

# Hans Pohl (1935-2019)

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The noted economic, business, and social historian Hans Pohl died on 10 December 2019, at the age of 84. Pohl was born on 27 March 1935, the son of the estate owner Hermann Pohl and his wife Magdalene in Bärdorf, District Frankenstein (Lower Silesia, today Poland). In 1945, at the age of nine, he was forced to leave, settling in Dillenburg in Hesse, where he attended *Gymnasium*, which he completed in March 1955. From the summer semester of 1955, Hans Pohl studied economic and social history, classical philology, law, and economics at the University of Cologne. His main professors there were the historian Richard Konetzke, the economic and trade historian Ludwig Beutin and later the economic, financial and trade historian Hermann Kellenbenz. He received his doctorate in July 1961. His dissertation, *Die Beziehungen Hamburgs zu Spanien und dem spanischen Amerika in der Zeit von 1740 bis 1806*, published in 1963, benefited not only from the advice of those mentors but also from study and research in Madrid in 1958-59.

After earning his doctorate, he continued at Cologne as research assistant and lecturer. In December 1968 he completed his teaching habilitation thesis, *Die Portugiesen in Antwerpen (1567-1648)*, which was published in 1976. Shortly after his habilitation, he was appointed to the Chair of Constitutional, Social and Economic History at the University of Bonn for the winter semester of 1969-70. He declined offers from universities in Hamburg, Inns-

bruck and Vienna to stay at Bonn until his retirement in 2000. Even after retirement he continued to be an active researcher and teacher. His last major work, the monograph *Historische Skizzen zur Bankassekuranz*, was published in 2011.

In the course of his long and extremely productive academic career, Hans Pohl produced significant results in five fields. He worked on pre-modern and modern trade and global history in his dissertation and habilitation thesis as well as in the 1989 monograph *Aufbruch der Weltwirtschaft*, a dense overview of global economic interdependencies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His second field of research, the economic history of Spanish America, was closely related to the first but thematically broader in its concern also with national industrial development, for example in Mexico. An important monograph summarizing many of his research results was published in 1996 under the title *Wirtschaftsgeschichte Hispanoamerikas in der Kolonialzeit*. The development of the industrial economy in Germany and neighbouring countries, such as Luxembourg, formed a third research focus, to which Pohl devoted himself mainly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He entered a fourth field in 1986 with a controversial business history, *Die Daimler-Benz AG in den Jahren 1933 bis 1945*, a third edition of which came out in 2017. In the field of business history, especially the automobile industry, Pohl presented a number of studies in the following years while also contributing to the considerable upswing in business history in Germany since the late 1970s through numerous editorships and studies. His fifth and final field of work was the history of banks, savings banks, and financial markets, in which he was very active for 30 years as author and editor of monographs and anthologies.

In the course of his long career, Hans Pohl was active in numerous national and international committees and associations, as well as the editor of prestigious journals and book series. He was a long-standing member of the International Advisory Board of *The Journal of European Economic History*. He also reviewed numerous books for the *Journal* and published two substantial essays from his fields of research. The 1999 survey essay, "Economic powers and political

powers in early modern Europe: Theory and history”, based on a wide range of literature, illustrates the growing interdependence between politics and economics, in particular the mutual use of resources to further either political or economic goals. Hans Pohl draws evidence from the history of science and empirical examples, focusing on spaces, institutions and networks. The second important contribution, his 2008 review article “Saving banks and credit cooperatives in Germany: Competitors in the same markets for 150 years?” summarizes for an English-speaking audience the major results of his research in the field of savings bank history since his 1982 work on the history of the Westdeutsche Landesbank. As a summary of the history of German savings banks since the 19th century, the article is still ground-breaking today.

With the passage of Hans Pohl, German and international economic, business and social history loses a committed, stimulating and productive researcher who has presented countless scholarly contributions based on a wide range of archival sources as well as stimulating syntheses and at the same time an important mediator between science and business. As a scholar and as a man, Hans Pohl will be remembered by all those who had the privilege of knowing him.