Inge Scholl, Schoolteacher

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“One day in 1945 (in the wrecked city of Ulm), posters appeared on the walls of houses. They told of a lecture that was to be given. The people stared in disbelief. Was it possible, just a few weeks after the end of the war? Was it really true that Romano Guardini* would speak — wasn’t he dead?”

These are the words of the young German girl whose purposeful hands hung the posters, telling residents of Ulm that free thought had returned to their city.

Her name is Inge Scholl and the posters represented a war-long determination and a lifetime’s work ahead.

Inge Scholl was 25 when her brother and sister were beheaded for anti-Nazi activities at Munich University. She had already determined that at war’s end, she would in some way devote her life to dissuading the German people from their band-wagon weakness for demagogoy. But the horrifying deaths of Hans and Sophie in a Munich prison gave form to her fight — the brother and sister and their friends had had a plan, and it was Inge’s to carry on.

In the little garrison city of Ulm, Inge worked the first years of the last war in the tax consultants’ office of her father. The family’s sympathies were well enough known so that, with the execution of the two student members, all of them and their friends were hustled into prison, Inge to stay for five months.

The end of the war had long meant freedom, an end to oppression and the resumption of meaningful life. It was the moment for which Inge had waited, and yet peace dawned on a city strewn with ruins, a people without food or clothing or hope. To do what she and her martyred brother and sister dreamed meant mounting huge odds in herself and despair in those to whom she appealed.

Inge had one friend to help. Otto Aicher was a young Ulmer, an ex-soldier who had tried to warn Sophie and Hans Scholl before their arrest. The two planned together to bring speakers to Ulm, to tell what they had been forbidden to tell during the deadening, wasted years of the Nazi reign.

It was Otto who wheeled through the nightmarish wreckage of southern Germany on a bicycle to find their first speakers.

There was no hall in Ulm where such lectures could be held, but one church remained undamaged and in it was a meeting room. Inge and Otto had no funds so a small fee was charged, to cover the expense of the speakers’ arduous journeys and brief stays in the little city.

Scarcity of food made ration cards necessary in those months. The cards could be used only in the city of issuance. So speakers came in cars or on the bulging trains, halted and detoured for hours by ruins, and arrived in a city where food was not available to them. It was often impossible to tell, despite the posters’ proclamations, whether the speakers would have strength enough to give their lectures. Once a speaker fainted on the stage.

Inge was able to obtain, at length, a supplementary ration from the city, and the lecturers were given a tiny supper before taking the stage. Inge’s sister had an extra room in her home, which became the chamber for visiting lecturers.

After a while the two obtained a car, and thereafter travel for them and for their guests was easier.

What of the Ulmers, who disbelieved those first dramatic posters?

Says Inge, “To them it was hard to believe. Here was something that had been forbidden them during all the Nazi time — they could hardly understand that the past and all that had happened were discussed thus openly.

* A German-Italian religious philosopher.
However, the misery of the past had opened their hearts to frank and serious talk. They began to relax. In spite of the insecurity and primitive standard of living, it was quite evident that times had changed. There was new hope."

Again and again, crowds made their way to the church through the grotesque and near-impassable ruins. Lectures were given by renowned philosophers, authors and theologians, people whose names had seemed forever extinguished in the days of Nazidom. Gradually the mystery dissolved — how had these lecturers gotten to Ulm, when there was practically no communication with the outside, either by rail or post? The people of Ulm learned what Inge Scholl dreamed of doing, in memory of her murdered brother and sister. It was this audience which appealed to Inge to expand the lecture series into a permanent school.

In 1946, a year after war's end, 28-year-old Inge Scholl was director of the Ulmer Volkshochschule.

There had been such a school — a night school for adults — once before in the city. But in 1933 it had been discontinued, and there were no other educational sources in the city beyond the high schools. So despite the meagerness of the school's first offerings, they were enthusiastically devoured by the residents of Ulm. In one day, 2,000 persons enrolled for classes.

Today, if one asks Inge Scholl for a look at her school, she will smile apologetically and lead a tour through classrooms of several public schools, to the old firehouse of Ulm and to the offices and small lecture room which bears the name of Ulmer Volkshochschule. The school came to life in the loft of the old firehouse, a room the city contributed for Inge's use. Before each lecture, more than 400 chairs were hauled onto the floor and set up. For smaller classes, rooms were procured in public schools, or other public places were temporarily converted into classrooms.

**When the year 1946 began, and Inge was casting about for funds with which to launch the longed-for school, the mayor of Ulm granted permission for a collection to be taken in the school's name. More than 40,000 marks was contributed. In 1947 the state of Württemberg-Baden appropriated funds for the school. Major financing, however, came from a system since adopted by several other adult evening schools. Close to 70 percent of school expenses were covered through a fee of two Reichsmarks per month paid by 2,300 members. All in turn were privileged to attend any class, lecture, or belong to any group under the school's sponsorship.**

Despite the enthusiasm of some, setting up the little school in Ulm was not a task for the undedicated. The "new day" that had dawned after a 12-year storm was not so clear as the friends of Hans and Sophie Scholl had anticipated. The new, the "free" Germany put its shoulder to a grindstone that wore it down with ration cards and housing shortage and shrunken supplies of needed goods. "It was disheartening to read, day after day in the newspapers, that we were all guilty of the horrible war." The slow sifting of Nazis from the unbelievers began, and as it proceeded sapped much enthusiasm from the young people of Ulm who wanted to plunge as quickly as possible from the old to the new Germany.

Then currency reform came and many could no longer afford the two-mark fee to enter the school.

Inge watched the school's followers diminish; her inspiration could not lessen for some the insurmountables of new misery and doubts. But she and Otto kept plugging toward their goal. Otto designed modernistic posters and the city allowed them a small free space on the sidewalk ad-posts. Inge solicited funds from the state and city governments. (The State Ministry of Education has offered her a DM 500-600 salary per month, from which she takes money she needs and funnels the remainder back into the school.)

For the financially hard-hit, she has worked out free membership, so that today 200 attend the school without paying fees. Many of these free members do odd jobs and carpentry about the school, one woman mends for Inge.

There are now 2,500 students in the school, a board of conscientious and prominent "trustees," and a roster of lecturers that reads like a German Who's Who. The school has come of age and wields an influence in educational circles on many levels. The Ulm adult evening school is a maverick among German education institutions but its success holds great promise for them all.

**There are three main emphases in the school program. Lectures still maintain a huge following with such names as Theodor Heuss and Carl Zuckmayer as drawing cards. Classes balm the curiosity of those who wish to learn about anthropology, music, psychology, art, drama and mathematics.**

A third segment of the program is the work group plan. In the work groups, students abandon their role of bench-sitting and themselves dig for the facts they want to learn. One recent theme for a work group was city planning, in which city officials, planning experts and imaginative citizens were subpoenaed for their views on the topic. City government is explored, the officials queried and their organization meetings monitored by group members. These studies spawn earnest discussions and helpful recommendations which go to the citizens and officials to whom they are of concern.

This form of study is Inge's pride, since it illustrates the aptitude of Ulm students to take the lead in democratic activity. Her greatest satisfaction is in noting the drift of study subjects and methods from formalism and theory to a close concern for the everyday problems and questions which touch upon every citizen's life.

Inge is assisted in administering the school by two permanent secretaries and by two maintenance men who service the scattered classrooms. Funds are insufficient to permit hiring out-of-town teachers for the frequent classes in foreign languages so Ulmers carry the burden of instruction in French, English, Russian and other tongues. The majority of other courses are held but once weekly, so that authoritative instructors for many
miles around the city have been induced to make once-a-week trips to the city to conduct the classes. She still aims at a permanent faculty, and one roof for the entire school.

**MUCH OF THE SCHOOL'S** development derives from the nine-man group which stands as an informal board of trustees. An editor, clergyman, representatives of education, city government and labor are members of the board. They are supplemented by a "Group of 50" which seeks to translate the work of the school into projects for civic development. This group consists of 50 interested citizens of Ulm.

Many of the students contribute to a monthly magazine emanating from Inge's clean and modern office. In the magazine are discussions of current cultural notables, a chronicle of events in Ulm, and a list of the coming month's lectures and classes. Each month's lecture program is packaged under one theme — from month to month it varies from literature to medicine to current politics.

Behind the large variety of subject matter lies one motive: to teach Germans, not what to think but how to think.

In a sense, Inge has attained her goal — she has found and delivered a means by which to lead her countrymen out of the authoritarian groove. Her hands are more than full with the job she now executes. Yet in the back of her mind a new plan is forming — a big dream and a giant hope. Inge Scholl wants to found a day college in Ulm.

"A new kind of school, a modern one." Not modern just in the sense she wants informal teaching and homey classrooms, but modern as to subject matter. She envisions professors from all parts of Germany and from countries throughout the world, who will teach new precepts to students of industrial design, commercial art, radio and film, journalism and advertising.

The students will come not merely from Ulm, but from the farthest borders of Germany, to live in a modern dormitory and to learn the crafts of the mid-century world. "But no matter what the subject," says Inge, "with professors of many lands, philosophies and religions, new patterns of thinking will inevitably be taught."

**THAT IS INGE SCHOLL'S** new dream: a day college teaching modern crafts in such a way as to encourage independent thought. She sees it as a symbol for a new Germany.

To Inge this college is more than a dream. It is a possibility and she stands ready to see it through. She has discussed her plan with many and has received encouragement and support in influential quarters all over Europe.

She told her story to US High Commissioner McCloy — her past and her project for the future which prompted him to tell the American people about her. In his speech at Boston on January 26, Mr. McCloy said, "This story of an individual ... will reveal why many of us working in Germany have faith in the future of the German people."

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**American Group Trained as Local Emissaries in Germany**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE** has announced that its Foreign Service Institute has inaugurated a special three-month course to train a group of selected young Americans for county-level posts as "local emissaries" in Germany.

Twenty-seven men, all around 30 years of age, are taking this course. They have been chosen from a pool of Foreign Service candidates who have already passed rigid examinations for the Service, written, oral and physical, in annual nation-wide competition.

Upon the completion of training, all officers will go to Germany for service under the Office of the United States High Commissioner, John J. McCloy, who conceived the idea of this specialized training course for his local aides. Each man will be stationed in a German county (Kreis), where he will represent the American people and the High Commissioner in carrying on a program of active presentation of democratic ideas and processes. Approximately 80 county officers are currently engaged in this "grass roots" program in Germany.

In many cases, these men will work in communities far removed from American administrative centers in Germany, and will be the only Americans in their particular localities. With their wives and children, these young men, purposely chosen from the younger generation, will participate actively in German community life, developing friendly relationships and personalizing to their German neighbors the spirit of America.

Each resident officer must be able at the completion of training to speak the German language fluently and idiomatically in order to be able to reach a maximum effectiveness in communicating ideas. For that reason, the Foreign Service Institute course includes four hours a day of drill in conversational German. This training is given in accordance with the scientific methods of intensive language instruction used so successfully by the Armed Forces during the war.

The primary mission of each resident officer will be to work with German officials and other local leaders in an effort to encourage democratic processes and attitudes and to foster the development of responsible citizenship. Germans will not be asked to copy American institutions but to develop their own in accordance with accepted democratic values. Resident officers will describe and explain American institutions, and encourage free and open discussion of the American way of life, so that the Germans may be led to understand and adopt such American ways as may aid in the development of a democratic Germany. — From the Department of State Bulletin, Feb. 13.