

Ecumenical Bangs And Triangles

One of the most gruelling races of the space age is taking place on drawing boards of airplane designers.

The race is to work out a supersonic passenger craft that will wing its way from New York to London in two hours.

Target date to get such a plane in the air is early in the 1970s. Russia is believed well on the way to another first. Britain and France are at work on a cooperative project and the United States still hasn't even clarified what it wants much less how to design it.

The victory might be a boomerang to the victor, however.

Already there is talk of banning supersonic craft from flying over populated areas—the sonic bangs that follow these planes would be a constant irritant to residents below and probably smash windows, break china and even disrupt delicate surgical operations.

The multi-million dollar planes would be left with nothing but arctic wastes, tropical jungles or the vast oceans to fly over.

But there are hazards there too.

The current issue of the aviation magazine "Flight International" describes a recent flight of an Australian jet fighter plane which laid down such a devastating boom that a shoal of mullet fish floated to the surface, stunned for several minutes.

Parallel to the problems of scientists in their restless search for speed are the problems of churchmen in their relentless quest for religious unity.

Pope Paul's recent encyclical also laid down somewhat of its own "sonic boom" which has brought many comments to the surface.

The Pope said he had "an attentive, reverent interest in the spiritual movements connected with the problem of unity." These "movements" are summed up in English-speaking nations by the name "ecumenical movement" (from the Greek word for worldwide).

This movement has drastically changed the face of Christendom from a morass of bitterly competitive sects to a picture of a long divided family trying to regroup its scattered members at the old homestead.

The Catholic Church has stood aloof from the movement for fifty years—watching it but not involved in its growing pains.

Pope John changed that stance and now Pope Paul wants the Church to take "the initiative in restoring the unity of Christ's fold."

That's the boom that has rattled the ecumenical dishes.

The "Initiative" for such activity has long been considered as centered in Geneva, Switzerland, headquarters of the World Council of Churches, coordinating agency for 200 Protestant and Orthodox churches. And now the Orthodox are increasingly voicing their own views on how ultimate unity should be fashioned thereby creating an ecumenical triangle—Geneva, Rome, Constantinople. (There is also talk of a pentagon—these three plus Moscow and Canterbury.)

Not only is there now this new subject of ecumenical geometry but even a new geography besides. It is said that "Constantinople is between Geneva and Rome."

The latest issue of "The Ecumenical Review" of the World Council of Churches wisely comments: "The truth is that the center of the ecumenical movement cannot shift—because it has no earthly center. Its earthly expression is multilateral. The one center of the ecumenical movement is our common Lord. And the only possible ecumenical geometry is that which (Lutheran) Archbishop Soderblom used to express in the figure of the circle with Christ in the center and all churches moving toward that center and so coming closer to each other."

This is also the attitude of Pope Paul which he expressed in these words: "The Catholic Church will not cease, by prayer and penance, to prepare herself worthily for the longed-for reconciliation."

—Father Henry Aiello



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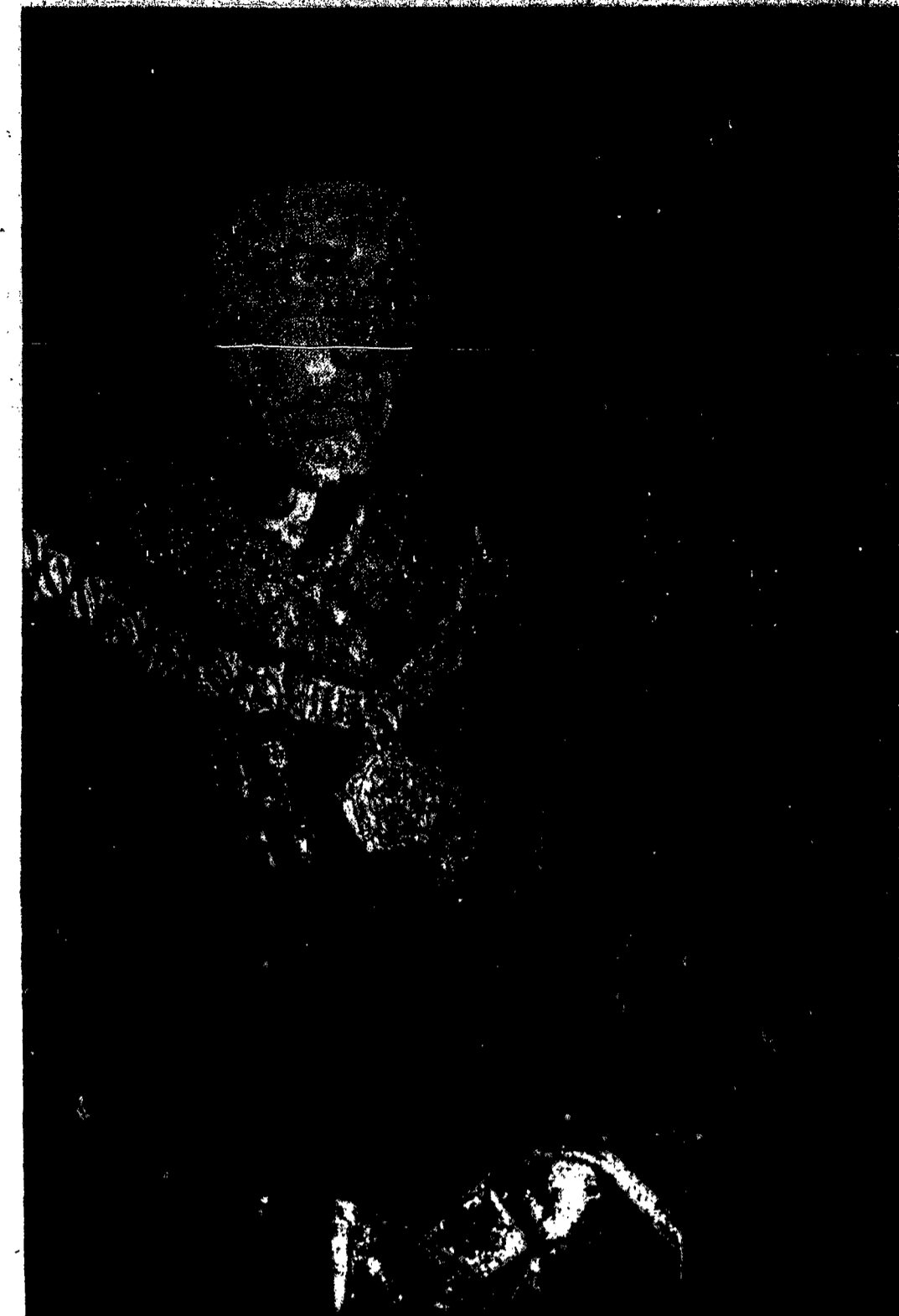
Catholics Take Look at Church's Role in Education

BY GARY MacEON

It is not only in the United States that the great debate on the future of education under Catholic auspices is taking place. In many parts of the world, Catholics are asking if it is necessary and proper to continue today to give general education as high a priority among Catholic institutional activities as has been customary in recent centuries.

The issue was keenly debated, for example, at a recent national meeting of the association of Catholic colleges of Columbia. The meeting agreed that a program to streamline Catholic educational activities in the country, with a view to their gradual reduction, should be prepared for submission to a later meeting.

The practical reason advanced for this re-evaluation is substantially the same as those which underlay the decision of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to suppress the five lowest grades in its schools and transfer the children to public schools. It is that education is threatening to absorb



In Memory of Martyr

This picture of St. Thomas More was recently blessed and placed in the cell in the Tower of London where he was held a prisoner awaiting martyrdom in 1535. He was Lord Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII but lost his honor and his head when he refused to accept that monarch's decision to take over the Church in England. St. Thomas More was a companion in prison with St. John Fisher, bishop of Rochester in Kent, who was also martyred for the same reason. St. Thomas More is the patron of the parish church on East Avenue, Brighton.

Sharpshooter For the Lord

By FATHER WILLIAM ROLIN, C.S.B.

Bangkok, Thailand — (NC) The priest — call him Father Joseph — had been sent by the government to inspect the temples in the villages. They began that morning in the Thai village when Suwan, the young catechist, brought Father Joseph a small Buddha, saying that he had received it from government inspectors. "They gave it, you?" the priest asked and then heard to his surprise that the catechist had said he came for it. Others in the village had done the same, and some persons had two or three of the images. The explanation was not a possession of the Catholic village; however, but an effort to avoid trouble in the villages. The inspectors had asked the images and a surcharge of 25 cents to each temple fee, in order to raise money to rebuild a famous Buddhist temple in Bangkok. A slight in annual registration and a small fee to the village were playing it safe. Also, the inspectors were telling the people that the images could keep the bullets and shells of the communists across the river in Laos from hitting their villages. Again, many villagers, still close to the traditions of superstition, would put the Buddhas next to medals of Our Lady, playing it safe from this standpoint, too. Acting on an impulse, Father Joseph got his 38 pistol, put it next to Suwan's image, and blew it to pieces with the first shot. "You see," he said, "no image can protect you from a bullet. Tell that to the village."

But Suwan was unimpressed. He told the priest that he was too close when he shot at the image. The Buddha of the image had attracted others, and soon a crowd had gathered. Father Joseph tried to turn attention away from his shot at the image by practicing with shots at an old auto battery and letting others take trial shots first with the pistol and later with a rifle and finally with a shotgun. Then it happened. A pagan in the crowd challenged the priest: "I hear you don't believe my Buddha will protect me from communists. Sit at the government inspectors tell me. Take a shot at my Buddha. If you hit it, I will know that the claims are false. If you can't hit it, I will know they are true."

Father Joseph tried to turn this obviously awkward test aside, saying that a shot at the Buddha would not be honorable, and would make Buddhism angry, and the government inspectors as well.

But the villagers emphatically denied this. They wanted to see what the priest could do. It was said out loud: "Father Joseph, your religion is not as strong as that of the Lord Buddha. Then he should admit it."

And that was why he was standing there, facing the tiny image, with a loaded weapon in his hand. And — too late — he realized that he was now holding his shotgun, with an inaccurate slug in its chamber. The rifle that he could handle in this situation, confidently was out of reach.

Father Joseph, near panic, would shoot the rough slug high or low, left or right. He wanted to lay the gun down, get his rifle, but knew that would be interpreted as weakness.

One solution that came to him was to aim blindly. He would have the shot, if true, ricochet from the plank into the image. If the gun shot high he would still be on target.

The priest took a deep breath and squeezed the trigger. The Buddha vanished. The Catholics cheered. The pagan who issued the challenge shrugged, wryly inspecting a gouge mark one inch in front of the place where the Buddha had rested on the plank.

That night, it is said, many a little Buddha was tossed into the creek that leads to the Mekong River and the sea.

Control Nature Instead of Limiting People

Greater Food Production, Key to Population Boom

New York—(RNS)—Step up nature's productivity rather than limit human beings through birth control was the advice given here by Abbe Francois Houtart at a press conference announcing his forthcoming book, "Population and Food."

As Belgium's leading expert on population and food problems, Abbe Houtart heads the Center for Socio-Religious Research in Brussels and is secretary-general of the International Federation of Institutions for Socio-Religious and Social Research (FERES).

The book, to be published by Sheed and Ward in November, was written in collaboration with Michel Cepede, French rural economy specialist and delegate to the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and Dr. Linus Groot of FERES, from the Netherlands. It is the outcome of a recommendation made at the FAO meeting in 1960 by Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutti, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to FAO.

The Belgian priest noted that the publication is strictly a synthesis of facts concerning population and food problems with an effort "to arrive at a conclusion regarding the earth's ability to support its population."

By no means is it a treatise on moral attitudes. While Catholic moral principles are defended, this is done from a scientific approach, because these principles, too, are facts.

Asked whether the book presented official Catholic views on current controversial family planning and birth-control questions, Abbe Houtart replied: "The imprimatur makes the book officially approved. However, since it is written from a scientific rather than a theological basis, conclusions reached are based on fact and reason. It is not a treatise on moral philosophy."

Chief among the "practical conclusions on population theories" in the book is a finding that the moral principles and the control over the forces of nature in the struggle to feed the world's peoples are economic, political, social and cultural.

The priest said the findings refute "two popular fallacies" put forward by demographers, social scientists, planners and statesmen.

The first fallacy, he said, is that world population will continue to increase indefinitely. All living species are subject to factors preventing unlimited expansion. Demographic studies show that in the case of human beings, the curve of population growth is not constant. In the countries of high rates of population growth the curve of population growth has not yet changed direction.

"But it would be ridiculous to think this curve will remain fixed indefinitely at the same point," he stated.

The "second fallacy" — that the earth cannot feed its own population, even a very considerably increased population — was refuted by the priest. "Only half the earth's arable land is being cultivated," he pointed out, "and much of this is being cultivated very inefficiently. In certain areas land is still being wasted or destroyed through improper techniques."

To feed five billion inhabitants (which may be the population of the world around 1990), it would only be necessary to use all the world's arable land at a rate of production one-third that of Europe before 1958.

Abbe Houtart and his colleagues recommend economic, political, social and cultural changes which will help mankind meet the food and population challenge.

With nearly two-thirds of the world suffering from hunger, the remainder enjoying food surplus, a reorganization of the world food distribution is in order, he said. "A policy of far-sighted liberality on the part of rich nations during the transition period in which self-help development programs must be set up in developing lands" is recommended.

"Today," he pointed out, "some 120 billion a year is spent on military build-up, while less than \$10 billion is directed toward underdeveloped countries. If we could reduce the amount of money spent on armaments and put some of it toward the advancement of these underdeveloped countries, it would be one part of the solution."

He condemned the trend to find a solution "first of all in the limitation of the human species" as an unacceptable attitude and a "deflection from man's proper role of conquering nature."

"Our aim should be," he concluded, "not to limit man, but to control nature. The economy must not dictate to us the number of human beings. We must bend and expand that economy to fit the human being."

"If there are grounds for exercising reasonable control over the process of conception, it is not that nature is not bountiful enough. Man has simply not made sufficient efforts to control the earth. It is too easy to desert from this duty by simply pressing for a reduction in the number of human beings."

In many lands today, he observed, there is a cultural lag. Rapid advances in medicine and hygiene are prolonging the life span and reducing infant mortality. "Today a peasant in Ecuador has twice as many children as would have survived from the same number of births at the turn of the century. To have the same number of children, only half the number of births would now be necessary."

Abbe Houtart expressed belief that "rationalized control over conduct" is the answer.

"This is a question of specifically human conduct at a cultural level and involves the proper moral connotations. It will not do simply to distribute contraceptive devices as if we were dealing with animals. A cultural evolution must be set in motion, above all by raising the living standards which will make a full human development

possible. This means education. While we wait for the law to be overcome there is a responsibility in this matter for mankind as individuals and as a whole."

He noted that in the economic field of high living standards the population question is righted. It self. Higher aspirations on the part of the family lead to a natural limitation in the number of children.

In response to a reporter's question, he opposed "planning solely from above" — institution, or governmental sources. Although adaptation and acceptance must come from the individual and family, this does not rule out, he said, family planning and counseling centers such as exist in Malta and New York City, under Catholic auspices, where methods meet with Church approval.

Abbe Houtart was asked his views on resolutions now before the United Nations Economic and Social Council regarding the expenditure of technical assistance funds to enable developing countries to set up programs of population control.

He replied that in countries such as India and Japan, where government planning programs and birth-control centers do not affront religious principles of the people, these may well be acceptable. However, in Catholic lands or other nations where birth control centers might offer programs offensive to moral and religious principles, they would be unacceptable.

Thus, it should be up to the respective people and their governments in determining whether to accept population control programs offered by the U.N. agencies. Such programs could not operate globally on the same basis for all—the cultures and religious backgrounds of the countries concerned must be taken into consideration, he held.

In conclusion, Abbe Houtart urged his audience not to be discouraged by the size of the task involved in solving world food and population problems. "We must proceed, step by step, taking small steps."

The priest, who received his Doctorate in Sociology from the University of Chicago, is an adviser on sociological matters to Leo Josef Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels, and was technical consultant to the South American Hierarchy during the second session of the Ecumenical Council.