

Onassis Is Getting Wish--Link to JFK

By DREW PEARSON and JACK ANDERSON

WASHINGTON — On Nov. 14, 1963, this column carried an item regarding the ambition of Greek ship owner Aristotle Onassis "to be the brother-in-law of President Kennedy."

Eight days later President Kennedy was dead, and now five years later Onassis will become the husband of President Kennedy's widow.

Prior to this, during the fatal fall of 1963, Jacqueline Kennedy had gone to Greece for a cruise on the ornate Onassis yacht to dissuade her sister, Princess Lee Radziwill, from marrying Onassis. She had returned from Greece only a short time before the tragedy of Dallas.

THERE WERE SEVERAL REASONS President Kennedy was not enthusiastic about having his sister-in-law marry the big, brusque shipowner, one of them being the fact that Onassis had been embroiled in a passionate love affair with Maria Callas, the Greek opera singer. When she was discovered on the Onassis yacht, Onassis had made the remark: "I'm a sailor, and a sailor has a girl in every port."

The romance with Madame Callas had got nowhere, partly because her Italian husband had refused to give her a divorce. So Onassis turned his affections to Princess Radziwill.

Lee Radziwill had been on the Onassis yacht most of

the summer when Jackie joined her in the late summer of 1963 for a cruise through the Aegean. On the yacht at the time was Jon Agnelli, head of the Italian Fiat motor empire and Jackie's escort on previous Mediterranean cruises—a fact which had caused comment in the European press and considerable eyebrow lifting among the jet set in Nice and Rome.

THERE WERE OTHER REASONS President Kennedy could not have been enthusiastic about having Onassis as a brother-in-law. He had once been criminally indicted by the Justice Department for deceiving the United States with a phony shipping deal and had paid the United States \$7 million in settlement.

Furthermore, Onassis had made much of his vast shipping fortune at the expense of the United States.

A former stevedore who married the daughter of Stavros G. Livanos, one of the great shipping tycoons of Greece, Onassis got his start first from his father-in-law, second from buying up surplus American ships after the war.

A KINDLY UNCLE SAM WITH too many ships on his hands wanted to rehabilitate the merchant marine of European nations and as a result Greek merchants bought 98 liberty ships for a paltry down payment of \$21,780 per ship plus a Greek government loan guarantee and Greek certificates extended under the Marshall plan.

Greek shippers did not carry Marshall plan goods to

Greece free, as did French, British and Italian government steamers. On the contrary, some of the ship purchased privately from the United States were transferred to Panamanian, Liberian or Honduran registry. They paid almost no taxes in Greece, and as Greek citizens with income from Panama or Liberia, they were not required to pay taxes in the United States.

One of Onassis' rivals, both in the shipping world and in his competition for prominent American women, has been his brother-in-law S. S. Niarchos, another big Greek shipowner who married another daughter of Livanos.

NIARCHOS IS THE GREEK WHO made headlines in the United States by marrying Charlotte Ford, daughter of motor tycoon Henry Ford II. Niarchos was a fugitive from a \$16,582,000 tax judgment by Uncle Sam but managed to get it settled for about 25 cents on the dollar in time to arrive in New York one day after a baby was born to his wife. He had divorced his Greek wife to marry Charlotte, despite the big lift given him in the shipping world by his marriage into the Livanos shipping family.

Charlotte Ford, close friend of Lynda Bird Johnson, had introduced Lynda Bird to George Hamilton.

Niarchos has now left Charlotte Ford—or she left him—to return to his Greek wife.

The two Greek shipowners and two former brothers-in-law are members of the international jet set which com-

mutates to and from New York, Athens and Paris. Onassis has a home in Athens called "Mikrokavouri," which means "little crab," a yacht usually anchored in the Aegean off the Astir bathing beach, two cabanas at Vouliagmeni—another bathing beach near Athens; and a private island off the west coast of Greece.

ONASSIS HAS COME A LONG WAY from the young Greek refugee who in 1922 barely escaped from Smyrna with his life. The Greek population of Smyrna faced the alternative of being butchered by the Turkish army or throwing themselves into the sea. Onassis' father was killed, but he and his mother and sister were picked up by relief boats in Smyrna harbor as the city burned behind them.

He became a small fisherman, operated his own schooner and gradually rose to be one of the most powerful businessmen in Greece, as well as the owner of the Olympic Airways.

It was former Prime Minister Constantine Caramanlis who put Onassis in the airplane business by giving him a government monopoly. Later when Caramanlis learned that Onassis was supporting his political opposition, Caramanlis seized the big shipowner by his coat lapels and exclaimed: "I hear you are supporting the opposition after all the things I have done for you."

Onassis' reply, now famous in Athens, was, "Take your hands off the lapels of my coat. I started as a stevedore, and my arms are strong enough to reduce you to ashes."