

2 Priests to Hoover-- 'Retract'

NEW YORK — (AP) — Two imprisoned Roman Catholic priests accused by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover of heading a conspiracy to bomb underground supply lines and kidnap a high government official said yesterday he should either prosecute them or retract the allegation.

They said the "conspiracy" was one of conscience and they called on Hoover for a chance to answer his charges.

In a statement released through two of their lawyers in New York, the Revs. Daniel and Philip Berrigan said:

"On Friday, Mr. Hoover singled us out as leaders of an East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives. We are happy to agree that such a conspiracy of conscience does exist in a far more extensive form than Mr. Hoover recognizes.

"There is also a West Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives, a Middle Western Conspiracy to Save Lives, a Middle Atlantic and a Southern Conspiracy to Save Lives. There is, in fact, a Worldwide Conspiracy to Save Lives and to demand an end to U.S. bombing operations in Southeast Asia."

The brothers, serving sentences at a federal prison in Danbury, Conn., for destroying draft records, continued:

"Mr. Hoover, is overgenerous. At Danbury we have neither the facilities nor personnel to conduct such an enterprise. Nor do we have access to government funds.

"We have already been tried and condemned by Mr. Hoover's remarks, and we

should have an equal opportunity to answer his charges.

He ought, in view of the seriousness of the allegations he has made, either to prosecute us or publicly retract the charges he has made."

Friday, during an appearance before a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, Hoover said the Berrigan brothers were the principal leaders of a conspiracy whose members planned to bomb underground power lines and kidnap a high government official.

Two other Roman Catholic priests, members of the East Coast Conspiracy, denied that a bombing or a kidnaping was planned, and said the Berrigans did not belong to the group.