



The Paperback Aggressiveness

SFChronicle

OCT 29 1974

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New York

HOWARD KAMINSKY, the president of Warner Paperback Library, a paperback publishing house, is a far cry from the tweedy, stiff-upper-lip publishers of yore. He wears flashy suits. His talk is salty. His manners are sometimes runyon-esque. As one colleague said, "Alfred A. Knopf he is not."

And yet when it came to negotiating for the memoirs of the 37th President of the United States, Richard M. Nixon, the first deal was pulled off, not by some Doubleday or Scribner scion, but by Kaminsky and another Warner executive, William Sarnoff, according to Mr. Nixon's literary agent, Irving Paul Lazar.

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KAMINSKY'S disclosure that Warner had acquired "the complete rights" to publish the memoirs underscored the growing power and aggressiveness of paperback publishers. Traditionally, the paperbacks have bought reprint rights to works from the original, hard-cover publishers. But Kaminsky says he is now empowered to sell the hard-cover rights, and other rights, to publishers here and around the world.

"It's the paperback houses that make

the headlines now," said Nancy Hardin, a literary agent with the Ziegler Ross Agency in Los Angeles. "It's only in the last year or so that you would dream of the President's memoirs being bought by a paperback house; it indicates the shift in power and prestige in the industry."

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ROSS CLAIBORNE, the editorial director of Dell Publishing Company, cited another reason for paperback publishing's aggressiveness.

"It's undeniable that hard-cover houses in the past have sold reprint rights for large sums of money to paperback houses — and then totally abdicated their responsibility of trying to promote the books," he said. A lot of paperback publishers have become bitter because books they paid large sums of money for were not supported properly in the hard-cover editions — so that has forced paperback publishers to think more about original publishing."

But beneath these and other immediate causes lies the reason for the growing paperback muscle: "It's inevitable: they've got more money," said Julian Bach, the New York literary agent.

New York Times