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Church sale of 'porn bookseller' slammed in Germany

A trade union and other critics on Thursday slammed a decision by Germany's Roman Catholic Church to sell a profitable bookseller accused of distributing "pornographic" material.

Conservatives had long lobbied for the Church to sell Weltbild over charges it sold erotic literature along with its tens of thousands of other titles.

The firm, based in the Bavarian city of Augsburg in southern Germany, is the country's second largest mail-order bookseller with annual turnover of 1.65 billion euros ($2.21 billion) and around 6,400 employees.

On Tuesday, the German Bishops Conference, the firm's main shareholder, said it would seek a buyer "without delay".

The move followed remarks by Pope Benedict XVI demanding "restrictions on the dissemination of material with erotic or pornographic content, in particular on the Internet" and urging concerted action by the German Church.

The Verdi services union, on behalf of Weltbild staff, blasted the sale in a blog, calling the allegation of porn distribution "unfounded and exaggerated charges levelled by archconservative Catholic groups".

It said it feared Weltbild could now be dismantled, as German press reports speculated about the potential interest of a major online bookseller such as Amazon.

"It is a message sent by conservative groups... who want to damage the image of the Church" and overpower moderates within the Bishops Conference, added Christian Weisner of the liberal Catholic movement Wir Sind Kirche ("We Are Church").

The Catholic Church is a major player in German business, running daycare centres, hospitals and nursing homes as well as banks and even breweries.

http://www.expatica.com/de/news/german-news/church-sale-of-porn-bookseller--slammed-in-germany_190917.html
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