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Krupp Foundation continues research project on the position of its founder Alfried Krupp towards National Socialism

Independent source research led by Professor Dr. Eckart Conze sees potential for in-depth research

Expert panel advocates further research and a multi-perspective publication

Essen, 14 July 2023 – The research project initiated by the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation in February 2022 and led by Professor Dr. Eckart Conze has unearthed sources that could shed light on Alfried Krupp's position towards National Socialism. These are to be examined and assessed within the course of further research and will result in a publication. Aspects to be examined in more detail include Alfried Krupp's memberships in Nazi organisations as well as the so-called 'Landsberghilfe', an informal support network for Krupp's fellow prisoners in the Landsberg Allied war crimes prison, as well as the 'forced labour' range of topics. A panel of experts which discussed the results of the research project recommended continuance of the research and a multi-perspective publication project.

Professor Dr. Eckart Conze is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Philipps University Marburg and an expert on the history and impact of National Socialism. The aim of the project led by him was to research historical sources that would enable the person of Alfried Krupp to be more closely examined and to shed more light on his relationship to National Socialism.

Start of the project: source research

The project comprised the identification, review and analysis of new or not yet systematically analysed sources on Alfried Krupp and his position towards National Socialism since the 1920s. It purposefully extended the era of the 'Third Reich' of 1933-1945, and included both



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the position of Alfried Krupp (1907-1967) within the Weimar Republic as well as Krupp's dealings with the Nazi past in the period of the Federal Republic. The view is intended to go beyond the entrepreneurial activities of Alfried Krupp to consider other dimensions, for example his political positions and private statements.

Together with his research assistant, Dr. Jens Brüggemann, Professor Conze established a consistent research strategy for the project aimed at identifying potentially meaningful sources of material. For this purpose, databases and finding aids from numerous national and international archives were consulted, of which 14 were finally selected for systematic source research. In addition to the Krupp Historical Archive, considered the most important point of contact for the source research and available to the researchers without restriction, these consisted of three departments of the Federal Archives, four state and regional archives, the Arolsen Archives, the Institute of Contemporary History, two concentration camp memorial sites and the Documentation and Research Centre for Social Insurance Institutions. Private and business documents of Alfried Krupp, various family members and other persons from the business environment and his circle of friends and acquaintances were examined, including correspondence, minutes of meetings, notes, calendars, party and SS documents as well as files from ministries, the Wehrmacht, the Gestapo and the defence and prosecution of the Krupp trial at Nuremberg. The files and holdings viewed were then assessed with regard to their informative value and further research possibilities.

Professor Dr. Eckart Conze: "Selected in-depth probing within the source research has revealed potential that is unquestionably worth pursuing. Continuing the project offers the chance to gain a more precise picture of Alfried Krupp's relationship to National Socialism and thus also to make an important contribution to research in contemporary history."



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Pressemitteilung

Potential for continuation of the project

Issues that may shed light on Alfried Krupp's position regarding National Socialism in the course of continued research relate, for example, to his supporting membership of the SS and his comparatively late entry into the NSDAP at the end of 1938. Further questions relate to the so-called 'Landsberghilfe', an informal support network that aided war criminals released from the Allied prison in Landsberg in the 1950s to integrate into society. Following his release from Landsberg prison, Alfried Krupp sporadically kept in touch with former fellow prisoners and supported them both financially and also non-materially. Conze and Brüggemann have identified 183 people who received support payments, including SS members as well as members of the Gestapo, the Wehrmacht and Nazi functionaries. Another complex of topics that has not yet been fully researched concerns the employment of forced labourers by the Krupp company – specifically, Alfried Krupp's involvement in the planning of a production facility in Auschwitz and the use of concentration camp forced labourers, but also researching the information he had at his disposal.

Panel of experts discusses the next steps

Following completion of the research, the Foundation invited a panel of experts to discuss the results of the source project and develop recommendations for further steps. The panel consisted of renowned historians including Professor Dr. Simone Derix, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg, Professor Dr. Norbert Frei, Friedrich-Schiller University Jena, Professor Dr. Cornelia Rauh, Leibniz University Hanover, Junior Professor Dr. Eva-Maria Roelevink, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and Professor Dr. Joachim Scholtyseck, Bonn University. Consensus existed among the historians that continuing the research would be useful and could bring new insights to light.



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Pressemitteilung

Continuation of the project

In line with the experts' recommendation the follow-up project initially focuses on a multi-perspective biographical approach, and will look more intensively at Alfried Krupp as part of further research, including a publication with contributions from around eight to ten authors from different fields of expertise. This concerns his socialisation via his family environment as well as his role as an entrepreneur and private person. What influence did his family environment have on his decisions? How did he evaluate the war? What was his scope for action? Why did Alfried Krupp support his fellow Landsberg prisoners in the 1950s? What image of National Socialism did he represent? How did he view his own role in the Nazi era? These and further issues will guide the detailed research, and the multi-perspective publication will also be available in English. Concurrently with this, a digital application is being developed with the goal of conveying the history of Alfried Krupp as barrier-free and location-independent as possible and, in particular, to reach young target groups. The Foundation is funding the project, planned to last for around two years, with up to 150,000 euros.

"We are aware that we are dealing with a complex issue: as a foundation we bear responsibility to implement Alfried Krupp's legacy, which means initiating and supporting charitable projects with the assets bequeathed by him and to serve the common good. At the same time it is also our responsibility to question the man Alfried Krupp, his position and his attitude. By now continuing the research we fulfil this responsibility and do so thoroughly and on the basis of scientifically robust findings", stated Professor Dr. Dr. h. c. Ursula Gather, Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees of the Krupp Foundation.

About Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach

Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach was born in 1907 into an industrialist family as the eldest son of Bertha and Gustav Krupp von



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Pressemitteilung

Bohlen und Halbach. He was prepared early on for his leadership role which he assumed in 1943 as sole owner of the company. In 1945 he was arrested by US troops and placed under arrest. In 1948 he was sentenced to prison in the course of the Nuremberg Krupp Trial and pardoned in 1951. He assumed management of the Krupp company again in 1953. In 1967, shortly before his death, he ordered that his private and company assets be transferred to a charitable foundation. The Foundation commenced its work in 1968 and uses the income it receives from its corporate shareholding, now consisting of 20.93%, to promote science, education, art and culture, health and sport.

Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach's entrepreneurial activities under National Socialism have already been focused on within the context of the Nuremberg Krupp Trial and in later academic studies. To date however there has not been a comprehensive study of his relationship to National Socialism. What did the National Socialist past mean for his work at the helm of the company? Did he reflect on his responsibility? Did he consider his actions at the time of the Foundation's establishment? A biographical approach to Alfried Krupp that also addresses these issues is still lacking.

Professor Dr. Eckart Conze

Professor Dr. Eckart Conze has been Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the Department of Modern History, Philipps University Marburg since 2003. He heads the Marburg International Research and Documentation Centre for War Crimes Trials, and in 2005 was appointed by then Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer to the Independent Commission of Historians of the Foreign Office which investigated the history of the ministry and its members under National Socialism and how this was dealt with after 1945.



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Pressemitteilung

About the Krupp Foundation

The non-profit Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation has been supporting people and projects in art and culture, education, science, health and sport since 1968, committing € 690 million for this purpose to date. The founder was Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach as the last sole owner of the Fried. Krupp company, whose assets were transferred to the foundation he established. As the largest shareholder of today's thyssenkrupp AG, the Foundation uses the income it receives from its shareholding exclusively for charitable purposes. With its work, it sets accents in the development of science and higher education and also aims to contribute to international understanding and improve the education of young generations. The Foundation has been working to reappraise the history of the Krupp company and family for decades – among other activities initiating academic projects and publications carried out by renowned historians such as Lothar Gall and Harold James. At the Foundation's headquarters, an exhibition in Villa Hügel provides information about the role of the Krupp company in the 'Third Reich' and about the person of Alfried Krupp. An app informs about the history of Krupp under National Socialism among other topics. The Krupp Historical Archive, which holds extensive material on Alfried Krupp, is accessible to all interested parties and supports scientific and other projects.

For further information see: www.krupp-stiftung.de/alfried-krupp/

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