

The Spirit of Horst Wessel



Who Was Horst Wessel?

Horst Wessel (September 9, 1907– February 23, 1930) was a German National Socialist who eventually became a hero of National Socialism after being martyred by Jew led Communists. As a teenager Horst Wessel was a leader among the youth group of the German National People's Party, a conservative nationalist party. He would often lead the group into brawls against Communists. But when the organization began viewing him as too extreme he became more involved with the National Socialists and the Stormtroopers (the SA). Eventually in 1926, he abandoned his studies of law at Berlin's Friedrich Wilhelm University to become a full-time Stormtrooper; and also to develop more of an understanding of workers' problems and to protect lower class Germans from the Red Terror and Communist intrusions. Now, as a leader of the SA, he often made speeches and led marches and fights against Communists in the streets. While Berlin was a mainly Liberal and Communist city, with his charisma Horst Wessel began winning over the support and votes of many Berliners for the National Socialists. The Judeo-Communists did everything they could to thwart Wessel's influence, including killing SA members, and also spreading lies about Horst Wessel, saying he was originally a street beggar, a thief, and even a Berlin pimp. Eventually Wessel became too much of a threat, so the Communist Party decided to assassinate him. On the night of January 14, 1930 Horst Wessel opened the door to a Communist assassin who shot him in the face. Wessel was rushed to the hospital and would survive for forty days before passing away. During those forty days he was frequently visited by Joseph Goebbels and SA members.

Goebbels describes his experience of this in the essay below titled "Raise the Flag High"

Raise the Flag High!

by Joseph Goebbels

It was late in the evening and I was enjoying the rare pleasure of reading a good book. I was relaxed and at ease. The telephone rang. I picked up the phone with trepidation. It is worse than I expected. "Horst Wessel has been shot." Trembling with fear, I asked: "Dead?" "No, but there is no hope." I felt as if the walls were collapsing around me. It was unbelievable. It cannot be!

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A few days later I step into the small hospital room on the ground floor and am shocked by the sight. A bullet in the head has done terrible damage to this heroic lad. His face is distorted. I hardly recognize him. But he is happy. His clear, bright eyes shine, though we cannot talk for long. The doctor has ordered him to keep calm. He only repeats a few words: "I am happy." He does not need to say it. One sees it by looking at him. His young, bright smile overcomes the blood and wounds. He still believes.

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I sat by his bed on a Sunday afternoon as streams of visitors came until evening. One can hope. He is improving. The fever has dropped, the wounds healing. He sat up part way and talked. What about? A foolish question! About us, about the movement, about his comrades. They stood outside his door today, and one after the other came by and raised his arm to salute the young leader for a moment. I could not bear it otherwise!

I look at his hands, which are now small and white. His strong nose stands out in the middle of his face, and two bright eyes sparkle. But the fever is back? He cannot eat, his strength gradually declines, though his spirit remains fresh and alert. He is not allowed to read. He may only talk. It is hard to obey the warning look of the nurse. Will I ever see him again? Who knows! If blood poisoning does not develop, everything will be OK.

A lonely mother sits outside. Her face reflects a question. "Will he make it?" What can one say but yes? I try to persuade myself and others.

Blood poisoning develops. By Thursday, there is little hope. He wants to talk with me.

The doctor gives me a minute. How hard it is to walk past the death watch into the room! He does not know how serious his condition is. But he senses it may be the last time: "Do not go away!" he begs. The nurse relents, and he is comforted. "Do not lose hope. The fever comes and goes. The movement, too, has suffered in the last two years, but today it is hard and strong." That consoles him. "Come back!" his eyes, his hands, his hot dry lips, say, as I leave with a heavy heart. I fear I have seen him for the last time.

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Saturday morning. It is hopeless. The doctor is no longer allowing visits. He is hallucinating. He does not even recognize his own mother any longer.

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It is 6:30 Sunday morning. He dies after a hard struggle. As I stand by his bed two hours later, I can not believe that it is Horst Wessel. His face is yellow, the wounds still covered with white band aids. Stubble shows on his chin. The half-open eyes stare glassily into the eternity that we all face. The small cold hands lie in the midst of flowers, white and red tulips and violets.

Host Wessel has passed on. His mortal remains have given up struggle and conflict. Yet I can almost physically feel his spirit rise, to live on with us. He believed it, he knew it. He himself put it in words: He "marches in spirit in our ranks."

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One day in a German Germany, workers and students will march together singing his song. He will be with them. He wrote it in a moment of ecstasy, of inspiration. The song flowed from him, born of life and bearing witness to that life. The brown soldiers are singing it across the country. In ten years, children will sing it in the schools, workers in the factories, soldiers on the march. His song makes him immortal. That is how he lived, that is how he died. A wanderer between two worlds, between yesterday and tomorrow, between that which was and that which will be. A soldier of the German revolution! Once he stood with his hand on his belt, proud and upright, with the smile of youth on his red lips, always ready to risk his life. That is how we will remember him.

I see endless columns marching in spirit. A humiliated people rises up and begins to move. An awakened Germany demands its rights: Freedom and prosperity!

He marches behind them in spirit. Many of them will not know him. Many will have gone where he now is. Many others will have come.

He strides silently and knowingly with them. The banners wave, the trumpets sound, the pipes sound, and from a million throats the song of the German revolution resounds:

“Raise the flag high!”

(This was the opening line to the “Horst Wessel Song,” a poem he had written that became the Nazi Party anthem.)



The Flag High!

The flag high! The ranks tightly closed!
The SA march with bold, firm steps.
Comrades shot by the Red Front and reactionaries
March in spirit in our ranks.
Clear the streets for the brown battalions,
Clear the streets for the stormtroopers!

Already millions look with hope to the swastika.
The day of freedom and bread is dawning!
Roll call has sounded for the last time!
We are all already prepared for the fight!
Soon Hitler's flag will fly over the barricades.
Our slavery will soon end!

The flag high! The ranks tightly closed!
The SA marches with a bold, firm pace.
Comrades shot by the Red Front and reactionaries
March in spirit in our ranks.