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Thalidomide. A drug marketed in the 1950's as a mild sleeping pill, safe even for pregnant women stalks victims still today.

Andreas Meyer

They didn't just deny us a fair financial settlement, they also took our dignity by compelling us to become welfare recipients. We lived for forty years on the brink of poverty.

Fifty-five years after thalidomide was taken out of circulation, the victims want the truth to be told - to prove that they were denied fair compensation.

The survivors put their hopes in this man. Tobias Arndt found in the German state archives newly discovered files that show how victims of thalidomide were betrayed by political interference in court proceedings.

TITLE

The Secret deal - The Dark History of the Thalidomide Scandal.

Thalidomide was first marketed in 1957 in West Germany under the trade-name Contergan.

The medication was initially hailed as a "wonder drug" by its manufacturers Grünenthal, the German company that created and marketed thalidomide.

Its distribution however - led to the biggest man-made medical catastrophe of the twentieth century.

More than 10.000 children were born with gross limb malformations as a result.

It is estimated that 80.000 embryos died in their mothers' womb.

Some 2.800 so-called Contergan children currently survive in Germany today.

Claus Knapp, was one of the doctors who lifted the lid on thalidomide in Germany 55 years ago when he realised that the mothers of large number of malformed children had all taken the same medication.

These are the original Charts that he and a colleague Dr. Widikund Lenz made in 1961. They indicate that the damage done to an unborn child was dependent on the exact days their mothers took thalidomide. Following their discovery that birth defects conformed to a predictable pattern both doctors decided to phone Grünenthal.

Statement: Dr. Knapp

Then Lenz spoke and said

'You know – we have information and must talk to one of your doctors. We think and strongly suspect that these malformations that are regularly occurring throughout Germany are caused by your medication. We are telling you this because we think this is very serious and we need help.'

After that the phone made a click noise. And Lenz said they've hung up. But no, they hadn't put the phone down. They simply connected us to one of their lawyers. And he actually knew about this already.

After this call, It became obvious to us that they knew precisely what was happening and that they were only waiting for someone, someday, to break the news.

The Northrhine-Westphalia State Archive in Duisburg. Tobias Arndt researches here on behalf of thalidomide victims. Arndt searches in the archive collections for pieces of evidence amongst documents that have not been examined until now.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

Well, this is a sensational finding, a finding that you can only make if you really dig deep into these archives. So here a witness came forward and it must be pointed out he is a former employee of Grünenthal with a PhD who wanted to give testimony. He says that stickers were made to put on boxes of tablets. The stickers read: „Not for pregnant women”.

For medication to be sold without this 'not for pregnant women' warning, suggests the drug was being marketed in full knowledge that it damaged unborn children.

The witness says he first wrote to the prosecution with this information, but there is no record of his letter. This allegation has never been heard in court because the trial was terminated.

Expectant mothers had no way of knowing that the sedative they were taking was not suitable for pregnant women. This happened worldwide, in Great Britain an estimated two thousand thalidomide babies were born

British survivors want to demonstrate that the German government supported the manufacturer when the scandal became public. They believe there is a moral case for all survivors across Europe to be supported by the German Health Fund.

Statement English Nick Dobrik

I think the Germans find it difficult to face up to their history with thalidomide and they have to do it now. And they feel ashamed. But at the same time being typical governments they feel paralysed. they do not know what to do about it. But sooner or later they are going to have to confront what happened.

In June 2016 a conference titled “The Role of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia towards Contergan and the Consequences ” took place in Düsseldorf. The conference revealed the findings of a study commissioned in January 2014 by the Health Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Barbara Steffen.

The study is a PhD doctoral degree from the Faculty of History, University of Munster.

At the start of the conference the author of the doctoral dissertation Niklas Leonhard-Schramm is put under pressure from thalidomide victims. One of the reasons is that, in his report, he identified Contergan as a 'life style' drug.

Statement: Andreas Meyer

I ask you to explain to me why Contergan is described as a lifestyle medication. I find this really disrespectful towards our mothers. It suggests that our mothers took this drug because it was fashionable to take it. Our mothers trusted in the company who said that it was harmless.

Statement: Niklas Lenhard-Schramm:

I regret this very much. It isn't meant like this.

statement: Contergan-survivor:

I would like to express my agitation about the fact that here again research took place without the participation of the affected people. Have you ever heard the principle “nothing about us, without us?” That principle is still relevant today.

The author of the study was commissioned by the Health Minister to examine the role of the local government during the criminal trial against the manufacturer.

Statement: Niklas Lenhard Schramm

You can not answer the question if the state acted correctly or not correctly because this is principally a question of evaluation. You can answer the question if the state acted legally or illegally. And here it can be said that there is no indication that an unlawful influence on the criminal trial took place.

So there is no indication that the state behaved in an incorrect manner during the criminal trial against the Pharmaceutical company Grunenthal?

A key player in the Contergan-trial is the justice minister of the Land North-Rhine-Westphalia,

Josef Neuberger.

In May 1968 the trial began.

Statement: Dr. Josef Neuberger

This trial brings a range of technical difficulties but I am absolutely convinced that the President of the District Court of Aachen has done everything possible to overcome these difficulties.

Before Neuberger became the Minister of Justice, he was the criminal defense lawyer of the main defendant. The archives contain files which demonstrate that he was the defense lawyer for the former director of Grünenthal, Hermann Wirtz.

Tobias Arndt discovered a memorandum from the Aachen Prosecution Service, stating that Neuberger wrote to the Prosecution Service two days before he became Justice Minister.

Neuberger is of the opinion that all questions concerning his client have been answered, and that there is no obstacle to a termination of the legal proceedings.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

And then he wrote, 'I would be personally obliged for a swift resolution'. He already acts like he's running the show, which two days later he will be.

According to the newly discovered documents, the last thing Neuberger did on the afternoon of the day he was sworn in as Justice Minister, was meet with the prosecution in Aachen. Again, he asked them to stop action against Wirtz.

The charges in the Contergan trial are personal injury and involuntary manslaughter.

The defence demanded the termination of the trial, and that the parents of the children are only allowed to observe the trial.

Justice minister Neuberger then becomes head of the Prosecution Service. He is not allowed to interfere with the proceedings any more.

However, after two years in office he writes a letter to a defence lawyer

The letter is addressed to Erich Schmidt Leichner defence lawyer of one of the Grünenthal defendants.

Dear colleague, writes the Justice Minister "during night time browsing through papers I found something about the admissibility of Evidence."

Was the Minister of Justice interfering with the criminal trial in an unlawful way and giving legal advice to a defence lawyer? We show the letter to the author of the thesis and ask him how he evaluates the letter as regards the role of the regional state during the trial.

Statement: Niklas Lenhard Schramm

That's general correspondence, nothing to do with the Contergan-trial.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

Of course this has something to do with the Contergan-trial.

Firstly, due to the tactics concerning the correct procedure on how to make evidence admissible.

During the trial both parties continuously blocked each other.

And secondly, the two personalities Neuberger and Schmidt-Leichner.

Schmidt-Leichner, as we found out, was in the court room during that period, present at every hearing, at one of the biggest trials in North-Rhine-Westphalia.

Where else should he have been to consider these legal arguments?

The University of Glasgow. Professor of History Ray Stokes conducts research at the Faculty of Corporate History. Professor Stokes is an acknowledged expert on Twentieth Century German business history.

He read the doctoral thesis about the role of the Federal State Government. And he also knows about the Neuberger letter from his time as Minister of Justice.

Statement: Prof. Ray Stokes

It's not only that Neuberger gives advice to Schmidt-Leichner. Neuberger also says at the end of the letter that the two should meet each other in the next weeks at a meeting of German lawyers.

And this shows a permanent contact between the two. Not only on a personal but also to some extent there is a professional association between the two of them.

British victims of thalidomide are represented by The Thalidomide Trust.

Tobias Arndt presents the findings he found in the German archives. Letters, files and minutes detail the way the criminal trial against the manufacturer Grünenthal was handled.

These documents shed new light on what happened 55 years ago. It is not only the British Thalidomide survivors who are shocked by the findings. They now have allies in all the British political parties and Parliamentary questions about thalidomide are common.

February 2015 the British Parliament heard about the ongoing struggles faced by the victims of thalidomide .

Statement: English Mr. Michael Moore.

Thank you Mr Speaker.

For over 50 years the Thalidomiders have been campaigning for justice. Particularly from the German manufacturer Grünenthal. Now that over a 150 MPs have signed an open letter to the German chancellor - would the Prime Minister add this to his busy agenda today so that we might get a decent and fair settlement for all concerned?

Prime Minister

Well I have on the behalf of a constituent actually raised this issue not only through the European Parliament but also with the German authorities and I'll certainly reflect on what the honourable Gentlemen says.

418 British MPs from all political persuasions have now signed an open letter to the German Chancellor Ms. Merkel on behalf of the victims of thalidomide.

British Thalidomide survivors, supported by British and European politicians from all political groups, are asking the German government to urgently recognise their moral obligation

There are 465 members of the Thalidomide Trust who are not just fighting for compensation. They want those responsible for their disabilities to be held to account. Campaigner Nick Dobrik thinks they will get justice. The truth about what happened will be revealed.

Lawyer Christ Jefferis represents the thalidomide victims.

Statement English: Chris Jefferis

If they had not ended the trial, as they did in the early 70s, then the evidence would be available to the victims to use in their future actions against Grünenthal and others. And in particular the UK survivors action in the 70s would have undoubtedly have been ended in a much more favourable fashion to the claimants.

As it was it did not have the evidence and had to settle for a much bigger discount in the amount they should have got than it would have been the case if it would have been the evidence available they would have got a proper settlement and that is what the Thalidomiders are after now.

The British lawyer considers a newly discovered memo to be of crucial evidence. A confidential meeting took place in July 1969 at the Ministry of Health in Bonn. The top management of Grünenthal, the manufacturers of thalidomide, were present to discuss the settlement of the case.

The reason for the meeting was to reach an agreement with the company about a process which may provide compensation for thalidomide victims. When the German Parents Association heard about this discussion and asked to see details of this meeting, a Minister is on record as saying “that the Parents Association will under no circumstances receive these details.”

Statement: Prof. Ray Stokes

This is explicitly mentioned in many documents, that the children or the parents and their representatives should be excluded and should play no role in the negotiations concerning the trust fund.

Half a century later, in the Summer of 2015, a meeting between British victims of Thalidomide and representatives of the German Government took place in the German Embassy, in London.

Statement English: Chris Jefferis

I think they heard the concerns we have. They obviously refute the fact that they interfered in the criminal trial but they never actually answered individually the documents that we put to them.

The British MP Simon Hoare was also present at the meeting in London at the German Embassy.

Statement English: Simon Hoare

It was a meeting at the German Embassy and really it was a meeting of 2 halves. The first half I thought was very positive. Clearly the mood music coming out of the officials on the German side of the table was very encouraging. they wanted a dialogue, they wanted a conclusion.

We had to leave as we had to go back to the Commons to vote. And then the notes following that seems to suggest that they slightly dried up like a clam and it's very much 'we are not getting involved in this. This is the only meeting we have to discuss this.' Effectively that's the end of the news.

And I think if there is anything that came out of the meeting that we had at the Embassy in July of last year is that there had been a long debate point as to whether the drug which had been taken by British mothers had been manufactured in Germany or manufactured under license in the UK and this is now very clear that the German officials take entirely the point that the Thalidomide Trust has been making for many a long year that there was no thalidomide manufactured in the UK and that was taken by British expectant mothers had been manufactured in Germany.

For the victims of thalidomide, this fact has only recently come to light.

Since the seventies people effected by Thalidomide produced in Germany could only file applications for compensation with the German Government. And those who file the application have to renounce all claims against the manufacturer Grünenthal. Many European victims say that they received too little, or no compensation at all.

The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs declined to give an interview about this.

Neither would it comment about the meeting with the British Thalidomide contingent at the German Embassy in London. However, they said off camera that that the German Contergan-Stiftung, grants financial support when claims are founded.

Christiane Ortel made an application to the Contergan Stiftung - the German Contergan foundation - for support.

Statement: Christiane Ortel, Female

I started a lawsuit and it went to trial. I won the first court hearing .

It's about a box-spring-bed I chose because of my chronic back pain.

Although I won this legal dispute the Foundation is filing an appeal to a higher court.

They are arguing about what is a legitimate need for a victim of thalidomide and what is not.

But for me it's only about one thing. I simply need this bed.

18:01 Statement: English Dr. Craig Milward

We spend a third of our lives in our beds. Our beds are important and for her (Christiane) to be turned down on that basis is utterly ridiculous. And so it's abundantly clear to me that applying to the Contergan Stiftung isn't going to be a solution for us at all.

And so therefore for us to be subjected to a ridiculous system, a bureaucratic system at this point of our lives. It's not going to meet our needs. All we need is money that we can use in the ways that we know will suit us best.

The former manufacturer of thalidomide does not any longer consider the claims from the victims of thalidomide to be their responsibility.

Statement: Frank Schönrock (Grünenthal-Gruppe)

People affected always have the opportunity to sue Grünenthal and they do this for instance in the United Kingdom. There are lawsuits pending today. Every person effected by a Grünenthal Thalidomide product has a right to receive substantial financial support.

Support that is not paid for by Grünenthal but by the Federal Government.

One of those whose application to the German Contergan Stiftung was denied is Lorraine Mercer.

And now her body is beginning to fail her.

Statement English: Lorraine Mercer

Sometimes, I could do with more help because I am getting more stiff, more fragile, more stiff in my back. I'm finding when I move like that it's getting more stiffer.

Five decades of distortions and contortions are taking their toll.

Her jaw is weakening. She needs oxygen to revive her.

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Statement English: Mikey Argy

There is a fund in Germany connected to the Contergan Stiftung which allows Thalidomiders to apply to it for financial assistance. There is also a fund set up by Grünenthal to apply to. But you can apply to them saying you wanted some more money but you would have to prove first of all you applied to the Thalidomide Trust to get some more money and that they said no. And then that you applied to all charities, and you have applied to local governments to see if you can get assistance and when you have been rejected by everybody you can then ask Grünenthal if they would like to contribute some money towards your financial assistance. But you are not aware of that because Grünenthal hasn't made it public to Thalidomiders outside of Germany.

In fact the company established a foundation. However Grünenthal does not want to speak about this, and neither about the way decisions on applications and the amounts given are taken. They do not want to create any envy, they say.

Statement English: Mikey Argy

We believe the German government should be responsible for paying for those unmet health needs that we all have. And hopefully when we get that money Lorraine's needs will be you know met.

Sir Robert Nelson is a British High- Court judge. He wrote a letter to the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs

Statement English: Sir Robert Nelson

The purpose of the letter was to bring home to the German government the problems that the thalidomiders face and the shortfall in finances that we felt that they had in the amount they got and the amount that they would in fact need. I wrote it to the relevant minister and there was no reply as such.

For decades the parents never knew what was going on behind their backs during the criminal trial.

The strategy for the defence of the thalidomide manufacturer was to convince the prosecution to agree to a termination of the trial. They knew they had not only the Justice Minister of the regional government on their side but also the Federal Government.

However, the termination of a criminal trial is bound by strict conditions. And according to the prosecution service they were not met.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

Here we have an assessment from the prosecution service, dated April 1969, where they look from a purely legal perspective at the question whether the trial could be terminated.

And there is one condition for bringing the trial to an early end, which is the level of guilt attached to the defendants. And this document concludes that a low level of personal guilt is out of the question. Another condition for the termination of the trial is the absence of public interest. Ten points are listed why there is public interest. Mainly because of the vast number of victims. One thousand damaged adults and several thousand malformed children.

The parents didn't know that during the criminal trial, private meetings between the Federal Government and the defendants took place

The defense finally achieved their goal in December 1970. The criminal trial ended due to lack of evidence and lack of public interest.

The parents then had no alternative but to go along with a miserable compensation scheme contrived by the government and the company.

Statement: Justice Minister Gerhard Jahn

We call on all parents to reach a decision concerning this generous offer. I cannot imagine any responsible mother and any responsible father who cares for the well being of their child to refuse such an offer.

To not take this settlement will jeopardise effective support not only for their own child but for all the other Contergan children.

Statement: Monika Eisenberg, Female

My mother was a widow at that time with two little children and she had to make decisions about my future.

She was then put under pressure. And it was massive. Pressure exerted on her to sign documents that she didn't want to sign because she said these documents were very detailed about my future and she needed time to think about it.

Many German victims today understand that their parents did not realise the implications of putting their signatures to paper.

Monika Eisenberg

And it's their wrongdoing, not of our parents. Our parents were just bamboozled. This is a depressing fact, still today.

During the negotiations, the Federal government stated that a suitable amount of compensation would amount to one and a half Billion Deutschmarks. At the end Grünenthal paid just 100 Million Deutschmarks.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

The 100 million Deutschmark compensation for the children could additionally be set against taxes. There is an assessment report from the Federal Justice Ministry about this. And the report of the Federal Justice Ministry concludes that Grünenthal only had to pay 29.4 Million or in the worst case scenario 35.24 million Deutschmarks net. The remaining sum was a tax saving.

Grünenthal received a signed agreement from the parents.

The decisive points were: To accept the amount of compensation on offer and to waive all further claims against the manufacturer of thalidomide.

Statement: Andreas Meyer

And for this reason the Contergan Stiftung Law was imposed on us - the victims of thalidomide.

The Act says that we can never sue Grünenthal, meaning that we cannot pursue claims for damages.

Last but not least, they should try to annul the Contergan-Stiftung Law - and claims in the billions should follow.

The goal of the British victims of Thalidomide is to fully meet the health needs of thalidomide survivors across Europe. The newly discovered documents are there to prove that an illegal relationship existed between politics and the pharmaceutical company.

Statement English: Sir Robert Nelson

The influence of the German government in that which I say appears to be the case from the papers is one which on the face of it offends the constitutional principle of no executive should interfere with the responsibility of exercise of its duty by the judiciary and that's a constitutional principle which the Germans accept, which is accepted indeed throughout Europe.

Grünenthal when asked, says they examined these various accusations with their own internal investigation.

Statement: Frank Schönrock: (Grünenthal-Gruppe)

Here our experts conclude that there was no interference on the part of politics or authorities on the criminal trial with its termination.

And how does the Regional Government of today evaluate the Government of that time?

Statement: Barbara Steffen (Green Party, Female)

I think it's very important that the Contergan-victims know that we do not consider it correct what has happened.

And we think that an apology for the victims is forthcoming as regards the role of the Regional Government. An admission that they may have fought harder legally. That the officials of the Region were not more courageous and active and had taken an active stance against the company.

This can't be decided by a court of law. But it is something that you must claim responsibility for. That you apologise for this misconduct.

The British Thalidomide victims insist that they were denied a fair settlement. And that the German Contergan Foundation was formed under the wrong circumstances.

Statement English: Nick Dobrik

You suffer in two ways. First there is the physical damage itself. As well there is the constant reminder is that the people who perpetuated this crime have never been brought to justice. And there has been a

cover up. So you spend your whole life trying to find the answer to those questions and therefore it blights your existence and this has happened with all the thalidomiders in Europe.

The British thalidomide-victims look to Brussels for support. And their voice is being heard.

Time is pressing upon them. Many of them can't pay for adequate health care.

And the older they get the more costs they have.

At a European Parliament press conference in May 2015 Nick Dobrik spoke about the issues facing the victims of Thalidomide.

Statement English: "And Now Nick Dobrik"

Statement English: Nick Dobrik

And we did a research in the German archives We came up with astonishing information which really shook us and made us realise what had happened. And I want to just make 3 comments about this investigation we did into the criminal trial.

The first thing we discovered there was secret negotiations between Grünenthal and the German Federal Government whilst the trial was taking place.

Secondly the German Federal President at the time entered into talks with Grünenthal to arrange a contribution in return for the trial been terminated. Despite the fact that the prosecution office in NRW warned him he must not do this, this is illegal.

The net result of this, the third point which is the most important for the 4 countries here, is that all the evidence was suppressed.

The issues facing the victims of Thalidomide were discussed in the European Parliament again in March 2016

Statement English: Diane James

In May 2015 nine months ago MEPs of every political group here in the EU parliament insisted that a solution be found to the scandal of the lack of action on the urgent needs of the thalidomide victims. A solution to a problem that is approaching 60 years old. During those 60 years the German government system and the pharmaceutical company concerned have deployed every possible prevarication and procrastination tactic to avoid addressing those needs.

Statement: Matthias Groote

It is very sad that we today so much time after the thalidomide scandal happened still have more than nine hundred victims, who have to date not been correctly compensated. And at the end of the day - there is no solution.

There are a large number of documents discovered in the state archives detailing the stories of survivors in other European countries. In Spain there are currently three hundred people who claim that they have never been compensated.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

The document clearly proves that a substantial volume, 160 kilos of raw material of thalidomide, was exported to Spain for further processing. Enough to produce approximately three to four million tablets.

And you must realise that the Spanish victims never got this information for at least for 30 to 40 years. Thus, this information has only been available very recently.

The tablets that were manufactured in Spain from this raw material, and also other thalidomide products, were sold long after the product was withdrawn in Germany.

In Spain there was for decades no acknowledgement that children were born with thalidomide-induced malformations.

The fact that the drug was sold in Spain for years after it was taken off the market in Germany has hardly been addressed.

The Spanish governmentt officially recognised that there had been Spanish victims of thalidomide in 2010. A Spanish court then ruled against Grünenthal in November 2013. But in 2014 Grünenthal got the judgement reversed, arguing that the case had been brought too late..

The paediatrician Klaus Knapp lives today in Madrid and campaigns for the Spanish Thalidomide victims.

When thalidomide was pulled from the Spanish market, no campaign was carried out to explain to doctors its potential effects on foetuses.

Statement: Dr. Claus Knapp

When it was already banned in Germany they still had advertising for it here in Spain, promoting its beneficial qualities for pregnant women.

And they then took it because they frequently needed it. Pain during pregnancy can be very severe and so they took this medication which was so highly recommended.

A drug that was strongly advertised and marketed.

The Spanish victims formed an association called AVITE.

They held a congress in Madrid in February 2016. Nobody here at the meeting, the participants say has ever received compensation from the German Contergan-Stiftung or Grünenthal.

Statement: Dr. Claus Knapp

There was no proper Health Ministry and the so called Dirección General was not a ministry and was led by someone who proudly said 'we have no expenditure this year, as we have no problems in Spain. We can return our budget to the government.' In those days they never saw problems.

Grünenthal stresses that there were already “specific and efficient means” for all Spanish victims to seek economic aid.

Statement: Ignazio Martinez Lawyer

Grünenthal is fully responsible, they manufactured the product and imported it to Spain.

Yes, we lost the trial at the high court, even though the court had no doubt about the responsibility of Grünenthal for the tragedy.

They say the statute of limitations on the case has run out. Now we want to fight for a change of the verdict.

Manuel Nunez unsuccessfully asked the German Contergan-stiftung for support.

Spain never set up a compensation fund for victims. Manuel was born in the wrong year.

Statement: Manuel Bioque Núñez

I was born six month before the date, I therefore can't get any compensation according to the decree of the Spanish King.

Why?

Because I was born in July 1959.

The Spanish decree only supports those born between 1960 and 1965.

Some are too old for compensation, some are too young. Only those who are born within a time frame of five years have a chance of getting support.

Statement: Ignazio Martinez Lawyer

Nobody knows why these dates were fixed. And we have asked all the people who should know. It is completely nonsensical because we have documents that mention cases in Spain from 1957. Meaning, three years prior to the fixed legal time-period.

On the other hand, thalidomide-children were born up to the seventies. In a time when thalidomide was not really meant any more to be on the market. Even though this is all illogical, the government maintains that we use this time frame.

In the little Basque village of Legoretta lives one of the youngest victims of thalidomide to be found in Spain.

Mariano Garmendia is 39 years old. When he was a baby medical care was basic. Knowledge of Thalidomide and Mariano's specific difficulties was almost non-existent.

It wasn't until Mariano was a young man of 20 that his mother finally heard the word thalidomide and realised that she took the drug during pregnancy.

Statement: Lierni Iparragirre, Female

I feel awful , because I was completely ignorant about Thalidomide. I believed it when I was told it just happened. And, I have today even more of a bad conscience. Of course, I blame myself. At the moment, I feel worsen than I ever did.

Mariano Garmandia only ever received help from his family. He never received any financial support from the Spanish state, from the Contergan-foundation or even from Grünenthal.

Mariano had to give up his architecture studies. Student life was proving to difficult to cope with. His disability got the better of him.

Statement: Mariano Garmendia Male

When I learned that I am actually affected by thalidomide I never thought of blaming my mother. The pharmaceutical company and the Spanish Government are the culprits.

However, I do not have any anger. I think everybody should get some kind of support. I didn't receive any help.

However, I am not angry with anybody. It is simply difficult to describe my feelings.

The Spanish victims of thalidomide have been ignored for decades.

The Association of Victims of Thalidomide in Spain have won and lost trials since they started their fight. They now want to form a stronger alliance with the British Thalidomide campaigners to share documents and information.

A recent trove of official documents and doctor's prescriptions have come to light.

Tobias Arndt presents a discovery that could be useful in court for the Spanish victims of thalidomide.

Statement: Tobias Arndt

This is possibly one of the most important documents found to date. It is from 21 December 1961, a few weeks after the market withdrawal.

With reference to this document after the market withdrawal. It states that doctors in Spain were not informed about the cessation of sales, neither have the the pharmaceutical representatives of the sales division of the Spanish sales company.

A summary of the authorisation documents from the Spanish health authorities show that thalidomide was still on the market in Spain, even after market withdrawal in Germany. In some cases, even until 1969.

In two cases, the product came directly from Grünenthal.

One of these was a combination preparation which was introduced in Spain after sales in Germany ended. And Thalidomide is very clearly on the list as a component.

Meanwhile, Contergan-victims in Germany recently became aware of these findings. The British Thalidomide campaigners have a plan.

They are seeking to win over the European Parliament, believing that the Bundestag must then take action .

Statement: English Nick Dobrik

What we are going to do, is that we are about to launch a massive campaign in the German Parliament with the help of the British Embassy. There has to be a judicial inquiry in Germany to find out the truth behind everything.

Statement: Andreas Meyer

If this is correct we could rewrite the entire Contergan-scandal and history. Then there must be compensation for the fact that we lived in poverty in Germany and abroad for 40 years and who had to finally pay?

The citizens of this country, the tax-payer, they have paid for this. And that is really a crime against all of us.

With the admission that not everything went right, and with an apology to the victims the State Government of North-Rhine-Westphalia intends to close the Contergan-file.

The insights of a PhD thesis and an apology are not enough for the victims.

They feel betrayed and demand a new investigation, one that also takes their own experiences into account and that evaluates the files found in the inventories of the German archives.

Statement: Monika Eisenberg Female

Frankly speaking, I am slowly getting fed up with having to fight all the time, for my rights. However, I am absolutely convinced about the new findings, I consider them to be meaningful.

And we should also approach the government. Because the Government are those who protected Grünenthal, yes, the government should make Grünenthal liable – that cannot be questioned. Otherwise this could go on for another 20 years, and in 20 years we won't be here.

I just would like to lead a normal life. I want to be with my family. I want to go on holidays.

I don't want to think about it all the time.

I think the German Government should just accept its responsibility.

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