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book pirates

by Spencer Moosa

TAIPEI, Formosa, Dec. 22 (AP)- Although nothing official has been said on the subject, the Chinese Nationalist government will probably block any attempt by Formosa's busy book pirates to issue an unauthorized reprint of William Manchester's controversial book "The Death of a President."

Government leaders are well aware of the bad light in which Nationalist China would find itself if a pirated edition of the book, or material deleted from the original manuscript, were to make its appearance on Formosa.

Publishing sources in New York say material deleted from Manchester's manuscript has been sent to Formosa for reproduction. Leading ~~French~~ book pirating companies denied possession of such material. ~~Leadingxxx~~

Copyright protection in Formosa for Manchester's book or of any other can be obtained by a registration payment of six times the cost of a single copy ~~of the~~ to the Ministry of Interior.

Under a 1963 law, anyone pirating a book so registered is liable to a fine ranging from \$37.50 to \$225 and/or a jail term of one to three years.

Many foreign publishers are copyrighting books in Formosa to obtain this legal protection. Others are making arrangements ~~to~~ for authorized reprinting for distribution only within Formosa.

Books are pirating in Formosa by the photo offset printing method and are sold for about 10 to 20 percent of the cost of the original editions.

Because of angry clamor among book publishers abroad, the Nationalist Chinese government in 1963 banned export of pirated books and declared offenders would be treated as smugglers liable to seven years in prison.

About 25 companies are believed to be engaged in the book piracy business in Formosa.

The leading book pirate companies have jointly issued a 1966-67 catalogue in which a blank space is left for the individual concerns to imprint their own names and addresses.

The catalogue contains about 5,000 titles, all but a handful of which are pirated.

The headings under which the books are listed include dictionaries, best sellers, the humanities, engineering, pure science, agriculture, business administration, social science, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.

The book pirates have for years been portraying themselves as public benefactors. In 1962, when publishers abroad were raising an outcry against their activities, one of the book pirates said: "we have been helping our government to raise the cultural standard of our country by publishing books at prices which students and scholars can afford.

"We have also," he said, "saved our government much foreign exchange which importation of books would have absorbed."

Most people, however, do not think of the book pirates as benefactors but as businessmen out for profit. Their activities moved one versifier to write:

"The pirates of Formosa

"Don't roam the Spanish Main:

-- unauthorized --

"They publish books ~~unauthorized~~

"And ride the gravy train."

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