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*The Otto Otepka Case: Long Years of Controversy Over His Role at the State Department*

The Post's story (Aug. 15) regarding the delay in the Senate confirmation of Helmut Sonnenfeldt for under secretary of the treasury contains statements about me that are not merely erroneous but defamatory.

One statement attempts to link me with the late Senator Joseph McCarthy because I was appointed in the State Department in 1963 at a time he was seeking to "root out security risks." This is an overworked tactic.

I never met Senator McCarthy. I had no connection with him whatsoever. My duties required that I carry out the President's security program. I did this without fear or favor. Thus, in the course of my determination with respect to government security regulations, I found no substance to the accusations that there were Communists in the State Department. My findings are a matter of record.

It is not true, as The Post alleges, that I was dismissed by the State Department in 1963 for "leaking information to a Senate aide." I have never been dismissed for any reason. I transferred from the Department to the Subversive Activities Control Board without a break in service, in 1969. I retired from the government in 1972 after 36 consecutive years of federal service.

I was reprimanded and demoted by Secretary of State Dean Rusk after I had responded to a lawful summons from the Senate Internal Security

Subcommittee, submitted through my superiors, and pursuant to the subcommittee's demand I provided information which established that three State Department officials that lied under oath when they denied that they had tapped my telephone and ransacked my office safe after opening it with burglar tools.

My requested testimony did not constitute "leaking" but it obviously embarrassed the Kennedy regime. My penalty was six years of harassment and solitude in a State Department pesthouse.

It is untrue that I have testified before two congressional committees regarding Mr. Sonnenfeldt, as The Post says. On the occasion of his public appearance before the Senate Finance Committee relative to his nomination, I was in the audience only as a spectator. I was not asked to testify and I did not seek to do so.

Following Sonnenfeldt's appearance, I responded to a formal subpoena served on me by the House Internal Security Subcommittee in connection with pending legislation relating to the present Federal Employees Security Program.

In my testimony, which was in executive session and under oath, I responded fully and truthfully to questions put to me about Sonnenfeldt, giving emphasis to his misstatements before the Senate Finance Committee on matters of which I had accurate knowledge.

A recent judicial determination has been made which is relevant. It is a written opinion issued by United States District Judge Roszel Thomsen on November 12, at Baltimore, Md, in connection with my libel suit against the New York Times.

Despite the finding by this respected jurist that establishes an untrue allegation that I was "dismissed" or "fired" by the State Department, on November 13 The Post carried a story saying "Otepka was fired after being accused of releasing classified documents to a Senate subcommittee." I call to your attention the following findings by Judge Thomsen referring to certain charges made against me by the State Department in 1963:

(page 4), "The original decision was that he should be dismissed . . . Otepka appealed; his appeal stayed operation of the decision . . . he was given work of a trifling nature fairly referred to by him as 'made work' . . . The decision of the Secretary in December 1967 was . . . that Otepka . . . be transferred to duties which did not involve personnel security functions."

(page 6), "The evidence would support a conclusion, whatever one's ideological angle, that plaintiff (Otepka) was shabbily treated by the State Department."

Furthermore, Judge Thomsen also noted that I continued in the employ-

ment of the State Department until 1969 when I was confirmed by the United States Senate for a Presidential appointment on the Subversive Activities Control Board. The consensus among members of the Senate is that the full Senate would have rejected my nomination by the President had I been fired by the federal government for the offense alleged, or for any other reason.

The Senate hearings on my nomination were amply distributed to the press and these contain the full account of the shabby treatment that I received from the State Department to which Judge Thomsen referred in his findings.

OTTO F. OTEPKA.

Washington.

*Editor's Note: According to the State Department, Mr. Otepka was ordered dismissed by Secretary of State Rusk in 1963. He remained on the Department payroll during a long series of appeals which upheld Secretary Rusk's order. Prior to leaving office, however, Rusk revoked the dismissal order but demoted Mr. Otepka in grade from GS 15 to GS 14; and reprimanded him officially. In 1968 Secretary of State William P. Rogers also declined to exonerate Mr. Otepka of all the original charges. In March, 1969, President Nixon appointed him to a \$36,000 a year job on the Subversive Activities Control Board.*