT NEVER WAS

According to the *Evening Standard*, the technicians' strike at the BBC did not prevent the Corporation from rather optimistically sending a production team to Switzerland for two whole weeks of location filming on a six-part serial based on the children's classic *Heidi*.

"Nothing was shot," writes the *Standard*, "but the actors and technicians – 20 of them – had a rather pleasant holiday. Extras were hired for two days of camera rehearsals, complete with cameramen, boom operators and sound technicians.

"The actors were fully made-up and costumed. The only snag was that there was no film in the camera. Any film that might have been shot was sure to have been 'blacked' back in England.

"Meanwhile, the serial which is intended to be shown in America too, has been postponed until the industrial action is over but those involved in it are contented and bronzed by the Swiss sun."

Nine Britons injured on an Alpine cruise

Nine Britons were among the twenty tourists injured last month when their coach collided with a lorry near Biasca, in the Tessin. They were heading south towards Milano when an Austrian lorry appeared on the wrong side of the road. The collision was inevitable and it was a near-miracle that no one was killed and that none of the injured, who were treated at Faido and Bellinzona hospitals, were in a critical condition.

SWISS PUT UP £6m FOR GEORGE KENT

Mr. Tony Benn's Department of Industry may wind up with a stake of over 10 per cent in a new concern controlled by the Swiss industrial giant, Brown Boveri, as a result of a deal announced on July 11. The George Kent instrumentation group which was controversially involved with the old Industrial Reorganisation Corporation is forming a new joint company with Brown Boveri in a reorganisation of its activities.

The joint company to be called Brown Boveri Kent and which will be 53 per cent owned by the Swiss group will take in Kent's industrial instrumentation activities.

An entirely separate company will be formed called Scientific and Medical Instruments to take in the medical instruments side of the Kent operation. This will be completely owned by Kent shareholders with no involvement on the part of Brown Boveri.

The Department of Industry holds a 24 per cent stake in George Kent from the days of the IRC when it backed Kent in the bitter takeover battle with Ranks for the medical instruments firm, Cambridge Instruments.

The Cambridge Instruments business will form about half of the new SMI group. When the new Conservative Government of 1970 broke up the IRC, the Kent group became something of a cinderella and has been struggling along with an erratic profit performance. Talks have been going on with Brown Boveri for almost a year. Brown, one of the world's biggest electrical engineering undertakings, is only involved in a small way with the industrial instrumentation market covered by Kent.

It has a small UK operation, British Brown Boveri, which had a turnover last year of £6.4 millions. Under the new deal, it will inject £6.1 millions into the Brown Boveri Kent concern. Terms of the rearrangement are one ordinary share of 25p in BBK and one ordinary share of 10p in SMI for each ordinary stock unit of 50p in Kent.

The 53 per cent stake means a value of 33p being placed on each Kent share by Brown Boveri. The deal has to be approved by shareholders which include Rank with a 17 per cent stake.

A Department of Industry official said yesterday that the Government has still to make up its mind what to do with its stake. But if Mr. Benn decides to stay with Kent, the Department will land up with a stake of over 10 per cent in BBK plus its existing Kent share of 24 per cent transferred to SMI. Most of the borrowings of Kent will be taken over by BBK.

In the year ended March 30, the BBK part of Kent accounted for £37.6 millions of sales and made a profit before interest and tax of £1.6 millions. It will retain £16.8 millions of the Kent borrowings against only £1 millions cash injection by Brown Boveri for its equity stake. BBK's net tangible assets for

ordinary shareholders will be £15.3 millions and the borrowings will be reduced by the subscription moneys. The preference stock and loan capital of Kent will remain in Kent.

(*Guardian*)

UBS CORRECTS THE "DAILY EXPRESS"

The *Daily Express* used a term to which the Union Bank of Switzerland in London took exception when it reported on the exchange losses suffered by the Bank following the death of a customer. The paper wrote of the "demise" of the Bank. This led to a correction being printed in its July 10th editions in which it was duly stressed that these losses had been covered by a transfer from the Bank's internal reserves and that business was continuing as usual. The *Express* apologised for the embarrassment which its information might have caused to the UBS.

TRAVEL

SWISS TOURISTS FROM CYPRUS FULL OF PRAISE FOR THE BRITISH ARMY

Swiss tourists stranded in Cyprus during the recent troubles were abounding in praise for the British Army when they eventually returned home. A *Tribune de Genève* reporter interviewed a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Hinterreger, from Urdorf (ZH) who had set out for the "holiday of their lives" to Limassol, on the southern coast of Cyprus. They hadn't slept and eaten properly for several days prior to their landing at Kolten.

They explained that they had arrived in Cyprus on the Friday before the Coup.

"Friday, Saturday and Sunday were marvellous. We enjoyed splendid weather and the temperature of the sea rose to 28 degrees. On Monday morning (day of Coup) everything changed. Tanks and armoured vehicles burst into the streets. We went to the information office and learnt that a military putsch had been staged and that Makarios had been killed.

"The population was overcome by collective hysteria. The 200 employees of our first-class hotel were taken over by panic. Three or four hours following the announcement that a new government had been formed, only twenty employees were still in the hotel and an unbelievable confusion spread over the town.

"We were told not to leave the hotel. From Tuesday onwards, all the telephone and telegraph communications with the outside world were cut. Barricades and other obstacles sprang up all over the city which appeared to have turned into a battlefield.

"On Saturday morning tourists stranded at the Amatus Beach Hotel had the unexpected visit of the British Army. Arriving with armoured transport



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vehicles, the British offered to drive these tourists to the security of the British bases. The Hinterreggers were among those who accepted this offer and were driven with other German and French tourists towards a base already harbouring thousands of refugee-tourists."

The Hinterreggers explained that no Swiss official representatives appeared on the scene.

"Although the German Consul and Belgian representatives had taken care of their nationals, we were left alone and didn't receive any help. We failed to see any Swiss officials. The representatives of our travel agency, who had given us the most careful attention until the Coup, had disappeared and we never saw them again."

"We arrived at the base and the commanding officer told us that 20,000 tourists were already waiting there. The British were extremely courteous, but they too had been surprised by events. Women, children and old people were allowed to sleep in the barracks but thousands of other tourists had to sleep rough under a rather cold sky. We shall never forget the frenzied hunt for blankets. Some tourists who had completely lost their nerves had to wait for hours before getting an opportunity to cover themselves. A West German journalist who had been spending his holidays at Limassol had suffered a heart attack."

The Hinterreggers, like the other tourists who had landed in Kloten on the same flight, all agreed that the British had been marvellous and that they could not

have returned were it not for their help. One of them said: "Without the British Army, the tourists on the island would have certainly suffered many casualties. The British imposed their presence, put order in the prevailing chaos and enabled us to leave this war-torn island."

EGYPTIAN STUDENTS PENNILESS IN ZURICH

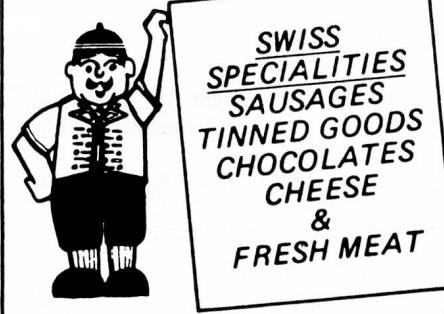
Zurich has been invaded by thousands of Egyptian students following an apparent misunderstanding by Cairo University. According to the *Tribune de Genève*'s Zurich correspondent, some 5,000 students responded to leaflets distributed in Cairo University on the rich holiday job opportunities in Switzerland by applying for a visa at the Embassy and taking a cheap return flight to the country. While many found jobs, 1,500 were apparently stranded in Zurich with a few francs in their pockets. Unable to afford the local cost of accommodation, several hundred of them were compelled to sleep rough in the parks, or on the cold paving of *Shopville*, the underground shopping precinct near the central railway station. Some others found a bed in the City's youth hostels, while the authorities accommodated a few hundred in a gymnasium converted into a dormitory.

The students were being urged to return home before their last franc had been spent and were told that they had been misinformed about the summer job opportunities open to them. They learnt that there was a waiting list even for Swiss students at Berne's students' association. But many Egyptians were

reluctant to leave and preferred to try their luck by tasting the cold marble of *Shopville* for a little longer.

This influx of students stemmed from a misunderstanding. Last May, the Federal Administration informed Embassies that there were some holiday jobs available for students. Misinterpreting this information, Cairo University distributed a great many leaflets leading students to believe that Switzerland offered an inexhaustible job market. The reality was unfortunately different and certainly likely to cause considerable disappointment. It also seems that the Embassy in Cairo misjudged the situation.

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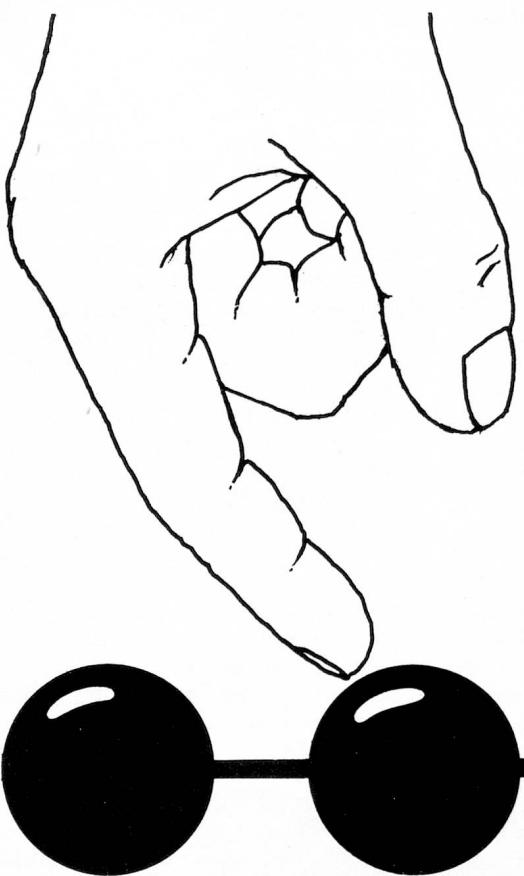
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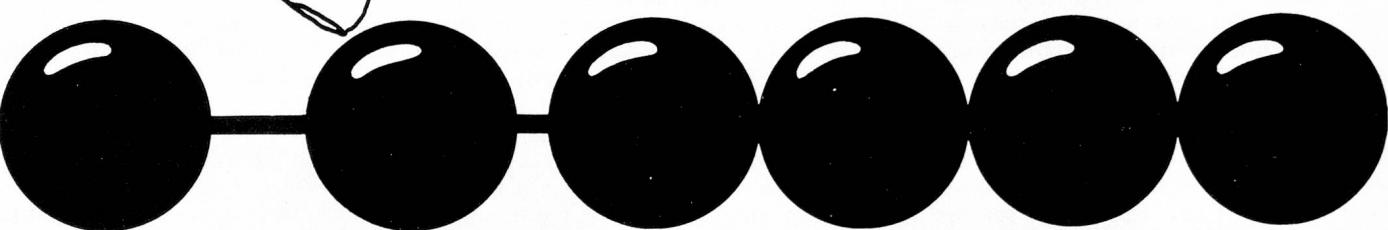
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NEW THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY

Two years after the storm over the teaching of Father Stephanus Pfuerstner, a Dominican don who advocated sexual freedom to his Fribourg students, the Swiss Catholic hierarchy is faced with the case of a theologian from Lucerne, Professor Hans Kueng, who previously holds a Chair of Theology at Tubingen (West Germany) whose teaching is also not in line with accepted catholic thinking. The case appears to be very involved because the Swiss Catholic Church, whose highest body is the Conference of Swiss Bishops, would not like the controversy to grow out of proportion. The case was recently discussed by a meeting of Swiss Bishops. They revealed little of the latest developments which also involve the congregation for the doctrine of the faith in Rome. At the latest news, a movement called "Action for Human Rights within the Church" has suggested a meeting in Lucerne or in Zurich where the parties concerned could confront their views. The movement has invited the Secretary-General of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith, Mgr. Jerome Hamer, the President and Vice-President of the Conference of Swiss Bishops, Mgr. Nestor Adam and Mgr. Anton Haenggi, and Professor Hans Kueng to the meeting.

As for Father Pfuerstner, whose

forced retirement from his professorship in Fribourg has stirred lasting ripples in the city, he has left his order and is now engaged in social research with a German university.

Professor Kueng fell foul of the Catholic establishment by questioning the infallibility of the Pope. "The Church consists of men and will never be God. As any human it is always liable to make mistakes and draw others into errors in every field" was a declaration which could hardly have been unchallenged. A staunch supporter of the ecumenical movement, Professor Kueng also believes that the Vatican's theological intransigence is an obstacle to the reunification of all the Christian churches.

These ideas were presented in a book which found great success in Germany. In 1971, the Italian Church managed to have it banned from libraries in the Peninsula. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith eventually instituted proceedings against the Professor and arraigned him to the relevant Vatican court. Professor Kueng reacted strongly. He refused to go to Rome and counter-attacked in various articles. In an interview by the French daily *Le Monde*, he expressed the hope that the Congregation, presently an "instrument of the Inquisition", would one day become an "instrument for the preaching and the furthering of faith".

VAST RELIGIOUS GATHERING IN LAUSANNE

An address by Billy Graham was the highlight of a gathering of 20,000 people in Lausanne's Olympic Stadium on Sunday, July 21st. The American evangelist, who had last preached in Switzerland in 1960 and attracted immense crowds, was among the speakers at a rally organised by the International Congress for World Evangelism. Although he was not the only speaker it was primarily to listen to him that thousands of parishioners had converged on Lausanne from all over Switzerland and neighbouring France. Among the other speakers on a programme which included choral performances were Bishop Dean from Sydney, President of the Congress, and three personalities from India, Japan and Uganda who witnessed to their conversion to the Christian faith. In his short sermon, which the crowd heard with religious attention, Billy Graham called for a moment of silence and prayers for peace in Cyprus. Basing his address on Psalm 23, he illustrated why it was necessary to get nearer to God in the same way that it was necessary to pay one's parking fines. In drawing this unusual parallel, he related an anecdote about a parking offence in Lausanne. Billy Graham's powers of persuasion were demonstrated by the many who later stepped on the lawn before him to reassert their faith.

Another religious meeting took

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