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“COMPELLING! WIRE-TIGHT SUSPENSE!

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—Anthony Lane, THE NEW YORKER

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REMINDER OF THE PERILS, AND GLORY, OF COURAGE!”**

—John Powers, VOGUE

“A KNOCKOUT OF A PERFORMANCE!

We feel we're seeing Scholl's spirit come to life again!”

—Kenneth Turan, LOS ANGELES TIMES

SOPHIE SCHOLL

THE FINAL DAYS



ZEITGEIST FILMS AND BAVARIA FILM INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS A COLOKIND FILM AND BROTH FILM PRODUCTION "SOPHIE SCHOLL: THE FINAL DAYS" IN COOPERATION WITH ARBE
JULIA JENTSCH ALEXANDER HELD CARIAN HINRICHS JOHANNA GASTDORF ANDRÉ HENNICKE FLORIAN STETTER PETRA KELLING JÖRG HUBE CASTING NESSIE NESSLAUER MAKE-UP MARTINE FLENER STYLING TEBOR ECKSTEIN COSTUMES NATASCHA CURTIUS NOSS
PRODUCTION DESIGN JANA KAREN SOUND TITLAND WINKLE SOUND DESIGN DANIEL DIETENBERGER ALEX SAAL MARGA HABERNICKE SOUND MIX TSCHANGIS CHAHROVCH EDITOR HANS FUNCK MUSIC JOHANN KLIMEK PRODUCTION DESIGNER PHILIP HEIL DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MARTIN LANGER
PRODUCTION MANAGER PATRICK BRANDT EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JO N. SCHÄFER CO-PRODUCER BETTINA REITZ PRODUCER CHRISTOPH MÜLLER SVEN BÜRGE MEISTER FRED BREINERSDORFER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PHILIP HEIL
SCRIPT FRED BREINERSDORFER DIRECTOR MARC ROTHMUND

BAVARIA FILM
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Zeitgeist
FILMS

The New York Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2006

FILM REVIEW

The Quiet Resolve Of a German Anti-Nazi Martyr

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

“**S**ophie Scholl: The Final Days” conveys what it must have been like to be a young, smart, idealistic dissenter in Nazi Germany, where no dissent was tolerated. This gripping true story, directed in a cool, semi-documentary style by the German filmmaker Marc Rothemund from a screenplay by Fred Breinersdorfer, challenges you to gauge your own courage and strength of character should you find yourself in similar circumstances. Would you risk your life the way Sophie Scholl (Julia Jentsch) and a tiny group of fellow students at Munich University did to spread antigovernment leaflets? How would you behave during the kind of relentless interrogations that Sophie endures? If sentenced to death for your activities, would you still consider your resistance to have been worth it? In a climate of national debate in the United States about the overriding of certain civil liberties to fight terrorism, the movie looks back on a worst possible scenario in which such liberties were taken away. It raises an unspoken question: could it happen here?

Scholl, whose story has been told in at least two earlier German films (Michael Verhoeven’s “White Rose” and Percy Adlon’s “Five Last Days”), is regarded today in Germany as a national heroine. Much of the movie, an Oscar nominee this year for best foreign-language film, is based on documents and court transcripts hidden in East German archives until 1990.

The movie follows the last six days of Sophie’s life, after she and her brother Hans (Fabian Hinrichs) are arrested at Munich University in February 1943 for printing and distributing anti-Nazi leaflets. Their arrest takes place in a political climate of panic and denial after Germany’s defeat at Stalingrad. News of the rout has begun to circulate, but the powers-that-be dig in their heels.

The Scholl siblings belong to the White Rose, a tiny resistance movement at Munich University. The pamphlet they distribute in the university’s empty halls, while classes are in session, declares that the war cannot be won and urges Germany to sue for peace. They naïvely hope to ignite a spontaneous student rebellion.

But the Nazi attitude toward the reversal of Germany’s fortunes on the battlefield is one of enraged denial. The shrill accusations



Julia Jentsch plays a university student arrested for disseminating anti-Nazi leaflets in “Sophie Scholl.”

leveled against Sophie and two of the other accused in the interrogation room and in court by the fulminating judge, Dr. Roland Freisler (André Hennicke), have a tone of desperate, hysterical fury.

“Sophie Scholl: The Final Days” pointedly steers away from unnecessary melodrama and sentimentality to deliver a crisp chronology of events told entirely from Sophie’s perspective, with minimal back story. As the brother and sister race to distribute the leaflets, the movie refuses to underline the built-in suspense. Apprehended by an alert janitor just as they are blending into a milling crowd of students, they are hustled to Gestapo headquarters and interrogated separately.

As Sophie undergoes the first grueling hours of minute cross-examination by Robert Mohr (Alexander Held), an icy, contemptuous criminologist with a mind Columbo might envy, she maintains a remarkable composure, insisting that she is apolitical and relating an elaborate cover story involving the transportation of laundry in the suitcase that carried the leaflets.

Sophie wins the first round of this cat-and-mouse game and is about to be released when investigators searching her apartment turn up more incriminating evidence. Even after her story crumbles, Mohr, who has a son roughly Sophie’s age, is not entirely unmoved by her arguments, and near the end of her confinement, he offers her an unacceptable deal to save her own life. At each turning point, Sophie, who is deeply religious, prays to God for help.

On learning that Hans has confessed, she

finally admits her complicity but continues trying to protect other members of the group, especially Christoph Probst (Florian Stetter), who is married with children. But eventually he is brought into custody.

We meet Sophie’s sympathetic cellmate, Else Gebel (Johanna Gastdorf), an avowed Communist, and Sophie’s supportive parents, who cheer her on in a subdued, wrenching farewell. Ms. Jentsch’s portrayal of Sophie is the more impressive for its complete lack of histrionics. Yes, Sophie is a heroine, but not one given to Joan of Arc-style theatrics. An optimistic, life-loving student with a boyfriend and a rich future ahead of her, she is the kind of decent, principled person we would all like to be.

Sophie Scholl

The Final Days

Directed by Marc Rothemund; written (in German, with English subtitles) by Fred Breinersdorfer; director of photography, Martin Langer; edited by Hans Funck; music by Johnny Klimek and Reinhold Heil; produced by Christoph Mueller, Sven Burgemeister, Mr. Breinersdorfer and Mr. Rothemund; released by Zeitgeist Films. At the Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, west of Avenue of the Americas, South Village. Running time: 117 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Julia Jentsch (Sophie Scholl), Alexander Held (Robert Mohr), Fabian Hinrichs (Hans Scholl), Johanna Gastdorf (Else Gebel), André Hennicke (Dr. Roland Freisler) and Florian Stetter (Christoph Probst).