

Painful Bitburg Controversy Stirs New Interest In Young Anti-Nazi Heroes Of White Rose Movement



Participants in services at Dachau concentration camp in memory of the 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust. Services were organized by the American Jewish Congress.

Amid the anguish and discord of President Reagan's visit to Bitburg there was one bitter-sweet note: renewed attention to the inspiring, but half-forgotten story of how, at the height of World War II, a group of Christian students at the University of Munich organized an underground resistance movement against Nazi racism and terror.

Most of those involved in what is known as the White Rose movement were hunted down and beheaded or imprisoned. But their story remains a quietly eloquent beacon of affirmation of human decency and courage that not even Hitler's savagery could extinguish.

The story of the White Rose movement -- no one is certain why they chose the name -- was retold Friday, May 3 in Germany when a group of some 200 people from the U.S., Great Britain and other nations gathered at the Perlacher cemetery near Munich to honor the memory of the young leaders of the movement who are buried there.

The commemoration was organized by the American Jewish Congress whose president, Theodore R. Mann, noted that honoring the martyred White Rose members was "the appropriate



Members of American delegation in Munich place white roses on graves of leaders of anti-Nazi White Rose movement. From left to right: writer-feminist Betty Friedan; Morton A. Kornreich, president, Joel Boyarsky, member, board of governors, and Elaine Winik, immediate past president of the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York. The memorial was organized by the American Jewish Congress.

way to symbolize reconciliation between Germany and the U.S., not a visit to a German cemetery where SS killers are buried."

The leaders of the youth group, Hans and Sophie Scholl, were brother and sister, both students at the University of Munich. Hans was 25 and Sophie was 22 when they were tried by a notorious "People's Court" in Munich and executed by guillotine. Also beheaded on that day was their co-worker Christoph Probst. A fourth, put to death a short time later, was Alexander Schmorell. All four were buried in Perlacher cemetery, adjacent to the prison where they were held.

The Scholls, children of a liberal middle class family, like most young Germans joined the Hitler youth after Hitler came to power, but they were repelled by the brutality, anti-Semitism and repressiveness of Nazism. In 1942, at the height of World War II, while attending the University of Munich, they organized an underground

resistance movement to produce and distribute anti-Nazi literature. Spotted by a janitor at the university, Hans and Sophie Scholl and their fellow student Christoph Probst, were turned in to the Gestapo. They were beheaded on February 22, 1943.

During months of intense underground activity, the White Rose members distributed thousands of leaflets both at the University of Munich and in many cities in Germany and Austria. They inspired others, and after the destruction of the Munich branch, a Hamburg group of the White Rose emerged to take up the work. Their leaders, too, were tried, convicted and executed. In all, about 50 members of the White Rose movement were caught, imprisoned or put to death.

In Munich on May 3, the 200 who gathered at the Perlacher cemetery in Stadelheim, a suburb of Munich, to hold a memorial service in memory of the White Rose resistance movement included Americans, British, French and Germans. Co-sponsor of the memorial observance was the City of Munich.

The 50 Americans represented a broad cross-section, including civil rights activists like entertainer Dick Gregory, labor union officials, church representatives, and feminist leader Betty Friedan, as well as officials of American Jewish organizations.

In memorializing the White Rose martyrs, AJCongress president Mann pointed out that what is needed from our national leaders now is "clarity about the nature of the symbolism that could inspire our American and German children and grandchildren."

"If further reconciliation is needed," he said, "it is the reconciliation that comes from the tears of Jews and Germans flowing together over the graves of Hans and Sophie and their coworkers, who died in order to make the first crack in the edifice of tyranny that engulfed us in that dark night."

Henry Siegman, executive director of AJCongress, who was born in Germany, noted that this was the first time in 43 years that he had returned to German soil. He recalled that many members of his family had perished in the gas chambers and crematoria.

Denouncing "the lie of Bitburg," he declared that the Hitler SS were not victims but "killers who deliberately and brutally murdered my little cousins, my grandmother, my aunts and uncles, one million Jewish children and countless others."

"Hans and Sophie Scholl, we honor you and your comrades, martyred and alone," Mr. Siegman added. "We have come from far distances to pay you this tribute of love, of remembrance, and -- above all -- of truth, for in that truth lies our hope and our salvation."

The moving ceremony including the laying of remembrance wreaths. The members of the gathering then placed white roses on the graves of the slain young anti-Nazis.

Afterward, the group visited the site of Dachau concentration camp near Munich, where a service was held in memory of the 6 million Jews who died in Nazi concentration camps as well as the estimated 12,000 Germans who, like the members of the White Rose, were executed during the war for their active opposition to Hitler.

The mourners then made their way back to Munich as clouds darkened the sky and a cold, wet wind swept across the German countryside.

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22 E. OAKY AT LAS VEGAS BLVD. LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	3681 MARYLAND AT TWAIN LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	574 N. EASTERN AT BONANZA LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	
4962 S. EASTERN AT TROPICANA LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	3630 W. SAHARA AT VALLEY VIEW LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	3459 S. JONES AT SPRING MOUNTAIN LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	2710 NO. GREEN VALLEY PARKWAY HENDERSON OPEN 24 HOURS
4910 E. TROPICANA AT NELLIS LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	232 N. JONES AT FREMONT LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	2021 CIVIC CTR. NEAR LAKE MEAD LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	6115 W. TROPICANA AT JONES LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS
350 N. NELLIS AT STEWART LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	850 S. RANCHO AT CHARLESTON LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	3750 FLAMINGO AT SANDHILL LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS	1941 N. DECATUR AT LAKE MEAD LAS VEGAS OPEN 24 HOURS

OPEN 24 HOURS