German Resistance to Nazism

Stories describing the tireless, brave and inspiring activities of the resistance movement throughout World War II are well known but few of us would be aware of German resistance to Nazi Germany or the contribution made by one Sophie Scholl… or we wouldn’t be, if it were not for the work of LJMU’s Professor Frank McDonough.

Sophie Scholl was a key figure within the White Rose, a non-violent, anti-Nazi resistance group which was active in Germany throughout World War II. McDonough’s book ‘Sophie Scholl: The Women Who Defied Hitler’ aimed to provide the first major interpretation in the English language of the Sophie Scholl’s life and influences, conveying her story through letters, diaries and the testimonies of eye witnesses.

The biography reached a much wider audience than traditional academic books with 8,000 copies sold worldwide. It was also discussed widely in the media, including a two page news feature in the Daily Mail (reaching 5 million readers) along with features in the Catholic Herald, The Times Educational Supplement and the Sunday Telegraph. It rose to number 8 in the Amazon bestseller list (Feb 2009) and was listed in ‘Best Books of the Year’ by the Sunday Telegraph and the London Evening Standard.

To raise awareness of Scholl, the White Rose movement and most importantly to relate both to the modern day, McDonough gave over 25 public lectures – mostly outside of academic forums – including the Richard Dimbleby public lecture (attended by 200 people) and his Professorial public lecture (attended by 160 people and viewed on-line by over 4,500).

McDonough has also contributed to television programmes which have been viewed by millions and aired across the world, the latest being a ten part series called ‘The Rise of Hitler’ broadcast on the Discovery Channel and for which he was the lead contributor.

Furthermore, the research has impacted on secondary, tertiary and adult education. ‘Sophie Scholl’ is essential reading on numerous A/S Level and undergraduate courses on European history and the Third Reich.

“McDonough’s book has greatly raised awareness of Sophie Scholl in the UK, forms a key part of our educational activities on the White Rose in Bavarian adult education and is used extensively in German schools.”

Head of Adult Education, Munich area