

The Fifth Broadsheet of the “White Rose” (January 1943)

Abstract

By offering active political resistance to the Nazi regime, the Munich student group known as the “White Rose” earned a special place in the history of Germany’s youth opposition. No doubt the best-known members of the group were siblings Hans (1918–1943) and Sophie Scholl (1921–1943), both of whom had supported the Nazi regime early on but eventually came to oppose it. Information about the government’s crimes—the euthanasia program and conditions on the Eastern Front, for example—hastened their move toward resistance. In addition to the Scholls, the core group consisted of Hans’s friends and fellow students Alexander Schmorell (1917–1943), Christoph Probst (1919–1943), and Willi Graf (1918–1943). Professor Kurt Huber (1893–1943) joined the “White Rose” 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 active resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, and demanded an end to the war. Whereas their first four broadsheets only circulated within a small group of mostly Munich-based academics, the fifth one (see below) was distributed in thousands of copies and found its way into several cities in southern Germany. Written by Hans Scholl, Schmorell, and Probst, and addressed to all Germans, it warns that complicity in Nazi crimes could only be avoided by active resistance.

When Sophie Scholl went to distribute the group’s sixth and final broadsheet at Ludwig Maximilian 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

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 the 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!

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