

# CHURCH AND THE CITY

## FIGHT -- A Positive Achievement

By Father P. David Finks

Within the next month, unless some new morass of Federal red tape is encountered, the FIGHT organization will turn the first spadeful of dirt for its \$2.9 million low income housing development in the ghetto to be known as FIGHT Square.

Rochesterians cannot permit their annoyance at FIGHT's tumultuous rise to power to blind them to the truly historic and positive achievement for our community that this housing development represents.

The FIGHT Square project represents what a carefully organized segment of a community can do as opposed to what a group of powerless, frustrated people can only demand from the nebulous "power structure."

A mass-based organization such as FIGHT after several years of back-breaking organizational effort has its own national and local identity; its officers elected annually in a public convention of its over 100 member organizations. These men are responsible to its Delegates' Council which meets monthly to vote on current operations.

The important thing here is the growth of a political process going beyond protest to positive action. Because it has developed a broad-base of power within the black community, FIGHT is now free to enter into coalition with any group that is willing to assist in carrying out its program on a business-like basis.

FIGHT Square will show Rochester that "black power" in concrete organizational form is ready to work with a local architect and housing development corporation, both white, and a national foundation, KMF, which supplies technical assistance

to build housing tailored to meet the expressed needs of the people who will occupy it.

The same process of "black capitalism" is evident in the development of FIGHTON, Inc., which is almost ready to begin operation in the renovated factory on Sullivan Street formerly owned by Timely Clothes. This new industry entirely black-owned and operated is the result of a coalition with Xerox to provide technical assistance and guaranteed first markets for FIGHTON's products.

Financing for this new industry will come from an innovative arrangement with Rochester Business Opportunities Corporation and Marine Midland Bank with the loans guaranteed by the Small Business Administration of the federal government. This is another example of a creative coalition in the best capitalistic style.

The issue is not integration but local community development. The FIGHT organization, unique in the local community because of its strong base of member organizations and voting delegates responsible to the constituency is ready to work on a business basis with any organization of integrity which can further the priorities of its people regardless of faith, creed or color.

The success of this kind of black capitalism should make the Churches and other organizations in the community re-evaluate their traditional approach to the service of the poor and powerless among us. It is akin to the change of direction which the Churches and social agencies took after the European immigrant wave crested in the "twenties" and the new citizens entered the social and

industrial mainstream of American life.

Any agency or Church which bypasses the elected structure in the black community, for whatever "good," is undermining the process of self-determination and maintaining destructive patterns of dependency. In Africa, South America, Asia recent history has shown that such "neo-colonialism" leads to oftentimes bloody variations of the "Yankee go home" syndrome.

The Churches in particular should support this drive for self-determination and local community control. The other ghetto groups of Hispanic-Americans and poor whites need initial subsidy to secure trained community organization specialists who can aid these groups to develop control of their own destinies.

There are numerous small organizations of neighborhood people banding together in the older residential neighborhoods to overcome deterioration and gain better services. These need trained organizers, and funds to pay them.

Public and private agencies must respond to the cry for local control in the makeup of their boards of directors and staff. Scholarships should be made available to encourage talented young people from the neighborhoods to prepare to take over administrative posts in settlement houses, medical centers and the public and parochial systems.

This is radicalism in the best tradition of our proud American history. It is also basic Catholic social doctrine as enunciated by the modern Popes from Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum to Paul VI's Progressio Populorum.

Red Cross are being distributed to Biafran soldiers, and that civilians are starving despite the relief.

It was not a new charge, and the standard reply in the past has been that there is absolutely no truth to it — at all.

Neither position is quite right. In a four-day, 250-mile tour of most of Biafra — which included visits to and feeding centers and four general hospitals — this writer saw no evidence of relief food reaching the soldiers from supplies donated by Caritas and the World Council of Churches.

The Red Cross, however, admits that it "loses" about 25 per cent of its supplies. It must go somewhere, but most likely it is to local workers and hangers-on who, while not on the distribution list, are nevertheless hungry.

Medical supplies go to hospitals — which treat civilians and military patients. Obviously, some medical supplies are used on soldiers, who are no more healthy after stopping mortar shells and bullets than the rest of the population.

The truth, as usual, lies somewhere between the extreme positions of the propagandists and in fact cases no shadow across the relief agencies or the Biafran government.

There was a breakfast here at Holy Ghost Seminary one morning, at which we heard a BBC report that the Nigerian army had taken the town of Oguata. It was a little upsetting, since Oguata was only 10 miles south of Ibiaba, and from Uli, where Biafra has its only airfield — into which must fly the relief supplies each night.

The report turned out to be untrue — later that same morning we met two priests who had just driven from their stations south of Oguata; they reported no military activity whatsoever.

It had another effect as well — it increased the already-wide BBC credibility gap to the point where its news broadcasts have become one of the few sources of outside entertainment available to Biafrans. It also increased the determination of Biafrans and relief workers to continue regardless of the supposed danger.

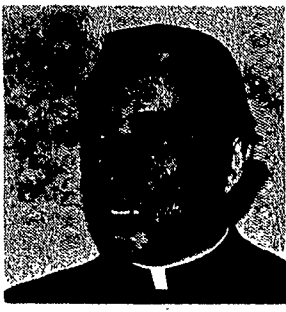
The propaganda game has infected the relief agencies themselves, especially their statements on the extent of hunger in Biafra. To a certain extent it is necessary — they depend on continued contributions to keep going.

There are, depending on who is speaking, 3,000 or 6,000 or 10,000 or 12,000 deaths daily caused by starvation. Since the supplies of yams and garri, the two staple foods, are running out, there may be as many as 12,000 or 15,000 or 20,000 or 25,000 deaths each day within two months.

That is one side of the picture. The other is, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, that the Biafran food crisis has been "more or less overcome."

Both extremes are less than realistic, according to Father Anthony Byrne, the Caritas Internationalis representative who coordinates the religious relief effort. His view is shared by most relief workers in Biafra.

"The truth is that we don't know — and can't know — how many people are starving or might starve," said Father Byrne.



# ON THE RIGHT SIDE

## On the Virtues of Keeping Silent

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

A few years ago I was riding with a friend who had the car radio tuned in to some remarkably discordant rackets which the disc jockey called music. After a few moments of dreadful listening he tuned off the radio and grinned: "Despite ontological principles, sometimes nothing is better than something."

On Nov. 7 at the reconciliation rites near Miami, President-elect Nixon and Vice President Humphrey made cordial statements of unity for the press. Sen. Muskie was asked what he had to say. He replied: "The basic theme of the meeting (i.e., national unity) has been well struck. In Maine we have a saying: 'Don't say anything that doesn't improve on the silence.'"

Noise and talk! Everyone is concerned. Ear doctors are concerned about the effects on the hearing. Psychiatrists are concerned about the effects on the psyche. Medical doctors are concerned about the effects on the nervous system. Many spiritual directors are concerned about the effects on the spiritual life.

In June 1966 I stopped at a Religious House to visit some priests. I dropped at a priest's room to inquire where I could find my friends. With the enthusiasm of a blast-off he exclaimed: "Come in! Sit down! Glad to see you. Do you know what's the trouble with the world? Everybody talks! Nobody listens! Nobody listens!" He flowed on like the Niagara Falls without a pause or the suggestion of a pause. And he remained faithful to his theme: "Everybody talks. Nobody listens."

After 25 minutes of listening, I had to interrupt him to say: "I'm sorry but I have an appointment and must leave." With great cheerfulness he talked me to the corridor exit.

"Dialogue" has become a mod word. Frankly, I think many who once advocated this constant verbal din are having second thoughts, and are weary of it.

One of the strangest modern anomalies is the fact that silence is being discontinued in many relig-

ious houses. This includes Retreat Houses.

My own experience is that the Spirit of God speaks best when it doesn't have the competition of dissipating voices. Our Lord, Who is eternally in union with His Father, felt the human need of silence. He withdrew at times from the crowds and from the chatter of men to commune with His Father. . . . "He went up into a mountain alone to pray." (Mt. xiv-23) "He fled again into a mountain Himself alone." (John vi-15). Sirach wrote: "In many things be as if you were ignorant and hear in silence and withal seeking." (Sir. xxxii-12).

A year ago a friend described her annual retreat. "I always considered my retreat the highpoint of my year. A time to listen to God, and to think. It helped me regain perspective. My

heavens! This last retreat was a talkathon! We celebrated the Liturgy with a dialogue homily, and one pushy woman took over the homily. I felt sorry for the priest. He couldn't get a word in.

"We talked at meals instead of listening to some profitable tape, or to some reading of a helpful spiritual book. We talked with one another, with the Sisters — and one lady even snared a salesman for half an hour who wouldn't escape. We dialogued during conferences. I want a retreat where God's quiet voice can come through; and return strengthened to live by the Spirit in daily life."

Our Lord said: "Let your answers be, yea, yea; no, no." Sen. Muskie said: "Don't say anything that doesn't improve on silence."

An Indian proverb says: "Listen, or your tongue will keep you deaf."



# Time for Polemics Over On Encyclical; Haering

By JAMES C. O'NEILL (NC News Service)

Rome — The time for protests against Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control, Humanae Vitae, is over, Father Bernard Haering, C.S.S.R., said in an interview here.

The well-known theologian said that Humanae Vitae's chief concerns should find a full response and its positive teachings should be deepened and brought to a fuller understanding.

The German Redemptorist has been among the foremost champions for a change in the Church's traditional position on birth control.

"In view of the Pope's attitude that theologians should have reasonable freedom for research and development, the time of declarations and polemics against the encyclical is over," he said.

"Polemics and reaction are out of place and not the right way of responding. Acceptance of the fundamental value which an encyclical of the Pope has, and even with the disagreements involved, an encyclical is the starting point on the road, a starting point that cannot at all be neglected."

Father Haering has just published a book in Italian, together with Jesuit Father Karl Rahner, entitled "Reflections on Humanae Vitae" that reviews the bishops' statements issued in Germany, Belgium, Canada and Italy.

"I feel that the contributions of the several national episcopates are a very valuable step forward. They do not diminish at all the fundamental concerns of the Pope. However, they are adding some very important distinctions and further developments."

# All This and Propaganda, Too

By JOHN R. SULLIVAN (NC News Service)

Ibiaba, Biafra — The trouble with propaganda and propagandists is this: no matter how far the truth is stretched, it is invariably done in the name of righteousness.

The line of reasoning is often tortuous — and sometimes broken entirely — but somehow the propagandist is always able to justify the most extreme disregard for the realism of a situation.

The syndrome has infected not only the Nigerian and Biafran governments, whose causes may or may not be just, but also the spokesmen

for relief workers who have a more rightful claim that justice is on their side.

Whether the techniques of propaganda really serve the purposes of either, however, must be considered an open question.

There are, for instance, the attempts on the part of the Nigerian federal government to discredit and discourage the efforts of relief agencies upon which several million Biafrans depend for their sustenance.

Kennedy Lindsay, a former history professor at Nsukka University wrote in the Toronto Globe and Mail that food and medical supplies sent to Biafra by religious agencies and the

Red Cross are being distributed to Biafran soldiers, and that civilians are starving despite the relief.

It was not a new charge, and the standard reply in the past has been that there is absolutely no truth to it — at all.

Neither position is quite right. In a four-day, 250-mile tour of most of Biafra — which included visits to and feeding centers and four general hospitals — this writer saw no evidence of relief food reaching the soldiers from supplies donated by Caritas and the World Council of Churches.

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# An Act of Faith

As part of a course at St. Agnes High School called "The Problem of God" seniors were given the assignment of writing a provisional act of faith. The following, written by Sharon Bucher, showed such quality that the Courier-Journal reprints it here.

I believe that man is made to the image and likeness of God. Therefore, I believe in man, and have confidence in him, confidence and hope that he can and will build a world where love for his fellow man prevails.

All men are brothers, expressing their relationship towards one another by their concern, their working together, and their steps towards peace and understanding. Because I believe this, I must make my beliefs available to others by my continual practice of them.

I believe in the Blessed Trinity, in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I believe that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son, lived on the earth and was known as Jesus of Nazareth.

I believe that His life is an inspiration and I want to orientate my life to Him. I believe in the resurrection, that Christ died, rose, and thus is present in our lives today. Because I have experienced a relationship with Jesus,

I am drawn into a mysterious relationship with His Father, the First Person of the Trinity. I also believe that God the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, has enlightened his people and given them strength.

Because of my belief in Jesus I cannot become self-motivating and withdrawn, but must and shall commit myself to working together with others for a better world.

I believe that the community is the setting for Christ, and because of His presence within it the community can be a foundation for a world illumined with light and not shadowed by darkness.

Because of my awareness of Christ in the world, and because of my belief in the community of the faithful, I have a responsibility to my fellow man — to help him learn to grasp what I am beginning to understand.

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