

Transatlantic Connections: A Cosmopolitan Context for Max and Marianne Weber's New York Visit 1904*

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Abstract

Max Weber's *Amerikabild*, his 'picture' of the United States, was first shaped by the 1848 exile Friedrich Kapp (1824–1884), a leader of the German Republicans in New York, who after his return in 1870 became a close family friend and a paternal mentor.

The first section sketches the relations between Friedrich Kapp and Max Weber senior, and also their sons, in the context of the global economic developments before the First World War. The second deals with the Webers' German-American and German-Jewish contacts in New York, the third with their meeting the Lichtensteins, Kapp daughters and sons-in-law. This served Max as a sounding board for evaluating the tensions between Yankee religious tradition, secularization and assimilation (section 4). Finally, I will turn to the fates of three generations of American and German Kapp descendants, a story of German-Jewish relations on both sides of the Atlantic. This completed a cycle of exile and emigration from the 1848ers to the refugees from Nazi Germany. If with decreasing intensity, relations with the Weber family continued into the 1930s.

Keywords: Max and Marianne Weber, Friedrich Kapp, the German-American and German-Jewish milieu of New York, exile and emigration from 1848 to the Nazi period.

* This essay expands some themes which I first treated in my book *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), esp. ch. 14, abbr. *Familiengeschichte*. It is another contribution to the history of the tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism within the same families in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Wherever feasible, references are to the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (ed. H. Baier, M.R. Lepsius, W.J. Mommsen, W. Schluchter and J. Winckelmann; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1984–), abbr. MWG. The main source for the American journey are the letters of Marianne and Max Weber to Helene Weber (Max's mother) in the Geheime Staatsarchiv Berlin, Rep. 92:6, abbr. GStA. Marianne quoted from them extensively, but selectively in *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1926); see Harry Zohn, *Max Weber: A Biography* (trans. with an introduction by G. Roth; New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), cited as MW; the translation was first published in 1975. For other English excerpts, see Lawrence Scaff, 'The "cool objectivity of socialization": Max Weber and Marianne Weber in America', *History of the Human Sciences* 11.2 (1998), 76. I thank Lawrence Scaff for his generosity in making available to me his transcription of sections that I had not done myself.