

## The White Rose: Why are some people willing to die for their beliefs?

I have two reasons for giving this talk. One is to make more people aware of the “most famous” German group that resisted Nazi oppression during World War II. Secondly, I want a discussion on why some people are willing to die for their beliefs because it is something I cannot imagine doing myself.

I put quotation marks around “most famous” in the opening paragraph because although the White Rose is well known in Germany, it is not well known here. Most people I’ve mentioned them to had never heard of them. I myself first heard of them comparatively recently and I’m seriously interested in World War II Germany.

My first encounter was hearing a radio interview with Czechoslovak holocaust survivor Alexandre Raab, founder of the White Rose chain of nurseries here in Ontario. Raab explained that he’d waited patiently until the name was available because he wanted to honour the White Rose, the resistance movement. Since I’d never heard of them I was intrigued.

*Der weissen Rose*, the White Rose, was a group of mostly students at the University of Munich in Bavaria. Some were studying philosophy. Most, but not all, were religious in some way. Some of the boys had done military service but were allowed to do stints at university between stints on the Eastern Front. This experience provided them with more knowledge of what was actually going on than the average person living in Germany at the time but they still come across as young and somewhat naïve. And I think it is this naivety that has made the White Rose so appealing.

To believe that there was very little resistance to Hitler inside Germany is a serious misunderstanding. Resistance to the Nazis began, of course, before they even came to power, continued during the thirties and throughout the war. Resistance came from political groups of the left, centre and even conservatives, from unions, from churches and religious people, from within the government and branches of the military. Several attempts were made to assassinate Hitler both by groups and individuals. Although it did not succeed in overthrowing Hitler or ending the Nazi tyranny, the resistance did have an impact on the war and the ultimate defeat of the regime.

Why does it seem otherwise? The Nazi regime set out systematically and ruthlessly to destroy all opposition. Thousands of the people who would have been part of an even more effective resistance movement fled into exile soon after Hitler came to power. Many more were, like I would have been, frightened by the danger and sank into silence and inaction. Many did not and paid the price. At least 5000 were executed. Many more spent time in prison. Some were simply murdered. And yes, there was a feeling within Germany that people really shouldn’t undermine the government during wartime. This feeling is pretty common here too. Many ordinary Germans saw members of the resistance as traitors because that was what almost every source of information available to them told them they were. Unlike in the countries Germany tried to conquer, the resistance had to assume that much of the population actually supported the government and would report their activities from a sense of duty or from totally justified fear.

The nations fighting Germany during World War II also decided not to publicize the German resistance to Hitler during or after the war. The insistence on unconditional surrender and the strategic bombing raids which caused so many civilian casualties made it necessary to see Germany as guilty as a nation rather than as itself a victim of Nazi tyranny. The allied armies knew about the resistance and benefited from it but did not want to praise it. And actually during the first few years after the war many German people did not admire the resisters but still saw them as traitors.

Things have changed. The new generation in Germany greatly admire the White Rose. In the TV series “The Greatest German” brother and sister Scholl scored very high, fourth place, ahead of, for example Goethe and Beethoven. A movie about them was made in Germany and was nominated for a

best foreign picture Academy Award.

But why is the White Rose the most celebrated of the many German resistance movements? The 20<sup>th</sup> of July movement within the German army is more famous in North America thanks to a recent US movie starring Tom Cruise. The *Rote Kapelle*, the Red Orchestra, was much larger, much more effective (although it too was betrayed and met the same fate as The White Rose) and is well known to those interested in WWII Germany. But the German military officers, one almost feels, had a duty to assassinate Hitler, to put a stop to the horrors. We condemn them for failing, for waiting so long even to try, rather than praising them for the failed attempt. And, as their name might suggest, the Red Orchestra included many Communists and was allied to the Soviet Union. Supporters of Stalin, a man whose policies led to the deaths of more innocent people than even Hitler's, are hard to idolize. Its members committed acts that would be considered treason in any country at war. While the White Rose advocated some treasonous actions, they were not allied to a totalitarian ideology nor to any foreign power. They committed no treason but simply tried to tell the truth and appeal to the conscience of the German people.

There is a purity to the White Rose that makes them the ideal representatives of those willing to die for what they believe both for the German people and for my talk. When you read the leaflets you will find a certain innocence, even naivety. They all display some interest in religion but even more so in philosophy-- which should not be surprising in idealistic university students, which is exactly what most of them were.

For this is what the White Rose did, wrote, printed and distributed leaflets denouncing Hitler and his government, revealing some of the atrocities that government had committed in the name of the people and calling on those people to resist, overthrow the National Socialist regime, but mainly to print and distribute more pamphlets. Every step in the process was dangerous. If they trusted the wrong person, even discussions could have led to arrest. Being found in possession of the drafts of anti-government essays would have led to arrest. The printing press had to be hidden and each page produced required the turn of a handle. They distributed the leaflets in three ways, each requiring considerable risks. Members of the White Rose would take a suitcase full of leaflets, board a train for another city, leave the suitcase on a luggage rack and sit elsewhere in the train grabbing it only when they arrived at their destination. There they would mail the leaflets to yet another city. They would also pin leaflets to public notice boards. Finally they simply scattered piles of leaflets at the University of Munich.

This last was their undoing although the Gestapo would have caught them eventually anyway and, I believe, they all knew it, and expected it. These young people knew they were going to die for their beliefs. They were arrested and taken to Gestapo cells. Despite long and rigorous interrogation, they did not reveal any names or any information that could have harmed others. The questioning was not gentle: Sophie Scholl had one of her legs broken between her arrest and her appearance for trial.

They were tried by the notorious People's Court presided over by Hitler's Hanging Judge: he harangued them from the first abandoning any pretence of a fair trial. The verdict was a foregone conclusion. They were convicted of high treason and sentenced to death. On February 22, 1943 Christoph Probst, Hans Scholl and Sophie Scholl were guillotined. During the following months most of the other members of the White Rose met a similar fate.

In the past when I've spoken of the White Rose I've suggested they were a brave but ineffective resistance movement. That is, in fact, not true. Even when they were active they caused the regime considerable annoyance. Although many who received the leaflets in the mail handed them in to police, many did not, and the regime had to deal with the fact that those who handed them in may have read them. They managed to establish branches in Berlin and particularly Hamburg where many of Hamburg White Rose met the same fate. The White Rose had a role in a student uprising in Munich—which was quickly suppressed. After their execution graffiti appeared on walls in Munich: "*Ihr Geist lebt wieter*" "Their Spirit Lives On". Others carried on the fight. Copies of the leaflets were smuggled

out to the allies. The RAF made many thousand copies and dropped them on German cities. The reality and the message of the White Rose did reach many people in Germany.

Who were these people? To keep this talk short, I'm going to do what everybody else has done, focus on the brother and sister, Hans and Sophie Scholl. They grew up in a prosperous middle class family. Their father was mayor of Ulm. He was very critical of National Socialism and did himself get into some trouble with the regime, spending a short period in jail. Hans rebelled against his father by joining the Hitler Youth before membership in that organization became almost compulsory for non-Jewish German boys. Sophie followed her brother's example and joined The *Bund der Deutsche Mädchen*, the equivalent of the Hitler Youth for girls. Hans reached a leadership position in the Hitler Youth but became disillusioned with the movement and the regime after a few years. He joined an opposition youth movement shortly before it was banned. Sophie and Hans were soon reconciled with their father's liberal views and experienced a growing contempt for the regime.

Although she was paired with her brother on "The Greatest German" it is Sophie who has become the focus for the White Rose; the best book about the movement is titled *Sophie Scholl and the White Rose*. The movie about the movement is titled: *Sophie Scholl, the final days*. She is idolized perhaps because she was the leading female member; it would have been easier for her to avoid her fate than for her brother and the other members who actually had to serve in the military and faced death on the Eastern Front. Under intense interrogation she proved as brave as the men: she confessed to her own involvement but never revealed another's name. It is pleasing and touching that she did fall in love with another member of the White Rose, Alexander Schmorell, who ultimately was also executed. The innocence and purity which made the White Rose the "ideal" resistance movement finds its quintessence in Sophie.

Before I open the floor for discussion, I cannot resist passing on some information I learned for the first time by accident while doing research for this talk. During World War II there was a German man living in Nanking China who did great good using methods pretty much the opposite of those used by the White Rose. John Rabe is referred to as a "Nazi businessman"--he ran the Chinese branch of Siemens--but he could also be called China's answer to Schindler. Just as Schindler is revered for saving many Jewish lives, Rabe is revered in China because he saved thousands of Chinese lives during the rape of Nanking. That's all I have to say on that subject.

Also I'm going to indulge in a bit on pedantry. I transcribed the White Rose leaflets word for word from a book. In a few cases the German word *Fuhrer* is left in German although it is translated elsewhere in the same document. In German the word *Fuhrer* has none of the connotations it has for us. It simply means "leader". A Boy Scout pack would have a *Fuhrer*. A group of Kindergarten kids walking in line would have a *Fuhrer*. A flock of sheep might have a *Fuhrer*. Hitler chose to call himself simply because it was such an ordinary word.

I will save my diatribe for the Niagara Secular Humanist website, but I must comment negatively on the uninformed way the White Rose use the words "atheist" and "atheistic". But you can find other things to object to in the leaflets, particularly one comment about Jewish people (which has to be understood in context). This does not take away from the courage of the White Rose.

Finally I'll turn to the subject about which I'm seeking illumination from you: why are people willing to die for their beliefs. On this occasion I'm not interested in soldiers or suicide warriors, nor in religious or political fanatics. Nor, frankly, in people who respond to immediate danger to themselves or their families by acts of considerable courage. Rather I want us to talk about people who, like the members of White Rose, decide they must take a stand, do something, whatever the cost. We find them throughout history: scientists, religious, atheists, and many others who just seem ordinary except for their courage. And we have them today: journalists, environmentalists, activists, and many ordinary people. I think particularly of Iran, Myanmar, China and other countries where oppressive governments rule. We owe an enormous amount to these people because their deaths have helped destroy oppression

and spread truth. Why do they do it?

The Leaflets follow:

#### THE FIRST LEAFLET

Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized nation as to allow itself to be “governed” without any opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to the basest instincts. It is certainly the case today that every honest German is ashamed of his government. Who among us has any conception of the enormous shame that we and our children feel when eventually the veil drops from our eyes and the most terrible of crimes—crimes that eclipse all atrocities throughout history—are exposed to full light of day? If the German people are already so corrupted and spiritually crushed that they do not raise a hand unquestioningly trusting in the dubious legitimacy of historical order; if they surrender man’s highest principle, that which raises him above all of God’s creatures: his free will; if they abandon the will to take decisive action and turn the wheel of history and thus subject to their own rational decision; if they are so devoid of all individuality, have already gone so far along the road to becoming a spiritless and cowardly mass—then, yes, they deserve their downfall.

Goethe speaks of the Germans as a tragic people, like the Jews and the Greeks, but today they seem to be rather a spineless, weak-willed herd of hangers-on, who now—the marrow sucked out of their bones, robbed of their centre of stability—are waiting to be hounded to their destruction. So it seems—but it is not so. Rather, by means of gradual, systematic abuse, the system has put every man into a spiritual prison. Only now, finding himself lying in fetters, had he become aware of his fate. Only a few recognized the threat of ruin, and the reward for their heroic warning was death. We will have more to say about the fate of these people.

If everyone waits for someone else to make a start, the messengers of avenging Nemesis will come steadily closer, until even the last victim has been cast senselessly into the maws of the insatiable demon. Therefore every individual has to consciously accept his responsibilities as a member of Western and Christian civilization in this last hour; to arm himself as best he can to work against the scourges of humanity, against fascism and every other form of absolute state. Adopt passive resistance—resistance—and block the functioning of the atheistic war machine before it is too late, before the last city is a heap of rubble, like Cologne, and before the last of our youth bleeds to death on some battlefield because of the *hubris* of a sub-human. Don’t forget that every people gets the government it deserves!

From Friedrich Schiller’s “The Lawgiving of Lycurgus and Solon”:

Viewed in relation to its purposes of Lycurgus’ code of law is a masterpiece of political science and knowledge of human nature. He desired a powerful, unassailable state, and firmly based on self-created principles. Political effectiveness and permanence were goals toward which he strove, and he attained these goals to the fullest extent possible under the circumstances. But if one compares the purpose Lycurgus had in mind with the purposes of mankind, then a deep abhorrence takes the place of the approbation we felt at first glance. Anything may be sacrificed for the good of the state except that end for which the State serves as a means. The state is never an end in itself; it is important only as a condition under which the purpose of mankind can be attained, and this purpose is none other than the development of the capacities which reside in man, if it hinders the progress of the spirit, then it is reprehensible and corrosive, no matter how excellently devised, how perfect in its own way. Its very permanence in that case amounts more to a reproach than to a basis for fame; it becomes a prolonged evil, and the longer it exists, the more corrosive it is...

At the price of all moral feeling a political system was set up, and the resources of the state

were mobilized to that end. In Sparta there was no conjugal love, no mother love, no filial devotion, no friendships; all men were merely citizens, and all virtue was civic virtue.

A law of the state made it the duty of Spartans to be inhumane to their slaves; in these unhappy victims of war humanity itself was insulted and mistreated. In the Spartan code of law the dangerous principle was promulgated that men are to be looked upon as means and not ends—and foundations of natural law were destroyed by that law...

What an admirable sight it is, in contrast, to see the rough soldier Gaius Marcius in his camp before Rome, when he renounced vengeance and victory because he could not endure the sight of a mother's tears!...

The state [of Lycurgus] could endure only under the one condition: that the spirit of the people remained quiescent. Hence it could be maintained only if it failed to achieve the highest, the sole purpose of a state.

From Goethe's *The Awakening of Epimenides*, Act II, Scene 4.

SPIRITS:

Though he who ahs boldly risen from the abyss  
Through an iron will and cunning  
May conquer half the world,  
Yet to the abyss he must return.  
Already a terrible fear has seized him;  
In vain he will resist!  
And all who still stand with him  
Must perish with his fall.

HOPE:

Now I find my good men  
Are gathered in the night,  
To wait in silence, not to sleep.  
And the glorious world of liberty  
They whisper and murmur,  
Till in unaccustomed strangeness,  
On the steps of an old temple  
Once again in delight they cry:  
Freedom! Freedom!

Please make as many copies of this leaflet as possible and pass them one!

THE SECOND LEAFLET

It is impossible to engage in an intellectual discourse on National Socialism because it cannot be defended on rational grounds. It is wrong to speak of a National Socialist philosophy, for if there were such an entity, one would have to try by means of analysis and discussion either to prove its validity or disprove it. In actuality, however, we face a totally different situation. At its very inception this

movement depended on the deception and betrayal of one's fellow man; even then it was inwardly corrupt and could only support itself by constant lies. After all, Hitler states in an early edition of "his" book (a book written in the worst German I have ever read, in spite of the fact that it has been elevated to the position of the Bible in this nation of poets and thinkers): "It is unbelievable to what extent one must betray a people in order to rule it." If at the start this cancerous growth in the nation was not particularly noticeable, it was only because there were still enough forces at work that operated for the good, so that it was kept in check. It grew larger, however, and then, in a final spurt of growth, the tumour grew larger, however, and then in a final spurt of growth, the tumour burst, as it were, and infected the whole body. Most of its former opponents went into hiding. The German intellectuals fled to their cellars and, like plants struggling in the dark, away from light and sun, and gradually choking to death. Now the end is at hand. Now it is our task to find one another again, to spread information from person to person, to keep a steady purpose, and to allow ourselves no rest until the last man is persuaded of the urgent need of his support in the struggle against this system. When thus a wave of unrest sweeps through the land, when "it is in the air," when many join the cause, then in a great final effort this system can be shaken off. After all, an end in terror is preferable to terror without end.

We are not in a position to make a final judgment about the significance of these historical events. But if this catastrophe can be used to further the public good, it will only be by virtue of the fact that are cleansed by suffering; that in the midst of deepest night we yearn for light, summon all our strength, and finally rise up to shake off the yoke which weighs on our world.

We do not intend to discuss the question of the Jews, nor do we wish to offer a defence or apology here. No, instead to demonstrate this we want to cite the fact that since the conquest of Poland *three hundred thousand* Jews have been murdered in that country in a bestial manner. Here we see the most terrible crime committed against the dignity of man, a crime that has no counterpart in human history. For Jews, too are human beings—no matter what position we take with respect to the Jewish question—and a crime of this dimension has been perpetrated against human beings. Some may say that the Jews deserved their fate. This assertion would be a monstrous form of insolence, but let us assume that someone said this—what position had he then taken toward the fact that the entire Polish aristocratic youth is being annihilated? (May God grant that this program has not fully achieved its aim as yet?) All male offspring of the houses of the nobility between the ages of fifteen and twenty were transported to concentration camps in Germany and sentenced to forced labour, and all the girls of this age group have sent to Norway, into the brothels of the SS!

Why tell you these things, since you are fully aware of them—or if not of these, then of other equally grave crimes committed by this frightful sub-humanity? Because this touches on a problem that involves us all deeply and forces us all to reflect. Why are the German people so apathetic in the face of all these abominable crimes, crimes so unworthy of the human race? Hardly anyone thinks about that. It is accepted as fact and put out of the mind. The German people slumber on in their dull, stupid sleep and thereby encourage these fascist criminals; they give them the opportunity to carry on their depredations; and of course they do so. Is this a sign that the German people have become brutalized in their most basic human feelings, that the sight of such deeds does not strike a chord with them, that they have sunk into a terminal sleep from which there is no awakening, ever, ever again? It seems that way, and will certainly be so, if the German does not arouse himself from this lethargy at last, if he does not protest whenever he can against this gang of criminals, if he doesn't feel compassion for the hundreds of thousands of victims—not only compassion, no, much more: *guilt*. For his apathy allows these evil man to act as they do; he tolerates this "government" that has taken upon itself such an enormous burden of guilt; indeed, he himself is to blame for the fact that it came about at all! Everyone shrugs off this guilt, falling asleep with his conscience at peace. But he cannot shrug it off; everyone is *guilty, guilty, guilty!* It is not too late, however, to do away with this most reprehensible of all miscarriages of government, to avoid being burdened with even greater guilt. Now, our eyes have recently been opened, we know exactly who our adversary is, and it is high time to root out this brown

horde. Up until the outbreak of war, the large part of the German people was blindfolded; the National Socialists did not show themselves in their true aspect. But now, now that we have recognized them for what they are, it must be the sole and first duty of every German, to destroy these beasts.

If the people are barely aware that the government exists, they are happy. When the government is felt to be oppressive, they are broken.

Good fortune, alas! builds itself upon misery. Good fortune, alas! is the mask of misery. What will come of this? We cannot foresee the end. Order is upset and turns to disorder, good becomes evil. The people become confused. Is it not so, day in, day out, from the beginning?

The wise man is therefore angular, though he does not injure others; he has sharp corners, though he does not harm; he is upright but not gruff. He is clear-minded, but does not try to be brilliant.

LAO-TZU

Whoever undertakes to rule the kingdom and to shape it according to his whim—I foresee that he will fail to reach his goal. That is all.

The kingdom is a living being. It cannot be constructed, in truth! He who tries to manipulate it will spoil it, he who tries to put it under his power will lose it.

From their very nature some creatures lead from the front, others follow; some give warm breath, others cold; some are strong, some weak; some survive, others succumb.

The wise man therefore forswears excess; he avoids arrogance and does not overreach himself.

Please make as many copies of this leaflet as possible and pass them on.

#### THE THIRD LEAFLET

*Salus publica suprema lex* (Public safety is the supreme law)

All ideal forms of government are Utopias. A state cannot be constructed on a purely theoretical basis; instead, it must grow and develop in the same way an individual human being matures. But we must not forget that at the beginning of every civilization the state already existed in a rudimentary form. The family is as old as man himself, and out of this initial bond man, endowed with reason, created for himself a state founded on justice, whose highest law was the common good. The state should reflect the divine order, and the highest of all utopias, the *Civitas dei*, is the model it should ultimately resemble. We will not compare the many possible states here—democracy, constitutional monarchy, monarchy, and so on, but one issue needs to be made clear and unambiguous; every human being has the right to a just state, a state that safeguards the freedom of the individual as well as the good of the whole. For according to God's will, man should be free and independent, while fulfilling his natural duty of living and working together with his fellow citizens, and strive to achieve earthly happiness through self-reliance and self-motivation.

But the present "state" is the dictatorship of evil. "Oh, we've known that for a long time," I hear you object, "and it isn't necessary to bring that to our attention again." But, as I ask you, if you know that, why do you not rouse yourselves, why do you allow these men in power to rob you step by step, both openly and in secret, of one of your rights after another, until one day nothing, nothing at all will be left but a mechanized state system presided over by criminals and drunkards? Is your spirit already so crushed by abuse that you forget it is your right—or rather, your *moral duty*—to eradicate this system? But if a man can no longer summon the strength to demand his right, then he will definitely perish. We would deservedly be scattered over the earth like dust in the wind if we do not marshal our powers at this late hour and finally find the courage we have lacked up to now. Do not hide your cowardice behind a cloak of expedience, for with every new day that you hesitate, failing to oppose this offspring

of Hell, your guilt, like a parabolic curve, grows higher and higher.

Many, perhaps most, of the readers of these leaflets cannot see clearly how they can mount an effective opposition. They cannot see any avenues open to them. We want to try to show them that everyone is in a position to contribute to the overthrow of this system. Solitary withdrawal, like embittered hermits, cannot prepare the ground for the overthrow of this “government” or bring about the revolution at the earliest possible moment. No, it can only be done through the cooperation of many convinced energetic people—people who agree on the means they must use to attain their goal. We have few choices as to these means. The only one available is *passive resistance*. The meaning and the goal of passive resistance is to bring down National Socialism, and in this struggle we can’t shrink from any means, any act, wherever it is open to attack. We must bring this monster of a state to an end soon. A victory for fascist Germany in this war would have inconceivable and terrible consequences. The first concern of every German is not the military victory of Bolshevism, but the defeat of National Socialism. This must be the first order of business; its greater imperative will be discussed in one of our forthcoming leaflets.

And now every resolute opponent of National Socialism must ask himself how he can most effectively fight against the present “state”, how he can inflict the most damaging blows. Through passive resistance, without a doubt. We can provide each man with a blueprint for his acts; we can only make general suggestions, and he alone will find the best way to achieve them.

*Sabotage* armament industries, *sabotage* every assembly, rally, ceremony, and organization sponsored by the National Socialist Party. Obstruct the smooth functioning of the war machine (a machine designed for war that is then used solely to shore up and perpetuate the National Socialist Party and its dictatorship.) *Sabotage* in every scientific and intellectual field involved in continuing this war—whether it be universities, technical colleges, laboratories, research stations, or technical agencies. *Sabotage* all cultural institutions that could enhance the “prestige” of the fascists among the people. *Sabotage* all branches of the arts that have even the slightest dependence on National Socialism or serve it in any way. *Sabotage* all publications, all newspapers, that are in the pay of the “government” and that defend its ideology and help disseminate the brown lie. Do not give a penny to public fund-raising drives (even when they are conducted under the guise of charity), for this is only a cover. In reality the proceeds help neither the Red Cross nor the needy. The government does not need this money; it is not financially interested in these fund-raising drives. After all, the presses run non-stop, printing as much paper currency as is needed. But the people must never be allowed to slacken! Do not contribute to the collection of metal, textiles and the like. Try to convince all your acquaintances, including those in the lower social classes, of the senselessness of continuing, of the hopelessness of this war; of our spiritual and economic enslavement at the hands of the National Socialists, of the destruction of all moral and religious values; and urge them to adopt *passive resistance*.

Aristotle, Politics: “Further...[a tyrant] should also endeavor to know what each of his subjects says, or does, and should employ spies everywhere...and further, to create disunity and division in the population: to set friend against friend, the common people against the notables, and the wealthy among themselves. Also he should impoverish his subjects; the maintenance of guards and soldiers is thus paid for by the people, who are forced to work hard and have neither the time nor the opportunity to conspire against him...Another practice of tyrants is to increase taxes, after the manner of Dionysius at Syracuse, who contrived that his subjects paid all their wealth into the treasury within five years. The tyrant is also inclined to engage in constant warfare in order to occupy and distract his subjects.

Please make as many copies of this leaflet as possible and pass them one!

There is an old maxim that we tell our children: “He who won’t listen will have to feel.” But the wise child will not burn his finger a second time on a hot stove. In the past weeks Hitler has chalked up successes in Africa and Russia. As a result, optimism on the one hand and shock and pessimism on the other have grown with the German people; this is quite inconsistent with traditional German apathy. One hears among Hitler’s opponents—that is, the better segment of the population—exclamations of despair, words of disappointment and discouragement, often ending with the question: “Will Hitler now, after all...?”

At the same time, the German offensive in Egypt has ground to a halt, and Rommel has to bide his time in a dangerously exposed position. But the push into the East proceeds. This apparent success has been purchased at the most horrible expense of human life, and it can no longer be counted an advantage. There we must warn against *all* optimism.

Who has counted the dead—Hitler or Goebbels? Neither of them! In Russia thousands are lost daily. It is the time of harvest and the reaper cuts into the ripe grain with wide strokes. Mourning enters the country cottages, and there is no one to dry the ears of the mothers. Yet Hitler feeds lies to those people whose most precious belongings he has stolen and whom he has driven to a meaningless death.

Every word that comes out of Hitler’s mouth is a lie. When he says peace, he means war, and when he blasphemously uses the name of the Almighty, he means the power of evil, the fallen angel, Satan. His mouth is the foul-mouthing maw of Hell, and his might is at bottom accursed. True, we must conduct the struggle against the National Socialist terrorist state with rational means, but whoever today still doubts the real existence of demonic powers has completely failed to understand the metaphysical background of this war. Behind the concrete, visible events, behind all objective, rational considerations, we find the irrational element: the struggle against the devil, against the servants of the Antichrist. Everywhere and at all times demons have been lurking in the dark, waiting for the moment when man is weak; when of his own volition he leaves his place in the order of Creation as founded for him by God in freedom; when he yields to the force of evil, separates himself from the powers of a higher order and, after voluntarily taking the first step, is driven on to the next and the next at a furiously accelerating pace. Everywhere and at all times of greatest trial men have appeared, prophets and saints, who cherished their freedom, who preached the One God and who with His help enabled people to reverse their downward course. Of course man is free, but without God he is defenseless against evil. He is like a rudderless ship, at the mercy of the storm, an infant with his mother, a cloud dissolving into thin air.

I ask you as a Christian who is wrestling to preserve his greatest treasure, if you are hesitating and playing games of intrigue and procrastination in the hope that someone else will raise his arm in your defense? Has God not given you the strength and will to fight? We must attack evil where it is strongest, and it is strongest in the power of Hitler.

So I returned, and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

ECCLESIASTES 4

True anarchy is the generative element of religion. Out of the annihilation of every positive element she lifts her gloriously radiant countenance as the founder of a new world.... If Europe were about to awaken again, if a state of states, a teaching of political science were at hand! Should hierarchy then...be the principal of the union of states? Blood will stream

over Europe until the nations become aware of the frightful madness that drives them in circles. And then, struck by celestial music and made gentle, they approach their former altars all together, hear about the works of peace, and hold a great celebration of peace with fervent tears before the smoking altars. Only religion can reawaken Europe, establish the rights of the peoples and install Christianity in new splendor visibly on earth in its office as guarantor of peace.

NOVALES

We wish to make very clear that the White Rose is not in the pay of any foreign power. Though we know that the power of the National Socialists must be defeated by military means, we are trying to facilitate a renewal of the severely wounded German spirit from within. This rebirth must be preceded, however, by a clear recognition of all the guilt with which the German people have burdened themselves and by an uncompromising battle against Hitler and his all too many minions, party members, Quislings, and the like. The chasm that separates National Socialism must be split open wide with brute force. For Hitler and his followers, no punishment on this earth can be commensurate with their crimes. But out of love for coming generations we must make an example after the conclusion of the war, so that no one will have the slightest urge to attempt such actions ever again. And do not forget the petty scoundrels in this regime; note their names, so that none will go free! Having played their part in these abominable crimes, they should not be able to rally to another flag at the last minute and act as if nothing has happened.

To reassure you, we want to add that none of the addresses of the readers of the White Rose are recorded in writing. They were picked at random from directories.

We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!

#### THE FIFTH LEAFLET

##### A Call to All Germans!

The war is nearing its inevitable end. As in the year 1918, the German government is trying to focus attention exclusively on the growing threat of submarine warfare, while in the East the armies are constantly in retreat and invasion is imminent in the West. Mobilization in the United States has not yet reached its peak, but already it exceeds anything that the world has ever seen. It has become a mathematical certainty that Hitler is leading the German people into an abyss. *Hitler cannot win the war, only prolong it.* The guilt of Hitler and his minions exceeds all measures. Retribution draws closer and closer.

But what are the German people doing? They will not see and will not listen. Blindly they follow their seducers into ruin. *Victory at any price* is inscribed on their banner. "I will fight to the last man," says Hitler—but in the meantime the war has already been lost.

Germans! Do you and your children want to suffer the same fate that befell the Jews? Do you want to be judged by the same standards as your critics? Are we to be forever the nation which is hated and rejected by all mankind? No. Dissociate yourselves from National Socialism gangsterism. Prove by your deeds that you think otherwise. A new war of liberation is about to begin. The better part of the nation will fight on our side. Cast off the cloak of indifference you have wrapped around you. Decide *before it is too late!* Do not believe the National Socialist propaganda that has driven the fear of Bolshevism deep into your bones. Do not believe that Germany's welfare is linked to the victory of National Socialism for good or ill. A criminal regime cannot achieve a German victory. Separate yourselves *in time* from everything connected with National Socialism. In the aftermath a terrible but just judgment will be meted out to those who stayed in hiding, who were cowardly and hesitant.

What can we learn from the outcome of this war—this war that was never a national war?

Imperialistic designs for power, regardless from which side they come, must be neutralized for all time. Prussian militarism must never come to power again. Only in a generous, open cooperation among the peoples of Europe can the groundwork be laid for genuine reconstruction. All centralized power, like that exercised by the Prussian state in Germany and Europe, must be eliminated. The coming Germany must be federalistic. At this juncture only a sound federal system can imbue a weakened Europe with new life. The working class must be liberated from its degraded conditions of slavery by a reasonable form of socialism. The illusory structure of autonomous national industry must disappear. Every nation and each man has a right to the goods of the whole world!

Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the protection of individual citizens from the arbitrary will of criminal regimes of violence—these will be the bases of the New Europe.

Support the resistance. Distribute the leaflets!

#### THE SIXTH LEAFLET

Fellow Students!

Our people are deeply shaken by the fall of our men at Stalingrad. Three hundred and thirty thousand German men were senselessly and irresponsibly driven to their deaths by the brilliant strategy of our World War I corporal. Fuhrer, we thank you!

The German people are in ferment. Will we continue to entrust the fate of our armies to a dilettante? Do we want to sacrifice the remaining German youth to the base ambitions of a Party clique? No, never! The day of reckoning has come—the reckoning of German youth with the most abominable tyrant our people have ever been forced to endure. In the name of German youth, we demand Adolf Hitler's state restore our personal freedom, the most precious treasure that we have, out of which he has swindled us in the most wretched way.

We grew up in a state where all free expression of opinion has been suppressed. The Hitler Youth, the SA, and the SS have tried to drug us, to revolutionize us, and to regiment us in the most promising years of our lives. "Philosophical training" is the name given to despicable method by which our budding intellectual development is smothered in a fog of empty phrases. A system of selection leadership, at once unimaginably devilish and narrow-minded, trains up its future party bigwigs in the "Castles of the Knightly Order" to become Godless, arrogant, and consciousnessless exploiters and executioners—blind, stupid hangers-on of the Fuhrer. We "Intellectual Workers" are the ones who should put obstacles in the path of this caste of overlords. Soldiers at the front are regimented like schoolboys by student leaders and trainees for the post of Gauleiter. Gauleiters insult the honour of women students with crude jokes, and the German women students at the university of Munich have given a worthy response to the besmirching of their honour, and German students have defended their female comrades and stood by them.... This is the beginning of the struggle for our free self-determination, without which intellectual and spiritual values cannot be created. We thank the brave comrades, both men and women, who have set us such a brilliant example.

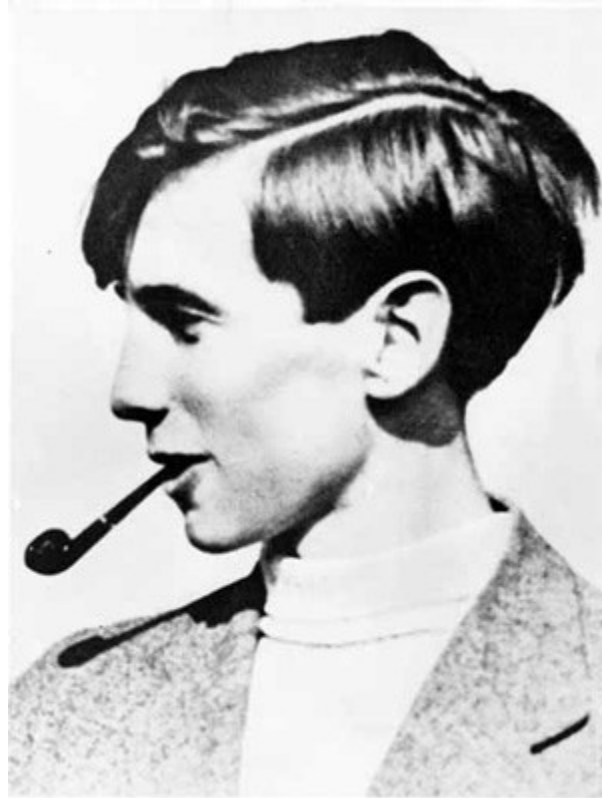
There is only one slogan for us: fight against the Party! Get out of all Party organizations, which are used to keep our mouths shut and hold us in political bondage! Get out of the lecture halls run by SS corporals and sergeants and Party sycophants! We want genuine learning and freedom of expression. No threat can intimidate us, not even the closure of universities and colleges. This struggle for each and every one of us, for our future, our freedom, and our honour under a regime that will be more conscious of its moral responsibility.

Freedom and honour! For ten long years Hitler and his comrades have squeezed, debased and twisted those beautiful German words to the point of nausea, as only the ignorant can, casting the highest values of a nation before swine. In the ten years of destruction of all material and intellectual freedoms, of all moral fibre in the German people, they have sufficiently demonstrated what they understand by freedom and honour. The frightful bloodbath has opened the eyes of even the stupidest German—it is a slaughter that they orchestrated in the name of the “freedom and honour of the German nation” throughout Europe, and which they start anew every day. The name of Germany will remain forever stained with shame if German youth do not finally arise, fight back, and atone, smash our tormentors, and set up a new Europe of the spirit. Women students! Men students! The German people look to us! Just as in 1813 when the people expected us to shake off the Napoleonic yoke, so in 1943 they look to us to overthrow the National Socialist terror through the power of our spirit. Beresina and Stalingrad are aflame in the East; the dead of Stalingrad beseech us

“Up, up, my people, let smoke and flame be our sign!”

Our people stand ready to rebel against the National Socialist enslavement of Europe in an impassioned uprising of freedom and honour.

## Illustrations



Alexander Schmorrell



Gestapo Headquarters Munich



Hans Scholl



Heart of the White Rose



Johann Reichard, Executioner



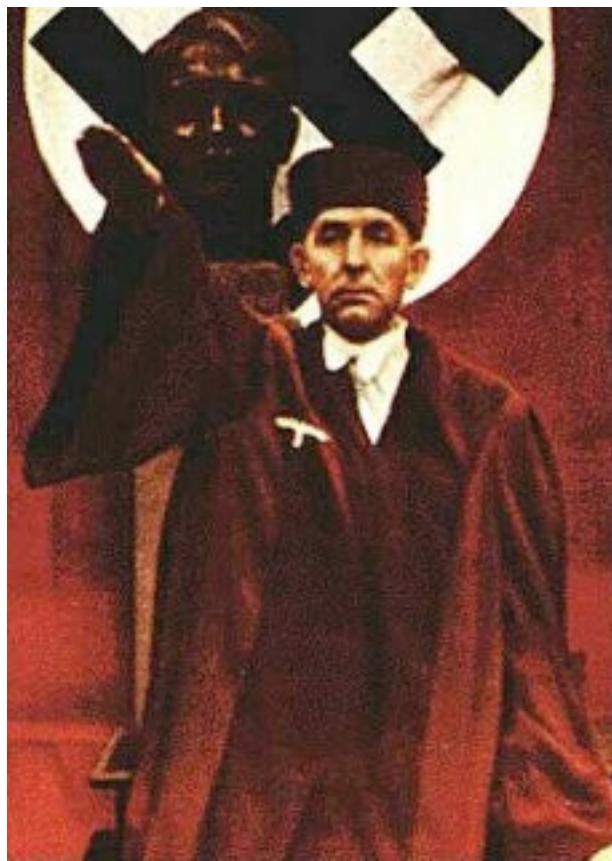
Kurt Huber



Members of the White Rose



Monument to the White Rose



Roland Freisler, President of People's Court



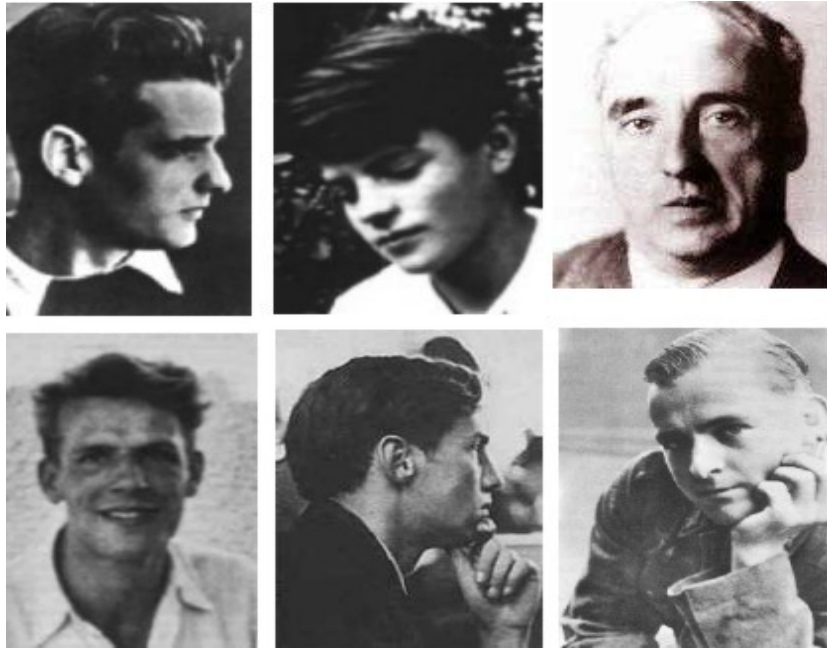
Soldiers on Leave, with Sophie Scholl



Sophie Scholl



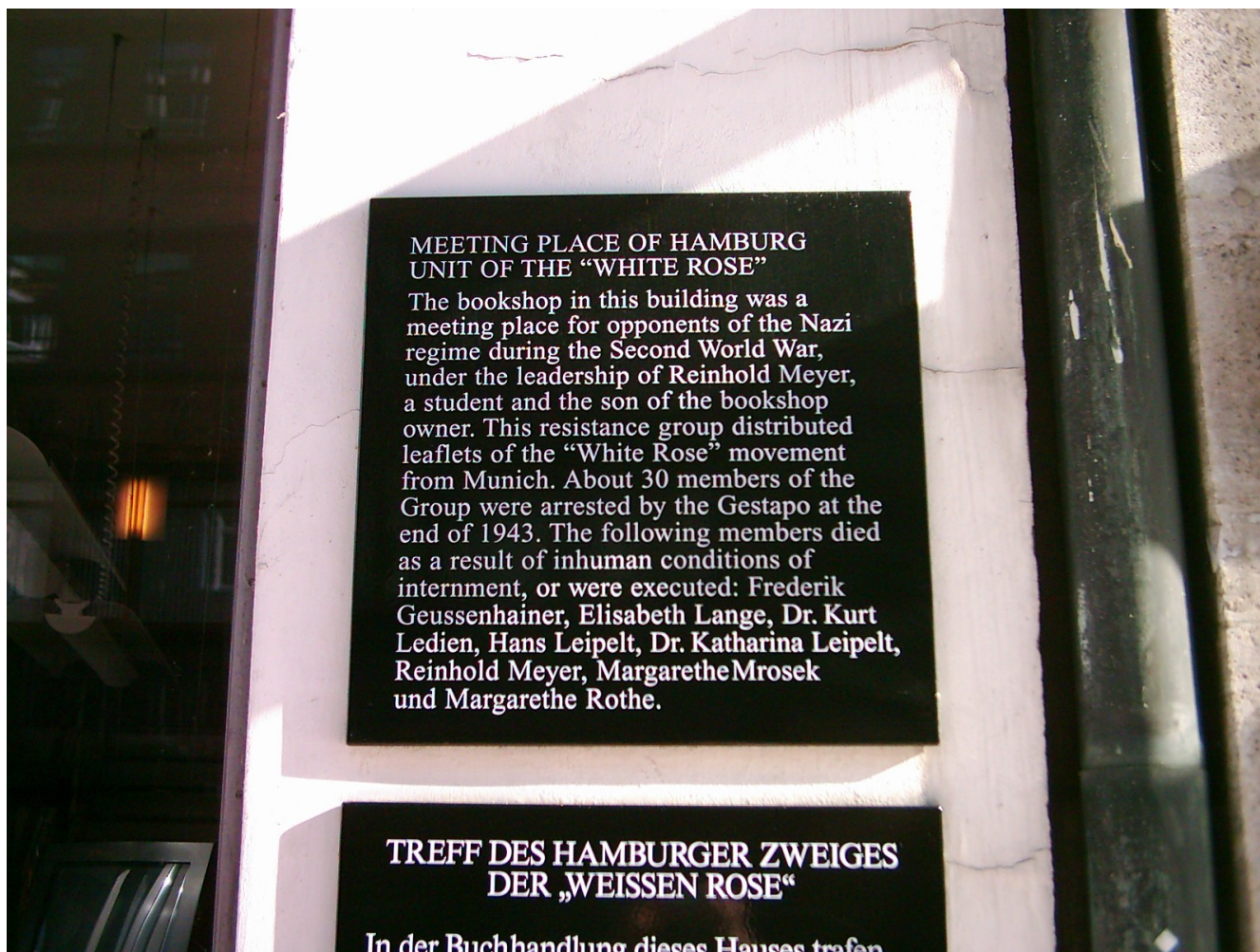
Sophie Scholl Stamp



White Rose



White Rose Grave Marker



**MEETING PLACE OF HAMBURG  
UNIT OF THE "WHITE ROSE"**

The bookshop in this building was a meeting place for opponents of the Nazi regime during the Second World War, under the leadership of Reinhold Meyer, a student and the son of the bookshop owner. This resistance group distributed leaflets of the "White Rose" movement from Munich. About 30 members of the Group were arrested by the Gestapo at the end of 1943. The following members died as a result of inhuman conditions of internment, or were executed: Frederik Geussenhainer, Elisabeth Lange, Dr. Kurt Ledien, Hans Leipelt, Dr. Katharina Leipelt, Reinhold Meyer, Margarethe Mrosek und Margarethe Rothe.

**TREFF DES HAMBURGER ZWEIGES  
DER „WEISSEN ROSE“**

In der Buchhandlung dieses Hauses trafen

White Rose Plaque, Hamburg



White Rose Members in Uniform