

## The Star Spangled Banner – auf deutsch

By Don Heinrich Tolzmann

This following image is an undated German translation of the U.S. National Anthem that was probably composed during the Civil War as an expression of German-American patriotism. This was at a time when German-Americans enthusiastically supported the Union cause, forming many German regiments. (1)

A copy of this song sheet is at the Library of Congress, and the image reproduced here is from Wikipedia. (2) The publisher is listed as H. De Marsan located at 54 Chatham Street in New York.

The German text reads as follows:

O! Sagt, könnt ihr seh'n in des Morgenroths Strahl,  
Was so stolz wir im scheidenden Abendroth grüßten?  
Die Sterne, die Streifen, die wehend vom Wall,  
Im tödlichen Kampf uns den Anblick versüßten?  
Hoch flattere die Fahne in herrlicher Pracht,  
Beim Leuchten der Bomben durch dunkle Nacht.  
O! Sagt, ob das Banner, mit Sternen besä't,  
Über'm Lande der Freien und Braven noch weht?

2.Vom Strand aus zu seh'n durch die Nebel der See,  
wo Feindes Schaar ruhet in drohendem Schweigen,  
Was ist's das die Wind' auf befestigter Höh'  
mit neckendem Weh'n bald verhüllen, bald zeigen?  
Jetzt faßt es der Sonne hell leuchtenden Strahl,  
Jetzt scheint es vom Berge, jetzt weht's über's Thal.  
O! Es ist ja das Banner mit Sternen besä't,  
Das über'm Land der Freien und Braven noch weht.

3.Und wo ist die Band', die verwegenlich schwor,  
Dass die Gräuel des Krieges, das Wüthen der  
Schlachten,  
Sollt' rauben uns Heimath und Vaterlands Flor?  
Ihr Herzblut bezahle das frevelnde Trachten.  
Keine Gnade noch Schonung für Herr und für Knecht,  
Nur Tod sei die Loosung, dann sind wir gerächt.  
Und siegreich das Banner mit Sternen besä't,  
Überm Lande der Freien und Braven noch weh't.

4.Und wo die Männer für Freiheit und Vaterland  
Vereinigt stehn, da sende von Oben,  
Den Kämpfern errettend die mächtige Hand,  
Die Freien, die müssen den Vater dort loben.  
Gerecht ist die Sache, auf Gott wir vertrau'n.  
D'rüm sei die Loosung, auf ihn wir fest bau'n  
Und siegreich das Banner, mit Sternen besä't,  
Über'm Lande der Freien und Braven noch weht.

The song sheet appeared as follows:

The translator may well have been one of the German Forty-Eighters, as refugees of the revolution of 1848 were known, as the dress of the soldier in the lower left is reminiscent of the clothing worn by the revolutionaries. A slave is depicted at the lower right, who the soldier was fighting to liberate. This relates to a comment I made in my book on the Forty-Eighters:

As political activists, the Forty-Eighters sought to realize their ideals of humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism, liberty, justice, and education for all by means of active involvement in the political process in the U.S.... First, they were articulate individuals with strongly held beliefs. And, second, they sought to realize them in America. This was clearly evident in the 1850s and the Civil War, which need not be reviewed here. However, their role during the time of national political crisis has certainly been recognized as significant, and was already at the time by Lincoln, who rewarded many Forty-Eighters with military and political appointments. (3)

It is unknown how widespread the German version of the U.S. National Anthem was, but since it was published in New York, it most likely was sung by some of the German regiments that came out of New York, as well as elsewhere. (4) Chances are that it probably was also published in the German-American press.

## Notes

1. For a history of the role played by German-Americans in the Civil War, see: Wilhelm Kaufmann, *The Germans in the American Civil War*. Translated by Steven Rowan and edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, with Werner D. Mueller and Robert E. Ward. (Carlisle, Pa.: John Kallmann, Publishers, 1999). Also, see: J.G. Rosengarten, *The German-American Soldier in the Wars of the U.S.: J.G. Rosengarten's History*. Edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann. (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, Inc., 1996).
2. For the copy at the Library of Congress, see: [http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.rbc.amss\\_cw105730/default.html](http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.rbc.amss_cw105730/default.html)
3. See: Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *The German-American Forty-Eighters: 1848-1998*, (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, Indiana University-Purdue University & Indiana German Heritage Society, 1997), p. 3.
4. See, for example, my article on one of the German regiments from New York: "The Steuben Regiment: A German Regiment from New York in the Civil War," *The Palatine Immigrant*. 40:1(2014): 19-26.

