

Paris, July 11th. 1955

250,000 DEMONSTRATE IN BRUSSELS

Positive UNDEVELOPED : 43 meters - 143 ft

DEVELOPED

In a protest against the Roman Catholic School policy of the Liberal Socialist coalition government of Premier Achille van Acker, an estimated 250,000 Catholics thronged Brussels yesterday.

The visitors came from all over the country, and many people fainted on the sidewalks during the demonstration, because of heat. The demonstrators carried anti-government posters and shouted slogans opposing the draft bill on education submitted to the Senate, after approval by ~~the~~ The House of Representatives, by Socialist Minister of Education Leo Collard. A group of demonstrators was seen carrying the traditional pirates black flag of revolt. Similar flags hung from many churches in the Flanders area.

Mr. Theo LEFEVRE, head of Social Christian Party who had organized this mass demonstration was standing on the Stock Exchange stairs with officials of his party and representatives of Catholic organizations, while the parade went on for over four hours.

Although the demonstration was authorized by the Burgmaster of Brussels, gendarmerie massed at strategic points of the capital were ready, but did not have to intervene.

Last March 25 a similar Catholic demonstration was banned. Some incidents occurred between demonstrators and police. To avoid new incidents, Catholic and Socialist leaders agreed last month on a three-month truce, during which none of the opposing parties would stage any demonstration against the other. So far the truce has been respected on both sides.

The draft bill provides for control of the opening of new private schools, cuts certain subsidies to free (Catholic) education, establishes strict conditions to the subsidizing of private education and plans a series of measures which, according to Catholic spokesmen, are "deadly enemies" to Catholic education in Belgium. Catholic spokesmen further claim the bill aims at destroying the Catholic School system, while pro government voices say that it will re-establish the balance between official and Catholic schools, a balance, they claim, which was broken in favor of Catholic education by former Social Christian Minister of Education, Pierre Harmel.

Pictures show, views of the mass demonstration parading in streets around the Stock-Exchange in Brussels, Catholic personalities on Stock-Exchange stairs during parade, and various views of peaceful but mass demonstration with placards, flags etc...