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Krupp Stiftung

Press Release

A new publication examines Alfried Krupp's relationship with National Socialism from eight perspectives

Independent research by the Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte (Society for Business History, GUG) paints a nuanced picture of the entrepreneur | The Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation concludes its reappraisal, initiated in 2022. | The publication is available via open access

Essen, 23 November 2026 – What was Alfried Krupp's stance on National Socialism? What was the scope for action he had as an entrepreneur, and how did he deal with his responsibilities after 1945? These questions are explored in the new publication "Alfried Krupp und der Nationalsozialismus. Perspektiven auf einen Unternehmer" (Alfried Krupp and National Socialism. Perspectives on an Entrepreneur). Eight researchers examine Alfried Krupp from educational, sociological, social-psychological, legal-historical and economic-historical perspectives. The GUG was responsible for editing the publication and for the conception and management of the academic project. The publication – also available via open access – will be presented at the FUNKE Event-Center in Essen on 23 November. The independent research project was made possible and initiated by the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation in 2022.

Two-phase research project fills a gap in research

While research has already been carried out into the Krupp company and its role under National Socialism, this new publication focuses for the first time on Alfried Krupp as a key figure. The study, which deliberately adopts a multi-perspective approach, also examines the periods before 1933 and after 1945 in order to better contextualise Alfried Krupp's actions and activities during the National Socialist era. The project therefore fills a gap in research.

The project was carried out in two phases. An initial comprehensive review of sources, led by Professor Dr. Eckart Conze of Philipps University Marburg, was followed, on the recommendation of an independent commission of experts, by an in-depth investigation by a multidisciplinary team. This consisted of Professor Dr Manfred Grieger (Georg August

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University Göttingen), Professor Dr Heiko Kleve (Witten-Herdecke University), Associate Professor Dr Christian Marx (University of Trier), Professor Dr Louis Pahlow (Goethe University Frankfurt), Professor Dr Eva-Maria Roelevink (TU Bergakademie Freiberg), Martina Rupp (Marburg), Professor Dr Joachim Scholtysek (University of Bonn) and Professor Dr Dieter Ziegler (Ruhr University Bochum). To safeguard academic independence, the research concept as well as drafting of the publication were entirely the responsibility of the GUG and the eight authors. For the new study, source material was examined, partially for the first time, and analysed in numerous archives. The Krupp Historical Archive with its collections also provided support for the project.

Research paints a nuanced picture of Alfried Krupp

The publication offers a more nuanced yet clearer picture of Alfried Krupp. It portrays him as an entrepreneur who had the freedom to act independently and who utilised this freedom for the interests of the family business. His active role in the wartime economy becomes particularly evident, not least through his company's activities in the occupied territories. Alfried Krupp was informed about key developments concerning forced labour, though he largely delegated decisions concerning its organisation and the treatment of forced labourers. His stance after 1945 is also examined in new light. The examination of the Nuremberg Krupp trial focused on him personally reveals neither any discernible engagement with his personal responsibility nor any admission of guilt on his part. The examination into the so-called Landsberg Aid also yields new insights: Alfried Krupp continued to support former fellow prisoners and condemned Nazi perpetrators even after his release from prison.

The publication also illuminates the social influences on Alfried Krupp. The concluding socio-psychological essay analyses, among other themes, his family upbringing and the dominating importance of the company's continued existence to his actions. This offers possible explanations for Alfried Krupp's attitude, as well as for his lack of apparent self-reflection. Without downplaying his responsibility, the publication offers a new perspective on Alfried Krupp.

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"The publication focuses on Alfried Krupp as a key figure. The multi-perspective approach was decisive: it brings together different academic perspectives, thus making it possible to analyse in detail his scope for action, his responsibilities and the conditions under which he acted, and to synthesise these into an overall impression," said Dr Andrea H. Schneider-Braunberger, Director of the GUG and editor of the publication.

Publication as a starting point for outreach and dialogue

The Executive Board and Board of Trustees of the Krupp Foundation regard publication of the research findings as a mandate to continue the dialogue on historical responsibility. Speaking on behalf of the Executive Board, Dr Michaela Muylkens explains: "We are aware that we are dealing with a complex issue: as a Foundation we have a responsibility to uphold Alfried Krupp's legacy; that is, to fulfil the Foundation's mission in his name and with his assets, and to serve the common good. However, this responsibility also means continually re-examining Alfried Krupp and his actions." Professor Dr Ursula Gather, Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees, adds: "We have faced this responsibility in the form of this reappraisal. It lays an important foundation for assessing our founder from a scholarly perspective and, based on that, determining how we should approach his person and his legacy. This does not alter the Foundation's charitable mission – the Foundation will continue to fulfil this role under its founder's name."

The multi-perspective study is being made available to the public in various ways. It is being published in print and as an open-access publication, and a range of event and outreach formats, including digital ones, will be offered to foster a broad dialogue. The Foundation is providing €300,000 in funding for the two-phase research project, including its educational outreach programmes and the digital application.

Bibliographic details:

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For download of the open-access publication, please visit:

www.unternehmensgeschichte.de
www.krupp-stiftung.de/en/alfried-krupp/

Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte (GUG)
The Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte (Society for Business History, GUG) is an internationally recognised academic institution dedicated to promoting research into corporate history. It publishes the "Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte" (Journal for Business History) and awards the Prize for Business History. In June 2012, GUG e.V. established the wholly-owned subsidiary GUG mbH to carry out contract research, build corporate archives and provide consultancy services relating to business history. Projects completed by the GUG include Lufthansa, LVM, Ottobock, Miele, Sartorius, Südzucker, Deutsche Bahn, Hertie and Adidas among others.

Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation
The non-profit Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation has been supporting people and projects in science, education, arts and culture, health and sports since 1968, to date committing around €715 million for this purpose. 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 exclusively for charitable purposes. Through its work it aims to contribute to areas such as international understanding, historical education and social participation. For decades, the Foundation has been committed to examining and documenting the history of the Krupp family and company, initiating academic projects and publications. At the Foundation's headquarters, an exhibition and an app provide insights into Krupp's role during the National Socialist era. The Krupp Historical Archive, which houses an extensive collection of material on Alfried Krupp, is open to everyone interested.

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