

He Speaks to No One; No One Speaks to Him

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WASHINGTON.

Five days a week, a well-built man with pleasant features and close-cropped hair drives into the basement of the State Department to the section reserved for top-echelon officials. He parks, enters an elevator and rides to the third floor, where he gets off and walks to Room 38A05. It is 8:45 a. m. and the building is beginning to hum with bureaucratic precision.

Ordinarily this daily ritual would seem little different than the pattern habitually followed by thousands of government employees in Washington.

There is a vital difference, however. It is almost unbelievable, not unlike an ancient Greek drama: no one speaks to the man and he speaks to no one.

In the elevator, the conversation fades to a painful silence. In the corridors, one or two people invariably nod



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Otto F. Otepka:
All alone at State.

in mute recognition, but quickly lower their eyes. Inside Room 38A05 he sits

behind a bare desk to face another morning in solitude, just as he has done for almost a year. There are no departmental instructions or reports or communiques waiting for him. There is no mail. There is a telephone, more ornamental than functional since it never rings.

The sole occupant of the room, for all intents and purpose, is nameless. There is no nameplate by the door as is customary with all high-ranking State Department officials.

Around the corner, a nameplate outside Room 3333 reads, "Otto F. Otepka."

But you would not find Mr. Otepka there. He is the man in 38A05.

The room has been his Elba since he was banished there June 27, 1963.

The fact is Mr. Otepka, 48, is a human island ostracized by all State Department workers.

This is his penalty for having too candidly told the Senate Internal Security subcommittee about the State Department's security screening procedures. By so doing he had, in effect, violated the clubhouse rules. Since that moment, his career, encompassing 28 years in government service, including 11 with the State Department, has been in jeopardy. His superiors maintain he released classified material without authority, a charge which he denies and is fighting.

When he allegedly breached the unwritten code of the department, he was deputy director of the security section, a ranking post of highly sensitive nature. He had 33 employees under him and his \$18,200 annual salary is near the maximum a State Department officer can earn.

Today he continues to draw his salary. He is still listed on the roster and the hall directory as "Chief, Division of Evaluation, Office of Security." Yet, he has no duties and no assignments.

His department superior never communicates with him. He is prohibited from going into technical areas which are considered within his jurisdiction. He has no secretary; one who worked with him for several years has been inexplicably transferred. All incoming calls are received in an adjoining office by a girl who relays them to him. He never makes a call from his phone as it may be "bugged." He never eats in the department dining room since it may embarrass former associates. He never receives invitations to department social affairs.

On one occasion a fellow employee visited Mr. Otepka in his office. When the associate returned to his own office, he was immediately summoned by his chief and ordered not to call on Mr. Otepka again.

Like many officers and employees, who silently sympathize with Mr. Otepka, the once-friendly associate now shuns him rather than damage his career.

Several months ago Mr. Otepka, already separated from his normal duties, was told to write a handbook on security evaluation.

Despite the esoteric nature of the work, he was denied access to classified files. His own files were impounded when he was moved out of his original office and they were never returned.

Formerly, he received a small mountain of confidential reports from the FBI and CIA daily, concerning Communist subversion. No longer do they come to his desk. He has written memo after memo explaining the impossibility of writing a handbook without current information. The memos have not been answered. Since he has no secretary, he was given an old dictaphone but it was subsequently taken away.

He now believes the assignment was a ruse intended to make it appear he was still a working security officer.