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History 133C

**Inge Scholl’s Depiction of the White Rose and Her Siblings**

* Found in Inge Scholl’s – *Die Weisse Rose[[1]](#footnote-1)*
* Pages 147-150: *The Fifth Broadsheet of the White Rose*
* Published and Distributed by siblings Sophie and Hans Scholl in February 1943
* Obtained at the UCSB Library – English Translation – *The White Rose: Munich 1942-1943.* Inge Scholl, Dorothee Solle. Middletown, CT. Wesleyan University Press; Scranton, PA: Distributed by Harper & Row 1983
* This exploration will first give a summary of the group’s motives and the events (particularly focusing on Hans and Sophie) culminating to the group’s execution in 1943. Then I will give further background on their older sister Inge, a former Nazi who published their story. Then I will explain a common criticism I found of Inge, particularly showing how her depiction of the events was far more subjective and idealizing in regard to her siblings. Lastly, I will offer a counter-argument taken from the introduction of Scholl’s book that this source came from that justifies the dangers the group took on.

This source is the fifth and final broadsheet of a series of pamphlets created by the White Rose in Munich in 1942 to 1943. The story of the White Rose youth group of organized resistance against Hitler and the Nazi Regime began in 1942 when siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl, two German students of the University of Munich, formed the group alongside fellow students Christoph Probst, Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf, and their psychology and philosophy professor, Kurt Huber.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Scholl siblings enrolled themselves in Hitler Youth in the 1930s, but removed themselves once they accepted the advice of their liberal father, Robert Scholl, that “they [the Nazis] are wolves and deceivers, and they are misusing the German people shamefully, like the Pied Piper leading the children to destruction.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Following the formation of the youth group (started by Hans and Schmorell originally),[[4]](#footnote-4) they began distributing pamphlets with political messages and poems that brought to light the war crimes and horrors of the Nazis, and particularly called out Hitler and his manipulation. The first pamphlet was distributed in November of 1942 and the final one, the one from this source, entitled “Fellow Fighters of the Resistance” was distributed in February 1943.[[5]](#footnote-5) The group was successful in keeping their anonymity in their distribution of the first four leaflets, however, the school and the Gestapo had caught wind of the operation and set them up with constant surveillance. Whilst raining piles of pamphlets over hallways and out of windows, the university’s superintendent spotted the siblings and locked the doors while also alerting the Gestapo, who swiftly came and arrested the pair and hauled them off to their prison, Wittelsbach Palace.[[6]](#footnote-6) The siblings were imprisoned alongside their comrade Probst, and upon their trial in which they were allowed no defense attorney nor were their parents allowed entry, the trio was sentenced to death on the terms that their leaflets “called for the sabotage of the war effort and armaments and for the overthrow of the Nationalist Socialist way of life of our people, have propagated defeatist ideas, and have most vulgarly defamed the Fuhrer, thereby giving aid to the enemies of the Reich and weakening the security of the nation.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Inge Scholl was born in 1917, making her one year older than Hans, and four years older than Sophie. In the 1933 she enthusiastically joined the League of German Girls, and unlike her younger siblings she rejected her father’s advice on Hitler due to his pacifist conviction.[[8]](#footnote-8) Inge glorified the ideas of Hitler rebuilding a strong Germany and providing work and bread for their people. In his book, *A Notable Treason*, author Richard F. Hansen goes in depth on the life of Inge. He relates that Inge held a memory in which she remembered Hans’ change to opposing Nazism after being a flag bearer at a Hitler rally in which he was reprimanded for singing songs written by Jewish songwriters, despite their beauty and wholesome meanings.[[9]](#footnote-9) In 1937, Inge and her siblings were arrested by the Gestapo under conspiracy of holding items that would support illegal organizations (songs, poems, diaries, etc.) but were released three weeks later. Following the execution of her brother and sister, Inge was again arrested with the rest of her family, but were eventually released, while their father served a two-year sentence. Following the war, Inge married Otl Aicher and they founded and ran an adult education school in Ulm, where Inge was headmaster. She also talked about the rejection her and her family faced by their neighbors, friends, and business associates who were too afraid to be associated with them. She went on to write the book from which I have gained a majority of the information on the White Rose, *Students Against Tyranny,* in 1952. It gave insight to the next generation of Germans as to the militarism that brought their country to catastrophe and moral disgrace. This text also contains the source of the Fifth Broadsheet.

In my research I found multiple criticisms of Inge Scholl’s writing of the *White Rose.* Most critics of Scholl focus on her use of pathos in the text as well as her constant reinforcement of ideologizing her siblings. In his critical article, “Are We Victims Yet? Resistance and Community in The White Rose, Five Last Days, and The Nasty Girl,” David Levin points out some problematic aspects of the retellings of this organization’s existence. Levin spends a great deal of time discussing the problematic fictionalization of Inge Scholl in writing the book, as he claims she gave herself too much involvement when in reality Inge merely watched from the sideline. He goes in depth of explaining her lack of realization or explanation as to how dangerous her siblings and their comrades were to themselves as soon as they consolidated their efforts into a named group, and points out that Inge went to great efforts to solely show the heroism of their effort as opposed to explicitly pointing out the dangers they were putting themselves and their families in. Levin states that “Inge Scholl’s account is as interesting for its formulaic and often clumsy fictionality as it is for its content.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

One counter-argument for this take (whilst not directly referencing Levin) comes from Dorothee Solle, in which she first points out that in the years following the White Rose incident, she felt the youthful idealism promoted by the tale of the Scholl siblings as subjective, with “little sense of the realities of power and politics.”[[11]](#footnote-11) However, Solle goes on to explain that in the decades that followed, her viewpoint changed once she came across the realization that the White Rose’s efforts repeatedly underscored the issue which was to be decisive in delaying the downfall of Hitler’s Reich – anticommunism. She explains how this dangerous ideology set forth Hitler’s power in an ignorant German mindset that the Nazis were the lesser of two evils and that the “good German people” felt that once the war thinned out the Nazis’ military power, Hitler could be overthrown.[[12]](#footnote-12) Soelle explains that the youth group, through their leaflets, were far ahead of their peers and were justified in the dangerous tasks by having the guts to bring to light the gruesome atrocities of the Nazis and Hitler.

I believe the fifth broadsheet (of the six total) stands out and is the sole one to be viewed on GHDI because it is the most “call to action” pamphlet of the series. The fifth one is the first to directly and explicitly call out the German people and explain that Hitler is not leading them to victory, but rather prolonging the war and their suffering. The first four pamphlets also contain certain philosophical excerpts, while this one gets directly to the point in pointing out the numerous flaws and dangers that the Nazi party and its leaders are forcing onto the people of Germany.

**Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order**

1. Inge Scholl, *Die Weiße Rose*. Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg: Fischer Bücherei, 1955. Accessed through the UCSB Library.

* This source describes the events of the resistance group. This source was my main point of reference for this project.

*Sentence of Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst, 1943.* Found on p. 114 in Inge Scholl’s book, *Die Weiße Rose*.

* This source was one of a few transcripts regarding the trial of the group that was located at the end of Inge Scholl’s book. It is the exact words of the court sentencing that condemned the youth to their execution.

1. Hornberger, Jacob G. *Holocaust Resistance: The White Rose – A Lesson in Dissent.* Jewish Virtual Library. 1981. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-white-rose-a-lesson-in-dissent>

* This source provided excellent details of the events of the group’s origin. Particularly about the Scholl siblings’ involvement in and detachment from Hitler Youth, providing insight on their father’s advice. It also gave details about the trial that I did not see in the book.

1. Solle Dorothee. Introduction of *The White Rose.* English Translation of Inge Scholl’s Book. Wesleyan University Press. 1983. P. XI

* This source was the introduction of the English translation of Inge Scholl’s book. It provides a positive response to Inge Scholl’s portrayal as well as giving her own “outside looking in” experience of the trials that she recalled listening to on the radio as a little girl.

1. Levin, David. *Are We Victims Yet? Resistance and Community in The White Rose, Five Last Days, and The Nasty Girl*. 1998. The Germanic Review. Accessed on JSTOR through the UCSB library.

* This source was a critical comparison of the portrayal of the White Rose events as shown in both Inge Scholl’s book and the films made about it (Five Last Days and The Nasty Girl). Overall, Levin was very critical of Scholl’s idealistic portrayal and commended the films portrayals.

1. Hansen, Richard F. *A Notable Treason*. Ignatius Press. November 2012. Accessed on Google Scholar.

* Like Simkin’s webpage, Hansen’s book gave many details on the life of Inge, except this source had far more detailed memories of the events of Inge’s life.

1. Simkin, John. “Inge Scholl.” Spartacus Educational. September 1997, edited January 2016. <https://spartacus-educational.com/GERschollI.htm>

* This webpage gave extensive details on Inge Scholl’s early life, political views, and life after the fall of the Nazis.

1. Inge Scholl, *Die Weiße Rose*. Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg: Fischer Bücherei, 1955, pp. 147-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hornberger, Jacob G. *Holocaust Resistance: The White Rose – A Lesson in Dissent.* Jewish Virtual Library. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-white-rose-a-lesson-in-dissent> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Inge Scholl, *Die Weiße Rose*. Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg: Fischer Bücherei, 1955, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Inge Scholl, *Die Weiße Rose*. English Translated Notes. Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg: Fischer Bücherei, 1955, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Taken from the translated transcript of *Sentence of Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst, 1943.* Found on p. 114 in Inge Scholl’s book. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Simkin, John. *Inge Scholl*. Spartacus Educational. September 1997, edited January 2016. <https://spartacus-educational.com/GERschollI.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Hansen, Richard F. *A Notable Treason*. Published by Ignatius Press. November 2012. p. 104 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Levin, David. *Are We Victims Yet? Resistance and Community in The White Rose, Five Last Days, and The Nasty Girl*. p. 87 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Solle Dorothee. Introduction of *The White Rose.* English Translation of Inge Scholl’s Book. Wesleyan University Press. 1983. P. x. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Solle Dorothee. Introduction of *The White Rose.* English Translation of Inge Scholl’s Book. Wesleyan University Press. 1983. P. XI [↑](#footnote-ref-12)