

# Nazi-era newspaper reprints stir row in Germany

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The reprinting of a Nazi newspaper featuring fiery remarks by propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels has sparked a row in Germany as authorities try to get it removed from the newsstands.

The paper -- the Voelkischer Beobachter (People's Observer), dated March 1, 1933 -- is the second of a series of Nazi-era newspapers republished in annotated facsimiles by British publisher Peter McGee, who intends to reprint papers up until 1945.

The latest edition hit German newsstands early on Thursday, with a photograph on the front page of the Reichstag parliament building in flames, seen as a pivotal moment in the rise to power of Hitler's Nazis.

The fire was used by Adolf Hitler -- who had been sworn in as chancellor four weeks earlier -- to "prove" that Communists were hatching a plot against the German government and justify a swift crackdown.

"Murder, terror, fire and destruction: these are the terrible things this fanatical party (the Communists) leaves behind it," Goebbels writes in the commentary on the first page.

Bavaria's finance ministry, which holds the rights to all publications from the main Nazi publishing house, this week ordered the newspapers pulled from the racks and the banning of further editions.

The southern state said it is concerned about the possible offence to Holocaust survivors and the potential misuse of the papers by neo-Nazis. But the move prompted a heated debate over press freedom.

The chief editor of the series, Sandra Paweronschitz, said in a statement that the argument that the papers could fuel extremist activity was "as short-sighted as it is wrong".

She pointed out that the series was accompanied by commentary from leading historians putting the papers in their proper historical context.

"We will fight this attack on the freedom of the press with all legal means - if necessary not only in civil courts but also before the Federal Constitutional Court," she said.

Charlotte Knobloch, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said she supported the publication of the paper but hoped people would read the historians' comments alongside the articles.

"As a Holocaust survivor, these texts are much more to me than just interesting historical documents. They are part of a harrowing reality that I can still recall," she said in a commentary on the publishers' website.

If people read only the propaganda, she acknowledged, it could be "disastrous".