



Hitler's Rival: Ernst Thälmann in Myth and Memory

Russel Lemmons

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Throughout the 1920s, German politician and activist Ernst Thälmann (1886--1944) was the leader of the largest Communist Party organization outside the Soviet Union. Thälmann was the most prominent left-wing politician in the country's 1932 election and ran third in the presidential race after Hitler and von Hindenberg. After the Nazi Party's victory in that contest, he was imprisoned and held in solitary confinement for eleven years before being executed at Buchenwald concentration camp in 1944 under the Führer's direct orders.

Hitler's Rival examines how the Communist Party gradually transformed Thälmann into a fallen mythic hero, building a cult that became one of their most important propaganda tools in central Europe. Author Russel Lemmons analyzes the party intelligentsia's methods, demonstrating how they used various media to manipulate public memory and exploring the surprising ways in which they incorporated Christian themes into their messages. Examining the facts as well as the propaganda, this unique volume separates the intriguing true biography of the cult figure from the fantastic myth that was created around him.

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