



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

By 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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Editorial Review

Review

Daniel Siemens - delivers trustworthy historical revelations concerning the Wessel material while reading - as excitingly as a crime story with an ominously long track of blood. Die Zeit This book could be used as a standard reference on the essential details of the Nazi technique of domination - and its consequences. Der Tagesspiegel Siemens has unrolled a spectacular criminal case. A gripping and fact-rich historical study. WDR (Western German Broadcasting) It has been years since I have read a book dealing with the early Nazi years with as much interest, excitement and admiration. Robert M. Citino, Central European History A brilliantly researched and highly readable account of the life and death of Horst Wessel, the today largely forgotten creator of the official anthem of National Socialism. Thomas Weber, author of Hitler's First War In this masterful book, Daniel Siemens tells the gripping story of how a small-time SA firebrand became a celebrated Nazi martyr. Beautifully written and assiduously researched, Siemens provides a penetrating account of political radicalism and violence in the Weimar Republic, and of terror, propaganda and popular mobilization in the Third Reich. An outstanding work of history. Nik Wachsmann, Birkbeck, University of London Excellent...thoroughly readable text, which tells its complex story with considerable elan...Siemens has delivered an outstanding work of history, which illuminates and educates, yet wears its considerable erudition lightly...Siemens has raised the flag for serious, well-written, accessible history... Roger Moorhouse, BBC History Magazine, June 2013

About the Author

Daniel Siemens is a historian of Nazi Germany and DAAD Francis Carsten Lecturer in Modern German History at the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies (SSEES), University College London. He contributes to various daily newspapers in Germany, including the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

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