

Siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst (left to right) of the Student Resistance Group “White Rose” (1942)

Abstract

Hans and Sophie Scholl came from a liberal Christian family. Against the wishes of their parents, both had participated in the National Socialist youth movement during the early years of the Third Reich – Hans (born 1918) belonged to the Hitler Youth [*Hitler-Jugend* or HJ], and Sophie (born 1921) was a member of the League of German Girls [*Bund deutscher Mädel* or BDM]. Both moved beyond their youthful enthusiasm for Nazism, however. Hans began turning away from the movement after recognizing its inherent racism and militarism. In 1942, while studying medicine in Munich, he co-founded the "White Rose" student resistance group. (The white rose was chosen as a symbol for freedom of political opinion. It was originally used in the anti-Napoleonic writings of Romantic author [Clemens Brentano](#).) In July 1942, Hans was sent as a medical orderly to the Eastern Front, where the brutal treatment of Poles and Jews further strengthened his will to resist. In the meantime, Sophie had also changed her mind about the regime. She began studying in Munich and joined the “White Rose” despite her brother's objections.

In addition to the Scholls, the group consisted of Hans's friends and fellow students Alexander Schmorell (born 1917), Christoph Probst (born 1919), and Willi Graf (born 1918). Professor Kurt Huber (born 1893) joined the group later on. In 1942 and 1943, group members distributed six broadsheets in which they appealed to the public's sense of moral duty, called for resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, and demanded an end to the war. Whereas their first four broadsheets circulated only within a small group of mostly Munich-based academics, the fifth one was distributed in thousands of copies and found its way into several cities in southern Germany.

When Sophie Scholl went to distribute the sixth and final broadsheet at Ludwig Maximilians University on February 18, 1943, she was spotted by the school's janitor, who informed the authorities. The Gestapo arrested Hans and Sophie along with Christoph Probst. On February 22, 1943, the People's Court sentenced all three to death. They were beheaded the same day. Schmorell, Graf, and Huber were sentenced on April 19, 1943. Schmorell and Huber were executed on July 13 of the same year. Graf was executed on October 12, 1943.

Source



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