

PRESS RELEASE

Bertelsmann Has Handling of Forged Hitler Diaries Reviewed by Academics

- **Extension of research contract with Institute of Contemporary History to investigate the history of “Stern” magazine**
- **Bertelsmann guarantees independence of and full support for research work**

Gütersloh / Hamburg, February 24, 2023 – Bertelsmann has commissioned an academic review of the company’s handling of the forged Hitler diaries. To this end, the international media, services and education company is expanding an existing research contract with the renowned Institute of Contemporary History (IfZ) in Munich. Back in August 2022, the Bertelsmann Executive Board had commissioned the IfZ to conduct an independent review of the history of “Stern” magazine. The present historical analysis by the IfZ will take several years, and its results will be published in full. In the course of the research project, all historically relevant documents from Gruner + Jahr and “Stern” will be transferred to Bertelsmann’s Corporate Archive in Gütersloh.

Bertelsmann Chairman & CEO Thomas Rabe said: “The publication of the forged Hitler diaries in April 1983 forms a chapter of its own in the history of ‘Stern’. We believe it is necessary to have the handling of the discovery, evaluation, and publication of the forged diaries at Gruner + Jahr and Bertelsmann academically reviewed. I am very pleased that the Institute of Contemporary History, in its capacity as an independent partner, is prepared to devote special attention to this aspect as part of its research into the history of ‘Stern’ story that is already underway. We will fully support this part of the IfZ’s scientific work as well.”

The IfZ is already investigating, on behalf of Bertelsmann, the period from the founding of “Stern” by Henri Nannen in 1948 until his departure in 1983. With this analysis, Bertelsmann seeks to make an objective, academic, and lasting contribution to the recently rekindled discussion about longtime “Stern” editor-in-chief Henri Nannen (1913-1996). Now the research period and subject matter have been extended to include a historical analysis of the handling of the forged Hitler diaries, to obtain an objective picture of how and why it was possible for the forgery to be published.

The research work is being carried out by the Deputy Director of the Institute of Contemporary History, Prof. Dr. Magnus Brechtken, who is a recognized expert in examining the legacy of National Socialism. The Institute of Contemporary History has already successfully conducted numerous studies of this kind. On Bertelsmann’s side, the project is being supported by the Corporate Archive, which is part of the Group’s Corporate Communications department.

Background information

The first issue of “Stern” was published on August 1, 1948 by the newly founded Stern-Verlag Henri Nannen. Since 1965, Stern has been published by Gruner + Jahr GmbH & Co. KG, which was newly founded at that time. Bertelsmann first acquired 25 percent of Gruner + Jahr in 1969, and increased this stake to 74.9 percent by 1976. In 2014, Bertelsmann acquired the remaining shares and became the sole owner. Since January 1, 2022, Gruner + Jahr has been part of RTL Deutschland.

In 1998, Bertelsmann became one of the first media companies in Germany to commission an Independent Historical Commission (IHC) to research the company’s history during the National Socialist era. After more than three years of research, the IHC presented its report, “Bertelsmann in the Third Reich,” which was published by C. Bertelsmann Verlag in 2002. The IHC’s collection of files forms the cornerstone of the Bertelsmann Corporate Archive, which was established in 2003.

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company 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, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has 145,000 employees and generated revenues of €18.7 billion in the 2021 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.

Bertelsmann online



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