

Human Rights And Resistance In Nazi Germany

by Fred Breinersdorfer

It Never Stops

The murderers were very **accurate** (akret). The protocol of the decapitation of medical student Hans Scholl under the guillotine in Munich February 22nd in 1943 states: quote “Elapsed time from entering the death chamber to the fall of the head 8 seconds.” Thereafter in the category of “special notes” it says: quote” The delinquent called out: “Long live liberty”.

No, it will never stop. The fight will never be over. The peoples fight against political tyranny. The goals resistance fighters are fighting for are very often similar and can be summed up in two words. Human Rights.

We understand the human rights as the basic guaranty of dignity for every human being, his freedom as well as equality before the law, the **inalienability** (inailianible) of these rights and their universal validity. In Paris on December 10th in 1948, the United Nations proclaimed the key sentence of the Charta of human rights. It says quote “All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

You all know that the first constitutional Charta which enclosed a guaranty of the human rights is the Declaration of Independence of the United States back in 1776.

The concept of human rights evolves around the idea that all people have the same rights guaranteed by nature. In our believe all countries have the duty and

responsibility to guaranty and respect the human rights. The Charta of the United Nations just states the human rights but it does not establish there validity. The human rights have already existed before 1948 and so they did during the Nazi regime and also long before that. They apply universally regardless of the historical situation, which means all around the world.

The Human rights apply to all of us no matter of what descent, religion or sex we are. They are inseparable and **inalienable**. Human dignity is inviolable. The principles of the human rights go right along with humanism and the in the Age of Enlightenment developed idea of the law of nature. That is why they don't need to be legally enforced. They result from the simple fact of being human.

The Human Rights Fear

Dictatorships fear nothing more than the realisation of human rights. Because especially the freedom of speech, the right of equality and the ban of discrimination, undermine in the eyes of those in power, their right of omnipotence. Therefore the human rights are literally beaten down with all forces. This is unfortunately happening right now in the People's Republic of China, in Iran, Myanmar, North Korea and other countries around the world. Every dictatorship creates massive police forces, **surveillance** (suweience) – and intimidation systems to oppress dissidents. Just think of the “Gestapo” and “Stasi” in my country – very sad historical **notorieties**!(notoraities)

But the fight will never stop. Last year we had to experience, five people being sentenced to death for their leading role in the first protests against the re-election fraud of President Mahmud Ahmadedschad in Iran on November 18th 2009.

The semi annual statistics of the “Writers in Prison Committees” of the “International PEN Centre” from January to June 2009 lists 644 cases of persecution of journalists and writers alone, which didn't do anything wrong except executing their right of freedom of speech. The national terror against **intellectuals** in many regions of the world right at this very moment ranges from murder to kidnapping, false

imprisonment to people simply vanishing. The case list of the PEN centre is a document of exercised barbarity and inhumanity.

Nobody is able to answer the question of how many men and women are persecuted and punished for their fight against oppression and violence, because they don't endure any popular positions like people in the intelligence and therefore they will never show up in any statistics.

Uncounted are the names of those who managed to fight undercover for the implementation of the human rights.

Differentiation Of Political Resistance From Putsch And Revolt

But not every attempt to change political affairs deserves to be called resistance. For instance when pursuit out of eagerness for power and selfishness. Someone who **instigates** a revolution just to put himself in power is a rebel not a resistance fighter. Looking at it this way, the classification of terrorist movements is easy. It doesn't fight for human rights but explicitly against it. Because its only goal is it to continuously install a new terrorist system without any human rights. In a so called "theocracy" of the Taliban or Al Kaida exists no freedom of religion and the discrimination against women is a common routine.

Human Rights And Nazi Ideology

The Ideology of Nazi Germany stood in a very extreme antagonism to the human rights. The quintessence of its inhuman doctrine to create a pure **raced** "national community" can be summed up as follows:

Destruction of democracy and thus abolishment of all democratic rights and freedoms
Creation of a single party state under a "Fuehrer"
Extensive restrictions of freedom of religion

Replacement of religion with national socialistic ideology with its atheistically driven master race and Fuehrer cult

Elimination of the right of freedom of speech,

Elimination of freedom of press and introduction of censorship

Restriction of freedom to travel

Discrimination of all "none Germans elements" especially the Jewish people in all aspects of life

Erection of concentration camps, euthanasia, forced sterilisation and the eventual industrial genocide of the European Jews

What a list of political **atrocities!** (ätr'oseti)

Between 1933 and 1945 all these violations of human rights were enforced consequently and violently by the Nazis during everyday German life. Those who adapted to the system as so called "National comrades" not drawing too much attention didn't have to worry. Active contribution in the Nazi Ideology and its goals could lead to a fast career, power and influence.

Reinhard Heidrich, one of the architects of the so called "Final Solution of the Jewish question" managed to make it from a dishonourable dismissal from the marine to a SS- general and the absolute "head of the German police" within five years.

But those who didn't comply with the Nazis had to expect discrimination, persecution, imprisonment and death. Brutal enforcement against dissidents and so called "subhuman beings" was part of daily life of the system -literally a part of every day life.

The unbelievable violation of the human rights **instead** ended in persecution and the killing of the Jewish people, a genocide never seen in history before. Anti-Semitism which had a sad tradition in Europe long before Hitler's party came to power was **prioritized** (prioritised) for the first time by the program of the Nazi Party.

Hitler compared the "Herrenmensch" (leading Race) of Germanic descent to the "Untermensch" (subhuman being) namely Jews, but also to gypsies like the Sinti and

Roma and coloured people. In his book "Mein Kampf" he states two ideas which are directly connected. The idea of a higher and a lower race which are in constant fight with each other and the idea that a so called "mixing of races" would weaken the higher race to the point where it would eventually disappear.

The absurd **conspiracy** theory of a so called "world Judaism" played right into this so called "racial conflict" "Rassenkampf". Hitler imputed world leadership onto the Jews as their evil element, **whereas** (wārās) he himself was after the very same thing namely to gain power over the entire world. Hitler held the conspiracy of the world Judaism responsible for all negative events at the time. Such as the First World War, the German defeat in that war, the November Revolution and the inflation. In doing so he identified Judaism with the "financial capital" in the USA as well as with its world political opponent the "Bolshevism". Those theories absolutely electrified the Germans, for they felt internationally discriminated against, exploited and broke after their defeat in World War1, the "Treaty of Versailles", the economic depression and the inflation. Hitler's idea of a "world Judaism" enabled him to project a perfect concept of the enemy to the people.

That is why the so called "race **hygiene**" 8HAITSCHIN9 of the Nazis was a highly aggressive element. Hitler wrote quote: "A country that cares for, and nurtures its best racial elements during an age of racial contamination, must become the leader of the world one day".

It is obvious that this view of the world implies almost an obsessive reflex to **eradicate** (irädicäit) the alleged enemy the so called "Subhuman beings". It is also obvious that such a system leaves no room for human rights. The human rights and Nazism are **irreconcilable** (irekonsaiebl) anta'gonisms. On the contrary let's say: had there been a revolution in Germany back than establishing human rights, the whole system of persecution, oppression, terror and killing would have collapsed. But that is just a theory. The daily reality looked completely different.

Right after the takeover of the national socialists on January 30th in 1933 they started to aggressively and systematically eliminate Jewish people from German society. One of the first actions they took was to pass a new animal protection law which

made kosher butchering illegal. The actions of the NS Regime led with a never before seen aggression and consequence to the boycott of Jewish businesses, doctors, lawyers, scientists and artists, to occupational bans and forced people into migration. Jewish men and women and even children had to wear the infamous yellow star in such a way that it could be seen from afar. What followed was the so called "Nuremberg Laws" for "Race purification", the "Kristallnacht" (Night of broken glass) **Arianization** (Ärianisäschen) and Ghettos. Those are all words that stand for nameless pain and agony of innocent people. The attack on the Sowjet Union in June 1941 started the organized and industrialized holocaust, the Shoa. It cost the lives of six million people.

Racism found various disgusting ways to express itself throughout history. But the consequent enforcement of the so called "racial conflict" towards Jewish people in Nazi Germany stands alone in all history.

Someone defending the human rights fighting for freedom and equality and against discrimination in a situation like this would be a public enemy just like the Jews.

Dictatorships Do Die Too

However: No **doctorial** (doktoriel) system ever existed in the long run, and none stayed without inner resistance.

From 1933 to 1945 Nazi Germany made history as one of the most horrific inhuman regimes in world history. But it was doomed like all dictatorships in the same way I mentioned earlier. No matter how powerful it presented itself it **induced** (indusd) inner opposition and went down in a military inferno. And especially because of the enormous proportions of that terror system it is very useful for analyzing to what part human rights played into the development of opposing forces. Opposing forces we sum up as resistance.

Like I said history holds no example of a dictatorship that existed in the long run. But Nonetheless on September 1st in 1933, Adolph Hitler announced that the country

under his guidance would be a “Third Reich” which would last a “1000 years”. But we know that his regime only lasted 13 years. Millions of people lost their life’s during this time through Hitler and his **accomplice** (äkomlis) , and because of a big part of the German people who blindly followed his politics. I repeat that because it is 60 years after still beyond any comprehension. And all this is yet exceeded by the industrial killing of 6 million Jews, and thousands and thousands of dissidents in the concentration camps of the “1000 year Reich”.

However the Nazi regime didn’t stay without inner resistance. Any force generates a counterforce, action causes reaction. That’s what physics teaches. But unlike in nature distribution of power in human history is highly different and the results too. There are two examples of this in my country within the last century. One is the strong and massive opposition building to a huge movement of peaceful forces which eventually caused the peaceful revolution in the former GDR in 1989. Mass demonstrations and people calling “We are the people” swept away not only a 40 year dictatorship but also broke down the Berlin wall on November 9th which than **initiated** (in’ischiädid) the end of the cold war and the Stalinist heritage. The other example shows the resistance against Hitler and his gang in small groups, in little forces, often uncoordinated and **seemingly** (simingli) hopeless. But therefore it took so much more courage to stand up against the Nazis.

We ask ourselves who were those outstanding personalities, mobilizing all their courage and strength to rise up against this brutal, immoral and **ins’ane** German killing machine that rolled all over Europe? It enslaved entire nations sometimes in a matter of weeks almost all over Europe with so called “Blitzkrieg”. Facing this makes one thing very clear. It implied a deadly danger to fight against this system. A killing machine that smashes entire nations would not hesitate to do the same with any political resistance in its own country.

But still some Germans stood up against Hitler. But why is that? Why did some rise up against the system while others followed and went along? And why did most of my parent’s generation participate actively in this terror? The motives of those who followed and played along are quite obvious: Those people expected certain benefits,

or at least wanted to keep themselves and their families from disadvantages. But what made one decide to resist. What were the reasons?

Georg Elser

This is the story of resistance fighter Georg Elser from Koenigsbronn. He is not an intellectual; he is a working class man. He is born on January 4 in 1903 as the oldest of five **siblings** (siblings). His family lives in a simple home in the region of Swabia in Southwest Germany. He grows up becoming a very talented craftsman as cabinet maker. He is what you would call a local Bohemian and a very social and open personality who loves music and is many girls charm.

All through his life Elser is proud to be a working class man. He voted for the communist party, because quote "They are the only ones who support us workers". Elser is in his mid twenties when the "big depression" literally desolates the social structures and economy of his home region. But than in 1933 circumstances change. The National Socialism ends all economic misery. It brings an apparent fresh sense of life and perspectives to people also in the suburban areas who were humiliated by this crisis. Neither SS nor Gestapo have to show up in Koenigsbronn, to convince people to solute to the system and put up the swastika flag (Nazi flag). Elser's peers, friends and relatives among those also the communists join the Nazi party although some hesitated for quite a while.

Elser seems to be the only one in his village who realizes the dangers of the Nazi ideology despite its seemingly successful appeal. A simple man who says of himself he didn't read much throughout his life, sees clearly what millions of his fellow Germans don't. He feels the rising threat of a racist, violent, inhuman regime under Hitler. There are other people who see those dangers too. But Elser is the first who draws radical conclusions, very early and before everybody else. He already decides in 1938, one year before the beginning of the war to go in active resistance in his

most radical form, the assassination of a **tyrant** (tairent). He decides to kill the most powerful man in the world at the time all by himself.

On the 8th of November 1939, a few weeks after the successful occupation of Poland and on top of Hitler's political powers, a time bomb build with great precision by Elser explodes in the Munich "Burgbräukeller". But Hitler had left his annual commemorative address for the victims of the 1923 putsch in Munich unusually early. Just 13 minutes after, the bomb detonates and kills 8 people. Elser is caught and arrested about half an hour earlier in Konstanz while trying to escape across the green border.

The Gestapo questions and tortures him, to get the names of his **accomplices**. Hitler personally gives order quote "...someone has got to be able to categorize this man. Let me know about it. Besides do what ever it takes to make this criminal talk.

Have him **hypnotized** (hipnetaist), give

him drugs, utilize today's latest technology. I want to know who planed this and who are the men behind it". But Georg Elser is and always will be the lonely resistance fighter against Hitler and his terrorist regime.

After Elser's arrest his way leads him through two concentrations camps always as prioritized prisoner with special treatment, because Hitler plans to put him on a show trial after his ultimate victory "Endsieg", to expose him as an henchman for the British secret service. When the German front lines collapse in April 1945 Hitler orders the liquidation of Elser. On April 9th 1945, just 20 days before the liberation of KZ Dachau, Elser gets murdered and the Nazis later try to call him a victim of the allies' bombings.

The "White Rose"

About three year after Georg Elser's failed assault Hitler's luck turns dramatically for the worse. On February 3rd 1943 the German forces have to surrender in Stalingrad. 250.000 soldiers end up in Sowjet war **captivity**. For the first time after non-stop military success the regime had to admit heavy military defeat. Funeral music is played on the radios for days, theatres and cinemas stay closed. The war is at its turning point. Everyone in a realistic mind can see that the "Endsieg" (ultimate victory) has long been in **shambles**.

Already in 1942 a few young students and professors around the Sophie and Hans Scholl siblings along the philosopher Kurt Huber started discussing ways against the unbelievable daily terror of the Nazis in Europe. The Scholl's Christian protestant background, Willi Graf's catholic faith and the philosophic political background of Kurt Huber form a strong ethic base and give the group the moralistic justification for its fight. During their time at the front lines in 1942 Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf had seen mass killings of Jews at the frontlines and witnessed the terrible agony in the Ghetto in Warsaw Poland. All that gave them extra motivation for there fight after their return to Germany.

The students and their professor call themselves the "White Rose" and try to get other people in other cities to join them. Secretly they design and print six different political leaflets and spread them very cleverly and with great personal effort in Germany's cities.

They articulate on their flyers what nobody is allowed to say. The "final victory"(Endsieg)" is a farce, Hitler and his gang is defeated. The "White rose" demands the end of the World War II terror and Holocaust **unleashed** (anleschd) by Nazi Germany. Stop the horrors and death of millions! All further **bloodshed** (Bladsched) is **futile** (fjutil). These theses are necessarily followed by the exclamation to abolish the Nazi Regime. And consequentially express political goals, freedom, democracy, peaceful relations between countries and a unified Europe. One of their

strongest key phrases addressing their fellow students but also “all Germans” is quote:

“It’s on us to fight the fight of every single one of us for our future, freedom, and dignity, in a political system which is aware of its moral responsibility”

With these words they are challenging a terrorist regime not known to world history at that point. Why do they do it? Who reads them will find that none of the 6 different leaflets contain the slightest hint of selfishness. Their actions are fuelled simply by their moral standards and **conscience** ens)(konsch. Just as unselfish as Georg Elser the simple man of the people. With the only difference, that they are able to articulate their thoughts and goals very specifically and precisely.

The group does not like Elser intend to radically get rid of the evil by ripping out its root literally in one single strike. They count on the solidarity, intelligence and courage of their fellow students and “all Germans”. A speculative and bold endeavour, with people, who perceived and also defined themselves as subjects not just since the Wilhelminian era.

Nevertheless, the members of the “White Rose” spread their flyers; write their slogans on the walls at night in Munich. Every one of them knows their lives are on the line. That takes a kind of courage we don’t have to come up with today. And - I repeat -all these efforts for one reason only, the realisation of the human rights, morality and human dignity in the dark age of the Nazi terror.

On February 18th 1943 in the **spur** (spör) of the moment Sophie Scholl tosses a pile of leaflet no. 6 on the inner courtyard of the university in Munich. She and her brother are arrested and other members of the “White Rose” too. On February 22nd 1943 after a short propaganda trial Sophie, her brother and their friend Christoph Probst

are killed on the guillotine in Munich. Four other friends and **conspirators** (kosp'eretes) meet the same fate. 13 others receive a long prison sentences.

July 20th in 1944

A second attempt of tyrant assassination is tried about five years after Elser's attack in the "Bürgerbräu Keller" and about one and a half years after the non-violent act of resistance by the "White Rose". On July 20th in 1944 Klaus Schenk, Graf von Stauffenberg tries to kill Dictator Hitler with a bomb during a briefing in his headquarters "Wolfsschanze." The attempt fails.

Unlike Elser, Stauffenberg is not acting alone. Involved parties of the plot come from nobility, the German military, and the administration. It is a big **partially** (paschly) **heterogeneous** (heterodschinies) group consisting of even ministers and war criminals.

Opposition against the war preparations of the NS already started to build in 1938 among high rank military officials of the "Wehrmacht." Over and over again it comes to **conspiracies** and even concrete plans of an assault or overthrow. Some proved to be impossible to realize, others failed or had to be postponed while everything had to be kept secret from the Gestapo.

After the **devastating** (d'evestäiting) defeat in Stalingrad in January of 1943 the military situation left no realistic hope for the so-called ultimate victory "Endsieg" anymore. Stauffenberg and a circle of officers and generals decided to take the initiative. Their goal was to get rid of the "military dilettante" Hitler and the immediate start of peace negotiations with the allies by a new German military government.

Stauffenberg decided to take action. Ever since July 1st 1944 he had regular access to Hitler's military briefings. He took his chance on July 20th in the Fuehrer head quarters to place a time bomb in a briefcase close to Hitler. But Hitler survived with only minor injuries, saved by a heavy table top. Four of the attendant crowd were killed.

Stauffenberg managed to get away in time, convinced that Hitler was also among the dead. He took a plane to Berlin but due to the poor communication lines the whole overthrow would just slowly pick up but seemed to be a success around 6 in the evening. When Hitler called from the "Wolfsschanze" and talked on the radio the entire overthrow collapsed. The very same night Stauffenberg was one of the first officers shoot by a military command in the headlights of a truck.

The Nazis came back with a **vengeance** (wentschens). It's estimated that about 1500 arrests and 200 executions took place. A series of propaganda trials at the so called "court of the people" (Volksgerichtshof) followed.

Some of the victims were executed by **choking** (tschouking) to death with wire loops.

The Reaction

Needless to say that the Nazi regime did not only use brutal force to break the resistance but was also smart enough to take advantage of Goebble's control over the media when resistance went public. That way the Nazis were able to divert the attempts by the resistant fighters to destabilise the system, into the opposite and managed to achieve a propagandistic stabilisation of the system.

The assassination attempt by Georg Elser was used by the Nazis to spread conspiracy theories, and the people would hail (hail) to Hitler who was then on top of his powers even more fanatically.

The short propaganda trial of the “White Rose” and their execution which followed just hours later the same afternoon, were used as propagandistic act to demonstrate the unbroken power of the system. This caused additional fear among the people after the defeat of Stalingrad.

After Hitler’s survival of the assault by Stauffenberg in the “Wolfsschanze” he talked of providence protecting him and his plans. That way he tried to manifest the myth of his invincibility and the crazy idea of the “ultimate victory” (Endsieg), just 9 months before the unconditional surrender of his regime. Additionally the NS – propaganda denounced Stauffenberg and his companions as traitors in a new version of the stab in the back legend. They were called cowards who betrayed Germany in times of trouble.

Cynically, the NS falsification of the assassin’s true motives still rings through nearly until today. The actual goals of the resistance movements have been blurred (blörd) and damaged by this for a long time

Who thinks the resistance fighters would spontaneously be honoured after the war for their courage, resoluteness and sacrifices is wrong. Certainly Germany included a big catalogue of human rights in its constitution in 1949. The young country of course cared a lot about the protection of the human rights. But the old thinking was still very present in the minds and hearts of many people.

Too many Germans were still infected by the old NS ideology after 1945. I know that for a fact from my own experience in my family. Many executive positions in the government and justice system were almost naturally filled by former Nazis.

In terms of Nazi propaganda resistance fighters were looked at as cowards and traitors for a long time for they were trying to stab the fighting troops in the back.

I was told by Elisabeth Hartnagel a sister of Sophie Scholl who's still alive, that her family was discriminated against, in their hometown Ulm, after the war, because of the resistance fight of Hans and Sophie. It was just like a few years earlier when Jews would walk down the streets marked with the yellow star and people would change sides so they would not have to engage into any conversation.

The public in post war Germany also reflects on the old NS propaganda treating the case of Georg Elser as if he had been a puppet of the allies' secret service. Even worse protestant pastor Niemöller a former resistance fighter himself, denounced Elser as a member of the SS. Only when in 1964 some of the interrogation protocols of the Gestapo were discovered Elser's picture in the public eye finally changed. Elser, the lonely assassin was **rehabilitated**. (rihåb'illitåtid) But still he is just slowly looked at by the German memorial history as the man he truly was. The only resistance fighter who **derived** from the people.

Even over seas the overthrow of July 20th in 1944 attempted by Stauffenberg and his companions was tried to be diminished as a morally inferior move to show of Germany the former enemy as a breaking monolithic block. Winston Churchill who was informed about the plans of the assassination beforehand, said in 1944 in the British House of Commons. These are just **eradication** fights among the Third Reich military command. He further commented that the leading personalities of the Third

Reich are now tarring each other apart and are trying to kill one another but their days are numbered.

The USA just goes right along with Churchill's interpretation and writes in the "New York Times" of August 9th 1944, that the plot rather looked like a bunch of gangsters trying to get even with each other, than behaviour one would normally expect of officers in a cultivated country.

Marion Gräfin Dönhoff journalist and co-editor of the renowned German paper "Die Zeit" who died in 2002 pointed out in a rather bitter tone that Stauffenberg's companions were asking for help over seas but would only find a "wall of silence". Dönhoff ascertained failure to render assistance.

Even though they knew better, the allied forces followed Hitler's interpretation, and called the attack an act of "overly ambitious officers."

Nobody mentioned the motivation of the resistance fighters who were trying to put human rights in contrast with the criminal Nazism.

In 1946 it was Winston Churchill who uttered the first clear words about what resistance against Hitler was all about from the moralistic and humanistic point of view. However he didn't correct his earlier comment about the July plot. He said quote:

"There was opposition alive in Germany, which belongs to the greatest and noblest ever seen in the history of politics of all people. These people fought without any inner or outer help only driven by the restlessness of their conscience. When they

were alive we couldn't see them because they had to disguise themselves. But in the dead resistance has become visible. Those dead are not able to justify all of what happened in Germany. But their action and sacrifices are the indestructible foundation for a new start."

Legitimation Of Resistance Through The Human Rights

"When injustice becomes justice, resistance becomes a duty". These words were written by Berthold Brecht a German dramatist. He raises an important question. What defines justice from injustice in a political system? Who ever is in power holds the right to define what is right and wrong. Political resistance therefore finds itself always outside of law and order. But resistance is still **legitimate** (ledsch'idemit). It even will become a moral duty if the grounds of justice are left by those in power. An important if not the most important indication for that is whether or not a country respects and protects the human rights.

From the Nazi regimes point of view the only justice was the justice legislated by the Führer state. Human rights which claim people's natural law were **relentlessly** (ril'entlesli) fought against.

I follow this essential question in my screenplay about "Sophie Scholl" in the fourth dialog of the questioning between Sophie and Robert Mohr the Gestapo officer. When Mohr asked quote "What am I supposed to go by if not by the law regardless of who passes it?" Sophie answers quote "Your conscience" and she adds quote "Laws will change, but conscience wont."

With all modesty I think I pretty much nailed the core of the matter at least emotionally with this.

Motives (m'outifs) Of Resistance

The motives for resistance towards the Nazi regime were not **homogenous** (homatschenes) and often **entwined** (intwaint) with each other. Fighting a terrorist regime in all its different facets of injustices naturally needs more than just one concept.

The military resistance by the men of the July plot, the intellectual resistance of the "White Rose", the individual resistance by Georg Elser were not the only ones. There were many other resistance activities against Hitler and the NS regime in Germany. Especially active was the protestant church, the communists with the "red chapel" (Rote Kapelle) and socialist but also a lot of conservative political forces. Their motives for resistance varied depending on their individual political or religious backgrounds. The communist for instance wanted to build a dictatorship of the proletariat in place of the Hitler regime. Its legitimacy is very questionable from the aspects of the human rights. All religious resistance had one thing in common. Their believe in Christ's act of salvation for a peaceful world in justice united them in their conviction that to fight against **hatred** and violence had become a duty of all people. The human rights are very **noticeable** (n'outisebl) here.

The motives of the three cases I described were different too. Elser saw Hitler as plain evil in person. He acted convinced that had to prevent a monstrous bloodshed. His attempt failed and millions died.

The July plot 1944 by Stauffenberg was motivated by the **inevitable** ('inävetabl) military defeat of Germany which could only be avoided by eliminating Hitler and an immediate peace agreement with the allies. National interests were justification for high **treason** (triesen). It is surprising that radical anti-Semites and war criminals also participated in the July plot.

Some historians add more value to the November 8th 1938 George Elser plot and the “White Rose” leaflet actions at the university of Munich on February 18th 1943 because those had more of a democratic character. Where as Stauffenberg was a monarch. But aren’t those just labels?

It’s a fact that the horrific eradication of the Jews was the main motivation for 20 of Stauffenberg’s co-conspirators to join the plot. So they admitted before the so-called “court of the people”. Most historians find that a learning process took place in some of the men of the July plot. Under the impression of Hitler’s brutal aggressive and violent politics they went from former agreement to resolute rejection to the point where they were willing to break their oath.

The “White Rose” was the only group which clearly and consequently referred on their Leaflets to the human rights to fight against the Nazi system.

Here are some quotes from leaflet number six. The last of the flyers Quote:

“We grew up in a country where freedom of speech is ruthlessly (r’ußlessli) restrained, (...)

We are after true science and real freedom of thought! (..)

That’s the beginning of our fight for free self-determination, without we can not establish intellectual value.(...)

“It’s about the fight of every single one of us for our future, freedom, and honour, in a political system which is aware of its moral responsibilities”.

And can it be said any more clear than with the following slogan from the fifth leaflet?

Quote:” Freedom of speech, freedom of denomination, protection of the individual citizen from the **arbitrariness** (arbitrariness) of a criminal political system. Those are the fundamentals of a new Europe”.

The Non-Violent Resistance Of The “White Rose”

Let’s not forget one extremely important aspect at this point. The members of the “White Rose” acted consequently non-violent. That’s what sets them apart from Elser and the men around Staufenberg. In my opinion this makes their fight and efforts so much more honourable not only from a moralistic point of view. Non-violence is one of the essential principles of the human rights. Because of its non-violence the resistance of the “White Rose” legitimized itself also in a legal and humanitarian way.

Let’s jump to the present. One of the 644 intellectuals of the PEN centre list is writer Liu Xiaobo. He was sentenced to 11 years in jail on December 24th in 2009 in Beijing. One of the so called “crimes” he was accused of was. I quote:

“The greatness of non-violent resistance is when a man even as victim faced with biggest tyranny and its terrible impacts, answers hate with love, prejudice with dignity and violence with rationality.”

Resistance Without Consequences In The Nazi Regime

It is tragic and cruel that many of the resistance fighters paid for their courage with their lives. And it's almost as tragic that none of the resistance actions managed to even get close to any of its aspired goals. The bloodshed at the frontlines and behind just kept going with the same intensity. The monstrous killing machines of the Nazis just kept on destroying countless innocent lives. Millions of allies' soldiers were killed, trying to stop Hitler and his **accomplices** ('äkomleses) like Mussolini. And the human rights were violated more and more each time over.

My deceased mother-in-law, who was a fellow student of Hans Scholl, told me that the University of Munich felt like an ice box after the execution of the Scholl siblings and Christoph Probst on February 22 in 1943. All students were only wearing Nazi uniforms without any exception anymore. She said no one would even dare to have a critical thought, let alone verbalizing it. Circumstances were even more dictatorial as before after the trial. The fellow students who had been specifically addressed by the "White Rose" with the sixth and last leaflet were shying away with no exception.

The Resistance Gene (dschin)

But on the other hand none of the accused broke down psychologically in Hitler's propaganda trials the so called "peoples court". Nor were they looking for excuses to save their necks. That applies to all of the accused there.

The "White Rose" as well as to the conspirators of July 20 in 1944 as well as for Georg Elser who was tortured in the concentration camps by the Gestapo.

It seems as if all people have an **indomitable** (ind'ometible) inner strength to fight against injustice and oppression, almost as if there were a kind of "resistance **gene**" in our body. Some people can obviously only take terror and oppression of their basic

human rights up to a certain physiological and psychological point before they become resistance fighters like Sophie Scholl the student and Georg Elser the craftsman.

Resistance And Human Suffering

Resistance fighters had to suffer terrible pains but inflicted the same kind of pain on their families, friends, innocent victims and their relatives. That was inevitable and is therefore also a very tragic aspect of the problem.

Take for instance the parents of the Scholl siblings. They've lost two of their beloved children. Young and talented students, whose famous leaflets ring through in brilliance and content until today, smart people full of life who had what it takes to become scientists or political leaders after the end of the terror system in a new democratic Germany. Leaders that were needed so badly in my country in that Nazi infested post war period. Robert Scholl who was Sophie's and Hans Scholl's father and the relatives of the other members of the "White Rose" didn't just suffer under the burden that was inflicted on them they were proud of their children's courage and willingness to make sacrifices.

Almost everyone who's seen our movie "Sophie Scholl, the last days" asks himself the same question we did from the very first moment when we started making this movie. What would I have done personally in Sophie Scholl's place? Would I have also given my life for political ideas, which did not stand any chance to be realized instead must have seemed almost unthinkable under those circumstances?

We can of course say that we are not in the same situation as people were back then, although the honest answer would probably almost always be "no."

But every generation is presented with the same challenge in a new and different way. Not to look away in the face of injustice, passiveness fatalism, but to overcome all fears for morality and conscience, in other words when the human rights are demanding it. Even to the point of life or death.

Would we rise to the streets as Iranien's in Theheran to stand up against the Mullahs today? To bring back the human rights to a country, which has been oppressed for decades and would we risk to be sentenced to death for it?

I don't know what I would do if it would concern my country.

All I can say is that the fight will never stop. And that there are people out there today, who are willing to fight for freedom, equality and human dignity.
