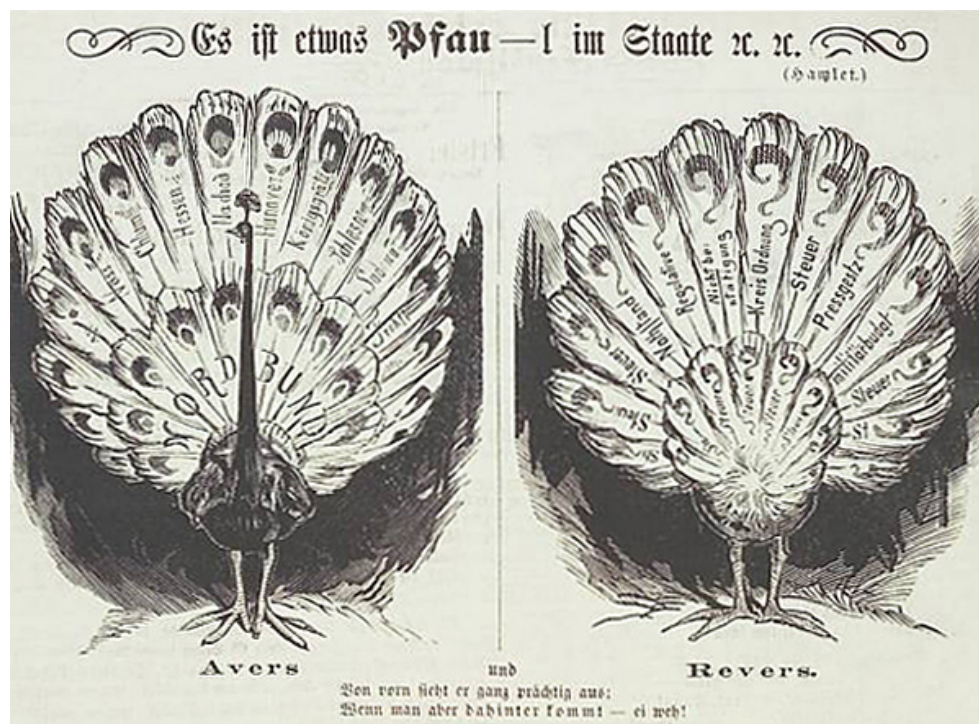


“Something is Rotten in the State, etc.” (October 4, 1868)

Abstract

The wordplay in the title of this unsigned caricature from the satirical journal *Kladderadatsch* derives from the German word for peacock [*Pfau*] and the similarity between that word, the English word “fowl,” and Hamlet’s famous claim that there was “something rotten [i.e. foul] in the state of Denmark.” The peacock is the Prussian state, overly proud of its splendor and importance. On the left, we see the peacock from the front. Interspersed among its radiant feathers are the names of the federal states of the North German Confederation, as well as the names of various battles won by Prussia (some with, some against those same states). On the right, we see the peacock from behind—now its feathers look much less splendid. In fact, the peacock’s markings point to thorny issues facing the Confederation: taxes, proposed laws limiting freedom of the press, the autonomy of local authorities, the military budget, and more. Of these problems, the repellent prospect of higher taxes [*Steuer*] appears again and again. The caption reads: “It looks magnificent from the front. But when you realize what’s *behind* it—oh dear!”

Source



Source: “Es ist etwas Pfau—I im Staate u. u. (Hamlet)” [“Something is Rotten in the State, etc.”], *Kladderadatsch*, vol. 21, no. 46 (October 4, 1868), p. 184. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.2250#0284>

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