

From Wikipedia

George Mische and Father Phil Berrigan were prime organizers of the Catonsville Nine. The organizing process was very democratic, with interminable meetings and "who's in, who's out" handraisings.

Fr. Philip Berrigan and Tom Lewis had previously poured blood on draft records as part of "The Baltimore Four" (with David Eberhardt and James Mengel) and were out on bail when they burned the records at Catonsville. (The first documented action against draft files is reputed to have been by Barry Bondhus in Minnesota, who, along with other family members, carried human waste into a draft board and defaced draft records.[2])

The Catonsville Nine were tried in federal court October 5–9, 1968. The lead defense attorney was William Kunstler. They were found guilty of destruction of U.S. property, destruction of Selective Service files, and interference with the Selective Service Act of 1967.[3] They were also sentenced to a total of 18 years' jail time and a fine of \$22,000. Several of the nine—Mary Moylan, Phil Berrigan, Dan Berrigan and George Mische—went "underground" when it came time to show up for prison—in other words, the FBI had to try to find them. Father Dan Berrigan caused considerable embarrassment to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover by popping up and giving sermons and then fading back into the "underground".

Fr. Daniel Berrigan wrote, of the Catonsville incident: "Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children..." The whole of his statement is in *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*.

Large demonstrations occurred outside the Federal Courthouse on Calvert St. during the trial. The trial came soon after the events of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago where considerable violence took place. The Nine's trial, with religious people involved, made the overall peace movement a bit harder to dismiss since protesters in Chicago consisted of younger, student and SDS, Weather Underground, and youths with long hair.

Both the judge, Roszel C. Thomsen, and the prosecutor, Stephen H. Sachs, realized the historic proportions of the event but allowed little leeway to the defendants arguments. In these early trials of such actions the government always overcharged and always tried to keep the trials to "nothing but the facts," i.e., did the Nine destroy files or did they not? The Nine, on the other hand, often referred to a higher law that they were following—God's moral law—as well as such precedents as the Nuremberg war crimes trials after 'World War II. They called several expert witnesses. At one point, prosecutor Sachs quipped that "the government is not a balloon attached to the consciences of the Nine."

Aftermath

Fr. Daniel Berrigan was convicted and sentenced to prison to begin on April 9, 1970. According to Anke Wessels, director of Cornell's Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy, "On the

very day he was scheduled to begin his prison term, he left his office keys on a secretary's desk in Anabel Taylor Hall and disappeared."^[4] Cornell marked Berrigan's impending imprisonment by conducting a weekend-long "America Is Hard to Find" event on April 17–19, 1970,^[5] which included a public appearance by the then-fugitive Berrigan before a crowd of 15,000 in Barton Hall.^[6] On August 11, 1970, the FBI found and arrested Berrigan. He was released from prison in 1972.^[7]

The "Nine" inspired many other anti-draft and anti-military actions in the 1960s and 1970s, including the D.C. 9, Chicago 8, Harrisburg 7, Camden 28. Participants sometimes remained at the scene to be arrested, sometimes they departed in order to avoid arrest. It is unknown how many persons were not drafted because of these actions.

As of 2009 the movement had morphed into a continuing movement with an emphasis on nuclear weapons. The so-called "Plowshares" actions, along with the Catonsville Nine and earlier actions, have been detailed online by Jonah House. A book *A Chronology of Plowshares Disarmament Actions (1980–2003)* was compiled by Arthur Laffin.

The Catonsville Nine and Baltimore Four were the subject of the 2013 documentary *Hit & Stay* by Joe Tropea and Skizz Cyzyk.