

The White Rose

*Do you know the country without freedom, the country of terror and tyranny?
Yes, you know it well, but are afraid to talk about it.
They have intimidated you to such an extent that you don't dare talk for fear of reprisals.
Through their unscrupulous terror tactics against young and old, men and women,
they have succeeded in making you spineless puppets to do their bidding.*
—Helmuth Hubener, executed by the Third Reich, at age 16, in 1942

As we slowly but incrementally are being manipulated by our government and stooge mainstream news agencies to confuse the concept of patriotism with that of its malignant form—nationalism—it might be appropriate to share a story of patriots who wouldn't go along with the nationalistic fervor that swept Germany before and during World War 2.

That particular nationalism lost its attraction, by the way, midway through the war when the German people began to realize and become victimized by all that was going on within and without their nation.

We are currently tilting toward nationalism. This gradual process effectively got a major boost when President Bush issued the “if you're not with us, you're against us” broadside to his fellow citizens and those around the globe.

George Orwell, who left us with “Animal Farm” and “1984” to point us toward the things to come, had this to say about nationalism and patriotism:

“By ‘nationalism’ I mean . . . the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests. Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism.”

Our government is corrupt. Democrats and Republicans. It doesn't matter.

They argue policy and issues in front of you, but get things done behind the scenes at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Our military is being misused and will soon find itself deployed in parts of Iran.

Surveillance and the end of privacy are upon us. This we're told is the price of security. But there will be no security. We will suffer a greater 9-11 and our government will act once again like Moe, Larry and Curly. Then they will take away more freedom.

And when we realize—and we all will—that we've been had, it will be too late.

Those who remain silent—to include the churches that, as they did in Germany, would not speak out against totalitarianism and the legalized murder called warfare—can take solace in knowing they all did their part to usher in The New Reich.

And now the story of the White Rose:

The White Rose was an organization of mostly university students in Munich during World War 2. The White Rose group, among several others at the time, opposed the Nazi regime for its fascism at home and its acts of atrocity elsewhere across the European continent.

The core members of the group were Hans Scholl, his sister Sophie, his girlfriend Traute Lafrenz, German soldier Christoph Probst, Alexander Schmorell, Willie Graff, his sister Anneliese, philosophy professor Kurt Huber, and Jürgen Wittenstein.

The group wrote and distributed informational leaflets that criticized not only the Third Reich, but the German people who refused to resist in light of the brutality of their government and military.

The group published six editions of leaflets—in the days of the hand-cranked duplicator machine—that encouraged passive resistance as the preferred way to bring about the downfall of the government. A seventh edition was about to be published, but the bearer of the draft was apprehended.

Besides stack distributions in several cities, the leaflets were also mailed from various locales in the south of Germany to people in the education and medical professions and even to pub owners, whose venues often were used as informal meeting places.

Then the White Rose raised the stakes a bit higher. For three nights in February, 1943, Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, and Willie Graff painted anti-Nazi slogans along the main thoroughfare in Munich, though the area was crawling with police and military personnel.

Three days after the last night of slogan-painting, February 18, Hans and Sophie Scholl were distributing stacks of leaflets throughout the buildings on the campus of the University of Munich, when they realized—as they were hurrying away—that they still had leaflets in the suitcase in which they carried them.

That's when they made a fatal decision: They chose to ascend to an empty atrium high atop one of the university buildings and cast the remaining leaflets to the wind to fall in a shower upon the students below.

Sophie recalled their actions that day, by stating, "It was either high spirits or stupidity that made me throw 80 to 100 leaflets from the third floor of the university into the inner courtyard."

As students read them, they also headed up to the atrium from which the Scholls had tossed the leaflets. So, too, did a university maintenance man—a Nazi collaborator—who spotted the couple and summoned the police. The building was locked down, the Scholls were arrested, and interrogated by the Gestapo.

(Legend has it that the Scholls had plenty of warning but refused to make good their escape.)

Four days later, on February 22, the Scholls and Christoph Probst, who was arrested on February 19, were executed by guillotine.

Willie Graff was also arrested on February 18 and executed by guillotine in October 1943.

Alex Schmorell was arrested on February 24 and executed by guillotine in July 1943.

Kurt Huber was arrested on February 27 and executed by guillotine in July 1943.

Jürgen Wittenstein, Traute Lafrenz, and Graff's sister Anneliese survived. Lafrenz, reportedly, is still alive and residing in the United States.

In his farewell letter to his sister, Graff, a devout Christian, wrote these words: "They shall continue what we have begun."

Fascism is not just what happens in other countries. It happens in any nation that desires empire while depriving its citizens of their freedoms behind the justification it's for their own good.

Well, like it or not, fascism is happening here.

But can any of you be counted upon to begin the work that others will surely continue?