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Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites during the Great War.

By Duane C.S. Stoltzfus. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. xxi + 268 pp. \$29.95.

When the Hutterites, German-speaking Anabaptists who embrace a communal, pacifist lifestyle, emigrated from Russia in the nineteenth century, the U.S. government had promised them exemption from military service and guaranteed them religious freedom. In 1918, four Hutterites from South Dakota (brothers David, Michael, and Joseph Hofer, and relative Joseph Wipf), were drafted to fight in World War I. Upon arriving at Army training camp, they refused to follow orders and were subsequently court-martialed. Sentenced to twenty years' hard labor, they served time in Alcatraz and Fort Leavenworth. Two of the Hutterites died in prison, and two were later discharged and released.

Duane Stoltzfus, Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at Goshen College, presents a well-written and moving case study of the Hutterites' imprisonment, as well as a more extensive examination of violations of American religious and political dissenters' civil rights during the Great War. Stoltzfus foregrounds his story by describing contemporary attitudes toward German Americans in general and, specifically, religious minorities like the German-speaking Anabaptist Hutterites, against whom Americans harbored suspicions because of their isolated, communal lifestyle; their successful farming, and their pacifism. The latter particularly enraged a secular America enflamed by "hyperpatriotism" that tolerated, and even supported, the violation of conscientious objectors' human and civil rights by authorities who sought to use them as examples to deter other dissenters (viii).

The Wilson administration made some provision for conscientious objectors, establishing a Board of Inquiry that determined the sincerity of their objections on religious grounds. Sincere conscientious objectors were assigned noncombatant duties, usually farm furloughs. Unfortunately, the Hutterites had been court-martialed before they could be interviewed by the Board, which simply validated their sentence. Because they persisted in their disobedience in the Alcatraz Disciplinary Barracks, the Hutterites underwent solitary confinement, suffering both physical torture and denial of nutrition. For the communal Hutterites, the imposition of solitary confinement certainly also amounted to psychological torture (135). By the time the men were transferred to Leavenworth, after the Armistice, their condition had so deteriorated that three were hospitalized with serious illnesses, and two of the Hofers died of influenza shortly after their arrival. The surviving Hofer brother was released to accompany the corpses home; Wipf was finally released in April 1919.

Stoltzfus provides a nuanced discussion of the Hutterites' religious and cultural motivations, explaining their behavior using the "Anabaptist religious mantle" (18). The combined effect of religious teachings, martyrs' stories extending into modern times, belief in the inevitability of persecution for one's faith, and an outlook according to which the world is starkly divided between God and Satan, strengthened the men's resolve as they refused to follow military orders and persisted in the face of imprisonment, torture, malnourishment, illness, and finally death (18). The author locates U.S. authorities' justification for their actions in their

idealistic desire to win the “war to end all wars,” a project that demanded a common sacrifice and denied the validity of individual religious beliefs, especially those outside the mainstream (219). Additionally, Wilson saw the draft as serving the “crusade for Americanization,” creating both a homogenous middle class and a tightly knit nation out of diverse groups (57). That the authorities’ actions both flew in the face of promises made to the Hutterites when they were recruited as Americans and violated constitutional rights to freedom of religion and from cruel and unusual punishment demonstrates the extent to which guarantees from victims’ own government can be casualties of war.

Stoltzfus has consulted a wealth of sources, including letters from the imprisoned Hutterites, interviews, government documents, and scholarly books and articles. To expand the limited information available on the Hofers’ and Wipf’s incarceration, especially in Alcatraz, the author has incorporated sources on other conscientious objectors, particularly Mennonites and socialists. While this provides important contextual information about the conditions of the Hutterites’ imprisonment, Stoltzfus’ story often digresses beyond the bounds of his subtitle and becomes the story not only of the Hofers and Wipf, but of non-Hutterite conscientious objectors as well.

The centennial of World War I invites us to re-examine that war and its effects, and Stoltzfus makes a valuable contribution to a reassessment. His final chapter discusses domestic “casualties” of the Great War: civil and human rights, constitutional guarantees of freedom, and the United States’ (self-)image as a land that shuns torture. Engaging with history in works like this one reminds us of the richness of our immigrant history, the fragility of the rights that immigrants come to this country to enjoy, and the obligation to defend those rights, even under exigent circumstances. As Stoltzfus points out, “ the United States [can] only be as free as the Hutterites, the Mennonites, the Amish, ...and the socialists among us” (227).

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