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Julia Jentsch is terrific! An ace performance!”

— Derek Elley, VARIETY

SOPHIE SCHOLL

THE FINAL DAYS

The true story
of a young woman
who did what few
in Nazi Germany
dared even think.



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SOPHIE SCHOLL

T H E F I N A L D A Y S

A F I L M B Y M A R C R O T H E M U N D

PUBLICIST (NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES, NATIONAL):

SASHA BERMAN

Shotwell Media
2721 Second Street
Santa Monica, CA 90405
phone 310.450.5571
fax 310.450.5577
cell. 310.428.8942
SashaBerman@earthlink.net

ACADEMY AWARD CAMPAIGN PUBLICIST

BONNIE VOLAND

3827 York Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90065
phone 323.344.0211
bvoland@usa.net

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WWW.SOPHIESCHOLLMOVIE.COM
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A Z E I T G E I S T F I L M S R E L E A S E

247 CENTRE ST • 2ND FL • NEW YORK • NY 10013
www.zeitgeistfilms.com • mail@zeitgeistfilms.com
(212) 274-1989 • FAX (212) 274-1644

SOPHIE SCHOLL

T H E F I N A L D A Y S

SYNOPSIS

The true story of Germany's most famous anti-Nazi heroine is brought to thrilling life in the multi-award winning drama SOPHIE SCHOLL—THE FINAL DAYS. Academy Award Nominee for Best Foreign Language Film, SOPHIE SCHOLL stars Julia Jentsch in a luminous performance as the young coed-turned-fearless activist. Armed with long-buried historical records of her incarceration, director Marc Rothemund expertly re-creates the last six days of Sophie Scholl's life: a heart-stopping journey from arrest to interrogation, trial and sentence.

In 1943, as Hitler continues to wage war across Europe, a group of college students mount an underground resistance movement in Munich. Dedicated expressly to the downfall of the monolithic Third Reich war machine, they call themselves the White Rose. One of its few female members, Sophie Scholl is captured during a dangerous mission to distribute pamphlets on campus with her brother Hans. Unwavering in her convictions and loyalty to the White Rose, her cross-examination by the Gestapo quickly escalates into a searing test of wills as Scholl delivers a passionate call to freedom and personal responsibility that is both haunting and timeless.

SOPHIE SCHOLL—THE FINAL DAYS received three Lolas (German Oscars) including the Audience Award and Best Actress Award to Jentsch for her brilliant characterization of the title role. Jentsch also won Best Actress at the European Film Awards and the film also won two Silver Bears for Best Director and Best Actress at the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival.

FURTHER PRESS NOTES

SOPHIE SCHOLL—THE FINAL DAYS is the moving portrait of one of the few heroines in German history. The film depicts the last six days (17-22 February 1943) in the life of Sophie Scholl from her own perspective: that of a courageous and vibrant young woman who is willing to face death for her belief in the ideals of the 'White Rose.' Through their resistance and protest against the Nazi regime, Sophie Scholl and her fellow members of the White Rose resistance group have become synonymous with civil courage and a peaceful struggle against the rule of violence and oppression.

Although the film follows the historical facts as closely and faithfully as possible (using the original interrogation records), it has been written and directed as a feature film. Taking a sensitive and refreshingly open-minded view of history, young director Marc Rothemund re-awakens the now virtually mythical, iconic figure of Sophie Scholl. Heading the strong ensemble he has put together for his project is Julia Jentsch (*The Edukators*) in the lead role. Starring alongside Jentsch are Fabian Hinrichs as Hans Scholl, Alexander Held (*Downfall*) as the Gestapo interrogator Robert Mohr, André Hennicke as Judge Roland Freisler and Johanna Gastdorf as Sophie Scholl's cellmate Else Gebel.

With this gripping feature, Marc Rothemund continues his successful collaboration with Fred Breinersdorfer (screenplay), Sven Burgemeister (producer), Martin Langer (director of photography) and Hans Funck (editor).

A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR
MARC ROTHEMUND

What is SOPHIE SCHOLL–THE FINAL DAYS about?

Our film focuses on Sophie Scholl's last six days – from the preparation of the leaflet operation at the University of Munich to her capture, interrogation, sentencing and execution. It is an extreme situation in which we also become acquainted with her character, her past and the ideas of the White Rose.

In what ways is it different to Michael Verhoeven's film about the White Rose?

Michael Verhoeven's film 'Die weisse Rose' describes the development of the entire resistance group; the dramatic events following the arrest of the members take up only a minor portion of the film. That film ends with the arrest of Sophie Scholl; ours begins with this, and we accompany Sophie on her emotionally turbulent journey to her death over the period of five days. We also show how Sophie grows under pressure as she assumes her duty.

Percy Adlon's film 'Fünf letzte Tage' also covers this period ...

Percy Adlon's 'Fünf letzte Tage' devotes itself to this period of time, but it looks at the events through the perspective of Else Gebel, Sophie's cellmate in the Gestapo prison. That film ends when Sophie is led to the courthouse. Our film, in turn, is consistently narrated from Sophie's point of view, and it goes further. We have reconstructed the trial and brought to life the infamous 'blood judge' Roland Freisler. And we also depict Sophie's stay in Stadelheim prison: her last cigarette, her farewell to her parents, her last meal, her prayers, her execution. But perhaps what sets this film apart the most from the previous films on Sophie Scholl is that we were able to consult documents that were still inaccessible in the 1980s.

Namely?

Above all the original minutes of the Gestapo interrogations. These previously unpublished documents had been hidden away in East-German archives for decades and were only made accessible in 1990. Especially the interrogations of Sophie Scholl are tremendously exciting. What particularly fascinated me was the fact that the Gestapo official Robert Mohr, an interrogation specialist with 26 years of experience, actually believed that Sophie Scholl was innocent after his first, five-hour-long questioning. For five hours she listened to him, never batting an eyelash, never hesitating at the wrong moment. An incredible achievement. Then, when incriminating evidence against her is found after a search of her apartment, she continues to deny her involvement. It is not until she is confronted with the interrogation minutes of her brother, in which he confesses to everything and accepts full responsibility that she says: Yes, I took part in this and am proud of it. From then on she tries to protect her friends and convince the interrogation officer that the 'White Rose', whose leaflets always gave the impression of coming from a large organization, consisted solely of herself and her brother.

Up to now little was known about the interrogation officer ...

Yes, since before us hardly anyone had taken the trouble of conducting research on him. Robert Mohr was an interesting figure: an interrogation specialist who had already worked under two other governments; and a passive collaborator who upheld the laws, no matter who passed them. I found it thrilling to see how someone like that could be in denial of the horrible events transpiring at that time. For a long time I asked myself why, after interrogating Sophie Scholl over several days, he offered her a chance to save her neck at the end. Then I found out that Mohr had a son of Sophie's age, who had just been sent to the eastern front shortly before.

Did you have an opportunity to talk to this son?

Yes, we interviewed his son Willy Mohr, who is now 83 years old, for four hours – and won deep insights into Robert Mohr's nature. We also conducted long interviews with Anneliese Knoop-Graf, the sister of the 'White Rose' member Willi Graf. She was questioned by Mohr for four months and was able to describe both Mohr and the interrogation room very precisely. Moreover, she was in the same cell as Sophie Scholl during these four months, also with Else Gebel as cellmate. The two were good friends even after the war. She was thus able to provide valuable information on Else Gebel, too. And we had the chance to speak to Else Gebel's nephew. Another important witness was Elisabeth Hartnagel, Sophie Scholl's younger sister, who later married Sophie's fiancé Fritz Hartnagel. Her conversation with the filmmakers was her very first interview in front of a camera. She also opened up her private archives to us. All these

witnesses gave us additional support in our endeavor to tell our story as authentically as possible.

What sources did you use for your depiction of the trial?

We had the written grounds for the death sentences by Judge Roland Freisler, the indictment and the official minutes of the legal proceedings. We also had a number of eyewitness accounts. Basing himself on all of this material, Fred Breinersdorfer, who practiced law for many years himself, wrote a thrilling judicial hearing: three defendants – three completely different viewpoints. First there was Christoph Probst, who fights for his survival and, with the assent of Hans and Sophie Scholl, distances himself from the ideas of the 'White Rose' since he does not want his three children to grow up without a father. Then there is Hans Scholl, whose arguments strike at the heart of Judge Freisler's views since Scholl, unlike Freisler, has actually fought on the front for his country. And finally there is Sophie, who argues on an emotional level and is guided by her natural sense of right and wrong. She courageously challenges Freisler to the very end.

She marches unbroken towards death ...

I admire her courage. She turned down the 'golden bridge' offered to her by the interrogation officer Robert Mohr – thus practically signing her own death sentence. I find this approach to death quite startling: how does such a life-affirming, positive-minded young woman like Sophie Scholl come to terms with the fact that her life is being taken away from her? How does she find a meaning in her death? And, of course, as an atheist I ask myself: is it easier to face death as a believer?

The script emphasizes the inner world of the characters ...

The emotional aspect was the most important one for Fred Breinersdorfer and myself: the emotions of the characters, their viewpoints, their conflicts – this is what constitutes the red thread that runs through the story. I had already been astonished by the dialogues when reading the as yet unpublished interrogation protocol. Then, when you have such great actors at your disposal such as we did, an entirely new dimension comes into play: it is really incredible how Julia Jentsch, for example, threw herself into her role, how she empathized with Sophie's emotional life and awakened it to life.

If you had to choose, what is more important to you: that a film is engrossing – or that what is shown is historically authentic down to the last detail?

The first. But in our case we were lucky since the facts that we researched did not contradict each other. We were able to piece them all together like a puzzle. We knew the course of the events and were able to build an emotional structure on this groundwork, which enabled us to trace Sophie Scholl's feelings and frame of mind. This is how I approached the figure with Julia Jentsch and how we shaped her character with all the information we had, and according to the way we saw it. I am very happy that Julia agreed to go on this difficult emotional trip.

How did you put your cast together? How did you find Julia Jentsch in particular?

I had seen Julia both on the screen and on the stage, the latter in 'Othello' in the Munich Kammerspiele. She is an extremely intense actress who commands an incredible power when she is on the stage or in front of the camera. And she would have given an arm and a leg to play Sophie. We needed fighters like this for the film, since the shooting conditions were difficult for everyone. Julia, for example, had to start at six in the morning, then she worked till 6:30 pm, went to the Kammerspiele to star in a play in the evening – and was back at work on the set punctually at six the next morning. Fabian Hinrichs, whom I had admired in 'Gun-Shy' (Schussangst) and who plays Hans Scholl, flew from Munich to Berlin at 5 pm on his first day of shooting, then stood on the stage for three and a half hours at the Volksbühne before traveling back by car to Munich to shoot with us for another 14 hours. Only someone who absolutely wants to be part of this project can do this.

In your production you have avoided all too blatant topical references ...

Intentionally. I want to cut down the distance as much as possible so that today's viewer can slip right into the action. This is why I paid attention to show as few uniforms and swastikas as possible. As for the costumes, I wanted originals from the 1940s, but chose those that are the least disconcerting to us today. I even went into a café with the actors in costume, and no one seemed surprised. I don't want to make copies of historical scenes, but explore current issues. How do we react when we are confronted with injustice? How far are we willing to go with our personal commitment? There are still wars and dictatorships today all over the world. Only recently did the people in Ukraine go out on the streets to protest even though they knew that they could have been mowed down by tanks. I would be

happy if more Muslims would rise up against Islamic fanatics. But the issue of civil courage is also one that we face in our everyday lives – for example, in bullying at the workplace or at school, where the weaker ones are trampled on. To rise up against injustice, to refuse to close our eyes – this will always remain an important issue. And this is why viewers shouldn't feel that they're sitting in a history class in my film.

Where did you shoot? On original locations?

As much as possible, yes. You can see, for example, Hans and Sophie Scholl leaving their former apartment in Munich's Franz-Joseph-Strasse and stepping out into the courtyard. Since the Schwabing workshop where the 'White Rose' printed its leaflets unfortunately no longer exists, we reconstructed it after extensive research. The Wittelsbacher Palais in the Brienner Strasse, where Munich's Gestapo headquarters were located, was torn down in 1964, but there are several other buildings with similar facades, for example the Government of Upper Bavaria. We had detailed ground-plans of the interiors and rebuilt them faithfully in the Bavaria Studios. And, of course, we also filmed at the Ludwig-Maximilian University and the Munich Courthouse. Incidentally, I discovered on old photos that the trees on the Geschwister-Scholl Square in front of the University, which were replaced some time after the war, are now exactly the size they were in the early 1940s. I consider this a good omen: the time is ripe for this film!

A CONVERSATION WITH LEAD ACTRESS
JULIA JENTSCH

What was for you the most interesting aspect in the film SOPHIE SCHOLL–THE FINAL DAYS?

That the situation was so extreme and so exceptional. We follow a young woman who's going to die shortly, we accompany her throughout the police interrogations and the trial, and all the way to her execution. A young woman who faces death with incredible strength, and who fights courageously for her goals and ideals till the very end. This both fascinated and intrigued me, and I asked myself how did she think, how did she feel? I wanted to get close to this character. It was clear that it would be a major challenge. But at the same time I knew that this is a story that absolutely deserves to be told!

How did you prepare for the role?

I read a lot, especially Sophie Scholl's letters and diaries, but also the minutes of the interrogation. Before we started shooting, I got together with Alexander Held quite often in order to learn the dialogues and work out the interrogation scenes together. I found it very nice that he also felt a need for this collaboration. Then I saw the videos of the interviews that Marc Rothemund conducted with Anneliese Graf and Elisabeth Hartnagel. They were incredibly exciting – even though they threw me somewhat into a panic when they described how Sophie spoke ...

She spoke with a Swabian accent?

Yes. However, Marc and I had quickly agreed that I was not to speak like this in the film. Sophie Scholl with a Swabian accent would have created a distance and caused a certain perplexity that we wanted to avoid at all costs. In any event, I soon noticed that it wasn't good when I tried to copy Sophie as closely as possible. I look different from her, I have a different voice range ... Instead, I tried to develop a feeling for her, for example through the way she wrote. This at least gives us an idea about how she thought and what was important to her. It is in this manner that I tried to come as close to her as possible.

Do you find it principally more difficult to portray historical figures?

I do feel that it is quite difficult. As an actor, you want to do justice to every figure that you portray. But when you're interpreting people who actually lived, there is another component, an enormous responsibility towards those who knew them. I really do not want to be too intrusive or importunate. Marc tried to break down my scruples by saying: 'Sure, we're trying to do justice to history and to be as authentic as possible. But we're also not obsessively chasing after every detail. Ultimately, we're telling our own version of the story based on our research and on the results of our shoot.' That convinced me.

Did you see the films by Michael Verhoeven and Percy Adlon on Sophie Scholl before the shooting?

I already knew 'Die Weisse Rose'. But since that film focuses chiefly on a different period of time, there was no danger of letting myself be too influenced here. 'Fünf letzte Tage' I saw much later, and I was very glad in hindsight. I thought it was very good, and if I had been familiar with it before the shooting, it might have exerted too much of an influence on me.

How would you characterize Sophie Scholl? What makes her special?

I had the impression that she took a great interest in people. She had an enormous sense of compassion. I find it amazing how she wrote about meeting people from all walks of life, and how she communicated with them. And on top of this came a great thirst for knowledge. In her letters you keep reading: 'Send me more new books, I'm dying of hunger!'

Do you think that Sophie's faith helped her on her path?

Absolutely. I find it interesting here that while her father tended to keep away from the church, her mother was very religious, but did not force her faith upon her children. The Scholl siblings were thus exposed to both points of view, were able to observe them critically and decide what they wanted for themselves. They thus found their way to God on their own. I am convinced that Sophie culled great strength from her faith just before her death, when she was so alone. Her prayers are depicted in the film.

In the Gestapo interrogations she showed that she had nerves of steel ...

Indeed. She actually managed to mislead the interrogation officer, an experienced professional, for hours on end and to convince him of her innocence. Sophie even becomes a little eerie when you read the records of the interrogation. She must have had an enormous serenity and self-assuredness during these hours. Her strong sense of compassion and her need to protect her friends no doubt pushed her to accept full responsibility when the evidence against her became crushing and she was no longer able to deny her involvement. And she also had the courage to turn down the chance that the interrogation officer gave her. She practically signed her own death sentence by standing up for her ideas and saying: 'I repeat what I said. I was the guilty one.'

Did you ever ask yourself how you would have reacted in this situation?

Of course. And I can only say that I hope I would have made the same decisions. But I really don't know. It would be presumptuous to claim that I would have acted the same way. However, the war should also be taken into consideration here. Sophie may have thought: 'Countless people are being killed in air raids or dying somewhere on the front for this immoral war – why shouldn't I commit myself to a good cause, one that's worth fighting for?'

At the beginning of the film, we see Sophie singing and dancing...

Yes, we felt it was important to at least hint a little at what a life-affirming person Sophie was. On old photos we can see how she went hiking and swimming with her friends, how she had fun at parties and drank wine. She most certainly wasn't someone who longed for death, but a young woman who loved life and was interested in everything.

Not an ethereal creature with a halo ...

No, a real person. A young woman. One shouldn't forget this. On one side we have the statement of her executioner, who said that he had never in his entire working life seen anyone go to the scaffold as upright as Sophie Scholl. But on the other side we also know that she cried, for example when she heard that Christoph Probst had been arrested. This was for me the biggest problem I faced: in every scene I had to ask myself what Sophie was feeling right then. Are her inner strength and sense of security prevailing here, or do her fear and sadness break through? I had to contend with this dilemma throughout the shooting.

A permanent struggle between strength and fear of death?

Yes, exactly. That's precisely what makes this character so thrilling. I would have found it totally uninteresting to portray a larger-than-life being hovering in some unattainable distance. The viewers should realize that Sophie was a totally normal girl with all the fears of a normal girl – and that she made decisions that we could also make. We can't simply hide behind some excuse, saying: 'I'm not as strong as Sophie Scholl.' This is absurd. Sophie showed us that we can also overcome our fears and weaknesses – and that we must fight in order to be strong.

Thus it's not a film that only looks into the past through binoculars ...

No, absolutely not. The issue of civil courage keeps coming back all the time. For example, if someone is assaulted in the subway. Sophie forces us to ask ourselves: how would we behave? Do we really always act in such a way that we can reconcile our behavior with our conscience? How far would we go for our ideals? As far as this is concerned, the film is really up-to-the-minute!

INSPIRATION THROUGH FACTS

NOTES ON THE FILM
BY FRED BREINERSDORFER
AND MARC ROTHEMUND

It is with a mixture of revulsion, excitement and reverence that we took up the Gestapo's records on the White Rose. When one reads them carefully, one is particularly struck by the beginning of the interrogation, at how skillfully the siblings deny everything and how magnificently Sophie nearly manages to save her neck. Then come the crushing evidence and the confession, followed by the attempt of interrogation officer Mohr to find out the names of the co-conspirators. Afterwards come the anguishing hours of Sophie's endeavor to incriminate as few friends and fellow conspirators as possible. And finally, Sophie's interrogation records show how she turned down the chance that Mohr offered her – the chance to get a milder sentence, but at the price of betraying her ideals.

Nevertheless, an uncritical reading of the texts could give rise to the impression that the siblings had already revealed the identities of their friends relatively early and without any significant resistance. But this would be wrong, for we should not forget that we are dealing here with the perpetrators' records. The style and diction make it absolutely clear that they were written up by the interrogation officer. This reflects a long tradition of legal courts and police procedure in Germany, which was not invented by the Nazis and is still practiced in this manner today. The police officer questions, takes notes and dictates the minutes in the form of a summary in the presence of the defendant. Questions and answers are only added afterwards if the text still contains some unresolved issues after its completion.

In a word, in the case of Sophie's records, it is Mohr's voice, his view of the events and not Sophie's statements that determine the contents of the minutes. Mohr's comments, his gestures, his attempts to bully her and other tactics he may have employed are not recorded there. And neither are Sophie's reactions. But what does emerge from the document are elements of political discussion and Sophie's courageous statements.

Excerpt translated from the book 'Sophie Scholl – Die letzten Tage', edited by Fred Breinersdorfer,
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UPTIGHT BEFORE THE EXECUTIONER

Freislers judicial murder of Christoph Probst, and of Hans and Sophie Scholl

We can see from the unparalleled reaction of its 'terror justice' to what extent the Nazi regime felt threatened by the actions of the 'White Rose'. On Thursday 18 February, Hans and Sophie Scholl are arrested and interrogated for three whole days, until 20 February, with only brief interruptions. On Friday 19 February Christoph Probst is arrested in the offices of the 'Studentenkompanie' in Innsbruck and brought to Munich's Wittelsbacher Palais. During his interrogation on 20 February he confesses to having written the draft of a text that was found on Hans Scholl and that Probst had written at Scholl's request. The following day, Sunday, 21 February, the indictment is completed and ready. The hearing is fixed for Monday morning, 22 February at 10 am, before the Reich's formally highest court, the 'People's Court' (Volksgerichtshof). Although it resides in Berlin, it will be meeting in Munich's courthouse. The presiding judge is none other than the president of the 'People's Court' Dr. Roland Freisler himself, who has flown to Munich specifically for this occasion.

It is due to Gauleiter Paul Giesler that the 'People's Court' can be activated at all for this, and so quickly at that. Hans Scholl, Christoph Probst, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf are soldiers. They are thus not actually subject to civil justice, but to military justice. But already on 19 February Giesler contacts Reichsleiter Martin Bormann in Berlin and informs the Gestapo Special Commission of the results of his intervention on that same day at 5 pm. 'General Field Marshal Keitel has dismissed the soldiers in question from the Wehrmacht and agrees that they be sentenced by the 'People's Court'. The Gauleiter requests that the sentence be carried out in the coming days and the execution as soon as possible thereafter,' wrote Giesler.

The sentence. Not only Giesler's telltale use of this word proves that the outcome of the 'judicial proceedings' is already clear from the start. Neither the Gestapo nor the court have given the defendants a chance to procure themselves a defense attorney. The families of the accused are also unable to obtain legal help since they are kept in the dark both about the arrest and about the forthcoming trial of their loved ones (as to the Scholl parents, they are informed thanks to the courageous intervention of Traute Lafrenz and Jürgen Wittenstein). The Reich Supreme Justice (Oberreichsanwalt) sends the indictment for high treason to two court-appointed counsels on Sunday afternoon; the trial is scheduled for the following morning. The counsel assigned to Hans and Sophie Scholl has neither the courage nor the inclination to request a postponement of the trial in order to become acquainted with the material and consult with his clients. Else Gebel reports about the pitiful show put on by attorney August Klein, who paid Sophie Scholl a pro-forma visit in her cell and asked her if she had any wishes, instead of conversing seriously with her about a promising defense strategy. 'No, all you want is for him to confirm that your brother has the right to be executed by shooting. (...) He is literally terrified by your questions about whether you will be publicly hanged or whether you must die through the guillotine.' Gebel then adds: 'These things asked so calmly, and by a young girl to boot – this is not at all what he was expecting.' Attorney Dr. Ferdinand Seidl at least tries to petition the court to have the trial of his client Christoph Probst separated from the main trial against the Scholl siblings, but his efforts are in vain.

The trial on Monday morning is planned as a tribunal. However, Gestapo and Nazi jurists fear the unpredictable reactions of a public that has not been carefully selected beforehand. The trial is thus closed to the public. The benches are filled with members of Nazi organizations sent specifically as delegates. Junior lawyer Leo Samberger, one of the few independent witnesses, reports about the uneasiness of the onlookers: 'One saw tension everywhere in people's faces. I believe I am right in concluding that most of them were pale with fear – the fear that spread outward from the judge's desk.' The University janitor Schmied, along with Gestapo commissioners Robert Mohr and Anton Mahler were scheduled to appear as witnesses, but were not heard. The prosecutor, Oberreichsanwalt Weyersberg, and the judge, as well as the defendants' counsel formed the silent backdrop to the lead actor in the red robe. 'Raging, screaming, howling to the point where his voice broke, leaping up explosively again and again,' is how witness Leo Samberger describes the conduct of the 'People's Court' President Freisler which, however, did not intimidate or break the defendants. 'The bearing of the defendants made a profound impression, not only on me. Here were people who were obviously filled with their ideals. Calm, composed, clear and brave were their answers to the sometimes shameless questions put to them by the presiding judge, who carried himself throughout solely as a prosecutor, and not as a judge.'

Freisler categorically refused to give a hearing to the parents of Hans and Sophie Scholl, who were struggling to get into the courtroom, and had them removed by court ushers. Freisler's murderous attitude emerges particularly clearly in his treatment of Christoph Probst. Even according to the Gestapo's findings, Probst had had no part in the wall slogans and leaflet actions that were at the center of the prosecution. Everything was reduced to a text found on Hans Scholl, which Probst had written at his request, but which had not been reproduced. No one besides

Hans Scholl had read it. Probst confessed and claimed that he had written the text in a fit of psychotic depression because his wife had just given birth with great pains and was still suffering from childbed fever. As a father of three children, he begged the court to spare his life. When Hans Scholl also begged for mercy for Probst in his closing statement, Freisler cut him off with the words: 'If you have nothing to say for yourself, be still!' Through his manner of conducting the trial and with the death sentence that he pronounced, also for Christoph Probst, Freisler unabashedly demonstrated his decision-making process, which derived from despotism and knew absolutely no judicial considerations or differentiation. The message was: the 'People's Court' physically destroys not only those who, like the Scholls, offer resistance and admit it, but also those who are ideologically close to, or friends with, people who exercise resistance. No thought is free any longer. A Gestapo official noted Hans Scholl's commentary on the Court President on a document for Freisler's file: 'Scholl describes the trial as a complete farce.'

The unanimous statement approved by all factions of the German Parliament (Bundestag) on 25 January 1985 describes exactly what had occurred during the trial in Munich on the morning of 22 February 1943, namely 'that the institution designated as 'People's Court' was not a court of justice in a constitutional sense, but an instrument of terror used to impose the National-Socialist dictatorship.'

Freisler announces the sentence at 12:45 pm. 'During wartime, the defendants, in leaflets, have called for the sabotage of armaments and the overthrowing of our people's National-Socialist form of life. They have propagated defeatist ideas and shamelessly insulted our Fuehrer, thus favoring the enemies of the Reich and sabotaging our power of defense. They will thus be punished by death. They have forfeited their citizenship forever.'

The plea for mercy that junior lawyer Leo Samberger helps Robert Scholl to formulate, is not taken into consideration. Nonetheless, Robert Scholl and his wife are allowed to visit with their children Hans and Sophie in Stadelheim. The parents do not yet know that the executions are already scheduled for that same day.

Christoph Probst is unable to bid his family farewell. He has himself baptized at the last moment by a Catholic priest. The cell guard allows the three friends to smoke one last cigarette together. At 5 pm, Sophie, Hans and Christoph are guillotined by the executioner Reichart.

Freisler condemned six people to death from the circle of the 'White Rose': all three defendants of the first trial of 22 February 1943: Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst; as well as Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf and Professor Kurt Huber in the second trial on 19 April 1943. Altogether, the First Senate of the 'People's Court', which Freisler headed, pronounced death sentences on about 2,295 individuals between 1942 and Freisler's death in 1945. On 3 February 1945, the day of his death, Freisler was once again busy carrying out 'justice'. During a break in a trial, he was killed by shrapnel in an air raid on Berlin.

–Ulrich Chaussy, author

Excerpt translated from the book 'Sophie Scholl – Die letzten Tage', edited by Fred Breinersdorfer,
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CAST

JULIA JENTSCH (SOPHIE SCHOLL)

Julia Jentsch (born in 1978) studied at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst 'Ernst Busch' in Berlin and began her career in the theater. She has been an ensemble member of the Munich Kammerspiele since 2001. There she has starred in roles such as Desdemona in Luk Perceval's production of Shakespeare's 'Othello', Elektra in Andreas Kriegenburg's staging of Euripides' 'Orestes' as well as in Lars-Ole Walburg's production of Sophocles' 'Antigone', in which she played the lead role. She was proclaimed best young actress by the trade journal 'Theater heute' in 2002.

Julia Jentsch has also appeared in a number of television films since 2001 such as, for example, Rainer Kaufmann's 'Und die Braut wusste von nichts' (2002), Christoph Stark's 'Bloch – Tausendschönchen' (2002) and Jürgen Bretzinger's 'Tatort' thriller episode 'Bitteres Brot' (2003). She made her movie debut in 2000 in Judith Kennel's much acclaimed feature ZORNIGE KÜSSE. She starred in Christoph Stark's JULIETTA in 2001 and in Sven Taddicken's MEIN BRUDER DER VAMPIR in 2002. At Cannes 2004 she co-starred with Daniel Brühl in Hans Weingartner's THE EDUKATORS (DIE FETTEN JAHRE SIND VORBEI). In September 2004 she was seen in Oliver Hirschbiegel's DOWNFALL and in January 2005 she appeared with Thomas Kretschmann in Hans W. Geissendörfer's SNOWLAND (SCHNEELAND) in the acclaimed Sundance Premieres section.

ALEXANDER HELD (ROBERT MOHR)

After studying drama at the Otto Falckenberg Schule in Munich, Alexander Held (born in Munich in 1958) began his career in 1980 and pursued it at various prestigious theaters such as the Munich Kammerspiele, the Staatsschauspiel Hannover, the Freie Volksbühne Berlin, the Theater Basel and the Salzburg Festival. His experience as a solo singer in the chorus of the Regensburger Domspatzen also served him well in several musical productions such as 'Sweet Charity' (1992) at the Theater des Westens in Berlin.

Roland Emmerich discovered him for the screen in 1993 by casting him in his TV movie 'Morlock – König Midas'. This was followed the same year by Steven Spielberg's Oscar-winning feature SCHINDLER'S LIST, in which Held played an SS 'Obersturmbannführer'. The versatile character actor has since been devoting himself primarily to screen roles and has starred in more than 70 television productions to date, including Norbert Kückelmann's docudrama 'Alle haben geschwiegen' (1995), Dominik Graf's Grimme Prize-winning satire 'Dr. Knock' (1996), Nikki Stein's 'Tatort' thriller 'Norbert' (1999), Hark Bohm's 'Vera Brühne' (2000), Peter Keglevic's 'Der Tanz mit dem Teufel' (2000) and Dominik Graf's 'Die Freunde der Freunde' (2001).

Alexander Held's big-screen roles include performances in the two Ralf Huettners films DER KALTE FINGER (1995) and DIE MUSTERKNABEN (1996). These were followed by Stefan Ruzowitzky's ANATOMIE (1999), Michael 'Bully' Herbig's DER SCHUH DES MANITU (2000), Joseph Vilsmaier's LEO UND CLAIRE (2001) and Jean Becker's EFFROYABLES JARDINS (2002). Most recently Held has starred in Dennis Gansel's BEFORE THE FALL (NAPOLA) (2003) and Oliver Hirschbiegel's DOWNFALL (2003).

FABIAN HINRICHS (HANS SCHOLL)

Fabian Hinrichs (born in Hamburg in 1976) began his career after completing his training at the Westfälische Schauspielschule Bochum. Among the first stage plays he starred in were productions by Leander Haussmann such as 'Measure for Measure' and 'Peter Pan', a coproduction of the Schauspielhaus Bochum and the Vienna Festwochen. Hinrichs has been an ensemble member of the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin since 2000. There he has starred in productions by Frank Castorf ('Endstation Amerika' and 'Forever Young'), René Pollesch ('Stadt als Beute'), Leander Haussmann ('Paul und Paula') and Christoph Schlingensiefel ('Rosebud' and 'Atta Atta').

In addition to guest appearances in TV series such as 'Grossstadtrevier' and 'Aus gutem Hause', Hinrichs has played a number of roles on the big screen as well, for example in Felicitas Wollenberg's KOMM DOCH, MEINE KLEINE (1998) and Fred Kelemen's DESIRE (2001). He made his breakthrough with his portrayal of a young man in civilian service in Dito Tsintsadze's thriller GUN-SHY (SCHUSSANGST) (2003), which won the Golden Shell at the San Sebastián Film Festival.

CREW

MARC ROTHMUND (DIRECTOR)

Marc Rothmund, born in 1968, comes from a Munich "film family". His grandfather, Siegfried Rothmund, was the producer of Siro-Musik and head of press for Das Mädchen Rosemarie (1958); Marc Rothmund began his professional career as assistant director to Helmut Dietl (for ROSSINI), Bernd Eichinger (for 'Das Mädchen Rosemarie', a remake of his grandfather's classic), Dominik Graf (for 'Sperling') and Gérard Corbiau (for FARINELLI). In 1998 he obtained the Bavarian Film Prize as best young director for his first feature film DAS MERKWÜRDIGE VERHALTEN GESCHLECHTSREIFER GROSSSTÄDTER ZUR PAARUNGSZEIT ('Love Scenes from Planet Earth'). With 1.7 million spectators, his second feature HARTE JUNGS ('Just the Two of Us') was one of the most successful films of 1999. His TV thriller 'Das Duo – Der Liebhaber' won the VFF TV Movie Award in 2003.

With SOPHIE SCHOLL-THE FINAL DAYS, Marc Rothmund continues his successful collaboration with screenwriter Fred Breinersdorfer, which was launched in 1997 with two episodes of the ZDF thriller series 'Anwalt Abel' (both awarded the Telestar) and reached a high point with the TV movie 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt' (2002). This gripping drama about the fateful bullying of a policewoman obtained many awards, including the Golden Camera and the Grimme Prize in Gold.

FRED BREINERSDORFER (SCREENWRITER)

Fred Breinersdorfer (born in 1946) is both an attorney and an author who has written crime novels, radio plays and stage works in addition to many screenplays. He began his screenwriting career with a 'Tatort' classic, 'Zweierlei Blut'. He also wrote all 20 episodes of the ZDF series 'Anwalt Abel', many 'Tatort' episodes and TV movies, including 'Der Hamtermörder' (1990), 'Angst' (1993) and 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt' (2002).

Breinersdorfer is an honorary professor, chairman of the VS (Verband Deutscher Schriftsteller in ver.di), a member of the P.E.N. Center Germany and a member of the board of directors of VG Wort. In 1986 he founded the crime-writers union 'Das Syndikat'. Many of his scripts and films have won awards and nominations.

After working together on three TV movies to date, Fred Breinersdorfer has teamed up with Marc Rothmund once again for SOPHIE SCHOLL-THE FINAL DAYS. The two are also serving as producers of the film for Broth Film.

CHRISTOPH MUELLER (GOLDKIND FILM, PRODUCER)

After studying film producing at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen in Munich, Christoph Mueller (born in Wuppertal in 1964) began his career in 1993 as location manager for the TV series 'Der Fahnder' and as production manager for various advertising spots. In 1994 he produced his first short films and worked for FFP as producer of two ProSieben thrillers directed by Sigi Rothmund two years later. Also in 1996 he provided the concept and treatments to the TV comedy 'Die Chaos-Queen' starring Veronica Ferres, and to Dominik Graf's TV thriller 'Der Skorpion', which garnered a number of awards.

From 1997 to 2000 Müller worked for Helmut Dietl's Diana Film, produced Jan Josef Liefer's directing debut 'Jack's Baby', collaborated with Helmut Dietl on the script to LATE SHOW and later worked as associate producer for Constantin Film's feature HARTE JUNGS, directed by Marc Rothmund.

Together with Hofmann & Voges Entertainment, Müller founded the feature-film production company Goldkind Film in 2001 and produced the comedies FEUER, EIS & DOSENBIER and ERKAN & STEFAN 2 in 2002. The following year Müller's Goldkind Film joined forces with a new partner, TV60Film, with which it produced SOLOALBUM (director: Gregor Schnitzler) after the novel by Benjamin Stuckrad-Barre. In 2004 Müller produced with Sven Burgemeister director Florian Gaag's debut feature WHOLETRAIN and SOPHIE SCHOLL-THE FINAL DAYS.

SVEN BURGEMEISTER (GOLDKIND FILM, PRODUCER)

Sven Burgemeister (born in Buchholz in 1966) majored in 'Production and Media Management' at the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film in Munich, where he graduated in 1993. He freelanced in a variety of functions in the film world before becoming a producer at TV60Film in 1993, where he developed and realized primarily television productions. Along with Bernd Burgemeister, Sven Burgemeister has been a producer and co-partner of TV60Film since 1999.

Among Burgemeister's most notable productions are the prize-winning TV movie 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt' directed by Marc Rothemund, the ZDF crime series 'Das Duo', the screen adaptation of Amelie Fried's novel 'Der Mann von nebenan', the three-part TV drama 'Deutschlandlied', the TV thriller 'Das Finale' and the Christmas film 'Der Weihnachtswolf'. Sven Burgemeister also took part as producer in the European coproduction DIE STUNDE DES LICHTS (1998), starring Joachim Król in the lead role. Among his most recent productions, 'Grüsse aus Kaschmir' was screened at the 2004 Munich Filmfest.

Along with Marc Rothemund and Bernd Burgemeister, Sven Burgemeister was awarded the Golden Camera 2003 for best German TV movie for 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt', and also won the producer's award VFF TV Movie Award for the film 'Das Duo – Der Liebhaber' in 2003.

Burgemeister has been a managing director of Goldkind Film with Christoph Mueller since 2003. The firm's first feature, SOLOALBUM, was successfully launched in German theaters. Most recently, Goldkind Film has produced SOPHIE SCHOLL-THE FINAL DAYS and is preparing the release of the debut film WHOLETRAIN.

MARTIN LANGER (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Martin Langer (born in 1959) was the cameraman for seven films by Roland Suso Richter, beginning with 14 TAGE LEBENSLÄNGLICH (1997), for which Langer won the German Film Prize. He then worked on Richter's TV movie 'Die Bubi Scholz Story' (1998 – German Camera Award for Langer) as well as the feature films NICHTS ALS DIE WAHRHEIT (1999), EINE HANDVOLL GRAS (2000) and the Anglo-American coproduction THE I INSIDE (2003).

Langer has also been the cinematographer for Hermine Huntgeburth's features DER HAHN IST TOT (2000) and BIBI BLOCKSBERG (2002), Margarethe von Trotta's DIE ANDERE FRAU (2004) and Carlo Rola's SASS (2001), for which he won the Bavarian Film Prize as best cameraman.

Martin Langer has just finished shooting Hermine Huntgeburth's most recent project DIE WEISSE MASSAI.

Following the award-winning TV drama 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt' (2002), SOPHIE SCHOLL-THE FINAL DAYS is Langer's second project with director Marc Rothemund.

HANS FUNCK (EDITOR)

Hans Funck has been working since 1992 as an editor for many feature films and TV productions. Among them are features such as Katja von Garnier's BANDITS (1996/97), Sönke Wortmann's ST. PAULI NACHT (1998), Oliver Hirschbiegel's DAS EXPERIMENT (2000), Joseph Vilsmaier's LEO UND CLAIRE (2000/2001), Urs Egger's EPSTEINS NACHT (2001), Robert Schwentke's EIERDIEBE (2001) and Stefan Ruzowitzky's ANATOMIE 2 (2002). Following 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt' (2002), for which Funck was nominated for the German Editing Prize, SOPHIE SCHOLL-THE FINAL DAYS is his second project with Marc Rothemund. Among Funck's most recent productions are Katja von Garnier's IRON JAWED ANGELS (2002/2003) and Oliver Hirschbiegel's DER UNTERGANG (2003/2004). Funck was nominated for the German Camera Award for 'Bandits' in 1998 and for 'Das Experiment' in 2001. He was awarded a Golden Lion by RTL in 1998 for the TV movie 'Opernball'. Hans Funck is a member of the Deutsche Filmakademie.

SOPHIE SCHOLL

T H E F I N A L D A Y S

CAST

Sophie Schöll	Julia Jentsch
Robert Mohr	Alexander Held
Hans Schöll	Fabian Hinrichs
Else Gebel	Johanna Gastdorf
Dr. Roland Freisler	André Hennicke
Christoph Probst	Florian Stetter
Alexander Schmorell	Johannes Suhm
Willi Graf	Maximilian Brückner
Gisela Schertling	Lilli Jung
Robert Schöll	Jörg Hube
Magdalena Schöll	Petra Kelling
Werner Schöll	Franz Staber

CREW

Director	Marc Rothemund
Screenwriter	Fred Breinersdorfer
Producers	Christoph Mueller, Sven Burgemeister (Goldkind Film) Fred Breinersdorfer, Marc Rothemund (Broth Film)
Co-Producer	Bettina Reitz (Bayerischer Rundfunk)
Commissioning Editors	Hubert von Spreti (Bayerischer Rundfunk), Ulrich Herrmann (Süd-West Rundfunk), Andreas Schreitmüller (arte), Jochen Kölsch (Bayerischer Rundfunk/arte)
Director of Photography	Martin Langer, BVK
Set Design	Jana Karen
Costumes	Natascha Curtius-Noss
Casting	Nessie Nesslauer
Editor	Hans Funck
Music	Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil
Production Manager	Patrick Brandt
Line Producer	Jo N. Schäfer
A production of	Goldkind Film and Broth Film
In co-production with	Bayerischer Rundfunk, Süd-West Rundfunk and arte
Supported by	FFF – FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, FFA – Filmförderungsanstalt and BKM – Bundesanstalt für Kultur und Medien
Locations	Munich (Bavaria Studios and original locations, incl. University of Munich)
World Sales	Bavaria Film International
Supported by	FFF Bayern, FFA and BKM

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