

OCT 15 1963

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■ IN THE BACKGROUND**A QUESTION OF STATE**

The storm blown up around Otto F. Otepka of the State Department's Security Office has been long brewing. More than two years ago, they whisper in Foggy Bottom, Otepka recommended withdrawal of Harlan Cleveland's security clearance. The recommendation was overruled, and Harlan Cleveland, unsung Hero of the Katanga War, is still Assistant Secretary of State for UN affairs. And Otepka has been, since then, marked for slaughter.

For months the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee has been looking into the security climate in State, especially in relation to Castro's rise to power, Latin American affairs in general, and U.S. conduct in the Congo. The inquiry has been sharp and apparently painful: sharp enough to prompt the Attorney General to the unusual procedure of attending one particular session as an "observer"; and painful enough to keep the Secretary of State away from the August 30 hearing even though subpoenaed—and no State employee has consented to appear since August 30.

Now the reprisal: State's High Command has summoned Otepka to the mast on the charge—relayed to the press for preliminary trial by headline—of conspiring with the Subcommittee's veteran counsel, J. G. Sourwine. Otepka is alleged to have committed the crime of *lèse-Bureaucracy*: communicating "confidential" and "for official use only" data to Sourwine.

Thus begins one more episode in the perennial clash between the Executive's will to unchecked power and the Legislature's duty to know how the laws are administered. Under every President of this century (see Clark R. Mollenhoff's *Washington Cover-Up*) the issue has been openly joined at least once. The Otepka case may be the occasion for the test battle of the Kennedy regime.