Winner of the 2020 White Rose Project Translation Competition

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Pamphlet draft by Christoph Probst

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Stalingrad!

200,000 German brothers were sacrificed for the prestige of a military impostor. The Russians' humane terms of surrender were kept secret from these sacrificed soldiers. General Paulus received the Oak Leaves for this mass murder. High-ranking officers bailed out of the Battle of Stalingrad by plane.

Hitler forbade those encircled from retreating to the rear troops. Now, the blood of 200,000 soldiers doomed to die accuses Hitler of murder.

Tripoli! It surrendered unconditionally to the British Eighth Army. And what did the British do? They let the citizens' lives continue as usual. They even kept police and officials in their posts. They made only one radical change: purging the biggest Italian colonial city of all false ringleaders and subhumans. With deadly certainty the devastating, overwhelming, superior power approaches from all sides. Hitler's capitulation will be far less than that of Paulus. Even if he has no chance of escape. Will you let yourselves be lied to like the 200,000 men who defended a lost cause at Stalingrad? Let yourselves be massacred, sterilized, or robbed of your children? In Casablanca, on 26 January 1943, Roosevelt, the most powerful man in the world, said: our struggle for extermination is directed not against the peoples, but against the political systems. We fight until unconditional surrender. Is there any need for further reflection before making your decision?

Millions of human lives are now at stake. Shall Germany share Tripoli's destiny? Today all of Germany is surrounded, as Stalingrad was. Are all Germans to be sacrificed to the emissary of hate and the will to exterminate? Sacrificed to the one who tortured the Jews to death, eradicated half of the Poles, wanted to exterminate Russia; the one who took your freedom, peace, family happiness, hope and cheerfulness and gave you inflated money in return? This should not happen, it must not! Hitler and his regime must fall, so that Germany lives on. Decide: Stalingrad or downfall, or Tripoli and a hopeful future. And when you have decided, then act.

Translator's Commentary

In January 1943, as Christoph Probst drafted the White Rose resistance group's seventh pamphlet, German prospects in World War II seemed increasingly dire. On the 1 , 22 German divisions were encircled at Stalingrad and 175,000 soldiers dead, a number which rose as General Paulus ignored the Russian terms of surrender and the Red Army broke the Siege of Leningrad. Simultaneously, Tripoli declared its unconditional surrender, avoiding the destruction occurring in the USSR.

Probst uses this pairing of Stalingrad and Tripoli as his central structuring tool, presenting his audience with a binary choice: either do nothing and face the fate of Stalingrad or resist Hitler and potentially receive the same treatment as Tripoli. As such, Probst's pamphlet represents an appeal to German self-interest. It offers not a political manifesto or principled denunciation of Nazi genocide – the work's single mention of the Holocaust is worryingly but understandably brief given its anti-Semitic audience – but an enumeration of the benefits the average German might see if they resisted Hitler. For the 'Millionen Menschenleben' it addresses, inaction would see them 'massakriert, sterilisiert', and robbed of their children, whilst resistance might allow them to reclaim their lost 'Freiheit, Frieden, Familienglück, Hoffnung und Frohsinn'. The syllogism is simple: 'Hitler und sein Regime muss fallen, damit Deutschland weiterlebt'.

A translation of Probst's pamphlet must reflect its persuasive stance and attitude of pragmatic urgency. Retaining the original's short and paratactic sentences ensures its hurried insistence is not lost, whilst rendering 'wollt ihr' as 'will you' suggests not a mere desire but an active practical decision, nested within a pair of pointed rhetorical questions. Vocabulary choices serve to further villainize Nazi leadership, by translating 'sich...gerettet' as 'bailed out' rather than 'saved themselves'. Similarly, Probst's usage of 'Untermenschen' turns the Nazis' appropriation of Nietzsche – whom Hans Scholl read enthusiastically – against them. Although 'subhumans' does not bear quite as explicit connotations, it is clearly preferable to the inelegant 'under-men'.

Nietzsche is also perceptible in the lens of power through which Probst constructs his argument. The Allied powers appear not as humanitarian liberators but a 'vernichtende, erdrücke nde Übermacht', led by the world's 'mächtigste Mann' and engaged in a 'Vernichtungskampf' differing from Hitler's in object alone. Here, Aquinas – a central figure in the group's philosophy – exerts a greater influence than Nietzsche. World War II stemmed from power, rather than just authority; conscience's dictates could be obeyed only by resisting Hitler and accelerating its end.