

*Today in National Affairs*

# The Dagger in the Cloak —And Mr. Otepka's Back

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WASHINGTON.

Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, D., Conn., has achieved a reputation for independent thinking. When he says that the Department of State, in dismissing its Director of Security, used methods that are highly questionable, the country naturally becomes interested, especially since Mr. Dodd himself at one time served in the Federal Bureau of Investigation under J. Edgar Hoover.

The Connecticut Senator told the Senate Tuesday, Nov. 5, that a "serious challenge to responsible government" occurred when Otto Otepka was dismissed by the State Department simply because he had "testified honestly before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security on matters relating to security in the Department of State." He quoted the existing statutes which say that "the right of persons employed in the Civil Service of the United States, either individually or collectively, to petition Congress, or any member thereof, or to furnish information to either house of Congress or to any committee or member thereof, shall not be denied or interfered with."

Sen. Dodd declared that, by its action in the Otepka case, the State Department "has in effect, nullified this statute" and has issued a warning "to all employees that co-operation with the established committees of the Senate, if this co-operation involves testimony considered unpalatable at higher echelon, is a crime punishable by dismissal."

Then came a sensational development. The Senate Internal Security subcommittee released on Nov. 9 letters filed by three State Department officials asking that the record of their testimony be amended and conceding that an eavesdropping device had been placed on the telephone wire in Mr. Otepka's office. Sen. R. L. Hruska, R., Neb., thereupon demanded that the State Department consider dismissing the three men who, he said, had misled the Senate. Immediately after Mr. Hruska's statement, two of the same three men—who have been the principal accusers of Mr. Otepka—were placed on "administrative leave" for the time being by the State Department.

Sen. Dodd, in his initial speech, pointed out that the significance of the case "cannot be overstated" and added:

"Mr. Otepka was the last old-line security officer holding a top position in the Office of Security. He has been an employee of the United States government for 27 years. He has served as Deputy Director of the Office of Security and Officer in charge of evaluations. His efficiency ratings have always been 'excellent.' In 1958 he received the meritorious service award from Secretary of State Dulles. But suddenly, for some strange reason, certain people in the department decided that Mr. Otepka had to go.

"And so, they began first, to restrict his functions. Then they installed a tap on his telephone. Although a State Department official has denied under oath that this was done, the Subcommittee on Internal Security has proof that the tap was installed. Then they began to monitor Mr. Otepka's burn basket. Then they locked him out of his office and denied him

access to his files, although no charge had yet been brought against him.

"No one suspected of espionage or disloyalty has to my knowledge been subjected to such surveillance and humiliation. But Mr. Otepka was not suspected of disloyalty or espionage. He was suspected very simply of co-operating with the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security and of providing it with information that some of his superiors found embarrassing or objectionable."

In many respects this is more important than the alleged scandals that are being investigated on Capitol Hill in domestic affairs, for the

whole question of giving security clearance to individuals employed in the Department of State now has been raised in a sensational manner. Sen. Dodd concluded:

"If the dismissal of Mr. Otepka is permitted to stand, it will become impossible or exceedingly difficult to elicit any information from employees of the executive branch that bears on disloyalty, malfeasance, conflict of interest, or other wrongdoing by their superiors."

The Department of State has not made public its detailed reasons for the dismissal of Mr. Otepka, nor has it given a satisfactory explanation to the Senate Internal Security subcommittee. But wherever the question of security arises, Congress is naturally on the alert. For there have been too many instances in which employees in the executive branch of the government have been given security clearance and later turned out to be indiscreet in passing out to friends and acquaintances information which eventually reached the Communist side.

In a vast organization of employees such as the Federal government maintains today, it is natural that there should be instances of questionable security. But the system which the Department of State has for years maintained is one that has created in Congress confidence in its procedures. The Otepka case has shaken that confidence. And the fact that the current fight for better security is being led by a Northern Democrat, who himself is an expert in security matters, is accepted by other Senators as an indication that the problem is being handled by the Senate in a wholly nonpartisan way.

The Administration has the responsibility of answering to the Senate and to the public just why the methods complained of by Sen. Dodd were used to remove a competent official from the delicate and difficult post of handling security matters in the Department of State.

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