

Teresa Nentwig: Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf (1893–1961). A conservative Social Democrat, Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2013

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 - A. Stenographic records and printed papers
 - B. Document collections and documentations
 - C. Journals of law, legal texts and bulletins
 - D. Surveys and statistics
 - E. Speeches of Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf as well as articles of newspapers and magazines written by him
 - F. Newspapers and magazines
 - G. Press and information services
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Summary:

This thesis deals with Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf (1893–1961) who was the co-founder and long-standing Prime Minister of Lower Saxony. Biographical reflexions as well as historical and political science analyses form the focus of the study.

Following the introduction (chapter 1), Kopf's life until 1945 and potential imprints are worked out (chapter 2). In this context, the author of this thesis also studies his activities during the "Third Reich" in detail. At first, Kopf was the co-owner of a firm who participated in the administration and the sale of houses belonging to Jews. Then, during the Second World War, he was an efficient and highly engaged collaborator of a National Socialist institution, the Main Trusteeship Office East ("Haupttreuhandstelle Ost", abbreviated HTO), who took over Polish and Jewish property in Poland and pursued the "germanization" of Poland. Moreover, Kopf worked for the real estate company of the "Haupttreuhandstelle Ost" (GHTO). Until the end of 1942 he detached from his contractual relations to the HTO and the GHTO, probably because of a financial conflict. But in May 1944, he still worked as a provisional administrator of the property of the Jewish community in a small Upper Silesian village. These activities are casting shadows on his biography. It is true that Kopf was later exonerated by Jews and by clergymen prosecuted by the National Socialists – they emphasized how Kopf had done his best to help them and that he had taken personal risks while doing so. Such and similar testimonies appear credible and therefore exculpatory. But they cannot be verified nowadays. After the Second World War Kopf described the activities he had carried out from 1933 until 1945 only with a few words: "self-employed businessman and farmer".

The third chapter of the thesis deals with the foundations for the long political career of Kopf in the postwar years. Firstly, it is shown how he succeeded in climbing from the office of Hanover's district president (since 1 May 1945) to the office of Prime Minister of Lower Saxony (since 23 November 1946). One of the focal points of consideration is Kopf's contribution to the foundation of Lower Saxony. Secondly, the third chapter of the thesis shows how Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf participated, together with the other German heads of state, in the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany. Thirdly and lastly, the chapter deals with the government formations which took place in Lower Saxony between 1947 and 1959. With the exception of the year 1955, Kopf and his party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), always succeeded in taking over the government; only the coalition partners changed. As a result, Kopf held the office of Prime Minister of Lower Saxony until his death at the end of December 1961. Only from 1955 to 1959, he was replaced by a politician from another party, Heinrich Hellwege (Deutsche Partei, abbreviated DP).

The fourth chapter of the thesis examines how Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf's political leadership, especially as Prime Minister of Lower Saxony, can be described. At first, it is however the subject "political leadership" in general which is introduced: What does the term "political leadership" actually mean? How can you analyse it? What are the conditions and the restrictions of political

leadership?, and so on. As the success in political leadership is finally measured by the political output, the fourth chapter also deals with the results of Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf's leadership. The foundation of Lower Saxony, which he initially had promoted as district president of Hanover, then as president of the province of Hanover and at last as Prime Minister of the Land Hanover, can be considered to be his lifetime work respectively his historical achievement. Moreover, it was under Kopf's leadership that the economic and democratic reconstruction took place.

In 1948, Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf was overtaken by his past – the Polish government demanded his extradition as a war criminal. He was accused, among other things, of having enriched himself with Polish and Jewish property during the Nazi period. The background of the request for extradition and the reasons for the decision of the British military government to reject it are treated in chapter 5.

The sixth chapter summarizes the results of the thesis. One main result is that Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf had a many-faceted and tortuous life. But at the same time many continuities and connections can be identified. It was for example possible to work out several characteristic traits which were typical for Kopf over decades, inter alia his pragmatism, his good organisational skills, his wish for influence and career and his general conservative attitude which eventually was always characteristic for him in spite of his membership in the SPD (already since 1919). Another important result of the study is that Kopf's political leadership style was formed by a combination of different elements: He ruled charismatically, organisational-bureaucratically and sometimes in an authoritarian way, but first of all he ruled patriarchally – he personified the political image of the father as the head of state ("Landesvater" in German). At the end of this final chapter, the author provides an outlook on several research perspectives. It would be for example interesting to examine the elements which at present contribute to the cohesion of Lower Saxony.

The thesis is conceived as a biography which tries to understand and is always critical. That is, on the one hand, the author's objective was to work out and explain the basis of Kopf's thinking and the motives of his action. On the other hand, she strived for a critical analysis of her subject of investigation. In order to reach an approach as close as possible to Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf, the thesis bases on an analysis and interpretation of historical sources. This methodological access made sense because many documents from him or about him were lying in the archives without having been consulted. In addition to this, the author of the thesis conducted several interviews with contemporary witnesses, including, for instance, former personal assistants of Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf and secretaries of the State Chancellery in Hanover. All written and oral documents have been evaluated in a source-critical way.