

**Lena Haase, Der Trierer Oberbürgermeister Wilhelm von Haw (1783–1862). Eine politische Biographie zwischen Liberalismus, Katholizismus und preußischem Staat, Trier (Verlag für Geschichte und Kultur) 2018, XIV–340 S., 30 Abb. (Publikationen aus dem Stadtarchiv Trier, 5), ISBN 978-3-94576-806-8, EUR 24,90.**

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par  
**Christina Rathgeber, Berlin**

Lena Haase's »political biography« of Wilhelm von Haw (1783–1862) is based on her master's thesis of 2017 at the University of Trier. She has chosen an interesting subject of study, for Haw was active on a number of different levels. After studying law in Trier and Paris, he practiced law in Trier for a few years. Beginning in 1809 and throughout the Napoleonic occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, he held positions in the local legal-administrative systems in Trier and elsewhere. Haw's career flourished during the years of Napoleonic occupation, but Haase shows that as a member of the *Beamtenelite*, he also did well for himself when Trier fell under Prussian control. In 1818 he was appointed Trier's mayor and *Landrat* by the Prussian authorities. This meant that he was closely linked to different institutions. As mayor, he obviously had strong communal allegiances and as *Landrat*, he not only represented the central government in Berlin but also had loyalties to the local estates (*Kreisstände*) who had recommended him for this position. These years were marked by repeated conflicts with his superiors. Haw would be dismissed as *Landrat* in 1834 and in 1839 requested his retirement from his position as mayor.

As a representative of the city of Trier he was automatically a member of the newly created Provincial Diet for the Rhine Province between 1826 and 1839. He remained a member of this diet between 1840/41–1845 and 1851–1860 but as a representative of other institutions. His membership period therefore lasted for more than twenty-five years and during this time Haw was very supportive of Trier's requirements. Sometimes this led to clashes with the central Prussian government. Haase uses documents from the collection of Haw's papers (*Nachlaß*) in Trier's *Stadtarchiv* to show his position on the most important topics of discussion during these years. These included questions to do with taxation, freedom of the press, judicial reform, church policy, strategy for agriculture and farming, provincial parity for the Rhine Province; infrastructure projects for the improvement of this province; corporate interests as estate-owner, the provincial Fire Society and the poorhouse in Trier. Haw was an energetic member of this Diet and responsible for a number of petitions and resolutions. He was also active in the United Diet (1847), the upper chamber of the Prussian Diet (1850) and the Prussian House of Deputies (1852–1853).

Haase also uses the papers in Trier's *Stadtarchiv* to trace the development of Haw's often strained relationship with the central



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Prussian government. Haw saw himself more as a spokesman for the populace than as a representative of this government. At the same time he was an ambitious man. He sought ennoblement and hoped to obtain higher offices. Haw felt that he was not shown enough appreciation. With the increasing dissatisfaction of his superiors his frustration became ever more pronounced. The most serious reproach that was levelled against him was that he was far more interested in managing his different sources of wealth (Haw was a rich man) than in fulfilling the responsibilities of his office. Haase comes to the conclusion that even though Haw has the deserved reputation of being a charitable and generous mayor, he also used his office for his personal advancement. Although this conclusion is convincing, it is still somewhat surprising, for in the title Haase places Haw between liberalism, Catholicism and the Prussian state. It is not clear enough from the very beginning that despite his concern for the community's well-being, Haw's primary motivation was to further his own career.

Haase has gone to considerable effort to present Haw in his historical and social context. Apart from the broad use of secondary literature and many photographs and illustrations in six appendices (often based on her own research), she provides useful lists of the residents (1785–1858) of the street on which Haw lived and of the membership of some of the associations in Trier to which he belonged. Haw's membership in different associations in Trier after 1807 was typical of his social class and a central component in his socialization. It also gave him opportunities to influence developments within this city.

Haase provides brief histories of these associations and the nature of Haw's activities in them. These included: Trier's Masonic lodge; the Casino –, a reading society/social club which attracted Trier's elite social classes; a Catholic sodality (Marianische Bürgersolidität); the Gesellschaft für nützliche Forschungen; the Verein zu Besserung der Verbrecher und Verbesserung der Gefangenen-Anstalten; the Landwirtschaftlicher Verein für Rheinpreußen; and the Pius Association. In 1849 he was a founding member of the Wohlthätigkeits-Verein but this society probably only existed for one winter. In all cases, he was either a founding member of these associations or played a leading role in them. As Trier's mayor he also headed the administrative committee for die Vereinigten Hospitien & Stadtparkasse in Trier. In 1848, even though he had long ceased to be mayor, he even became president of this committee. A further important channel for Haw's socialization were familial networks and these are also presented in some depth.

In November 1852, while a member of the Prussian House of Deputies, Haw became one of the founders of the Katholische Fraktion. This parliamentary group can be understood as a forerunner of the Zentrum (est. 1870), the party of political Catholicism. Yet this appears to have been the extent of his interest in the furtherance of political Catholicism. He never exhibited great interest in Catholic issues. He belonged to Trier's Catholic sodality between 1819 and 1851, but after six years resigned from its office of prefect because he had been unsuccessful in his attempts to make this sodality a centre for Trier's Catholic citizens. His distance from the



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

concerns of contemporary Catholicism was confirmed a year later. In the summer of 1852, the so-called Raumer Decrees (drawn up by the Minister of Culture and the Minister of the Interior) attempted to suppress the extremely popular, mostly Jesuit-led missions and to keep Jesuits out of Prussia. This resulted in the agitation of great segments of Catholic Prussia. The founding of the Katholische Fraktion was a response to what was perceived as unconstitutional behavior on the part of the state. The monarch received a number of petitions requesting the repeal of these decrees.

There is no record of such an appeal being sent from Trier. Haase describes the Katholische Fraktion as the »early« Zentrum, but when the Zentrum was established in 1870, it actually had little to do with this earlier parliamentary group. It owed much to the efforts of Westphalians and most of the petitions against the Raumer Decrees had come from Westphalia. These petitions were decisive in the politicization of Catholicism, for they gave expression to the grassroots objection to the state's interference in the religious lives of Catholics. Haw, however, belonged to an earlier generation (s) than the men who would be active in the Zentrum – he was 69 in 1852 – and seems to have been unwilling to complain directly to the monarch.

The question of the depth of Haw's commitment to political Catholicism remains open. Nor is it made clear how he thought he could advance his career if he was repeatedly lax in the execution of his duties. All in all, however, Haase has used much new material to present an insightful and largely convincing study of the development of a career in Vormärz Prussia that took place on a local level(s) but was closely linked to the central government.



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)