

Formosa Won't Pirate Book

TAIPEI, Feb. 1 (UPI)—The "bookleggers" of Formosa, under considerable pressure, will pass up a literary windfall.

William Manchester's "The Death of a President" will stay off their presses.

They promised the government of the Republic of China they would pirate neither the unexpurgated nor the approved version.

It had appeared they had a bonanza on their hands that would top James Michener's "Hawaii," the best-selling pirated novel in the history of this strange business.

When the Manchester-Kennedy family controversy began, word got around that Taipei's bookleggers had managed to get page proofs of the book

and were ready to publish reproduced copies.

The American embassy got in touch with the Nationalist government, which called in the "bookleggers."

A few hours later, the government officially assured the embassy that no copy of the book was in Taipei and that

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no publishing company would pirate it even if it were.

"We don't want to jeopardize our country's traditional friendship with the United States," the owner of a book pirating company said.

In Formosa, book piracy is legal, since China has not joined the universal copyright convention.

Major book pirates believe they should stick to textbooks and stay away from nonfiction.

A reproduced textbook has an assured sale of from 500 to 3,000 copies a year while even a pirated best-selling novel seldom goes over 200.

The book pirating business started more than 20 years ago on the China mainland.

Pirates became internationally prominent almost overnight in 1960 when two of them reproduced the 12-volume Encyclopedia Britannica in large quantity.

A set sold for \$45 as against the average price of \$350 for the originals in the United States. A total of 3,000 sets were printed and at least 1,000 of them found their way to the United States and other countries.

An estimated 4,500 to 5,000 titles, nearly all English-language books first published in the United States, have been reproduced without authorization in Taipei in the last decade.