



The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left: 40th Anniversary Edition

William O'Rourke

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"During the first three months of 1972 a trial took place in the middle district of Pennsylvania: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA versus Eqbal Ahmad, Philip Berrigan, Elizabeth McAlister, Neil McLaughlin, Anthony Scoblick, Mary Cain Scoblick, Joseph Wenderoth. The defendants stood accused of conspiring to raid federal offices, to bomb government property, and to kidnap presidential advisor Henry Kissinger. Six of those seven individuals are, or were, Roman Catholic clergy—priests and nuns. Members of the new 'Catholic Left.'"-from the introduction

When The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left was originally published in 1972, it remained on The New York Times Book Review "New and Recommended" list for six weeks and was selected as one of the Notable Books of the Year. Now, forty years later, William O'Rourke's book eloquently speaks to a new generation of readers interested in American history and the religious anti-war protest movements of the Vietnam era.

O'Rourke brings to life the seven anti-war activists, who were vigorously prosecuted for alleged criminal plots, filling in the drama of the case, the trial, the events, the demonstrations, the panels, and the people. O'Rourke includes a new afterword that presents a sketch of the evolution of protest groups from the 1960s and 1970s, including the history of the New Catholic Left for the past four decades, claiming that "[a]fter the Harrisburg trial, the New Catholic Left became the New Catholic Right."

"O'Rourke's book on the Harrisburg trial was a classic when it first appeared and remains a classic of trial reporting, an account even forty years later that is still pertinent to our contemporary situation. His new afterword is a gem of condensed history. It is a boon to journalists, historians, and political analysts, as well as the general reader, to have this book back in print." — David Black, author of The King of Fifth Avenue and The Extinction Event

Reviews for the first edition:

"... a paean to the seven religious revolutionaries, a rueful but loving acknowledgment of their 'brave and foolish letters,' and a solemn threnody for the Catholic left, 'broken by the mortar and pestle of this trial." —New Republic

"[The book is] in my opinion, a discovery, not so much about the facts of the trial but about what the antiwar priests and nuns of today mean to Catholic youth."—Herbert Mitgang, The Progressive

"This is not only the best volume on any of the recent political trials. . . but a clinical x-ray of our society's condition." — Garry Wills, The New York Times Book Review

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