

Horst Wessel's Funeral Procession on Jüdenstrasse in Berlin (March 1930)

Abstract

Horst Wessel (1907-1930), the son of a Protestant pastor from a middle-class background, had joined the Nazi Party in 1926 while studying law. However, he dropped out of university two years later and scraped a living with odd jobs. Supported by Joseph Goebbels, the NSDAP Gauleiter of Berlin, he quickly rose through the ranks of the SA. The SA storm troop he led in Berlin's working-class neighborhood Friedrichshain was known as a brutal gang of thugs that sought confrontation with communist and social-democratic groups. In January 1930, Wessel was wounded with a gun in his apartment by a criminal who was also a member of the KPD, and later died from his injuries. It is unclear whether the assault was politically motivated or had a private background. Regardless, Nazi propaganda stylized Wessel as a martyr to the National Socialist cause. His funeral, which had to be guarded by the police, was exploited by the Nazis for propaganda purposes and recorded on film. A martial song written by Wessel was named after him and declared the party anthem. After the Nazis came to power, streets and buildings were named after him. This photograph by press photographer Georg Pahl shows the funeral procession passing by numerous onlookers under police protection.

Source



Source: Horst Wessel's funeral procession, March 1930. Photographer: Unknown. Aktuelle Bilder Zentrale, Georg Pahl. Bundesarchiv Bild 102-09303, access via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_102-09303,_Berlin,_Beisetzung_von_Horst_Wessel.jpg

Recommended Citation: Horst Wessel's Funeral Procession on Jüdenstrasse in Berlin (March 1930), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:image-4290>> [March 16, 2026].