

Company behind Pret admits to Nazi past

The Reimann family is the second richest in Germany, with stakes in major brands like Pret and Krispy Kreme. Now they have found evidence of a dark Nazi past. How should this make us feel?



Hidden past: Six companies which are now known to have collaborated with or have links to the Nazis.

"Reimann Senior and Reimann Junior were guilty," said Peter Harf. He is the spokesman for the one of the **richest** families in Germany, the Reimanns. "They actually belonged in prison."

The men were in charge of the family's investments company JAB Holdings during the 1930s and 40s. Now, a historian has discovered that they were Nazis who used **forced labour** during the Second World War.

Today, JAB Holdings owns stakes in well-known brands like Pret a Manger, Dr Pepper and Krispy Kreme.

Back then, it owned a chemicals company. In 1943 it was using 175 forced labourers, including prisoners of war.

Meanwhile, Albert Reimann Sr and his son

Albert Reimann Jr were both staunch Hitler supporters.

Reimann Sr donated to **the SS**. He hung swastikas outside his factory. In 1937, Reimann Jr wrote a letter to **Heinrich Himmler** calling them a "purely **Aryan** family business".

The current family members were "ashamed" when they found out, said Harf. "These crimes are disgusting," he added.

Now the family will donate €10 million (£8.5 million) to a charity which supports former slaves.

JAB Holdings is far from the first company to reckon with a Nazi past. Hugo Boss designed Nazi uniforms. German car companies like BMW and Volkswagen all used forced labourers.

The news organisation *Associated Press* fired its Jewish employees in Germany and complied with Nazi censorship. And Coca-Cola deliberately marketed itself as pro-Nazi.

Reckoning

How should we feel about these companies now? Some may feel uneasy buying a sandwich from Pret knowing that it is funded by a family which profited from Nazis.

Others may be impressed by the family's honesty. Germany is good at facing up to its mistakes. Its citizens learn that reckoning with history, rather than sweeping it under the carpet, is the best way to move forward.

Q & A

Q: What do we know?

A: JAB Holding Company is an investment firm for the Reimann family. Reimann Sr died in

1954 and Reimann Jr in 1984. JAB Holdings now owns several global food and coffee companies.

Q: What do we not know?

A: Whether the company's reputation (and the

brands it owns) will suffer as a result of the news. In the past, German companies have acknowledged their history without repercussions.

YOU DECIDE

Does learning about their history change how you feel about the companies mentioned in this article?

ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the companies mentioned in this article. Write a paragraph which explains why you think it should, or should not, be blamed for its links with the Nazis.

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."
William Faulkner

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



WORD WATCH

Richest – The family's wealth is estimated at €33-37 billion (£28-31 billion), according to *AFP News*.

Forced labour – Any work which people are

forced to do against their will.

The SS – The Schutzstaffel, Hitler's paramilitary organisation, and the "political soldiers" of the Nazi Party.

Heinrich Himmler – Head of the SS, and one of Hitler's closest allies. He oversaw the forced

labour operation and the "Final Solution" — now known as the Holocaust.

Aryan – In Nazi ideology, the "Aryan" race was considered a "master race" that was superior to all others.



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