

= Horst Wessel =

Horst Ludwig Georg Erich Wessel (9 October 1907 ? 23 February 1930) was a Nazi Party (NSDAP) activist known for writing the lyrics to the " Horst @-@ Wessel @-@ Lied " . His death in 1930 was used by the party for propaganda purposes .

Wessel first joined the German National People 's Party (DNVP) , but by 1926 was removed for being too extremist . He then joined the NSDAP , where he wrote songs for Nazi events . He rose to command several SA squads and districts . On 14 January 1930 , he was shot in the head by two members of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) . Albrecht Höhler was arrested and charged with his murder . He was initially sentenced to six years in prison , but was executed after the Nazis came to power . Wessel 's funeral was given wide attention in Berlin , with many of the Nazi elite in attendance . After his death , he became a major Nazi propaganda symbol . His name was used for several civilian and military purposes during the time of the Third Reich .

= = Early life = =

Horst Ludwig Georg Erich Wessel was born on 9 October in 1907 in Bielefeld , Westphalia , as the son of Wilhelm Ludwig Georg Wessel (born 15 July 1879) , a doctor and Lutheran minister at the Nikolai Church , one of Berlin 's oldest churches . Wessel 's mother , Bertha Luise Margarete Wessel (neé Richter) , also came from a family of Lutheran pastors . Wessel 's parents were married on 1 May 1906 . He grew up alongside his sister Ingeborg Paula Margarethe (born 19 May 1909) and his brother Werner Georg Erich Ludwig (born 22 August 1910) . The family lived in the Judenstraße (" Street of the Jews ") , which in medieval times had been the centre of Berlin 's Jewish community . Wessel 's refusal to follow his father into the ministry was the subject of many father and son conflicts .

The Wessel family , mainly influenced by the father , avidly supported the monarchist German National People 's Party (DNVP) , and when he was 15 , Wessel joined the DNVP 's youth group Bismarckjugend (" Bismarck Youth ") . He soon became a local leader , engaging in street battles with youth members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Communist Party (KPD) . Later , Wessel joined groups with a more sinister reputation , including the Organisation Consul and finally the Black Reichswehr .

Wessel attended Volksschule (primary school) in Cölln from 1914 to 1922 , and thereafter attended high school at Königstädtisches and Luisenstädtisches Gymnasium , where he passed his Abitur examination . In 1926 Wessel enrolled in Friedrich Wilhelm University .

= = In the Nazi Party = =

= = = Joining the SA = = =

By 1926 , the German National People 's Party decided that Wessel had become " too radical " and he was removed . That December , he joined Adolf Hitler 's National Socialist German Workers ' Party (Nazi Party ; NSDAP) and its paramilitary organisation the Sturmabteilung (" Storm Detachment " ; SA) . Part of the attraction to Wessel was the socialist stance taken by the Nazi groups in northern Germany . He was also impressed by Joseph Goebbels , the Nazi Party 's Gauleiter (regional leader) of Berlin , about whom he said " There was nothing [Goebbels] couldn 't handle . The party comrades clung to him with great devotion . The SA would have let itself be cut to pieces for him . Goebbels ? he was like Hitler himself . Goebbels ? he was our Goebbels . "

In a group of fifty SA men , Wessel traveled to the Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg in August 1927 , joining other Berlin Nazis to make a group of 400 , led by Goebbels . At the time , the SA was banned in Berlin . When they returned , the 450 brownshirts were arrested .

Wessel soon impressed Goebbels in turn , and in January 1928 , a period in which the Berlin city authorities had banned the SA in an effort to curb political street violence , Wessel was sent to

Vienna to study the National Socialist Youth Group , as well as the organisational and tactical methods of the Nazi Party there . He returned to Berlin in July 1928 to recruit local youths , and was involved in helping to implement a reorganisation of the NSDAP in the city into a cell @-@ structure similar to that used by the German Communist Party (KPD) . Wessel did this despite SA rules forbidding members from working for the party .

In 1929 , Wessel became the Street Cell Leader of the Alexanderplatz Storm Section of the SA . In May , he was appointed district leader of the SA for Friedrichshain where he lived . In October 1929 , Wessel dropped out of university to devote himself full @-@ time to the Nazi movement .

= = = Erna Jänicke = = =

At around the same time , the Alexanderplatz , the centre of Berlin 's nightlife , was part of the territory of Wessel 's SA troops . In September 1929 , he met Erna Jänicke , an 18 @-@ year @-@ old prostitute , in a bar . Soon he moved into her apartment in Große Frankfurter Straße (today Karl @-@ Marx @-@ Allee) . The landlady was Elisabeth Salm , whose late husband had been an active Communist . Some sources claim Wessel earned money as her procurer . After a few months , there was a dispute between Salm and Wessel over unpaid rent .

= = Death = =

= = = Assassination = = =

In the evening of 14 January 1930 , at around ten o 'clock , Wessel was shot in the face at point @-@ blank range by two members of the KPD in Friedrichshain . The attack occurred at Große Frankfurter Straße 62 , the building where Wessel and Jänicke lived . As he was lying seriously wounded in hospital , Goebbels was already releasing reports asserting that those who had carried out the attack were " degenerate communist subhumans " . He later died in hospital on 23 February from blood poisoning he contracted during his hospitalisation .

Following his death , the Nazis and Communists offered different accounts of the events . The police (led by Chief Inspector Teichmann) and several courts determined that both political and private reasons had led to Wessel 's assassination . By 17 January 1930 , the police announced their manhunt for their prime suspect : KPD member Albrecht Höhler . Jänicke identified Höhler as the gunman . It was then reported by a democratic @-@ minded newspaper that Jänicke knew about the existence of Höhler prior to the murder because Wessel had used her for espionage . Jänicke responded by saying she had never been a spy for Wessel , and that she only knew Höhler as an " acquaintance from the streets " . The police and courts believed Jänicke , and Höhler was quickly arrested . He was sentenced to six years imprisonment for the shooting ; the light sentence the result of the court finding that there were extenuating circumstances . Seven accomplices were also found guilty and sentenced to jail .

Three years later , after the Nazi accession to power in 1933 , Höhler was dragged out of prison and murdered by the SA .

= = = Funeral = = =

Goebbels ' plan was to turn Wessel 's funeral into a mass demonstration full of speeches and processions of SA men in uniform , but he could not get the necessary police permits to do so , even after Wessel 's sister requested Hindenburg to relent .

Wessel was buried in Berlin on 1 March 1930 . Contrary to Nazi claims , there were no attacks on the funeral procession . His funeral was filmed and turned into a major propaganda event by the NSDAP . Wessel was elevated by Goebbels ' propaganda apparatus to the status of leading martyr of the Nazi movement . Many of Goebbels 's most effective propaganda speeches were made at gravesides , but Wessel received unusual attention among the many unremembered storm troopers

. In an editorial in the Völkischer Beobachter (" People 's Observer ") , Alfred Rosenberg wrote of how Wessel was not dead , but had joined a combat group that still struggled with them ; afterwards , Nazis spoke of how a man who died in conflict had joined " Horst Wessel 's combat group " or were " summoned to Horst Wessel 's standard . " The Prussian police had outlawed public gatherings and the display of swastikas at the funeral procession , with the exception of a few Nazi Party vehicles . Wessel 's coffin was paraded through large parts of the center of Berlin in a procession that took many hours .

As the coffin reached Bülowplatz (now Rosa @-@ Luxemburg @-@ Platz) , KPD members began singing " The Internationale " in an attempt to disrupt the event . The police were unable to prevent abusive shouts and , at some points , flying rocks . No major clashes occurred , although someone had written " To Wessel the pimp , a last Heil Hitler " in white paint on the cemetery wall .

In attendance of Wessel 's funeral was Goebbels (who delivered the eulogy) , Franz Pfeffer von Salomon , Hermann Göring , and Prince August Wilhelm of Prussia , referred to as the " Nazi prince . " Prior to the event , Goebbels and Göring had discussed the possibility of Hitler attending . In his diary entry on the day of the funeral , Goebbels recalled : " Hitler isn 't coming . Had the situation explained to him over the telephone and he actually declined . Oh well " Goebbels blamed Rudolf Hess for preventing Hitler from coming .

Goebbels continue to use the " martyrdom " of Wessel as a propaganda device for years , including in January 1933 , when " an enormous procession ... led by Hitler , Goebbels , Röhm , and other top officials of the NSDAP , ... marched to the St. Nicholas Cemetery ... [where] Hitler spoke of Wessel 's death as a symbolic sacrifice , and dedicated a memorial to him . Wessel 's name was frequently invoked by the Nazis to bolster core tenets of National Socialist ideology during the remaining existence of the Third Reich . For example , a wartime article from the Nazi @-@ owned Völkischer Beobachter newspaper called Wessel " the hero of the Brown Revolution " and referred to his " sacrificial death " that " passionately inflamed millions who followed " . The paper further referred to Wessel as " the driving force behind the struggle for freedom of the armed services and the homeland of the Greater German Reich " .

After World War II , Wessel 's memorial was vandalized and his remains were destroyed . Such activity became common for buried Nazis in East Germany . The grave site was long marked only by part of the headstone of Wessel 's father , Ludwig , from which the surname " Wessel " had been removed . This , too , was destroyed around 2005 and the site was marked only by a raised mound of earth bounded by ivy , with two iceplants in the center . Later in 2011 , a group of anti @-@ Nazi activists attacked Wessel 's grave and sprayed the words Keine Ruhe für Nazis ! (English : " No Rest For Nazis ! ") on his headstone . In August 2013 , the grave of Wessel 's father was levelled as well , as the church wished to stop the site from being a rally point for Neo @-@ Nazis .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Horst Wessel Song = = =

Wessel played the schalmei (shawm) , a double @-@ reed woodwind instrument which was played in groups called Schalmeienkapellen (" Schalmeien orchestras or bands ") , and are still used in folk celebrations . Wessel founded an " SA Schalmeienkapelle " band , which provided music during SA events . In early 1929 , Wessel wrote the lyrics for a new Nazi fight song Kampflied (" fight song ") , which was first published in Goebbels 's newspaper Der Angriff in September , under the title Der Unbekannte SA @-@ Mann (" The Unknown SA @-@ Man ") . The song later became known as Die Fahne Hoch (" Raise the Flag ") and finally the " Horst @-@ Wessel @-@ Lied " (" Horst Wessel Song ") . The Nazis made it a co @-@ national anthem of Nazi Germany , along with the first stanza of the Deutschlandlied . It was later claimed by the Nazis that Wessel also wrote the music , but it was considered more likely that the tune was in reality adapted from a World War I German Imperial Navy song , and was probably originally a folk song . The authorship of the melody was finally determined by a German court in 1937 as not by Wessel .

=== Executions ===

On April 10 , 1935 , five years after Wessel 's assassination , and two years after the SA murder of Wessel 's killer , Albrecht Höhler , two persons accused of being involved in Wessel 's killing were put on trial and subsequently beheaded in Berlin 's Plötzensee Prison : Solly Epstein , a Jewish painter , and Hans Ziegler , a barber . The two had been arrested in August 1933 , and were put on trial in May 1934 with a third defendant , Peter Stoll , a tailor . In 2009 the sentences against them were rescinded by the German government .

=== Posthumous notability ===

==== Hans Westmar ====

Hans Westmar was one of the first films of the Nazi era to idealise a version of his life . Goebbels , however , disliked the film and temporarily banned it , eventually allowing its release with alterations and with the main character 's name changed to the fictional " Hans Westmar " . Part of the problem was the authentic depiction of storm trooper brutality , including violent clashes with Communists , did not fit the more reasonable tone the Nazis attempted to present initially , after coming to power ; unlike Wessel , Westmar preaches class reconciliation and does not alienate his family . It was among the first films to depict dying for Hitler as a glorious death for Germany , resulting in his spirit inspiring his comrades .

=== Memorial namings ===

Passau named a street Horst @-@ Wessel @-@ Straße .

The Berlin district of Friedrichshain , where Wessel died , was renamed " Horst Wessel Stadt " , and a square in the Mitte district was renamed " Horst @-@ Wessel @-@ Platz " . The U @-@ Bahn station nearby was also renamed . After the war , the name Friedrichshain was restored and Horst @-@ Wessel @-@ Platz (which was in East Berlin) became " Liebknechtplatz " (after Karl Liebknecht) . In 1947 it was renamed " Luxemburg @-@ Platz " after Rosa Luxemburg (it has been called Rosa @-@ Luxemburg @-@ Platz since 1969) .

In 1936 , Nazi Germany 's Kriegsmarine commissioned a three @-@ masted training ship and named her the Horst Wessel . The ship was taken as a war prize by the United States after World War II . After repairs and modifications , she was commissioned on 15 May 1946 into the United States Coast Guard as the USCGC Eagle (WIX @-@ 327) . She remains in service to this day .

Examples of German military units adopting the name of this Nazi @-@ era " martyr " in World War II include the 18th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Division , known as the " Horst Wessel " Division , and the Luftwaffe 's 26th Destroyer (or heavy fighter) Wing Zerstörergeschwader 26 , as well as its successor day fighter unit Jagdgeschwader 6 , which was similarly named the " Horst Wessel " wing .