

Duane C. S. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites During the Great War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. vii + 278. Softcover, \$29.95 USD.

In his book, *Pacifists in Chains*, Duane Stoltzfus tells the story of four South Dakota Hutterite conscientious objectors (David Hofer, Joseph Hofer, Michael Hofer and Jacob Wipf) who were imprisoned on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay during World War I. Although this story is well-known in Anabaptist circles, and the story of the harassment of pacifists during World War I has been discussed in other works, no one has researched the Hutterite story in this much depth.

Stoltzfus, professor of Communication at Goshen College, did extensive research that included an exhaustive perusal of original and secondary sources (including newspaper accounts and government records), as well as interviews with descendants of those imprisoned. Stoltzfus provides important historical background with reference to the anti-German climate in the United States during World War I, for example, antagonism to the music of composers such as Wagner and Mendelssohn, and he reminds us that this was period during which the United States government did not provide alternative service opportunities for pacifists. Stoltzfus notes that there was even a federal accusation of bribery against South Dakota Hutterite leaders (72).

Stoltzfus emphasizes that the Hutterite conscripts' refusal to drill, carry arms or wear uniforms represented, for Hutterites, a willingness to suffer persecution on the basis of the teachings and life of Jesus. He ties this to the group's long history of martyrdom. As Joseph Hofer put it in a letter to his wife, "We are not in prison because we have done bad things, but instead because of our conscience and faith..." (31)

In addition to the Hofers/Wipf Alcatraz story, Stoltzfus reviews the experiences of other Hutterite young men sent to military training campus in different parts of the United States. He provides analysis as well of political and legal developments that impacted the way that federal, state and county governments dealt with pacifists as well as members of ethnic groups that were considered potentially dangerous. Pacifists in general were considered to be "simple-minded" (68) individuals who might, in military training camp environments, be transformed into patriotic citizens.

In the Hofers/Wipf case, the four Hutterite men were court-marshaled, dishonorably discharged and sentenced to twenty years

of hard labor before being transported to Alcatraz, where they were tortured in a variety of ways. As Stoltzfus notes, “at night, the men lay on their backs, chained by hand and foot, a Hofer and a Hofer, a Hofer and a Wipf. They scarcely slept” (105). “...they remained in their underwear in the damp and musty cells. For the first four and a half days they received half a glass of water each day but no food. Rats ran wild in the dark of their cells” (117). They were also beaten with “knotted lashes” (121).

Three days after the Armistice the Hutterite men were transported to the disciplinary barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where they were “prodded with bayonets, as if they were swine.” (160). Ultimately Joseph and Michael Hofer died as a result of forced exposure to cold weather.

The book contains a few mistakes. For example, it is not true that “half” of the Hutterites (18) decided not to live communally when communal life was resurrected in some of the Ukrainian Hutterite villages in 1859 and thereafter. At most, one-third of the Hutterites did so. Stoltzfus also seems to be unaware of decisions to give up communal life in Hutterite history that predate 1819 (17), for example, for 67 years between 1690 and 1757. A description of “high cuffing” early in the book is repeated almost verbatim on page 189.

But in general this is an important and fascinating look at the treatment of Hutterite pacifists during World War I.

Rod Janzen  
Fresno Pacific University