



THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

And

DARTMOUTH FILMS

Present

A FRITH STREET FILMS Production

In association with THE BERTHA FOUNDATION:



ATTACKING THE DEVIL

HAROLD EVANS AND THE LAST NAZI WAR CRIME

- **PREMIERE: 13 JANUARY 2016**
- **GENERAL RELEASE: 22 JANUARY 2016**
- **RATED: 15, RUNNING TIME: 99 MINUTES**

CREDITS

Attacking the Devil

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Produced by **Jacqui Morris**

Co-producer **David Thomson**

Directed by **Jacqui Morris** and **David Morris**

Distributed by **Dartmouth Films**

Narrated by **Michael Sheen**

Featuring: **Sir Harold Evans, Dr Martin Johnson, David L Mason OBE, Louise Medus-Mansell (nee Mason), Phillip Knightley, Bruce Page, Elaine Potter, Marjorie Wallace, Sadie Galvin, Dominic Galvin, Pearl Dandily, Katrina Dandily, Tom Yendell, Kevin Donnelly, Mikey Argey, Ralph Nader, Alan Rusbridger, Nick Davies, Joan Thomas, Geoffrey Robertson QC, Ron Peet**

Composer **Alex Baranowski**

Camera **Clive Booth**

Editor **David Fairhead**

Narrator **Michael Sheen**

Executive Producer **Harvey Weinstein and Bob Weinstein**



Executive producer **Steve Milne**

Executive Producer **Christian Eisenbeiss**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"We used to employ journalists, not private investigators" observed Sir Harold Evans, giving evidence at the Leveson inquiry.

Described by many of his peers to be the greatest newspaper man of the twentieth century, Sir Harold Evans edited the Sunday Times during a period considered to be the 'golden age' in British Journalism. *Attacking the Devil* covers some of the investigations and campaigns that earned him that praise.

But we focus most heavily on how, in 1972, he risked imprisonment by defying the political establishment in order to help the horribly damaged child victims of thalidomide get proper compensation.

Using the law of sub judice that stopped any discussion in the press of a case before the courts, the suppliers of the drug, Distillers Biochemicals, were on the brink of forcing the children's parents to settle for a fraction of the compensation they needed.

A small group of parents, led by David Mason, stood up to extreme pressure exerted by the multinational company and their lawyers. They also had to resist the vast majority of other parents of children disabled by thalidomide, who were in desperate need of money, and were willing to accept the (all parents must agree to sign away their rights to sue us for negligence, or none of you get a penny) offer.

Distillers were determined to make Mason and his group of like-minded parents accept their terms. For the time being the handful continued to hold out, but their fight was waged in silence because the press could not report or pass comment on the subject. They were alone.

"When we tried to expose the plight of the thalidomide children - some without arms or legs, some born just trunks - they'd been denied compensation for ten years. Why wasn't there a huge national scandal about it. Why? Because we in the press weren't allowed to comment on a case before the courts." was Harold Evans' assessment of the challenge that faced him and his colleagues.



Risking prison for contempt of court, Evans, along with his reporters and legal team, took up the families' cause, and under fierce resistance from the drug company, found a way around the law and began what became known as the 'moral campaign', which, for the first time, let people know how the children had been treated.

Disgusted, the public expressed their anger by boycotting Distillers' products. In a single nine-day period their shares lost 35 million pounds and made them prey to a hostile takeover.

"We didn't stand a chance without that guy [Harold Evans]. But the bigger they are, the harder they fall," commented the mother of one thalidomide victim.

Building on the work of the Sunday Times and the Thalidomide Trust, *Attacking the Devil* reveals how thalidomide was developed in the Nazi concentration camps as an antidote to nerve gas. Although unfit for that role, its creators realized that it was a powerful addictive sedative, and after the war they found a way to make money by selling it as a cure for morning sickness, although they hadn't tested it for effects on the unborn child. This information has only recently come to light and is explored for the first time in our documentary.

The Weinstein Company released a statement in November 2015:

"We are in discussions to bring on a major director and award-winning producers to develop a feature film version of this incredible story."

Some other campaigns covered in the documentary include:

The exposure of the full extent of 'third man' Kim Philby's treachery.

"The idea that a serving KGB officer could have, at the same time, almost become head of British Intelligence just boggles the mind." Phillip Knightley

The campaign to get a posthumous pardon for Timothy Evans, wrongly executed for committing murders at 10 Rillington Place.

"...but three years after Evans had been hung his trial took on a new and disturbing importance. In March 1953 the bodies of three strangled women were discovered here in this alcove in Christie's kitchen." Michael Parkinson.



With contributions from many of the people who were intimately involved with the stories, we also hear from figures such as Alan Rusbridger, former editor of the Guardian, Geoffrey Robertson, the renowned human rights lawyer and Ralph Nader, who testify to how Evans' set an example of how an editor can change the world for the better.

ABOUT ATTACKING THE DEVIL

In 1968, five years before Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein blew the Watergate scandal wide open and brought down the Nixon regime, a team of British investigative journalists at the Sunday Times - led by the charismatic and unflinching Harry Evans - began an investigation and campaign which is today held up as one of the great achievements of twentieth-century journalism.

Now, in January 2016, driven by first hand testimony from Sir Harold Evans himself, ***Attacking The Devil*** - the incredible story of that ground breaking investigation - is to be told on film.

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s tens of thousands of expectant mothers took thalidomide, a defective morning sickness remedy, one of the last remnants of the Nazi science experiments of the 1940s. Little did they know that thalidomide was attacking their unborn child's nervous system. Many of the victims were stillborn and the survivors were born with severe physical or mental disabilities, or both.

Then editor of the *Northern Echo*, Harry Evans was one of the first journalists to seriously ask how a drug this destructive ended up on the market, and why, given the obvious devastation it had caused, no compensation was forthcoming from those responsible.

In 1967 Evans was appointed editor of the Sunday Times, where he assembled a crack team of investigative journalists, with whom he launched a campaign to expose the truth behind the thalidomide scandal and seek justice for its victims.

Evans and his team were confronted with a distressed and disunited group of parents of thalidomide sufferers, a criminal justice system entirely unsympathetic to the media, and a litigious, obfuscating, occasionally brutal and callous opposition in the form of German pharmaceutical giant Chemie Grünenthal, whose strong-arm Realpolitik threatened to deprive thalidomide sufferers of any compensation whatsoever.



Attacking The Devil, which won the main award at the Sheffield Doc/Fest, is directed and produced by Jacqui Morris and David Morris, the team behind 2012's BAFTA-nominated **McCullin**, the biographical film of seminal photojournalist Don McCullin. The story is also set to be dramatised as a major feature film by Hollywood giants Harvey and Bob Weinstein.

As well as Sir Harold Evans, the film includes the moving accounts from several thalidomide survivors of their search for an understanding of their condition and a sense of normalcy, and the role of the Sunday Times investigations in helping them on this quest.

Attacking the Devil premieres on Wednesday 13 January 2016 and goes on general release on Friday 22 January.

BACKGROUND

About Jacqui Morris & David Morris

Brother and sister directing team, David and Jacqui Morris, worked in advertising before going into the film business. Their first work was a feature-length gay-themed romantic comedy called *Mr. Right*, which showed on the opening nights at New York, Miami, San Francisco, Melbourne and Berlin gay film festivals. It was then sold to US Channel VH1.

In 2011, they started work on *McCullin*, a life of Don McCullin, the internationally acclaimed war photographer. The resulting documentary received two BAFTA nominations - Best Newcomers and Best Documentary. In 2013 the film had a two month theatrical release, before being broadcast on the BBC's prestigious *Imagine* slot. In November 2015 *McCullin* commenced a week-long run at New York's Museum of Modern Art, for which it received very good reviews.

On the strength of *McCullin*, the iconic British newspaper editor, Sir Harold Evans, entrusted the pair to document his eventful life. The resulting work, *Attacking the Devil Harold Evans and the last Nazi War Crime*, won the jury prize at the Sheffield Doc/Fest. It is to be released in the UK early in 2016. This film has been acquired by The Weinstein Company, who have also bought the rights to turn the story into a movie.

Currently, they are working on a feature-length documentary about Rudolf Nureyev, which is expected to be finished by spring 2016. This project has the backing of the Nureyev



Foundation, who are fully supportive of the innovative approach the directors are taking to show the genius of the dancer.

About Dartmouth Films

Dartmouth Films are pioneers in Britain of independent documentaries – finding new ways of funding, making and distributing films which have impact. We work with a wide range of directors helping to raise money for their films from foundations, private investors, philanthropists, film funds, broadcasters, distributors and through crowd funding appeals. We work with cinemas, broadcasters, online providers and civil society and community groups to get their films seen. And we provide editorial and line producing support to make sure the films are made. Sometimes we are with a film from the beginning, sometimes we join as it gets into production and sometimes we only get involved when it is ready to be released. We enjoy supporting new and emerging directors and working in partnership with other companies.

About Sir Harold Evans

Sir Harold Evans During his 14-year tenure as editor of the Sunday Times, Evans was responsible for its crusading style of investigative reporting which brought to public attention many stories and scandals which were officially denied or ignored.

One such report was about the plight of hundreds of British Thalidomide children who had never had any compensation for severe birth defects some had suffered. This turned into a campaign for the newspaper's Insight investigative team, and Evans himself took on the drug companies responsible for the manufacture of Thalidomide, pursuing them through the English courts and eventually gaining victory in the European Court of Human Rights. As a result, the victims' families won compensation after more than a decade. Moreover, the British Government was compelled to change the law inhibiting the reporting of civil cases.

David Mason OBE is a London art dealer, and father of Louise, disabled by Thalidomide.

Mason refused the initial offered settlement of £3 million by Distillers, which was only to be awarded if all the parents agreed. As a result of which he and his daughter suffered harassment by Distillers, culminating in his daughter being removed from his care, due to action by his solicitors and other parents supporting settlement, who believed he was not acting in her best interests by refusing settlement.



The Daily Mail took up his case until Distillers obtained an injunction and stopped further publication. It was soon after this that Harold Evans and his team from the Sunday Times devised a strategy to circumvent the law and help the victims achieve their aim of getting a settlement of £20 million.

Elaine Potter wrote for the Sunday Times and co-authored several Sunday Times books, including *Suffer the Children: The Story of Thalidomide*, and *Destination Disaster: From the Tri-Motor to the DC10*. Elaine is a trustee of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. She is co-founder of the David and Elaine Potter Foundation.

Phillip Knightley was a special correspondent for the Sunday Times. During this period he was a member of the 'Insight' investigative team.

Knightley's main professional interests have been war reporting, propaganda, and espionage. In more than 30 years of writing about espionage, he has met most of the spy chiefs of all the major intelligence services in the world, and interviewed numerous officers and agents from all sides during the Cold War.

Bruce Page is an investigative journalist who was head of the Sunday Times Insight team's investigation into the thalidomide tragedy. Rather than the campaign to get compensation for the children, he concentrated on the history of the drug's development. He and the team proved gross negligence in the testing procedures undertaken by the German company, Chemie Grunenthal, and of the British distributor of the drug (under the tradename Distaval), Distillers.

Marjorie Wallace was an investigative journalist and Social Services Correspondent for the Sunday Times. She wrote a series of articles in 1972 highlighting the financial and emotional plight of the thalidomide children who had been born in the 1950s and 1960s with physical disabilities. As a result of this campaign, she met Terry Wiles, about whom she co-authored a biography, *On Giant's Shoulders*, which was made into a BBC *Play of the Week* in 1979.

She founded SANE after writing a series of articles in *The Times* entitled "The Forgotten Illness" that highlighted the paucity of services and treatments for people suffering from schizophrenia. Initially focusing on schizophrenia, SANE is now concerned with all mental illnesses.

Ralph Nader is an American political activist, as well as an author, lecturer, and attorney. Areas of particular concern to Nader include consumer protection, humanitarianism, environmentalism, and democratic government.

Nader came to prominence in 1965, with the publication of his book *Unsafe at Any Speed* a critique of the safety record of American automobile manufacturers. In 1999, a New York



University panel of journalists ranked *Unsafe at Any Speed* 38th among the top 100 pieces of journalism of the 20th century.

Alan Rusbridger is a British journalist, Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford and the former editor-in-chief of *The Guardian*. He took up the post in 1995, having been a reporter and columnist earlier in his career. Rusbridger stood down from the post at the end of May 2015.

Geoffrey Robertson QC is a human rights barrister, academic, author and broadcaster.

Robertson is a founder and joint head of Doughty Street Chambers. He serves as a Master of the Bench at the Middle Temple, a recorder, and visiting professor at Queen Mary University of London.

Dr Martin Johnson is director of the Thalidomide Trust which provides help for surviving victims in the UK. He and the Trust have gathered evidence pointing to the conclusion that, rather than when the drug was patented in 1954, scientists at Chemie Grünenthal developed the drug during the Nazi period; and created it for a purpose that had nothing to do with what it was eventually marketed for.

A TIMELINE OF THE THALIDOMIDE SCANDAL AND THE SUNDAY TIMES INVESTIGATION

1953 The anti-morning sickness drug thalidomide is created in Germany by the Grünenthal Group.

1958 Thalidomide is first licensed for use in the UK.

1961 An Australian doctor, William McBride, writes to the *Lancet* medical journal after noticing an increase in the number of deformed babies born at his hospital, all to mothers who had taken thalidomide. The drug is withdrawn later the same year.

1962 Thalidomide is banned in the UK

1968 The UK manufacturer Distillers Biochemicals Ltd (now Diageo) reaches an inadequate compensation settlement after an unequal legal battle with the families of those affected.

1972 The Sunday Times publishes a front-page lead under the banner "Our thalidomide children, a cause for national shame", part of a long-running campaign for further compensation. Eventually, a total of £28m is paid out by Distillers during the 1970s.

IMAGES

[STILLS \(CREDIT CLIVE BOOTH\)](#)

[OTHER BACKGROUND IMAGES](#)