



John P. Roche

The Surveillance Mess

THE PRESS has finally picked up the story, revealed here some time ago, that former Attorney General Ramsey Clark was responsible for the surveillance operations of the United States government from 1968 to 1969. Since these operations included a massive display of lunacy by military counter-intelligence, it is understandable that Clark and his deputy, Warren Christopher, have been eager to get out from under. In the process they have issued blanket denials that they were ever aware of military involvement, Clark going so far as to say that "I don't care what the documents say." From a dis-

tinguished lawyer this is certainly a novel approach to probative evidence.

The difficulty, one suspects, is that Clark was not aware of the mad capers of the counter-intelligence crew. Theoretically they were working for him because he had been charged by President Johnson with anticipating riots, and the President directed all relevant branches of the government to cooperate fully in the effort. It was a legitimate mission and a certain amount of surveillance, under close control, was a necessary component of the job. Keeping an eye on dangerous characters is hardly an outrage to American freedom. Indeed, in the light of events over the last decade, one could wish that somebody had been watching Lee Harvey Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan, and James Earl Ray.

IN SHORT, a President who did not take energetic action to head off civil disorder would have been guilty of gross incompetence, and the Department of Justice was the logical place to establish the command post. This was done by Clark, and a small outfit known as IDIU (Interdivisional Intelligence Unit) was set up to establish a co-ordinated intelligence assets of the government responsibilities, that is, it drew upon the intelligence assets of the government including those in the Justice Department such as the FBI and those elsewhere like the Secret Service (which is in the Treasury Department) and the Department of Defense.

Still nothing wrong. On the contrary, it was a very sensible effort to rationalize the intelligence-gathering operation. But now for a moment, we will push the calendar back to January, 1968, and attempt to recreate the mood in the White House and the administration.

THERE HAD BEEN savage riots in the summer of 1967 and with a Presidential election looming, and anti-war sentiment boiling over among groups of militants, 1968 was not a year to look forward to with joyous an-

ticipation. Then came the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and attendant violence in the nation's capital and in other cities and then the murder of Sen. Robert Kennedy. The word was out that the militants planned to make the Democratic National Convention into a shambles.

President Johnson ordered a doubling of precautions: Presidential candidates were given security. (Robert Kennedy refused it and it probably cost him his life: the first place the Secret Service would have swept was the kitchen where Sirhan was hiding.) The existing intelligence units were simply unable to cope with the task and turned to the Department of Defense for additional assistance. (If memory serves, the Provost Marshal lent military police to help the Secret Service guard the candidates.) Army Secretary Stanley Resor was now in the operational slot so far as military assets were employed, but Clark was in overall command.

Still nothing wrong. As of this point in time, no one could fault the President or the Attorney General. The IDIU was working away issuing weekly summaries of potential trouble spots, and one recalls that they were sober careful assessments hardly in the James Bond tradition. The fact that the military were cooperating was known by all hands involved. What was not known was the fantastic dimensions of the military operation.

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