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night lead kennedy book

New York, Dec. 22 (AP)- Secret meetings were under way today to clear the controversial book "The Death of a President" for publication by Harper & Row in April. Lawyers were granted four additional days to work out an agreement.

The meetings follow a compromise last night between representatives of Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Cowles Communications Inc. allowing the 80,000-word, four-part series to begin ~~in~~ in the Jan. 10 issue of Look magazine.

Later the meetings were adjourned, without any indication of whether or not progress had been made, or when they might be resumed.

Look agreed to make some changes and deletions in William Manchester's book concerning the private life of Mrs. Kennedy and her two children. Sections of the book reportedly unfavorable to President Johnson will remain. The book deals with events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy.

It was learned today, meanwhile, that Mrs. Kennedy and her children, Caroline and John Jr., are booked on a flight to Antigua, British West Indies, on Dec. 26. This is the day before a scheduled hearing in her damage suit against Cowles, Harper & Row and Manchester.

A source close to the dispute said today's meetings "at this point are limited to the lawyers."

He said others -- apparently representatives of Mrs. Kennedy and the publishers -- may be brought into the meetings later.

The source noted, however, that an agreement is unlikely to be reached today because the 300,000-word book is nearly four times longer than the serialization. "There is additional material which the Kennedys will want out," he said.

The lawyers in the case met for 15 minutes this morning in the chambers of Supreme Court Justice Saul S. Streit.

The defense attorneys asked for and were granted permission to

delay their answers to Mrs. Kennedy's charges in her damage suit until ~~Thursday~~ Tuesday, Dec. 27. The answers had been due Friday. The delay is an indication the negotiations may be extended over several days.

Edward S. Greenbaum, chief counsel for Harper & Row, said earlier the publishers "will be very glad" to settle the controversy with Mrs. Kennedy along the lines of her out-of-court agreement with Look.

Meanwhile the West German illustrated magazine Stern announced in Hamburg that it would publish a complete and unabridged serialization of the book. The editor in chief, Henri Nannen, said Stern was not bound by any agreement between Look and Mrs. Kennedy.

Nannen said Stern had paid \$72,000 for the German serial rights, and the contract between Stern and Look did not provide for any changes or cutting of the text.

After consulting with attorney's for Mrs. Kennedy, a source close to the family said:

"We do not know anything about the Stern statement except Look represented to us that they had made no agreement which permitted Stern of any other publication to which Look had sold rights to publish ^{any} ~~any~~ text ~~with~~ other than that which appears in Look magazine."

William Attwood, editor-in-chief of Cowles Communications Inc., publisher of Look, said "Look and Cowles will go to any length to prevent the publication by Stern of any part of Mr. Manchester's book that has not been approved" by Mrs. Kennedy.

He said he had dealt with officials of Stern in the past and assumed them to be "responsible publishers."

He commented, however, that "the magazine has only the interest of putting 'unexpurgated' on the cover and selling more copies."

Attwood said he was sending Look's syndicate manager, Joseph Wurzel, to Germany immediately to meet with Stern's editor.

Look, which paid Manchester \$665,000 for serial rights, sold foreign rights to a number of publications.

Despite efforts by Mrs. Kennedy to delete passages in Manchester's book that she considered private, sources in the publishing field said it was almost certain that bootleg copies of the manuscript were sold to outlaw publishers in Formosa.

But government sources said in Taipei today that the Chinese Nationalist government probably would block any attempt to issue an unauthorized ~~dist~~ edition of the book.

In addition, many of the disputed passages from the manuscript -- or passages purposed to be from the manuscript -- have been widely printed in newspapers here and abroad.

It was also reported today that at least one counterfeit copy of the manuscript was circulating in New York.

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"The Death of a President."

"The author, William Manchester, and the publisher of Look Magazine have assumed complete and sole responsibility."

Asked to elaborate on that, a Kennedy spokesman said today "We can't very well approve what we haven't seen." He said the Kennedy negotiators had not had access to the manuscript in five weeks and that they have not seen the final proof.

He said the manuscript shown to Kennedy representatives last Saturday -- at a session attended by Mrs. Kennedy -- was not the final proof.

In another part of her statement, Mrs. Kennedy made what was interpreted by some as an apparent but indirect allusion to President Johnson:

"I have been told there are historical inaccuracies and unfair references in the book. That they have been written is unfortunate. However, it was clear before bringing this suit that historical judgments, even if inaccurate, could not properly be suppressed by a court of law. In time, history will deal fairly and justly with this period."

In Hamburg, the magazine Stern said in a statement it did not think Mrs. Kennedy could block West German publication through court action, since only that which is probably false or damaging to a person's honor can be prohibited under German law.

The magazine said neither of these grounds apply to the serial serialization, even though the political prestige of President Johnson might be injured by parts of the book.

"I can understand that Sen. Robert Kennedy would like to avert this dispute (with President Johnson) for the sake of his political career, but this can be no reason for not reporting the complete, unmodified, historical truth," Nannen commented.

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