

and beauty.’ And I thought immediately when he was shot, that that’s why he was shot. We are afraid of grace and beauty.

Clark approached his brief attempts at seeking public office in much the same way as Lyndon LaRouche approached his eight Presidential campaigns. Douglas Martin of *The New York Times* reported: “Mr. Clark became an office seeker in 1974, when, as a Democrat, he tried to unseat Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York, a Republican. Holding to his principled positions, Mr. Clark often told voters what they did not want to hear. He advocated gun control legislation in speeches to hunters and told defense industry workers that their plants should be closed. He lost convincingly.”

No. The voters of 1974 New York lost, not Ramsey Clark. Clark was that rarest of candidates in politics: a truth-teller. In a time darkened by multiple assassinations and the shrinking of the national character, Clark, like President John Quincy Adams, embodied a stubborn disdain for retreating to the comfort of a conve-

nient deceit, wrapped in the guise of a law. Legislation, such as the civil rights legislation which he worked to enforce in the 1960s, had to be dynamic, an expression of the living spirit of the American Constitution, perfecting itself by breaking through the artificial boundaries of outworn convention. He preferred to speak the truth, boldly and without artifice. We believe that he would be particularly gratified by the newly initiated work of the Committee for the Coincidence of Opposites, against the use of sanctions as a form of population warfare.

We include a [link](#) to a speech delivered by Clark in January of 2015 at Riverside Church in New York City, directly following remarks delivered by Helga Zepp-LaRouche. This speech, which recounts his deployment to Selma, Alabama to ensure safe passage for Martin Luther King and 50 marchers on the road from Selma to Montgomery, is unique in expressing the inner life of that moment in American history, as unique as was the man Ramsey Clark himself.

—Dennis Speed

Ramsey Clark: Reflections on the Third March from Selma to Montgomery

Ramsey Clark, the US Deputy Attorney General in 1965, was put in charge of providing security for the third—this time successful—attempt of civil rights activists to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, March 21-25, 1965. Mr. Clark delivered reflections on that march to a conference sponsored by the Schiller Institute on January 17, 2015, which we excerpt here. The full speech is available [here](#).

He was speaking at the same Riverside Church in New York City, where Dr. Martin Luther King had delivered his speech “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” on April 4, 1967, in which he declared his opposition to the Vietnam War. It was traumatic for Dr. King and a complete departure from his earlier career as a civil rights leader. He was saying something about his nation, and about war. Mr. Clark reports receiving a call from Dr. King afterwards, concerned that the press would try to distort what he had to say, and he

wanted to make sure that he had at least one reliable, legal representative, who would not mis-represent his intent that day.

In his speech in this church in 1967, I guess it was—and I’ll correct myself if I search and find otherwise—Dr. King said some words that hurt him deeply and personally, but he felt had to be said, and they were these: “The greatest purveyor of violence on Earth, is my own country.” It hurt him palpably to say it, but it was a truth he felt deeply, and he said it.

The next day a couple of lawyer friends of his showed up, and they’d got a copy of the speech. And they said, “Dr. King, I want to be sure I have an accurate copy” of what you really said. It was, that “the greatest purveyor of violence on Earth, is my own country.”

Conditions haven’t changed globally in that particular, I’m afraid. We remain the greatest purveyor of vio-

lence on Earth. We glorify its power and ignore its pity. Just look at our entertainment, our war films, and our crime films [applause]. It's like we've got a love affair with violence. And yet, the words he spoke here will win the struggle, if human life is to endure on this planet. I'm an optimist: I'm sure it will, at least from our own hand, which is the cruelest fate of all.

On-Site in Alabama

The first night out, I was sent down to Montgomery, Alabama, about four days before the march started. I was Deputy Attorney General at the time, which is, on the organization chart, the second highest-ranking officer in the [Justice] Department; it requires Presidential nomination and Senate confirmation. My assignment was to protect the order of a U.S. federal judge who prescribed the fashion in which people could march from Selma to Montgomery, along a public highway. It was litigated for quite a while and came up with the solution that 50 people could be chosen and march two abreast. If you see the movie *Selma*, which I recommend—the movie *Selma*, is about Selma [Alabama]: It's about the courage and beauty of the people there, who were tired of the sheriff who liked to walk his horses over their bodies—a man named Clark. No relation that I'm aware of! If there is, I disclaim it now. Not that had I been in his shoes, I might not have been the same.

But the march was an interesting occasion, a study in the character, the moral character, of our society. The FBI, which always requires someone who wants to know the truth to be carefully observed in his statements, told me that there were 1,200 men, who had served lengthy convictions in prison for white racist crime against African Americans, who had come to this Selma-Montgomery area—1,200. They were out of prison now, and they had rifles on the rack in the back of the cabin of their pickup trucks. And the [assumption of the] Bureau, whose assumptions I don't usually follow, was that they intended to use those rifles if they got a chance.

We brought a diversity of law enforcement into that area that was certainly unprecedented in this country, in terms of its diversity, in terms of its magnitude—we had 10,000 standing by in reserve. It had taken them maybe 48 hours to get into action. But we had Border Patrol and U.S. Marshals, and to the extent we could rely on them, some state and local agents and Army



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who was tasked with ensuring the safety of the march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., in 1965: “We have to resurrect the spirit that pervaded those who imagined and led what was really a wonderful march.”

standing by—for 50 people to do under court order, which was litigated for about a year and a half, before you could undertake the project in a free society, to do something no one in his right mind would want to do, unless someone dared them to, and that is, walk from Selma to Montgomery!

I remember John Doar [Justice Department Civil Rights Division] got so sunburned, I thought he was going to lose his nose! Even though it was in March, the Sun was really hot down there. I got the top of my ears blistered and because my nose is bigger than his, it got more blistered than his, but I couldn't see mine as well as I could see his.

A Beautiful Sight

And the fear was palpable. The first night, we got across the bridge. I nearly lost my job, because I was standing on the far side of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, by a Border Patrol car. I always liked Border Patrolmen, because they're kinda cowboys, and they work independently and they don't have a director of the FBI who's making them dress like they're on Wall Street, or someplace, and they go in pairs, because they're afraid.

I was standing by this Border Patrol car, with an open mic; there were about six other Border Patrol cars that were stationed all around so we could talk to each other immediately.

As they started to cross the bridge, I made the unfortunate error of saying, “Here they come, isn’t it beautiful?” This was Sunday [March 21]. Monday morning, the *New York Times* headline is: Deputy Attorney General down there to be neutral—ha-ha—and protect the marchers from the public and the public from the marchers, at the point at which the marchers started over the bridge, said, “Look at that, isn’t it beautiful?”—for which some of my superiors were uncomplimentary about my verbiage. But it was beautiful.

The idea that it would take a force of that magnitude—and it wouldn’t, really, but it would take a pretty good force—to make it safe, to do something that no one in his right mind would want to do anyway, and that is, march from Selma to Montgomery, even though it was the month of March, as well as the marching month, in the broiling Sun.

And the first night, we got out—I talked to the farmer myself; we’d leased some land. We’d pay him some money so we could stay on his land, because we didn’t want to have some conflict about, “Hey, get off my property.” There weren’t other places that were as convenient. I forgot what I paid him, but maybe \$500, for 50 people to spend the night on his land, on the ground; most of them had sleeping bags and something like that. We got there, and he



Library of Congress

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King addresses an earlier (aborted) march in Selma. King told Ramsey Clark, on the night before the 1965 march, “You know, you can never be afraid.”

said, “Can’t do it. You can’t come on my land. I’ve been threatened.”

But it was getting to be dark, and I’d been up and down that road so many times, I knew every foot of it, and there was a state park—it wasn’t a mile and a half or two miles further down the road, so we just went on down there. And I set up sentries to march around the camp as we set up some four-foot side-wall Army tents and had sleeping bags for the 50.

So about 11 o’clock Dr. King grabbed me, and we walked away from the crowd; we were sitting around fires and we had these sentries—it looked like a Civil War scene to me. And he said, “I think you’ve been told I’ve got to fly to Chicago in the morning.” I said, “No, I haven’t



Norris McNamara

Sheriff Jim Clark orders Civil Rights leader James Forman to move on, in Selma, 1964.

been told.” He said, “Yeah, I’m going to leave here about 3:00 in the morning, so I’m going to sleep now.” I kinda fussed at him, and said, “You’ve got to tell me if you’re going to do those things, because I want to be sure you’re safe, man. You can’t be driving yourself or having somebody drive you down that road by yourself without protection.”

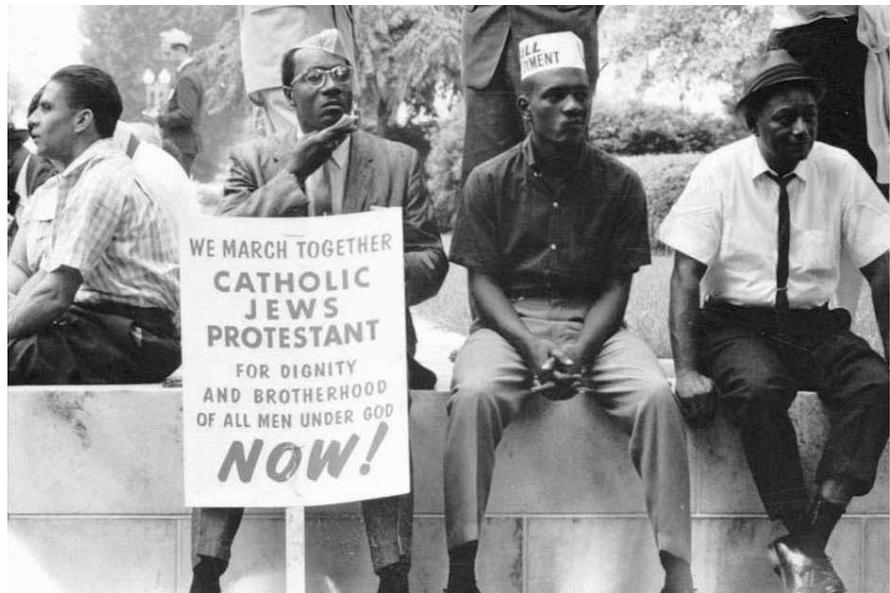
We were by this tent, we were looking down; it looked like a Civil War scene here in the United States of America, 1965, with campfires and sentries marching around the 50 people. And there was the only one of the 50 that slept any that night, as far as I could tell—I didn’t. I wasn’t one of the 50, but I was supposed to be in charge of their safety. Which was kind of ridiculous in itself; I’d been a Marine corporal and a Boy Scout, but I wasn’t a professional in the field of protection.

He got up and left, and got back Monday night. But the other marchers didn’t really sleep that night. They sat around the campfire and they talked, and thought, and some of them came up and got in the tents for a while.

And we marched on.

It’s hard to believe, the palpable fear of violence and the actuality of risk. I have no idea of whether there were really 1,200 men with felony convictions for racist violence, all white, all the men that were there with their guns on racks behind them, most of them in pickups. They were there and had the will to shoot.

But I was flying a plane back that Friday, after we’d gotten to Montgomery, and all the speechifying had gone on in front the Capitol. It was a little Army plane, about a 12-passenger plane, and the pilot came back and said, “I got a phone message for you.” So, I went up to the cockpit and listened. They said that a woman had been killed on the way back to Selma; she was taking some of the people who had come over for the march from Selma, that lived in Selma, wanted to go home, back; and was shot, and killed. So, we turned the plane around, flew back to Montgomery, and tried to see what



Library of Congress/Peter Pettus

Protesters in Selma in 1965. “I hope that the symbol of the Selma-Montgomery march will permeate our character,” said Ramsey Clark, “because it really believed that we could overcome; it desired it passionately, and it was committed to lives without violence.”

we could do to show our sorrow and prevent further violence, under a pretty tense situation, still.

There were about 25,000 people who came from outside of Alabama, to participate, or just stand there and watch, a big crowd out in front of the Capitol, watching the speeches and all, after the end of the march.

Dr. King’s Spirit Will Prevail

You wonder how much has really changed. You hope for the best, but you go into our prisons, and you see they’re overwhelmingly, disproportionately, African American, African-American males, young— young, very young. Lives of freedom for them are terminated, at least temporarily—the length of their prison sentence. And probably, at least, freedom of will and mind and spirit badly damaged for the rest of their lives. Because we haven’t found the capacity to love each other yet, and particularly when we have different colors of skin. Which in my view doesn’t tell you anything about what’s underneath, except another human spirit. And we know of so many who were so great.

Dr. King’s spirit will prevail for societies, not just ours, in the spirits of many, many people, for as long as our form of communication endures.