

JUN 18 1958

Approved For Release 2000/05/24 : CIA-RDP75-00149

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Committee Holds Onassis To Slate

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[Maritime Editor of The Sun]

Washington, June 17—The House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee this afternoon refused Aristotle S. Onassis ten minutes to clarify the whole matter of his American-flag tanker cancellations.

When the Greek shipping magnate rose in the audience while the House committee was questioning Clarence G. Morse, maritime administrator, about the contracts, Mr. Onassis was told to sit down and let the committee run its own show.

His turn to testify will come Thursday, according to Representative Bonner (D., N.C.), committee chairman.

Morse Questioned 4 Hours

The Argentine citizen, who is reputed to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars in ship tonnage—although much of it is tied up without earnings in the present low charter market—drew attention away from Mr. Morse, who had undergone four hours of grilling by the members of the House subcommittee.

Mr. Bonner apparently was a bit miffed that someone should interrupt his committee operation. He told Mr. Onassis to sit down, hit the stand with his gavel and broke an ash tray. The audience roared.

From Traviata To Tosca

After today's session ended, reporters asked Mr. Onassis what he had been going to say, the short, thick-haired man smiled and spoke from the musical world:

"Today you have been hearing 'La Traviata', but when I am on the stand you will hear 'La Tosca'."

Both operas are tragedies concerning the deaths of beautiful women, the former by tuberculosis and the latter by suicide. How they are linked to this canceling of 198,500 tons of new ship construction remained a mystery tonight.

The 198,500 tons—one 106,500 tanker and two 46,000-tonners—was to have been built under American flag as part of an agreement made in connection with a settlement for the illegal purchase of surplus ships at the end of World War II.

The settlement was made with the Department of Jus-

nice and the Maritime Administration.

After Mr. Onassis announced formally that he could not build the new ships because of the recent oil import restrictions, the Justice Department entered

an \$8,000,000-plus suit against him last week.

The House committee became interested in the settlement of the case last year at the instigation of Representative Zelenko (D., N.Y.), who today crossed words with Mr. Morse a number of times.

Zelenko Denied Rumor

Mr. Zelenko's interest in the Onassis situation has been said to be more than just that of an ordinary congressman, but he denied last year a charge that his law firm represented another major shipowner.

Mr. Morse, who is reputed to have an even temper and to keep an open door to anyone who wishes to discuss maritime activities with him, became angered when Mr. Zelenko asked him repeatedly why he entered into discussions with Mr. Onassis on the ships mentioned since they were supposed to be built under an irrevocable trust fund set up for the Onassis children.

Mr. Morse replied that Mr. Onassis was a stockholder of a corporation holding part of the interest in these ships as well as being father of the children involved.

But that explanation was not sufficient for Mr. Zelenko, who repeatedly attempted to read something else into the situation.

The witness explained that when he knew the ships probably would be canceled under today's market conditions, he did try to work out a deal to get two other tankers Mr. Onassis was building in this country for foreign registry transferred to American flag.

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