

CUSHING DEFENDS ONASSIS WEDDING

Says It Is Nonsense to Call Bride a 'Public Sinner'

Remarks by Cardinal Cushing are printed on Page 34.

Special to The New York Times

BOSTON, Oct. 23—Richard Cardinal Cushing, rebuking critics of the former Mrs. John F. Kennedy, has termed "a lot of nonsense" suggestions that she is "excommunicated" from the Roman Catholic Church and is a "public sinner" because of her marriage to Aristotle Socrates Onassis.

[In Vatican City, a spokesman reaffirmed the Vatican's position that the former Mrs. Kennedy was in an "irregular position" with the Roman Catholic Church because of her marriage and was barred from church sacraments, according to United Press International.]

In a talk here yesterday before a business group, the Boston Archbishop also said that he had known of the marriage plans "months ago" and had turned down requests that he use his influence to stop the marriage.

He said that "many of those

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who are identified in high places with the Administration of the late President Kennedy" and "others intimately related and associated with the Kennedy family" had got in touch with him.

The Cardinal added, however, that the former Mrs. Kennedy had been "committed" to the marriage "no matter what I said."

In another part of his talk, he said:

"Why can't she marry whomever she wants to marry, and why should I be condemned and why should she be condemned?"

The wedding of the 39-year-old widow of President Kennedy and Mr. Onassis, 62-year-old multimillionaire shipowner, took place last Sunday on Skorpios, Mr. Onassis' island in the Ionian Sea off the west coast of Greece.

Because Mr. Onassis, a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, had been divorced, the wedding raised questions about the status of his new wife in the Roman Catholic Church.

The church teaches that marriage is an indissoluble contract and forbids Catholics to marry divorced persons.

Cardinal Cushing said that he had received many letters "condemning me and condemning the church, and the church has nothing to do with it."

"I never would condemn anyone," he said. "And this idea of saying she's excommunicated, she's a public sinner, God knows who is a sinner, what a lot of nonsense. Only who is not."

"There are so many ramifications with regard to anything that might be considered as sinful that only God Almighty could really interpret them and manifest His infinite love for the sinner, while at the same time despising the sin."

Charitable View Urged

The Cardinal spoke to the Caritas Guild, made up of members of the licensed beverage industry.

Noting that caritas is the Latin word for charity, he appealed to the public to be charitable toward Mrs. Onassis.

He said that he had heard radio listeners "knocking her head off" on talk programs broadcast over Boston radio stations.

He said that charity, love and "mutual respect and esteem for one another" would be necessary "if we are ever going to get anywhere in uniting this nation."

The Cardinal married the former Jacqueline Lee Bouvier to the then Senator Kennedy in Newport, R.I., in 1953 and baptized their children.

The cleric recalled his long friendship with the former Mrs. Kennedy and said that she had visited him last Tuesday (Oct. 15), "secretly and unknown and unannounced save the fact she had contacted me."

"She spoke to me about two hours," he said. "And I let her talk because I knew she had confidence in me. And I encouraged and helped her in every possible way."

"I had a letter from her that would be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars if I allowed any of the national secular magazines to publish it, but I burned the letter. The letter was thanking me for understanding her."

Vatican's Reaction

VATICAN CITY, Oct. 23 (UPI) — Vatican officials reacted with disbelief today to Cardinal Cushing's statement that the former Mrs. Kennedy could marry "whomever she wants."

Hsgr. Fausto Vallaino, the official Vatican spokesman, reaffirmed the Vatican's position that the former American First Lady was in an "irregular position" with the Roman Catholic Church because of her marriage to Mr. Onassis and was barred from church sacraments.

"I agree with the Cardinal's statement that only God knows who is a sinner," he said. "But whoever contravenes the law of the church incurs her sanctions."

Other high Vatican sources agreed with the Cardinal's statement that Mrs. Onassis was not excommunicated or a public sinner.

Couple Go for Swim

SKORPIOS ISLAND, Greece, Oct. 23 (AP) — Mrs. Onassis and her husband went for a swim today in a secluded cove on the third day of their honeymoon.

Newsmen in boats found the cove.

Mrs. Onassis was paddling about in a yellow one-piece bathing suit with a petaled bathing cap. She left the water in apparent annoyance when she saw the reporters and went into the trees.

Her husband took his time drying off on the beach. Then both disappeared in the direction of their yacht.

Soviet Press Derisive

MOSCOW, Oct. 23 (UPI) — The Soviet press made its first mention of the Kennedy-Onassis marriage today by questioning the bride's taste and deriding the publicity in America's news media.

The weekly newspaper of the Soviet writers' union, Literary Gazette, said that Mrs. Onassis' life had previously been dominated by "the quest of beauty."

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