

A PLOT ON ONASSIS CHARGED IN ARTICLE

Nixon, Burger and a Hughes Aide
Linked to 1954 'Dirty Tricks'

CHICAGO, Aug. 2 (AP) — Richard M. Nixon, who was then Vice President; Warren E. Burger, then a Justice Department employee, and Robert A. Maheu, a one-time aide to Howard R. Hughes, were part of a 1954 plot directed against the late Aristotle Onassis because of his shipping power, according to an article in the September issue of Playboy magazine.

The article, excerpted from "Spooks," a forthcoming book by Jim Hougan, said that the plot had developed after the Greek shipping magnate received permission from the late King Ibn Saud to carry Saudi Arabian oil in his ships.

Today's Washington Post quotes Mr. Maheu as confirming the basic elements of the article in a phone interview from Las Vegas, Nev. But he denied Mr. Hougan's allegation that his actions had been part of an international conspiracy.

Mr. Burger, who is now Chief Justice of the United States, denied through a spokesman that he had received intelligence reports on the campaign against Mr. Onassis.

Nixon Not Available

Mr. Nixon could not be reached for comment, and the intelligence agency refused comment.

"I wouldn't take the assignment" from Stavros Niarchos, Mr. Onassis' in-law and rival, "until I cleared it with the outfit," Mr. Maheu was quoted as saying. The "outfit," he said, was the Central Intelligence Agency, which at the time paid him a \$500 monthly retainer.

He said that he reported his anti-Onassis activities regularly to the C.I.A. The agency also helped his operatives in Rome, where derogatory stories about Mr. Onassis were given to a newspaper, he said.

Mr. Maheu also acknowledged briefing Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Hougan contends that the Jidda Agreement between King Saud and Mr. Onassis broke the monopoly control of Saudi oil shipments by the Arabian-American Oil Company, angering many American oil executives as well as Mr. Niarchos.

Campaign Is Described

Quoting extensively from the financial journalist John Gerrity, who said that he had been in on the plot, Mr. Hougan said that Mr. Niarchos, the C.I.A., the Federal Bureau of Investigation and various Government officials began a calculated "dirty tricks" campaign against Mr. Onassis.

He said that the campaign involved wiretapping Mr. Onassis' New York headquarters, shadowing his top employees and spreading smears against Mr. Onassis in the world press by means of Government leaks and bribed journalists.

The author said that the campaign had even involved the bombing and strafing of one of Mr. Onassis' whaling ships by a Peruvian fighter plane.

In the article, Mr. Hougan quotes Mr. Gerrity as saying that he and Mr. Maheu, whom Mr. Gerrity believed was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, were recruited for the campaign at a meeting in Mr. Nixon's office in early 1954, when Mr. Nixon was Vice President.

He also said that Mr. Gerrity had met with Mr. Burger, then an Assistant Attorney General, who said that he would take "judicial oversight" of any activities that Mr. Gerrity and Mr. Maheu might take against Mr. Onassis.