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Clark's Hot Reply To a Questioner

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By Robert Bartlett

Former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark yesterday accused President Nixon of trying "to distract the American people from the truth" by inspiring an attack on him concerning his recent North Vietnamese visit.

And the normally affable Texan gave a rare public display of temper during a question-and-answer period after a brief speech he made at the American Bar Association convention.

More than 1000 persons heard Clark address the ABA's Section on Individual Rights and Responsibilities at the Hilton Hotel.

REACTION

Upon entering the meeting, Clark was asked by newsmen his reaction to former GOP Attorney General John Mitchell's calling him a "dupe." Clark replied:

"Richard Nixon has asked him to say that to distract the American people from the truth."

During the session, he was quizzed by Rita Hauser, a former U. S. representative on the United Nations' Human Rights Commission and a co-chairman of President Nixon's campaign for reelection.

"Did you not feel any constraint to plead the cause of our prisoners in your talks with North Vietnamese leaders?" Mrs. Hauser asked.

"Of course, I pleaded for our American prisoners," Clark shot back. "Why do you and some others assume I did not?"

"Why don't you go there?" (to North Vietnam), he suggested as Mrs. Hauser looked away, obviously surprised by the fury of his re-

ply.

Clark said he interviewed ten American POWs—who now oppose American intervention in Southeast Asia — and "in my judgment, they were not brainwashed. They were tough-minded loyal American fighting men."

"I'd like to see a lot more Americans go over there," he said, "because we cannot be afraid of the truth."

HUMANE

"Maybe it's possible there has been some unhumanitarian treatment of our prisoners, but I think generally they are treating prisoners humanely," Clark said.

And, glaring in Mrs. Hauser's direction, he concluded:

"I think the people who say they are not have motives themselves — they may think more about the Thieu government than getting our boys home."

Clark was ashen and shaking with rage when he finished his impassioned answer to Mrs. Hauser, and even a standing, cheering ovation from the audience failed to cool his anger.

As Clark stalked from the room, Mrs. Hauser told reporters, who thronged around her, that, "I have never been so shocked by an answer to any question in my life."

She told reporters to "draw your own conclusions" why Hanoi had denied Red Cross access to the prison camps but granted it to Clark.

Asked for her conclusion, she said: "It's not a nice thing to say, but I suppose Hanoi intended to use him for their own purposes."

SURPRISE

Earlier in his talk, Clark

said he was surprised at the lack of any surveillance by North Vietnamese police during his two-week tour.

He also said the American prisoners he had seen and photographed — "this is not Communist film, it's Eastman Kodak" — seemed well-treated.

Clark also denied the contention that he had made any broadcasts on Radio Hanoi.

"Every American leader who said that has known that," he maintained, "and is deliberately trying to mislead the American public."

(He was obviously referring to a statement by Secretary of State William Rogers.

Clark's father, retired Supreme Court Justice Tom C.

Clark, sat at the head table with his wife, listening to his son's speech.

The elder Clark told reporters he doesn't think Mitchell "knows him very well."

Ramsey Clark is "always very cautious," the justice said. "I don't think he would say anything that couldn't be supported."