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## Piracy in the CIS — the Wild West?

*The pirating of video cassettes and computer software programs in Eastern Europe is estimated to cost the owners and producers millions of dollars every year in lost royalties and sales. **FBN's Ian PRYDE reports***

"We really started getting problems with piracy in Eastern Europe and the USSR when communism collapsed and people suddenly had much freer access to books, videos and music cassettes than before," says Dr. Harald Heker, a lawyer specializing in media and copyright law and a member of the management board of the Frankfurt-based Borsenverein des deutschen Buchhandels (German Publishers and Booksellers Association). "The laws on copyright which used to exist in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were all tailored to the communist system. Piracy was limited because there were no independent publishers and the award of licenses for the printing, distribution and sale of foreign material was under state control. These laws have now gone by the board and there are no effective laws

screens a few years after their initial release, and this "window of opportunity" is readily exploited by pirates catering for an audience eager for the latest Hollywood offerings. And whereas foreign films in the West are normally dubbed by professional actors working from a script, the illegal copies available in Russia are translated on the spot by one interpreter who translates and reads all the parts himself. Working without a script, he is forced to miss out large chunks of dialogue which are too fast or complicated. The translation is not dubbed as such but merely grafted on to the tape, leaving the original dialogue largely audible. "Official" translations on Russian TV also use the same technique but it is highly unsatisfactory and often does violent justice to a film, especially one with any artistic merits.