

## PRESS RELEASE

### Report on Bertelsmann's History under National Socialism Now Available in Digital Form

- In 2002, a commission of renowned historians set standards for the reappraisal of a company's history
- Independent academic investigation has been a guideline for Bertelsmann ever since – most recently in reviewing the history of “Stern”

Gütersloh, November 22, 2023 – Bertelsmann is making the Independent Historical Commission's (IHC) report on the history of the company under National Socialism digitally accessible for the first time. The work, which was published in 2002 and has since been available as a printed book, can now be accessed in full and free of charge via a new dedicated page on the website of the international media, services, and education company. The research report, which was compiled under the direction of four renowned historians, can be found there as a digital document with extensive search functions. Between 1999 and 2002, Bertelsmann became the first German media company to have its corporate history during the National Socialist era independently researched.

Bertelsmann Chairman & CEO Thomas Rabe said: “By convening the Independent Historical Commission to investigate Bertelsmann's history during the Third Reich, the company set standards for dealing with one's own corporate history. Since the report was presented in 2002, Bertelsmann has fully embraced the findings of the IHC report and dealt with them openly and transparently.” Thomas Rabe continues: “The Commission's unrestricted autonomy, i.e. complete freedom from any interference by the company, was a basic prerequisite for restoring Bertelsmann's credibility and integrity with regard to its corporate history. I believe that, as an international company, we have a special responsibility to discuss our history. The IHC's high scientific standard remains the benchmark for any consideration of our history.”

In early 1999, the then Bertelsmann AG commissioned a committee of four academics to investigate this period in its history. The “Independent Historical Commission to Research the History of Bertelsmann in the Third Reich” (IHC), chaired by historian Saul Friedländer, presented its investigative report in October 2002. Friedländer worked with historians Norbert Frei, Trutz Rendtorff, and Reinhard Wittmann as well as a team of research assistants. The IHC was granted unrestricted access to all relevant company documents and full independence in matters of research and publication. Their report was subsequently published by C. Bertelsmann Verlag.

By taking this approach, Bertelsmann corrected the previously incomplete and misleading account of its own history. The company's management and owning family accepted the commission's report without reservation as the official account of the company's history under National Socialism – and as the basis for all future public and academic discourse. The documents compiled by the IHC formed the basis for a newly founded company archive, where they have been accessible to the public ever since.

Bertelsmann has continued to adhere to the principle of independent academic reviews after the IHC report was presented. In June 2021, the biographical sketch “Reinhard Mohn – A Century Entrepreneur” was published on what would have been the 100th birthday of Bertelsmann’s post-war founder. Its author is the well-known corporate historian Dr. Joachim Scholtyssek, Professor of Modern History in Bonn.

In August 2022, the Bertelsmann Executive Board commissioned the Institute for Contemporary History (IfZ) in Munich to conduct an independent investigation into the history of “Stern” from the magazine’s founding by Henri Nannen in 1948 until his departure in 1983. In February 2023, this research assignment was expanded to include an investigation into the company’s handling of the fake, so-called “Hitler diaries,” whose publication by “Stern” in 1983 caused one of the biggest media scandals in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. The scientific processing of both research subjects under the direction of the IfZ’s Prof. Dr. Magnus Brechtken will take several years. The results will be published in full once the investigation is complete.

Link to the Independent Historical Commission’s (IHC) report on the history of the company under National Socialism:

[Bertelsmann during the National Socialist Era - Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA](#)

#### **About Bertelsmann**

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company with 85.000 employees, that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the entertainment group RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato Group, Bertelsmann Marketing Services, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company generated revenues of €20.2 billion in the 2022 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world. Bertelsmann aspires to achieve climate neutrality by 2030.

[www.bertelsmann.com](http://www.bertelsmann.com)

#### **Bertelsmann online**



#### **Enquiries:**

#### **Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA**

Markus Harbaum

Head of Communications Content Team

Spokesperson

Phone: +49 5241 80-24 66

markus.harbaum@bertelsmann.de