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“Mario Kessler offers a nuanced narrative of Arkadij Maslow that does justice to such a complex and interesting character in the twentieth century of hope and horror. In some ways, we are actually treated to a dual biography, as this book is not just an astute account of the heterodox Marxist Maslow but also of his partner (both romantically and politically) Ruth Fischer.” —Axel Fair-Schulz, Associate Professor of Modern European History, State University of New York at Potsdam, USA

“Mario Kessler brings Maslow to life and thereby shows the roads not taken, the various dissident politics of the period that kept alive for a better future in the worst of circumstances. The reader gets, therefore, a much richer view of communism and other radicalisms of the interwar period. Kessler opens the window on those whose lives were battered by the two major dictatorships of the twentieth century, Nazi and Stalinist, but who sought continually to create a different kind of politics.” —Eric D. Weitz, Distinguished Professor of History at City College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA. This book is a political biography of Arkadij Maksimovich Maslow (1891-1941), a German Communist politician and later a dissident and opponent to Stalin. Together with his political and common-law marriage partner, Ruth Fischer, Maslow briefly led the Communist Party of Germany, the KPD, and brought about its submission to Moscow. Afterwards Fischer and Maslow were removed from the KPD leadership in the fall of 1925 and expelled from the party a year later. Henceforth they both lived as communist outsiders—persecuted by both Hitler and Stalin. Maslow escaped to Cuba via France and Portugal and was murdered under dubious circumstances in Havana in November 1941. He died as a communist dissident committed to the cause of a radical-socialist labor movement that lay in ruins. Kessler considers Maslow's role in pivotal events such as the Bolshevik Revolution, in Soviet revolutionary parties and organizations, through to the rise of Stalinism and Cold War anti-communism. What results is a deep dive into the life of a key yet understudied figure in dissident communism. Mario Kessler is Professor and Senior Researcher at the Leibniz Center for Contemporary History at Potsdam, Germany.