



Our Death must be a Beacon Poems and Letters by Libertas Schulze-Boysen

Remembering the 75th anniversary of the execution of **Libertas Schulze-Boysen**

Narrator: Gregorij H. von Leitis

Introductory Lecture by Michael Lahr

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Libertas Schulze-Boysen and her husband Harro, along with Arvid Harnack and his wife Mildred (who was an American), formed the nucleus of the so-called "Red Orchestra", a resistance group fighting Hitler and his regime. The "Red Orchestra" was one of the biggest and most diverse resistance groups: women and men, Christians and Marxists, workers, intellectuals and artists, they all gathered in this group, united by their opposition to the Nazi Regime. For years they helped German Jews and political dissidents to escape and also provided vital intelligence to both the US and Russia. In the summer of 1942 the Gestapo discovered their activities and arrested over 100 members of the group. More of 50 of them were sentenced to death and executed, among them Libertas Schulze-Boysen.

After 1945 the historical contributions of the "Red Orchestra" were discussed very controversially and its achievements were often falsely labeled as pro-communist. Starting in the early 90's the access to hitherto inaccessible documents in archives in Prague and Moscow helped to correct and re-write the history of Libertas Schulze-Boysen and her circle.

Libertas Schulze-Boysen, née Haas-Heye, was arrested by the Gestapo in September 1942 and executed on December 22, 1942 in Berlin. During her three months in prison, she wrote some very moving poems. These poems along with Libertas's letters to her mother, show the enormous maturity, calmness and wisdom of the 29-year-old in the face of death and are a grand testimony of humanity and dignity.

On the occasion of the US-Premiere, the German Consul General Bernhard von der Planitz, wrote in a letter to Gregorij H. von Leitis: *"I would like to express my gratitude and high appreciation for the two programs 'Banned, Silenced, Persecuted' at Carnegie Weill Hall and 'Our Death must be a Beacon' here at the German House New York, which you and Michael Lahr have presented this fall. My wife, my colleagues and I were deeply impressed and moved by both evenings, which were exquisitely prepared and performed. I value these presentations as further highlights of your long, dedicated and tireless endeavors to keep alive the memory of those who were persecuted by the Nazis. I can only hope and highly recommend, that these two programs will be invited for presentations at other locations on both sides of the Atlantic."*

The Berliner Zeitung wrote: *"Michael Lahr outlined the chronological and geographic framework. In alternation between report and quote, a courageous, dutiful, God-fearing woman emerged. Libertas wrote to her mother about purification, as if she had secluded herself in a convent. In one poem, she asks a woman, who is about to be released, to take along her eyes, her senses, and her heart. The only thing she wants to retain is her suffering, since through struggling with pain her soul will remain unconquered."*

*The Lahr von Leitis Academy & Archive
Bonner Platz 1, D-80803 München
Tel. +49-(0)89-30 72 95 19, Fax +49-(0)89-30 77 91 38
info@lahrvonleitisacademy.eu
www.lahrvonleitisacademy.eu
www.facebook.com/lvlaa*