

PRESS RELEASE

Bertelsmann Will Hand Over Forged “Hitler Diaries” to German Federal Archives

- **Handover within the year following archival inventory**
- **Bertelsmann follows principle of transparent, scientific, independent approach to history in case of ‘Stern’ as elsewhere**
- **Conference on history of ‘Stern’ marks start of a research project by Institute of Contemporary History (IfZ)**

Gütersloh, April 24, 2023 – Bertelsmann will hand over the forged “Hitler diaries,” whose publication in G+J’s “Stern” magazine in 1983 triggered one of the biggest media scandals in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, to the country’s Federal Archives. This was announced by the international media, services and education company and the authority responsible for safeguarding federal archival materials ahead of a conference on “The History of ‘Stern’ and Its Formative Personages” hosted by Munich’s renowned Institute of Contemporary History (IfZ) in Berlin, which begins today.

In August 2022, Bertelsmann had commissioned the IfZ to conduct an independent scientific review of the history of “Stern” magazine. In February of this year, the research contract was extended to include an investigation into the handling of the forged “Hitler Diaries.” The conference, chaired by Professor Dr. Magnus Brechtken, deputy director of the Institute of Contemporary History and responsible for the research project, will look at historical continuities and new beginnings in German journalism after 1945. The three-day conference in Berlin is open to the public and runs until April 26.

Bertelsmann Chairman & CEO Thomas Rabe commented: “The handover of the forged ‘Hitler diaries’ to the Federal Archives guarantees that this source material from the history of the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980s will be professionally secured and usable. For us – following the commissioning of the IfZ – it represents another step in an approach to corporate history that strives for transparency, scholarship, and independence. We are pleased that the Federal Archive, which 40 years ago was able to prove beyond doubt that the diaries were a fake, will now take over their archiving as well.”

Prof. Dr. Michael Hollmann, President of the Federal Archives, explains: “The forged ‘Hitler diaries’ are in good hands in the Federal Archives as peculiar testimonies to contemporary German history. They show a brazen attempt to give the brutal crimes of National Socialism a human veneer, which resonated with society in the 1980s. After their transfer, the documents will be stored in perpetuity in the “Federal Republic of Germany” section at the Koblenz site and made accessible as part of our legal mandate. “

The Institute of Contemporary History is investigating the period from the founding of “Stern” by Henri Nannen in 1948 to his departure in 1983 on behalf of Bertelsmann. With this analysis, Bertelsmann seeks to make an objective, scientific and lasting contribution to the recently resurgent discussion about longtime “Stern” editor-in-chief Henri Nannen (1913-1996). The research period and subject matter were extended to include a review of the

handling of the forged “Hitler diaries”, so as to obtain as objective a picture as possible of how and why it was possible for the fakes to be published.

As part of the IfZ research project, Bertelsmann is transferring all historically relevant documents from Gruner + Jahr, or “Stern,” to the corporate archives in Gütersloh. The only exception are the forged “Hitler diaries,” which following an archival inventory will be transferred to the Federal Archive in 2023 as “special documents on contemporary history” and made usable there.

Useful Links:

- <https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Virtuelle-Ausstellungen/Vor-30-Jahren-Pressekonferenz-Des-Bundesarchivs-Zu-Hitler-Tagebuchern/vor-30-jahren-pressekonferenz-des-bundesarchivs-zu-hitler-tagebuchern.html>
- https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Virtuelle-Ausstellungen/Vor-30-Jahren-Pressekonferenz-Des-Bundesarchivs-Zu-Hitler-Tagebuchern/011_hitler-tageb-cher-chronologie_PDF.pdf?_blob=publicationFile
- <https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen/termin/die-geschichte-des-stern-und-seiner-praegenden-personen>

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 165,000 employees around the world and 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

About the Federal Archives

The Federal Archives have the legal mandate to permanently safeguard the archival materials of the Federal Government and make them usable. It houses documents including files, maps, pictures, posters, films and sound recordings in analog and digital form, which originated primarily at central offices of the German Reich (1867/71-1945), the occupation zones (1945-1949), the German Democratic Republic (1949-1990) and the Federal Republic of Germany (since 1949). The Federal Archives also collect written bequests of individuals as well as documents of parties, associations, and societies of national importance. Its more than 2,300 employees at 23 locations thus contribute to society’s collective memory and enable a fact-based examination of recent German history.

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