



Associated Press

AFTER COURT SESSION IN HARRISBURG: Five of the eight defendants accused of conspiring against the Federal Government outside Federal Building yesterday.

From left: Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Scoblick, Eqbal Ahmad, Mrs. John T. Glick, wife of a defendant in custody; Sister Elizabeth McAlister and the Rev. Joseph Wenderoth.

Seven in Berrigan Case Refuse to Plead to Charges

By **BILL KOVACH**

Special to The New York Times

HARRISBURG, Pa., May 25—Seven of the eight persons accused of conspiring against the Federal Government appeared in court here today and refused to plead to charges that they say are designed to stifle opposition to the Vietnam war.

The seven were arranged under an indictment handed down April 30 charging them with conspiracy to destroy files of several Selective Service board offices, to destroy the heating system of Government buildings in Washington and to kidnap Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser.

The eighth named defendant—the Rev. Neil McLaughlin—was excused because of a death in the family and will be arraigned next week.

Today's appearance was the first time the defendants have appeared in court together since the legal proceedings leading to the new indictment began on April 16. They were called before the Federal judge in the order they were named

in the indictment: Eqbal Ahmad, a Pakistani scholar; The Rev. Philip F. Berrigan; John Theodore Glick; Sister Elizabeth McAlister; Anthony Scoblick, a former priest, and his wife, Mary Cain Scoblick, a former nun; and The Rev. Joseph Wenderoth.

Pleas Made Earlier

All the defendants except Mr. Glick and Mrs. Scoblick were indicted by the same grand jury in January on charges of conspiring to perform the destruction of the heating system and the kidnapping plot. That indictment has been superseded by the new expanded indictment.

The six original defendants had entered pleas of not guilty to the first indictment.

Mr. Ahmad, a fellow at the Adlai Stevenson Institute in Chicago, established the pattern followed by his codefendants today when he stood before Federal Judge R. Dixon Herman and attempted to read a statement in lieu of a plea. The judge, while accepting the statements as part of the court record, refused to allow them to be read.

Under the original indictment, Mr. Ahmad said, he had no problem with a not guilty plea because "we needed only a modicum of judicial fairness to prove our innocence." As to the new indictments, he said:

"I had originally hoped that in this game of chance, we had hit upon a judge who would contribute to terminating this Government's violation of laws in the United States no less than in Indochina. Insofar as this court has not yet satisfied that expectation, I am unable to offer my cooperation to it. For these reasons I refuse to enter my plea before this court on the new indictment."

Security Is Tight

In lieu of a plea by the defendants, the judge entered—as required by law—a plea of "not guilty" for them. The procedure was followed for each defendant.

Unusual security precautions were in effect for the afternoon session, apparently because of the presence of Father Berrigan, who is serving a sentence in the Federal prison at Danbury, Conn., for destruction

of draft board files in Catonsville, Md.

Entry to the small Federal courtroom was restricted to those with special passes issued to the press, members of the immediate family of the defendants, and a limited number of interested observers.

The group decision not to enter pleas was apparently made at a meeting of the defendants here Monday night following a backyard barbecue—open to the public—given the defendants by members of the local Harrisburg Defense Committee.

After several hours of socializing, yard games, community singing and personal statements of belief in the antiwar movement by some of the accused, the defendants met with their attorneys late into the night devising their individual statements of resistance.

Today's arraignment was followed by another public picnic billed as a "Great Conspiracy Arraignment Picnic." Later in the evening a special mass was said in memory of Father McLaughlin's father, who died yesterday.