

EA129

MANCHESTER

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ADVANCE FOR AMS OF SUNDAY, DEC. 25

"DEATH OF A PRESIDENT"

BY HAL COOPER

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

(ADVANCE) NEW YORK, DEC. 24 (AP)--ON MARCH 26, 1964, AUTHOR WILLIAM MANCHESTER, 42, SIGNED A "MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING" TO WRITE A BOOK.

THE BOOK WAS TO BE "A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS OF AND SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY ON NOV. 22, 1963."

THE SECOND SIGNATURE ON THE MEMORANDUM WAS THAT OF SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY, D-N.Y., THE LATE PRESIDENT'S BROTHER.

THE BOOK WAS AUTHORIZED BY THE KENNEDY FAMILY. MANCHESTER COULD EXPECT--AND IN SOME AREAS WAS GUARANTEED--HELP IN HIS RESEARCH WHICH WOULD BE DENIED ANY OTHER WRITER CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PROJECT UNTIL NOV. 22, 1968.

BUT THE MEMORANDUM WAS TO LEAD TO ONE OF THE GREATEST CONTROVERSIES IN THE HISTORY OF U.S. PUBLISHING.

MANCHESTER SPENT MONTH AFTER MONTH PAINSTAKINGLY TRACING THE MOST OBSCURE DETAILS OF EVENTS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE ASSASSINATION IN DALLAS, TEX.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY, THE PRESIDENT'S WIDOW, GAVE HIM A 10-HOUR TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW EARLY IN 1964 WHICH BARED SOME OF HER INNER-MOST FEELINGS.

RECOLLECTIONS WERE CONTRIBUTED BY FORMER AIDES AND INTIMATES OF KENNEDY. THROUGH THE KENNEDY FAMILY, MANCHESTER HAD ACCESS TO HELPFUL PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND PERTINENT DOCUMENTS.

BY THE MIDDLE OF 1966 MANCHESTER'S 300,000-WORD MANUSCRIPT, TITLED "THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT," WAS IN THE HANDS OF HARPER & ROW, THE PUBLISHING FIRM NOMINATED BY THE KENNEDY FAMILY.

HARPER & ROW DECIDED TO PUBLISH THE BOOK NEXT APRIL.

LOOK MAGAZINE PAID \$665,000 FOR THE RIGHT TO SERIALIZE 60,000 WORDS STARTING WITH ITS JAN. 24 EDITION, DUE ON THE NEWSSTANDS JAN. 10.

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DELL PUBLISHING CO., OFFERED \$1 MILLION FOR THE PAPERBACK RIGHTS.

LUCRATIVE BIDS FOR RIGHTS TO PUBLISH OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES POURED IN.

THEN CAME A SERIOUS SNAG.



THE "MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING" PROVIDED THAT "THE COMPLETED MANUSCRIPT SHALL BE REVIEWED BY MRS. JOHN F. KENNEDY AND ROBERT F. KENNEDY, AND THE FINAL TEXT SHALL NOT BE PUBLISHED UNLESS AND UNTIL APPROVED BY THEM."

AS THE MANUSCRIPT DEVELOPED, IT HAD BEEN READ ON THEIR BEHALF BY FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES.

MRS. KENNEDY WAS UPSET BY WHAT THE READERS REPORTED. IT APPEARED TO HER THAT SOME REFERENCES TO HER AND TO HER CHILDREN, CAROLINE AND JOHN F., JR., WERE TOO INTIMATE, SHE INSISTED ON DELETIONS.

THERE WERE REPEATED CONFERENCES BETWEEN KENNEDY EMISSARIES AND AUTHOR MANCHESTER. MANY CHANGES WERE MADE. FINALLY, WITH THE PUBLICATION DATE FOR LOOK'S FIRST INSTALLMENT DRAWING NEAR, MANCHESTER BALKED AT ANY FURTHER TAMPERING.

AND ON DEC. 15 MRS. KENNEDY ANNOUNCED SHE WOULD SUE TO PREVENT PUBLICATION OF BOTH THE SERIALIZATION AND THE BOOK.



"IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR," SHE SAID, "THAT MY ONLY REDRESS IS TO ASK THE COURTS TO ENFORCE MY RIGHTS AND POSTPONE PUBLICATION UNTIL THE MINIMUM LIMITS OF MY FAMILY'S PRIVACY CAN BE PROTECTED."

WHAT PRECISELY DID SHE OBJECT TO? MRS. KENNEDY DIVULGED NO DETAILS.

HOWEVER, A FLOOD OF LEAKS FROM PERSONS WHO HAD READ THE MANUSCRIPT QUICKLY BROUGHT TO LIGHT SOME OF THE PASSAGES SHE CONSIDERED OBJECTIONABLE:

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--QUOTATIONS FROM A LOVE LETTER SHE WROTE TO HER HUSBAND WHILE SHE WAS ON A VACATION IN ATHENS.

--AN ACCOUNT IN HER OWN WORDS OF THE LAST NIGHT THEY SPENT TOGETHER BEFORE THE ASSASSINATION.

--A WORD PICTURE OF THE STUNNED YOUNG WIDOW LUBRICATING ONE OF HER RINGS WITH PETROLEUM JELLY AND SLIPPING IT ON A FINGER OF THE DEAD KENNEDY'S HAND.

--DETAILS OF BICKERING AMONG MEMBERS OF THE KENNEDY FAMILY OVER WHETHER THE PRESIDENT SHOULD BE BURIED IN MASSACHUSETTS OR IN ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY.

--CONTENTS OF LETTERS FROM MRS. KENNEDY AND CAROLINE WHICH WERE PLACED IN THE COFFIN BEFORE BURIAL.

THE BOOK ALSO CONTAINED MATTER WHICH COULD PROVE POLITICALLY EMBARRASSING BOTH TO SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, SEN. EDWARD M. KENNEDY, D-MASS.

TWO MEN IN THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS TOLD THE NEW YORK TIMES THAT MANCHESTER HAD DEPICTED LYNDON B. JOHNSON AS A "WEAK AND INEFFECTUAL" VICE PRESIDENT AND CAST AN UNFAVORABLE LIGHT ON HIS ACTIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ASSASSINATION.

"JOHNSON WILL ABSOLUTELY HATE IT," ONE SAID.

PUBLISHER BENNETT CERF OF RANDOM HOUSE SAID THE BOOK DESCRIBED MRS. KENNEDY AND HER FRIENDS AS "SHOCKED AND INFURIATED" WHEN THEY WENT TO A DALLAS AIRPORT WITH KENNEDY'S BODY AND FOUND JOHNSON AND HIS PARTY ALREADY ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, THE PRESIDENTIAL JET PLANE.



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SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LAWSUIT, WHICH CHARGED BREACH OF CONTRACT, WAS BROUGHT SOLELY BECAUSE OF HIS SISTER-IN-LAW'S FEELINGS.

"SHE IS VERY, VERY, VERY SENSITIVE," HE TOLD A COLUMNIST PETE HAMILL OF THE NEW YORK POST.

THE PETITION TO BLOCK THE BOOK BY INJUNCTION WAS BASED MAINLY ON A PASSAGE IN THE "MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING" FIXING THE EARLIEST PUBLICATION DATE AS NOV. 22, 1968, AND GIVING MRS. KENNEDY AND SEN. ROBERT KENNEDY THE RIGHT OF FINAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

MANCHESTER INSISTED THAT THIS CLAUSE WAS SUPERSEDED BY A TELEGRAM FROM ROBERT KENNEDY IN JULY ASSURING HIM THAT THE KENNEDYS WOULD "PLACE NO OBSTACLES" IN THE WAY OF PUBLICATION. THE SENATOR DENIED THAT THE TELEGRAM WAS IN ANY WAY A WAIVER OF THE MEMORANDUM.

IN A STATEMENT DEFENDING HIS DECISION TO PUBLISH, MANCHESTER SAID:

"IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT I HAVE BROKEN FAITH WITH MRS. KENNEDY, THAT I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HER CONFIDENCE IN ME AND THAT I RECORDED TOO FAITHFULLY HER WORDS AND EMOTIONS. I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE SO...

"THE KENNEDY FAMILY ASKED TO HAVE THE BOOK READ BY A NUMBER OF FRIENDS AND ADVISERS. THIS WAS DONE, AND APPROPRIATE CHANGES WERE MADE IN CONSULTATION WITH THESE DISTINGUISHED FRIENDS.

"MRS. KENNEDY ASKED TO HAVE YET ANOTHER FRIEND READ THE BOOK. THIS, TOO, WAS DONE AND YET MORE CHANGES WERE MADE.

"HOWEVER, IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THIS IS MY BOOK.

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"NEITHER MRS. KENNEDY NOR ANY MEMBER OF THE KENNEDY FAMILY NOR ANYONE ELSE IS IN ANY WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR MY RESEARCH FOR THE CONTENT OF MY WORK.

"IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY, AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT MY BOOK CAN WITHSTAND ANY OBJECTIVE TEST, PARTICULARLY THE TEST OF TIME. I ASK ONLY THAT IT BE GIVEN THE CHANCE."

CASS CANFIELD, HEAD OF HARPER & ROW, HAD THIS TO SAY:

"IN THE INTEREST OF HISTORICAL ACCURACY AND OF THE PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW THE TRUE FACTS OF THE AWESOME TRAGEDY--THE RIGHT TO KNOW WHICH LED THE KENNEDY FAMILY TO REQUEST MR. MANCHESTER TO WRITE HIS BOOK AND US TO PUBLISH IT--WE JOIN WITH HIM IN DEFENDING THE BOOK'S RIGHT TO LIVE."



FROM A KENNEDY FAMILY SPOKESMAN CAME THIS REBUTTAL:

"NO AMOUNT OF RHETORIC ABOUT "HISTORICAL ACCURACY" OR THE PUBLIC'S "RIGHT TO KNOW" CAN ALTER THE NATURE OF THIS CONTROVERSY--WHETHER MR. MANCHESTER AND THE PUBLISHERS BROKE THE WRITTEN AGREEMENT, FROM WHICH BREACH ENORMOUS PROFITS WILL APPARENTLY FLOW."

JUSTICE SAUL STREIT OF THE NEW YORK SUPREME COURT HAD SET A HEARING OF LEGAL ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST AN INJUNCTION FOR TUESDAY IN MANHATTAN. HE HAD PROMISED A QUICK DECISION.

THEN, WITH LAWYERS FOR BOTH SIDES CONFERRING URGENTLY BEHIND THE SCENES, CAME THE BREAK IN THE CASE: LOOK AGREED ON WEDNESDAY TO FINAL CHANGES IN THE TEXT DEMANDED BY MRS. KENNEDY, AND SHE AGREED TO DROP LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE MAGAZINE.

HARPER & ROW QUICKLY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO MAKE A SIMILAR SETTLEMENT.

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ATTORNEYS FOR THE FIRM AND FOR MRS. KENNEDY PROMPTLY BEGAN NEGOTIATIONS, AND A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE CONFERENCE SAID: "THERE IS GENERALLY A GOOD FEELING OF WORKING SOME OF THESE THINGS OUT."

NONETHELESS, SEGMENTS OF THE BOOK TO WHICH MRS. KENNEDY OBJECTS APPARENTLY WILL BE PRINTED. THE WEST GERMAN MAGAZINE STERN HAS SAID IT WILL NOT CONSIDER ITSELF BOUND BY LOOK'S AGREEMENT TO REVISE THE TEXT, AND WILL PRINT THE SERIALIZATION WITHOUT CHANGE.

ANOTHER POSSIBLE SOURCE OF AN UNEXPURGATED EDITION OF THE BOOK MAY HAVE BEEN SHUT OFF. THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID IN WASHINGTON IT HAD RECEIVED "SOME ASSURANCES" FROM NATIONALIST CHINA CONCERNING PUBLICATION OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT BY THE BOOK PIRACY BUSINESS THAT THRIVES ON THE ISLAND OF FORMOSA. THE DEPARTMENT DIDN'T ELABORATE, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN UNOFFICIAL REPORTS THAT NATIONALIST CHINA'S GOVERNMENT WILL NOT PERMIT PUBLICATION.

EVAN THOMAS, THE HARPER & ROW EDITOR ASSIGNED TO THE BOOK, SAID AUTHOR MANCHESTER HAS BEEN KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KENNEDYS. WHAT WAS HIS REACTION? THOMAS WOULDN'T SAY.

BUT, BARRING LAST MINUTE HITCHES, IT APPEARED THAT "THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT" HAD BEEN SAVED FOR AN AVID READING PUBLIC, AND FOR POSTERITY.

END ADVANCE FOR AMS OF SUNDAY, DEC. 25; MOVED DEC. 23

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