

Press Release

STATEMENT BY GUNTER THIELEN, BERTELSMANN AG CHAIRMAN AND CEO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE INDEPENDENT HISTORICAL COMMISSION'S FINAL REPORT

Munich, October 7, 2002 – On behalf of Bertelsmann's worldwide family of businesses and employees, I would like to sincerely thank the Independent Historical Commission, particularly Professor Saul Friedlaender, for its diligent work over the past four years in painstakingly researching and documenting our company's history during a profoundly troubling period.

I would also like to thank Herr Hersch Fischler, whose previous research and writing on Bertelsmann's history were instrumental in our decision to establish this Commission.

A 1998 article by Herr Fischler raised serious questions about how Bertelsmann was publicly representing its activities during World War II. Immediately following this, Bertelsmann responded decisively and responsibly by empanelling an independent commission to investigate the company's history during this era and to identify any inaccuracies.

As part of our company's commitment to transparency and openness on this issue, the Commission was given full access to all of our corporate records and complete autonomy in research, investigation, publication and selecting its members. Bertelsmann was the first German media or publishing company to open its archives in this fashion.

Today, Bertelsmann accepts the Commission's report as our official, public corporate record and as the best foundation for further public and academic discussion. I would like to express our sincere regret for the inaccuracies the Commission has uncovered in our previous corporate history of the World War II era, as well as for the wartime activities that have been brought to light.

This experience has reinforced for us why historical accuracy and transparency must be an integral part of our company's core values, and we hope to serve as an example to

other companies about the importance of this. This experience has also shown us how, as one of the largest media companies in the world, we have a special responsibility to promote openness and public debate on these issues. Additionally, it has strengthened our continuing commitment to support democracy, tolerance and human rights as well as Jewish causes and communities around the world.

We have learned that we cannot neglect our history; rather, our goal was to uncover the truth and learn from the mistakes that were made in the past. As such, we invite and encourage employees, academics and other interested private parties to read the report and to discuss, debate and examine its findings.

I would like to conclude by announcing that beginning tomorrow, October 8, Bertelsmann will open an interim corporate archive in the space vacated by the Independent Historical Commission in Munich. Here, the complete archives of Bertelsmann's corporate history will be open to the public and managed by a team of professional historians through March 31, 2003. At this time, the archives will be transferred to the Bertelsmann Foundation in Gütersloh, where they will remain available to the public.

For further questions, please contact:

Bertelsmann AG

Media Relations

Corporate Communications

Tel.: +49 – 52 41 – 80 24 66