

# The White Rose. Faces of a Friendship



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Sophie Scholl



# THE WHITE ROSE

## *Faces of a Friendship*

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# WHY?

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Sophie Scholl

Until somebody began to bring the conversation round to hunger, all the while fiddling with the wax droplets on the candles. It were a great mystery that there are so many people who did not feel a hunger for the spiritual (...)

Will they never start up, asking: Why?

Where does this inner unrest come from, this quiet ache?

But they always know a quick answer (...)

They pile a lot of stuff onto that small voice inside instead of simply stopping and asking: Why?

Inge Scholl

Man is born to think, says Pascal. To think, worthy academic: I reproach you with that word. You're surprised, eh, you representative of the spirit? The spirit you serve at this desperate hour is an evil spirit, but you're blind to despair. You're rich, but you're blind to poverty. Your soul is withering because you refused to hear its call. You ponder on the ultimate refinement of a machine gun, but you suppressed the most elementary question in your youth. The question why and whither?

Hans Scholl

What do most people concern themselves with these days?

Anything seems important to them but the most important question, the question for the "meaning of life!" Sad irony.

Christoph Probst

Why did people risk their lives under the sign of the White Rose?

Who were they?

Which way did they go?

What gave them the freedom to take action?

This exhibition lets them speak for themselves, in letters which they wrote to their sisters and brothers, parents and friends, in diary entries and in the comments of the survivors.

*"Their faces would delight you ..."*

## The White Rose – not an organisation but a circle of friends

In the summer of 1942, four leaflets were circulated in Germany, originating from Munich. The leaflets were in the name of the "White Rose" and they called for resistance. But what appeared to be a group or organisation was in fact a circle of friends.

### How did that circle of friends emerge?

#### A school friendship in Munich ...

The oldest ties in the White Rose exist between Alexander Schmorell and Christoph Probst who meet as fifteen-year olds in the school year of 1935/1936 at the Neue Realgymnasium in Munich. The two young men stay in touch even though Christoph leaves the school one year after their first meeting. As Christoph writes in a letter two years later, an "unbreakable friendship" develops between them.



Christoph Probst and Alexander Schmorell

[Photo: private collection, Dr. Michael Probst]

You'll already have heard about the circle of people I've brought together here. Their faces would delight you if you could see them. All the energy one expends flows back, undiminished, into one's heart.

Hans Scholl

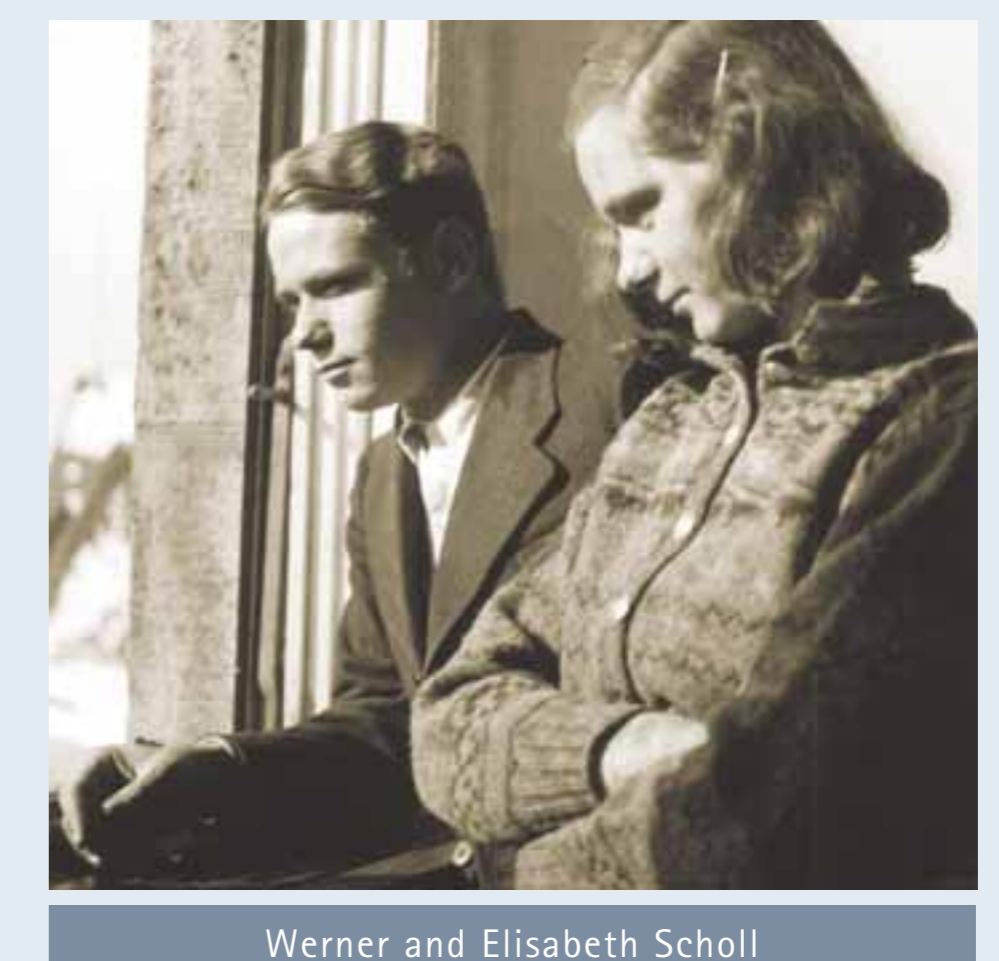
Letter, dated 12 January 1943, in: Inge Jens (ed.): At the Heart of the White Rose: Letters and Diaries of Hans and Sophie Scholl. New York: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 271

#### ... and another in the town of Ulm

Around the same time, another school friendship develops in Ulm between the very individual, artistically gifted Otto "Otl" Aicher (\*1922) and Werner Scholl. They both shared a strong disapproval of National Socialism.

werner and i were in the same class which was soon to take school leaving exams. we had become friends because i stubbornly refused to join the hitler youth. i was therefore neither allowed to take the school leaving exam nor to enrol at university. i was no longer isolated in the class. werner reacted in his own way to this. he left the nazi organisation, which caused a stir. his brother and sisters, in particular hans and inge, had been members of the hitler youth and were well known throughout town.

translated from Otl Aicher: Innenseiten des Kriegs. Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1985, pp. 10-11



Werner and Elisabeth Scholl

Their friendship soon extended to include Elisabeth Scholl ('Lisl'), one of Werner's elder sisters.



Otl Aicher, Elisabeth Hartnagel, Inge Scholl (1945 or 1946)

#### the beginning of a friendship

there are people whom you meet every day, on the way to work, for example. should you greet them or not? the more you ask yourself that question, the more oppressive the daily encounter becomes. at some point, fate must step in to bring on that moment where you (begin to) exchange a greeting. cycling on my way to school every day i met a girl with long plaits, always in about the same place. she sat upright on her bicycle, leaning back slightly, and looked out from blinking eyes. her bicycle had chrome-plated wheel rims, something special. she was an elder sister of werner's, that much i knew. but i had never been introduced to lisl personally, and i was hoping for the right moment to end our more and more embarrassing form of daily encounter. then i learned that werner's brother, hans scholl, and his older sister inge had been taken away to stuttgart by the gestapo for interrogation. because of "subversive activities" in the "bündische jugend". when i met their sister again on the cycle path that day, we exchanged greetings. it was the beginning of a friendship.

translated from: Innenseiten des Kriegs, pp. 10-11

Later, Werner's and Elisabeth's three brothers and sisters also become Otl's friends.

#### friends

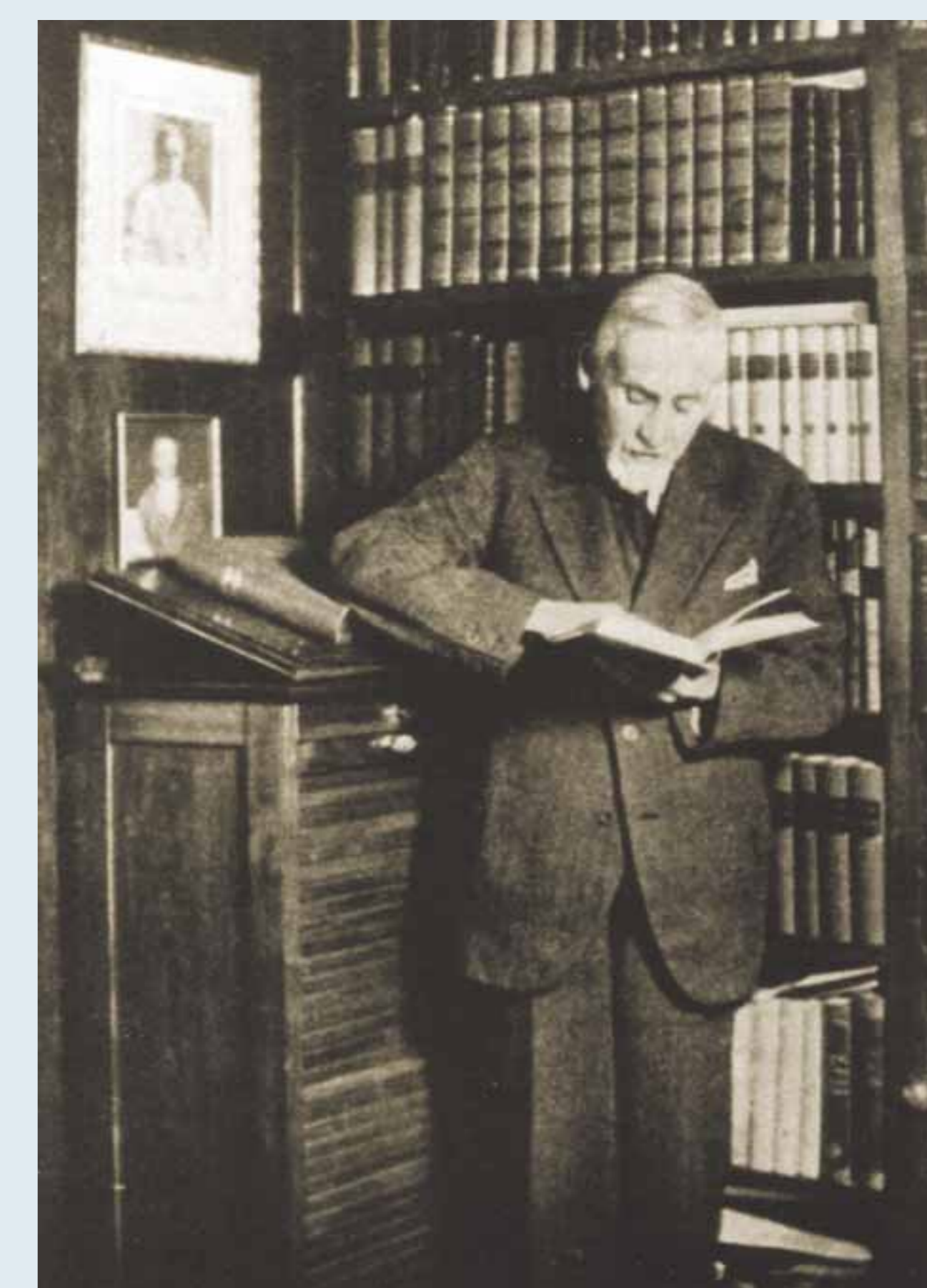
(...) i maintained firm friendships. on one side of the alley where i lived were the houses of farmers and factory workers, and on the other side were the villas where factory owners and doctors lived. i had friends on both sides. but only as long as i was fully accepted by them. (...)

friends who began to succumb to the pressure of the nazis, i lost. it didn't take membership of a nazi organisation - a single wrong word could be enough to drop a friend. but i won those who that remained strong instead. and werner's siblings were among them.

translated from: Innenseiten des Kriegs, pp. 39-40

#### Friendship with Carl Muth

In 1939, Otl begins to read sonnets of Michelangelo (in Rilke's translations) with his new friends. They also discuss art. In 1940, he visits the Catholic journalist Prof Carl Muth in Munich and, at barely 20 years of age, proposes a new design for Muth's famous journal "Hochland". The elderly gentleman is indignant but also impressed.



Carl Muth (1867-1944) in his library, ca. 1941

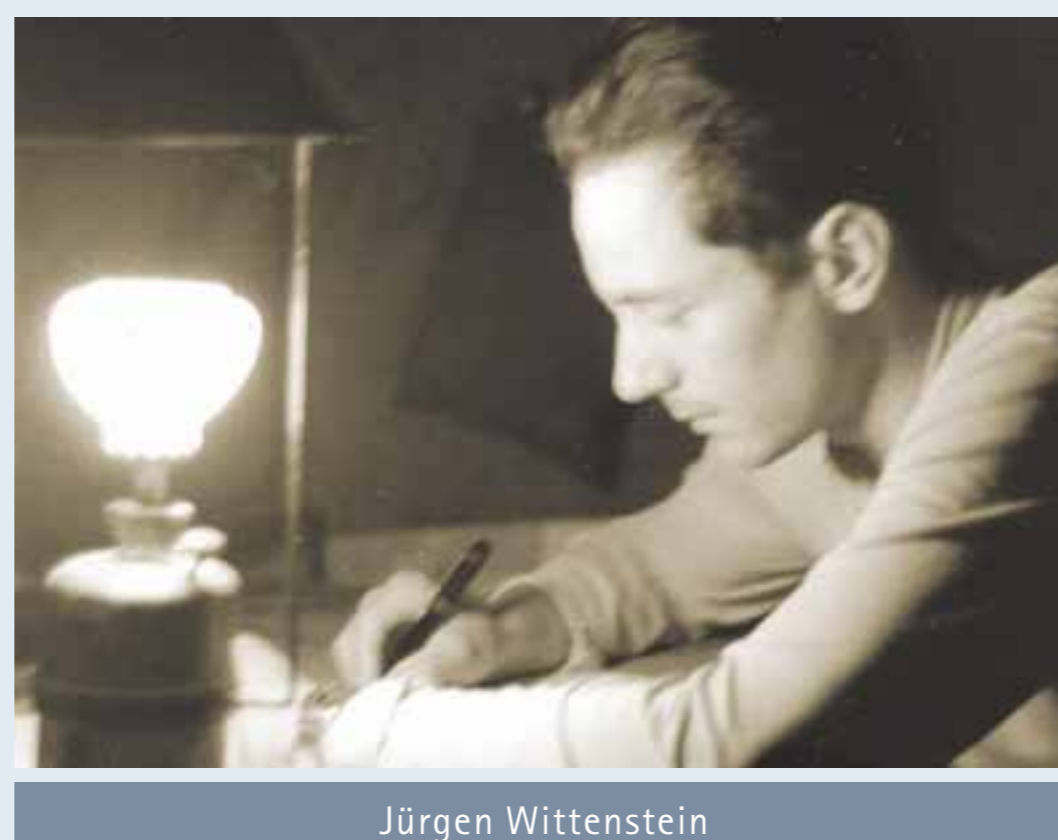
"Their faces would delight you ..."

In the autumn of 1941 - the "Hochland" has already been banned by the Nazis - Otl Aicher introduces Prof Carl Muth and Hans Scholl to each other. They become friends and soon begin to discuss theology and philosophy - sometimes meeting daily. Sophie Scholl joins them in May 1942 and, having enrolled as a student at the University of Munich, she initially finds lodgings in Muth's house. Thus, Sophie and Hans Scholl are introduced to Muth's literary circle of friends which includes the writers Theodor Haecker and Werner Bergengruen.

#### Munich: medicine, music, military service

At the end of June 1941, Hans Scholl meets Alexander Schmorell in the "Students' Company", having to do medical studies in uniform, as it were. One year later he is introduced to Schmorell's friend Christoph Probst. Also in 1942, Hans meets Prof Kurt Huber during a private concert. Huber teaches at the university and he is known for his dissident comments during the lectures.

In 1940, the medical students Wilhelm Graf and Hubert Furtwängler meet during a field exercise. "Discovered Willi Graf", Furtwängler notes in his diary. When in April 1942 Graf is given leave to continue his studies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Student's Company in Munich, he meets Alexander Schmorell, Hans Scholl and Jürgen Wittenstein - and he also meets Hubert Furtwängler again, who gets him to join the Bach Choir. In this choir they come together with other like-minded people such as Regina Renner, Wolf Jaeger, Ottmar Hammerstein and Josef Gieles. "One knew the other. It was a web of relations." (Regina Degkwitz, see Renner, 2004)



Jürgen Wittenstein

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

#### The inner circle

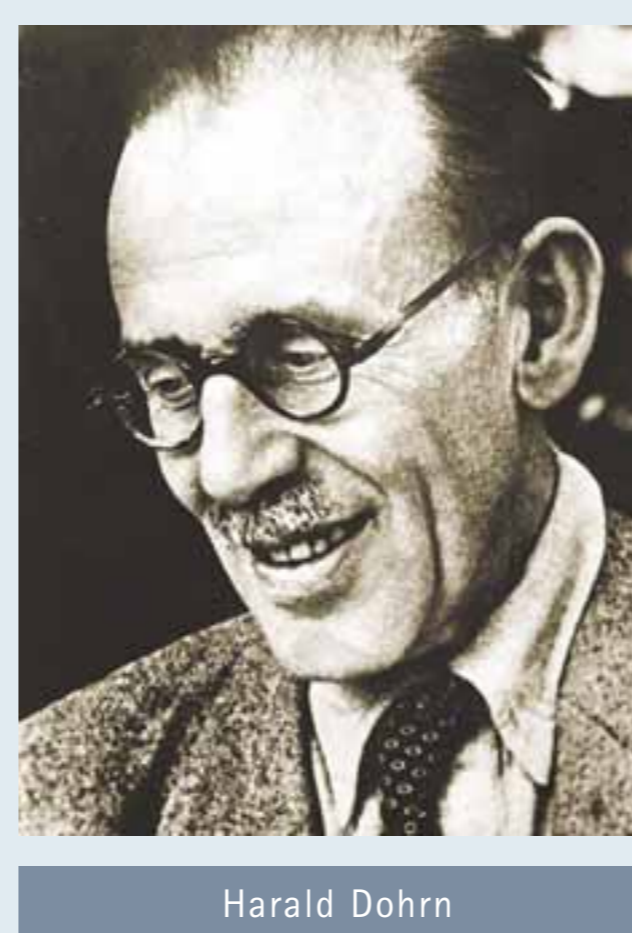
Lilo Fürst-Ramdohr, a close friend of Alexander Schmorell ("Alex"), reports how the inner circle of the White Rose formed in 1942:

"Sophie Scholl enrolled for the summer term at the university as a student of biology and philosophy. In the beginning, she stayed in Solln, in the house of Carl Muth, whose library her brother, Hans Scholl, was cataloguing. Traute Lafrenz, a medical student who knew Alex from his days at university in Hamburg, had met Hans Scholl through Alex in May 1941. A passionate but short relationship developed between her and Hans. Christoph Probst had returned to Munich for the summer term 1942. He and Willi Graf completed the inner circle, bringing it to four male and two female students all of whom also had loose ties to a greater circle of friends who helped."

translated from Lilo Fürst-Ramdohr: *Freundschaften in der Weißen Rose*. Munich: Verlag Geschichtswerkstatt Neuhausen, 1995. p. 77

#### Mentors ...

Some members of this larger circle of friends are much older than the others, such as the architect Manfred Eickemeyer, whose studio in Schwabing becomes the place of the nightly meetings and discussions, or the bookseller Josef Söhngen, the painter Wilhelm Geyer and Christoph Probst's father in law, Harald Dohrn. Dohrn, again, is an acquaintance of Carl Muth. There is also Eugen Grimminger, a friend of Hans Scholl's father from Stuttgart, who will give Hans money to put his plans into action.



Harald Dohrn

[Photo: exhibition catalogue Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.]



Theodor Haecker

Haecker was with us on your birthday. (...) He has a very serene face and an introspective look. I've never seen a face that carries more conviction.

Sophie Scholl in a letter to Fritz Hartnagel, dated 7 February 1943, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 275

#### ... and fellow students

The name "White Rose" stood for like-minded friends in Munich, Ulm, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Saarbrücken, and Hamburg but there weren't any cross links between them because it was simply impossible to set up an organisation in those times.

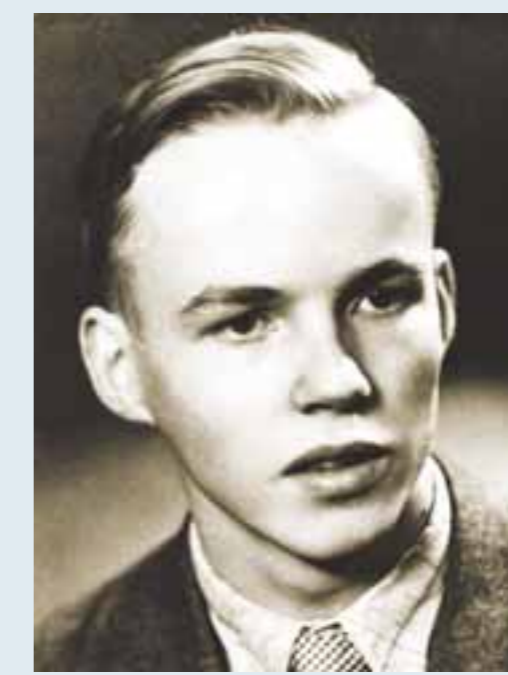
translated from Susanne Hirzel: *Vom Ja zum Nein, Eine schwäbische Jugend 1933 bis 1945*. Tübingen: Silberburg-Verlag, 2000. p. 9

#### Ulm

Some of the friendships from schooldays last, such as the one between Sophie Scholl and Susanne Hirzel in Ulm. Her brother, Hans Hirzel, has classmates who also fully disapprove of the regime. Among them is his best friend, Heinz Brenner, who in the autumn of 1941 copies the sermons of Bishop Galen warning against Nazi repression and mails them out to people in Ulm - including the Scholl family. Also in this group are Franz Josef Müller and Heinrich Guter, who will later, in Ulm, help by putting White Rose leaflets in envelopes. Susanne Hirzel, by then a student of music, will bring the leaflets to Stuttgart.



Franz J. Müller



Hans Hirzel



Susanne Hirzel



Heinrich Guter

[Photos: exhibition catalogue Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.]

#### Saarbrücken and Freiburg

Willi Graf stays in touch with his friends from Saarland Helmut Bauer, Rudi Alt and Heinz Bollinger who go to university in Freiburg. The latter's brother, Willi Bollinger, supports them from Saarbrücken.

#### Berlin and Hamburg

Hans Scholl keeps in touch with his former fellow student and flat-mate from Munich, Hellmut Hartert, who now studies in Berlin. Jürgen Wittenstein takes to Helmut, his brother-in-law, five of the six leaflets.

Traute Lafrenz has come to Munich as a medical student. In the autumn of 1942, she takes the third leaflet back to her hometown, Hamburg, where Heinz Kucharski discusses it with friends. Kucharski, again, has a friend in Munich, Hans Leipelt, who with his girlfriend, Marie-Luise Jahn, collects money for Kurt Huber's widow after Huber's execution.

Now it is our task to find one another again, to spread information from person to person [...].

2<sup>nd</sup> Leaflet (1942)

*"I'll never again get used to this ..."*

At times, he seems to be completely wrapped up in his "work."

Munich, 23 December 1942

Dear Miss H... !

Do I work? (Work, for me, only means that of a sculptor) ... Through it, I also hope to become a little more "happy" somehow, since being without work, here in Germany, is the most insufferable condition I can imagine. At such times, a terrible unrest is my dogged companion ... Only in work do I find calm.

Yet, Alexander does not escape into this calm. As early as January 1942, he had made hints to Lilo about adopting active forms of resistance. From May onwards, he repeatedly leaves sealed boxes in her apartment.

Around June and July, Hans Scholl and Alexander write the first four "Leaflets of the White Rose". These leaflets, each with a print run of one hundred, are sent out within Munich as well as in other places. To write and distribute the leaflets, Alexander had organised a typewriter and a duplicating machine. Then, no further activities are possible for some time since on 23 July their Student's Company is detached for "medical training in the field" to Russia.



Hans and Alexander on the train to Russia

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

## Longing

The Schmorell family had always maintained contacts to Russian emigrants and dissidents. Lilo Fürst-Ramdohr remembers that "the apartment of the Schmorell's was like a small piece of Russia in Munich" (2003). Thus, Alex is excited to see his mother country when the Student's Company sets off for Russia. He does not yet know that the experience of the following months will become crucially formative for him. He enters the country as an enemy - and finds his own identity there.



[Photos: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

7 August 1942

Dear Lilo!

Beautiful, magnificent Russia! The birch is your tree. There, far, far away, where the earth touches the sky, at the edge of an endless plain, there she stands - solitary, pointing to the sky. O solitary birch, the everlasting wind of the steppes caresses, ruffles, breaks you - you are at his mercy, forever. And aren't the Russian people just like you? ...

It is no coincidence that the boundless soul is alive in these very people of the endless plains, the steppes.

You know, Lilo, the Russian people are such that you have to either love them tremendously or dislike them with the same intensity, hate them. (...)

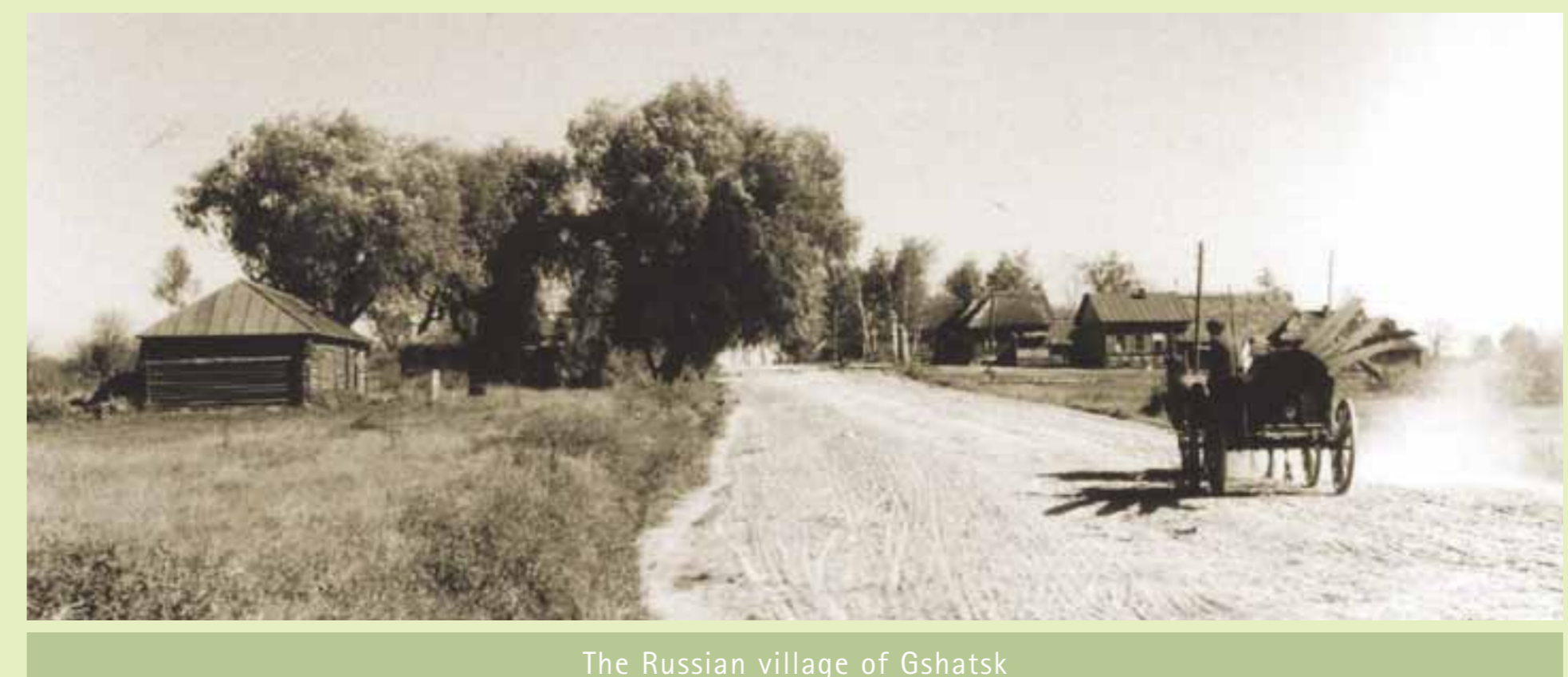
As I looked into these faces for the first time, into these eyes, and as I talked to them for the first time - what an immensity of life shone towards me from them all!

He makes Russia accessible to his friends. Thus, Hans Scholl in his letters repeatedly makes reference to his "Russian friend", as in the letter to Professor Huber, quoted below.

17 August 1942

Three good friends of mine, whom you know, are in the same company. I find my Russian friend particularly useful. I'm trying hard to learn the language.

[At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 216]



The Russian village of Gshatsk

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

Alexander is deeply moved by the Russian experience. After his return to Germany, he writes to a Russian friend:

25 November 1942

Dear Walja,

Now that I've been to Russia, everything here seems alien and strange to me. I'll never again get used to this European, "cultured" life - ever! My days are filled with thinking of you and of Russia - at night I dream of you and of Russia, because my heart, my soul, my thoughts - I left them all behind in Russia. (...) And yet, I have to stay in Germany for some time. I'll have many things to tell you when we meet again - but at the moment, it is too early to talk about them.



Paula Modersohn-Becker  
Birch trees in a landscape, ca. 1901

To Marguerite Knittel, the future wife of his friend Furtwängler, he writes:

January 1943

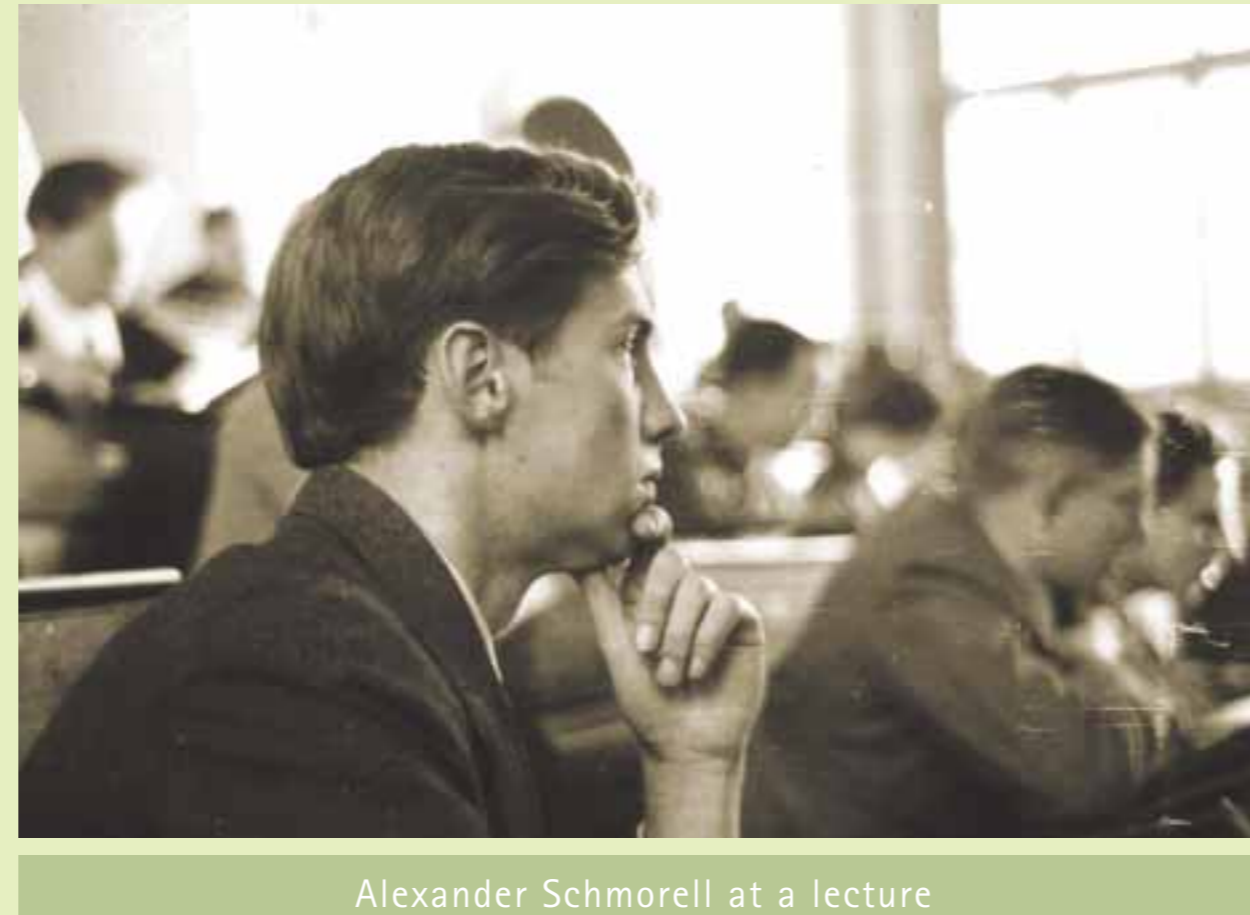
Dear Marguerite!

A fisherman who sits far, far away in my distant homeland, has cast deep into my heart.

And the further I go from my homeland, this great country, the stronger he pulls the rod, and the more pain is in my heart, the more restless I become.

## Back in Munich

The medical students return to Munich for the winter term of 1942/43, which starts on 6 November. But before they return to university, they are given three weeks leave which Hans and Alexander use to make contact with other dissidents. In Chemnitz, they meet Falk Harnack whose brother Arvid has been imprisoned in Berlin for being a member of the resistance group "Rote Kapelle" ("Red Orchestra").



Alexander Schmorell at a lecture

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

The continuation of their studies at university in December gives them opportunity for frequent visits to Professor Huber. They let Huber in on the leaflet campaigns of the circle, and Huber decides to contribute. Villa Schmorell becomes the venue for literary evenings attended by, among others, Christl Probst and Sophie and Hans Scholl. Even the intervals during concerts at the Odeon, which they frequently attend, are used to exchange information.

9 December 1942

Dear Nelly,

Unrest, terrible unrest – that's the main feature of my life here. I wouldn't be able to put up with it any longer if there weren't some obligations. Only they give me the moral right to stay here. And stay I must for a while longer. Once these obligations are fulfilled, my time in Germany will end. And then, this longing will be fulfilled which has been blazing away inside of me for my whole life. Then, I will return to Russia, to my homeland.

At the end of January 1943, the fifth leaflet is produced and distributed in Regensburg, Salzburg, Linz, Vienna, Frankfurt, Freiburg and Hamburg. The circle decide to expand their resistance activities. Several times, Hans, Alexander and Willi venture out at night to paint the walls of the university and other central buildings in Munich with messages such as "Down with Hitler" and "Freedom".

On 8/9 February 1943, Falk Harnack travels to Munich to visit Alexander, Hans Scholl, Willi Graf, Lilo Ramdohr and Professor Huber and discuss resistance and the future of Germany with them. He arranges a meeting with the dissident theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer for them, to take place on 25 February at the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. On 9 February, the friends discuss a new leaflet campaign.

On Wednesday, 18 February 1943, Lilo Ramdohr informs Alexander of the arrest of his friends Sophie and Hans. Since Willi, too, had been imprisoned that night, joint escape seems impossible. Two further attempts to flee over the Alps on his own fail because of the bad weather.



The "Völkische Beobachter," dated 24 February 1943

Alexander has to return to Munich. He gets through a passport control unrecognised; several people hide him, including Lilo Ramdohr in Munich's Prinzenstrasse 30. Two days after the execution of Christoph Probst, Sophie and Hans Scholl, the police publish a portrait of him, putting a price of 1,000 Reichsmarks on his head. That same day, Alexander Schmorell is recognised in an air raid shelter and arrested.

## "I'll never again get used to this ..."

During the interrogations, he stands by his actions. He declares:

In our present time I could not content myself with being silently opposed to National Socialism, but out of my concern for the fate of two people I saw myself obliged to contribute my share to a change of circumstance. (...) What I did, I did not do unaware but I was aware even of the possibility of losing my life if it came to investigations. I have ignored all this because I valued my inner obligation to take action against the National Socialist state more highly than any other.

On 19 April 1943, the notorious Volksgerichtshof (People's court) passes the death sentence on Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf and Kurt Huber. For three months he waits in prison – first for a decision on his plea for pardon, then for his execution. His letters leave no doubt how he understands life:

Munich, 30 May 1943

Dear parents!

If my plea for pardon is turned down, please consider that "death" does not mean the end of all life but rather the opposite – birth, transition into a new life, a magnificent, eternal life! So death is nothing terrible. What is hard and difficult is being separated. Yet, it becomes less hard if we consider that we will not be separated for good but only for a time, as if going on a journey.

The plea is rejected. He writes to his sister:

Munich, 2 July 1943

My dear, beloved Natasha!

You may be surprised to hear that with every day I become calmer inside, happy and cheerful even, that for most of the time my mood is better than it was when I was still free! How did that happen? Let me tell you now: All this hard "misfortune" was necessary to get me on the right path. (...) After all, what did I know of faith, of true, deep faith, or of truth, of the final and only truth, of God? So little!

The date of his execution is set for 13 July. His defence attorney reports:

"I visited Alexander Schmorell in the afternoon on the day of his death, 13 July 1943, to accompany him on his last journey. When I came to the death row I met a person who had just received the final comforts of his religion and who had already cast anything worldly far beyond him. I will never forget the words which he spoke almost cheerfully: 'You will be surprised to find me so calm in this hour. But I can tell you that even if at this very moment they brought the news that somebody else should die in my stead, such as the officer here who must look after me, I would still choose death. Because I am now convinced that my life, however short it may have been, must end in this hour since through my action I have fulfilled my purpose in life. I wouldn't know what else there would be for me to do, even if I was to be released now.'"

translated from Inge Scholl: *Die Weiße Rose*. Frankfurt: Fischer, 2001, p. 192



**Hans Scholl to his mother and his sisters Inge and Sophie, Russia, 2 September 1942**

The fall has already yellowed the first leaves in the treetops, and the birches, yes, the birches stand tall among the tall, solemn firs like young girls shivering with cold. It still isn't obvious to every eye, but there's a thin, delicate film over the trees and fields. It's Nature's mourning garb, which externalizes all sadness and converts it into beauty. I can't understand why so many people are such strangers to death. Isn't it death that makes life precious, or rather, has made it so?

Death, like sin, is what makes us human. A flower is beautiful because it fades. The flower fades, but beauty endures. What is more, death transfigures beauty.

At the Heart of the White Rose, pp. 218-219



Paula Modersohn-Becker, Birches, 1900

**Sophie Scholl to Lisa Remppis, 10 October 1942**

Now I'm delighting once more in the last rays of the sun and marveling at the incredible beauty of all that wasn't created by man: the red dahlias beside the white garden gate, the tall solemn fir trees, the tremulous, gold-draped birches whose gleaming trunks stand out against all the green and russet foliage, and the golden sunshine that intensifies the colors of each individual object, unlike the blazing summer sun, which overpowers anything else that tries to stir. It's all so wonderfully beautiful here that I've no idea what kind of emotion my speechless heart should develop for it, because it's too immature to take pure pleasure in it. It merely marvels and contents itself with wonder and enchantment. - Isn't it mysterious - and frightening, too, when one doesn't know the reason - that everything should be so beautiful in spite of the terrible things that are happening? My sheer delight in all things beautiful has been invaded by a great unknown, an inkling of the creator whom his creatures glorify with their beauty. - That's why man alone can be ugly, because he has the free will to dissociate himself from this song of praise. Nowadays one is often tempted to believe that he'll drown the song with gunfire and curses and blasphemy. But it dawned on me last spring that he can't, and I'll try to take the winning side.

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 250

**Sophie Scholl, sketch, Blumberg, undated (January 1942?)**

(...) In the course of our conversation about spiritual hunger and the food that might assuage it, we got around to the subject of music - not surprisingly, since one of our number was a music student.

Can music really satisfy spiritual hunger? Can something that springs from the soul be its food as well? That would be like a body having to construct itself out of itself alone.

(...) A word unexperienced by the soul is a dead word, and an emotion that fails to engender a thought is a futile emotion. But music softens the heart; by resolving its confusions and relaxing its tensions, it en-

**"The flower fades, but beauty endures"**

ables the mind, which has previously knocked in vain on the locked portals of the soul, to operate within it. Yes, music quietly and gently unlocks the doors of the soul. Now they're open! Now it's receptive. This is the ultimate effect that music has on me, that makes it one of my life's necessities.

(...) Listening to music properly entails complete self-abandonment to it, a detachment from all that still holds me captive, even now, and a childish heart devoid of sophistication and the quest for ulterior motives. The reward is a liberated heart, an uninhibited heart, a heart that has become receptive to harmony and things harmonious, a heart that has opened its doors to the workings of the mind. (...)

While pondering on the hunger that exists in mankind, for which music represents neither more or less than the air that enables a flame to burn more brightly still - while pondering on this, I've become aware that we would starve to death if unsustained by God, and that not only one long thread attaches us to God through the creation, as I used to believe when I still didn't know what a life is, especially a human life.

At the Heart of the White Rose, pp. 190-191

**Kurt Huber in his notebook, 26 December 1921**

The true work of art is as inexhaustible as life itself.

**Hans Scholl to Sophie, 14 May 1941**

The Mozart Festival ended today with a big orchestral concert at the Tonhalle. You should have been there! Art like that is as essential to us as our daily bread. Definitely! What would life be without it?

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 115

**Willi Graf in a letter to Marita Herfeldt, 8 December 1942**

I live off plenty of good music these days. Just tonight, I was listening to Edwin Fischer and his chamber orchestra. (...) The "Messiah" last Sunday was impressive beyond words. At the end of last week, I saw a performance of the Wendling Quartet - Haydn's Quartet in C major was particularly good. And so it continues. It is simply impossible to take all the opportunity there is. On top of it all, we're currently singing old Christmas songs in our choir, and a magnificent motet by Schütz which we will perform at a concert on 20 December.

All these are beautiful things that are more than mere activity. I had to do without such pleasures for a long time, during the last three winters, but now I can enjoy this beauty to the full. In music I encounter an endlessly versatile world, and there are things in the world that look quite different after such an encounter.

translated from Anneliese Knoop-Graff/Inge Jens (eds.): Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994, pp. 177-178



Susanne Hirtzel, a friend of Sophie Scholl, and a student of music



"The flower fades, but beauty endures"

**Hans Scholl to his sister Inge, 27 June 1938**

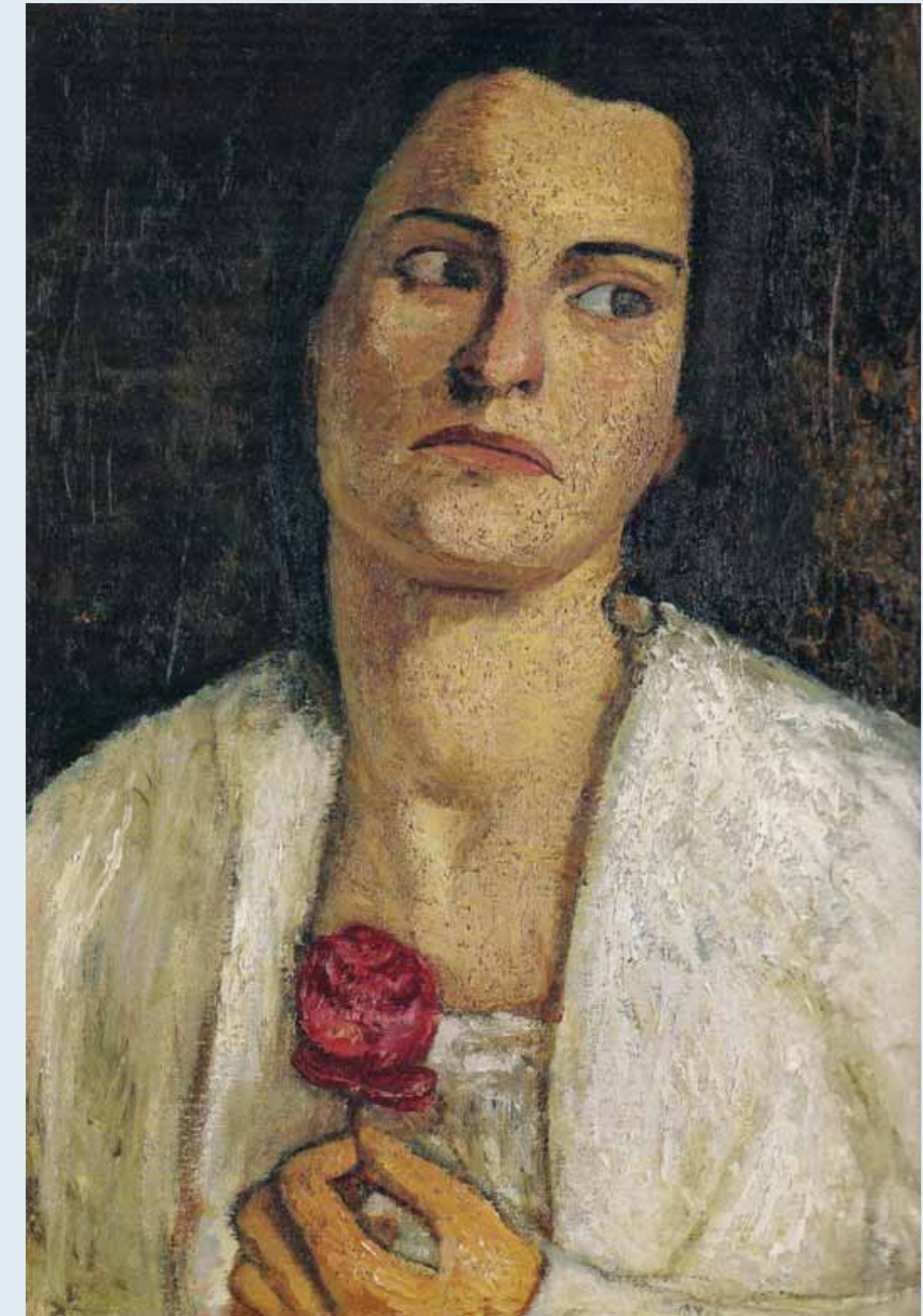
I keep a rosebud in my breast pocket. I need that little flower because it's the other side of a coin, far removed from soldiering but not at odds with a soldierly frame of mind. You should always carry a little secret around with you, especially when you're with comrades like mine.

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 12

**Hans Scholl, Russian diary, 31 July 1942**

How splendidly the flowers are blooming on this railroad embankment! As if all had assembled so that no color should be missing, they bloom here with gentle insistence – everywhere: alongside ruined buildings, gutted freight cars, distraught human faces. Flowers are blooming and children innocently playing among the ruins. O God of love, help me to overcome my doubts. I see the Creation, your handiwork, which is good. But I also see man's handiwork, our handiwork, which is cruel, and called destruction and despair, and which always afflicts the innocent.

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 222



Paula Modersohn-Becker, Portrait of sculptress Clara Rilke-Westhoff, 1905

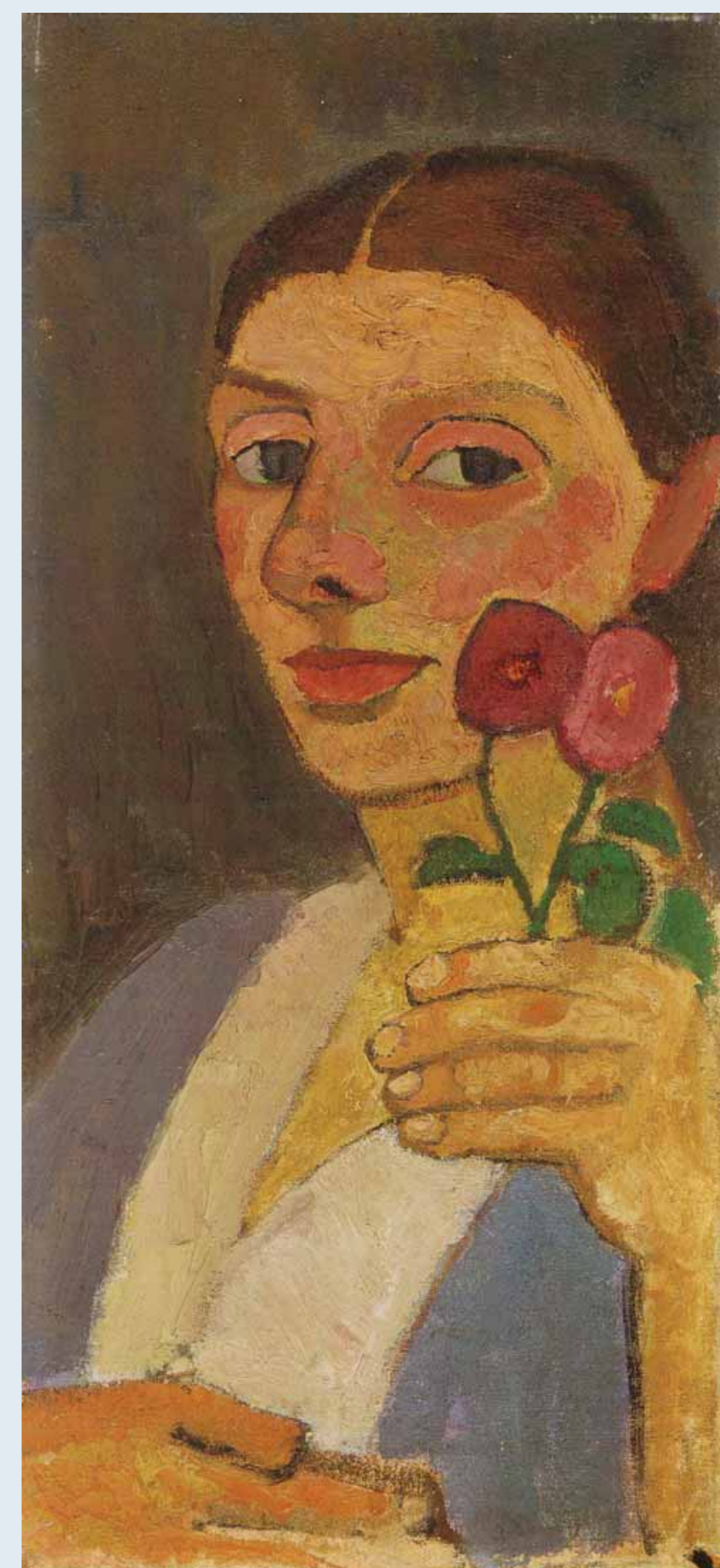


Paula Modersohn-Becker, Young girl with yellow flowers in a glass, 1902

**Inge Scholl to her father Robert Scholl, 13 June 1943**

And didn't Sophie and Hans love flowers! Even on 23 February, when I came into their apartment with Otl, there was a leafy plant on Hans' desk, its violet leaves clinging to the stems like fragrant butterflies and some strewn across the desk. And in little Sophie's room there was a pot with tulips. Last August, while you were in prison, we were introduced to a painter at Lu's, and he greeted Sophie with the words: "But don't I know you? Aren't you the girl whom I've seen often before with a flower in her hair?"

translated from Inge Aicher-Scholl (ed.): *Sippenhaft*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1993. p. 62



Paula Modersohn-Becker, Self-portrait with two flowers in her raised left hand, 1907



Sophie Scholl

**Sophie Scholl to her sister Inge, Worpsswede, 9 August 1939**

I'm crazy about Paula Modersohn's work, on the other hand. She developed a tremendously original style for a woman, and her paintings aren't derivative of anyone in particular. You must see them all.

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 34

Beauty will save the world.

Fjodor Dostojewskij

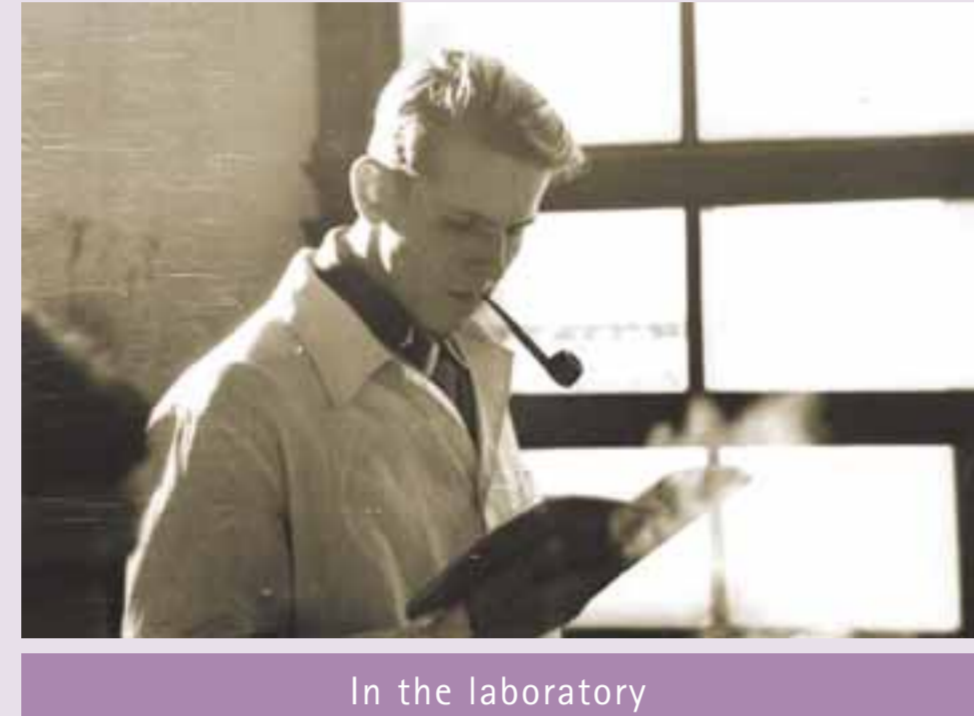
## "... there is something like a sparkle on the life of all humans"

Having jumped a year, Christoph, now aged seventeen, takes his school leaving exam in 1937 at the Landerziehungsheim Schondorf.

### Choice of career

Feeling a "need to help and heal wherever he could, he decided to become a physician, finally preferring this choice of profession to all other possible options available to him".

(Angelika Probst, 1947)



In the laboratory

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]



[Photo: private collection, Dr. Michael Probst]

Having completed his term at the Reichsarbeitsdienst, he is drafted to the air force, where he receives training as a medical orderly. After his two years of military service, he takes up his medical studies in the summer term of 1939. When the war breaks out, he is, unlike his friend Alex, drafted to the Student's Company of the air force. He is therefore sent to Strasbourg and later to Innsbruck to study.

From there, he writes to his stepmother:

It is not so easy for me to live in Innsbruck. I'm missing a person who is close to me, you know, a soul mate or even just a like-minded person. Especially, since there are so many things right now which are almost impossible to bear without talking them over with somebody.

Letter, dated 5 February 1943, translated from: "... damit Deutschland weiterlebt." p. 105-106

But his friendship with Alexander holds strong. Lilo Ramdohr, a friend of Alex's, remembers:

"Whenever he was in Munich, he visited Alex. What I liked best about the two of them was that they always smoked pipes – a way of showing their opposition to uniformity. Wherever they went, they always had a pipe in their mouths, no matter whether they were smoking or not."

Liselotte Fürst-Ramdohr, translated from: "... damit Deutschland weiterlebt." p. 144



### "Magnificent marriage"

At twenty-one, in August 1941, he marries Herta Dohrn. They have two sons, Michael and Vincent – "their little, clear souls are all my pleasure, a never-failing pleasure". In his farewell letter he will talk of his "magnificent marriage". Yet, his life is not free of troubles or dejection.



Family picture with grandma (Elise Probst)

[Photo: private collection, Dr. Michael Probst]

In the summer of 1942, he writes to his sister Angelika:

My dearest Ängs!

(...) Recently, my life has been quite two-sided; on the one hand I have been suffering from alarming week-long waves of fatigue, which pretty much limited my waking hours. In between those times I have been quite busy – doing medicine, Russian, reading, shopping, etc. I felt virtually compelled to be active since a kind of quiet despair kept creeping close and closer to my heart during moments of leisure. But it was a "positive" kind of despair, if there is any such thing, because it did not cause resignation but activity and intensity (...).

Hoping that our lives may at some point bear fruit. Let me hug you,  
Yours Christel

Letter, dated 4 July 1942, translated from: "... damit Deutschland weiterlebt." p. 95

He also tries to convey that hope to others. Also in the summer of 1942, he writes a birthday letter to his brother Dieter who has just been drafted.

Even in the worst chaos, the most important thing is that the individual achieves his aim in life, his salvation, which cannot be obtained through outward "achievement" but only through perfecting himself inwardly as a person.

After all, life does not begin with birth and does not end with death. Life too, this great task of becoming human, is preparation for an existence in another, new form.

In the end all smaller and greater tasks and events in life will serve this one task. And even though we don't recognise their hidden, inner connection, we know that they must have meaning. Only at some later point will we be able to see all things in our life in a clear light.

Letter, dated 27 July 1942, translated from: "... damit Deutschland weiterlebt." p. 96

### Struggle

Repeatedly, Christoph feels the need to discuss faith – with his wife and his father-in-law, both of whom had converted to Catholicism, and with soldiers he cares for as a medic. Often, he goes to a shop selling minerals in Schwabing to talk with the shop's owner, who holds a responsible position in the "Heliand", an association for Catholic girls. She remembers that "he was a great struggler" (Elisabeth Anneser, 2004).



[Photo: private collection, Dr. Michael Probst]

But how did, at the same time, his decision mature to help his friends Alexander Schmorell and Hans Scholl with writing the leaflets?

"He surely wasn't a born revolutionary (...). But he was a very keen and close observer, by nature and by education, one who quickly knew how to deepen his intellectual and primarily his moral understanding. I remember from many talks in the family circle that he suffered greatly from his times, right down to his physical wellbeing. For example, he was always deeply agitated when talk came to the euthanasia programmes, the mass murder of the mentally and physically handicapped which the Nazis couldn't hush up for very long; and he was outraged when the Jewish people were forced to wear the star of David in public, especially since his stepmother was Jewish too; not to mention the growing number of reports of mass crimes committed in the concentration camps and on the eastern front, which were leaking out."

Bernhard Knoop (1983), translated from: "... damit Deutschland weiterlebt." pp. 132-133

“... there is something like a sparkle  
on the life of all humans”

Naturally, his friends are against his participation. They do not want to put him in danger because he has family, as Lilo Ramdohr remembers.

"When Sophie Scholl, Willi Graf and Traute Lafrenz joined the circle later in the summer term of 1942, everybody agreed once again that Christl would have to be kept out of everything. But Christl wasn't to be excluded and it hardly could all have been done without him. He had a great influence on the text of the leaflets. In 1941/42, he studied in Strasbourg for the winter term, for the summer term he was in Munich and in the winter of 1942, he was transferred to Innsbruck. But he always visited his friends and followed their work, offering criticism and making good suggestions, at least that's what Alex said."



With his son Michael

[Photo: private collection, Dr. Michael Probst]

translated from Lilo Fürst-Ramdohr: *Freundschaften in der Weißen Rose*, p. 61



Departure to "medical training in the field"  
Hans and Sophie Scholl, Christoph Probst (from left to right)

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

## Friendship

While his friends do their "training in the field" in Russia, he writes the following lines to Hans Scholl:

Ruhpolding, 18 October 1942

Dear Hans!

It is strange that your first letter should reach me right now as I felt a very strong longing for the company of you all during this last week. It is true, I have experienced and seen everything as if I had actually been there with you, and our separation has often been painful to me. More and more I have felt how much my life needs this true friendship between men, our conversations of the mind, but those of the heart even more. Having read your letter today – Sunday morning –, I have received answers to some of the discussions which I held with you in my mind.

Your lovely letter has delighted and deeply moved me since I can imagine so well what you all are experiencing in Russia ...

I am greatly looking forward to skiing and spending a winter in the mountains with you, dear Hans, and with Alex. And in the city, too, we will pursue our common interests and fulfil our obligations.

translated from Christian Petry: *Studenten aufs Schafott*. Munich: Piper, 1968, p. 72-73

In January 1943, Herta and Christoph Probst have their third child, Katharina. Christoph continues to place great importance on his friendship with his friends in Munich. Elisabeth Scholl, who stays over at her sister and brother's for a few days, remembers one of his visits:

"One day, Christl Probst on passing through Munich paid us a short visit. I was impressed to see that in spite of the shortness of his stay of only one and a half hours, he got out of his uniform and put on civilian clothes. Immediately, Hans and him withdrew to Hans' room. Later, we drank tea together and talked about Christl's wife who was in hospital with puerperal fever after giving birth to their third child."

Elisabeth Hartnagel, translated from: Inge Scholl: *Die Weiße Rose*, p. 164



Overnight stay at Jürgen Wittenstein's, having missed the train

[Photo: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

But suddenly, things gather speed. Lilo Ramdohr remembers how the friends try to protect Christoph and his family in the sudden maelstrom of events.

"Around 10 February 1943, Alex came running in, breathless, saying: 'Something is going to happen over the next days.' Leaflets are to be dropped at university. Christl wants to do it alone with Hans, but Hans Scholl refuses. (...) Sophie Scholl insists on helping her brother distribute the leaflets throughout university anyway. (...) I greatly admired Sophie. There is no doubt that she risked her own life wanting to protect Christl Probst."

translated from *Freundschaften in der Weißen Rose*, p. 113

Sophie and Hans Scholl are caught only eight days later. Hans carries the handwritten draft of the 7th leaflet in his pocket. His attempt to swallow it to protect its author fails. The handwriting gives Christoph Probst away.

Hitler and his regime must fall so that Germany may live. Make up your minds: Stalingrad and doom or (...) a future of hope. And when you have made up your minds, take action.

translated from the draft of the 7th leaflet by Christoph Probst

Christoph Probst is arrested the following day in Innsbruck as he is just about to set off to see his wife in hospital. He is taken to Munich. Three days later, on 22 February 1943, the "People's Court" ("Volksgerichtshof") under Roland Freisler passes the death sentence on him, Sophie and Hans Scholl.

That afternoon, before his execution, Christoph Probst asks the chaplain to be baptised. The clergyman hesitates – but Christoph's is not a hasty decision. He proves to be well prepared and receives baptism and Communion. Shortly afterwards, Sophie, Hans and Christoph are granted a last brief meeting in the prison yard. His words of farewell are:

"In a few minutes, we'll see each other again in eternity."



# FREEDOM

"Long live freedom!"

Then, there will be a new German youth, and we will train it from very early on for this new state. This youth must learn nothing else but to think like Germans and act like Germans. And when these boys and girls enter our organisations at the age of ten, it is often for the very first time that they get into fresh air and feel it. Then, after four years in the Jungvolk, they enter the Hitler Youth where we keep them for another four years. After that we're all the more determined not to return them to the hands of the creators of consciousness of class and station. So we take them away again, up into the party and to the Arbeitsfront [Labour Front], into the SA [Stormtroopers] or into the SS, into the NSKK [NS motorist corps], etc. And should they have failed to have become true National Socialists after three or one and a half years in these organisations, they'll be put with the Arbeitsdienst [Labour Service] where they will be drilled hard for another six or seven months, and all of this will happen under one symbol - that of the German spade. The little that's left in consciousness of class or station here and there after those six or seven months, will be taken care of by the Wehrmacht [Armed Forces] where they will go for further treatment for two years. And when they return after two, three or four years, we will immediately receive them back into the SA, SS, etc. so that they may under no circumstances lapse back into their old ways. And so they'll never be free again for their whole life, and they'll be pleased that it is so.

Adolf Hitler (1938)

"Father, what is a concentration camp?"

He told us what he knew and suspected and added:  
"That is war. War in the midst of peace and within our own people. War against the defenceless individual. War against human happiness and the freedom of its children. It is a frightful crime." (...)

This talk between Father and ourselves occurred on a long hike in the spring. Once again we had thoroughly talked out our questions and doubts.

"What I want most of all is that you live in uprightness and freedom of spirit, no matter how difficult that proves to be," he had added.

Suddenly we were comrades, our father and ourselves, and none of us were conscious that he was so much older.

We had the welcome sensation of seeing our horizons widen, and at the same time we understood that this expansion of the world brought with it and risk danger.

Inge Scholl: *Die Weiße Rose*, pp. 11-12

Our attitude and commitment must show that this is not the end of human freedom.

Christoph Probst

In the name of German Youth we demand restitution by Adolf Hitler's state of our personal freedom, the most precious treasure that we have, out of which he has swindled us in the most miserable way.

6<sup>th</sup> Leaflet (February 1943)

I demand freedom for the German people.

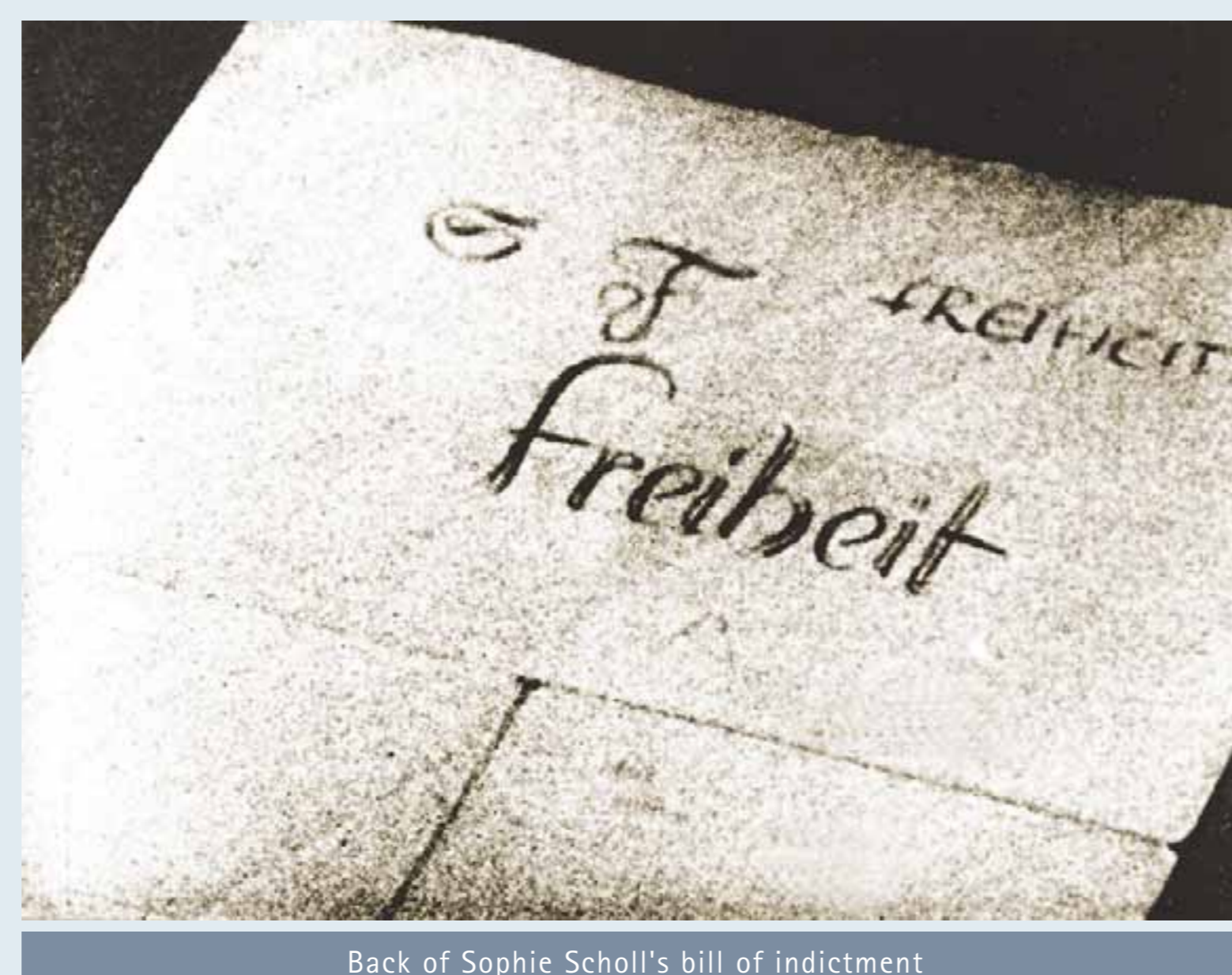
Prof. Kurt Huber before the Volksgerichtshof (April 1943)

22 February 1943

Gestapo prison at Wittelsbacherpalais, before the trial:

"After a short while her [Sophie's] cell, too, was empty. She left the indictment sheet behind, and on its reverse we found the word 'freedom' written in her own hand."

*Die Weiße Rose*, p. 58



Back of Sophie Scholl's bill of indictment

[Photo: Exhibition Catalogue, Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.]

If I am to suffer death in fighting for freedom, I ask you to rejoice and cheer someone who has found his way home to the final freedom of the spirit. Then, making the sacrifice of my own life I will have attained complete freedom.

Kurt Huber

Man is only free in the face of eternity; and in this freedom of attitude lies the inescapable meaning of personal life in history; the meaning which man cannot avoid even if he were to refrain from action.

Reinhold Schneider

Man is free, to be sure, but without the true God he is defenseless against the principle of evil. He is a like rudderless ship, at the mercy of the storm, an infant without his mother, a cloud dissolving into thin air.

4<sup>th</sup> Leaflet (summer 1942)

The honour which we pay to those who gave their life for freedom will become a mere gesture if we do not also try to understand what this freedom demands from us and if we are not willing to fulfil them.

Romano Guardini, *Memorial Speech*, 1958



"... but I press on regardless"

## Parents

In 1917, Robert Scholl is mayor of Ingersheim, a small town in Württemberg – it is the year that his wife Magdalena gives birth to their first daughter, Inge. Hans Fritz is born one year later, on 22 September 1918.

The family moves to Forchtenberg am Kocher, where Robert Scholl takes up another post as mayor, which he will hold for ten years. Elisabeth (\* 1920), Sophie (\* 1921) and Werner (\* 1922) are born here. At times, Robert Scholl's godson Ernst lives with the family.



Robert and Magdalena Scholl

Having been voted out of office in 1930, Robert Scholl and his family briefly move to Ludwigsburg before, in 1932, they finally settle in Ulm. Here, Robert Scholl begins to work as tax consultant and auditor. Every morning in front of the mirror, and at times sniggered at by his children, he recites the first two lines from Goethe's poem "Beherzigung":



Elisabeth and Hans Scholl

*Stand firm against all  
the powers that be,  
never yield,  
be strong,  
summon the arms of the  
gods to your aid.*

Translation: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 292

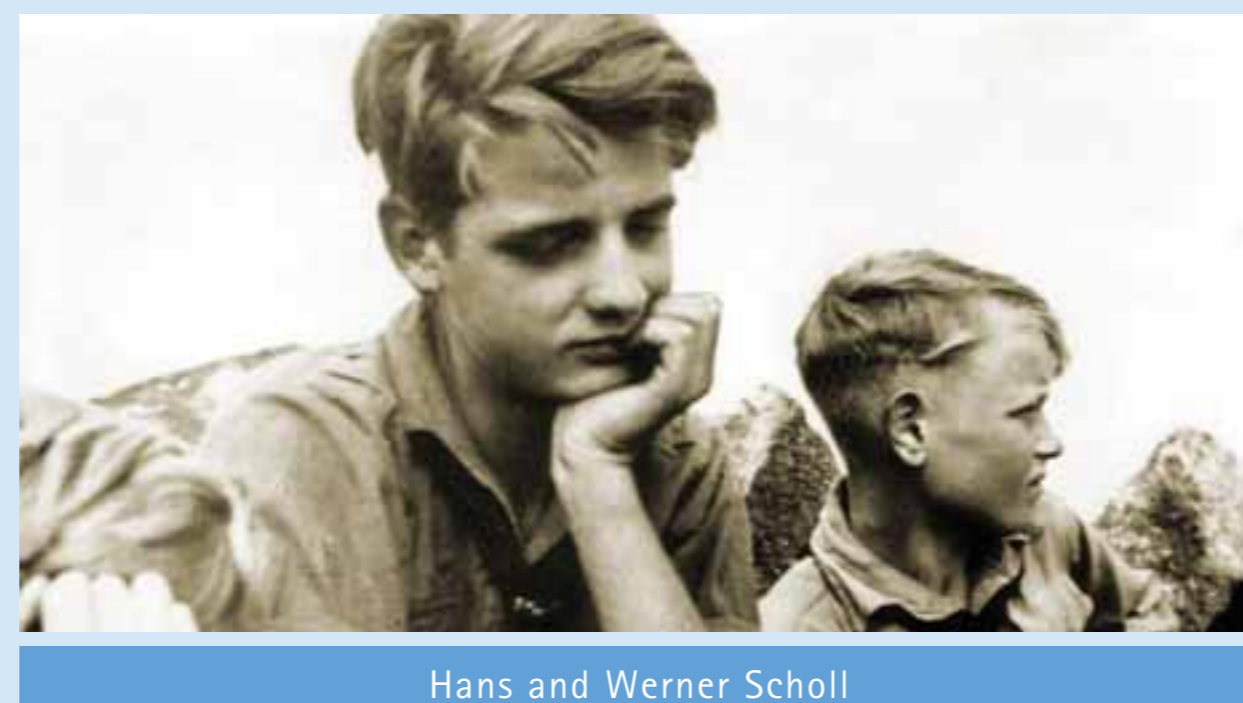
## From Hitler Youth to Bündische Jugend

In spite of his father's reservations, Hans develops a fascination with the Hitler Youth and is soon promoted to the rank of a troop leader. "Hans Scholl was the leader in Ulm. They all wanted to be in his troop" (Franz J. Müller, 2003). And so, Hans is chosen to carry the banner of Ulm's Hitler Youth Tribe at the Nuremberg Rally in September 1935.



Ulm's Hitler Youth during the march to celebrate Hitler's birthday in 1937. The banner in the middle is that of Hans Scholl's group.

[Photo: City Archive Ulm]



Hans and Werner Scholl

But he returns a changed man. The huge event does not fascinate him – it depresses him down, disappoints him. Everything is clichéd. Step by step, many of the things that are close to his heart are banned. A Hitler Youth leader grabs his copy of "Sternstunden der Menschheit," a book by his favourite author Stefan Zweig from his hands; and they must no



Birthday photo for Magdalena Scholl, Ludwigsburg, 1930  
From left: Robert Scholl, Inge, Hans, Elisabeth, Sophie, Werner

longer sing the songs of other peoples. Without officially resigning from the Hitler Youth he distances himself inwardly and with friends becomes involved with the illegalised Bündische Jugend (a movement which emerged from many different youth groups and associations).

Looking back, Robert Scholl writes about his son:

Walking along and across railway embankments was typical of Hans. From his 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> year, it sometimes gave me cause to secretly worry about him. Such a zest for freedom and independence in such a restricting state, I thought, can lead to many a tragic collision. I had observed a similar desire for freedom in young Englishmen, before 1914, in Stuttgart. But even then, in the German police state of the time, such freedom-loving people had to take quite a few knocks. I too have this desire for freedom which was so typical of Hans. But I am more timid by nature, shy, and therefore almost a coward, while Hans was courageous, bold and daring.

translated from Inge Aicher-Scholl (ed.): *Sippenhaft*, p. 60

In the winter of 1935/36, Hans and some of his friends found the group "dj. 1.11." They decide to travel to Lapland together in the next summer. On 9 August, they begin their four-week journey to the north, travelling by train – often without tickets. Werner is also part of the group. On the boat, Hans addresses the boys:

"Our actual journey begins only now. Each of us is different, and that is alright. But what is more beautiful is when a group of boys act in harmony."

## First imprisonment

Having completed his school leaving exams in 1937, Hans must serve his half-year with the Arbeitsdienst (National Labour Service), followed by military service. A passionate horseman, Hans wants to join the cavalry but ends up with the motorised cavalry in Bad Cannstatt instead. In November, the family has its first encounter with the Gestapo – the Nazi's feared secret police. They arrest Inge, Werner and Sophie because of 'subversive activities' with the Bündische Jugend and take them to Stuttgart for temporary imprisonment. In mid-December, Hans is arrested in his barracks because of 'breach of exchange control regulations' during the Lapland trip.



Hans Scholl at the Arbeitsdienst, front row, first from left

He spends Christmas in prison:

Dear Parents,

Now that a day has gone by since Father visited me, I want to write to you both. (...)

I have plenty of time to think now, and the whole of my sunny boyhood passes before my eyes in the brightest colors. First childish play, then serious work, then tireless exertion on behalf of a community. Few people can look back on such a fine, proud boyhood. And now I've regained confidence in my future. I've regained faith in my own strength, and ultimately I owe that strength to you two alone. Only now I am fully to my father's desire, which he himself possessed and passed on to me, to become something great for the sake of mankind.

Don't lose your gaiety, Mother, I entreat you, because your children need it so badly. What matters most is that Christmas should remain a joyful family occasion.

I think of you both so much.

Yours Hans

Letter, dated 18 December 1937, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 5

Hans is tried in 1938 for "continuation of the Bündische Jugend etc." While the trial drags on, Hans Scholl writes from the barracks:



Hans Scholl

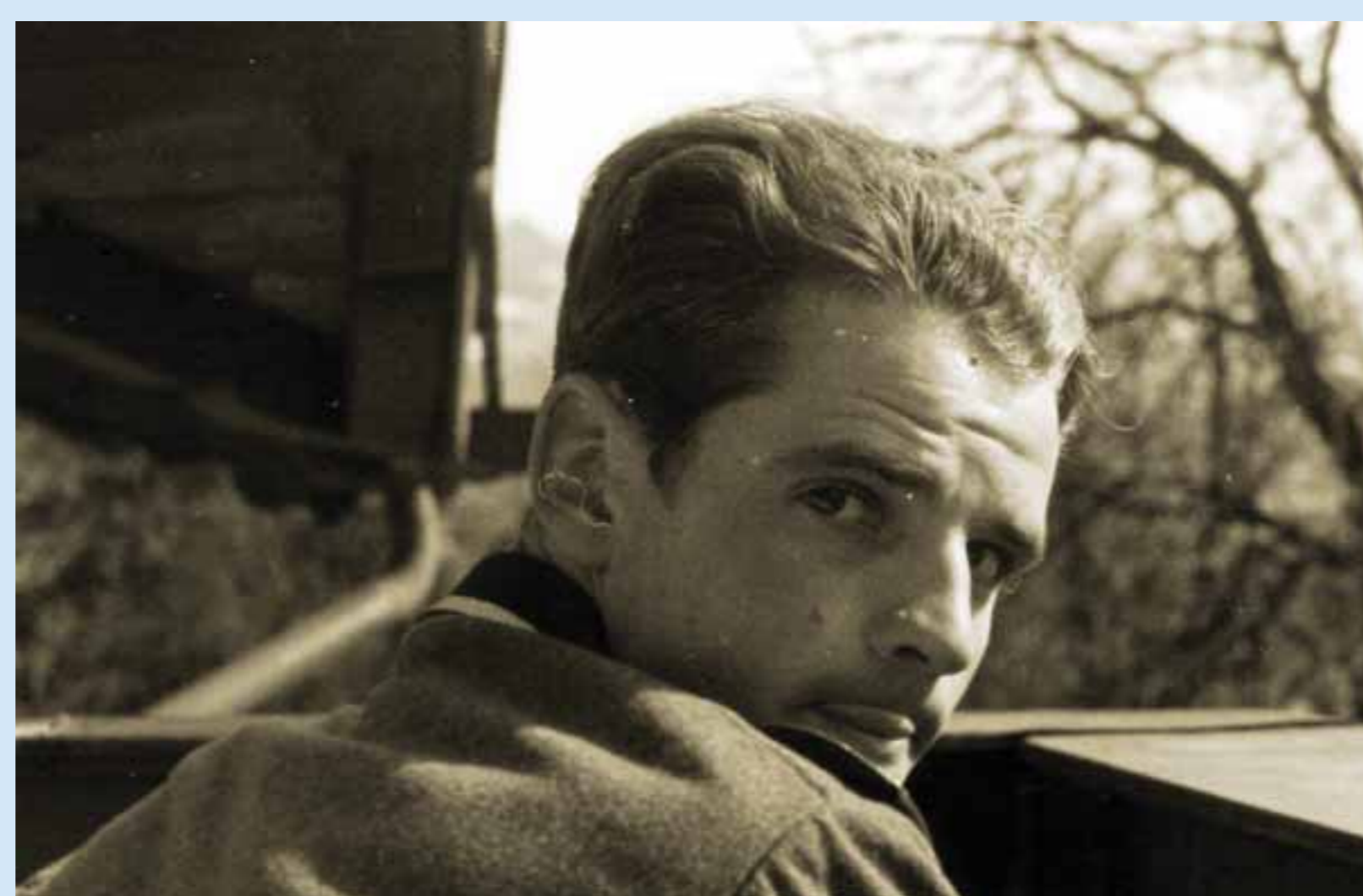
*My whole body, every sinew, every vein of it, yearns for life.*

Proceedings are suspended on 2 June 1938 due to an amnesty under the impunity act granted after the annexation of Austria.

## Friends

The Scholl's activities as youth leaders and their meeting with Catholic youths around Otl Aicher lay the foundation for an open circle of about 20 friends in Ulm – the "Schollbund". Since the friends soon end up in different places in Germany, they use a personal newsletter with the name "Windlicht" to stay in touch.

To Hans Scholl and Otl Aicher, books are an elixir of life. They read Michelangelo, Rilke, Stefan George, Paul Claudel, Berdyaev, and Werner Bergengruen, and they discuss what they have read, passing and recommending the books and in this way developing new friendships.



Hans Scholl

*"... but I press on regardless"*

## Medical studies

In the summer term of 1939, Hans Scholl is finally able to take up his long-awaited studies of medicine in Munich.



Hans Scholl (left) as a student of medicine

He is drafted in March 1940 and assigned to the 2nd Student's Company in Munich. The medical students participate in the campaign against France as medical orderlies.



Hans Scholl on leave

Hans returns to his studies in October 1940. Back in Munich, he writes to his girlfriend Rose Nägele on 3 February 1941:



Return to Munich

Dear Rose,

It's snowing like fun today. There's nothing to do but stew in your cozy room, light your pipe, and ponder on your sins! If you'd received all the letters I've written you in my head, you'd be buried beneath a mountain of verbage.

First, though, the truth. I'm anything but an energetic youngster with both feet planted firmly on the ground. There's a kind of mad melancholy underlying everything, and that's why I'm disinclined to write. Don't get me wrong, though. I'm not talking about weakness on the outside, but an internal private insecurity that really has no connection at all with weakness. Nor [with] instability. One feels a bit world-weary at times, and all one's best efforts seem futile and superfluous. Perhaps these are symptoms of the age we live in. If so, we ought to be able to overcome them.

You've got a girlfriend in Munich, don't forget. Couldn't you pay her an occasional visit, and me as well? You haven't been skiing yet this year.

I'll write again soon.

Lot of love, Hans

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 99

"... but I press on regardless"

## Encounters

The following winter marks the beginning of a decisive change in him. On 7 December 1941, he writes to his girlfriend:

Dear Rose!

I'm thinking of you on this second Sunday in Advent, which I'm experiencing as a wholehearted Christian for the first time in my life. (...) Fundamentally, much has changed since then. That's to say, there's been a fundamental reinforcement of something that has become my mainstay in an age so eagerly searching for new values. I've discovered the only possible and lasting value - the place on one's pillow that never becomes hot or cold, as Cocteau puts it. There are things outwardly incomprehensible but inwardly comprehended. I want to travel far, as far as possible, along the road of reason; but I realize I'm a creature born of nature and grace, though a grace that presupposes nature.

I'll be able to describe this innermost development of mine better later on. I'm too much in the thick of it at present. At present I don't want to stray from the essential point at any price. (...)

Yours,  
Hans

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 183

At Carl Muth's he happens upon an illustrated book about the Turin shroud. To share his discovery with his friends, Hans writes in the "Windlicht" (December 1941):

Night had to be, so that this light could shine.

Claudel

Is it necessary to write about this picture, and did this face have to emerge from the shadows of the unexplored into the harsh light of day so as to kindle fresh doubts in mankind? Did we need this questionable evidence, we who have anyway acknowledged Christ as our Lord? Why, then, am I speaking to you? Because I have seen it. Because my way has been paved by nights of pondering, by a yearning for light and for knowledge of what exists. (...)

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 167

Two days before Christmas he sends the following letter to Carl Muth:

Dear Professor!

The few words of gratitude I want to send you are more easily written than spoken. It fills me with joy to be able, for the first time in my life, to celebrate Christmas properly and Christianly, with true conviction.

The vestiges of my childhood, when my carefree gaze dwelled on the lights and my mother's radiant face, were not obliterated, but shadows had fallen across them. I toiled in a barren age along profitless paths that invariably ended in the same sense of desolation and emptiness.

My loneliness was aggravated by two profound experiences of which I must sometime tell you, and last but not least by this terrible war, this Moloch that insinuated itself into the souls of all men from below and strove to kill them.

Then, one day, from somewhere or other, came the answer. I heard and perceived the name of the Lord. My first meeting with you coincided with that period. Thereafter it grew lighter every day, as if scales were falling from my eyes. I am praying. I feel I have a firm background and a clear goal. This year, Christ has been born for me anew.

Yours,  
Hans Scholl

At the Heart of the White Rose, pp. 184-185

One month later, he sends a letter to his girlfriend:

Dear Rose!

My promise was a rash one. Several weeks have gone by without my writing to you, but that's the way it is. I can never compel myself to write.

I'm now a homo viator in the best sense, a man in transit, and hope I always will be. After a lapse of many largely wasted years, I've finally learned to pray again. What strength it has given me! At last I know the inexhaustible spring that can quench my terrible thirst.

That's the main thing I have to tell you. All else is secondary! (...) I've no idea what will happen to us when the semester ends in a month's time, nor do I care in the least. I've dropped anchor, come what may, and nothing can really trouble me from now on.

I wish you all the best and God's blessing in the coming days. Expect another letter from me soon.

Yours,  
Hans

At the Heart of the White Rose, pp. 187-188

## Homo viator

In July 1942, after the first leaflet campaign with Alexander Schmorell, Hans and his fellow students of the Student's Company are posted to the eastern front for "medical field training". They travel to Russia via Warsaw, where they see the ghetto. The friends are finally deployed to a major military hospital 150 km from Moscow.



Hans Scholl during his deployment to Russia



Hans Scholl (left) and Alexander Schmorell



From left to right: Alexander Schmorell, Hans Scholl and Hubert Furtwängler

[Photos: George (Jürgen) Wittenstein]

In August, Robert Scholl is sentenced to four months in prison for violation of the treachery act. Talking to an employee, he had called Hitler "a great scourge of God." During those days, Hans describes his life behind the front lines to his mother and his sisters Inge and Sophie:

I have a great deal of time in which to do nothing, and consequently to think. We all need that. My last few weeks in Munich were grand and worthwhile but hurried, so they prevented many of my ideas from maturing. If you could see me now, you'd be surprised how little I'm affected by all that happened here at the front. And my comrades like me for being down-to-earth. Tackling things with a totally different attitude of mind, that's what counts. Alex has been very ill for several days. He developed diphtheria overnight, and now he's in bed with a high temperature. Hubert F. [Furtwängler] and Willi Graf had to deputize for a unit medical officer yesterday, up front with the infantry. That means I'm the sole remnant of our once proud "fifth column". I'm never lonely, though. I've made friends with a grizzled old fisherman. We often sit on a river bank from dawn to dusk, fishing like Peter at the days of Christ. I've also formed a choir here in camp from prisoners of war and a few Russian girls. Not long ago we danced half the night away, so energetically that our bones ached the next day. From the military aspect, we're in absolutely no danger at present. In fact, one of our senior medical officers has reinjected some iron into the peaceful atmosphere by lecturing us on infant nutrition. I couldn't help laughing heartily. There are many amusing asides to this place, and it's fun to preserve such caricatures. I carry a little notebook in which I "record" trivialities of that kind. No room for more.

All my very fondest love,  
Hans

Letter, dated 2 September 1942, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 219

Alexander Schmorell, whom he calls his "Russian friend", instils in Hans a love of Russia. "Most days I stroll through the endless forests with my friend Alexander, and in the evening we sit with Russian peasants, drinking tea or schnapps and singing."

Letter, dated 24 August 1942, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 218

In early October 1942, towards the end of the "medical field training", he writes to his parents:

I marvel anew every day at the beauty of Russia. I think I'll often be overcome with great nostalgia for this place when I'm back in Germany. The birch trees are gilded all over now, with a blue sky above. The jackdaws flew south in such numbers that they blotted out the sun. You've no cause to worry about me.

All my fondest love,  
Hans

Letter dated 3 October 1942, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 239

„... aber ich stürze mich hinein“

At the end of October, the Student's Company is transferred back to Munich. The encounter with the Warsaw ghetto and their war experience confirm the friends in their opposition to the regime. Hans uses three weeks leave to make contact with other dissident groups outside of Munich. He is at the hub of many activities.

In parallel, he continues his studies. Lectures in the daytime, including those of Kurt Huber, concerts, close reading and discussions in the evenings. In a letter to Otl Aicher, he hints at what is going on.

I'm surrounded here by a circle of people whose company you'd enjoy, and it would be a pleasant and tempting occupation to expand and cultivate such a circle if I didn't at present have more urgent business in the offing.

Letter, dated 6 December 1942, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 259

## More urgent tasks

The "more urgent tasks" which Hans refers to include editing, typing and copying the leaflets, painting dissident slogans on walls in the city centre in Munich, distributing the leaflets, and making contact with other dissidents throughout Germany. Falk Harnack arranges a meeting with Dietrich Bonhoeffer for 25 February 1943 by the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. But the meeting does not take place.

Two days before his arrest, on 16 February 1943, Hans writes to his former girlfriend Rose Nägele:

Never has my respect for your purity of heart been greater than it is now, when life has become an everpresent danger. But because the danger is of my own choosing, I must head for my chosen destination freely and without any ties. I've gone astray many times, I know. Chasms yawn and darkest night envelops my questing heart, but I press on regardless. As Claudel so splendidly puts it: *La vie, c'est une grande aventure vers la lumière*.

*At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 279

"Life is a great adventure toward the light."

Sophie Scholl and her brother are arrested on 18 February while distributing the 6<sup>th</sup> leaflet at the university. The regime is on edge, calling the trial before the Volksgerichtshof within only four days. The president of the 'Court', the notorious Roland Freisler, flies in from Berlin. Before Hans Scholl leaves his cell in the morning of 22 February 1943 for the trial, he pencils a message on the wall:

*Stand firm against all the powers that be.*

Translation: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 292

He is executed in the afternoon. After the war, a guard reports Hans Scholl's last words:

*Long live freedom!  
Long live Germany!*





"I've been presented with the voice"

Not errors do we have to fear but lies.

from Reinhold Schneider: *Las Casas vor Karl V. Szenen aus der Konquistadorezeit*. Leipzig: Insel, 1938, p. 186

I can't remain aloof because there's no happiness for me in so doing, because there's no happiness without truth – and this is essentially a war about truth ... Every false throne must first crack and splinter, that's the distressing thing, before the genuine can appear in unadulterated form. I mean that personally and spiritually, not politically.

I've been presented with the voice.

Hans Scholl, letter dated 28 October 1941, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 163

## The Lie

What race of men untainted in their souls could try,  
This daily diet, taken year on year, the Lie?  
Solemn they rose, with garlands machines and ploughs to tie,  
Spoke of Freedom and of Bread and all, all, was a lie.  
Borrowing from heroic past, with eagle plumes they rushed on high,  
Evoking the Fathers to preen themselves and all, all was a lie.  
Through the streets endlessly banners marched by,  
Bells throbbed accord and all, all was a lie.  
The justice of 'dead' law they began to deny  
Instead called upon Life and all, all was a lie.  
Deserts should have blossomed! But salvation remained dry,  
The Promise unsatisfying. All, all was a lie.  
Blood still on their hands, wreathed urns they dared supply  
Sang fame to the Dead and all, all was a lie.  
Then in the depths of our hearts a fog crept nigh,  
Dripping, drop after drop, the poisonous Lie.  
So we appealed in Hell, strangled, choked by the Lie,  
Let the ray of destruction in Truth's presence die.

Werner Bergengruen, *Dies irae. Eine Dichtung*, München 1945, p. 7  
(written summer 1944, translation: Helen Barber)

We feel to be safe in God's hand, whatever may happen to us, we will accept any fate because we clearly know that whatever it may be, it will be His will. It is not easy to bear this, but with His help we will keep trying. We are not alone, but stand together in our faith and our prayers.

Willi Graf, letter from prison in Munich Stadelheim, dated 26 September 1943, translated from: *Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, p. 197

Even though May came in accompanied by rain, all the fields were bright with the loveliest green imaginable. A sunbeam pierced a little gap in the dark sea of cloud, and the world laughed and glittered in the light of heaven. I stood there marvelling and thought, Does God take us for fools, that he should light up the world for us with such consummate beauty in the radiance of his glory, in his honor? And nothing, on the other hand, but rapine and murder? Where does the truth lie? Should one go off and build a little house with flowers outside the windows and a garden outside the door and extol and thank God and turn one's back on the world and its filth?

Hans Scholl, letter dated 2 May 1941, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 112



Entry of the Führer

(Photo: DHM-Bildarchiv)

That all things are conflicting does not mean that man should be conflicting also. And yet, this is a notion which you encounter everywhere: We are put in this conflicting world and therefore we must comply with its rules. And strangely enough, you can often find this entirely unchristian attitude in so-called Christians. But how can you expect fate to grant victory to a righteous cause if there is hardly anybody who will wholly offer himself up to that righteous cause? (...) Do you think there are still people today who never tire of focusing their thoughts and desire wholly on one thing?

Sophie Scholl, letter to Fritz Hartnagel, dated 22 May 1940, translated from: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 177

I'm going with the awareness that I followed my deepest convictions and the truth. Therefore I can await the near hour of my death with a calm conscience.

Alexander Schmorell, letter to his parents on the day of his execution, 13 July 1943

This sacrifice (...) may fail, it may have no recognisable consequences in the workings of existence, it may get drowned in the darkness of obscurity – yet, none of these can cancel its true meaning.

It is finally made only before God, entrusted to His wisdom and given into His hand so that He may place it where He wishes in the great scheme of the world.

Romano Guardini, *Memorial Speech*, Munich 1945

In the darkness of the Russian winter, a photograph of his sister Anneliese reaches Willi. Upon receiving it, he writes to her on 30 December 1941:

"Your photo gives me great joy (...) and I had hardly thought it possible that a sisterly photo could bring such great joy. (...) it is simply wonderful in its radiating brightness. I have stood it next to the candle which gives me the light to write, and indeed, my environment has become more beautiful and radiant. I can already see me hang this photo somewhere visible in my quarters so that it may from time to time cast a small glow on the daily grey. (...) I must confess that I really did not remember you in this way; I never remembered so much clarity and innocence (...).



Willi Graf's sister Anneliese

The photograph, however, continues to stand next to me, not caring what is said about it. And quite rightly so, don't you think?

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 138-139

To his sister Anneliese, Russia, 1 February 1942:

"Many days and weeks have passed. One battles on - in the word's best sense - living a primitive life, but there's great danger of turning primitive in one's spiritual life too; that's what I fear most, even though I can no longer judge how far down I really have already gone. This will only become clear when I return to the other world. I would so much love to read and to read so many things, and to work a little - but that is as difficult here as anything."

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 148-149

To Marita Herfeldt, Russia, 4 March 1942:

"There is so little logic in this whole undertaking - that's what I find particularly depressing. Often I feel a strange unrest inside, and then I find myself unable to read an article in the newspaper through to the end - and that says quite a lot, doesn't it?"

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 150

In April 1942, Willi Graf is finally able to continue his studies of medicine in Munich. Here, a shared apartment in Siegfriedstrasse becomes the place where he finds the friendship again which he had experienced in the "Bündische Jugend".

## Siegfriedstrasse

"Siegfriedstrasse was Hermann Krings and Fritz Leist. In these unquiet times (...) it provided a point of calm, a place where you met people whom you could talk to. It was a spiritual home. (...) Without Siegfriedstrasse, we wouldn't have been as immune as we were to the spirit of the times, a spirit which you had to protect yourself from (...)."

Walter Kastner (1984/1986), translated from: Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 264



It was around this time, that Willi Graf met Hans Scholl in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Student's Company.

Diary, 13 June 1942

Discussion with Hans Scholl. Hope to meet him more often. (...)

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 37

## "Let us try to not only bear this cross but to love ..."

In July 1942, Willi Graf, Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, Hubert Furtwängler, and Jürgen Wittenstein are dispatched to the eastern front for "medical field training".

To Walter Kastner, Munich, 8 November 1942:

The circumstances of military life hardly affected our being together, and that made a great difference. (...) Sometimes, during those days, I was really under the impression of being on trip to Russia (...). We read together, we sang, we shared our food. And so, I can only give you a general idea of what has been happening during those last three months; it was a most stimulating time, and I think time will show the real meaning of this time together.

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 172

Diary, 30 September 1942:

"(...) I will try to work a little because it seems necessary, work with all my will. The circumstances shall not impress me much; after all they are always there and must be accepted."

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 61



Early in November 1942, the medical students return to Munich. Here, Willi Graf and his sister Anneliese move into an apartment in Mandlstrasse. Anneliese has decided against taking up a scholarship in Geneva, preferring to study in Munich with her brother.

## Active resistance

Does it make sense to put up active resistance? Willi Graf must come to a decision since his friends in Siegfriedstrasse disagree with the White Rose in this respect.

"Fritz [Leist] thought that the whole undertaking of the 'White Rose' was politically immature, hopeless, an assault destined to fail. (...) He thought it would make more sense politically, if he and his group survived the chaos and would then be mentally prepared for a new beginning."

Emil Martin (1984), translated from: Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 288

"Freedom of choice was definitely an attitude they all shared. (...) But the disparity of their choices weighed heavily on Willi. After all, this wasn't a sudden decision for him, or one that came out of a momentary feeling - it had been hanging in the air for a long time. So it was all the more painful for him to see that he would really have to bear his decision and all its implications entirely on his own, with only the lonely voice of his conscience to rely on, without further refuge or support."

Walter Kastner (1986), translated from: Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 288

Diary, 14 January 1943:

"(...) I feel this unrest inside of me again, the same as sometimes comes over me without me knowing its final causes. How much time passes considering my plan? Will it be the right choice? Sometimes, I'm convinced of it, at other times I doubt it. But I will take it upon me nevertheless, even if it proves to be ever so arduous."

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 99

Willi Graf greatly likes the sonnets of Reinhold Schneider. Schneider's poetry plays "surely an important role in motivating [him] to resist" (Anneliese Knoop-Graf/Inge Jens). "One of the poems ends with the words: 'And with the grace of veracity God will bless the days last fighters.'"

Doch auf dem tiefsten Grunde meiner Tage  
Seh' ich mein Bild und seh' es klarer werden,  
Mein ruhlos Sein, das war die Not auf Erden  
Und mein die dunkle Ahnung, die ich trage.

O Bild, das ich mit heißem Schmerz befrage,  
Du trägst die Spur unendlicher Beschwerden,  
Erhellst von Kriegen hochentflamnten Herden,  
Vom Blitz des Schwertes und vom Blitz der Waage.

Denn meiner Seele unbestandne Not  
War tief verborgen in verworfner Zeit,  
Und all ihr Leid, ich mußte ihm begegnen.

Groß war der Tag und heilig sein Gebot,  
Und mit der Gnade der Wahrhaftigkeit  
Wird Gott des Tages letzte Streiter segnen.

Reinhold Schneider, 1941



## Unity of The Person

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only."

(Jacob 1:22) - Quote in Willi Graf's diary, 1933

For him, the decision to resist means "to be a doer of the word. This was the fruit of his brooding and his understanding – a clear conception of the world, drawing a wide arc between reading Stifter on the one side and taking political action on the other, but without fault, without contradiction. His thoughts, his desires and his actions merged into one conclusive form."

Anneliese Knoop-Graf

Willi Graf actively participates in the leaflet campaigns. At Christmas 1942, he meets old friends for discussions, including Heinz and Willi Bollinger and Rudi Alt. Between 20 and 24 January 1943, he distributes the 5th leaflet among his circle of acquaintances in the Rhineland, in Saarbrücken and Freiburg. With Alexander Schmorell and Hans Scholl he ventures out at night to paint the walls of prominent buildings in the city centre of Munich with 'dissident' slogans. It is the second half of February, the days (and nights) when the 6th leaflet is being prepared.



The apartment in Mandlstrasse

On 18 February 1943 Willi Graf goes to hear the lecture of Kurt Huber. Traute Lafrenz and him leave early. On their way to the next lecture in the psychiatric clinic they meet Sophie and Hans Scholl, who is carrying a suitcase. They agree to meet in the afternoon.

Willi Graf spends the evening with the Luibles in Pasing. Around mid-night, he returns to the apartment in Mandlstrasse; his sister Anne-liese has no chance of warning him of the awaiting Gestapo. They arrest them both.

*"Let us try to not only bear  
this cross but to love ..."*

## In prison

Having spent seven months in prison in Munich Stadelheim, he writes home to his family in September 1943:

Shouldn't we be almost glad that we can take upon us a cross in this world that sometimes seems to go beyond what's humanly possible? In a way, it means to 'literally' follow Christ. Let us try to not only bear this cross but to love and try to live more fully and have faith in God's will. Then, the entire meaning will be fulfilled in this painful suffering. Death is not the end for us but a gateway, the door to true life. I am trying to become fully conscious of this truth and I pray for strength and God's blessing. Then, the daily things do not affect you as strongly, whatever they may look like. Fulfilment in life is not in them. But my love for Germany grows day by day, and I have a painful share in its fate and its great wounds.

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 194

After months of waiting and numerous interrogations from which the Gestapo hopes to glean information about conspirators, Willi Graf is executed in the afternoon of 12 October 1943 by guillotine.

Prison Munich Stadelheim, 1 August 1943:

"Dear Anneliese, please include 2-3 good poems (Hölderlin, Rilke, etc.) in your letter – I'd be so grateful."

translated from Willi Graf. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, p. 192

The following poem was among those she sent:

The Course of Life

You too wanted better things, but love  
forces all of us down. Sorrow bends us more  
forcefully, but the arc doesn't return to its  
point of origin without a reason.

Upwards or downwards! In holy Night,  
where mute Nature plans the coming days,  
doesn't there reign in the most twisted Orcus  
something straight and direct?

This I have learned. Never to my knowledge  
did you, all-preserving gods, like mortal  
masters, lead me providentially  
along a straight path.

The gods say that man should test  
everything, and that strongly nourished  
he be thankful for everything, and understand  
the freedom to set forth wherever he will.

Friedrich Hölderlin



# KURT HUBER



"... someone who has found his way home  
to the final freedom of the spirit"

## Childhood and youth

Kurt Huber is born to German parents on 24 October 1893 in Chur in the Grisons (Switzerland). The boy shows many talents from a very early age. The family home has much to offer by way of inspiration; his parents are teachers, they are musical-ly and literally gifted and open for anything cultural. Kurt feels particularly attracted to music, excelling at the piano and already composing as a young child. Music opens a door for him into the realms of the spiritual world. Moreover, he maintains an interest in physics and technology throughout his life. And finally, he is an arts person, a scholar at heart who is interested in history, literature and languages. After the premature death of his father in 1911, the family moves from Stuttgart, where Kurt spent his school days, to Munich.



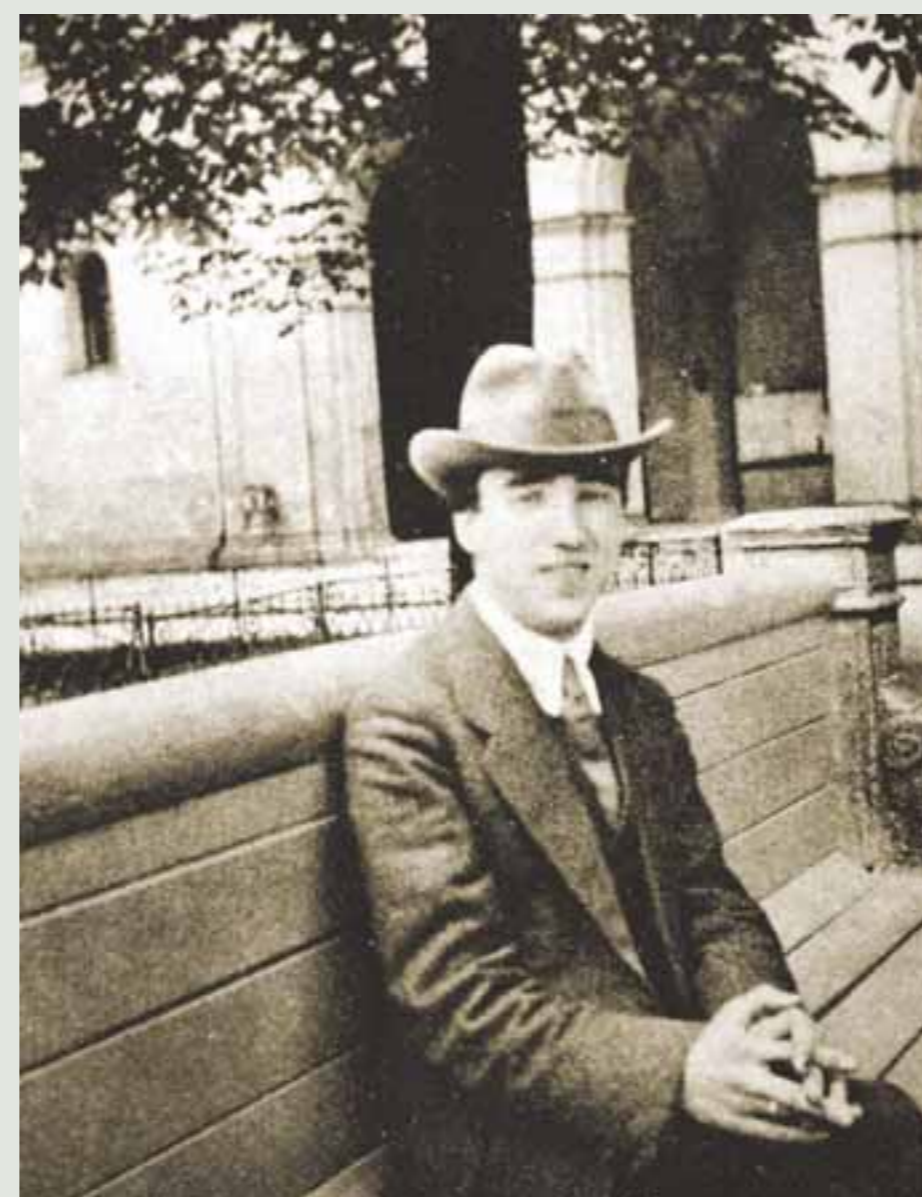
Kurt Huber aged ten

## Philosophy

He studies at the University of Munich and after completing his PhD and his postdoctoral lecturing qualification, he works there as a tutor in philosophy, psychology and musicology. As the reports of many of his students show, the academic training and education of young people is not an obligation for him but a matter of the heart. Hermine Maier, a former student, remembers:

After only a few lessons it was possible to understand his way of thinking and the deeper aims of his nature. He was a critical thinker whose nature submitted to a strict logic. In his lectures you could get the impression that all this wasn't about a presentation of philosophy and the logic in it but about its actual creation in a very original way. (...) He didn't elegantly solve the problems for his students - rather, he tackled each question so extensively and thoroughly that his students arrived at the point where they recognised for themselves the 'unresolvedness' of a problem and began to think about the open question in the individual way of independent thinkers.

His thinking is not static. It is a process, a continuous search for truth, and in no way is it abstract and isolated from real life. Kurt Huber is convinced that as a philosopher he ought to live what he teaches. His students feel that too. Hermine Maier calls him a "teacher of deeper thought" whose teachings gained practical significance for life.



Kurt Huber as a young PhD graduate in front of the University of Munich in 1917

His research focuses on the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and he will continue writing his biography of Leibniz even while in prison, though time will be too short to bring it to completion. Leibniz's merging of mystic experience and rational insight, his idea that order and harmony in the world are rooted in number, and the notion that the individual is the fulfilment of an idea of God - all these are aspects of Leibniz's thought which Huber "approves of since his own thought, well, even aspects of his personality, were akin to those of Leibniz" (Inge Köck). Leibniz personifies the type of universal scholar whom Huber strives to emulate.

In the preface to the biography he writes:



In the 1930s

The presentation (...) investigates the artistically free development and growth of thought from an incredibly rich life, as well as the difficulties and urges of a world view that strives for ultimate clarity but submits to the strict discipline of reason in order to master the wealth of life perceived. The heroic, undespairing battle for the meaningfulness of the world as a whole is the philosophical deed of a great German and European in a time of the worst humiliation of our people - from this we must draw knowledge and learn.

## Folk song research

Huber's most important field of research, however, is that of folk songs. In 1925, he begins to write down and analyse folk songs in Bavarian villages and he is soon considered to be a leading international authority in this field. The composer Carl Orff, who lives near him at the time, learns of many folk songs through Huber. Apart from their artistic and scientific collaboration, the two men share in a deep friendship.



At his desk in Gräfelfing

Huber's articles show that he does not only have musical and psychological expertise but also a deep sensitivity for the humanity which folk songs transport and express. In 1934, he writes:

"Only from the spiritual point of view, which finds its expression in the folk song at all times and in all places as something that is always different and yet consistent, are we able to understand the living types of folk song as the special forms of expression in which it lives, grows and dies.

The simple wild flower lives on its patch of soil for the time it is given - in this way it embraces life and death in nature. But its seed, wherever it falls on fertile ground, may take root and bloom anew."

What drives him to make folk songs the focus of his research? Without any doubt, folk culture means more to him than simply an object of scientific research. He thinks that in folk music, which he gets to know on his numerous research trips through upper Bavaria, the Balkans, southern France and Spain, it is possible to touch what is genuine and original in the soul of the people. And indeed he allows himself to be touched, as his colleague Kiem Pauli reports:

As we got up [after an evening during which Huber had noted down the songs of Tyrolean women], we were welcomed by a beautiful morning. After breakfast, which I had prepared for everybody, we shared a farewell which I will never forget. Professor Kurt Huber and I had walked about one hundred metres when the girls yodelled after us. Professor Huber said: "Quick, Pauli, some paper!" and then he wrote down the yodel in basso continuo, tears of emotion running down his cheeks - the chords echoed back from the mountains and it was as if all nature had joined in the song. (...) As we walked on, the most splendid melodies followed us, all of which Huber wrote down. And then, slowly, silence came in and two blissful people walked silently, next to each other, through the valley.

# KURT HUBER

... someone who has found his way home  
to the final freedom of the spirit"

Culture and national traditions are Huber's major ties with Germany and he feels that he shares responsibility for the fate of his fatherland. He is a cultural patriot.

Initially, there are indeed points of contact between his ideas and National Socialist concepts, such as the aim of strengthening the national rootedness in "blood and soil." But while National Socialist folk song researchers chiefly aim at showing the superiority of German folk song, Huber identifies the European connections between the folk song traditions. And while the former consider the "Horst-Wessel-Lied" (a notorious Nazi song) to be the epitome of German folk song, Huber stresses the inseparable nature of German national traditions and Christian culture:



Hiking

Where (...) German national tradition has survived to this day in a living and unspoiled manner, it is embedded in a certain mental attitude – the Christian attitude. (...) Whether Catholic or Protestant – to this day Christian man continues to be the upholder and keeper of true, ancient German folk tradition.

And true, unspoiled 'Germanness' reveals itself in both these major forms of grassroots, folk-experienced Christianity. The true significance of this fact cannot be emphasised enough. German traditions have only survived to this day in places where Christ is alive in the people. They faded and continue to fade to the same extent as the Christian faith. German national tradition cannot be brought to life without Christ. Without Christ it will fail, nor will it ever be possible to fill the absence of this natural inheritance of ours with surrogates dug up from a heathen, prehistoric past. The natural, German tradition of the historically tangible past has been the tradition of a people Christian at heart – and that has been so for the last one thousand years. Robbing it of this religious character will destroy it utterly.

With these ideas, Huber was in clear opposition to the National Socialist endeavours of replacing faith in Christ with faith in the Führer, of substituting Christian traditions with National Socialist festivals, and of branding the challenge to love one's enemies as an impossible, ridiculous demand. As a consequence, his hopes of being called to Berlin as director of the newly founded folk song archive went up in smoke.

## Family

People who were close to him described Kurt Huber as a warm-hearted person who, thanks to his intelligent sense of humour, was always



Kurt Huber with his children

a welcome guest. Yet, he is also very quick-tempered and very sensitive to injustices. To his children he is a very strict but loving father. Once, during a severe thunderstorm which the family weathers in an attic apartment, his little daughter Birgit begins to panic. Huber picks her up, takes her to the open window to look at the sky, and says, deeply touched, "Look, isn't the world wonderful!" His daughter's fear of thunderstorms is cured.

## Active resistance

Huber's decision to put up active resistance has its roots in a long time of suffering which increasingly brings him into an inner opposition to the National Socialist state. The growing rigidity of intellectual life in Germany, the dissolution of the rule of law, the abolition of freedom in teaching and research, and finally the growing number of whispered reports of atrocities committed by the German occupation army in the east – all these intensify his bitterness and rage.

It is at this point in time in the summer of 1942 that he meets Hans Scholl during a musical and literary evening. Huber's lectures have already become a meeting place for dissident students. And soon, further contacts develop – with Alexander Schmorell, for example. Yet, Huber will only learn late in 1942 that Schmorell and Scholl are the authors of the "Leaflets of the White Rose".

The defeat of the German army at Stalingrad has a deep impact on him; the futility of the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers, the hypocrisy of the propaganda which tries to turn the catastrophe into an act of heroism. Soon, he becomes the author of the last leaflet of the White Rose. On 18 February 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl distribute it inside the central building of the University of Munich. They are caught in the act. Only a few days later, on 27 February, the Gestapo arrest Kurt Huber in his apartment.

In prison, he continues to work on his typology of folk songs as well as on his biography of Leibniz. In addition, he writes poems which reflect his attempts at coming to terms with his fate.

What is man if he  
Though struck by evil forces,  
Though uprooted by sorrow,  
Did not ripen to goodness in the end?  
If He is not man, he would be  
A plaything of nature,  
But learning in suffering  
He slowly feels the trace of God.

What is God, if He  
Did not also create evil,  
To try man's heart  
For its godliness?  
He would not be God, if He  
had  
Not always forgiven man.  
Only grace will guide man's  
being  
To higher harmonies.

On 19 April 1943, Kurt Huber and twelve other defendants, including Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf, are tried by Roland Freisler, the notorious president of the 'People's Court'. At the closing of the trial, the defendants are allowed to make final statements. Huber ends his speech with the words:

My actions and my intentions will be justified in the inevitable course of history; such is my firm faith. I hope to God that the spiritual forces, which will justify my actions, will in time step forth from my own people. I have done as I did upon the prompting of an inner voice. I will suffer the consequences, as expressed in beautiful words by Johann Gottlieb Fichte:

And thou shalt act as if  
On thee and on thy deed  
Depended the fate of all Germany  
And thou alone must answer for it.

Like Willi Graf and Alexander Schmorell, he is sentenced to death. For three months he waits for his execution. On 13 July 1943, his last scientific manuscript breaks off – on the same sheet he addresses his family:



Kurt Huber's desk  
in Gräfelfing

While I was working for you today, I have received the news which I have been expecting for so long. (...) My dear ones, don't cry for me – I am happy and secure. The alpine roses, your last loving greetings from my beloved mountains, stand in front of me faded. In two hours I will enter the true mountainous freedom which I have been fighting for through all my life.

## Munich - "Capital of the Movement"

In 1935, Munich was dubbed "Capital of the Movement," a name which expressed the importance of the city to the Nazi regime. Munich had been the "birthplace" of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and the city remained the seat of the party headquarters and of many party organisations. The gargantuan expansion plans which the Nazis had for their "Capital of the Movement" were only completed in part due to the war. Among the buildings erected under that scheme were the "Führer Building" and the "NSDAP Administrative Building" in the "Party Quarters" at Königsplatz.

Munich was also a favourite location for NSDAP parades and events such as for the elaborate cult that had been created around the sixteen Nazis who had died in the "March on the Feldherrnhalle" on 9 November 1923. Two "Temples of Honour" were built for these "martyrs" of the attempted coup on Königsplatz.



Parade in Königsplatz by the "Temples of Honour"

[Photo: Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Bildersammlung 3. Reich, Vol. 2 No. 244]



Great German Art Exhibition at the House of German Art

[Photo: City Archive Munich, photographer: Huhle]

## Cultural life in the "Capital of German Art"

The Nazis also made Munich their "Capital of German Art". Their newly erected "House of German Art" was home to paintings and sculptures which mirrored the taste and ideology of the rulers. At the same time, they had modern contemporary art removed from museums all over Germany. Lilo Ramdohr reports on a visit to an exhibition at the "House of German Art" with Alexander Schmorell: "Everything was pro-Hitler's regime. I saw how Alex kept grinning. You had to be really careful not to say anything."

As in many other Germany cities, the Nazis also staged a burning of books in Munich. At the beginning of the summer term 1933, students and party organisations burned the works by such authors as Bertolt Brecht, Sigmund Freud, Erich Kästner, Erich Maria Remarque and Stefan Zweig. Books by authors whom the Nazis despised were only available through private contacts, from friends or from abroad. For the students of the White Rose such contacts included Carl Muth and the bookseller Söhngen.

In spite of Nazi censorship, Munich saw a considerable number of high-quality theatre performances and concerts during the first years of war. The diaries and letters of the friends of the White Rose bear witness to the importance of frequent attendance of concerts and performances.



Burning of books, 1933

[Photo: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich]

## The situation of the civilians during the Second World War

During the war, food and many convenience goods could only be bought with coupons. As early as 1941, the great shortage in textiles and household goods was being felt. In 1942, cuts in food rations caused great annoyance among the people. The result was an increasing frequency of hoarding trips and black marketeering. For the students of the White Rose, these conditions also meant that it was very difficult to procure paper, envelopes and stamps for the distribution of their leaflets.

Soon, the mayor of Munich, Karl Fiehler, who had been appointed in 1933, took brutal action against the Jewish population. Between November 1941 and March 1943, he had the majority of Munich's Jews deported to extermination camps in the occupied east.

The first major air raid on Munich on 19/20 September 1942 claimed 149 lives; more than 4,000 buildings were damaged. The citizens of Munich were alarmed by the raid, and some of them even dared to pen harsh criticism of the National Socialist leaders in anonymous letters. Further raids took place on 21 December 1942 and on 9/10 March 1943.

The strain of war-related extra work (e.g. in the expanding armaments industry), poor supplies, the fear of air raids and the worries about relatives at the front brought about an increasing discontentment among Munich's population.



Shopping 1941

[Photo: City Archive Munich, photographer: Nortz]



Destruction after the air raid of 19/20 September 1942

[Photo: City Archive Munich, photographer: Nortz]

## Protest against the Nazis, resistance and persecution

After Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, the Nazis had many of their opponents imprisoned. The prisoners were interrogated, sometimes beaten and even tortured by the "Secret State Police" (GESTAPO) in Munich's Wittelsbacher Palais. The prison in Munich Stadelheim served as the central remand prison and detention centre for political prisoners from all over Bavaria. It was here, that the death sentences of the friends of the White Rose were carried out. Moreover, opponents of National Socialism were always in danger of being sent to the concentration camp in Dachau near Munich.

Several groups and individuals offered active resistance to the Nazi regime in Munich such as the conservative group allied to Baron von Harnier, the communist Hartwimmer-Olschewski Group, the social democrat Hermann Frieb, Father Rupert Mayer and Georg Elser who carried out an assassination attempt on Hitler.

When in 1941 an act was passed to remove all crucifixes from Bavarian schools, there were angry protests from all over the region which stopped it coming into force.



Wittelsbacher Palais

[Foto: Stadtarchiv München]



Dachau concentration camp

[Photo: Bundesarchiv, shelf mark: image 152-23-22A]

During a rally at Munich's Ludwig-Maximilians University on 13 January 1943, the gauleiter (Nazi district leader) and Bavarian minister for education and cultural affairs, Paul Giesler, called on all female students to give birth to a child for the Führer instead of studying. The result were protests among the students. The last leaflet of the White Rose referred to the protests. "That is a beginning of the struggle for our free self-determination - without which intellectual and spiritual values cannot be created."



*"Better to suffer intolerable pain  
than to vegetate insensibly."*

## Parents

Sophie Scholl is born on 9 May 1921 the third child of Robert and Magdalena Scholl in Forchtenberg near Künzelsau. Two days before her arrest in February 1943, Sophie describes to her boyfriend, Fritz Hartnagel, the deep security which she always experienced at home:

Being there [at home] always does me good, though I don't get much time for personal activities, if only because my father's so pleased when I turn up and so taken aback when I leave, and because Mother shows her concern for me in a thousand little ways. There's something wonderful to me about such an altruistic love. I regard it as one of my life's greatest blessings. (...) However, I only feel really secure when I recognize the presence of selfless love, and that's comparatively rare.

Letter, dated 16 February 1943, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 278



Playing in Ulm, Sophie Scholl (at right)

## Nature

The immediate contact to nature holds a strong fascination for Sophie throughout her life, no matter whether it is meadows, trees, cliffs or water. Her sister Inge reports:

"The Forchtenberg storm drains were in bad repair, and in the spring were often flooded. What gave the grown-ups real headaches meant incomparable pleasure for us children. My father bought stilts for us, and we would cross the flooded streets on them, proud as little kings who had conquered another piece of land."

In: Hermann Vinke: *The Short Life of Sophie Scholl*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984, p. 10

At eighteen, Sophie writes in a school essay:

"I can never look at a limpid stream without at least dangling my feet in it; in the same way, I cannot walk past a meadow in May. Oblivious to everything else, I stumble down the slope, luxuriant in its flowers, and am knee-deep amid luscious grasses and flowers. Only now can I see all those little beasties living down below the leaves. A tiny beetle enthusiastically puts leg before leg (dear God, six little legs, and not once does he confuse them!) in order to climb up my finger all the way to the tip. And when I turn my hand, he enthusiastically climbs back the same way. So I stop teasing him and put my forefinger close enough to a buttercup for him to step across and be on his way. It's true I cannot actually see it, but I imagine his breast rising in a sigh of relief. And he is not the only one. All kinds of meadow denizens volunteer to scrabble all over me, on my forehead and nose, up my legs, down my neck. Today I gladly suffer all this, in fact I feel sort of honoured that they treat me with such distinction. I lie in the grass, quite still, my arms spread, my knees raised, and am happy."

The Short Life of Sophie Scholl, p. 27-29



Sophie Scholl

## Ulm

In Ulm, the family initially lives in an apartment in Olgastrasse rented from Jewish owners (1932) before moving to Münsterplatz in 1933. After Hitler's seizure of power, the older brother and sisters wholeheartedly join the Hitler Youth in Ulm, Sophie will later do likewise. The "closed ranks of marching youth with banners waving, eyes fixed straight ahead, keeping time to drumbeat and song", (Inge Scholl) hold a fascination, even though their father voices concern as regards Hitler. "We felt we belonged to a large, well-organized body that honored and embraced everyone, from the ten-year-old to the grown man. We felt part of a process, a movement, that transformed the masses into a people. We believed that whatever bored us or gave us a feeling of distaste would disappear itself."

Students against Tyranny, pp. 6-7



The house at Münsterplatz (centre), where the Scholls lived



May festival in Ulm

Though Sophie Scholl gets promoted to the rank of a group leader, she distances herself inwardly more and more. She does not understand why her Jewish friend is not allowed to enter the "Bund Deutscher Mädel" (BDM - the Nazi youth organisation for girls):



Sophie and her friend Erika

"Why is Luise, who has blond hair and blue eyes, not allowed to become a member, while I with dark hair and dark eyes am a member of the BDM?" And why can't we read Heinrich Heine at BDM social nights just because he was Jewish?"

When Sophie's brother Hans withdraws from the Hitler Youth after his participation in the Nuremberg Rally in 1935, turning to the 'bündische' group "dj. 1.11" instead, this group becomes an important point of reference for Sophie too. Although, as a girl, she cannot participate in their meetings and trips, through this new circle of friends she gets to know the songs of other peoples and the works of authors whose books have been forbidden. Otl Aicher, a classmate of her younger brother Werner, introduces her to Christian classics such as St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

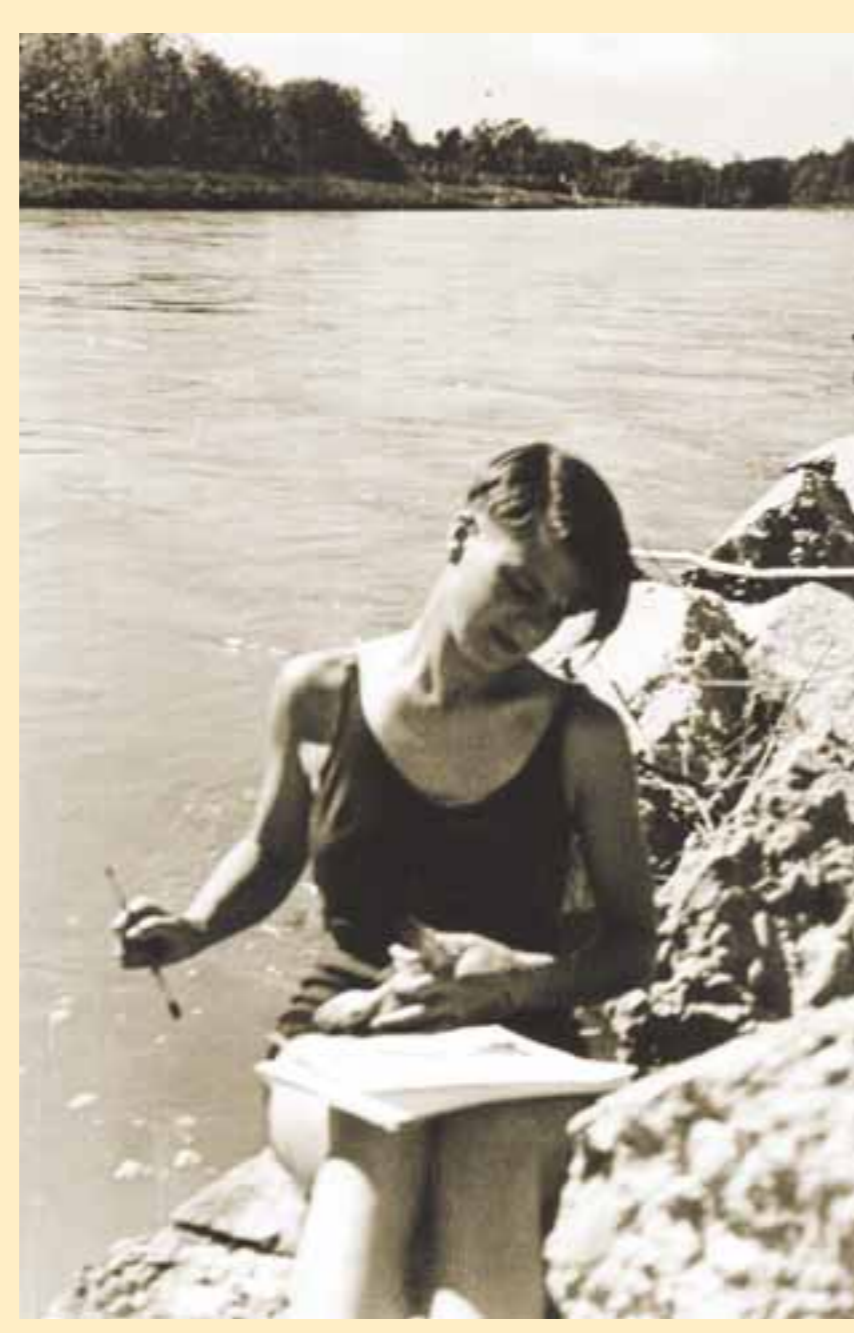
*"Better to suffer intolerable pain  
than to vegetate insensibly."*

## Duties and Interests

At home "there's always plenty to do, what with laundry, window cleaning, etc." (Letter to Fritz Hartnagel, dated 6 October 1939). During her last two years at school, Sophie pays just as much attention as necessary to maintain her levels. Though she often appears indifferent in class, her biology teacher Dr Fries remembers that she always has the right answer at the ready when asked. Apart from her duties in household and school, Sophie follows her numerous interests whenever time allows. These include going to theatre performances and concerts, swimming, reading, writing letters, making music (she plays the piano), and most important of all, drawing and painting. In a letter dated 8 July 1938, she writes:

"I don't have a sense of vocation or anything like that, but anyone who wants to be an artist must become a human being first and foremost. From the bottom up. I'm going to try and work on myself. It's very difficult."

Letter to her sister Inge, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 28



Sophie, painting by the river bank



Dancer, Drawing by Sophie Scholl

## War

Her distance to the Nazi regime continues to grow, owing to political events such as the discrimination of fellow Jewish citizens or the occupation of the Sudeten in Czechoslovakia, but even more importantly through personal experience in her family. Here, the arrest of her brother and sister because of "subversive activities" in the illegal youth movement "Bündische Jugend" in 1937 figures prominently. When, in September 1939, Hitler invades Poland and the war begins, Sophie makes her friends who are drafted promise to never shoot. Yet, she knows very well that this promise can never be kept. She suffers from being unable to make a clear statement against the war anywhere else than at home. One month after her school leaving exams, half a year after the beginning of the war, Sophie Scholl writes to Fritz Hartnagel:

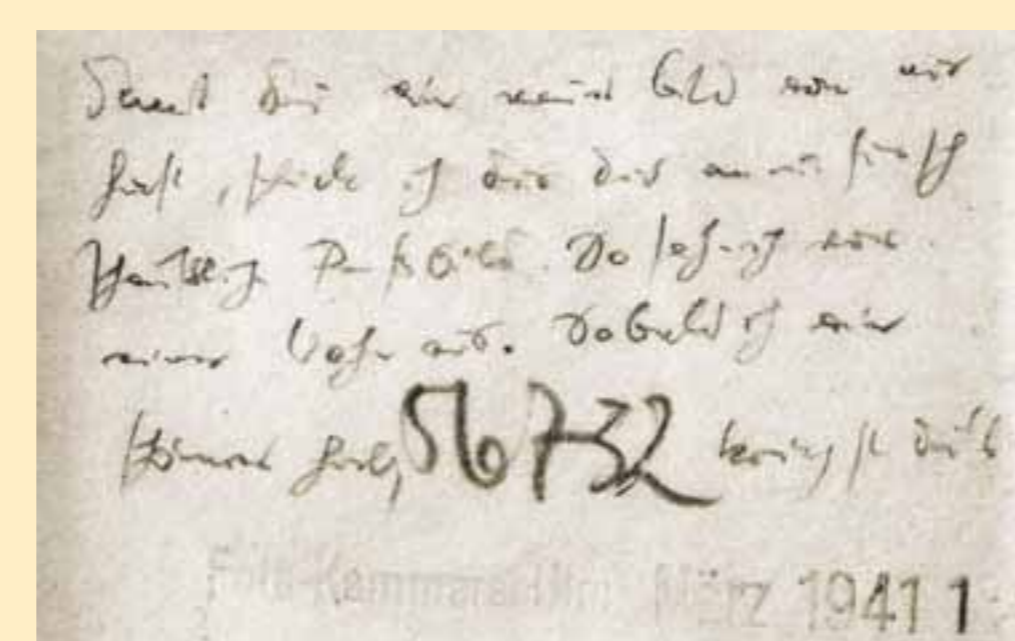
There are times when I dread the war and feel like giving up hope completely. I hate thinking about it, but politics are almost all there is, and as long as they're so confused and nasty, it's cowardly to turn your back on them. (...) It makes me nervous, being on edge all the time. On edge everywhere including home, where work goes on till after dark, and father's in an irritable mood, and where I never get an hour's peace and quiet. (I'm exaggerating again. I do sometimes, but not often.)

Letter, dated 9 April 1940, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, pp. 65-66

Passport photo (taken in March 1941), which Sophie Scholl sends to her boyfriend Fritz Hartnagel at the front. On the back, she writes:



"I send you this so that you have a new photo of me; I think it's dreadful ... As soon as I have a new one, I'll send it to you."

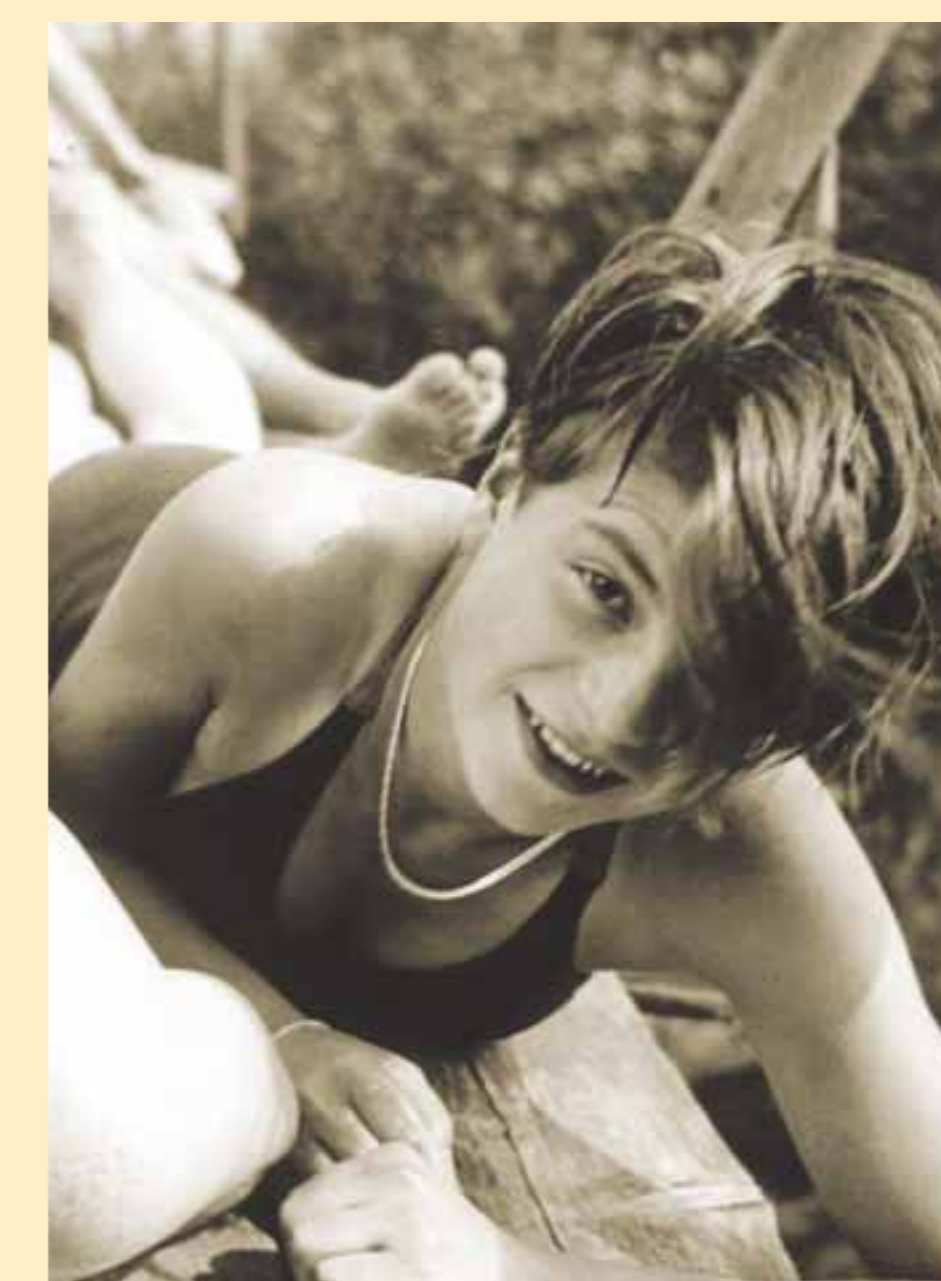


Often, she would rather escape into a dream world. But she knows that this is not a valid alternative.

My dear Fritz,

We're having some really glorious early summer weather. If I had time, I'd stretch out beside the Iller, swim, laze, and try to think of nothing but the beauty around me. It isn't easy to banish all thoughts of war. Although I don't know much about politics and have no ambition to do so, I do have some idea of right and wrong, because that has nothing to do with politics and nationality. And I could weep at how mean people are, in high-level politics as well, and how they betray their fellow creatures, perhaps for the sake of personal advantage. Isn't it enough to make a person lose heart sometimes? Often my one desire is to live on a Robinson Crusoe island. I'm sometimes tempted to regard mankind as a terrestrial skin disease. But only sometimes, when I'm very tired, and people who are worse than beasts loom large in my mind's eye. But all that matters fundamentally is whether we come through, whether we manage to hold our own among the majority, whose sole concern is self-interest – those who approve of any means to their own ends. It's so overwhelming, that majority, you have to be bad to survive at all. Only one person has ever managed to go straight to God, probably, but who still looks for him nowadays.

Letter, dated 29 May 1940, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, pp. 68-70



She becomes even more aware of the gift of nature against the background of war and turmoil:

There are two roses on my bedside table. Strings of tiny beads have formed on the stems and the foliage, which hangs down into the water. What a pure and beautiful sight, and what chill indifference it conveys. To think that it exists. That trees simply go on growing, and grain and flowers, and that hydrogen and oxygen have combined to form such wonderful, tepid summer raindrops. There are times when this comes home to me with such force that I'm absolutely filled with it and have no room left for a single thought. All exists, although human beings behave so inhumanly, not to say bestially, in the midst of creation. That's a great blessing in itself.

Letter to Fritz Hartnagel, dated 17 June 1940, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 73



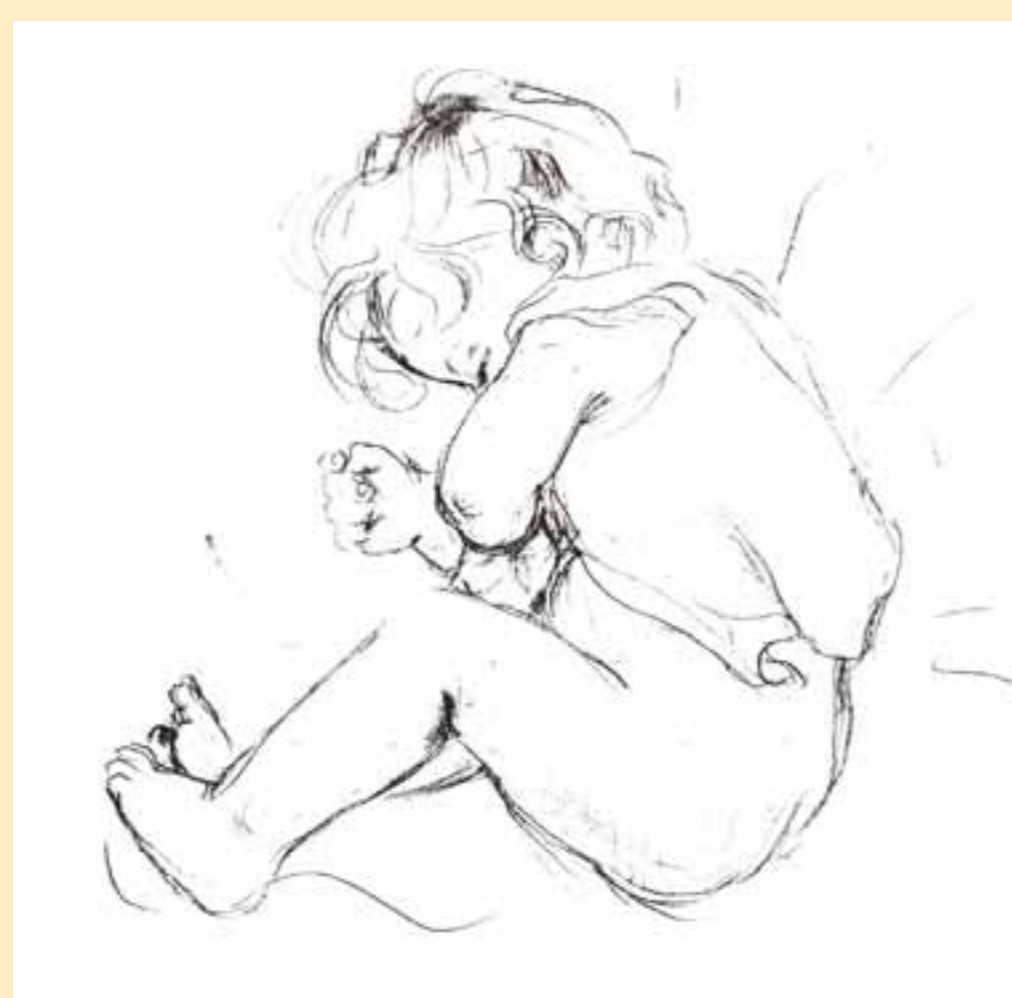
*"Better to suffer intolerable pain  
than to vegetate insensibly."*

## War Relief Service

Before taking up her studies at university, Sophie must do one year of "Kriegshilfsdienst" (War Relief Service). She wants to use this time for training as kindergarten teacher at the Fröbel Seminar in Ulm. Looking back at the first two months of her work there, she writes to Fritz:

I'm more at home at the kindergarten these days. I've grown very fond of many of the children, and it makes me happy when they're nice to me. It's only now that I see how superficial my attitude to children really is. You need more than the kind of emotion children so readily arouse. I now realize what infinite love for all living things you need to be able to cope with those unpredictable, often spiteful, often heart-warming little childish creatures. Few people possess as much love as that, but one can cultivate it.

Letter, dated 8 July 1940, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, pp. 79-80



Dieterle (left);  
Drawings by Sophie Scholl, circa 1940

Sophie is greatly disappointed when she learns at the end of the training year that it will not count in lieu of National Labour Service. So she spends the next half year at the Labour Service camp in Krauchenwies near Sigmaringen. Her first impression is summarised in a diary entry:

I arrived here four days ago. I'm sharing a dormitory with ten other girls. I often have to close my ears to their chatter in the evening. Every time I join in, it seems like a concession, and I regret it. I've managed to stay pretty much in the background so far, thanks to my shyness. I wish I could keep it up, but I'm forever catching myself showing off in little ways. It's awful, my craving for recognition. (...) It's destructive of mental harmony.

Diary entry, dated 10 April 1941, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 126



Sophie (bottom right) at the party  
for her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in Krauchenwies

Apart from letters from home ("I always count my time from letter distribution to letter distribution"), it is her nightly reading which helps her not to lose heart. Writing to her parents and her sister Inge, she says:

I'm very grateful for the books. We're forbidden to have any of our own (even Bibles had to be sent home), but the supervisor merely told me to put them away in my locker. (...) I haven't made any special friends here, though I'm on fairly good terms with everyone. I'm quite happy about that, not having to fritter away my time with this person or that.

Letter to her parents and her sister Inge, dated 25 April 1941,  
in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 135

At nights, while the others are cracking jokes, I read St. Augustine.  
(Diary entry, dated 10 April 1941)

I've found a number of passages in St. Augustine that can serve as a reply to Oti's letter. I skim over a lot of things or forget them as soon as I've read them. But some things seem to supply an answer, and I'm immensely pleased about that. (Diary entry, 1 May 1941)

At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 137



Sophie at the National Labour Service camp  
in Krauchenwies



Ulm Cathedral

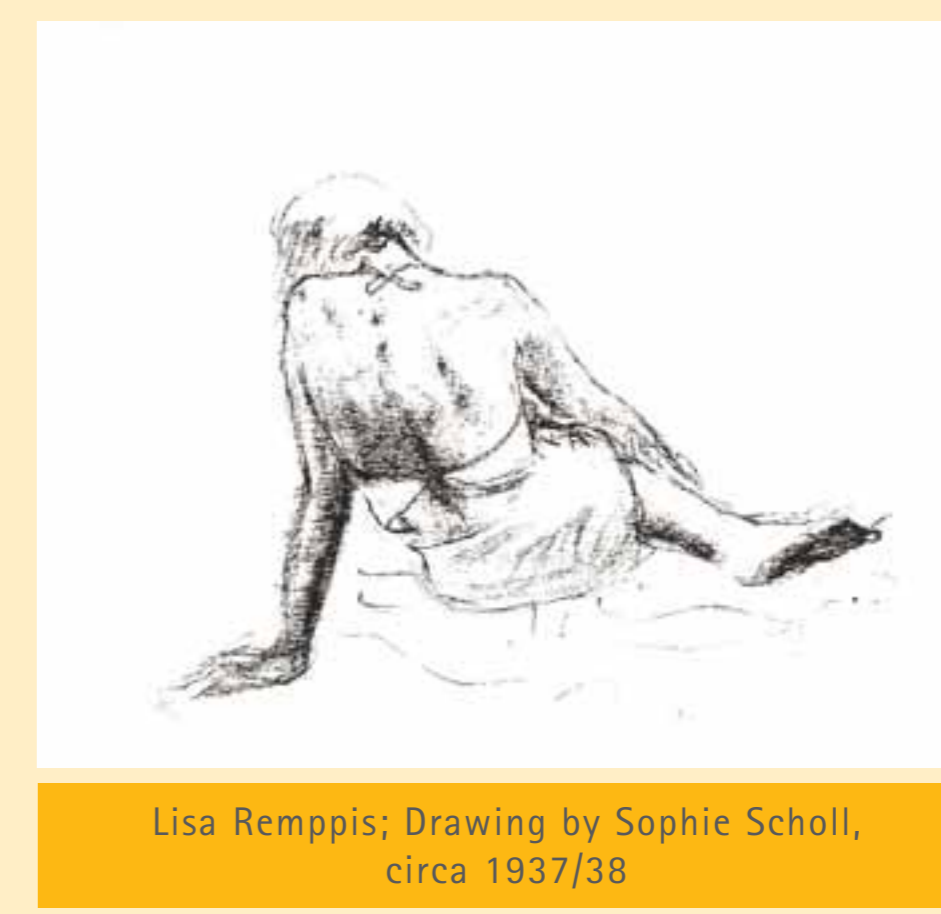
Apart from the lack of friendship, Sophie suffers the cold and the poor food at Krauchenwies. The situation becomes bearable only in early June 1941, when the "Labour Maids" are sent to do field service. Sophie enjoys the work in the fields, far away from the drill of the commander in the camp. Though despising the "crazes" of the other girls, she has decorated her locker door with a few photographs, including a photo of the Ulm Cathedral and photos of her family.

Only towards the end of her time at the Labour Service does she find a true friend:

If it can be arranged, I'm going to Krauchenwies church this evening with an (...) girl from Thuringia. There are some four-handed pieces by Handel and Bach we want to play on the organ. (...) Those are red-letter occasions for me, (...). How lovely it is to play and sing in the church (which I'm gradually coming to understand).

Letter to Lisa Remppis, dated 23 August 1941, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 147

As during the first weeks in Krauchenwies, Sophie keeps a diary during her time in Blumberg, where she works as a kindergarten teacher for another six months after Labour Service. Inspired by reading St. Augustine and Blaise Pascal, her entries turn more and more into a dialogue with God:



Lisa Remppis; Drawing by Sophie Scholl,  
circa 1937/38

The heart loses its way amid these petty commotions and forgets its great homeward route. Unprepared and given over to futile, abject trifles, the heart may be caught unawares when the time comes, having squandered the one great joy for the sake of little ones. I realize that, but my heart does not. It dreams on incorrigibly, lulled to sleep by forces that trouble me, torn between desire and melancholy. All that I'm left with is melancholy, incapacity, importance, and a slender hope. However stubbornly my heart may cling to its treasures, be it only out of love for the sweet life, wrest me away against my will, because I'm too weak to do so myself; turn all my pleasures sour, make me wretched, make me suffer before I dream my salvation away.

Diary entry, autumn 1941, in: *At the Heart of the White Rose*, p. 171

*"Better to suffer intolerable pain  
than to vegetate insensibly."*

Sophie Scholl isn't a dreamer. When in the winter of 1941/42 the German population is called to generously donate warm woollen clothes for the soldiers at the eastern front, she is uncompromising.

"We won't give. Whether at this moment it's German soldiers who freeze to death or Russians makes no difference; it's all equally bad. We have to lose the war. If we donate woollens now, we help prolong it."

The Short Life of Sophie Scholl, p. 78



## Prayer

At around the same time, her spiritual struggle intensifies:

I visited the church on Saturday afternoon, ostensibly to play the organ. It was absolutely empty. It's a colorful little chapel. I tried to pray, I knelt and tried to pray, but even as I did so I thought: Better hurry, so you can get up before someone comes. I wasn't afraid of strangers seeing me on my knees, but I was afraid Hildegard might walk in, so I couldn't disclose my innermost thoughts. That's probably wrong, probably a false sense of shame. And that's why I hurried through my prayer and got up just the same as I'd knelt down. I wasn't ready - I was simply trying to force something.

Diary entry, Blumberg, 4 November 1941, in: At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 173

I decided to pray in church every day, so that God won't forsake me. Although I don't yet know God and feel sure that my conception of him is utterly false, he'll forgive me if I ask him. If I can love him with all my soul, I shall lose my distorted view of him.

When I look at the people around me, and also at myself, I feel awed by humanity because God came down to earth for its sake. On the other hand, this is what always strikes me as most incomprehensible. Yes, what I understand least about God is his love. But what if I didn't know about it!

O Lord, I need so badly to pray, to ask.

Yes, one should always bear in mind, when dealing with other people, that God became man on their account. To think that one feels too good to condescend to many of them! What arrogance! Where on earth did I get it from?

Diary entry, dated 12 February 1942, in: At the Heart of the White Rose, pp. 191-192

And in the summer of 1942, she writes in her diary:

If I could only once call you father, but I can hardly address you as "YOU". I do so [as one that speaks] to a great unknown. I know that you'll accept me if I'm sincere, and that you'll hear me if I cling to you. Teach me to pray. Better to suffer intolerable pain than to vegetate insensibly. Better to be parched with thirst, better to pray for pain, pain, and more pain, than to feel empty, and to feel so without truly feeling at all. That I mean to resist.

Diary entry, dated 29 June 1942, in: At the Heart of the White Rose, pp. 207-208

But my soul is hungry, and, oh, no book can assuage that hunger.

Diary entry, dated 12 December 1941, in: At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 178

## Munich

In May 1942, Sophie can finally begin her studies of biology and philosophy at the University of Munich. Immediately, she is introduced to the friends of her brother Hans, whom she spends her spare time with as often as possible.

A few weeks after her arrival in Munich, the first leaflet of the White Rose appears at the university. It is uncertain, at which point in time Sophie learned who its authors were. What is certain is that she participates in the nightly discussions at Studio Eickemeyer. The time she spends with her brother and friends in Munich is intense. When they are despatched to the eastern front for "medical training in the field", she finds it hard to say goodbye.

Hans went off to Russia last week with all the other people I've made friends with over the past few weeks and months. I still preserve such a vivid recollection of every little farewell word and gesture. I'd never have believed I could become so attached to them all, especially Hans.

Letter to Lisa Remppis, dated 27 July 1942, in: At the Heart of the White Rose, p. 209

In August, her father is sentenced to four months in prison for calling Hitler "a great scourge of God" in front of an employee. Sometimes, Sophie gets close to the prison at night, playing the famous tune "Die Gedanken sind frei" ("Our thoughts freely flower") on her flute. For two months, she has to work in an armament factory in Ulm which provides badly needed supplies for the front.

Early in November 1942, the medical students return from Russia to Munich, unharmed. In December, Sophie moves in with Hans at Franz-Joseph-Str. 13. In mid-January, the 5<sup>th</sup> leaflet appears. Sophie takes it to Augsburg, Stuttgart and Ulm, having acquired the envelopes and stamps beforehand. Through Susanne Hirzel, her friend from her school-days in Ulm, she can win over Susanne's brother Hans for their cause.



Hans Scholl and ...



... Alexander Schmorell. Drawings by Sophie Scholl

On 18 February 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl are discovered by a janitor at the university while laying out leaflets. Four days later, they are both sentenced to death. Sophie takes the sentence calmly. While in prison, she says to her cell mate:

Such a fine, sunny day - and I have to go. But how many are dying on the battlefield in these days, how many young promising lives ... What does my death matter if through us thousands of people will be stirred to action and awakened?

Inge Scholl, translated from: Students against Tyranny, p. 56



"... a time in which one must search for and find resonance in each other"

## friends

the friend is the only one who understands you and supports you when the whole world has turned away from you. the friend is the external model of one's own personality; against him one articulates one's growth and one's self-control. the friend allows for staying in touch with oneself. he facilitates the questioning and the finding of answers. he who is without friend will collapse in on himself.

Otl Aicher, translated from *Innenseiten des Kriegs*, p. 39

### Willi Graf in a letter to August Sahn, a friend from the catholic youth association Bund Neudeutschland, 22 May 1940:

It is simply such that the things we did together in the past shaped what was possible in life, and the knowledge of it shines out every day.

translated from Willi Graf: *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, p. 326

### Sophie Scholl to Lisa Remppis, 13 April 1941:

I got a very nice letter of Hans. I think it would be grand if we could study together, I wouldn't slack in front of Hans.  
(I wouldn't want to in front of anyone, for that matter, not anymore.)  
The same goes for him, and that's the best educational incentive of all.

At the heart of the White Rose, p. 131

### Lilo Fürst-Ramdohr on her student days in Munich:

Since Alex and I still visited the Zeichenstudio König, the studio also often became our meeting place if we hadn't been successful in getting in touch with each other elsewhere. In this way, I saw Hans and Christl quite often when they came to pick up Alex. They frequently asked me to accompany them into the wine tavern, where they didn't say a word but smoked their pipes all the more ferociously. In spite of the full schedules which each one of us had, there was always time for our friends. You simply made the time. Everybody just had to have something which he could look forward to. And even if you only saw each other briefly, it brightened up the whole day.

translated from *Freundschaften in der Weißen Rose*, p. 61



### Christoph Probst in a letter to his sister Angelika, 15 July 1942:

My dearest Ängs!  
(...) Unfortunately, Alex and Hans will be sent far away in the summer, probably to Russian military hospitals. Alex has been through a very active time, and you were certainly right with your prediction. His character has achieved a greater unity and liveliness through it. The great differences in character between Alex, Hans and me always give our time together a particular charm. After all, this is a time in which one must search for and find resonance in each other, and that does not mean that agreement with each other has to be complete.

translated from Hinrich Siefken: *Die Weiße Rose und ihre Flugblätter*, Manchester 1994, p. 73

### Robert Scholl in a letter sent from family arrest (Sippenhaft), 25. August 1943:

My dear ones!  
Your loving lines have deeply troubled my soul anew. To this day, I have prayed day and night for the life of Prof Huber. Hans had often told me how dear he was to him. And since he was a friend of our two beloved ones, he had already become a very good friend to me last year, even though I have never met him.

translated from *Sippenhaft*, p. 84

"Wasn't this sense of fellowship overpowering?"

## Preparations for war

Soon after 1936, the more romantic aspects began to fade and the impression of freedom, community and adventure could less and less hide the fact of an advancing enforced conformity.

Hans had learned a repertory of songs, and his troop enjoyed hearing him sing to his own guitar accompaniment. He sang not only the songs of the Hitler Youth but also folksongs of many countries and peoples. What a magical effect the singing of a Russian or Norwegian song could produce with its gloomy, impelling melancholy. How much it told about these peoples and their lands.

But after a time Hans underwent a remarkable change; he became a different person. Some disturbing element had entered his being. This had nothing to do with Father's objections; he was able to close his ears to those. It was something else. The leaders had told him that his songs were not allowed, and when he made light of his prohibition, they threatened punishment. Why should he be forbidden to sing these songs that were so full of beauty? Merely because they had been created by other races? He could see no sense in it; he was depressed, and his light-hearted manner disappeared.

Inge Schöll, translated from: Students against Tyranny, pp. 7-8

The National Socialist rulers aimed at systematically preparing youth for military service. This had far-reaching consequences. While the percentage of sportive and playful aspects decreased, the openly military, war-preparatory nature of the camps and trips became more and more apparent. The teenagers were trained on weapons and scouting games took on the character of manoeuvres.



Hitler Youth during training

[Photo: Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz]

At this time he was honored with a very special assignment. He was chosen to be the flagbearer when his troop attended the Party Rally in Nuremberg. His joy was great. But when he returned, we could not believe our eyes. He looked tired and showed signs of a great disappointment.

We did not expect any explanation from him, but gradually we found out that the image and model of the Hitler Youth which had been impressed upon him there was totally different from his own ideal. The official view demanded discipline and conformity down to the last detail, including personal life, while he would have wanted every boy to follow his own bent and give free play to his talents. The individual should enrich the life of the group with his own contribution of imagination and ideas. In Nuremberg, however, everything was directed according to a set pattern.

Day and night the talk was about *Treue* - loyalty. But what was the foundation of *Treue*, after all, but being true to oneself? Rebellion was stirring in Hans's mind. (...)

Some time before, Hans had been promoted to the rank of *Fähnleinführer*-troop leader. He and his boys had sewn a handsome banner, bearing in its design a great mythical beast. This flag was something special; it was dedicated to the Fuehrer, and the boys had pledged their loyalty to the banner because it was the symbol of their fellowship. One evening, however, when they had come into formation with their banner and stood in review before a higher-echelon leader, the unheard-of happened. The leader suddenly and without warning ordered the little flagbearer, a cheerful twelve-year-old, to hand over the banner.

"You don't need a banner of your own. Use the one prescribed for everyone."

Hans was deeply disturbed. Since when have we had this rule? Didn't the cadre leader know what this particular flag meant to the troop?

After all, it was not just another piece of cloth that could be changed at will. The order to hand over the banner was repeated. The boy stood rigid, and Hans knew how he felt and that he would refuse. When the order was given for the third time, in a threatening voice, Hans noticed that the flag was trembling. At that he lost control. He quietly stepped from his place in the ranks and slapped the cadre leader. That put an end to Hans' career as *Fähnleinführer*.

Inge Schöll, translated from: Students against Tyranny, pp. 13-14

## War

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, the day-to-day life of the Hitler Youth changed for good. Instead of social evenings, song contests and camp life, the teenagers were now increasingly used for guard duties, airspace monitoring, and later for air-raid protection duties, work in armament factories and the organisation of the evacuation of children to rural areas. Older leaders whom the boys had looked up to were drafted. In rapid succession, they were replaced by the younger ones who often found it much harder to gain similar acceptance and who were often overburdened with the tasks they were given.

Adolf Hitler on youth education:

My ideal of education is hard. All that is weakness must be hammered away. In my Ordensburg elite schools a youth will be raised who will strike fear into the heart of the world. I want a violent, masterful, fearless, cruel youth. Youth must be all that. They must withstand pain. There must be nothing weak and tender about them. The free, splendid predator must once again flash from their eyes. I want my youth to be strong and beautiful. They must be trained in all manner of physical education. I want an athletic youth. That is first and foremost. In that way we will expunge the thousands of years of human domestication. In that way I have the pure and noble natural material before me. In that way I can fashion the New Order. I want no intellectual education. Knowledge will spoil my youth. I would prefer them to only learn what they will acquire freely following their play instinct. But they must learn self-control. They shall learn to conquer their fear of death in the most difficult trials. That is the stage of heroic youth. From it will grow the stage of free man, of man who is the measure and centre of the world, creative man, God-man. In my Ordensburg elite schools, beautiful, self-determined God-man will stand as an idol who will prepare youth for the coming stage of manly maturity ...

translation of: Hermann Rauschning, based on a speech by Adolf Hitler, quoted from: Walther Hofer: Der Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente 1933-1945. Frankfurt: Fischer, 2002, p. 88

The hollowness of the promises which many had believed in so passionately only a few years earlier and the hypocrisy of the entire regime became increasingly apparent, even though only few people admitted it to themselves, let alone said so aloud. During the air raids and in the daily battle for survival in the final phase of Hitler's "thousand-year empire", the Hitler Youth was drowned in the massive machinery of war and in the desperate and futile last stand of the "Volkssturm".



[Photo: Süddeutscher Verlag, Bilderdienst]

"... a mere farce"

## Law and judges under National Socialist rule

Our legal system must serve above all the maintenance of this commonwealth of the people. The impossibility of removing the judges from office must be matched by the flexibility of finding a verdict in the interest of society. Not the individual but the people must be at the centre of legislative solicitude. High treason and treason against the people shall in the future be eradicated with barbarous ruthlessness.

from Adolf Hitler's Inaugural Speech, 23 March 1933

## First Trial: 22 February 1943, Munich

**Defendants:** Hans Scholl  
Sophie Scholl  
Christoph Probst

**Prosecutor:** Public Prosecutor Weyersberg

**Judge:** The President of the Volksgerichtshof, Dr Freisler  
The Director of the District Court, Stier  
SS Squad Leader Breithaupt  
SA Squad Leader Bunge  
State Secretary and SA Squad Leader Köglmaier

My Führer!

The Volksgerichtshof will always attempt to judge how it thinks that you would judge the case yourself, my Führer.  
Heil, my Führer!

Your devoted political soldier,  
Roland Freisler

Inaugural letter to Hitler, 14 October 1942



Roland Freisler,  
President of the Volksgerichtshof

[Photo: Exhibition Catalogue, Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.]

The convicts were typical loners who had committed indecent assaults on the military morale and the power of resistance of the German people by daubing houses with slogans hostile to the state and by preparing treacherous leaflets. In view of the heroic battle of the German people, such degenerate subjects deserve nothing but to be speedily put to an honourless death.

Münchner Neueste Nachrichten, 23 February 1943

A rally attended by some 3,000 students on the evening of 22 February 1943, during which the speakers, a disabled student veteran and the district student leader, were interrupted by tempestuous applause after almost every sentence, has shown proof that the criminal acts of the four convicts can in no way be generalised.

from Circular Letter St. 6/43 of the Reich Student Leader, dated 23 February 1943

Carl Schmitt on the ordered murder of the old SA leaders in June 1934 (so-called "Röhm Coup"):

The Führer protects the law from the worst misuse when he, in time of great danger, by the power of his high office, serves as the highest judge and directly administers justice: "In this hour, I was responsible for the fate of the German nation and was thus the German people's highest judge." The true leader [Führer] is always also a judge. The authority to judge results from leadership. He who wants to separate the two or pose one against the other will either turn the judge into a counter-leader or into the tool of a counter-leader, and he thus seeks to use the judicial system to lift the state off its hinges. (...) In truth, the deed of the Führer was true jurisdiction. It does not submit to jurisdiction but is itself the highest jurisdiction. (...) The Führer's authority to judge springs from the same legal source as all jurisdiction of all peoples. The highest jurisdiction proves itself at the time of highest need, when the highest measure of judicially avenging fulfilment of the law appears. All jurisdiction stems from the people's right to live.

translated from Carl Schmitt: "Der Führer schützt das Recht",  
in: Deutsche Juristenzeitung, 1 August 1934, p. 945-947

Only three days after the arrest of Sophie and Hans Scholl and two days after the arrest of Christoph Probst, the Volksgerichtshof in Berlin received the bill of indictment by the Chief Public Prosecutor (Oberreichsanwalt). The charge: preparation of a treacherous enterprise, treacherous aiding of the enemy and undermining of military morale. Only one day later, on 22 February 1943, the trial begins at around 10 am in Munich before the 1<sup>st</sup> Chamber of the Volksgerichtshof. The president of the "People's Court," Roland Freisler chairs the trial - raving. Hans Scholl to his sister: "But this is a mere farce."

An eye witness reports: "It seemed that I wasn't the only one who was deeply impressed by the position of the defendants. There stood people who were full of their ideals. Their answers even to the impertinent questions of the chair who acted as a prosecutor throughout the trial and never once showed himself as a judge, were calm, composed, clear and brave." Around 1:30 pm, the court announces the verdict. The formulation runs:

The accused have in time of war by means of leaflets called for the sabotage of the war effort and armaments and for the overthrow of the National Socialist way of life of our people, have propagated defeatist ideas, and have most vulgarly defamed the Führer, thereby giving aid to the enemy of the Reich and weakening the armed security of the nation.

On this account they are to be punished by Death.  
Their honor and rights as citizens are forfeited for all time.

Students against Tyranny, p. 114

The opinion is riddled with exclamation marks and thick with National Socialist morale: "He who acts as the defendants have done, treasonably undermining the home front and thus undermining the military morale at a time of war, and thereby aiding the enemy of the Reich (§ 5 special war time penal decree and § 91b of the penal code), raises his dagger to plunge it into the back of the front."

The verdict is executed three and a half hours later, around 5 pm in the prison at Munich Stadelheim.

It is not possible through solitary withdrawal, in the manner of embittered hermits, to prepare the ground for the overturn of this "government" or bring about the revolution at the earliest possible moment. No, it can be done only by cooperation of many convinced, energetic people - people who are agreed as to the means they must use to attain their goal. We have no great number of choices as to these means. The only one available to us is passive resistance.

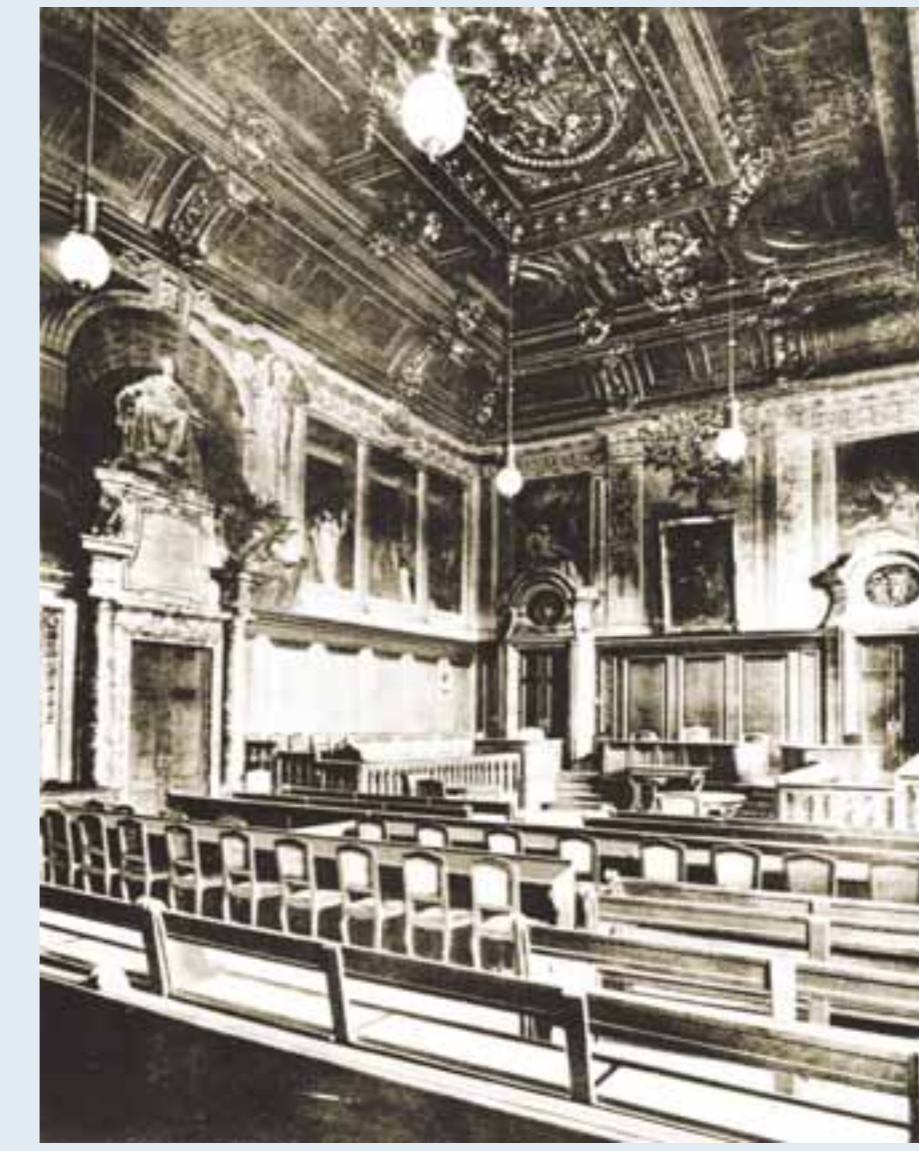
3<sup>rd</sup> Leaflet (1942)

"... a mere farce"

## Second Trial: 19 April 1943, Munich

**Defendants:** Alexander Schmorell  
Kurt Huber  
Willi Graf  
Hans Hirzel  
Susanne Hirzel  
Franz Joseph Müller  
Heinrich Guter  
Eugen Grimminger  
Heinrich Bollinger  
Helmut Bauer  
Falk Harnack  
Gisela Schertling  
Katharina Schüddekopf  
Traute Lafrenz

Fourteen further defendants are tried on 19 April. The trial before the 1<sup>st</sup> Supreme Court of the Volksgerichtshof began at 9 am, "rolling along



Volksgerichtshof Munich  
[Photo: Exhibition Catalogue, Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.]

in a single monologue of Freisler's that was only interrupted briefly when he knocked back his constantly refilled glass of water, during a short lunch break, and during a short break after 8 pm prior to the pronouncement of judgement" (Katharina Schüddekopf).

The Volksgerichtshof passes death sentences on Willi Graf, Alexander Schmorell and Prof. Dr. Kurt Huber – the other defendants are given prison sentences. Falk Harnack is found not guilty.

## Third Trial: 13 July 1943, Munich

**Defendants:** Josef Söhngen  
Harald Dohrn  
Wilhelm Geyer  
Manfred Eickemeyer

On the day of execution of Alexander Schmorell and Kurt Huber, the third trial related to the White Rose is held before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Court at the District Court Munich I. The accused are four of the older friends and mentors: the bookseller Josef Söhngen, Christoph Probst's father-in-law, Harald Dohrn, the painter Wilhelm Geyer, and the architect Manfred Eickemeyer, who had made available his studio for the nightly meetings and discussions, and who had reported atrocities of the German occupants in Poland. The nine-hour trial ends with a mild sentence. Judge Schwingenschlägl sentences Söhngen to six months in prison and acquits the other three defendants.

The District Court of Saarbrücken sentences Willi Bollinger to serve three months in prison. He is spared worse since his friend, Willi Graf, covers up for him during the Gestapo interrogations.

## Fourth Trial: 3 April 1944, Saarbrücken

**Defendant:** Willi Bollinger

## Fifth Trial: 13 October 1944, Donauwörth

**Defendants:** Lieselotte Dreyfeldt  
Wolfgang Erlenbach  
Valentin Freise  
Marie-Luise Jahn  
Hans Leipelt  
Hedwig Schulz  
Franz Treppesch

A fifth trial takes place on 13 October 1944 in Donauwörth, in which Hans Leipelt is sentenced to death and Marie-Luise Jahn to a long prison sentence.

## Sixth Trial: 17 April 1945, Hamburg

**Defendants:** Rudolf Degkwitz  
Felix Jud  
Heinz Kucharski  
Ilse Ledien  
Thorsten Müller  
and others

The "Hamburg branch" of the White Rose is also uncovered. Here, 19 defendants, including Heinz Kucharski and Rudolf Degkwitz, are tried just days before the end of the war. The 1<sup>st</sup> Chamber of the Volksgerichtshof sentences Kucharski to death who manages to escape during an air raid.

1. So the judge is not being placed above the citizen as the upholder of jurisdiction of the state, but he stands as a member within the living community of the German people. It is not his task to bring to bear a legal system which is above the community of the people, nor to assert a general value system; but rather it is his task to maintain the actual order of the community of the people, to wipe out parasites, to punish acts against the community, and to settle quarrels among them members of the community.

2. The basis for the interpretation of all legal material is the National Socialist ideology, in particular as it is expressed in the party programme and in the statements of our Führer.

from Adolf Hitler's Inaugural Speech, 23 March 1933

The living law of the people is first and foremost embodied in the Führer, and the judge who administers justice in the new Reich is necessarily subordinate to the Führer's intentions which simply are the expression of the highest law.

translated from Ernst Rudolf Huber: *Verfassungsrecht des Großdeutschen Reiches*. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1939. p. 278-279.

Why do you allow these men who are in power to rob you bit by bit, openly and in secret, of one domain 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 drunks?

3<sup>rd</sup> Leaflet (1942)

"... man's highest principle ... his free will"

Leaflets of The White Rose.

I

Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized nation as allowing itself to be "governed" without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct. It is certain that today every honest German is ashamed of his government. Who among us has any conception of the dimensions of shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil has fallen from our eyes and the most horrible of crimes - crimes that infinitely outdistance every human measure - reach the light of day? If the German people are already so corrupted and spiritually crushed that they do not raise a hand, frivolously trusting in a questionable faith in lawful order in history; if they surrender man's highest principle, that which raises him above all other God's creatures, his free will; if they abandon the will to take decisive action and turn the wheel of history and thus subject it to their own rational decision; if they are so devoid of all individuality, have already gone so far along the road toward turning into 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 it would appear rather that they are a spineless, will - less herd of hangers-on, who now - the marrow sucked out of their bones, robbed of their center of stability - are waiting to be hounded to their destruction. So it seems - but it is not so. Rather, by means of gradual, treacherous, systematic abuse, the system has put every man into a spiritual prison. Only now, finding himself lying in fetters, has 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 persons.

If everyone waits until the other man makes a start, the messengers of avenging Nemesis will come steadily closer; then even the last victim will have been cast senselessly into the maw of the insatiable demon. Therefore every individual, conscious of his responsibility as a member of Christian and Western civilization, must defend himself as best he can at this late hour, he must work against the scourges of mankind, against fascism and any similar system of totalitarianism. Offer passive resistance - resistance, wherever you may be, forestall the spread of this atheistic war machine before it is too late, before the last cities, like Cologne, have been reduced to rubble, and before the nation's last young man has given his blood on some battlefield for the hubris of a sub-human. Do not forget that every people deserves the regime it is willing to endure.

From Friedrich Schiller's "The Lawgiving of Lycurgus and Solon":  
 "...Viewed in relation to its purposes, the law code of Lycurgus is a masterpiece of political science and knowledge of human nature. He desired a powerful, unassailable state, firmly established on its own principles. Political effectiveness and permanence were the goal toward which he strove, and he attained this goal to the full extent possible under the circumstances. But if one compares the purpose Lycurgus had in view with the purposes of mankind, then a deep abhorrence takes the place of the approbation which we felt at first glance. Anything may be sacrificed to 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 all of man's powers, his progress and improvement. If a state prevents the development of the capacities which reside in man, if it interferes with the progress of the human spirit, then it is reprehensible and injurious, 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 endures, the more harmful 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 friendship; all men were citizens only, 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 as ends - and the foundations of natural law and of morality were destroyed by that law.

....What an admirable sight is afforded, by contrast, by the rough soldier Gaius Marcius in his camp before Rome, when he renounced vengeance and victory because he could not endure to see 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 has 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 in his fall.

HOPE:  
 Now I find my good men  
 Are gathered in the night,  
 To wait in silence, not to sleep,  
 And the glorious word of liberty  
 They whisper and murmur,  
 Till in unaccustomed strangeness,  
 On the steps of our temple

Once again in delight they cry:  
 Freedom!  
 Freedom!  
 Freedom!

Please make as many copies of this leaflet as you can and distribute them.

"Cast off the cloak of indifference ..."

LEAFLET OF THE RESISTANCE

A Call to All Germans!

The war is approaching its destined 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 climax, 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; he can only prolong it. The guilt of Hitler and his minions goes beyond all measure. Retribution comes 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 traducers? Are we to be forever the nation which is hated and rejected by all mankind? No. Dissociate yourselves from National Socialist 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. Make the decision before it is too late!

Do not believe the National Socialist propaganda which has driven the fear of Bolshevism 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 never was a national war?

The imperialist ideology of force, from whatever side it comes, must be shattered for all time. A one-sided Prussian militarism must never again be allowed to assume power. Only in large-scale cooperation among the nations of Europe can the ground be prepared for reconstruction. Centralized hegemony, such as the Prussian state has tried to exercise in Germany and in Europe, must be cut down at its inception. The Germany of the future must be a federal state. At this juncture only a sound federal system can imbue a weakened Europe with a new life. The workers must be liberated from their condition of down-trodden slavery under National Socialism. The illusory structure of autonomous national industry must disappear. Every nation and each man have 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 5<sup>TH</sup> LEAFLET



# FAREWELL

Prison Munich Stadelheim.

Last meeting of the parents with their daughter Sophie, a short time before her execution. Inge Scholl reports:

Once again, mother said: "Remember, Sophie, Jesus."

Sophie answered gravely, firmly and almost commandeeringly: "Yes, but you too."

Then she went, freely, fearlessly, calmly, with a smile on her face.



My dearest parents!

... I am completely strong and calm. I will receive the Holy Sacrament and die blessedly. I will have the 90th psalm read to me. I thank you for having blessed me with such a rich life. God is with us.

With love, for the last time,  
Your grateful son Hans



Munich, 13 July 1943

My dear father and mother!

Now, it was not to be otherwise but it is God's will that I should end my life on this earth today in order to enter a new life which will be never-ending and in which we will all meet again. Let this reunion be your comfort and your hope. Sadly, this fate is harder to bear for you than it is for me, since I'm going with the awareness that I followed my deepest convictions and the truth. I can therefore await the near hour of my death with a calm conscience.



Think of the millions of young people who give their lives out there in the field – their fate is also my fate.

Please give my love to all my loved ones, especially to Natasha, Erich, Njanja, Auntie Toni, Maria, Aljenshka and Andrej.

In a few hours I will have entered the better life, I will be with my mother and I will never forget you and I will pray with God for your calm and comfort. And I will wait for you. There is one last thing I would like to ask you to particularly do: Don't forget God!!!

Love, Shurik

Prof Huber, who sends his warmest regards, and I will go together!

Munich, 12 October 1943

My dear parents, my dear Mathilde and Anneliese,

On this day I will depart this life and enter eternity. It pains me greatly that I should cause you such suffering as you live on. But God will give you comfort and strength and that's why I will pray to the last moment since I know that it will be harder for you than it will be for me.



I ask you, dear father and mother, with all my heart, to forgive me the suffering and disappointment which I have caused you. I have often and particularly here in prison regretted what I did to you. Please forgive me and keep praying for me! Remember me fondly! Stay strong and composed and trust in God, who will turn everything to the best, even if at the moment it causes bitter pain. Throughout my life I have not been able to tell you how much I loved you – but now in these last hours let me tell you on this plain piece of paper that I love you with all my heart and that I have always admired you. For everything you have given me in life and what you have made possible through your care and love. You, who must stay, stand together in love and mutual trust! The love of God embraces us and we trust in His grace. May He be our gracious judge.

My final greetings of love to you all, dear father and dear mother, Mathilde, Ossy, Anneliese, Joachim, all my relatives and friends.

Shall God's blessing be with us; it is in Him that we are and live. Farewell and be strong and keep your faith in God. With love, always,

Yours Willi

My dearest mother,

I thank you that you have given me life. If I am right, it has all been a way to God. But since I have not been able to walk very far, I shall jump the last bit. My only sorrow is that I have to cause you pain. Don't mourn me too much since that would cause me great pain in eternity. But since I will be in heaven, I shall be able to give you a magnificent welcome there. I have just learnt that I only have one hour left. I shall now be baptised and receive the Holy Communion. If I cannot write any further letters, please give my love to all my loved ones. Tell them that my dying was easy and cheerful. I think back to my magnificent childhood days, to my magnificent marriage. And through it all shines your beloved face. How caring and loving you always were. Don't allow yourself to be robbed of your joy of life. Please don't get ill. Continue to walk on your way to God.



Love for ever and always, yours Christl, your beloved son.  
Mother, dearest mother!

My dearest, dearest Clärelein!  
My dearest, dearest, good-behaved Birgit,  
and my sweet little Wolfi!

While I was working for you today, I have received the news which I have been expecting for so long. My dearest! Rejoice with me! I shall die for my fatherland, for a more just, more beautiful fatherland which will surely rise from this war. I shall be with you and my beloved children all days until you shall follow me to where there is no more separation! I entrust the fate and the education of our beloved children into your loving, caring hands. I know they will remember their father and bring their beloved mum all the joy they can read from her eyes.



Beloved Clara! One year ago, we happily walked to the beautiful Mösern together and gazed into the deep-blue Lake Blindsee – remember these magnificent hours, our time together with the children, and forget all the sorrow! Put yourself and the children under the cross and everything else shall be given to you hundred- and thousandfold. And be proud to have made your contribution to the fight for a new Germany! You are heroes like the women and children who have lost their husbands and fathers at the front. You have, dear Clara, in these difficult months given me so endlessly much love and made my time so beautiful that I do not know how I shall ever thank you. If I did not know that I shall be able to stand by your side in the hereafter, on the other side, I would feel like a beggar. But as it is, I shall remain indebted to you.

My dearest Birgit! The course of your life is grave and dark in the beginning – but it will be bright in the future. Your and your dear mother's letters have given me endless comfort. I know that you will support mother and will be her right hand. Your father will always remember you and pray for you all. The loving God has given you riches. Use them, enjoy music and poetry and always stay the dear, good angel you have always been to us.

My dearest, brave little Wolfi! The entire beautiful life still lies before you. You shall be a good boy, and a decent man, mother's protector and pride! And if things get difficult for you in life, always remember your father, who will continue to care for his beloved little son!

My dearest ones! Don't cry for me – I am happy and secure. The alpine roses, your last loving greetings from my beloved mountains, stand faded in front of me. In two hours I will enter the true freedom of the mountains which I have been fighting for all my life. Beloved! One short little hour! My last wish!

Lord, o Lord, I am prepared,  
To take Your friendly hand  
And travel joyfully into eternity!  
Bless our German land,  
Bless my wife and children,  
Comfort them in all pain,  
Give my most beloved ones  
The divine peace of Your love!

May the almighty Lord bless and protect you!  
Your loving father.

Dear Paula, Dora and Richard! In this last hour, I think of you deeply and I thank you with all my heart for your love. With love,  
Yours Kurt

Beloved! A last brave swig of the fine port wine to your health and to the health of our beloved fatherland!

This must not prevent us from being joyful and to think joyfully of those who have given their lives. Many of them did, like Christl and Hans and Sophie Scholl, go ... well, what could be the right word for it? You never go to your death joyfully but with a sense of having achieved what was one's calling. I can only wish every one of you that – thinking back on the day at night – you shall have that sense of having achieved your calling.

Joseph Rován