

## CPYRGHT Even the Weariest River

The Senate internal security subcommittee is finally approaching the end of the road in the long, slow investigation of the state department's firing of Otto Otepka, chief of the evaluations division of the department's office of security. The subcommittee has invited Secretary of State Rusk to appear if he has anything to say, but Sen. Eastland, the chairman, says that anything Rusk volunteers won't interfere with prompt publication of the subcommittee's voluminous record.

The Otepka affair—a major scandal of the Kennedy-Johnson administration—has been developing since Otepka in 1963 cooperated fully and frankly with the subcommittee, recounting sloppy security practices in the department. His superiors promptly charged him with “conduct unbecoming a state department officer”—namely, we assume, telling the truth.

That the investigation of Otepka's treatment has dragged on so unconscionably is not altogether the fault of the subcommittee. Department witnesses were not only evasive but lied and then, when found out, recanted their falsehoods. When the subcommittee had its material fairly well in hand last summer, the White House exercised pressure to keep the facts bottled up until the Presidential campaign was over.

The department's behavior toward Otepka and his associates and supporters was unbelievably harsh. His office telephone was bugged, his wastebasket of material to be burned for security reasons was sifted, his secretary was taken from him, his office and files were closed to him, his mail denied him, he was ostracized in the department, and was reduced to useless duties equivalent to cutting up paper dolls. His associates were transferred to distant and obscure places where their security experience was stultified.

When the record finally sees the light of day, it is expected to show that Otepka's troubles began building up when he ran into practices originally instituted by Alger Hiss in 1945. Hiss, a New Deal state department official, was trapped in a

web of lies and convicted of perjury after the late Whittaker Chambers fingered him as a soviet espionage agent.

Hiss, who had much to do with the establishment of the United Nations, created a committee and a procedure for placing American citizens in U. N. posts. Many of those selected by the Hiss machinery turned out to be subversives.

When the Kennedy administration came along, Harlan Cleveland, assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, began making quickie appointments under procedures which bypassed security regulations. Otepka protested to his superior, John Reilly, that some of the persons appointed were of a character he could not approve on security grounds. Reilly responded by tapping Otepka's telephone.

Even more strange is the report that Cleveland asked Otepka if there were some way that Hiss could be brought back into government. Otepka coldly replied that persons convicted of felonies were not qualified. The matter was dropped, but Cleveland did not appoint a panel to pass on potential U. N. employes, and some members were former associates and defenders of Hiss.

All of this Otepka frankly disclosed to the Senate subcommittee when it called him as a witness. Senate regulations state that no federal employe is to be penalized for giving evidence to an authorized committee, but by now the state department was doing a burn because of the embarrassing evidence that it had given jobs to security risks.

From then on the department's intention was to destroy Otepka. When he was fired, and demanded a review, as was his right, the department was afraid to allow him a public hearing on the merits of its ruling, but kept him on the payroll, assigned to menial duties, in the apparent hope of breaking his spirit and inducing him to leave in disgust. The story is sordid and shameful, and soon the American people will know the full facts of the vendetta. We hope that it will move them to demand a wholesale housecleaning in the state department.

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