

In his news conference Monday, Secretary of State Rogers voiced an attitude about freedom and national security that could have spared the Nixon Administration and the nation untold pain and humiliation had it been official policy. Mr. Rogers did not directly disagree with what the President has said recently in this area; but the differences in priority, emphasis and approach were unmistakable.

"I believe," said Mr. Rogers, "that it is very important for the United States not to become so obsessed with security matters that laws are freely violated. . . . I think great care should be shown before any extralegal action is undertaken. . . ."

"If you were asking me, do I think that the security considerations were sufficiently grave and serious to justify the burglary of (Dr. Daniel) Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, the answer is no, I don't think so."

Secretary Rogers did say that it was "very discouraging" and embarrassing to have secret documents leaked and published during sensitive diplomatic negotiations, adding that this could "adversely affect our security." But in general he felt the Government should remain strictly within legal bounds in trying to plug leaks or tighten security; and he would sanction extralegal methods only "in very unusual circumstances."

The remarks are typical of William P. Rogers' approach to public life. They fit in with his comportment as Attorney General of the United States in President Eisenhower's second Administration—an office in which he was, alas, far more comfortable and more effective than he has been in his present job.

What a price President and country have paid for the fact that this sensible approach to a delicate question of supreme importance, as expressed simply and directly by one of Mr. Nixon's closest friends and the only member of his original Cabinet still in office, was rejected for the counsel of lesser, less honorable men.