

# A Puzzling ITT SFChronicle Mission to Chile



**Jack Anderson**

**I**NTERNATIONAL Telephone and Telegraph dispatched one of America's top bugging experts into the homes and government palace of Chilean President Salvador Allende in 1971.

The alleged purpose of this mysterious mission was to "de-bug" Allende's rooms and to train Chilean police and army men in electronic de-bugging techniques. Interestingly, it was the military which later overthrew Allende.

The visit of master-bugger John Ragan came as ITT, the CIA and the U.S. Embassy in Santiago were busily seeking information to help them get the socialist Allende out of office. Allende was nationalizing American companies in Chile, including ITT.

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**R**AGAN, an ex-FBI electronic specialist, is best known as the man called in by the White House "plumbers" to bug the home of columnist Joseph Kraft. In the "business," Ragan is respected as an awesome pro.

On his trip to turbulent Chile, Ragan took along a load of "offensive" bugging equipment. Secret Watergate documents reveal that Ragan stayed in Chile from April 28, 1971, to May 5, 1971, and was paid \$200 a day by ITT. While there, Ragan, at the invitation of the army and police, entered Allende's homes at Valparaiso and Santiago, and his presidential palace.

According to Ragan, he and Allende once sat down and had coffee. There the Chilean leader learned that Ragan worked for ITT. Ragan describes the conversation as "cordial."

No one seems to know why ITT, a relentless enemy of Allende's, was allowed in his dwellings, much less why the Chilean president let an ITT agent conduct "electronic sweeps" of his rooms at a time when planting of bugs was widely feared in Chile. Allende cannot explain. He died from gunshot wounds in the coup.

But as we reported on March 21, 1972, ITT had made approaches "to select members of the Armed Forces in an attempt to have them lead some sort of uprising" in late 1970, only a few months before ITT and the Chilean army helped arrange Ragan's visit.

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**T**HE ITT electronics mission is even more puzzling in view of a secret ITT memo dated Sept. 29, 1970, from ITT Vice President E. J. Gerrity to ITT President Harold Geneen. In the memo, Gerrity advises "We should withdraw all technical help (to Chile) and should not promise any technical assistance in the future."

Yet, within months, ITT's deputy security chief and its \$200-a-day electronics consultant were dispatched to give "technical assistance" to the army, police and to at least one Chilean telephone company official.