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Lying in State

The Department of State must be a delightful place to work these days. The atmosphere of affectionate camaraderie and warm mutual confidence prevailing there has probably not been matched anywhere since the heyday of the Medicis in Renaissance Italy.

Consider the situation, for instance, in the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Security, Mr. John F. Reilly. Mr. Reilly was going quietly along minding everybody else's business when he discovered that one of *his* assistants, a Mr. Otto F. Otepka, was telling tales about him to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

How did Mr. Reilly find out about Mr. Otepka? Why by pawing through the contents of Mr. Otepka's "burn basket" of course and by tapping Mr. Otepka's telephone. How else?

Mr. Reilly appears to have been assisted in this snooping -by another of Mr. Otepka's colleagues, a Mr. Elmer D. Hill, Chief of the Security Office's Division of Technical Services. When these worthy fellows were asked by members of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee if they had ever done any prying into Mr. Otepka's private affairs, however, they looked quite scandalized at so offensive an imputation and replied as blandly as you please that they certainly had never done anything of the sort.

But the fact of the matter appears to be, nevertheless, that, although they may momentarily have forgotten about it, they did actually "bug" Mr. Otepka's quarters in that elegant State Department building; they now acknowledge as much, although they insist that they didn't really hear anything interesting. So, by "mutual consent," they have been ordered to go on leave until the whole affair is looked into.

What kind of State Department has the United States got these days? One supposes that workers in the Foreign Commissariat of the Kremlin look over their shoulders at their associates with a certain amount of apprehension and anxiety. But

who would have supposed that Americans in the American Department of State would need to employ official tasters when they venture into the departmental dining room?

This kind of bugging and spying and tattling produces no kind of security at all. It produces nothing but an atmosphere of crippling and suffocating suspicion. Decent men should not be asked and cannot be expected to work in such an atmosphere. The foreign affairs of a free people should not be conducted in so malign and miasmic a climate.