U.S. Produces Kidnap Plot Letters

HARRISBURG, Pa, March 3—The government introduced into evidence today two letters, attributed to the Rev. Philip Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth McAlister, that attest to a plan to kidnap presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger.

"It needs much more thought and careful selection of personnel," Sister McAlister allegedly wrote in an Aug. 20, 1970, letter to Father Berrigan about a proposal "to kidnap—in our terminology make a citizens' arrest of—someone like Henry Kissinger."

Replying from his cell at Lewisburg, Pa., federal penitentiary, where he had been destruction of Selective Service records, Father Berrigan allegedly wrote Sister McAlister:

"... The project as you outlined it is brilliant, but grandiose. I've found with bitter experience, that when people opt for too much they're either stupid or egotistical... None theless, I like the plan and am just trying to weave elements of modesty into it.

"Why not coordinate with the one against capitol utilities?... To disrupt them, and then grab the Brain Child (Kissinger) — this would be escalation enough."

Father Berrigan, Sister McAlister and five others are charged with conspiracy to kidnap Kissinger, to bomb tunnels under federal buildings in Washington and to raid federal offices.

Boyd Douglas, the government's chief witness, who smuggled the letters in and out of the prison, testified today that despite the fact that Father Berrigan thought kidnapping could not be carried out "without the use of violence," he persisted in accepting the idea as a valid form of protest. "I told Philip Berrigan I didn't see how it could be done without the use of a gun," said Douglas. Philip Berrigan agreed that it could be loaded.
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Philip Berrigan was transferred from Lewisburg to Danbury Federal Prison in Connecticut, where he joined his brother, the Rev. Daniel Berrigan, also imprisoned for destruction of Selective Service records.

On the Sunday before Father Philip Berrigan left Lewisburg, Douglas said, the priest outlined 22 tasks he wanted the informant to either do himself or relay to other persons. Sister McAlister, Douglas said the priest told him, should coordinate the tunnel project. "Also, Elizabeth McAlister and John Swinglish should be able to recruit the necessary people," Douglas said Berrigan told him.

Douglas testified that letters and telephone calls continued to come to him about the project from Sister McAlister and the Rev. Joseph Wenderoth, another defendant, after Father Berrigan was transferred from Lewisburg to Danbury Federal Prison in Connecticut, where he joined his brother, the Rev. Daniel Berrigan, also imprisoned for destruction of Selective Service records.

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PLOT, From A1 with blanks rather than real bullets.

"I told Philip Berrigan I was sure I could obtain a gun for use in the kidnapping if it was requested of me . . .

"Philip Berrigan further said it would have to be considered by the people recruited for the project that a very severe sentence might be given for such a kidnapping."

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