

Max Weber's Articles on German Agriculture and Industry in the *Encyclopedia Americana* (1906/1907) and their Political Context

Guenther Roth

Abstract

Recently two lengthy entries by Max Weber on German agriculture and industry were discovered in the *Encyclopedia Americana* of 1906/1907. They appear to be the only articles Weber wrote for a broad anglophone readership, apart from the poorly translated lecture at the Congress of Arts and Science in St. Louis in 1904. As economic experts Hugo Muensterberg, the organizer of the 23 contributions on Germany, chose two leading advocates of imperialist *Weltpolitik*, Weber and Ernst von Halle, Admiral Tirpitz's propaganda chief for Imperial Germany's ambitious naval expansion. The proximity of Weber's combative but somber 'social imperialism' to Halle's was recognized in the 1920s by the anti-establishment historian Eckart Kehr, but in recent decades has been overlooked in the Weber literature. Pursuing *Weltpolitik* in a lower key, Weber restates his long-held view, shared by Halle, that the fast growing German *Industriestaat* should be integrated into the world economy by a policy of moderate tariffs and trade treaties, in opposition to the conservative policies of high tariffs and autarky and, more recently, to Joseph Chamberlain's Imperial tariff movement. Backed by plenty of statistics, his own and Halle's, he enables the reader to compare the agricultural and industrial developments of Germany and the United States and to some extent also those of England and France. Considering American and German trade barriers ultimately surmountable, he warns of increasing Anglo-German tensions. His line of reasoning fitted Muensterberg's overarching cultural agenda, which aimed at a rapprochement between Germany and the United States by promoting *Deutschtum* and reducing 'Anglo-Saxon hegemony'. The political context of the *Americana* story involves the prehistory of the First World War.

Keywords: Agriculture and industry in Imperial Germany, *Encyclopedia Americana* (1906/1907), Ernst von Halle, Hugo Muensterberg, Max Weber, *Weltpolitik*.

Prefatory note

This essay is intended as a companion piece to Wolfgang Schluchter's introduction to the *Americana* articles published as a supplement to the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), MWG, I/8, *Ergänzungsheft*. Weber's two articles, written in 1905, on 'Agriculture and Forestry' and 'Industries' (about 10,000 words,

nine pages, double-columned) were recently discovered by Christoph Müller, an expert on Hugo Preuss, famous as the 'father of the Weimar Constitution'. Preuss, still a young, unknown scholar at the time, contributed the entries on 'Government' and 'Judiciary' to the German section. The discovery of Weber's articles alleviates an awkward situation for Weber scholarship: the inadequate English translation of the lecture which Weber delivered, at Muensterberg's invitation, on the capitalist transformation of German society at the 1904 St. Louis Congress. In a better translation and a concise encyclopedia format, the articles cover some of the same ground.¹ But though the present translation is superior, it was undertaken by somebody who did not sufficiently know German economic terminology, and this resulted in some awkward rendering. Moreover, American usage has changed significantly over a century. For instance, the text distinguishes more broadly trade unions, for employer combinations such as cartels, from labor unions, contrary to present-day usage. But the text must stand as is.

The St. Louis and *Americana* articles remain the only texts Weber wrote explicitly for an anglophone audience, the readership of the latter being much larger than for the former. At the time neither his readers nor he himself had any inkling that his emerging oeuvre would become vastly influential in the anglophone world. There is a large amount of literature about the ways in which Weber, after recovering from his breakdown in the course of 1902, worked out his basic conception of social science and the comparative sociology that culminated in the two versions of *Economy and Society*. But while he no longer taught jurisprudence and economics, living in early academic retirement as a capitalist rentier (via his mother's and wife's fortunes), he retained his expertise in these fields. He maintained his intense interest in legislative and constitutional politics and held fast, through war and postwar upheavals, to his

1. See 'The Relations of the Rural Community to Other Branches of Social Science', in Howard J. Rogers (ed.), *Congress of Arts and Science: Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904* (trans. Charles W. Seidenadel; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), VII, pp. 725-46; the misleading title was assigned to Weber. Reprinted in *MWG*, I/8, pp. 212-43. In a *tour de force*, Peter Ghosh has recently penetrated as far as possible into the linguistic thicket of Seidenadel's translation effort; his 'critical edition of the English text' appeared as 'Max Weber on "The Rural Community"', in *History of European Ideas* 31 (2005), pp. 327-66, his own article as 'Not the Protestant Ethic? Max Weber at St. Louis', pp. 367-407.

commitment to Germany's integration into the world economy, until his death in 1920.² This consistency is also illustrated by his three American articles. It is true that Weber's imperialist rhetoric made him notorious long before his posthumous fame as a 'founding father' of sociology. But I shall argue that the *Americana* articles demonstrate that his vaunted stridency was in fact countered by his realistic and quite mundane tariff and trade policies. Weber remained, as he called himself, an 'economic nationalist' or, as I prefer to call him, 'a cosmopolitan nationalist'.³

The Americana, as the *Encyclopedia Americana* called itself in its expanded edition of 1906, was an ambitious attempt to create the first American encyclopedia for wide distribution.⁴ The 23 contributions on Germany were solicited by the Harvard psychologist Hugo Muensterberg (1863–1916), but his editorial activity has been overlooked, in contrast to his role in organizing the 1904 Congress of Arts and Science at the World's Fair in St. Louis and in inaugurating, in the same year, the German-American academic exchange between Berlin and Harvard. For the economic topics he chose two close acquaintances, who were, however, unknown to a larger American readership and recognized by only a few American colleagues. In fact, Muensterberg, lifelong German citizen and self-styled German patriot, engaged two vociferous advocates of *Weltmachtpolitik*, a slogan for Imperial Germany pursuing the politics of a world power. One was Max Weber, the other Ernst (Levy) von Halle (1868–1909).⁵

2. See my 'The Near-Death of Liberal Capitalism: Perceptions from the Weber to the Polanyi Brothers', *Politics and Society* 31.2 (2003), pp. 263–82.

3. See MWG, I/4, p. 565 and ch. 1 of my *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

4. *The Americana* boasted about being 'assisted by more than one [later two] thousand of the most eminent scholars and authorities in America and Europe'. Basic information is found in Isabel Downing Douglas, 'The Encyclopedia Americana: An Historical Study of its Rise and Development, 1901–1930' (MA thesis, Columbia University, June 1930). The new encyclopedia was conceived and copyrighted in 1901/1902 by Frederick Converse Beach (1848–1918), director of the Scientific American Company. The first edition had no entry on Germany. The 1904/1905 edition, managed by George Edwin Rines (1858–1951), contained a 21-page article. Rines instituted a board of 'department editors' and expanded the country coverage, recruiting Hugo Muensterberg for Germany. Volume 7 carried Beach's 'copyright 1907'. A peculiarity of *The Americana* was the absence of pagination to make easier the substitution of materials, but this makes citation difficult. All unidentified quotations below are from volume 7 of *The Americana*.

5. Halle dropped 'Levy' in the mid-90s. The Levys were an old Jewish merchant family in Hamburg. According to Ekkehard Böhm, Ernst took his mother's maiden