



RIVAL OF ONASSIS ONCE HIRED MAHEU

Undermining of a Shipping Deal Disclosed at Trial

NYTimes MAY 28 1974
Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, May 27—About 20 years ago Stavros Niarchos, the Greek tanker operator, hired a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent whose office rent was paid in part by the Central Intelligence Agency and assigned him to undermine a valuable shipping contract held by Aristotle Onassis, an arch rival.

The secret agent was Robert A. Maheu, who described the incident Friday in cross examination in the Federal trial here over his \$17.3-million defamation suit against Howard R. Hughes's Summa Corporation. Mr. Maheu once worked for Mr. Hughes. His report of the Niarchos-Onassis adventure

is not a central issue in the trial and no evidence to substantiate it was offered.

Mr. Maheu said he left the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1947, went into a business venture that failed and later opened an office of his own in Washington, with the Central Intelligence Agency paying part of the bill so "I would be available to them as situations arose."

He shared the office, he said, with Carmine S. Bellino, who had also been in the F.B.I. and who was later to be a principal figure in the investigation of labor racketeering led by a committee headed by Senator John L. McClellan. Mr. Bellino recently had a leading role in the Senate Watergate committee's investigation. Mr. Maheu's testimony did not say that Mr. Bellino also had a Central Intelligence Agency relationship.

Mr. Maheu said that after opening his office he was hired to work in a proxy fight over control of the New York Central Railroad, and then was approached by a London lawyer whose name he said he could not recall.

He said the lawyer gave him

a \$5,000 retainer and told him he was to disrupt the carrying out of a contract Mr. Onassis had negotiated for transporting all the oil produced in Saudi Arabia for five and a half years. Mr. Maheu said that he obtained a copy of the contract and that experts estimated it would earn Mr. Onassis \$200-million a year for its duration.

Learns Who Client Is

Mr. Maheu said he found an American living in retirement who could help him. He identified the man as Carl Twitchell, who he said had lived in Saudi Arabia and had relationships with Government figures who advised the then-king Ibn Saud.

About that time, Mr. Maheu said, he learned that his client was Mr. Niarchos. He said he was disturbed to learn that in those times Saudi Arabia gave entry visas to visitors but withheld exit visas for the king's convenience.

With Mr. Twitchell, he said, he went to Saudi Arabia. He said they had obtained the Onassis contract and an analysis of it and had given a copy to the National Security Council. With Mr. Twitchell's help,

Mr. Maheu said, he learned that a \$1-million bribe had been paid to one of the King's ministers to have the contract signed and approved.

Mr. Maheu said that he related this to one of King Ibn Saud's advisers, and that the King send word back, by a messenger who delivered the Maheu exit visa, that the King was grateful for the information. Mr. Maheu said the contract was criticized by the United States Department of State and was soon abrogated by the Government of the King.

In cross-examination Mr. Maheu was challenged to discuss his billings to Mr. Niarchos and to say whether and where he had seen Mr. Niarchos. (Even though he worked for Mr. Hughes for 15 years, Mr. Maheu never met the reclusive billionaire.)

Mr. Maheu said he had seen Mr. Niarchos in London, New York, Washington, Rome, Beirut and Athens. He said he never submitted billings but asked during the period of the job for additional money for expenses — money that was always placed immediately in his bank account.