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WHAT OUR FATHERS DID: A NAZI LEGACY



Directed by DAVID EVANS
Written by PHILIPPE SANDS
Produced by FINOLA DWYER and AMANDA POSEY

World Premiere: Tribeca Film Festival
Run Time: 92 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

A poignant, thought-provoking account of friendship and the toll of inherited guilt, *WHAT OUR FATHERS DID* explores the relationship between two men, each of whom are the children of very high-ranking Nazi officials and possess starkly contrasting attitudes toward their fathers. Eminent human rights lawyer Philippe Sands investigates the complicated connection between the two, and even delves into the story of his own grandfather who escaped the same town where their fathers carried out mass killings. The three embark on an emotional journey together, as they travel through Europe and converse about the past, examining the sins of their fathers and providing a unique view of the father-son relationship, ultimately coming to some very unexpected and difficult conclusions.

ABOUT THE FILM

The idea for the documentary came from the internationally renowned British human rights lawyer Philippe Sands; in researching his book about the origins of international law (commissioned and to be published by Knopf in 2016), he became friends with two 70-something sons of very senior Nazis, one of whose fathers, Hans Frank, was tried and executed at Nuremberg. This unlikely friendship evolved into the film; it is both deeply personal and more universally resonant. Both men see their fathers very differently; their encounters and their own testimonies are fascinating, provocative and moving. We travel with them to their family homes in Austria and Germany, as well as Lemberg in the Ukraine where their fathers governed, and where Philippe learns that their fathers' actions lead directly to his own Jewish family's fate.

Adding to the film's power, we have the first and exclusive access to extraordinary archival footage—Frank's family home movies—which go right to the heart of the Nazi regime from a family perspective, including 'day trips' to the Krakow ghetto that chill the spine. It is the first time this footage will have been seen in public. This archive has now been donated to the Holocaust Museum for future generations; startlingly it features an image of 'the girl in the red dress', coincidentally the same imagery that Spielberg famously used in SCHINDLER'S LIST.

The film also includes an interview with Niklas Frank in front of the renowned Cecilia Gallerani painting "The Girl with Ermine" by Leonardo da Vinci, the painting that Hans Frank notoriously stole and hung in his own office when he occupied the Wawel Castle, ironically now returned there and on display as a reminder to visitors. Niklas hasn't seen the painting since he was a child standing in front of it with his father.

The film is intended to tie-in with a year of significant dates across 2015 and 2016: 70 years since the end of WWII, 70 years since the start of the Nuremberg Trials in November, and next year the anniversaries of Frank's indictment and execution, and the final judgments of Nuremberg.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY OF THE FILM

The journey of this story took Philippe Sands, the international lawyer and writer, across old Europe with Niklas Frank, son of Hans Frank, a senior Nazi executed at Nuremberg, and Horst von Wächter son of Otto von Wächter, also a senior Nazi and Hans Frank's deputy. Towns, villages, summer homes and old castles provide the clues as they all explore their fathers' lives, and their surprising intertwined families' histories.

Philippe visits the Frank family home in Bavaria, from where Hans Frank watched the American troops arriving to arrest him; he explores the dilapidated 16th century Schloss to the north of Vienna which is now Horst von Wächter's home, and enters the Wawel Castle in Krakow where Niklas grew up, as a 'Prince of Poland'. Here he sees the famous portrait of Cecilia Gallerani by Leonardo da Vinci, which Hans Frank loved so much that he took it home with him when he fled from the advancing Soviet army. The three men travel to London and meet on stage at the Southbank Centre to debate their differences in public for the first time.

Philippe proposes a trip to Lviv in the Ukraine. Philippe, Niklas and Horst meet at the hall in the center of Lviv where Hans Frank gave a famously anti-Semitic speech in 1942, announcing the forthcoming actions to be taken to destroy the entire Jewish population. Otto was in the audience who 'laughed and clapped' as Frank joked about the speed with which the Jewish population was disappearing from the streets of the city.

The next day, the three men go to Zolkiew, an old Ukrainian town, which has at its center, next to the market place, a ruined synagogue, still majestic in its architecture, but empty and dead. It was burnt out on the day the Germans occupied the town. Once it was the synagogue frequented by Philippe's own family. They travel to the woods outside Zolkiew, where the Jewish population of the town, men, women and children, over three thousand of them, were marched to the edge of a pit, and shot, one by one, Philippe's family included. It is a beautiful place now; the pits long since filled with water, slender rushes waving gently above them. But the tension between the three men standing at the water's edge is tangible.

While in Ukraine the three men visit Brody, just outside Lviv, to attend the annual celebration of the creation of the Waffen-SS Galicia Division, which was formed by Otto von Wächter to fight the Bolsheviks when he was governor of the region. Surrounded by Ukrainians who venerate Horst's father, the three men watch as the remains of German and Ukrainian soldiers are reburied.

Finally they travel to Nuremberg, in Germany. Philippe and Niklas visit the cell where Hans Frank was held and the courtroom where he was put on trial and, on October 1st 1946, where he was sentenced to death.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Director David Evans was born in Wolverhampton, England, in 1962. He is an Emmy-nominated, multi-award winning director of film and television. His previous work in documentaries includes a BAFTA award-winning film about the English author Angela Carter, and a profile of radical feminist Andrea Dworkin. He directed the feature film *FEVER PITCH*, starring Colin Firth, for which Nick Hornby adapted his best-selling book of the same name, and is now established as a leading director of high-end TV drama in the UK, with credits including *Shameless*, *Downton Abbey*, and Russell T. Davies's *Cucumber*.

Editor David Charap has worked on many award-winning documentaries, most recently *THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS* and *VIRUNGA* (Oscar nominated), as well as features for Pawel Pawlikowski and Terence Davies.

As an eminent barrister, Professor Philippe Sands QC has been involved in many of the great international cases of recent years, concerning genocide in Yugoslavia, the London proceedings against Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet, and Colonel Gaddafi's son Saif at the International Criminal Court. He is also a journalist and author whose non-fiction books include *The Lawless World* and *Torture Team* which John Le Carré described as "gripping, furious, and very serious indeed."

ABOUT WILDGAZE FILMS

Wildgaze Films is run by Oscar-nominated, BAFTA-winning producers Finola Dwyer and Amanda Posey. Their upcoming film BROOKLYN, which premiered at Sundance in January 2015 to critical acclaim and sold after a bidding war to Fox Searchlight for \$9m, is based on Colm Toibin's award-winning novel of the same name. It was adapted for the screen by Nick Hornby, directed by John Crowley (BOY A, INTERMISSION), with Saoirse Ronan starring in the lead role. Domhnall Gleeson, Emory Cohen, Julie Walters, and Jim Broadbent also star.

Among their many credits are AN EDUCATION, starring Carey Mulligan in her breakout role, which was nominated for 3 Academy Awards (including Best Film), 9 BAFTAs (including Best Film and Best British Film, winning Best Actress), and winner of Best Foreign Film at the Independent Spirit Awards; Dustin Hoffman's directorial debut QUARTET, written by Ronald Harwood, starring Maggie Smith, Tom Courtenay, Billy Connelly, and Pauline Collins; and A LONG WAY DOWN based on the best-selling novel by Nick Hornby, adapted by Jack Thorne, directed by Pascal Chaumeil and starring Pierce Brosnan, Toni Collette, Aaron Paul, and Imogen Poots.

CAST & CREW

CAST:

NIKLAS FRANK
as Himself

PHILIPPE SANDS
as Himself

HORST VON WÄCHTER
as Himself

CREW:

Directed by
DAVID EVANS

Written by
PHILIPPE SANDS

Edited by
DAVID CHARAP

Directors of Photography
SAM HARDY, PHILIPP BLAUBACH, and MATT GRAY

Sound Recordist
MATTHEW POWELL

Music by
MALCOLM LINDSAY

Produced by
FINOLA DWYER and AMANDA POSEY

Executive Producers
PHILIPPE SANDS, DAVID EVANS, and NICK FRASER

Associate Producer
JOSEPHINE DAVIES

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in association with
WILLOW FILMS