

German newsstands
Jews, officials
uneasy about
Nazi reprints

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BERLIN — A headline proclaiming "Huge Fire in the Reichstag" greeted Germans at newsstands Thursday — and although the story is more than 70 years old, customers are snapping it up.

Dieter Grosse, who runs a newsstand at Berlin's busy Friedrichstrasse station, said he has sold about 600 copies of Zeitungszeugen — a new publication that reprints Nazi-era newspapers — since its first edition went on sale Jan. 8.

The project has drawn criticism from Jewish organizations and officials in the German state of Bavaria, who fear the reproductions could be misused by neo-Nazis.

Stephan Kramer, general secretary of Germany's Central Council of Jews, argues the project is dangerous because the historical context printed along with the original newspaper pages is not strong enough to prevent abuse by extremists.

"These copies are nothing more than examples for the neo-Nazis ... and I do not think they should be allowed to be sold in German newsstands," Kramer said.

Zeitungszeugen, a word play on the German words for "newspaper" and "witness," focuses on newspapers from the years the Nazis were in power — from 1933 to 1945.

Thursday's second edition features a reproduction of the March 1, 1933, front page of the Nazis' Voelkischer Beobachter newspaper, which includes a column by chief Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels blaming communists for setting the national parliament, the Reichstag, alight. Adolf Hitler seized on the event to consolidate his power.

Zeitungszeugen includes a spectrum of publications from far left to far right, and prints commentary and analysis by historians to explain their significance.

The London-based publisher Albertas Limited says the paper is meant to provide a historical overview of the events leading up to and throughout World War II.

It says the project was targeted to coincide with this year's 60th anniversary of the founding of Western Germany and the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which paved the way for German reunification.

But officials in Bavaria have vowed to take legal action to block further editions from appearing on newsstands.

— The Associated Press