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HAMBURG, GERMANY, JAN. 14 (AP)-COWLES COMMUNICATIONS, INC., WILL BRING A LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE WEST GERMAN MAGAZINE DER STERN OVER PUBLICATION OF WILLIAM MANCHESTER'S "THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT" ITS EDITOR IN CHIEF WILLIAM ATTWOOD SAID TODAY.

HE ANNOUNCED THE DECISION IN A STATEMENT AFTER MEETING STERN EDITOR HENRI NANNEN LAST NIGHT TO TRY TO PERSUADE HIM TO HAVE CERTAIN PORTIONS OF THE GERMAN SERIALIZATION CUT. NANNEN SAID AFTER THE MEETING NO CUTS WOULD BE MADE.

ATTWOOD'S STATEMENT SAID DER STERN WAS ONE OF THE MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS IN 25 COUNTRIES THAT HAD AGREED TO PUBLISH THE SERIALIZATION OF "DEATH OF A PRESIDENT" AFTER ITS INITIAL PUBLICATION IN LOOK MAGAZINE. DER STERN WAS THE ONLY ONE NOT HONORING ITS COMMITMENT, HE SAID.

"IT HAS ALREADY BROKEN ITS CONTRACT BY PUSHING AHEAD ITS PUBLICATION DATE AND DISTRIBUTING ITS MAGAZINE BEFORE THAT OF THE PUBLISHERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHO ARE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH," ATTWOOD'S STATEMENT SAID.

"NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES IN 24 COUNTRIES STATED THEY WOULD MODIFY OR DELETE PARAGRAPHS OF A PURELY PERSONAL NATURE IN 'THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT'....THOSE PARAGRAPHS WHICH DO NOT AFFECT HISTORY, BUT DO CAUSE DISTRESS TO MRS. JACQUELINE KENNEDY.

"DER STERN WAS PUBLICLY QUOTED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS AGREEING 'TO PUBLISH NOTHING THAT COULD HURT THE FEELINGS OF MRS. KENNEDY AND HER CHILDREN'. BUT DER STERN HAS NOW PRESUMED TO DECIDE FOR ITSELF WHAT ITEMS OF A PERSONAL NATURE WILL NOT. ONLY ONE PUBLICATION, DER STERN, PRESUMES TO TELL MRS. KENNEDY WHAT SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT DISTRESS HER.

"BECAUSE DER STERN KNEW DURING OUR COMMUNICATIONS OF THE LAST THREE WEEKS THAT THEY WOULD NOT HONOR THEIR CONTRACT, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TELLING US THEY WOULD, WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BRING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THEM.

"IN FAIRNESS TO THE MANY HONORABLE EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHO ARE OBSERVING THEIR CONTRACTS, AND IN FAIRNESS TO MRS. JOHN F. KENNEDY, WE HOPE OUR EFFORT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL."

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WILLIAM J. VAN DEN HEUVEL, ATTORNEY FOR MRS. KENNEDY, DISCLOSED THAT HE PRESENTED A PERSONAL PLEA FROM MRS. KENNEDY AT THE MEETING WITH NANNEN AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

HE QUOTED MRS. KENNEDY AS SAYING: "YOU KNOW THAT THE PASSAGES IT IS DESIRED TO HAVE DELETED FROM THE MANUSCRIPT DEAL ONLY WITH PERSONAL FEELINGS, THEY ARE IN NO WAY ESSENTIAL TO A RECORD OF MY HUSBAND'S ADMINISTRATION. EVERY OTHER COUNTRY WITH A DEVOTION TO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS HAS RECOGNIZED THIS. I SHOULD NOT THINK THAT GERMANY, ALWAYS AT THE CENTER OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S CONCERN, WOULD WISH TO BE THE ONLY ONE TO IGNORE THE PRIVATE FEELINGS OF A WIFE AND THE INNOCENT GRIEFS OF TWO SMALL CHILDREN."

VAN DEN HEUVEL SAID IN HIS STATEMENT:

"THE MAJOR DELETIONS REFER TO PRIVATE MOMENTS THAT NO DECENT PERSON WOULD WANT TO TRANSGRESS IN THE SORROW OF MRS. KENNEDY. THEY ARE NOT NOW, AND THERE NEVER WAS IN ANY OF OUR DISCUSSIONS, ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR CUTS OR CHANGES THAT HAVE ANY POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS REGARDING SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY."

VAN DEN HEUVEL SAID HE OFFERED TO NANNEN TO REVIEW EVERY CHANGE "RIGHT THEN AND THERE" AND IF HE DID NOT AGREE THAT THE CHANGE AFFECTED ONLY THE PERSONEL PRIVACY OF MRS. KENNEDY AND HER CHILDREN, HE WOULD TAKE THE OBJECTIONS BACK TO NEW YORK.

HE SAID HE ALSO PROPOSED THAT A PANEL OF LEADING GERMAN EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS MIGHT REVIEW THE MATERIAL BUT ADDED NONE OF HIS SUGGESTIONS WERE ACCEPTED BY DER STERN.

VAN DEN HEUVEL CONCLUDED: "THE LEGAL ACTION ANNOUNCED TODAY TO BE TAKEN BY LOOK MAGAZINE IS SOMETHING THAT NEITHER LOOK NOR MRS. KENNEDY WANTED TO SEE UNDERTAKEN. BUT WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE RIGHTS, DECENCY AND PRIVATE FEELINGS THAT THE LAWS OF ALL OTHER NATIONS HAVE PROTECTED CAN FIND SANCTUARY IN GERMANY AS WELL."

DER STERN BOUGHT THE GERMAN SERIALIZATION RIGHTS TO THE BOOK FROM LOOK FOR \$72,500. IT PUBLISHED THE FIRST INSTALMENT MONDAY (9 JAN) AND HAS REPORTED ALREADY STARTED PRINTING COPIES CONTAINING THE SECOND INSTALMENT.

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ATTWOOD'S STATEMENT DID NOT DISCLOSE WHAT TYPE OF LEGAL ACTION WAS PLANNED OR WHAT COURT THE ACTION WAS TO BE INSTITUTED.

ATTWOOD IMMEDIATELY LEFT FOR NEW YORK AFTER THE STATEMENT WAS RELEASED AND COULD NOT BE REACHED FOR COMMENT.