

The Berrigans: Conspiracy and Conscience

But how shall we educate men to goodness, to a sense of one another, to a love of the truth? And more urgently, how shall we do this in a bad time?

—Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

THE scenario read like an Ian Fleming doodle, a picaresque fantasy. The cast: a ragtag band of radical pacifists, many of them Roman Catholics, some priests and nuns, a physics professor and a Moslem from Pakistan. The leading actors: two hotly controversial priests—Philip Berrigan, 47, a Josephite, and his Jesuit brother Daniel, 49, both now in the Danbury, Conn., federal prison serving sentences for burning draft records with napalm in May 1968. The plot: a seemingly irrational conspiracy to blow up the heating systems at some five Government sites on Washington's Birthday, 1971, then next day kidnap Henry Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, and hold him hostage until Nixon agreed to speed the war's end in Viet Nam.

As early as last September, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover secretly briefed President Nixon, Attorney General John Mitchell and other top officials on the scheme. At that point, Nixon assigned Secret Service bodyguards to Kissinger. Late in November, without naming Kissinger as the intended victim, Hoover described the plan to startled members of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee. He attributed it to a group called the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives. At the time, some of Hoover's numerous critics dismissed his testimony as a grandstand play designed only to help him win funds for 1,000 extra FBI agents. Thomas Buck, 54, a writer and longtime friend of the Berrigans', accompanied Representative William Anderson, a Tennessee Democrat and former skipper of the submarine *Nautilus*, on a visit to Danbury shortly thereafter. "Dan said there was absolutely nothing

to it," Buck reported. "Phil, who is given to putting things in a more earthy way, said it was all bullshit."

Though one largely Catholic antiwar group readily admitted to being the East Coast Conspiracy, Anderson denounced Hoover for attacking the Berrigans. If the Justice Department had evidence against them, he said, it should be put before a grand jury. Hoover made no reply, but Attorney General Mitchell needed no advice from Anderson. The case was already on its way to court. Last week a federal grand jury in Harrisburg, Pa., issued indictments naming six defendants and seven co-conspirators—the Berrigan brothers among them—as plotters who had planned to do exactly what Hoover described.

Serious Alternatives

The black comedy no longer seemed quite so funny, though CBS's Eric Sevareid wryly suggested that, in the manner of O. Henry's famed story *The Ransom of Red Chief*, Kissinger would argue any antiwar kidnapers to a standstill and they would eventually pay Nixon to take him back. Kissinger was equal to the occasion, and reported that his overworked staff "has written a letter to the President stating that under no conditions am I to be ransomed." He had heard, he quipped, that "it was three sex-starved nuns" who were after him. Kissinger also complained halfheartedly that his new Secret Service shadows had crimped his reputation as a swinger. Said one occasional Kissinger date, Barbara Howar: "Henry is so preoccupied with his problems that the Secret Service man is good company."

By and large, however, reflective Americans could agree with Cornell Economist Douglas Dowd, a Berrigan ally: "It would be quite amusing if it weren't so serious." Is it possible that the Berrigans—who, though lawbreakers and rebels, have always preached non-

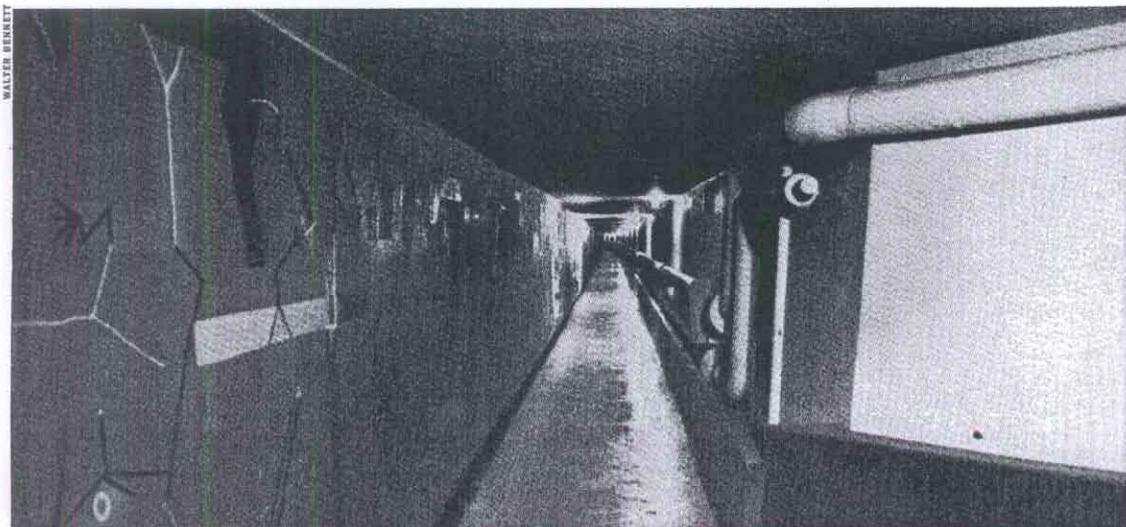
violence—have now turned to violent and bizarre methods? Or is it possible that the Government has drawn monstrous conclusions from flimsy evidence, perhaps taking protesters' idle speculations with total solemnity? The first could help rekindle the fires of protest that have seemed dimmer lately and also revive lingering fear and hate of radicals. The second could again put in question the Government's responsibility and fairness in dealing with dissent and stir new talk of "repression."

The indictment gave only the bare bones of the Government's case, leaving a host of questions unanswered; it did not even explain why Philip Berrigan was named as a defendant to be prosecuted, and Daniel only as a co-conspirator who would not be tried under this indictment. The grand jury was quite specific about one intriguing point—that the conspirators had aimed to enter an underground tunnel system in Washington that carries heating pipes and blow them up, using "destructive devices consisting of dynamite, 'plastic explosive,' primer cord and detonating devices which had not been registered to them in the National Firearms Reg-



FBI DIRECTOR HOOVER

HEATING TUNNEL CONNECTING GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN WASHINGTON



WALTER BENNETT



DANIEL BERRIGAN (LEFT) & PHILIP (CENTER) WITH U.S. MARSHAL



PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER KISSINGER

istration and Transfer Record." The little-known, 16-mile labyrinthine tunnel network in Washington is practically a New World version of the sewers of Paris—and potentially equally useful to an American *maquisard*. The steam ducts radiate from three key boiler plants in Georgetown, on Capitol Hill and near the Pentagon; on a recent recommendation from the FBI, all official maps of the tunnel system have been classified and access to most of the tunnels has been cut off to all but a carefully cleared few.

To satisfy the peculiar requirements

of conspiracy statutes,* the grand jury went on to list 22 separate overt acts of conspiracy by the defendants and their co-conspirators. Among the alleged acts: a visit to the underground tunnel system "on or about April 1, 1970," by Philip Berrigan and a Baltimore priest defendant, Father Joseph Wenderoth; and a discussion of the tunnel network last September between Wenderoth and an unnamed General Services Administration engineer. In separate counts, the grand jury also accused Philip Berrigan and Marymount Nun Elizabeth McAlister (*see box*) of illegally smuggling written communications in and out of the federal prison at Lewisburg, Pa., where Philip Berrigan was assigned before his transfer to Danbury.

In one version of the events that led up to last week's indictments, the Berrigan circle—a very loosely organized group that numbers 50 to 100 militants—had been discussing for more than a year various means to dramatize its opposition to the war. One tactic was a continuation of draft-board raids. Another

* One problem in conspiracy law is that conspiracy is a crime of intent; proving intent is difficult when the object of the conspiracy has not been carried out. For conviction, federal law requires proof not only that two or more people agreed to do something illegal, but also that at least one of them took a concrete step toward that end.

approach was the kidnaping-bombing plan, which some in the circle objected to as violent. Others argued that neither kidnaping nor bombing constituted violence in a moral sense, since no person would be physically harmed. According to this account, because something more serious than burning draft records was involved, the Government decided to step in and stop things before the plot proceeded any further.

The same theory has it that the Government's source of information on the kidnap-bomb plot was a group of non-religious in the circle who became alarmed once discussion turned seriously to use of tougher tactics than those employed in the raid that the Berrigans had led against the draft board at Catonsville, Md. The principal informer was not an infiltrator but an active member of the conspiracy, although not one of those named in last week's indictment. The details of the Kissinger plot were spelled out, astonishingly, in letters and hand-carried messages exchanged among the principal conspirators. Many of the communications were carefully sealed in double envelopes, but the informant, privy to their contents, passed the details along to the Government.

Reichstag Fire

One of the alleged conspirators confronted the principal informant and accused him of spilling the plans to the Government; he denied it, and is now in protective custody. TIME learned that two whose testimony has been important to the Government—though neither is the chief informant—are a brother and a sister named Joseph Joynt and Patricia Chanel. Mrs. Chanel, described by one movement activist as "an aficionado of the Jesuits," was questioned by FBI agents at her Silver Spring, Md., home and was promised immunity from prosecution in exchange for her testimony. Whatever she told them may not be wholly credible. She reportedly had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized in the middle of 1970; her psychiatrist wired the grand jury that she was incompetent to testify. Her brother, who was also quizzed by the FBI, works as an elevator engineer at Washington's Forrestal Building. The agents questioned him closely about the keys he carries in his work; they open doors to at least one Government tunnel.

All the defendants are being swamped with offers to represent them. One lawyer who has spoken for the Berrigans is William Kunstler, who gained his greatest notoriety defending the Chicago Seven. Kunstler represented the Berrigans during the Catonsville trial. His presence may be a mixed blessing. Said one Manhattan attorney: "I didn't think they were guilty until I heard Kunstler was their lawyer."

The Berrigans' answer to the indictment was an angry statement released through Kunstler: "Thirty-eight years ago, the Nazi Party burnt the Reichstag in order to stampede the German

people into supporting a policy of repression at home and militarism abroad. The Government of the U.S., for much the same purpose, [has] created a grotesque conspiracy to kidnap a presidential assistant and blow up the heating systems of federal buildings in Washington. The objective is a simple but deadly one: to destroy the peace movement by creating caricatures of those

who oppose the war in Southeast Asia." The very vehemence of the Berrigans' reply convinces most of those who know them that they must be innocent. The brothers might plot a kidnaping, their friends say, but they would not lie about it if caught. And indeed, if the Berrigans are guilty as charged, then the equation of the U.S. with Nazi Germany would seem almost as irresponsible

an act as those they were contemplating.

Many in the Berrigan circle freely admit that they have discussed kidnaping—but only in an academic sense, weighing its virtues and defects as a revolutionary tactic. Thomas Buck, who sees the Berrigans once a month at Danbury, reports that they talked it over following the kidnaping of Pierre Laporte and James Cross by Quebec separatist terrorists. "They deplored the Canadian thing," says Buck. Only after Hoover's Nov. 27 charge, he insists, did he and the Berrigans consider kidnaping as a possible technique for the peace movement. "We were always exploring these ideas," he says, "but that's what it was—exploring an idea. They concluded that it would be counterproductive."

Paul Mayer, an alleged co-conspirator and a former Benedictine monk, remembers Daniel Berrigan speculating that "bombing wasn't necessarily violent if you didn't hurt anybody." The trouble, Father Dan admitted to Mayer, was that one could never be certain that someone might not be injured.

Galloping to the Rescue?

That combination of rebelliousness and goodhearted naiveté is a mark of many Catholic radicals—who have a heritage of enthusiastic intrigue against conservative superiors. Even friends express dismay that so many priests and nuns caught up in the resistance often go about their plotting with the same conspiratorial breathlessness that they once brought to underground liturgies or challenging institutional rules. When the cops-and-robbers bustlings of the people around Philip Berrigan contributed to his early capture last year in a Manhattan church rectory, one weary bystander dismissed them as "lollipop revolutionaries." Yet the selfless, spartan, unattached life of priests and nuns could, in theory, make them apt revolutionaries in earnest. For that reason, although both Philip and Daniel Berrigan have been longtime proponents of optional celibacy, they nevertheless promote celibacy for anyone who wants to serve the "resistance" best.

The lack of specific information in the indictment, coupled with the Justice Department's refusal to amplify, has fueled the suspicions of skeptics, although some who initially dismissed the indictments as some mad joke now take them more gravely. In the *New York Times*, Tom Wicker argued that "if the Government cannot sustain these serious charges—better, for instance, than it was able to justify those against the Chicago Seven—it will provide another shocking example of the kind of official hysteria that so often damages individuals and clouds the public climate." Later the *Times* noted editorially: "Reason must await the facts."

The *Washington Post* voiced the fear that the indictments were "merely an attempt to justify retrospectively the premature and indiscreet charges made by Hoover two months ago." The FBI chief

A Talk with Sister Elizabeth

Among those indicted is Sister Elizabeth McAlister, 31, a cheery, impulsive New Yorker, who took her vows in 1966 as a member of the order of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Sister Elizabeth has been an art-history teacher at Marymount College in Tarrytown, N.Y. Last week she talked with TIME Correspondent Robert Anson about her life, the peace movement and the charges against her:

CALL her Liz, she asked, or Sister Elizabeth, anything but Sister Lizzie, which everyone calls her, and makes her sound so young. Her father, a prosperous contractor who is now dead, and her mother came from Ireland in the early '20s; she was a twin in a family of nine. There is scant sympathy at home for her work in the peace movement. When her youngest brother brought the bail money to free her last week, he told her that the family thought that she had probably done everything the Government charged her with "and a lot more things."

As a young Marymount instructor, Sister Elizabeth was assigned the task of maintaining the college's current events bulletin board. The daily headlines she tacked up became talismans on her private path toward pacifism. "By 1964 I was going to New York City once a month for some kind of meeting or demonstration," she recalls. In September of that year, Dan Berrigan came to Marymount to say Mass and speak; for Elizabeth, he was revelatory. "What Dan was saying very beautifully was what I had been thinking and never been able to articulate." She did not meet him until 1966, when she was introduced by her provincial superior. "Dan was always somebody at a distance," says Sister Elizabeth. "Phil was an easy man to know and like. He always starts talking to you at precisely the point where he ended his last conversation."

Her radicalism deepened. "I just started feeling that our Government wasn't giving us the truth, that it was saying things to justify our being in Viet Nam that seemed to me to be wrong." She came to believe

that "people have to take responsibility for their Government and what it does. Change is only going to be accomplished by bringing people to the point of consciousness that they change their own lives."

Was there a plot as charged? "I'm not going to answer that." Then consider a theoretical question. What if all the nonviolent tactics had been exhausted and none of them worked and the only way things were going to change was through violence? Could she approve of that? "I can't answer. That is going too close to the heart of the matter." She is determined not to discuss the trial, not even to deny her guilt, until she has



SISTER IN 1971

SISTER IN 1965

seen and talked to the other defendants. "The group is involved. We are responsible for one another. It is a Spartacist thing." She explains that in the film *Spartacus*, the Romans demand of the captured rebels that Spartacus identify himself, and one by one every man in the group stands and replies, "I am Spartacus."

There seems something very Irish in all of this—the priests and nuns, the faith, the romance, the ineptitude of the plot (if there was one) and, of course, the familiar informer. "I don't know about the last," she says. "I mean, we don't know for certain. Given my whole philosophy, how could I operate if I didn't trust people? How could I live in the movement?" And a final musing: "I guess Phil would say that unless we are willing to go to jail for our ideas, they aren't worth having. I don't know whether I can say that quite yet."



EQBAL AHMAD



JOSEPH WENDEROTH



ANTHONY SCOBICK



NEIL McLAUGHLIN

The Other Four Defendants

EQBAL AHMAD, 40, was born in what is now Pakistan; his father, a public official, was assassinated when Ahmad was four. He first came to the U.S. on a Fulbright in 1957, took a Ph.D. at Princeton, met Dan Berrigan when both were at Cornell. He is now a specialist in politics and international relations at the Adlai Stevenson Institute in Chicago.

FATHER JOSEPH WENDEROTH, 35, was more interested in sports than anything else

at St. Charles College and St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. His journey into radicalism began as a priest serving Baltimore blacks; he was relieved of pastoral duties after taking part in a 1970 Philadelphia draft-record burning.

FATHER NEIL McLAUGHLIN, 30, also of Baltimore, went to St. Charles and St. Mary's and came under the Phil Berrigan influence in 1964 while doing summer work at St. Peter Claver Church; he has worked in the Baltimore black

ghetto ever since. He turned increasingly to antiwar activity after the riots following the death of Martin Luther King Jr., and was relieved of pastoral duties a year ago.

ANTHONY SCOBICK, 30, is the son of a former Republican U.S. Representative; he left Phil Berrigan's Josephite order last June to marry Mary Cain, an ex-nun. (FBI men searching for the fugitive Dan Berrigan interrupted the wedding.) He has since worked with Wenderoth and McLaughlin among Baltimore blacks, earning money as a part-time taxi driver and janitor.

himself told *TIME* Correspondent Dean Fischer last month that he was "absolutely convinced" that he had a "substantial case." Has Attorney General John Mitchell simply galloped to his rescue? Fischer doubts it. "Too much is at stake," he thinks, "for Mitchell to run the risk of this case backfiring. The charges are far more serious than those leveled at the Chicago Seven. It would be uncharacteristic of the man to go out on a legal limb, to risk the resumption of massive antiwar protests in the wake of an abortive trial."

Says Sister Elizabeth, of the impending trial: "It could be the death or life of the movement." It could also mean life imprisonment for the defendants, the maximum penalty for conspiracy to kidnap. The trial will doubtless turn into a showcase for the Berrigans' ideas, particularly with Kunstler aiding the defense. Kunstler has already assumed his customary belligerent political stance. "We have to speak to the larger issues," says one alleged co-conspirator.

Cradle Rebels

Late last week a lawyer for the Baltimore archdiocese won approval for the release on reduced bail of Father Wenderoth and the two other defendants from Baltimore into the custody of their archbishop, Lawrence Cardinal Shehan—an unusual gesture of support for the dissenters by the American church hierarchy. Meanwhile, in the ten-story glass-and-steel federal district court building in downtown Harrisburg, the grand jury continues to hear witnesses. Before the grand jurors are done, they may well hand up further indictments.

However many names are finally thrown into the Government's case, the two Berrigan names will almost surely remain the focus of disturbed attention. Philip is an able political polemicist, a

voracious gatherer of facts, who has written well-argued books on racism and war. Daniel is a prizewinning poet, a charismatic provocateur, who became lionized as a modern Pimpernel while the FBI chased him last summer. He eluded authorities for four months, taking shelter with 37 families in twelve cities.

The Berrigans were cradle rebels. Tom Berrigan, their father, was the son of Irish immigrants who had fled rural poverty in Tipperary. He drifted away from the Roman Catholic Church in his teens because it failed to support trade unionism, and he did not return to it until—as a railroad engineer in Minnesota—he married a gentle German girl named Frieda Fromhart. But he stayed radical enough to lose his job for being a militant socialist. When he moved East to Syracuse, N.Y., with his wife and six sons—Thomas Jr., John, James, Jerome, Daniel and Philip—Tom Berrigan helped to organize the city's first electrical workers' union.

Under Frieda's compassionate influence, the home became a haven for Depression drifters down on their luck, but for Tom it was also a feudal castle to be ruled with a shillelagh fist. Philip ascribes his rebelliousness to resentment of his tyrannical father. Daniel traces his to the year when a stingy aunt took over the household while his mother was recovering from tuberculosis. "She actually starved us," he still says in some bewilderment.

Despite such knee-pants resentment of authority, the two elected the priesthood for a career. Daniel went in young, joining the Jesuits at 18 in 1939; he did not visit home again until 1946. Philip enlisted and went to war; in *Divine Disobedience*, Francine du Plessix Gray's admirable portrait of the Berrigans and other Catholic radicals, a friend characterizes Philip as "an ex-

ceptionally gifted warrior" who fought in France and Germany and won a second lieutenant's commission. After the war, he finished college at Holy Cross, not far from Daniel, who was at Weston seminary near Boston. In 1950 Philip entered the Society of St. Joseph—the Josephites—an order dedicated to work with Negroes.

Gospel Poverty

Ordained, they were still rebels. Nine years after ordination, Daniel wrote a controversial essay—now a minor classic—characterizing the priesthood as a "sheepfold for sheep" unless it was informed by experience in the world. Both Berrigans doted on the postwar French Catholic avant-garde, and a year in France during the heyday of the worker-priests radicalized Daniel further. Later, at LeMoyné College in Syracuse, he became a rigorous preacher of Gospel poverty, prodding his students to "get poor," urging friends to sell their homes and move into the ghetto, sending students down South, where brother Philip was teaching in an all-black New Orleans high school, to work with CORE. On a 1963 trip to Europe, Daniel became fascinated by the catacomb Christians he met in Iron Curtain countries. He returned lean and ascetic in a breezy new uniform—a black turtle-neck sweater, ski jacket and beret.

By 1965, he was in trouble: as one of the members of Clergy Concerned about Viet Nam, he had spoken sympathetically when young Catholic Roger LaPorte burned himself to death in Manhattan to protest the war. Moved by growls from Francis Cardinal Spellman's chancery office, the Jesuits sent Daniel on a trip to Latin America. It was the wrong trip: exposure to social injustices not only deepened his radical attitudes but "converted" the fellow Je-

suit who had been sent along as his companion. Within ten weeks, a nationwide protest by Catholic liberals and radicals brought Daniel home.

Philip's career in the Josephites has been no less contentious. He quickly came to feel that his order's treatment of blacks was patronizing, and he preached that the sufferings of blacks had made them superior to whites in wisdom, gentleness and maturity. Once, headed for Jackson, Miss., to court arrest during a bus-terminal sit-in, Philip was called back by his superior, but the Josephites eventually learned to live with his fierce devotion to black dignity. His larger trouble began only after he was transferred North to teach at the Josephite seminary in Newburgh, N.Y.

In conservative Newburgh, he dispatched teams of seminarians into the ghettos to investigate building-code violations. Worse, he had joined Daniel in protesting the 1965 escalation of the Viet Nam War; at one Manhattan rally, Daniel declared that in "such a war man stands outside the blessing of God . . . in fact, under his curse." Philip did not improve his reputation in Newburgh when, in an address before a community group, he linked racism and the Viet Nam War. "Is it possible for us to be vicious, brutal, immoral and violent at home and be fair, judicious, beneficent and idealistic abroad?" he asked. Two weeks later he was banished to Baltimore.

There he again worked to build activism in the ghetto. But he also itched for a U.S. national resolve to turn against the war—and for his church to lead that change. Though progressive Catholic journals spoke clearly enough, U.S. bishops remained equivocal: Bishop James P. Shannon (TIME, Feb. 23, 1970) was one of the few prelates to speak out against it publicly. Philip joined other Catholic and Protestant clergy and laymen in picketing and praying at the homes of Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara and at Fort Myers, Va. Then, in October 1967, Philip and three other men poured a mixture of human, calf's and duck's blood on Selective Service files at a Baltimore draft board. Seven months later, with Daniel now enlisted in the cause, the Catonsville Nine struck with their homemade napalm, and newsmen and photographers were on hand to record the burning of Selective Service records.

Higher Morality

Catonsville, for the Berrigans, became something of a litmus for the responsiveness of the American "system." Until the trial, they maintained a kind of naive hope that their message, once heard, would vindicate their actions. In a forthcoming special issue of *Holy Cross Quarterly* devoted entirely to the Berrigans, Protestant theologian Robert McAfee Brown tries to assess the symbolic importance of Catonsville. While most Americans bridled at a destruction of public records, Brown sounds a fa-

miliar—and simplistic—jeremiad of the antiwar movement: the act was intended as "a vivid reminder of what has happened to the collective conscience of our nation; we are outraged when paper is burned, and we are not outraged when children are burned." Near the end of the trial, the Berrigans joined the other defendants in a dramatic direct dialogue with the judge, arguing that the jury should consider the higher morality of their act. The Catonsville Nine won sympathy, but not acquittal.

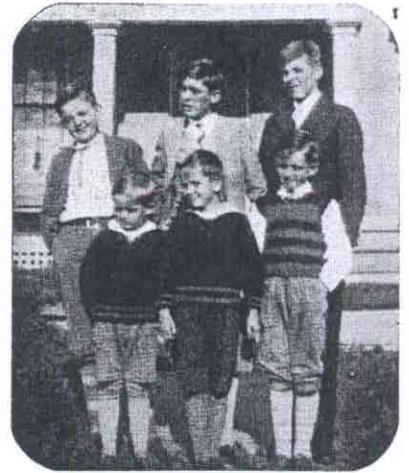
Total Resistance

Thereafter, a dark, almost apocalyptic vision of society began to dominate the thought of both Berrigans, a view of society as a kind of *Catch-22* nightmare. Daniel had already undergone yet another radicalization while awaiting trial. On a trip to Hanoi to bring back three U.S. prisoners, he had been caught in an air raid and found himself hurtling into a shelter with a Vietnamese baby in his arms. The experience became both a scar and a poem: "In my arms, Father, in a moment's grace/The Messiah of all my tears I bore,/reborn, a Hiroshima child from hell."

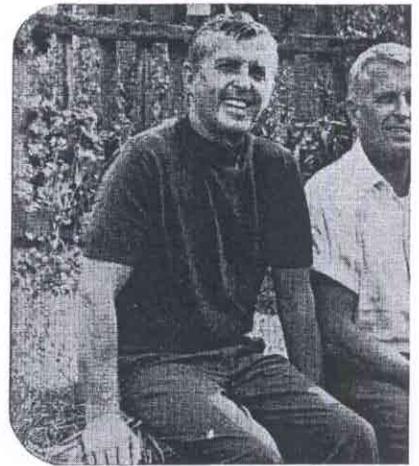
The trial simply corroborated the Berrigans' suspicion that society was not reformable from within. The end of the war was no longer enough. "The consciousness of the radical man is integrated," wrote Daniel in *No Bars to Manhood*. "He knows that everything leads to everything else. So while he works for the end of the war, for the end of poverty, or for the end of American racism, he knows also that every war is symptomatic of every other war. Viet Nam to Laos and on to Thailand, and across the world to Guatemala, and across all wars to his own heart. What he is finally looking for is not a solution (knowing as he does that human history has not offered solutions). He is really looking for a creation: a new man in a new society."

This was now the message: radical change, total resistance. Yet it was refined, carefully restricted resistance that the Berrigans preached. "Do not validate old bankrupt methods of coercion and murder," Daniel warned, "by creating new, bankrupt methods of roughly the same things." They remained exasperatingly ebullient: Philip was still the gregarious, plainspoken man who greeted friends with bear hugs or bone-crushing handshakes; Daniel still the wide-smiling purveyor of a deep, almost secret gaiety. When Daniel was arrested in August, the photo of the arrest prompted Dwight Macdonald and Robert McAfee Brown to identical judgments: Berrigan, grinning, was the free man; the dour agent the bound one.

The Harrisburg indictments now challenge the image of cheerful, studiously nonviolent resistance heretofore evoked by the Berrigans, and there is a certain logic in the challenge. From angry essays to public protests to illegal acts of resistance, the Berrigans have moved



THE SIX YOUNG BERRIGANS (1928)



FIVE OF THE SIX BERRIGANS

ever closer to revolutionary thought and practice. Disciplined as they have been in both their faith and their personal lives, the Berrigans may well have believed that they were able to maintain a limit beyond which they would not go. But they do not live in a vacuum, and the world is currently teeming with examples of revolutionary priests.

Roman Catholic Bishop Albert Ndongmo of Cameroun has won a commutation of the death sentence pronounced two weeks ago after he was found guilty of complicity in rebellion and plotting to assassinate the head of state. In Argentina, the Priests' Third World Movement—already implicated in the kidnap death of Former President Aramburu—claims 400 members. In Colombia, priests and nuns are allied with Marxists in the Golconda resistance movement. Their paradigm is Camilo Torres, the Colombian priest who was killed fighting with guerrillas in 1966. In the U.S., the activities of the Jewish Defense League, led by a



JEROME, FRIEDA & DANIEL (1949)



AFTER FATHER'S FUNERAL (1969)

rabbi, add a special interreligious note of militancy (see following story).

A theology of violent revolution has become a respectable subject even in such exalted quarters as the World and National Councils of Churches. There has, of course, always been some kind of theological consideration of violence in Christian thought. The communities of early Christians were largely pacifist, but St. Augustine, faced with the reality of an officially Christian Roman Empire, found it necessary to formulate the theology of the "just war." Even then, however, violence remained the prerogative of the state, although St. Thomas Aquinas argued in the 13th century that revolutions against tyrants could also be justified. Juan de Mariana, a Spanish Jesuit theologian, even justified the assassination of tyrants. Yet for centuries, while secular and anticlerical revolutions swept Europe, the established churches almost always acted as a conservative force. Only in recent years have Christian theologians begun

to reconsider the moral implications of revolution—not merely as a choice but indeed as an imperative.

Can such a theology be Christian? Jesus bluntly warned that those who live by the sword will perish by it. His most unsettling words on the subject ("I have not come to bring peace but the sword") have traditionally been interpreted as merely a metaphor of the divisions that Jesus' teachings would inevitably create. But now some theologians, biblical scholars and a vocal squad of popularizers are beginning to say that a sword-bringing Christ is entirely logical; they argue that Jesus was in fact a revolutionary, involved in active resistance against the Establishment of his day. Though the theories are not widely accepted, young activists find the idea exciting. Father David Kirk of Manhattan's Emmaus Community fashioned a selection of radical passages from the Bible and Church Fathers into a fast-selling little red book, mischievously titled *Quotations from Chairman Jesus*. Its foreword is by Daniel Berrigan.

Many theologians of revolution take their cue from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the pacifist German pastor who finally joined the plot to assassinate Hitler and was executed by the Nazis in 1945. For Lutheran Bonhoeffer, violent resistance was justifiable only when the government denied its divine commission and thus forfeited its claim to obedience—an extraordinary, apocalyptic moment when every act of obedience to the government became disobedience to God. Nonviolence, argued Bonhoeffer in his *Ethics and Letters and Papers from Prison*, is the rule for normal times.

His heirs, however, are not so discriminating as Bonhoeffer. Theologian Richard Shaull, a onetime missionary in Brazil, argues more broadly that in instances of human oppression, "those most concerned for the well-being and future of man will find themselves involved" in revolution. A committee of the British Council of Churches came to a simple conclusion harking back to Thomas Aquinas: if there is a "just war," then there must be a "just rebellion" as well. In 1967, a "Message from Bishops of the Third World"—signed by 16 Roman Catholic bishops—warned that in some situations revolution might be the only answer to social evils.

Hitler's Enemies

Rome's Father Bernard Häring admits instances when violence is justified, but has reservations about "violence in the name of the Kingdom of God." So, most emphatically, does French Reformed Theologian/Jacques Ellul in his book, *Violence*. Ironically enough, Ellul traces modern "Christian enthusiasm for violence" not to Bonhoeffer but to Hitler. According to Ellul, Hitler's attacks on Christianity as a religion for the weak and cowardly inspired many Nazi Christians to join in violence for "socially just" ends. "That violence is

so generally condoned today shows that Hitler won his war after all," writes Ellul, who fought with the French Resistance. "His enemies imitate him."

Even in their most recent books, the Berrigans have certainly seemed to agree more with Ellul and Häring than with those at home or around the world who practice or encourage violence. In one passage of his *Prison Journals of a Priest Revolutionary*, Philip Berrigan writes that a Christian, "on a given occasion, may tolerate and approve—but not actively join—a violent revolution." Even for such restricted participation, is this the occasion? For all the Berrigan rhetoric affirming that the times are "inexpressibly evil," the U.S. clearly has not reached that "extraordinary" moment when Bonhoeffer would call its Christians to armed rebellion, and until that moment Daniel and Philip Berrigan have a stake in admitting few exceptions. They have never been terribly worried about the sacredness of property, especially property they feel is already intended for evil use. But a Gandhi-like respect for human life has marked both the Berrigans' campaign against the Viet Nam War and their careful proscriptions against personal violence in the "resistance." Only extreme despair, it would seem, or some psychological convulsion might drive them to abandon such a position.

Collision of Conscience

Whether the Berrigans are found innocent or guilty, their long-term significance will not be assessed at Harrisburg. "We will be dead, long dead, before history comes up with some kind of impartial verdict on the Berrigans," writes Jesuit William Van Etten Casey in the *Holy Cross Quarterly*. "But of one thing we can be certain now: they will be in history as another chapter in that oldest story, the collision of conscience with the state." That is not all. To those who read the Berrigans' writings and ponder the Berrigans' lives, the greatest fascination lies not with the collision between conscience and state, but rather that between the Berrigans' conscience and their own.

It can be said for the Berrigans that they are, after all, prophets, and it is the business of prophets to prick the human conscience. One need not agree with a prophet to be goaded by him; prophets often have a view of life so single-minded that other perceptions are distorted. But prophets should know, as surely the Berrigans must, that even that dispensation has its limits. What will be on trial at Harrisburg will not be the Berrigans' philosophy, but the facts of the case and, ultimately, their integrity. Barring some monumental misunderstanding or misinterpretation, either the Berrigans or their accusers must be wrong. Their followers—and not only their followers—would like to believe the brothers. They proclaim their innocence; if their prophetic role is to endure, they had better be right.