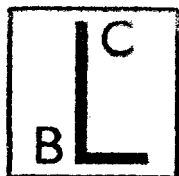


# AUSTRIAN REQUIEM

by

KURT VON SCHUSCHNIGG



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# AUSTRIAN REQUIEM

by

KURT VON SCHUSCHNIGG

Chancellor of Austria and Prisoner of Hitler

*Translated by Franz von Hildebrand*

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TO  
MY WIFE

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## PREFACE

AND NOW all is over.

Humanity holds its breath, the old world together with the new, perhaps for the first time in history. Humanity waits for the sunrise. For it was a long and bitter night, in which Lucifer once more tried his strength against God. It was a night which divided mankind into supermen and lower creatures, wilfully forgetting that man is God's creation and creation's destiny.

The damage wrought will be irreparable for many years to come. Some of it can never be repaired.

To-day it is easy enough to assert that all this was to be foreseen. Only those who actually foresaw it years ago and foretold the fate of Europe then may find credence among the ruins and on the corpse-strewn fields. Many were damned as traitors and agitators of those who warned and knew, already before 1933, what was in store for Europe. There were others who were optimists at first and later disillusioned, having relied on the emergency brakes; there were theorists whose theories could not hold reality in check, teachers whose pupils outgrew them.

Most of them paid heavily for their errors. Among those who saw the approach of the catastrophe were—alas—certainly not all Austrians, but Austria. What our small State had done, especially since 1932, what it had tried, what it had suffered was not always understood or approved of by the world. Nor was it always right. But whatever Austria did—right or wrong—can only be evaluated and understood against the background of the approaching cataclysm. That the country as a whole foresaw the catastrophe as early as 1933 was apparent to anyone who attended public discussions, such as, for instance, those of the Pan-Europa Union in Vienna. If, therefore, we make mention of this fact to-day, it is without presumption or arrogance, but with heartfelt suffering and horror, remembering the countless victims, the irreparable damage.

But it is not the purpose of this book to ask the why or the

wherefores. . . research v . . . a. e. to others better qualified for such . . . . . gations. W! / has been done cannot be undone. The war was, from the German point of view, from the very moment of its conception a highly hazardous enterprise, to say the least. There is no justification for any gamble with human lives; even less when the culture, the prestige, the welfare of an entire people are at stake, and through them the welfare of the whole civilized world. No, there is no justification, no excuse, no explanation; all the less as the experiences of 1914-18 showed unmistakably what could reasonably be expected.

Thus from the German point of view the war was senseless. Senseless for us all, at least in so far as we fail to learn from this bitter experience.

Perhaps this caesura of historical development which we have witnessed is to play an important rôle in the divine world plan. Perhaps this incision was necessary for the sake of progress and understanding. For if justice and reason, and not hatred and vengeance, establish a new order, the catastrophe itself may yet benefit humanity.

Most of this book was written between the summer of 1938 and the summer of 1945. During this time I was cut off from the world and knew little of world events—nor did I know what was to become of me. The book, therefore, cannot claim to be anything but a personal account and a human confession.

Parts of these writings were submitted, chapter by chapter, to the censorship of the Gestapo, as soon as they were written. This was necessary in order to avoid confiscation of everything I had written during my detention, since it was more than probable that they would find my papers sooner or later. I also wished to put my personal views on record, since neither the Gestapo nor the German Government showed any interest in finding out the truth about my views or my activities. In vain I waited for years for my trial before the People's Court—just as I waited in vain for the much-talked-of questioning which was to establish the crucial points of the accusation. The greater part of the manuscript, however, was kept secret; not without difficulty, as my scant belongings were closely examined every time I was moved from one camp to another.

Since a certain amount of time elapsed between the writing of the book and its publication, some passages may seem out-

dated. Others, again, may appear tense and over-strained. But there is no exaggeration in the book, and as far as factual accounts are concerned, I can vouch for its strict accuracy.

Later, during 1943, I was tempted more than once to destroy the entire work, or at least to revise what I had written so far. But finally most of it remained exactly as I had written it down during my detention. It may be—in fact, it is to be hoped—that some passages of this book will seem incredible to the reader. Yet my experiences are nothing new. Time and again men have endured the same fate and far worse: every time that new ideas and ideals have swept the earth like a hurricane and left humanity, shaken and trembling, in a sea of misery. How small, how unimportant is the fate of an individual compared with the agony of entire nations, heralding the beginning of a new era, a change for the better or for the worse. For such storms are the answer of the Creator to the sin against the spirit, to another attempted Tower of Babel, which, collapsing, buries an epoch and its generations under dust and debris.

While I was writing this book my thoughts were with those who have suffered far more and achieved far more than I—and above all with those who, to-day, are no longer alive.

*Capri, Pentecost, 1945.*

K. v. S.

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