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Welcker's Changes in the Staats-Lexikon after the 1848 Revolution

Source: article "Constitution" by Karl von Rotteck from the *Staats-Lexikon* (2nd edition, 1846)
http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=195

Carl von Rotteck and Carl Welcker, eds., *Das Staats-Lexikon: Encyklopädie der sämtlichen Staatswissenschaften für alle Stände: In Verbindung mit vielen der angesehensten publicisten Deutschlands. [The National-Lexicon: Encyclopedia of the Political Sciences for People of all Stations: In conjunction with many of the most respected journalists in Germany]*, 2nd ed. Altona: Verlag von Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1846, vol. 3, pp. 519-542.

Background on Research Findings

I wanted to compare the different editions of the *Staats-Lexikon* especially with regard to Rotteck's article "Constitution" to see whether there are any differences in the editions. According to Woodruff Smith in his book *Politics and the Science of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920*, there were three editions of the *Staats-Lexikon* published within the lifetimes of Rotteck and Welcker, the 1st edition 1834-1843, the 2nd 1845-1848, and the 3rd 1856-1866. The latter two were published after Rotteck had died. I also want to look into Welcker's biography, given that he had a more prominent role in the later editions of the *Staats-Lexikon*. Ultimately, the distinctions between the editions might provide some insight on the question of the different attitudes that Rotteck took on the constitutional system in "Constitutional" compared with his history series, *Allgemeine Geschichte*. The second edition is available on google books:

https://books.google.com/books?id=wghAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=constitution&f=false

Staats-Lexikon Web Search

- I found the third edition of the *Staats-Lexikon*, published from 1856-1866, on google books. There were 14 separate volumes. The 4th volume of the 3rd edition of the *Staats-Lexikon* contained "Constitution," here is the link to the article "Constitution"
https://books.google.com/books?id=rOpaAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=constitution&f=false

Carl von Rotteck and Carl Welcker, eds., *Das Staats-Lexikon: Encyklopädie der sämtlichen Staatswissenschaften für alle Stände: In Verbindung mit vielen der angesehensten Publicisten Deutschlands. [The National-Lexicon: Encyclopedia of the Political Sciences for People of all Stations: In conjunction with many of the most respected journalists in Germany]* 3rd ed. Leipzig F.A. Brockhaus. 1860, vol 4. pp 94-112.

- Searching for the article “Constitution” within the 1st edition of the *Staats-Lexikon*, I found 13 separate volumes for the 1st edition; “Constitution” was located in the 3rd volume, like it is in the 2nd edition. Here is the link and citation for the excerpt “Constitution” in the first edition: https://books.google.com/books?id=TpUNAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&vq=constitution&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=constitution&f=false

Carl von Rotteck and Carl Welcker, eds., *Das Staats-Lexikon: Encyclopädie der sämtlichen Staatswissenschaften für alle Stände: In Verbindung mit vielen der angesehensten publicisten Deutschlands. [The National-Lexicon: Encyclopedia of the Political Sciences for People of all Stations: In conjunction with many of the most respected journalists in Germany]*. 1st ed. Altona: Verlag von Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1836, vol. 3, pp. 761-797

Comparing “Constitution” across the three editions

Now that I had found “Constitutional” in all three editions, I decided to try and compare them. You’ll notice that the 1st edition’s excerpt of “Constitution” encompasses about 36 pages (761-797), compared to the 2nd edition which is 23 pages (519-542) and the 3rd edition which is around 18 pages (94-112). Based on looking through the respective google books, I think most of this has to do with the size of the text and how many words they are fitting on each page, the 1st edition having least number of words and thus more pages, but there still may be differences. I decided to use the google books tool to cut out portions of the text of each edition to translate and find any differences between them. For the most part, they were similar. However, at the end of “Constitution,” I noticed that for the 1st and 2nd editions, Rotteck signs his name, just as the translated version is shown on the GHDI website. However, the 3rd edition is signed by “Rotteck und Welcker.” Looks like Welcker did make some changes to the 3rd edition now that Rotteck was dead.

I cut out the last couple sentences of the passages to compare them and I had the translated GHDI source as a reference. The 1st and 2nd editions seem more or less to correspond to the GHDI source, and while there are some slight word variations, they are pretty much identical in their message. They discuss the constitutional system as a means to protect from both dominance by foreign powers and internal revolution. The 3rd edition is different. The translation is a bit difficult to make out, but Welcker says something about the constitutional system being essential to repair the defects of institutions and for the civilized world to be free (112). I continued to scan the 3rd edition to find some more differences, and I noticed a paragraph that had some dates, 1848, 1858, and 1859. I began to translate it.

Welcker mentions how the desires for change in the 1848 revolution have begun to be realized in Prussia in 1858 with the change in government. Presumably, he was referring to the ascension of William I as regent and indeed he would eventually start his “New Era” when he becomes king. He also speaks positively of the Italian revolutions in 1859 as promising to bring the constitutional system (109). Obviously this discussion is a new addition to the 3rd edition. In another area, I found that Welcker made a reference to Rotteck. Right before Rotteck’s 10 point comparison of the absolutist and constitutional systems (the excerpt translated in the GHDI passage) Welcker adds an additional sentence that says that this portion, the 10 point comparison, is essentially unchanged from Rotteck’s original (95). So Welcker did make some substantial updates to the 3rd edition of “Constitution” to

make it more contemporary. I compared more of the paragraphs of “Constitution” from the 1st and 2nd editions, and for the most part they are comparable. It doesn’t look like Welcker made many changes to “Constitution” between the 1st and 2nd editions. This is not all that surprising, both editions came before the 1848 revolutions and there weren’t too many developments in terms of the constitutional system in Europe, or at least in Germany. In contrast, Welcker made sure to provide some information on the constitutional developments in Europe for the 3rd edition after the failure of the 1848 revolutions to establish a constitutional monarchy in Germany.

Carl Theodor Welcker Web Search

- Given that that the 3rd edition of the *Staats-Lexikon* was so different from the previous two, I started a search to find some biographical information about Welcker to gain insight into why he may have altered it.
- I primarily used Michael Stolleis’ book, *Public Law in Germany 1800-1914*, and Woodruff Smith’s *Politics and the Science of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920*, both of which I had used earlier to find biographical information on Rotteck (citations follow below).
- I also found on google books the *Dictionary of German Biography*, which had some additional information on Welcker:
https://books.google.com/books?id=1NVRfl4gCw0C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Smith, Woodruff D. *Politics and the Science of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920*. New York. Oxford University Press. 1991.

Stolleis, Michael. *Public Law in Germany 1800-1914*. New York. Berghahn Books. 2001.

Killy, Walter and Vierhaus, Rudolf, eds. *Dictionary of German Biography*. Vol 10 Munich. K. G. Saur Verlag. 2006.

Carl Theodor Welcker (1790-1869) Biography and the *Staats-Lexikon*

Like, Rotteck, Welcker was an influential liberal thinker during the 19th century. I was curious to look into more about him because experienced the 1848 Revolution and even the first two of Germany’s unification wars, unlike Rotteck, who died in 1840. Nevertheless, it seems that Rotteck is the better-known figure in German liberalism. I’m going to guess that this is because of Rotteck’s renowned *Allgemeine Geschichte*, which is probably his most enduring work. The English translations of the *Allgemeine Geschichte* indicate that Rotteck’s influence extended beyond Germany. In any case, Welcker was originally from Hesse and studied law at the Universities of Giessen and Heidelberg, and began teaching at Giessen in 1814. (Killy, Vierhaus 441).

Welcker then began teaching at the University of Bonn in 1819. However, with the passage of the Carlsbad decrees that same year, he relocated again, this time to the University of Freiburg in the more liberal Baden, where he met Rotteck. In 1831 Welcker was elected to the Baden *Landtag*, a position he would hold for nearly 20 years (Stolleis 132). As a representative, Welcker promoted freedom of the

press and constitutional reform. For their newspaper *Der Freisinnige*, Rotteck and Welcker were excused [banned?] from their professorships in 1832, which was only briefly lifted in 1840. During this time, Rotteck and Welcker began to write the *Staats-Lexikon*. After Rotteck's death in 1840, Welcker was the sole editor of the 2nd, 1845-1848, edition. Based on the earlier discussion, it doesn't seem like Welcker changed it too much for the 2nd edition, at least within the article "Constitution." During the 1848 Revolutionary period, Welcker was appointed as the Baden envoy to the Federal Assembly and later took part in the Pre-parliament at Frankfurt. He was part of the more moderate liberal wing that advocated a constitutional monarchy. As the Parliament began to break down, Welcker supported the creation of a German state under Prussian rule (Killy, Vierhaus). Of course, this didn't happen with Frederick William IV's rejection of the crown and continued resistance from Austria. In 1849, Welcker left the National Assembly and began to withdraw from public life.

During this time he began to publish the 3rd edition of the *Staats-Lexikon* (1856-1866). Killy and Vierhaus note that it didn't have the impact as the previous editions with the liberal fervor of the revolutionary era now swept away during the 1850s. The failure of the 1848 revolutions in Germany was a major setback for liberalism and many of the academics who had rallied around it. Smith writes that after 1848, "most of the social scientists associated with the *Staatslexikon*" took their own individual paths to explain the failure of the revolution. For example, Welcker began to focus on "cultural reasons for resistance to revolutionary changes," as well as on the lack of lower class support for liberalism (Smith 39). (On a side note, reading that Welcker was focused on the issue of weak lower class support for liberalism is striking given that Smith earlier explains that Rotteck and Welcker intended the *Staats-Lexikon* to appeal to the educated "active citizen." It seems then, that Welcker should not have been all that surprised by a lack of lower class support for liberalism.) Thus, with liberalism temporarily dispersed, the 3rd edition lacked the same ideological reference point of the prior editions. Another problem with this edition of the *Staats-Lexikon* was perhaps Welcker's own abilities. In this regard, Stollies writes this about Welcker.

"He was father neither to a contribution to the theory of the state that has lasted beyond his own lifetime nor to a coherent work to the positive federal or state level. His nearly two hundred articles in the *Staats-Lexikon* are, as contributions to the ongoing process of scholarship, featherweight, but they are documents of the liberal end phase and of the popular pedagogical engagement with which these political professors spoke and wrote" (132)

The lack of a theoretical and ideological newness in the 3rd edition contributed to its lack of popularity among German audience. By this point, it seems Welcker had become a bit of an academic has-been. The *Staats-Lexikon* was past its prime. During the 1860s, when calls for a German unification began again and support for liberalism began to pick up, Welcker reemerged and joined the German National Association made up of moderate liberals in support of a German nation state. However, Welcker was against Bismarck's Prussian led German unification scheme and wanted Austria to be a part of the empire. Soon after, he died of a lung inflammation in 1869 in Heidelberg, a much more obscure figure in the liberal movement than he once was.

Rotteck, Welcker, and the *Staats-Lexikon*: Final Analysis

With this insight into Welcker's role in the *Staats-Lexikon* some conclusions can be drawn. It seems that the changes that Welcker made to the 3rd edition of the *Staats-Lexikon* and "Constitution" have been for the most part unsuccessful, at least compared to the earlier editions. In the post March period, Welcker likely felt compelled to try and alter and bring some new additions to the *Staats-Lexikon* perhaps to appeal to an audience that may feel discouraged about liberalism and the turn out from the 1848 Revolution. That would probably explain why Welcker expresses the constitutional changes in the late 1850s, like the ascension of William I and the Italian wars for Independence, with such positivity to perhaps indicate that the prospect of a constitutional system was not yet dead. On the other hand, Rotteck wrote "Constitution" as a way to educate people and in a very different ideological setting in which liberalism wasn't temporarily discredited, but was becoming accepted among the educated bourgeoisie. In any case, the intellectual and ideological background within Germany seems to be the primary reason why the editions of the *Staats-Lexikon* differ.

Welcker and Rotteck shared fairly similar ideological beliefs; that is, in support of a constitutional monarchy and moderate liberal reform. This begs the question, if Rotteck had lived into and beyond the revolutionary period, would he have experienced the same decline that Welcker did? Looking back at Rotteck's take on the viability of a constitutional system in Germany in the *Allgemeine Geschichte*, which was discussed in the prior draft, even during the 1830s Rotteck was very skeptical. If Rotteck lived past the 1848 Revolutions into the 1850s, I'd imagine he would have been very critical of what was occurring much like Welcker (he may have expressed his frustration a newer volume of the *Allgemeine Geschichte*). The impression I got is that Rotteck was more of a prominent figure than Welcker, and Rotteck certainly had other non-political works, like the *Allgemeine Geschichte*, that have serves as a buffer when liberalism was seen on the decline during the 1850s. It's difficult to make any assumptions about how the 3rd edition of the *Staats-Lexikon* would have been received if Rotteck had had a part in writing. Fundamentally, all I can really say is that it seems that *Staats-Lexikon* was geared for a pre-March audience, which is why its re-publication in the 1850s-60s was not as well received.

In terms of the question about Rotteck's conflicting attitude toward a constitutional system in "Constitution" and *Allgemeine Geschichte*, after examining the editions of the *Staats-Lexikon*, my conclusion remains that Rotteck took a positive view of the inevitability of a constitutional system in "Constitution" because the goal of the article was to shore up liberalism. I am more inclined to say that his pessimistic view of the development of constitutional system expressed in *Allgemeine Geschichte* might be more reflective of his personal view though. Even in the 1830s he doubted that a liberal government would ever be put in place in Germany. He likely would have been beside himself about the failure of the 1848 revolution and the subsequent conservative backlash.

Sources

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Carl von Rotteck and Carl Welcker, eds., *Das Staats-Lexikon: Encyklopädie der sämtlichen Staatswissenschaften für alle Stände: In Verbindung mit vielen der angesehensten publicisten Deutschlands. [The National-Lexicon: Encyclopedia of the Political Sciences for People of all Stations: In conjunction with many of the most respected journalists in Germany]* 3rd ed. Leipzig F.A. Brockhaus. **1860**, vol. 4. pp 94-112. ([google books 3rd ed.](#)) (also [available full text at the University of Freiburg library](#))

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