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CLEAR WAY FOR BARING RECORD IN OTEPKA CASE

Pin Down Rusk Threat to Bar His Return

BY WILLARD EDWARDS

(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, May 6—(The Star)

ate internal security subcommittee, it was learned today, has cleared away the last obstacle to publication of secret testimony in the Otto Otepka case.

The final stage of a three-year inquiry into lax security in the state department was reached when William J. Crockett, deputy under-secretary of state for administration, was questioned in executive session last Tuesday afternoon.

Pin Down Rusk Threat

Crockett's testimony had been sought for months to clear up many unanswered questions about state department policies and operations. In line with stalling tactics which angered subcommittee members since the investigation began in 1962, he made numerous excuses—until given a virtual ultimatum to appear May 4.

His evidence cleared gaps in the record which had caused the subcommittee to hold up release of records of the secret hearings despite a unanimous vote to publish them nearly a year ago.

A report widely rumored but never officially verified was pinned down—that Secretary of State Dean Rusk was personally responsible for preventing reinstatement of Otepka, a veteran security officer with an impeccable record who was fired Nov. 5, 1963.

Telling Truth His Offense

Rusk had resisted entreaties from high officials in the Johnson administration to erase charges of "conduct unbecoming a state department officer" against Otepka, reportedly vowing that any such action would not be taken while he remained secretary of state.

Otepka's offense, according to the subcommittee's findings, was in testifying truthfully about loose security conditions in the state department when summoned by the subcommittee.

The Otepka case has become a cause celebre and has provoked a heavier protest mail to Capitol Hill, the White House and state department than many more publicized issues.

Will Let Rusk Testify

Crockett suggested that Rusk might want to appear before the subcommittee to make a final statement in answer to all the issues raised during the long investigation.

Chairman James O. Eastland [D., Miss.] said Rusk would be given this opportunity to testify but he stressed that no long delay would be tolerated in preparing for release the bulky record, which approximates 20 volumes.

The first volume, dealing with the circumstances surrounding Otepka's harassment, will be made public at some date in June. Crockett has been given the privilege of editing his latest testimony and also of providing written answers to questions which went unanswered at the secret session.

Tap His Telephone

The subcommittee, it was learned, has also requested the state department to hold up the transfers of John R. Norpel Jr., and others in the state department's security bureau who were allegedly penalized because they befriended Otepka.

Otepka appealed his discharge and asked for a hearing before a state department panel, as provided by regulations. After 18 months, he still awaits the hearing. As a result, he remains on the payroll but in an isolated status, removed from security work and assigned to petty duties. The inquiry revealed that his telephone was tapped on orders of two state department officials. When they denied this under oath and were exposed, their resignations were requested. Both are back on the federal payroll in other capacities.

Refuses to Cover Up

The last continuance of the Otepka case was until May 10 but this hearing will again be postponed, it was reported. The published record of the subcommittee hearings is essential to the discharged officer's de-

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fense, according to his lawyer.

When Otepka was fired, Sen. Thomas J. Dodd [D., Conn.] labeled it "a serious challenge to responsible government and a direct affront to the Senate." The charge against Otepka, Dodd noted, boiled down to the fact that he "testified honestly on matters relating to security" and he was punished only because he had refused to cover up for his superiors.

Speculate on Rusk Ouster

Subcommittee members said the hearings, when published, would not bear so much on subversive influences in the state department as on appalling conditions which could permit subversives to flourish.

Security files were scattered and subject to rifling while recommendations for investigation of suspected security risks were ignored.

An even greater issue is involved, senators said, in the defiance of a Senate investigation by a government department. One member called the state department's tactics over a three-year period "a top level conspiracy to obstruct a Senate committee."

Speculating on the outcome of the case, one senator said Rusk might be able to keep his promise that Otepka would never be reinstated while he remained secretary. Rusk might be "promoted" to a roving ambassadorship or replace Adlai E. Stevenson as ambassador to the United Nations, he said, and a new secretary of state, perhaps Thomas C. Mann, undersecretary of economic affairs who is a Presidential intimate, could inaugurate his regime with a politically popular gesture by clearing Otepka of all charges.

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