



The Making of a Nazi Hero: The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel

Daniel Siemens

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On January 14, 1930, Horst Wessel, a young and ambitious member of the SA, was shot at close range and killed outside his home in Berlin. Joseph Goebbels, whose attention had already been drawn to Wessel as a possible future Nazi leader, was the first to recognize the propaganda potential of the case. *A young martyr for the Third Reich,* he wrote in his diary on February 23, 1930, immediately after receiving the news of his death. This was the beginning of the myth-making of what were essentially a very ordinary individual and a very ordinary crime. Horst Wessel became the hero of the Nazi movement and the song *Die Fahne Hoch* for which Wessel had written the lyrics (and which subsequently became popularly known as the *Horst Wessel Song*) became the official Nazi party anthem. Daniel Siemens here provides a fascinating and gripping account of the background to Horst Wessel's murder and uncovers how and why the Nazis made him a political hero. At the same time, it is a portrait of the Nazi propaganda machine at its most effective and most chilling.

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