

THE LINE

a true story

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From 1933-1945, Germany was under the totalitarian rule of Adolf Hitler and the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, who would plunge the nation into a genocidal war that would cost the lives of tens of millions. A nation cannot make war without the cooperation of the majority of its populace. This story begins with two members of that populace.

Gertraud "Traudl" Junge (née Humps) was born in Munich, Germany, on March 16th, 1920.

Though her National Socialist father leaves the family when she is 5 years old, her mother's focus in life is her children and so Traudl grows up a happy child who lacks self-pity and loves nature and dancing. A self-described "herd animal," Traudl seeks safety, security and harmony, and as a teenager, as most girls do, she is quick to join the BDM (League of German Girls, the female branch of the Hitler Youth) where she finds that special feeling of belonging to something larger than oneself. She is of course subject to Nazi indoctrination while a member of the BDM, though this is largely ineffectual due to her disinterest in political matters. Like most people she is neither for nor against the Reich, and is not really interested in what is going on. She is focused on her goal to become a dancer, like her sister, and the political climate of the thirties does nothing to derail that ambition, nor does the traditional call of family and motherhood. She occasionally hears of violence against Jewish citizens, but like her friends is not personally affected and assumes it is anomalous, and is in general happy to ignore any such harsh realities which have nothing to do with her life. She spends her time with bohemians in the self-contained world of the arts, and when she is forced to find employment, secretarial work, it is but a means to an end, and she lives for her leisure time when she can concentrate on her art. By 1941 she has passed her final dance exam and is ready to move to Berlin for the final phase of her career plan, but now there is a war on (she hopes for a quick end to the conflict) and it is more difficult to transfer jobs and municipalities. Also, dancers have become somewhat superfluous during wartime. Through a personal contact she is able to get a position as a secretary in the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, and so is soon off to start her new life.

She is 21 years old. Soon after settling in at this new job, word comes that the Fuhrer himself is looking for new secretaries, and the candidates are to be drawn from those working at the Chancellery. Traudl is excited to be among the chosen applicants for the position, and is transferred to the Fuhrer's headquarters with several other girls to test for the position. She does well, and in early 1943, after a few probationary weeks, she is formally offered the position of secretary to the leader of her nation. It has happened almost by chance, but suddenly she has an incredible job that no young person would have turned down. It could have happened to anyone. She was young, she couldn't have known any better. Deliberately ignoring the voice of warning inside her, Traudl would enjoy her years with her new employer. He is charming, friendly and paternal, and treats her very kindly. She is of course dazzled by his personality, head of the state as he is. Despite her proximity to the Nazi center of power, she is unaware of what that power is doing. She is Traudl Junge, a young woman with a good job. She is in the eye of the hurricane now, and either cannot or does not want to see the havoc being wrought all around her.



Sophia Magdalena Scholl was born in Forchtenberg, Germany, on May 9th, 1921. Her mother is devoted exclusively to her children, and her father is a caring man, a pacifist and intellectual who despises the National Socialists, and Sophie has a carefree childhood—she loves nature and lacks self-pity and grows up harbouring great thoughtfulness and sense of self. As a teenager she—against her father’s wishes—enthusiastically joins the BDM, as most girls do, but though she enjoys the time spent outdoors she rapidly becomes questioning of the anti-Jewish indoctrination she is subjected to—indoctrination that would be completely ineffectual due to its conflict with her personal values. Like her father she is soon against the Reich, and begins to learn what is really going on via word of mouth from her brother and their friends. Sophie spends her time with bohemians who come from the progressive world of the arts, and, despite not being personally affected by injustice, their anger builds as they learn of the atrocities that are being committed by the National Socialist regime. Sophie of course would be much happier escaping the harsh realities of her society, but writes that “the way things are now, everything else has to take second place.” Disinterested in traditional pursuits of motherhood and family, Sophie instead wishes to pursue studies at Munich University, but due to the war she is first forced to engage in various periods of forced labour, always horribly aware that the work she is doing is indirectly helping to perpetuate the war. Her brother Hans is of an identical nonconformist mindset, and with some friends he has by early 1942 formed an underground resistance group known as “The White Rose”—a group dedicated to non-violent resistance to the regime by means of stealthily spreading leaflets to rouse others and inform people of what is really being done in the name of Germany. Their mounting anger at the crimes of the Reich has forced them to act out of pure conscience, there is simply no other choice. Sophie quickly joins the group and is soon helping them spread a series of anti-Nazi leaflets throughout Munich. The White Rose leaflets speak aloud words that have not been heard within the country in 10 years, bellowing in anger against



“the dictatorship of evil.” The group eventually joins with the national resistance movement, giving Sophie, Hans and the others that special feeling of belonging to something larger than oneself. Always knowing and accepting the incredible risks they are taking in their actions, the White Rose is transformed from an isolated student group into an expanding network, spreading their literature throughout the urban centers of the Southwest and towards the North. They have by this time attracted the attention of the Gestapo, who are perpetually hunting down such “typical outsiders,” and are beginning to target the White Rose specifically by the end of 1942. In early 1943, Sophie and her brother are seen placing anti-Nazi leaflets in the hallways of the University of Munich and are turned in to the authorities, who soon discover the extent of their activities and began rounding up the other members of the White Rose. Sophie is unbendingly courageous while imprisoned, unrepentantly telling the Gestapo that she “would do it all over again” and refusing to recant in exchange for leniency. Four days later, Sophie Scholl, along with her brother and another White Rose colleague are subjected to a Nazi show trial and are accused and convicted of “high treason.” That same day they are transported to Stadelheim Prison where at exactly 5:00 pm, Sophie still in her street clothes, they are executed by guillotine. Sophie Scholl was 21 years old