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TWO QUOTE PRIEST ON TUNNEL SYSTEM

Jury Hears That Wenderoth
Spoke of an Inspection

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—The Government's contention that the Rev. Philip F. Berrigan and another antiwar priest secretly checked a utility tunnel system in Washington to see whether its destruction was feasible received circumstantial support today from witnesses at the Berrigan trial.

A former elevator operator in the Senate Office Building quoted the Rev. Joseph Wenderoth as saying that he and Father Berrigan donned coveralls and entered a section of the seven-mile tunnel system that supplies heat to 75 Government buildings in Washington.

The two Roman Catholic priests and five other defendants are charged with conspiring during 1970 to blow up the tunnels, kidnap the Presidential aide Henry A. Kissinger and raid draft boards in several states.

'Vague Discussion'

Another Government witness said he heard Father Wenderoth in a "vague discussion" of a possible disruption of the tunnel system. The witness said that at a subsequent peace rally at Catholic University there was "general talk" of the feasibility of political kidnappings such as were occurring then in Canada and South America.

The witness did not place Father Wenderoth at the rally, which was open to the public. Its chairman was John Swinglish, an alleged co-conspirator who is not on trial here.

Despite this testimony the Government found itself nearing the end of its case without any eyewitness evidence putting the two priests in the tunnel.

The conspiracy charge, as regards both the tunnels and the alleged kidnapping, rests heavily on the evidence of a paid F.B.I. informer, Boyd F. Douglas Jr., who gave the Government copies of the alleged letters between Father Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth McAlister, a New York City nun, outlining the purported plot.

Overt Act No. 4 in the Government's conspiracy charge says that "on or about April 1, 1970, Philip Berrigan and Joseph Wenderoth entered underground tunnels in Washington, D. C."

Several Witnesses Called

Chief Prosecutor William S. Lynch called several witnesses to testify about this.

John F. Millard of Warren, R. I., a part-time student at Boston College, said he was an elevator operator in the Senate Office Building in June, 1970, when he first met Father Wenderoth at a peace meeting on the Mall at Catholic University.

Mr. Millard, a thin youth with long curly hair and a droopy moustache, said that when Father Wenderoth learned of his job the following conversation took place:

"Father Wenderoth asked me what I thought of the idea of a protest against the war that would involve a power failure or blackout of Government buildings.

"He asked two questions: first, were any guards on duty in the Senate office building, and second, did I ever see the basement in the building?"

"I told him it was common knowledge that guards were all over the building and that the basement was big dark place with a lot of pipes.

"He said that he and Philip Berrigan had been in the tunnel of some building dressed in coveralls. I do recall the Forrestal Building being mentioned."

Earlier, a government official testified that there were entrances to the tunnel system only at the Forrestal Building, the State Department Building and the Potomac Annex Building.

The War and Alienation

Mr. Millard said he did not take the priest's remarks seriously. He thought that Father Wenderoth was merely expressing "a very vague idea that didn't represent anything concrete."

"My immediate thought," he added, "was what it would be like to be in an elevator during a blackout. I mentioned the possible dangers. Father Wenderoth replied: 'That, of course, is our immediate concern.'"

"But it seemed to me that any protest ought to be designed to show what was wrong with the war, and this sort of thing would only alienate people."

Mr. Millard said the next time he saw Father Wenderoth was at an antiwar meeting in Baltimore where, he said, there was no mention of blowing up tunnels, only a general discussion of the war itself. He said he and his friends found the discussion "so boring we sat off by ourselves and talked of other things."

Anthony D. Barone, 25, of Arlington, Va., a Civil Service Administration employe, said he heard Father Wenderoth discuss "escalation of tactics, including the possible disruption of the tunnel system," at a peace meeting. However, he was unable to identify Father Wenderoth in the courtroom.

Some months later, at an advertised rally of the Catholic Peace Movement there was a brief discussion of political kidnapping he said, but "there did not seem to be any urgency about anything."