

The Hutterites in Europe

Jacob Hutter, known as Jacob of Welfsberg, a Tyrolian who by trade was a hat maker, was a believer in the community way of life. Then in 1533 he, along with a large group of Tyrolians, joined the persecuted group at Austerlitz. Soon, because of his strict discipline and ability as an organizer, Hutter became leader of this congregation; which has remained unchanged for more than four centuries.

In 1536 persecution set in and Hutter was burned at the stake. The Hutterites, as they were called after their leader Jacob Hutter, have a history of almost continuous persecution. They paid the ultimate price for their faith. Some were left to rot in prison, while others were broken on the rock, thrown into rivers, burned at the stake, sold as galley slaves, beheaded or buried alive.

The Moravian nobles took a stand against the Imperial orders who were persecuting their good farmers. The Hutterite chronicles report that between 1550 until King Ferdinand's death in 1564 was "the time of the great persecution". During this time 16 colonies were destroyed, 81 members murdered and 140 sold into slavery to Turkey.

The chronicles also report that "the good time of the church" was during the reign of Maximilian II (1564-1576) and the first half of the next monarchy reign (1576-1612). Even so, soldiers would come to the Bruderhofs to steal and harass the believers. During this time the bruderhofs prospered under their Moravian nobles. It has been estimated that there were eight-six Hutterite bruderhofs in Moravia and Hungary. The population of each of these bruderhofs was between three to four hundred.

These bruderhofs were mostly agricultural and flour mills, large herds of cattle and fine breeds of horses. They also manufactured cutlery and pottery. Their nobles employed them as administrators of mills and farms. In 1581, one of their physicians was called upon by Emperor Rudolph II after other physicians from as far as Italy and Spain could not help him. The doctor was able to help the Emperor.

Everyone did what he was best suited for and the profits from the different trades were put into the communal treasury. Food, clothing and expenses were taken from the treasury. Widows, orphans and the old were taken care of and no one was in want.

Then a religious war broke out called the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Many armies marched through the country and plundered down on the Hutterite Bruderhofs since they had large amounts of food and other materials. These soldiers stole from their granaries and tortured and killed Hutterite men.

On page 54 The Hutterian Brethren which gets its account from the Geschechtbuch p 565, describes the cruelty of the armies as follows:

"It was stated above that the year 1621 began with much tribulation. The robbing, plundering, and burning of houses carried on by the soldiers continued throughout this and the following year. Altogether it was a very fearsome, miserable and evil time. It is impossible to write or tell of all the great and inhuman cruelties which were inflicted upon us and others in this godless, accursed and devilish war at the hands of the Spanish, Walloon, Polish and German Imperial forces. I cannot tell what awful devilish things were perpetrated on many good pious, and honorable sisters who had loved sobriety and purity from their youth, yea, on children, both boys and girls. Women with child and mothers on their deathbed as well as virgins were most outrageously attacked. The men were burned with glowing irons and red-hot pans; their feet were held in the fire until their toes were burned off; wounds were cut, into which powder was poured and set afire; fingers and ears were cut off, eyes forced out by inhuman torture; men were hung up by the neck like thieves; all sorts of such diabolical brutality and unheard of godlessness were committed, half the shame of which is not be written. Such things were openly practiced by the imperial soldiers who believed themselves to be the best of Christians. It would be impossible for one who had not himself seen and witnessed it to believe that a human being could conduct himself as did these demon possessed men. It would have been no wonder had the heavens turned pale, the earth shaken and all the elements trembled; yea, one would suppose that the devil himself would have been more fearful of the might, power, glory and majesty of God than these shameless men. May God lead them to realize it, to whom and to whose righteous judgment we commit everything."

Many congregations fled to Bruderhofs in more remote areas. The Austian government issued a decree in September 22, 1622 that all Hutterites were to leave Moravia in not less than four weeks or they would be put to death.

There were many sick and aged, and winter was coming. The Chronicles of the Hutterites report that they had to leave twenty-four bruderhofs that were filled with barley wheat and oats, 130 head of cattle, 150 horses, 70

oxen, 655 hogs, 300 barrels of wine, cloth, linen, salt, lard, wool, cooper and tools in the shops. This was estimated to be \$367,000 in value.

The persecuted Hutterites who had been driven from Moravia fled over the Hungarian mountains and came to seek refuge among their brethren in Hungary. The following three bruderhofs were established: Sabotisch, Protska, and Lewar. It was hard for these bruderhofs to help these empty handed newcomers. Sobitisch, the smallest bruderhof, had 3,000 refugees for the winter. Many of the younger men sought employment from the Hungarian nobles in order to buy food supplies.

The Turkish wars followed the Thirty Years War and once again the Hutterites were subjected to the ruthlessness of the invaders. The Turkish armies carried off the rich spoils from their storehouses and livestock. This was all taken easily for the brethren were believers in non-resistance.

The Hutterites were reduced to poverty so in 1665 they sent representatives to Holland to beg aid from the Mennonites and it was given to them. The Hutterites decided to abandon their community way of life in 1686. Their large supplies of food and other essentials in one place seemed unwise because of the repeated raids by the Turks. Everyone returned to private ownership after the property was divided.

The Hutterites during the eighteenth century had a tremendous struggle for survival. Because of persecution they were forced several times to switch from community living to private ownership and back again. The repeated raids by the Turks and persecution by the Catholics dropped their membership.

In 1760 the Jesuits received from Maria Theresa permission to force the Hutterites to convert to Catholicism. Hutterite homes were searched and their religious material that was found was burned. The Hutterite ministers were put into prison and were promised freedom only if they became Catholic. They closed their churches and opened Catholic churches instead. Hutterite families were not left alone for soldiers slept and ate in their homes.

After awhile the Hutterites were allowed to have their own church services, own teachers, own ministers and be exempted from military service provided they become Catholic. Many accepted this offer probably afraid and tired of going through more persecution. These Catholic Hutterites were known as Habaner. The word "Habaner" in the Slavonic language means an awkward person. The Hutterite way is to die for principles of faith instead of

recanting. A small group of Habaner exist yet today in Slovakia. They were once great tradesmen in pottery called Habaner ceramics. Now hardly anyone knows about these people while their brethren who continued to be true to the faith and the Christian fundamentals of love and the cross prosper here in America.

The Chronicles report that by 1760 terrible persecution reduced the number of Hutterites to sixteen. The ones named were: Andreas Wurz, Johann Kleinsasser, George Waldner (father of the Chronicles), Peter and Joseph Mueller, Christian Glanzer and Johannes Stahl. Johannes Stahl described in appearance as small, swarthy with curly hair and Lohrenz Tschetter were thrown into prison. The Jesuits took the children and had them baptized in the Catholic faith. When he saw he had no method to convert these imprisoned men, he banished them from the country with Joseph Kuhr (Chur). Johannes Stahl had to leave behind his wife and four children not knowing if he'd ever see them again. These two wandered into Wallachia (Rumania). There they found prosperous people who were given religious freedom. The country looked promising for agricultural purposes. They returned and informed their brethren that they had found a place to live.

This mere handful of brave and God-fearing people (who were members of the congregation in Alwintz) along with a large number of Lutheran exiles from Carinthia, who had accepted the Hutterian way of life, fled Maria Theresa's Empire and crossed the Carpathians into Rumania. They left all their possessions and avoided well traveled roads so they wouldn't be found. At first they took wagons but when they reached the Carpathian Mountain range, their guides told them to pack necessary things on four horses and leave the wagons behind. The Hutterian Brethren on page 105 explains, *"The escorts took us on untrodden ways through the underbrush and wilderness, where they knew that we were safe and without danger, for they knew all the secret ways and paths of the mountains. At many places we had to climb up on hands and feet. Everyone took care to follow closely so that he would not be left behind. At several places, the loaded pack-horses were brought up only with great difficulty. So we struggled on during the entire night. Each one can best imagine for himself what a difficult and tedious journey that was, with bag and baggage and little ones on the back, to climb the high mountains, with young and old and weak ones, and that at night. The border was at the very top of the mountain.*

Having crossed the border we were safe. We travelled slower a distance on the yonder side of the mountain until daybreak. They we halted at the side of a brook and had a season of united prayer and thanksgiving."

The Hutterites rented lands from Rumanian noblemen. A Bruderhof was established not far from the capital of Rumania which was Bucharest. Around 1767 some Habaner came and joined the brethren.

A year later war broke out between Turkey and Russia. Turkish raids again swept down on the Hutterites. Semetin, a Russian general, and his army were camped near the Hutterite Bruderhof. This general told the brethren that Czarine Catharine the Great of Russia, who herself was German, welcomed German farmers to her country. She had large areas of unimproved lands that needed to be developed. He was sure that they would be granted exemption from military service, be given control over their own schools and their own local self-government such as had been already granted to other Germans including Mennonites. The Hutterites also learned that a Russian nobleman Field Marshal Count Romanov had large areas of land and he needed good farmers.

General Semetin helped Hutterite representatives with passports so they could negotiate with Count Romanzov. Count Romanzov offered one of his manors at Wischinka on the Desna River in the province Tscheringov.

The Count and the Hutterites drew up the following agreement, freedom of religion, their own schools, no one forced to take oath, exemption from military service, no interference with community living and own local self-government.

The Hutterite representatives went back to the brethren to tell them the good news. The Count sent money, also a sergeant and ten cassocks along to give protection as they journeyed from Rumania to Wischinka. August 1, 1770 they arrived to establish a new Bruderhof. The count gave them a loan to start building. They built barns & houses for winter was coming on. When spring arrived, the farmers started working in the fields and the tradesmen started their industries such as pottery, weaving and metal.

And so they settled down enjoying the time of opportunity which had come. The Hutterites were excellent wheat growers and industrialists and soon their Bruderhofs became wealthy.

The Hutterites haven was short lived even though the terms on the contract with the Russian seal beautifully stated from "eternity to eternity to eternity".

Mrs. Jacob M Stahl.

The following transcript was discovered in late June, just before the publication deadline of this book, in the papers of David J. Mendel. It was felt to be of importance because of details not found elsewhere. The origin of the paper is not sure. At the beginning of the transcript is written "David J. Mendel 1892." His daughter, Mrs. Joe G. Hofer was kind enough to translate this immediately so it could be published here. We apologize, as we realize that portions may have been repeated in the preceding story.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HUTTERTHAL COLONY IN PROVINCE TAURIEN, SOUTH RUSSIA

In 1843 the Hutterthal Colony was established. Because of the mild winter, plowing started in February. In April mud houses were constructed for occupancy during the summer months until the building of dwelling houses could be completed. However, this plan was not accomplished because of heavy rains. Although sixteen houses were erected and covered, none were finished enough to be liveable. As a result the winter was spent in the above mentioned mud houses. Not until 1844 were all houses finished and occupied.

This colony was close to Taschenak River, 18 werst from Kreizstadt, Melitopol (2/3 mile equals 1 werst). The land was level prairie and along the river were fertile meadows. These fertile lowlands provided good nourishment so that the horses, stock cows and sheep soon were in good condition. Both penetrating and heavy rains were necessary for prairie hay and a crop. There were no rock or stone bridges. The necessary rocks or stones were brought from 60 werst away. Soon, however, the newly established brick yards provided durable bricks, making stone and rock unnecessary. Although there were no forests, there was a small wooded area where approximately 1200 trees thrived with much care. There also were a few spots of (Salpeter) gumbo which were very noticeable during the dry years.

The Honorable Bishop Johann Kornies named the colony Hutterthal in memory of our Reformer Jacob Hutter, who was born in Mesz one-half mile from Braunchken, Pusterthal. In 1529 Jacob Hutter came to Graftschaft, Tyrol, to the colony after leaving the Catholic church. He was a talented, educated, and highly respected individual and was soon recognized as such by the colony. Soon he was appointed as a teacher. He was instrumental in uniting the church at Austerlitz, Tyrol, with his church at Graftschaft, Tyrol, in Mahren. More churches were organized with the result that new managers had to be elected. The evil one was successful in sowing his seed among the

Elders of this congregation. Jacob Hutter had great struggles with these Elders. However, he remained true to his faith. Soon it was revealed that these Elders did not stay with the true gospel. Investigations were made to determine whether some of the members of the colony had become selfish with the colony's profit. Consequently, some of the Elders were found guilty of embezzlement even as Ananias had been. Because Hutter was faithful, the whole congregation accepted him with love. From that time on they were called Hutterian Brethren. At the same time other congregations were separated and dispersed during the Catholic persecutions.

In 1535 someone betrayed Jacob Hutter; he was arrested because of his staunch faith. He was mistreated unmercifully, and soon after dreadfully martyred. The wounds of his severe torture were filled with alcohol and set on fire. During all this he did not renounce his faith but instead remained steadfast. Although sentenced to be burned alive, he remained true. These events happened March 3, 1536. Even during his torture Hutter called to his persecutors, "Let us try our faith by fire, for this fire cannot damage my soul any more than the hot furnace hurt Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego."

In this Bruderhof of Hutterthal lived 69 families consisting of 205 males and 210 females. Historians consider theirs to be one of the great emigrations.

In 1753 an awakening came to Ertzherzogth, Kornthen, through the reading of Luther's writings. At this time no religion other than Catholic was permitted. The reading of Christian books enlightened many people. Such books and meetings were kept as secret as possible. Nevertheless soon sermons were given in the Catholic church against these books and teachings. When the sermons alone did not succeed in keeping the people from reading the forbidden books and meeting, public persecutions were begun. Government officials had instructions to make a clean house of the Lutherans and to consider them non-resident citizens. Only two alternatives were given – to make confession to the priest or to leave the country.

Many feared the decree and turned back while others remained steadfast in their newfound faith. This strong faith even separated many families. Among these faithful were several of our forefathers, namely John Kleinsasser, George Waldner, Peter Muller, Andrew Wurz, Christian Glanzen (Glanzer), John Hofer and Joseph Miller. Because he had no sons, Joseph Muller's name was not carried on. These and many others were arrested and taken to Klagenfurth to the city of Ybbs along the Danube River. Here they waited two months until others joined them. In all there were approximately 270 souls.

In 1755 they journeyed to Transylvania (Siebenburger). Here a government official and a Lutheran minister offered them freedom of religion. The Empress offered to finance their transportation, to build homes for them and to help them with land and farming necessities but in return they were required to take the Oath. Since this requirement was contrary to their convictions according to Matthew 5 and James 5, they did not accept the offer. Then new difficulties started. These people had to look for work and eventually came to the Hutterish Brethren at Alwintz. After studying the teachings and doctrines of this congregation, they found them to be more accurate than those of the Lutherans even though this brotherhood was not at its best since many had left the communal way of life and were on their own. However, they all had agreed to refuse to take the Oath, to accept the doctrine of non-resistance, and to reject infant baptism. The newcomers were ready to join these brethren. Unfortunately the government was notified and upon investigation refused to allow them to join. Finally, a Catholic priest from Alwintz, who was an agricultural man, called Elder Joseph Kuhr, telling him that his people would no longer be tolerated and that there was no work available for them.

In October of 1756 this group was taken to Groszpolndorf of Transylvania (Siebenburger). Here they were told that they would receive newly built homes, each family having its own land and meadows, if they would return to the Lutheran faith.

In 1757 more people came to Alwintz. Among them was a certain Mathias Hofer. Hofer and others were arrested and taken to the Hermanstadt prison. Hofer was a writer and a poet. The following poem was written by him.

Man hat uns genommen von der Christlichen gemein
Gebunden und gefuhrt Hermanstadt ein.
Da Haben wir gelitten viel Schmachwort und Pein.
Das tun wir dir klagen O Herr unser Gott.

Man hat uns gesperet ins Zuchthaus wie ich sag
Da haben wir müssen arbeiten ein Jahr und viel Tag
Man gab uns ein grofl und ein Brot auf ein Tag
Gott hat uns gesegnet wir haben kein Klag.

Wir haben müssen arbeiten in Wolle und Decken
In die Woche siebezig Pfund Reisen oder 100 Pfund Flechen
Sonst hat uns gegeben fur 1 Pfund ein Streich
Man hat uns gescholten fur foul und fur weich.

Hofer spent 16 years in prison. Upon his release he went to Wischinka, Russia. He had peculiar ideas that he expected the congregation to adopt. One idea was that they should eat only twice daily at noon and evening because the scriptures do not record that Christ ate more often than that. Another was that prayers should be audible and that every silent prayer was a demon offering. After much consultation the congregation could not convince him of his error. He then left the congregation, separated from his wife and went to Prussia (Preussen). He spent the rest of his life in Elbing, Etterward, with a Mennonite minister Gerhart Wiebe.

The exiled people in Poland did not attend the church services of the Lutherans or Catholics. Therefore, the government decided to scatter them so that they would have no knowledge of each others whereabouts. Families were put on ordered wagons and drivers took them to different places.

John Kleinsasser arrived at Kreuzdorf, George Waldner at Schluszbürgen Stuhl, Christian Glanzer at Steindorf. Within ten days they all knew where each one was located. Instead of destroying the congregation, new ones were formed and sprouted at different places. For needed counsel they went to Alwinz. John Kleinsasser was baptized and ordained as Elder. This strengthened the Brotherhood.

In September of 1763 Elder John Kleinsasser went to Hermanstadt to visit his brethren and sisters in prison. Upon his return, he reported that the "government made certain decisions against the Anabaptists (Wiedertäufer)." The King of Prussia and Empress (Kaiserin) Maria Theresa had made a peace treaty after seven years of war. Together they planned to cleanse the land of heresy (Ketzer). If the Lutheran ministers were unsuccessful with their admonishment, then Catholic priests were to take over. If these also failed, the people were to be considered heretics and to be forever banished from the land. This report brought great sorrow to all churches. Many earnest prayers were said. With confidence and faith, they submitted to God's will.

The Catholic church received both instructions and power to convert heretics to Catholicism. In Ungarn were three churches---Sabatisch, Levar and Schutzen. The persecutions started here. Some were beaten and some were imprisoned. The persecutions at Alwinz followed. Jesuit Delphini came to Alwinz trying to convince the brethren, but he was unsuccessful, even though he had even invited them to his services. He preached on John 16 proclaiming that the Catholic faith is the true faith. He also claimed to have healing power and to be able to remove mountains. At this time Roth and Kuhr were the Elders of the Brotherhood. Joseph Kuhr challenged Delphini

by saying, "What you read from the Bible is well known to me and is true, but the miracles you tell of are lies. The Lord did not command nor give power to his disciples to remove God's created mountains. They still remain. Whoever wants to stay with his faith should follow me." He went out but nobody followed him, not even his own son.

Kuhr was a very wealthy man and respected by the world because he helped the poor and loaned them money. He was the owner of a large orchard and vineyard. Everyone thought it would be hard for him to leave all this behind, but nothing held him.

Roth was a comfortable, wealthy man and was unwilling to surrender. He became a backslider. Kuhr was arrested and taken to capital Kassenburg where he spent three years in prison. A grandchild of Kuhr is living with us and is the last of his descendants. Kuhr himself had an unfortunate marriage.

The people at Alwintz did not accept the Catholic faith so they fled to Kreutz. The government repeatedly returned them. Among these were Johann Stahl (his descendants are the Stahl families) and Lorenz Tschetter. Both were imprisoned at Klassenburg. The Catholic priest asked Kuhr, "Do you know Zacharius Walter at Sabatisch? He's an intelligent man and has accepted our faith." Kuhr answered, "I know him well but do not consider him an intelligent man because he denied his faith." The Walters are descendants from this Walter. Kuhr and Stahl were exiled but Tschetter was kept back because he was quite young and the priest hoped to persuade him, although he also wanted to go with Kuhr and Stahl. These two were escorted across the border by Commissars to a great wilderness with a script stating that "they were banished from Transylvania (Siebenburger)." Both knelt to praise God for their release from prison. After a three day journey they arrived at a marketplace. This happened in 1766. In that same year in November Tschetter was released and joined the Kreutz brotherhood.

Kuhr and Stahl continued their journey, crossing the frozen Nister River by Selischeck on Nicholas (Christmas) Day. Here they worked during the winter and earned enough money to continue their journey.

On May 15, 1767 they started again from Selischeck and came to Moldau and Walachen unto Bucharest. Here they discovered the possibility of freedom of religion. They decided to notify the Brotherhood of the possibilities of settling here. They asked a farmer by Walachen to guide them secretly at night across the mountains to Alwinz. They arrived at Kuhr's son's place. Because the son had returned to the Catholic faith and

Stahl's wife had fled to Kreuz, they continued the same night. On the way they escaped several dangers and arrived safely at Kreuz.

Let us consider the church or Brotherhood at Kreuz. After Delphini had finished his work at Alwinz he came to Kreuz. He found the people to be very sincere and withdrawn because they had detected his cruel plans. He did not rest but traveled to Vienna (Wien) and conferred with Countess Maria Theresa to gain permission to torment these people until they forsook their faith. He returned with authority and power to order government officials to help him carry out his plans. He ordered that the small children of the brotherhood be placed in an orphanage under Catholic supervision and that the old people be distributed to different prisons. The Brotherhood lived in great fear and anxiety. At this time Kuhr and Stahl came with the message. The brethren were assured that God had answered their prayers.

On October 3, 1767, at 10 a.m. 76 souls left Kreuz. The local citizens were glad to see them go because they too lived in fear.

At Alwinz was a widow with two daughters and three sons-Elias, Johann and Samuel Wipf. From this family the Wipfs originate.

On this journey the people came to Reges at the river Alt. They had no passports. Discouragement was at a peak. The following day wagons and canoes were hired to help them across at night. They continued across the mountains traveling only at night. They continued across the mountains traveling only at night. They passed Kronstadt. The next day as they were hiding in a heavy forest, a hunter found them during the day. They asked for mercy but he told them that he had sworn to report everybody he saw and didn't promise that he would not do so. Evidently he didn't because nothing happened. As they came to the mountains, wagons were left behind. The journey was very troublesome. Everyone carried his own bundle and a small child. The sixteen year olds also had to help in carrying their share of the load. Four and five year olds had to run along side. The hired Walachen took them through heavily wooded areas. The mountains were so steep at places that they had to climb on hands and knees, especially where there were washouts and gullies. One can hardly imagine what it meant to travel with children, weak ones, and old people. When they came over the mountain peak, it was announced that "we are across the border". The congregation offered a prayer of gratitude and continued with God's blessing.

They then came to Tschakerlein. Kuhr and Kleinsasser continued to try to find a suitable place for the congregation to locate. At Bukarest they met Jacob Fredrick Wolfe, a German. He was the servant of the Prince. They

told him of their predicament and mission. He willingly showed them to places where they might have possibilities of settlement if they found them suitable for their situation. One place was by a brook Krabach (Ravenbrook). That same year on November 16, they moved to this place. In a short time five to six mud houses were ready for occupancy during the winter months. Each one started his own handicraft and made fairly good progress. All were happy and content even though poverty and persecution were continually their partners. They were poor but could live in peace.

Before long their good fortune changed and a dark cloud came. During the summer an epidemic broke out. On some days 16 to 18 people were bedfast. Many in the congregation died. It was especially sad when some of the honorable, industrious, religious leaders died. The dark clouds became darker, for soon they discovered that this was not a peaceful place. In 1768 war broke out between Russia and Turkey. The Walachens were of the Greek orthodox religion and, therefore, joined the Russians in driving out the Turks.

On November 24, 1769, an army (really a group of robbers) came to the Bruderhof and demanded money. They tried to force the brethren to give them money. They tortured them with beatings and when that was not enough irons were heated which they used to burn the brethren. At the same time they cried, "money, money." Glanzer softened when they took off his shirt and were about to burn him with hot plow lays as they asked for two gulden. Glanzer went to Elder Johann Kleinsasser who was sick in bed. The robbers went along. When the robbers saw the money, they took all of it and kicked Kleinsasser out in the yard and beat him unmercifully because they thought he had some more money. Johann Kuhr had to suffer the most because he spoke and undertood the Walachen language. Two Germans in the group witnessed all of this and they took Kuhr and hung him by his legs so high that he could barely touch the ground with his fingertips. Still they demanded money. Torture continued by starting a fire under Kuhr, singeing his hair and beard. This was a pitiful sight. Finally he was released. Next they put all brethren and sisters in one room and asked for money. They threatened to burn the house. The captain of the robbers had requested that fire be brought. The brethren tried to reason with them in all kindness telling them that they had come into this country as very poor people, had relocated before this, and had no money, not even a groshen (penny). Then the robbers went from room to room, took whatever they wanted and broke or tore up whatever they did not want. This frightening terror lasted from early morning till late at night.

Later the brethren were told that these robbers were killed in the war against the Turks. Wandering robbers were continually around us. The week after New Year many left for the forests with women, children, and cattle, even though it was winter. Seven or eight men stayed with the houses to protect them from fires started by mobs.

On March 27, 1770, new peril appeared. Two thousand Turks, who had ridden on horseback all night, crossed the Danube and arrived around 7 o'clock. They dismounted and took four brethren and one sister with them. When they were told who we were, they released us and said, "Don't be afraid. Germans shall not get hurt." But we didn't trust them and went to our families in the woods. We soon heard and saw that these Turks accomplished great robberies. There were pitiful cries but there was no mercy. When these Turks came to our yard, they found our houses empty so they left. We thanked God for such gracious deliverance. We knew we couldn't stay here very much longer, because even in times of peace, these people had the robbing spirit. The above mentioned robbers came to Dschurschu where the previous day Turkish merchants had come. Misery and affliction increased and some surrendered to slavery. The stronger men were sold for 70 to 90 Leu (1 leu equals 18 4/5 cents). The older men were a little cheaper. These facts were related to us by a Walachen who also was a prisoner and had had three different owners. He escaped and fled at night to arrive in his homeland. We knew that we weren't safe here either.

We were willing to move; but where to? We shared our plight with General Semetin, who was sympathetic to us. He was a Russian general fighting in Walachia against the Turks. He advised that we move to Russia (Klein-Russia) and assured us that we would have religious freedom there. After prayerful consideration, we accepted this as God's will.

General Semetin gave us a pair of oxen and a wagon to continue our journey. He also gave us the proper credentials to pass into Russia. On April 10, 1770, our little group started again. However, we all returned to our houses once more to be sure that nothing was left behind. Nature was at its best. The flowers in full bloom, the tall green grass, and the cheerful music of the birds gave us a heartbreaking farewell. We had lived 2 ½ years at Walachia. Even here our happy days were few in number. General Semetin suggested that we contact the Field Marshall Romanzof and accept his help and suggestions. We traveled with five wagons with a pair of oxen, for each wagon also had cows and sheep. We passed Bucharest around sunrise. After six days of travel we arrived at the city of Busau.

The citizens in this city lived in great fear because of the soldiers. News had been spread that the Turks were coming back. Within four days they did return. Villages were surrounded and the inhabitants were taken prisoner. When we received the message, we took to the mountains and hid in a valley two days until the terror was over. We thanked God for His protection.

Discomfort and hardships were continually with us on this journey. Oft times nights were spent out in the open during rains and storms. Our diet consisted of Pautuas (dried fish) and sweet milk provided for us by our cows and sheep. They were most beneficial to have along. To eat bread was unthinkable because there was none to be gotten. We were glad to get millet (hirse) and Turkish wheat (mais). We often said, "If only the time would come when we could eat as much bread as we want, how happy and thankful we would be."

When we came to the Polish border at Hottin we met the already mentioned Romanzof with a Russian nobleman. This nobleman suggested that we move on his property in Klein-Russia. He promised to advance or loan the use of his lands and meadows. We were to pay a certain tribute. He drew up a contract and after thorough and prayerful consideration, we accepted the contract.

(The following translation of the contract itself is taken from "Banished for Faith" by Emil J Waltner, page 64).

Privileges to be granted to the colonists who intend to settle at Wischinka:

1. Their full and free religious practices; neither shall they be required in court or to give an oath.
2. Shall not be required to render military service.
3. In their congregation they shall not be molested by anyone. Shall be permitted to work as a community and pay taxes.
4. Three years of exemption shall be granted.
5. Immediate necessities shall be advanced to them, and for the whole congregation one bushel of flour daily.
6. For the journey thirty rubles shall be advanced, and on arrival other necessities. In addition money and lumber shall be advanced for homes.

7. For the land for farming, hay and gardens, they shall pay a definite price after 3 years.

8. Each shall be allowed to practice his trade; they shall not enter into the liquor business; they shall be permitted to sell articles which they manufacture.

9. Their freedom shall in no wise be taken away. They shall be permitted to leave if it is not agreeable to them to stay, but must refund the amounts advanced to them plus ten percent of their increase.

10. After the time of exemption they shall pay taxes per acre and on the dwellings in cash.

11. For haymaking, they shall have 80 loads of hay for their cattle.

12. Since they cannot get buildings done before winter, they shall be provided for.

---In camp at Pruth eit Rabog, June, 1770

After this contract was signed Romanzof sent a guard of ten Cossacks to guide and protect us through Poland until we came to his land. Whenever we were close to a village, two Cossacks would be sent ahead to notify the villagers that the Fieldmarshall's people were coming and that they should prepare meals and a night's lodging for us. The authorities supplied us faithfully. When we arrived, the bread and hot meals were ready.

On August 1, 1770, we came to the river Desna. Here the Okonomia (stewards) gave us everything as the contract stated. Winter grain was sown and hay was made. The same year land was shown to us where we could settle down and start housekeeping and farming. A house and cattlebarn were started, but not finished so we had to winter in the nobleman's homes.

On July 20, 1771, the whole congregation moved on their own property. On July 24, the first church preaching service was conducted in the new house. On April 16, 1772, we observed our first communion service in two years, since the unrest had prevented us from regular service.

In 1772 Paul Glanzer went back to Hermanstadt to inform those that were left behind where the congregation had settled. He could not appear in public in any way because of fear that he would be imprisoned. His wife, daughter, brother and many others were held as prisoners here. He said

farewell to all and set out to go back to Wischinka by traveling through Walachen past Bukarest. Here two women who had been released followed him. The three made a safe trip to their home. This seemed to be the Lord's guidance, for these women had been imprisoned a long time. It was the desire of the Empress (Kaiserin) that the prisoners would become her servants. Glanzer's wife received her belongings after her release. She gave it to the brotherhood and they in turn applied it to the debt which had been made December, 1772.

From 1772 to 1779 they were prosperous in that they started weaving and pottery of which Stahl was the master. Handicrafts or trades of shoemakers (cobblers), blacksmiths, hat-makers, and tanners started here. With these handicrafts they were kept occupied. In 1776 the count (a government official) gave them permission to build a watermill, and in 1777 they built a windmill. These industries brought gain. Knowledge of their useful and beautiful products spread. The Brotherhood was flourishing because every member lived a God-fearing life. The Lord blessed these industrious and ambitious brethren. Their reputation in the community and county was such that noblemen, princes, and lords came to observe their arrangement. Everyone praised the work. Often five to six coaches were on the yard with government officials, princes, noblemen, and women (damen) who were touring the workshops, the school, gebet house (sanctuary), dining room, nursery and dispensary (drug room) with great amazement and satisfaction. Some even attended the worship service. Their products were gladly bought and praised. Even graff Romanzof was enthused at how this Brotherhood progressed on his property. He proudly talked about his Germans.

Their dress was very simple. The men wore short black trousers, and the women had blue dresses and white caps. Whenever they were out haying, the groups in such apparel looked very neat. All travelers were amazed and astonished at this group.

The Brotherhood was well organized. After a mother had taken care of her child for 1 ½ years, it was placed in the nursery where different women took care of them and gave them their meals. Two carefully chosen women were responsible for night duty. At the age of three, the children were placed in the Kindergarten school. Here they were given spiritual instructions as much as children can comprehend at that age. At the age of six they were promoted to the regular school.

The congregation had their daily scheduled morning and evening communal devotions. Worship services were held every Sunday and on church

holidays. A young boy would run to the workshops and homes to announce "zum gebet" (to prayer meeting).

In 1781, Andrew Gross came to this congregation from Ungarn. All Grosses are his descendants. The older people were joyfully reminiscing about the prosperous good times they had had. But it caused grief and heartaches to see the congregation dispersed.

In 1780 Roman Empress Maria Theresa died. Her son Joseph II became the ruler. He permitted freedom of religion. He banished the Jesuits and destroyed the cloisters. Many brethren wrote from Wischenka to Karthen, Siebenburger and Ungarn. The circumstances created a new desire among these to return to their fathers' faith especially since they had become dissatisfied with the Catholic faith.

In 1781 two brethren were sent by the Brotherhood from Wischenka to Ungarn to bring some back, but they returned unsuccessful on December 2 of the same year. Some had left the Catholic church at Sabatisch. Six brethren were arrested and imprisoned. Appointed men went to Kaiser Joseph and asked for their release. The Catholic priests tried to convince them with threats to accept their faith. Jacob Walter, son of Zacharias Walter, was firm but had to flee. He left his wife and child.

After a troublesome journey Walter arrived safely at Wischinka. He received a Russian pass from Count Romanzof and returned to Ungarn. There he was reunited with his family and then returned to the Brotherhood. His oldest daughter who was married to a Catholic did not come because her husband refused to leave the Catholic faith. But later they too joined the church. The separation of parents and daughter was heartbreaking.

At Sabatisch two ambitious and energetic young men, namely Wollman and Tittel, decided to go to Russia. Paul Mandel, who was in the workshop with them escorted them. Mandel was a native Bohemian. On the way they persuaded him to go along to Russia and so he continued with them in his working clothes without notifying his employer or parents of his whereabouts. They safely arrived at Wischinka. Mandel died in 1846 in the Hutterthal colony and left behind a grandson and great-grandson to carry on his name. Wollman's descendants carry his name to this day; however, Tittel had no male descendants to perpetuate his name.

On March 4 1784 Johann Waldner and Jacob Walter were sent to Ungarn. They traveled through Prussia and arrived at Franzthaldorf near Drissen, a Mennonite community. Jacob Walter met his daughter Susan with her

husband, Tobias Pohlman. This meeting was unexpected, and, needless to say, a joyful reunion. The Pohlmans decided to wait there until Walter and Waldner came through on their return trip. The two men then continued their Journey through Schlesien.

Near Gnadenfeld, Waldner became ill. Walter stayed with him because he didn't want to leave Waldner alone among strangers. Walter sent a messenger to Sabatisch telling them that whoever was willing to go along to Russia should come as soon as possible and join the Brotherhood in Russia.

The messenger returned to report that many were willing to go but could not get ready to leave so soon. They asked for a delay. Waldner and Walter did not appreciate this; they decided to return to Prussia. A few started from Sabatisch by way of Schlesien to Gnadenfeld. Hernhutter (Moravian brethren) lived here at this time. But the two brethren had already left, causing a great disappointment to the others. Soon these learned that the brethren were waiting for them in Prussia. There was a gathering of 47 souls. Among the group were yet another Wollman and Pohlman whose descendants (erben) are still alive. Because a number of the brethren had no male descendants, their names were not carried on.

In 1785 Joseph Muller and Christian Hofer were sent to Sabatisch because of a quarrel which arose among the backsliding brethren. To their great disappointment, they learned that all had left the faith with the exception of the before mentioned Jacob Walter. Muller and Hofer continued their journey to Wien where they appeared before Emperor Joseph and requested their remaining property (hinterbleibenenes Erbgut). The Emperor was very friendly and inquired of them how, why and when they had left the country, and if the persecutor's name had been Delphini. They related to him in detail where they lived, what kind of homes they had and the conditions of the contract. He encouraged them to return, but they answered " We weren't only suppressed but persecuted." He asked with violence, "Where?" Hofer related the incident of the imprisonment of the six men. Then the Emperor calmed down and remarked, "You must have a stronger religious faith than the Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists or Greek Orthodox Catholic." In great humility they pleaded for their property. He didn't promise them any assistance. However, the Hermanstadt Brotherhood's property (or money) was sent to Wien. It amounted to 2151 Florin, but who received it no one knows because the Brotherhood never got any of it.

The two brethren returned to Wischinka, going through Prussia where several Mennonites joined them. All returned except two widows who remained (Mrs. Decker with three sons and two daughters from whom the

present day Deckers descend and Mrs. Knels with one son and one daughter from whom the Knels descend).

This is the history and origin of our ancestors, the Hutterthal colony and the lineage of each name. However, we would like to mention a few experiences that took place in later years.

In 1786 the colony chose Christian Wurz, a young man to become a medical doctor to meet the colony's needs. He was sent to be trained by the personal doctor of Count Franzian. Wurz was of good testimony and was respected by the brethren; nevertheless, he received strict instructions to remain in the simplicity and true faith of the fathers. He promised. For a time he seemed to be true to his promise, but finally he conformed to the world with his clothing and beard cutting. He started to wear braids and scorned the faith of his fathers. The church dealt with him, but his love for worldly pleasures won his heart, and thus he was excommunicated. At the age of 26 years he left the colony, his wife and three children. He died at Moscow. All this grieved the colony, for they were very sympathetic with him because of his waywardness.

Later another young man, Samuel Wipf, was appointed to become a medical doctor to be educated by the same Count Franzian. He remained true to his faith and became a skilled doctor, a very valuable asset to the colony.

The colony lived in contentment and peace. But this was of short duration. Russia and the Turks were at war. In 1787 a law was passed and enforced which included all landowners. They were to contribute a certain amount of money and flour for the war. The colony was included in this. The brethren refused to pay such a tribute because it was against their conscience and against the contract. This developed into a scandal. They were threatened with imprisonment and openly were pronounced to be "stubborn". They were accused of setting a bad example for the other people of the land. The manager of Count Romanzof was embittered and provoked because the brethren made reference to the contract. He said, "It (the law) was the demand of the crown (krone) and the law of the land and not his."

The brethren were firm and said "We do not plan nor expect to meet the demand regardless of what the verdict will be."

The same year on October 23, the Elders decided at a business meeting that "We will rather leave houses and land before we sear our conscience." All members agreed. Two brethren took this decision to the count who was a friend of the colony and didn't want them to move away. He requested that

they appear later. Then he made them a different offer. "Because the war tax is against your faith and conscience, you could give a certain amount of money yearly to the count." The brethren agreed to this. Added to the yearly payment of 104 rubles and 95 kopek (ruble = 100 kopek = ½ cent), were 150 rubles. The Emperor received information of this transaction and was well satisfied. The Brotherhood thanked God for such definite guidance and an answer to prayer.

On June 21, 1794 at 10 p.m. a fire broke out in a Russian dorf (village). Our dorf was in great danger because the wind blew directly toward our yard. With God's help and the strenuous labor of the brethren, we were spared.

On May 18, 1796, Jacob Muller, a teacher, Jacob Bergthold, and three other families from Galizien were sent by their congregation to investigate and study our way of living. If they found it satisfactory, they would join us. The agreement in its entirety could not be met. During this meeting three other families came and were sorry that the union had not been completed. They were indeed sorry. They felt that they had been too fast in selling their property. These families stayed for a time but were never truly united with us, for they differed in many views. The church did not intend to leave the faith of their fathers. Since these families differed in their way of thinking, before long they left us.

In December 1796, the Count Romanzof died. Three brethren were sent to the funeral and to contact the young counts who were at their father's funeral. These brethren were to receive assurances from these young counts from Petersburg of the same protection and peace we had had during their father's reign.

The brethren were cordially received and were told by the counts, "We will do the best we can for you, as much as is in our power." In that same year Prince Karakov came from Petersburg with the instruction that all property must be shown to him. He also stated that the counts had traded their property for some of his. A discussion followed upon which we showed him the contract that we were a free people and as such could move whenever we wished. He answered, "You still have time; before we close the deal."

Immediately two brethren went to Petersburg to have the contract renewed. After reading this contract the count said, "I cannot differentiate between you and my people. You cannot expect that from me, for you are sensible and honorable people." They answered, "We do not expect that of you but we are a free people and may go whenever we wish." He replied "You are a good people but haven't you been recorded the second time as required in

the revision? You have paid a head tax." They were not aware of the true meaning of this statement. It seemed that according to the Count, they were not exempt nor a free people. Greatly discouraged, they wrote a petition and sent it to Emperor (Kaiser) Paul.

The Brotherhood called on the Mennonites who by this time had come to Russia and had full freedom of revision and a statement from the Emperor.

Because the petitioners belong to a property owner they may not enjoy the same privileges as those who are located on Crown lands. Their petition can therefore not be granted, but they should remain for the future in the same conditions as they had under the Count Field Marshall.

The message just quoted from Waltner's book "Banished for Faith", page 92, was the one the brethren returned with from the Emperor in answer to their petition. Discouragement was high, for all felt that their freedom and that of their descendants had been taken from them. In addition the government added another 150 rubles to their annual payment of 150 rubles. Although they were reluctant to pay, after consultation with other noblemen who were doubtful of their release, they too became doubtful and resigned themselves to the payment.

In 1800 Count Sergei Petrovitsch Romanzof came to his estate. He had a writing stating that since we were not registered in the revision during his reign and had only been registered during his father's reign, we must help support the Rekruten (recruits) or military service. We replied that we would not pay such support. We also noted that if they forced us, that point nine on the contract would be void and that we would then appear before the emperor ourselves.

Two brethren brought this message to the Count. He was very cordial and requested them to have patience. He was about to go to Germany and he promised that upon his return, he would discuss this matter with the Emperor himself in order to lighten their consciences. But when he returned in fall, they received no reply.

The brethren then selected two brethren, namely Johann Waldner and Jacob Walter, to go to Petersburg. Prayers followed these men, and they left with God's will and blessing. They started on February 19, 1801 and safely arrived at Petersburg on March 9. They acquainted the Count with the mission. On the twelfth of March great changes took place in the government. Emperor Paul died and his son Alexander came to the throne.

The Count suggested that they go home because it was not advisable to make proper agreements during this change. He said that he would do all he could for the colony, but they didn't trust his honesty any more. Their petition was to have crownland assigned to them. They were directed to Count Ekatharinoslav, who declared them a free people. The brethren came home with this resolution. Everybody was joyful that they weren't under the bondage of serfdom.

The land near Raditschewa was considered for settlement. The Count instructed his officers to put pressure on the brethren to move all the presently occupied property within three months.

On March 20, 1802, we started to dismantle our houses and journeyed to Raditschewa which was 15 werst from Wischinka. By the fifteenth of July, the last group had left Wischinka, leaving behind three brick houses. We also left a beautiful orchard, for which we received nothing. The Count's generosity did permit us to cut and keep the winter rye crop. Under such circumstances we left Wischinka and were released from the Count.

We had lived in Wischinka 32 years minus 36 days. One hundred and seventy-two souls had died here.

The Dorf Reditschewa was close to the river Desna. Soon five large, strong brick houses were built. Underneath two of these houses were strong cellars in which the bricks were laid in a corrugated fashion.

This newly established Bruderhof had a square or courtyard of 70 Faden (1 faden equals 1 fathom equals 6 feet). It had a large entrance gate which was securely locked every night. The yard was under close guard. Every profession had its workshop in the house on the main floor. Every family had an unheated, small bedroom on the second floor. The furniture consisted of a bed, one table and two chairs. At childbirth the mother could go to the children's room which usually was heated.

Every man had to learn a trade in which he was capable or qualified. All men had to spend a certain length of time working in the barn annually as Stahlknecht (barn-servant). The Brotherhood was short on finances for completing of the building project. However, the Crown (government) advanced them 4000 rubles which they were to pay in ten years. Twelve brethren gave their signature. And when the paid note was returned, none of the original signers were alive.

The Brotherhood was quite successful, but they never regained the prosperity which they had had at Wischinka. The older ones died, and the new generation could not appreciate the hard labor and thriftiness of the older people. They wanted more freedom and became selfish and dishonest. Of course, this does not work in communal life. The rules were that every profession had a manager, who assigned the work. It was also his duty to sell finished products and turn in the money made to the steward of the colony. In turn finances for raw material was supplied by the steward. For such offices only faithful, dependable, honest, and worthy men were carefully appointed. In Reditschewa, however, this arrangement was neglected. Every worker wanted to be a manager, to see the finished product and to buy the needed tools and material for his own handicraft for himself. They became very selfish. Instead of bringing the money to the steward, only the balance account sheet was presented. Money was kept for themselves to provide better food and more drink. With such dishonest deeds occurring, discontentment, jealousy and quarrels made great headways to destroy the unity. It grieved the brethren that some sought their own comforts.

A disagreement between Johannes Waldner and Jacob Walter, both ministers or elders, was a great hindrance to the Brotherhood. Walter with his brothers and sisters was the first to move away. He built a house in a nearby valley. Before long, half of the colony became his followers. The rift grew. Finally, they called on Count Ekatharinoslav (government official) to help them in their dispute. They sought to continue Christian fellowship, thereby, trying to motivate reconciliation and more peace. However, hatred and envy ruled the camp. "A divided house cannot stand" was a proven statement within the Brotherhood.

In 1818 one half of the colony moved to Chortiz, a Mennonite settlement. In 1819 the whole Raditschof dorf burned, including houses, barns, and equipment. Elderly people still talk about this tragedy and of the separation with aching hearts. But they also recall the fortune and blessings. It was hard to understand how all could vanish so fast.

In 1820 the group which had gone to Chotiz returned and divided the leftover livestock and land among the fifty families. They started two small villages (dorfs) near the banks of the Desna River. However, they never regained the original prosperity.

Very soon many noticed that they could not thrive spiritually or physically under such circumstances. Their land was scattered in 43 places within a radius of 20 Werst. The congregation asked the government for permission

to move elsewhere. In 1842 the delayed answer came that they may move to Molotschna in Province Taurien. It was impossible for all to leave at the same time; therefore, they divided themselves into five groups the older brethren being the leaders. In the fall of 1842 they proceeded to South Russia with a government guide. Here in Province Taurien in the Melitopol they established the Hutterthal Colony as mentioned in the beginning of this writing.

In 1853 Johannasruh started to build three werst north of Hutterthal. By 1857, 38 farmyards (Hofe) were finished. It was a beautiful village with houses of masonry and barns built with burnt bricks and decorated with built on gutters. Fences of masonry were built along the streets and ash trees beautified the avenues.

In 1857 some more land was bought in the same Province from Oreckov, 20 werst away and the new dorf Hutterdorf was established. In this dorf a small Bruderhof was organized and was very prosperous. A second Bruderhof was organized.

In 1864 a few members at Johannasruh started communal living. However, within two years they had discontinued. The improper arrangement of their homes and other buildings seemed to be a hindrance to their success.

In 1868 more land was bought in the Province Ekatharinoslav and a fourth colony was established named Neu Hutterthal.

In 1874 the government started the conscription law. The Hutterites were given a choice, either to serve the Russian army or to leave Russia. They chose the latter.

The migrated to America, coming to South Dakota. The Hutterdorf people were the first to leave. The two colonies which had lived in communal life for 15 years came to South Dakota and established Bon Homme along the Missouri River and Wolfcreek colony near the James River not far from the Wolf Creek stream in Hutchinson county. The Neu Hutterthal were the next group that emigrated but most of them went on their own farms.

In 1877 some more came from Hutterthal and Johannasruh. Some chose to go on their own farms while the others started a third colony along the James River in Hutchinson County; In 1878 and 1879 all the rest from Hutterthal and Johannasruh came and only a few chose to join the communal living. Most of them settled on their own farms.