

ITT Sent Bugging Expert to Chile

By Jack Anderson

The International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. 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 "debug" Allende's rooms and to train Chilean police and army men in electronic debugging techniques. Interestingly, it was the military that 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.

Ragan, 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. But in the "business," Ragan is respected as an awesome pro: a specialist called in to debug the quarters of such notables as Richard Nixon, Attorney General John Mitchell, Charles (Bebe) Rebozo and others.

On his trip to turbulent Chile, Ragan took along a load of "offensive" bugging equipment. Secret Watergate documents show he was accompanied down

by ITT's assistant security director, Russell Tagliareni.

The documents reveal that Ragan stayed in Chile from April 23, 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.

The 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.

"Through a trusted intermediary, we have been given a summary of Ragan's notes on the visit. They do not shed much light on the subject, but simply tell of meetings with the Chilean police and army officials. Some of them appear to be in code.

After the Chilean excursion, Ragan continued to have high-paying dealings with ITT. His private logs show such curious listings as "6/2/71—ITT test hi-power tmitter . . . 6/7/71—ITT w/ tmitter . . . 6/10/71—Call Jack Caulfield . . ." "Tmitter," in this case, is a tiny bugging transmitter. And Caulfield was the White House dirty trickster of the Watergate era.

Ragan also ran an ITT de-bugging seminar and has done de-bugging work for Geneen and lesser ITT officials such as Dita Beard, John Ryan and William Merriam. He collected \$175 to \$200 a day for such duties.

Footnote: Ragan spoke with my associate Les Whitten of length. The "tmitter" was used only at the seminar, he said, not for bugging. The Chilean mission, he insisted, was "open and above board" and no bugs were planted while in Chile, nor were any found. The bugs he took with him, he said, were left in Chile only for training purposes, not for "offensive" bugging. ITT also denies any effort to bug Allende.

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