

## Panther Raid

# Chicago Court Clears Hanrahan

### Chicago

Cook county State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan and 13 other law enforcement officers were acquitted yesterday of charges that they conspired to obstruct an investigation of the raid that killed two Black Panthers here nearly three years ago.

Cook county Circuit Judge Philip Romiti ruled that a special prosecutor had failed to present evidence of a conspiracy and directed the verdict of acquittal from the bench before a packed courtroom.

The family and friends of Hanrahan and his co-defendants burst into applause. A smiling Hanrahan later contended that the ruling vindicated the police who conducted the raid.

The acquittal is expected to help the controversial, quick-tempered state's attorney in his bid to win reelection next month in what has been regarded as a close race with Republican challenger Bernard Carey.

The politically charged case had come to be viewed as a test of Hanrahan and his claims to be a tough law and order prosecutor. His role has made him widely unpopular in black communities but also has enabled him to attract support in suburban white neighborhoods that normally vote Republican.

Judge Romiti found that during 14 weeks of testimony, special prosecutor Barnabas Sears failed to produce evidence of a conspiracy. He described a case in this language: "An inference drawn from another inference . . . more than conjecture and speculation."

Romiti said he was not judging the conduct of the police officers who, early in the morning of Dec. 4, 1969, burst into a Black Panther apartment and killed Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. That issue was not before the court, he said.

However, Hanrahan later appeared at a news conference with several of the raiding policemen and claimed that the evidence "showed the conduct of the police and the other defendants was lawful."

The indictment had





AP Wirephoto

**Edward Hanrahan held a press conference after he and 13 co-defendants were found innocent of conspiracy**

charged that Hanrahan, his top assistant and 12 policemen had conspired to obstruct justice during the investigation of the raid to protect the raiders from prosecution. It charged that they conspired to "plant

false evidence and furnish false information" as part of a cover-up.

Hanrahan had claimed the police fired into the Panther apartment only after being met by bursts of gunfire. A subsequent FBI investiga-

tion determined that only one shot was fired by the Panthers inside but that more than 80 were fired into their apartment by police.

During the trial this summer, statements from four of the surviving Panthers,

given earlier to their lawyers, were introduced into the trial record. They said that at least five occupants of the apartment held weapons during the raid and that they had fired five shots.

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