

## *Real Life Stories* *Those Who Fought For Freedom Until Death*

### **Sophie, Hans Scholl remain symbols of resistance**

Students Hans and Sophie Scholl were arrested and executed 77 years ago. The students and their friends had distributed leaflets calling on people to resist the Nazi regime. Today, they remain symbols of moral courage.



In February 1943, three young men - Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf - were on their way into Munich's city center. All three belonged to the "Weiße Rose" ("White Rose") group which had dedicated itself to resisting Adolf Hitler's regime. The three men were carrying thousands of leaflets that listed the crimes of the Nazi regime. The students threw the pamphlets into mailboxes, hoping to appeal to people's humanity.

But Scholl and Schmorell had devised an even bolder plan: in the darkness of night, they painted the words "Down with Hitler" on the facade of the Bavarian State Chancellery. They were yet more courageous elsewhere, writing "Mass Murderer Hitler" on another wall. Scholl's younger sister, Sophie, was at home at Franz-Joseph-Strasse 13 - awaiting their safe return.

#### **The path of resistance**

Hans and Sophie Scholl lived with their family in the southern German city of Ulm when National Socialists took power in 1933. Both children were still in school at the time - Hans was born in 1918 and Sophie in 1921. Their father, Robert, earned enough to support his wife, Magdalena, and five children as a tax adviser. A liberal man, Scholl did not approve of Germany's new leader and he and his wife taught their children the importance of tolerance.

The Scholl children, however, were fascinated with National Socialism. Hans quickly made a name for himself in the Hitler Youth. At the age of 16 he commanded a group of 160 boys. Sophie also expressed a sympathy for National Socialism. She joined the "Union of German Girls," a Nazi youth organization for girls. Like her brother, Sophie soon had a leadership position in the group. Her contemporaries would later remember her as being "very enthusiastic, very fanatical about National Socialism."

By 1942, Hans and Sophie would no longer be counted among those supporting Hitler and his regime. The siblings took notice of how their Christian faith and moral convictions were not in line with the goals of National Socialism. Hans became convinced that he needed to do something against the Nazis. In 1942, Hans was called to the Eastern Front where he and other medicine students would experience the inhumanity of war for three months. He is also said to have been extremely concerned by the fate of deported Jews.

#### **'Long live freedom'**

A group willing to protest against the Nazi government formed around Hans at Munich University in 1942. Four medicine students - Scholl, Christoph Probst, Schmorell and Graf - and philosophy professor Kurt Huber formed the core of the group. Sophie would join them later in the year when she moved to Munich to study biology and philosophy.

The group called its publications "Flyers from the White Rose" and left the pamphlets in public spots. With the help of other resistance groups, the flyers, which included denunciations like "Every word that comes from Hitler's mouth is a lie," were also distributed outside of Munich.

The White Rose's sixth pamphlet would be its last. On February 18, 1943, Sophie and Hans were distributing the flyer at the university. Both of the siblings were discovered and arrested after she was caught throwing a pile of pamphlets from a balcony into the square below. The Gestapo, or secret police, then interrogated them.



## *Real Life Stories*

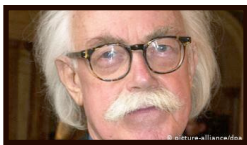
### *Those Who Fought For Freedom Until Death*

Even in these desperate circumstances, both Hans and Sophie attempted to convince authorities that they had worked alone. Sophie told her interrogators that "she did not want to have anything to do with National Socialism." Evidence against the pair was regarded as sufficiently incriminating and on February 22, 1943 a so-called People's Tribunal led by Roland Freisler sentenced Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst to death. They were executed a few hours later. Hans' last words were, "Long live freedom!"

#### **Moral examples**

"They permit us to believe that at the time not all Germans were mute and cowardly followers," German President Joachim Gauck has said, referring to the importance of the Scholls and the White Rose. In its fourth pamphlet, the group wrote, "We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!"

Their words, Gauck said, still apply today. Hans and Sophie Scholl and their friends had the courage to stand up for their convictions and resist - showing a degree of courage possessed only by a few at that time.



The Scholl siblings are still honored for their courage. Their names adorn schools in nearly every German city, and public squares and streets across the country have been named after them. A prize bearing their name is among Germany's most distinguished literature awards.

The story of the White Rose also continues to attract children, a fact that Franz J. Müller said he sees when he visits schools. Müller was the last surviving participant in the White Rose (Feb. 18, 2013). "They tend to be amazed by what we did," he said. "But Hans and Sophie Scholl really did not want to be heroes. Friendship and freedom were the values most important to them."

The White Rose Foundation in Munich, which Müller and other resistance members founded, is a memorial that keeps the memory of the Scholl siblings and their friends alive. Young people, in particular, can learn lessons from history, Müller said.

"The schoolchildren should get information from as many places as they can and talk with their friends so they are not so easily swayed by propaganda, and show civil courage when freedom is in danger," he said.

#### **Scholls were 'a sign that resistance was possible'**

Franz J. Müller was part of the White Rose resistance group that called for active opposition against the Nazi regime.

#### **Exhibition honors courage of White Rose anti-Hitler movement**

February 22 marks the anniversary of the execution of Hans and Sophie Scholl, key members of the anti-Nazi resistance group, White Rose. Though their lives were tragically short, their influence spanned across Germany. (22.02.2011)

#### **German army honors member of anti-Nazi White Rose**

Medical student Christoph Probst was executed by the Nazis for belonging to the White Rose, a clandestine movement that stood up to Hitler. More than 75 years on, the German army had decided to name a barracks after him.

#### **Hans Scholl: Fighting for freedom until death**

He fought Hitler with slogans and leaflets; that cost him his life.

*Real Life Stories*  
*Those Who Fought For Freedom Until Death*

**White Rose Movement**  
**Those who fought for Freedom until death**



Sophie Scholl  
9 May 1921 - 22 Feb. 1943  
Student of Medicine  
University of Munich



Hans Fritz Scholl  
22 Sept. 1918 - 22 Feb. 1943  
Student of Medicine  
University of Munich



Christoph Probst  
6 Nov. 1919 - 22 Feb. 1943  
Student of Medicine  
University of Munich



Kurt Huber  
24 Oct. 1893 - 13 July 1943  
University Professor



Willi Graf  
2 Jan. 1918 - 12 Oct. 1943  
Army Medic



Alexander Schmorell  
16 Sept. 1917 - 13 July 1943  
Student of Medicine