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THE MENNONITE QUARTERLY REVIEW

A Journal Devoted to Anabaptist-Mennonite History,
Thought, Life, and Affairs

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The *Review* solicits manuscripts in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies, broadly interpreted. Normally essays should not exceed thirty typewritten pages, submitted in duplicate with notes placed separately at the end. Text and endnotes should be typewritten, double-spaced, following the style prescribed by *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed., rev.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993). Manuscripts not meeting these requirements may be returned for alteration. Communications regarding contents of the journal (contributions, book reviews, matters of an editorial nature) should be addressed to John D. Roth, Goshen College, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen IN 46526 (johndr@goshen.edu).

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IN THIS ISSUE

During the past decade, debates in the U.S. over public education have increasingly taken on the contentious tone of our broader civic discourse. It's not only that education accounts for a significant portion of our tax dollars, or that access to education has profound consequences for life trajectories, or even that opinions on pedagogy, accountability, and measurable outcomes differ so widely. Instead, the debates are so passionate because education is the way in which societies transmit their deepest spiritual, cultural, and political values from one generation to the next. Education is never just about literacy or preparation for a future job market—at stake are fundamental assumptions about our shared identity and the communities we envision for the future.

Perry Bush, professor of history at Bluffton University, opens this issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* with a thoughtful essay on the educational vision of C. Henry Smith, a leading Mennonite public intellectual, who played a key role in shaping Mennonite identity during the first half of the twentieth century. As one of the first Mennonites in North America to receive a doctoral degree, Smith began his pedagogical career convinced that higher education was the key to progress—both for Mennonites and for the wider American society. In numerous speeches and publications, Smith argued that the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition was the source of such modern democratic principles as religious liberty and the separation of church and state. However, the experience of World War I and the strident patriotism that characterized American culture in the decades that followed sobered his perspective. During the second half of his life, Smith revised his educational vision for Mennonites. That vision became more inward-looking and defensive—Mennonite colleges and seminaries, he argued, should inoculate students against the currents of nationalism, fundamentalism, and acculturation. In lively prose, Bush traces this transformation in Smith's outlook, then shifts his focus to contemporary realities, noting how the pressures of professionalization and upward economic mobility have introduced new challenges for Mennonite educational institutions. The questions of identity, tradition, and witness to the broader society, he suggests, are never fully resolved; and education remains a crucial context where that debate must unfold.

In the essay that follows, **Felipe Hinojosa**, associate professor of history at Texas A&M University, offers an insightful illustration of this enduring tension. Drawing on insights from his widely-acclaimed *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture* (2014), Hinojosa proposes a new approach to Mennonite studies. Whereas the default mode of Mennonite scholarship has tended to frame the relevant

questions—be they theological, historical, ethical, sociological, or literary—from an insider's perspective, often in the form of some quest to define "Mennonite identity," Hinojosa proposes instead a "relational approach." Identity, he suggests, is forged most profoundly in relation to broader realities of ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, or politics, all of which interact with each other in complex, sometimes disorienting, ways. In the 1970s, for example, the debate swirling around the United Farm Worker movement pulled Mennonite fruit growers, farm laborers, social activists, and church institutions into complex relationships that can only be understood "from the outside in" rather than the other way around. Mennonite educational institutions, he argues, should foster precisely this kind of scholarship, framed in the context of larger social transformations.

On April 14, 1937, Nazi officials formally dissolved a German Hutterite community, the Rhön Bruderhof, confiscating its property and expelling its members. According to the dominant historical narrative, set forth by Michael Horsch, a German Mennonite elder and erstwhile supporter of the community, the Nazi action was precipitated by the community's economic mismanagement and imminent bankruptcy. Members of the community, however, who had earlier considered Horsch to be a friend, were stunned by his account of what happened. In this essay, historian **Thomas Nauerth** considers the primary source evidence in painstaking detail and raises significant questions about the veracity of Horsch's account. The sudden critical tone that Horsch adopted toward the community, he argues, reflected both German Mennonite suspicions of communitarian practices and the direct pressure of the Gestapo on Horsch to craft a narrative for foreign readers that would protect the Nazis from any hint of religious repression. Though this story has been largely forgotten by Mennonites, a sense of betrayal has lingered among descendants of the Rhön Bruderhof, which this article helps to explain.

David Weaver-Zercher, professor of American religious history at Messiah College, closes the issue with a research note focused on a minor mystery in the 1938 English edition of *Martyrs Mirror* that is still reprinted today—namely, why did the editors include only fifty-five of the original 104 images that the Dutch artist, Jan Luyken, had engraved for the 1685 Dutch edition? Weaver-Zercher challenges the traditional explanation that the missing images were excluded because they depicted particularly gruesome scenes. Instead, he suggests, the decision was based on a tradition already established in the 1886 English edition and by a desire to include more images from the Anabaptist section of the volume.

We hope you enjoy the range of topics and arguments in this issue!

— John D. Roth, editor

**"The Right Kind of Education and Perhaps Re-education":
C. Henry Smith, Mennonite Schooling, and the
Lessons of a Usable Past**

PERRY BUSH*

Abstract: Through his long and productive life as a history professor at Goshen and Bluffton colleges, C. Henry Smith (1875-1948) performed a number of critically important functions for the Mennonite Church. He was one of the church's leading historians and public intellectuals, as well as an energetic peace activist. Yet perhaps his most significant contribution was that of a leading Mennonite educator. In this role, he traversed a remarkable intellectual trajectory: from a view of Mennonite education as outward-looking and expansive to a vision of Mennonite education more inward-looking and defensive. Since Smith's day, Mennonite education seems to have been following the same path, though very much in the opposite direction. Tracing these two different intellectual trajectories offers fertile ground for reflection on the meaning and mission of Mennonite education today.

In January of 1895, Menno Simon Steiner, the progressive (MC) Mennonite activist and evangelist, received some fan mail and then a small stream of unsolicited articles for *Young People's Paper*, a monthly devotional magazine for Mennonite youth that he edited. The materials came from a 20-year-old schoolteacher in rural Illinois who identified himself only as Henry Smith from Metamora. The young teacher urged Steiner to offer more pieces in the journal by contemporary Mennonite writers, which, he reasoned, "are more interesting to our people than some other authors long dead might be." Yet "I like the paper very much as it is," Smith hastened to add. "It ought to be in the hands of every young man and woman in America who is interested in the welfare of the human race."¹

*Perry Bush is a professor of history at Bluffton (Ohio) University and author of *Peace, Progress and the Professor: The Mennonite History of C. Henry Smith* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Herald Press, 2015).

1. Henry Smith to Menno S. Steiner, Jan. 26, 1895, M. S. Steiner Papers, Hist. Mss I-33, box 4, file 5, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind. [hereafter abbreviated AMC]. On the *Young People's Paper*, see Harold S. Bender, "Young People's Paper (Periodical)." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (hereafter abbreviated G.A.M.E.O.).

doing so, we will begin to realize, as Luis Alvarez has argued, that "culture is not a unified system of shared meaning, but a system of multi-vocal, contested, and complex symbols in constant negotiation between various groups, and that the study of race and ethnicity is best understood by using comparative and interdisciplinary methods."²³

A relational approach to Mennonite studies challenges us to expand how we see ourselves as communities of faith that represent multiple formulations and expressions of Mennonite identity. My hope is that this will move us to change how we think about and write Mennonite history. But perhaps more importantly, I also believe it can also lead us to rethink Mennonite higher education in the twenty-first century. How, for example, can we make our academic program offerings at Mennonite colleges and universities more reflective of the changing demographics? One way might be to develop, and adequately fund, academic spaces for Latina/o, African-American, Native American, and Asian-American studies at our Mennonite colleges and universities. Instituting such programs will not only better prepare our students to be culturally competent, something I believe our schools already strive to do, but can also help foster new research into Mennonite studies and create spaces where the many voices of the Mennonite experience—from Texas to Colombia to Florida—can each be in conversation with one another. We have a tremendous opportunity to not only build on the strong programs in peace and conflict studies, but to also position our institutions as leaders in comparative studies in race and ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. Why is this important? Because it opens new pathways for academic research, and, perhaps more importantly, moves us toward a relational approach as a way to better appreciate the multiple histories and contested politics that encompass the Mennonite experience.

23. Luis Alvarez, "From Zoot Suits to Hip Hop," 69.

Michael Horsch and the Rhön Bruderhof, 1936–1937: From Friend to Hostile Witness to Historical Eyewitness

THOMAS NAUERTH*

Translated by Ellen Yutzzy Glebe

Abstract: The expulsion by the Nazis of a small German Hutterite community, the Rhön Bruderhof, on April 14, 1937, triggered a public controversy involving German, Dutch, and American Mennonites. At dispute was not only the reputation of the targeted community and the legitimacy of the Nazi regime's actions, but also fundamental questions regarding the economic viability and ethics of Christian community of goods. This article provides an overview of this controversy, clarifying the central role played by the Mennonite elder Michael Horsch.

Of the diverse and widespread Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century, the Mennonite and Hutterite fellowships are the primary branches that have survived into modern times. While the Mennonite movement has taken on a global character with members spread across some eighty countries, numerous campaigns of persecution forced the Hutterites to flee from their native Europe; the group has survived only in the United States and Canada. In 1933, however, when Hitler became chancellor of Germany and his National Socialist movement subsequently seized power, there was a Hutterite church community in central Germany called the Rhön Bruderhof. This small Christian fellowship had joined the Hutterite church in 1930; its members sought to live in community according to the principles of the early Christian church and the Hutterite tradition, rejecting the use of force and sharing all property within the community.¹

*Thomas Nauert is a professor of Catholic theology at the University of Osnabrück.

1. Aside from autobiographical accounts by Emmy Arnold and Hans Meier, the only comprehensive treatment of the history of this community is Yaacov Oved, *Witness of the Brothers: A History of the Bruderhof* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996). For the autobiographical accounts, see Emmy Arnold, *A Joyful Pilgrimage: My Life in Community* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough Publishing House, 1999) and Hans Meier, *Solange das Licht brennt: Lebensbericht eines Mitgliedes der neuhutterischen Bruderhof-Gemeinschaft* (Norfolk, Conn.: Hutterian Brethren, Deer Spring, 1990). On the history of the community during the period of 1933-1937, see Marjorie Hindley, "'Unerwünscht': One of the Lesser Known Confrontations with the National Socialist State 1933-1937," *German History* 11, no. 2 (1993),

Up until 1937, the Rhön Bruderhof resisted the increasing consolidation of the Nazi regime and sought to provide a living Christian counterexample. In 1933 they had survived a large-scale raid and the closure of their schools.² In 1934, in order to protect their school-age children from National Socialist indoctrination, community members sent their children to a newly founded settlement in Liechtenstein. Bruderhof men who were eligible for German military service followed them there in 1935, and then fled to England in 1936. The community's financial situation became increasingly hopeless. Important sources of income were lost, economic opportunities were limited, and currency regulations made it difficult for members to receive financial support from abroad. In addition, starting in mid-1936, various governmental agencies actively sought to drive the Rhön Bruderhof to ruin by denying permits for its income-earning operations, prohibiting overnight hospitality, and abruptly calling in major loans that had been extended to the community before Hitler's rise to power.

Although this Christian community offers a compelling witness, the major narratives of church history have neglected to fully appreciate and accurately render the story of the Rhön Bruderhof. As Mennonite theologian John Rempel has pointed out:

Even though we live in a relatively open society, the mind-set of pacifist church Christians in a totalitarian society has an enormous amount to teach us about the consequences of different understandings of a free church (collective conviction versus individual conscience) and its relationship to the state (the problems that arise when an ethic for the church has no continuity with an ethic for the state).³

While the sweeping questions raised by Rempel cannot be addressed here at length, the following article seeks to shed light on a brief episode of this history that is also relevant to Mennonite churches in Europe and North America. Even a cursory glance at the article on the "Rhönbruderhof" in the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, by historian James Irvin Lichti, reveals that the section on the dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof

207-219; Emmy Barth, *An Embassy Besieged: The Story of a Christian Community in Nazi Germany* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 2010); Thomas Nauwerth, *Zeugnis, Liebe und Widerstand: Der Rhönbruderhof, 1933-1937* (forthcoming).

2. See the short overview available at <http://de.evangelischer-widerstand.de/html/view.php?type=kurzbiografie&id=59&l=de>.

3. John D. Rempel, review of *Houses on the Sand? Pacifist Denominations in Nazi Germany* by James Irvin Lichti, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 85 (Oct. 2011), 663-666.—www.goshen.edu/mqr/pastissues/Oct11BookReviews.pdf.

and Mennonite reactions is disproportionately detailed.⁴ A closer reading suggests the reason for this level of detail: the dissolution of the community at the hands of the Gestapo in 1937 sparked a bitter controversy between community members and various representatives of the German Mennonite church. The controversy centered on the activities of a certain Michael Horsch, who, in November of 1937, published a booklet entitled *Die Auflösung des Eingetragenen Vereins "Neuwerk Bruderhof," Post Neuhof, Kreis Fulda*. This booklet included a collection of the most important documents related to the dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof along with a commentary on the texts, and it is still regarded as an important source for understanding these historical events.⁵ In the booklet, Horsch presented allegedly exact numbers from the Rhön Bruderhof's financial accounts and leveled dire accusations of fraud and mismanagement against the community. As Lichti's article indicates, Horsch's accusations and their uncritical reception in Mennonite circles up to the present day are connected to a question of practical theology: Can an economic model that rejects individual property and wages—embracing what Bruderhof founder Eberhard Arnold called a "communism of production"—be viable over the long term?⁶

There are a variety of reasons to examine this history more closely, particularly to establish the historical context in which Michael Horsch composed a publication that is still viewed as a valuable primary source.⁷

A DEDICATED FRIEND

The dramatic story of the Rhön Bruderhof's dissolution and its aftermath began when a small Bruderhof delegation attended the 1936 Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam. There they met American Mennonites who were deeply touched upon hearing of the dire need of the German Hutterite community. As a result, in November 1936 the American Mennonite John Horsch wrote to his brother Michael in

4. James Irvin Lichti, "Rhönbruderhof," in *Mennonitisches Lexikon* V, Section 2.—www.mennlex.de/doku.php?id=top:rhoenbruderhof.

5. Overview in James Irvin Lichti, "German Mennonites, Economics and the State," in *Anabaptist/Mennonite Faith and Economics*, ed. Calvin Redekop, Victor A. Krahn, and Samuel J. Steiner (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993), 83-110, 84, fn. 3. See also Horst Quiring, "Die deutschen Mennoniten zur Auflösung des Rhön-Bruderhofes 1937: Eine Dokumentation im Spiegel der Korrespondenz," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 33 (1981), 23-32, 23; as well as Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Relocation of the German Bruderhof to England, South America, and North America," *Communal Societies* 11 (1991) 66-77, 69.

6. Lichti, for example, speaks of the Bruderhof's "'manna-from-heaven' approach" to economic questions, which he contrasts with the German Mennonites' "stewardship norms."

7. "Scholarship has understood the dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof primarily through Horsch's eyes."—editorial note in the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, 41, no. 3 (1980), 3.

Germany, asking him to visit the Rhön Bruderhof and evaluate its situation and then report back to him if further help from the American Mennonites was required.⁸

Michael Horsch was an experienced Mennonite elder and member of the Conference of Elders and Preachers of the Mennonite Churches in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria (Ältesten- und Predigerversammlung des Verbandes badisch-württembergisch-bayrischer Mennonitengemeinden).⁹ He was also known for his engagement in charitable causes.¹⁰ On December 5, 1936, he answered his brother's letter, promising to visit the communities in the Rhön Mountains and Liechtenstein with another member of the Mennonite relief organization, Christenpflicht, and to report back.¹¹ Apparently he had already heard of the Hutterite group: "I have been wanting to see the Bruderhof communities . . . for some time," he wrote, "but have not yet done so."¹² Horsch was finally able to visit the Rhön Bruderhof in early January 1937. Having first spent a day at the Bruderhof community in Liechtenstein, he then spent two full days in the Rhön. The community recalled his visit warmly. As Hans Meier later wrote: "We had a very nice talk with him. He understood our situation and wrote to his brother about our needs."¹³ In Horsch, the community seemed to have found a true friend among the German Mennonites, a most welcome development at this late hour of their imperiled existence under a violent regime. For his part, Horsch had found new sisters and brothers in the faith, reporting to his brother that at the Rhön Bruderhof he had

8. John Horsch reported about informing his brother Michael and requesting him to undertake this journey in a letter to Harold S. Bender dated Nov. 25, 1936.—Archives of the Mennonite Church USA-Goshen [hereafter cited as AMC-G], Hist. mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 8/2.

9. For more on Michael Horsch, see Peter Letkemann, "The Mennonite Refugee Effort in Lager Lechfeld, 1921-1926: Beating Swords into Plowshares?" 90 *MQR* (July 2016), 277-306.

10. Michael Horsch died in 1949. His papers and correspondence have not been preserved, and it seems he never commented later on the events concerning the Bruderhof community. On his biography, see as the sole source: Volker Horsch, "Horsch, Michael," in *Mennonitisches Lexikon V*, Section 1.—www.mennlex.de/doku.php?id=art:horsch_michael.

11. Michael Horsch seems frequently to have gone on such "fact-finding missions." For example, in 1941, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had a "German-Poland project," for which the contacts were Unruh and Horsch. Horsch was to "make a tour . . . and bring me a report of actual need. Bro. Horsch made this tour at his own expense, as he had done most of his traveling for the M. C. Committee, and wrote up a splendid report."—Report from M. C. Lehmann, relief commissioner for the MCC in Germany.—PA AAR 127518.

12. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, Dec. 5, 1936.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, John Horsch 6/16.

13. Hans Meier, oral history transcript, May 24, 1979.—BHA PP g.

met people there who, without exception, earnestly seek to follow Christ's example, who understand his words and commandments as they are written, and seek to lead their lives accordingly. I tried to put myself in their place, to think and live according to their spirit and way of thinking, was glad to share in their need and hardship and in their troubles, and I felt quite comfortable there. I felt at home among them.¹⁴

Over the two days of his stay he was shown the entire farm, and he seems to have openly discussed with community members their critical economic situation and their limited prospects in Germany. After his visit, drawing on his years of experience in relief work, he set out with great vigor to assist the community, writing to his brother John in January 1937:

It cannot be the aim to support the residents of the Rhön Bruderhof over the long term there—humanly seen, they will not be able to hold out there much longer under the present conditions. Your help from America should serve to ensure that, among other things, when the time comes that they leave the Rhön Bruderhof, everything can be disposed of properly and well, in good order and in a manner that is honorable in the eyes of the world.¹⁵

In an earlier letter to his brother, Horsch had described in detail the assistance needed and outlined a possible division of these relief efforts between the German and American Mennonites.¹⁶ What he envisioned was not just immediate help, but also assistance in bridging the time until the next year's harvest. Never before had the community been blessed with such an experienced and engaged crisis manager. Horsch closed his letter of January 25, 1937, with the following words: "May the Lord grant through his grace that all those who are willing and able to help, and called by Him to do so, might deal with the members of the Bruderhof community according to His will."¹⁷

14. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, Jan. 20, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

15. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, Jan. 25, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9. This statement is interesting because in late 1936 and early 1937 the Bruderhof community itself had begun making plans to gradually leave the Rhön. "It seems more and more that we will soon be united in one place; we recognize that here over and over. On the other hand, it is incredibly difficult to predict when that might be possible."—Letter from Hans Zumpe to Emmy Arnold, Jan. 28, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0008. It seems, then, that there were discussions with Michael Horsch about these questions.

16. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, Jan. 20, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

17. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, Jan. 25, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

It was precisely this question of willingness, however, that would prove problematic. As it turned out, the association of German Mennonite elders rejected Horsch's proposal for an organized relief effort, apparently for reasons of "politics."¹⁸ But Mennonite reservations about the Bruderhof practice of community of goods likely contributed significantly to the elders' decision as well.¹⁹ In 1929, the Bruderhof's request to join the regional Mennonite conference had been rejected partly because of such concerns, which continued to color the Bruderhof-Mennonite relationship into the 1930s: "The Bruderhof people represented opinions that are strange [to us]. . . . For Mennonites, communal living has long been something rather unappetizing. And communism has ruined it for people because of what they have experienced or heard."²⁰

To what extent Horsch met with better luck in collecting private donations is unclear, as few relevant records survive.²¹ In the following months, however, the Mennonite relief organization Christenpflicht did send some immediate targeted assistance, as confirmed by two thank-you

18. In his letter dated Dec. 24, 1936, Michael Horsch observed that the German Mennonite elders were scheduled to meet in mid-January, and that "perhaps we can help the Bruderhof in the Rhön (65 residents) a bit by providing the necessary grain for bread until the next harvest."—Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, Dec. 24, 1926.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9. According to the minutes of the meeting of elders and pastors on Jan. 11, 1937, Michael Horsch reported on his visits. There is no mention, however, of "grain for bread until the next harvest." Instead, the extreme need was "commended to the brotherly love of our churches," and Michael Horsch was to forward any gifts to the Bruderhof. Ulrich Hege's detailed draft of the minutes of this meeting, dated Jan. 18, 1937, reveal more of the background of these few brief sentences. There he writes: "No consensus could be reached to help within the central association itself due to political [concerns] and other reasons. Instead, it was left up to Brother Horsch's discretion to take personal action [. . .]. It was also said that it should first and foremost be the task of their fellow believers in America to help in this case. (I do not know whether the politics should be included here or not)."—Letter from Ulrich Hege to Daniel, Jan. 18, 1937—Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Ulrich Hege.

19. For an overview of the relationship of German Mennonites to the Bruderhof, see Thomas Nauerth, "Hutterer und Mennoniten in Europa: Begegnungen und 'Vergegnungen' 1933–37," lecture at the Mennonitische Geschichtsverein conference titled "Stimmen, Lebenssituationen, Erfahrungen: Mennoniten in der NS-Zeit," Sept. 25–27, 2015, Münster-Gievenback, Germany.

20. Letter from Benjamin Unruh to "Lieber Simon," July 18, 1937.—Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Christian Neff, Mappe 163.

21. According to Lichti, it seems that support from the United States also failed to materialize in the way Horsch had hoped: "The Mennonite Central Committee was hesitant about taking on the role suggested by Michael. On February 27, Harold Bender wrote to . . . [his father-in-law] John Horsch: 'I do not think that we should put any money into their economic organization which has apparently been somewhat mismanaged, although we should help them to migrate if they need help.'"—Lichti, "German Mennonites," 88. The basis for Bender's estimation is unclear.

letters addressed to Albert Schantz, the organization's treasurer.²² Apart from such offerings, however, any fraternal assistance the community received was destined to come not from the Mennonites in Germany, but rather from the Hutterites in North America.

When John Horsch wrote to his brother Michael in November 1936 to inform him of the Bruderhof's need for help, he also mentioned that two American Hutterite elders, David Hofer and Michael Waldner, were planning to visit the community.²³ This visit took place in the spring of the following year. The arrival of Hofer and Waldner at the European Bruderhof communities marked a significant moment in church history, as it was the first time that Hutterite elders had returned for a missionary visit to the lands of their origin since the eighteenth century.²⁴ For the Rhön community, their coming was nothing short of momentous: it was the first time since the Bruderhof had joined the Hutterite church in 1930 that their North American brothers were seeing the European communities at firsthand.²⁵ A little more than a year earlier, the Bruderhof had suffered the unexpected death of its founder, Eberhard Arnold. Now Hofer's and Waldner's visit provided a much-needed spiritual and pastoral boost. "It is truly a [sign of] God's grace," wrote David Hofer, "that we could assist the community there and intervene on their behalf, for they were all quite inexperienced brethren who did not know very much."²⁶

The two Hutterite elders first spent several weeks at the Cotswold Bruderhof in England, which had recently been established to accommodate the men who had fled the Continent to avoid German

22. A letter has been preserved from Hans Meier to Brother Schantz, dated Feb. 12, 1937, thanking him for a donation of 300 marks and another from Walter Braun to the Schantz family, dated March 22, 1937, thanking them for two packages containing foodstuffs and clothing.—Literary Estate of Albert Schantz; copy preserved in the Bruderhof Historical Archive.

23. In January, Michael Horsch wrote that the "visit of two brothers from America, of which you wrote, is not yet come to pass."—Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, dated Jan. 20, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

24. On the background and significance of this, see Thomas Nauerth, "Kirchenkampf unter internationaler Beobachtung," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 27, no. 1 (2014), 181-195.

25. Both men recorded their impressions in journals during their trip and sent numerous letters to their communities back in the United States. See David Hofer, *Reise nach Europa, 1937* (Rosenort, Man.: Prairie View Press, 1990); David Hofer, "Die Auflösung des Rhönbruderhofes in Deutschland," *Der Pflug* 1, no. 3 (1938), 89-95; and Michael Waldner, *Reise Bericht* (Rosholt, S.D.: White Rock Bruderhof, 1980). These seem particularly valuable primary sources, given that both men wrote down their observations during their trip. A letter from David Hofer to Joseph Kleinsasser from May 2, 1937, is quite similar to the report of their travels published later.—BHA Coll. 0484_01.

26. Letter from David Hofer to Joseph Kleinsasser, May 2, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0484_01.

military conscription. In early April they traveled to Germany where they were eagerly awaited, not just by the Rhön Bruderhof members, but also by Michael Horsch. As Hofer wrote to John Horsch on April 13, 1937, "we expect Brother Michael any day, just as he wrote."²⁷

Hofer must have just succeeded in posting his letter from the Rhön Bruderhof, for on the following day, April 14, 1937, the Gestapo and the SS's intelligence agency (*Sicherheitsdienst*), aided by a large police force, raided the community and declared it to be dissolved.²⁸ The grounds for the dissolution, according to an internal Gestapo memorandum, were "reasons of state security."²⁹ The entire property was confiscated and occupied. The following day, April 15, 1937, the three members of the community's board of directors who were present on the premises—Karl Keiderling, Hannes Boller, and Hans Meier—were taken into so-called protective custody while the Gestapo prepared a case against them for credit fraud. On April 16, 1937, the remaining members of the community were permitted to leave Germany together as a group—a concession by the Gestapo that was largely the result of Hofer's courage and negotiating skill.³⁰

Most of the members of the Rhön Bruderhof traveled to the Netherlands, where the Dutch Mennonites took them in until June, when

27. Letter from David Hofer and Michael Waldner to John Horsch, April 13, 1937. — AMC-G, Hist. Mss. John Horsch 6/23.

28. In addition to the reports of the Hutterite elders, three members of the Rhön Bruderhof also recorded their experiences shortly thereafter: Karl Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung des Rhön Bruderhofes, über die Verhaftung und Gefangenschaft unserer drei Brüder Hans, Hannes und Karl, und über ihre Heimkehr zur Gemeinde" [ca. 1937]—BHA Coll. 0152, Box 1, Folder 8; Hannes Boller, "Bericht über die Gefängniszeit von drei Brüdern in Fulda von Donnerstag, den 15. April - Sonnabend, den 26. Juni 1937 und ihrer Wiedervereinigung mit der Gemein auf dem Cotswold Bruderhof, Freitag, d. 2 Juli 1937" [ca. 1938]—BHA Coll. 0007, Box 1, Folder 11; and Hans Meier, Hannes Boller, and Karl Keiderling, "Kurzer Tatsachenbericht ueber die Aufloesung des Rhoenbruderhofes und die Gefaengniszeit als Ergaenzung zu den anderen Tatsachenberichten Hans und Walter" [ca. 1938]—BHA Coll. 0191, Box E, Folder 9i. Also of note are the reports of Hans Meier, although these were composed much later; Hans Meier, "Die Auflösung des Neuhutterischen Rhön-Bruderhofes in Deutschland," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 10 (1979), 49-56; Hans Meier, "The Dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof in Germany," *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* 49, no. 7 (1980), 1-6; and Hans Meier, *Solange das Licht*, 60-65. There are a few later memoirs and a series of contemporary letters. The records kept by the Gestapo are no longer extant.

29. A memorandum of April 12, 1937, from the Gestapo Kassel to the Gestapo Frankfurt (HHStAW Abt. 519/3 Nr. 16656, pag. 48) states: "The Bruderhof community is to be dissolved by the office here for reasons of state security [aus staatspolizeilichen Gruenden]."

30. Hofer's extraordinary role is evident in Waldner's report: "Once again, David-Vetter spoke for the brethren, saying: 'Consider what you are doing: you will not make soldiers of these people, you will sin against them if you keep them here. Let them go, as one body. It is better for both you and for them.' And then the captains said: 'If you all leave at the appointed time, we won't make any more trouble for you.'" —Waldner, *Reise Bericht*, 41.

it was possible for them to emigrate to the Cotswold Bruderhof in England. A small number traveled to the Alm Bruderhof in Liechtenstein.³¹ After April 16, the only community member to remain at the Rhön Bruderhof was the bookkeeper, Hella Römer, whom the Gestapo ordered to stay and wrap up the community's accounts. The American Hutterite elders stayed with her for her protection,³² and used the opportunity to make several visits to the three incarcerated brothers. In late April, the American Hutterites then left for the Alm Bruderhof in Liechtenstein.

FROM FRIEND TO HOSTILE WITNESS

Michael Horsch seems to have arrived at the Rhön Bruderhof precisely in these dramatic days when the community was being forcibly disbanded and its property seized. In his subsequent publications about what happened, Horsch consistently emphasized that he had been an eyewitness of the raid on the community: "By chance I happened to be present at the Rhön Bruderhof during the dissolution and seizure of the property."³³ His claim to have been an eyewitness would later lend special weight to his version of the story—one in which his role was no longer that of a friend of the community, but rather a hostile witness against them. Accordingly, in order to evaluate the credibility of Horsch's eyewitness account, it is crucial to determine exactly when he arrived at the Rhön Bruderhof. Exactly what was he an eyewitness to?

If Horsch was indeed an eyewitness to the raid, it is remarkable how well he managed to escape notice. Neither the detailed notes kept by Karl Keiderling nor the journal written by David Hofer mention Horsch's presence on the day of the raid. Many accounts suggest that Horsch

31. The details of this departure and subsequent stay in the Netherlands can be found in the short note-style 1937 diary of Hildegard Friedrich (BHA Coll. 0094). See also Kurt Zimmermann, *Überblick unseres gemeinsamen Lebens*, who was at the Alm Bruderhof at the time and notes: "On April 17 the group from the Rhön Bruderhof arrived. They lacked the most basic supplies as they were only allowed to bring some hand luggage with them. But the joy in seeing one another again and in being united was great. They had to leave the second group at the Frankfurt am Main train station from where they traveled to Holland."

32. "We were also granted permission to stay here with Hella, the bookkeeper, so that she is not alone." —Waldner, *Reise Bericht*, 38f.

33. Michael Horsch, "Ergänzung zu der 'Notwendigen Berichtigung' der 'Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden,'" in *Gemeindeblatt der Mennoniten* 12/13 (1937). Citations refer to the version of this text included in *Die Auflösung des Eingetragenen Vereins 'Neuwerk Bruderhof,' Post Neuhof, Kreis Fulda*, ed. Michael Horsch (Ingolstadt, 1937), 8-10. Horsch's appearance is confirmed by Hans Zumpe, who remarks on the "remarkable coincidence that just in the same days in which the police occupied our Rhön Bruderhof . . . your brother Michael from Ingolstadt arrived at the Rhön Bruderhof." —Letter from Hans Zumpe to John Horsch, April 23, 1937; AMC-G, Hist. mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

arrived on April 15, 1937, during the second day of the police occupation.³⁴ Horsch himself suggested as much in his 1937 booklet, writing that he had been told upon his arrival that "the Bruderhof has been disbanded since yesterday."³⁵

Hofer, indeed, describes the events of April 15, 1937, in detail without any mention of Horsch. On that morning the three leaders of the Rhön Bruderhof were transported to a jail in Fulda. Hofer continued his account of that day:

Toward midday, the whole community waited with great expectations for our brothers, but they did not come. Two o'clock came, and then four. The dear community waited for their leaders, but they did not come. Then Michael-Vetter³⁶ [Waldner, the other Hutterite elder from the US] and I went up on the hill. . . . We saw a car coming, . . . and a man got out and came toward us.³⁷

It is a dramatic moment: this person—not Michael Horsch, but rather presumably a Gestapo officer—first announced to the horrified community that their leaders had been arrested, and then ordered them all to leave within twenty-four hours.

It is implausible that Hofer would have somehow missed Horsch's arrival, and there is no reason to believe that he would have omitted it from his account. Thus, it seems safe to assume that Horsch did not arrive at the Rhön Bruderhof on April 15, 1937.

That said, there is a second eyewitness account, in the form of notes kept by Hofer's companion Michael Waldner. In these Waldner wrote: "It should also be mentioned that Pastor Michael Horsch, a Mennonite, came on April 15, before they left around four in the afternoon, and also witnessed their flight; he did not have permission to enter the house—the police forbade it."

34. See Lichti, "German Mennonites," 88.

35. Michael Horsch, "Feststellungen von M. Horsch, Hellmannsberg," in *Die Auflösung des Eingetragenen Vereins 'Neuwerk Bruderhof,' Post Neuhof, Kreis Fulda*, ed. Michael Horsch (Ingolstadt, 1937), 14-32; here, 23. The reliability of this publication will be called into question below; Horsch's claim to have met both "delegates from America" is already enough to raise doubts, since Hofer's detailed account never mentions him.

36. "Vetter" (German for "cousin") is a term used among the Hutterites as an honorific for elders.

37. This description is basically confirmed by Gertrud Arnold's letter to Hans Hermann Arnold, dated April 22-23, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0190 in which Arnold relates the report of Kathleen Hamilton, who had just arrived in England and had witnessed the events leading up to the group's dissolution. Hamilton also speaks of the tense waiting on April 15, but there is no mention of Horsch.

A closer analysis of Waldner's account, however, reveals that it compresses all the events he remembered into a two-day span. According to him, the departure ("flight") of the community also occurred on the evening of April 15. But this conflicts with other accounts, including Hofer's far more detailed journal entries, which make clear that the members departed during the early evening hours of the following day, April 16, 1937.³⁸ It thus seems more likely that Horsch arrived on April 16 and missed the first two crucial days of the occupation and dissolution. This would explain why none of the accounts recorded close in time to these events mention Horsch's presence. The two accounts that do mention Horsch are memoirs recorded decades after the events that are of doubtful historical value. One is by Hans Meier, who in telling of Horsch's visit does not claim to have personally witnessed it, which indeed would have been impossible, since Meier was under arrest from the morning of April 15, 1937 on.³⁹ The other is a 1996 oral history transcript from Kathleen Hamilton, another Bruderhof member; her informal telling seems to have been influenced by Meier's many reports.⁴⁰

According to the early eyewitness accounts, when Horsch arrived he immediately encountered the police, who interrogated him.⁴¹ This seems to confirm Waldner's statement that Horsch had not been permitted to enter the house because the police had forbidden it. This would have been only natural: during an ongoing police operation, third parties are generally kept away from the scene; and, in any case, the Gestapo already had to deal with enough complications thanks to the unexpected presence of the Hutterite elders.⁴² According to a later account by the Dutch

38. Among others, Hildegard Friedrich's diary clearly states that they left the Rhön on April 16.—BHA Coll. 0094.

39. Meier, *Solange das Licht brennt*, 64. Hans Meier compiled his account in 1978 in response to Horsch's publications and revised it in 1990; his source must be either an unidentified eyewitness or Horsch's account.

40. It is unclear whether Kathleen Hamilton/Hasenberg actually encountered Horsch. His presence is only mentioned in memoirs recorded fifty-nine years later: "We were glad to see him. There was a sinister feel in the air and just the sight of a friendly face meant a lot. But we were a little bit previous. When asked by the officials, he said he was NOT a Hutterian. This was perfectly true, but he obviously was trying to disassociate himself from us."—Hasenberg, "Telling her Memories of the Dissolution," Dec. 6, 1996 (BHA Coll. 0115). Hamilton/Hasenberg's account dating from April 1937, on the other hand, makes no mention of Horsch.—Letter from Gertrud Arnold to Hans Hermann Arnold, dated April 22-23, 1937, BHA Coll. 0190.

41. According to Meier's account, Horsch greeted the police with the Hitler salute.—Meier, *Solange das Licht brennt*, 64.

42. The letter from Gertrud Arnold to Hans Hermann Arnold, dated April 22-23, 1937, reports of the two Hutterite elders: "They were ordered to go away immediately, but they paid this absolutely no heed and remained." This confirms the principle that strangers were generally not tolerated during police operations. The two Hutterites could ignore the

Mennonite leader Simon H. N. Gorter, based on statements made by Bruderhof member Adolf Braun, Horsch was in fact "escorted from the property by the police."⁴³ If this was the case and if Horsch's presence at the Rhön Bruderhof was limited to a short time on April 16, it might explain why his arrival goes unmentioned by Hofer in his lengthy report on that day's events.⁴⁴

While Horsch's movements on April 16 remain somewhat murky, what is abundantly clear is the abrupt negative shift in his attitude toward the community from that day forward. This sudden change puzzled even contemporary observers. There appeared a new, far less benevolent Michael Horsch. Gone was the friend, helper, and sympathetic interlocutor who had visited the community in January 1937. Now a hostile witness for the prosecution took his place, one who identified closely with the positions of the National Socialist authorities.

The first time after the dissolution that Horsch's name reappears in the extant sources is April 19 or 20.⁴⁵ Hofer notes there that he met with Horsch on the evening of April 20 to inspect the Bruderhof and discuss the situation. Waldner also described their encounter:

Friend Horsch told us: The brotherhood does not have a good reputation with the mayor. The hay and oats have been ruined by

measure due to their foreign citizenship, especially since the common membership in the "Hutterite Church" could not be overlooked.—BHA Coll. 0190.

43. Report of S. H. N. Gorter in *Zondagsbode*, July 18, 1937, in Horsch, *Die Auflösung des Eingetragenen Vereins "Neuwerk Bruderhof,"* 11-14, here, 12. In his later publications, Horsch claimed to have been a fully informed eyewitness, and he challenged Gorter's account by arguing that he had not been allowed to remain at the farm because the "gentlemen from the Landrat's office" had returned to Fulda. When these "gentlemen from Fulda" had returned, he claimed, he had been able to enter the Bruderhof "unrestricted."—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 23. This is itself a strange and unbelievable story. In the middle of a police action, after the three leaders of the community had already been arrested and investigations were ongoing, could an outsider truly have been allowed free access? Why should these "gentlemen from Fulda" trust an outside Mennonite elder, and for that matter why are we to believe that local officials had any influence with the Gestapo? And why didn't anyone remember this "unrestricted" visitor later?

44. In Hofer's letter to Joseph Kleinsasser, dated May 2, 1937, Hofer describes these three dramatic days, but there is no mention of an encounter with Horsch. It seems highly probable that Hofer would have mentioned Horsch in his letter to America if he had in fact met him.—BHA Coll. 0484_01.

45. It is entirely unclear where Horsch had been in the intervening days, or why he was still in the area; his home in Ingolstadt was around 300 kilometers from Fulda. Did he return to the Rhön or to Fulda on April 19, or had he been staying nearby since April 16? As a full-time farmer, he would have had ample reason to get home as soon as possible after April 16 and to remain there. After all, according to the Mennonite bulletin from April 15, 1937, he and his wife were slated to lead a Bible study course for women and girls in Hellmannsberg from May 3-8, 1937. Given the demands of his farm, he would have had plenty of work to do in advance of this weeklong absence.

rain. The potatoes were not harvested on time; they froze. The neighbors all want a piece [of the land] and other things, too [*Die Nachbarn haben wollen für's Theil heraus thun u etliche Dinge mehr*]. He also said: Some [Bruderhof members] work and some do not, and [there] are also many who cannot work and have never learned to work.⁴⁶

These remarks of Michael Horsch to Waldner seem to be based on the report of an unannounced agricultural inspection of the Rhön Bruderhof the previous year ordered by the *Oberpräsident* (chief administrator) of the province of Hessen-Nassau. Waldner's quotation of Horsch ("the hay and oats have been ruined by rain. The potatoes were not harvested on time; they froze") matches almost word for word the language of that report—an indication that this is not Horsch's own independent observation.⁴⁷ The goal of the surprise agricultural inspection, carried out on the unusually late date of November 27, 1936, had been to create further leverage for expropriating the community's farm.⁴⁸ For the Bruderhof, the timing had been most unfortunate. Ever since the departure of the draft-eligible men for Liechtenstein, the farm had lacked enough workers to operate properly. In addition, there had been a spell of bad weather, not uncommon at that high elevation.⁴⁹ Even so, when the two Hutterite elders—themselves experienced farmers—visited the Rhön Bruderhof less than five months after the agricultural inspection, they had not observed anything to justify the report's negative evaluation. On the contrary, Waldner had written: "On April 10, [we] walked around the farm; it was quite a large, well-developed farm, a pity to lose and leave it;

46. Hofer, *Reise nach Europa*, 1937, 44.

47. Report of the inspection by the Land Consolidation Office and the local administration for Fulda, dated Dec. 2, 1936.—HStAM 154/14 Nr. 60, pag. 18-23; also extant in BArch 5101/23410, pag. 00213-219.

48. This motivation is quite evident in a memorandum from the *Oberpräsident*, which states that this new report supersedes a far more favorable 1934 evaluation. The 1934 report had formed the basis for a May 25, 1934, decree by the Prussian minister of agriculture declaring that "the brotherhood is not to be restricted in their rights."—Letter of the *Oberpräsident* of Hesse-Nassau to the *Reichsminister* for Ecclesiastical Matters, dated Dec. 14, 1936; BArch 5101/23410, pag. 00198-00199. 00198. It seems, then, that the authorities were actively looking for ways to justify the dissolution of the community. By contrast, it's hardly plausible to argue that (some of) the authorities viewed the dissolution as necessary for "expanding agricultural productivity," as Lichti claims in "German Mennonites," 108. None of the surviving official texts give support to such an argument. Neither does the subsequent history of the Rhön Bruderhof farm following the community's dissolution and expulsion: the farm was never made more productive than it had been when operated by the community.

49. The dramatic situation caused by the bad weather is also described in contemporary letters; see, for example the letter from Kathleen Hamilton to her mother, dated Oct. 21, 1936.—BHA Coll. 0115.

the livestock, hogs, and horses were of the best quality."⁵⁰ The farm's poor condition in November 1936, then, reflected the community's involuntarily depleted workforce as well as bad luck with the weather, not, as Horsch was now claiming, the members' laziness.⁵¹

Why Michael Horsch supported such accusations and indeed actively disseminated them, first to the Hutterites and later in his publications, remains a mystery. Just months earlier, in a January 20, 1937, letter to his brother, the same Michael Horsch had observed: "The agricultural yield, as it is recorded in the books, cannot be increased under the present circumstances, not even by diligent German farmers,"⁵² a judgment that is incompatible with his later accusations of laziness or incompetence.

50. Waldner, *Reise Bericht*, 31. In another instance, he described the number of cattle and how they were held: "They also had seventeen good milk cows. An Englishman took care of them; he got up every morning at five and groomed and washed them. They were fine [animals] and well cared for. The worldly men [i.e., the secular authorities] also praised them. They also had three teams of good horses with harnesses and boxes, hay and feed [which] was all stolen from them. Exceptionally well-bred pigs. Grain feed, hay, everything you can think of, all stolen."—*Ibid.*, 46.

51. Interestingly, the accusation of Bruderhof laziness also appears in several official documents from the year 1936. They speak of an impression of neglect, compare the farm to a "Russian collective enterprise," and list laziness as essential characteristic of the members.—Letter of Gestapo in Berlin to the Minister of the Interior, June 16, 1936.—BArch 5101/23410, pag. 00131-00139, here 00137. During the occupation of the farm on April 14, 1937, according to Keiderling's accounts, a police commissioner "chewed [them] out" about their economic operations and work ethic. "But we will teach you to work now. You don't even know anymore what it means to work. You have let the farm become a complete shambles. Starting tomorrow the *Arbeitsdienst* [i.e., 'labor service'—beginning in 1936, young men were required to provide compulsory labor for six months before beginning their military service] will take over the farm and bring it back into shape."—Karl Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." By contrast, Hofer, who was certainly more experienced in practical matters than any police commissioner, judged the community's work ethic favorably: "They seem to all be very hardworking people."—Letter from David Hofer to his home Hutterite community, Feb. 28, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0484_01. While there is certainly room for criticism of the Bruderhof's leadership in the years 1933 to 1937, accusations of inefficiency and laziness seem completely unfounded; in the many extant memoirs, letters, and reports there is simply no indication that this was the case. On the contrary, one is rather inclined to question whether the members' heavy workload was sustainable, as Waldner apparently did: "Michael-Vetter [i.e., Waldner] told us that God does not demand of us to work so much as we do."—Letter from Hans Zumpe to David Hofer, Oct. 10, 1937, included in Hofer, *Reise nach Europa*, 1937, 199.

52. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, dated Jan. 20, 1937. This passage of the letter is confirmed by Boller, who remembered that Michael Horsch had, "after inquiring for several hours about our agricultural methods and comparing these with his own, declared that he could not improve on our yields."—Boller, "Bericht über die Gefängniszeit." It is therefore surprising to read in Horsch's later publication that his first impression had been that "here the farmer and the businessman were missing."—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 22. There is a clear contradiction between the contents of the letter from January and the later publication.

Hofer, the Hutterite elder, is unlikely to have read Horsch's January 20 letter with its precise description of the agricultural and financial situation. Yet even without knowing this background, he regarded Horsch's behavior in April 1937 as suspect: "Friend Horsch slandered the community in various ways, telling the officials in Fulda about neglected fieldwork, eating and drinking, and other made-up lies."⁵³

Even apart from whether or not Horsch's criticisms had a basis in reality, it must be asked: As a friend of the community, why did he now believe accusations made by dubious third parties more than he believed either his own brothers in the faith or his own earlier impressions? Second, why did he choose to actively publicize these accusations? Hella Römer, the bookkeeper whom the Gestapo had ordered to stay in Germany, soon noticed Horsch's new tone. Horsch, she reported, had

sadly said some things, including in the presence of the agricultural administrator and Mr. Hohmann, that were unpleasant for me, although we had previously outlined our position clearly for him. David-Vetter [Hofer] was especially supportive, and the difference between them was palpable, as even Mr. Hohmann later mentioned to me.⁵⁴

All this raises a series of questions that have not yet been fully resolved. Why would a friend act so openly against his friends? Instead of becoming an advocate for the authorities, why didn't Horsch simply remain silent?

From Römer's letter, it seems that Horsch's central aim in those turbulent days was to ensure that outstanding debts were paid. For despite the members' manifold efforts to secure a financial basis, the community had only been able to build up the Rhön Bruderhof since 1926 by incurring large debts. Eberhard Arnold had openly acknowledged this fact. Indeed, in a 1929 article describing the "start of an Anabaptist

53. Hofer, *Reise nach Europa*, 1937, 44. It is possible that some other document is the basis here in addition to the inspection report. On March 5, 1937, the Gestapo wrote to the minister for church matters asking him to authorize the "immediate dissolution . . . and confiscation of all property" for "police reasons." As evidence of "conditions that can no longer be tolerated on either social or hygienic grounds" they cited a letter they had intercepted, written by a woman who had left the Bruderhof after living there as a member for over a year. The letter is dated Dec. 28, 1936, addressed to the entire community of the Bruderhof, and signed by Wilhelmine Stahlmann.—BArch R 5101/23410, pag. 00223-00229. In this letter, there are, in fact, complaints concerning "food and drink." The letter writer, apparently psychologically unstable, complains bitterly about how poorly she had been given to eat compared to the "leaders" (*Führern*) of the community, especially about how she had never gotten chocolate!

54. Letter from Hella Römer to "Geschwistriget" [sisters and brothers], April 21, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0118.

Bruderhof in Germany," Arnold wrote that "the weakest point of this Bruderhof is its debt."⁵⁵

Horsch's insistence on debt repayment is yet another example of how much his new perspective overlapped with that of the authorities—that is, of the Gestapo and the office of the district administrator (*Landrat*). Debt repayment was the very point over which the authorities were putting pressure on the imprisoned Bruderhof leaders. As Keiderling recalled, during Meier's first round of interrogation by a certain Inspector Kaslowski, Meier was pressured into declaring himself ready to ensure "that all creditors will be paid their due."⁵⁶

Against this background, Horsch seems to have conceived the idea that the North American Hutterites should assume responsibility for these debts and pay them back gradually over the course of ten to twenty years. This suggestion astonished Römer, because "he did not speak at all of the Mennonite churches."⁵⁷ From the Hutterite side, Hofer rejected Horsch's proposal emphatically. From the start, Hofer's opinion was that there was neither a practical nor a moral basis for the authorities to demand that the Bruderhof repay its debts after they had plundered⁵⁸ and dispossessed the community and expelled it from its property.⁵⁹

55. Arnold, Eberhard, "Neuentstehung eines alttäuferischen Bruderhofes," *Mennonitische Blätter* 4 (1929), 36. The Rhön Bruderhof was hardly the only agricultural operation that struggled with debts in those years. Indebtedness was one of the major challenges facing farmers in the late phase of the Weimar Republic, especially in areas like the Rhön Mountains where the climate was unfavorable.—Cf. Weichlein, *Die Landkreise Fulda, Gersfeld und Hünfeld in der Weimarer Republik*, 187. Weichlein describes the agricultural situation in the 1920s: "In the administrative district of Kassel only 9.2 percent of farmers were eligible to pay income tax. The average income was far below that of the rest of the country at 643 Reichmark. In the Fulda district [...] not even this low value was reached."

56. Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." Here again it is clear that Lichti has too naïvely accepted Michael Horsch's claims. The Gestapo, however, quickly realized that "the need to compensate the Rhön Bruderhof's creditors" would remain after a forced auction if they were not able to force the community that had been denied its property to pay off these debts themselves.—Lichti, "German Mennonites," 89.

57. Letter from Hella Römer to "Geschwistriget" [sisters and brothers], dated April 21, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0118.

58. Based upon the accounts in Keiderling's memoirs and the journals kept by Waldner and Hofer, the term "plunder" seems more than relevant. Horsch wrote that the accusation of plundering was "not worth wasting even one word on."—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 25. But for someone who was not himself an eyewitness, this is a bit too weak to justify disregarding the accounts of those who were actually there. Compare the description of the lawyer Eisenberg, according to which "the Gestapo seized all of the furniture from the Rhönbruderhof and used it for their own purposes."—O. Eisenberg, "Der rechtliche Vorwand der Auflösung des Rhönbruderhofes im Frühjahr 1937," *Der Pflug* 4, nr. 2 (1957), 7-9.

59. See the letter from David Hofer to Hans Zumpe of May 8, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0484_01. There he writes: "I was of the opinion from the very beginning that the community of the Rhön Bruderhof was no longer obligated to send money to their creditors because they had

In addition to his efforts to get money from the Hutterite elders, Horsch, like the authorities, turned his attention to the three brothers incarcerated in Fulda. According to a letter from Römer, the three leaders were being held in so-called "protective custody" until the end of April 1937 because the Gestapo needed time to present the relevant material to the district attorney for formal charges.⁶⁰ In Fulda, access to prisoners in protective custody—who were jailed solely on the basis of a police order, outside of the formal justice system and with no legal warrant from a judge—seems to have been especially restrictive: they were only allowed to receive letters or visitors with the permission of the *Landrat's* office.⁶¹ It

seized all their property and taken their worldly possessions." For evaluating the question of the debts it is significant to consider the value of the property seized and the plundered possessions that had been left behind. There is an inventory of the livestock of the Rhön Bruderhof dated March 16, 1937, which had been compiled during a tour of the property by the Resettlement Society [*Reichsumsiedlungsgesellschaft*]. In the compensation proceedings after the war, Hans Meier, who was responsible for the community's finances when it was dissolved, listed the value of the livestock at 9,000 Reichsmark. There is also an extant list of the inanimate property, e.g. machines used within the household, agriculture, and workshops, as well as furniture and other household articles. Here Meier calculated circa 16,000 Reichsmark. In addition, Meier listed the inventory of the "Swiss families of Hans Meier and Hans Boller" (including, among other things, an astronomical telescope, violin, and viola) and estimated this total value at 11,000 Reichsmark.—HStAM 270/2129. Meier's list is indirectly confirmed by Waldner's notes: "In the attic they have many precious, valuable objects which some of them have brought from their homes. In a similar fashion everything has been left in the blacksmith's shop and workshops, everything a blacksmith needs, a cartwright's tools, a carpenter's bench. It was a theft of their property. . . . As the dear Savior prophesied: 'They will turn you out of your houses.' Also their machines—the combine, engine, binder, mower, saw, plow, harrow, hay baler, wagon, sled, sower, soil cutter, beekeeper's implements and what goes along with it. It was all stolen from them."—Waldner, *Reise Bericht*, 46f. Horsch, however, who would have seen all these things when he visited the community in January, later claimed: "Everything together which was left behind in the houses as the property of the association was worth only a little and was negligible in the calculation of the Bruderhof's total value."—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 24.

60. After taking the three brothers into custody, the Gestapo attempted to procure evidence sufficient for a legal prosecution and thus to keep them in detention pending their trial. They "arranged for a principal creditor to sign a statement according to which he felt defrauded by an open debt owed him following a purchase. At first he refused, but finally signed under pressure from the Gestapo. On account of this accusation of deceitful practices, the leaders were subsequently summoned before the court in Fulda, which issued an arrest warrant."—Eisenberg, "Der rechtliche Vorwand," 8.

61. See the letter from Hella Römer to Hans Zumpe, May 3, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0118: "Since Friday our three brothers are no longer in protective custody [*Schutzhaft*] but rather in pre-trial detention [*Untersuchungshaft*]. Therefore, letters and visitors no longer go through the *Landrat's* office but rather direct." The letter from Hella Römer, dated April 21, 1937, accordingly states that Horsch "had to get permission from the *Landrat's* office" to visit the imprisoned leaders. For a detailed explanation of the distinction between "protective custody" and "pre-trial detention," see the overview in Lothar Gruchmann, *Justiz im Dritten Reich 1933-1940: Anpassung und Unterwerfung in der Ära Gürtner* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), 535ff.; Gruchmann calls protective custody the "Gestapo's fiercest weapon."—Ibid, 544.

is thus all the more unusual that Horsch was granted permission to visit them on April 22, 1937.⁶²

Both Boller and Keiderling reported on Horsch's visit. Keiderling's account is detailed and revealing. According to his report, Waldner had been misinformed—presumably by Horsch himself—about the three prisoners' being "happy and in good spirits," for any pleasure the three brothers may have felt over the visit of their friend Horsch soon dissipated:

Downstairs, in the inspector's office, we were greeted by our friend Horsch from Ingolstadt in Bavaria and the junior jurist Hohmann, who had been appointed by the Secret State Police [Gestapo] to assume the administration of the Rhön Bruderhof on behalf of the state until the planned forced auction could be held.⁶³

It is noteworthy that on the same day that the Hutterite elders were denied permission to visit their fellow church members, permission was granted to Horsch as an outsider who had visited the community just once before. Not only that, but this outsider made his visit in the company of the official administrator of the Bruderhof's confiscated farm, apparently without further supervision and without the usual time limit.⁶⁴ "We were quite happy," Keiderling reported, "to see Michael Horsch, for we remembered well how well we had gotten along when he visited us for three days in January." Their happiness, however, was short-lived:

But we were disappointed by the first words [he uttered]. He said . . . that we had overestimated the value of the farm and would never recover as much money as we had entered into our account books.⁶⁵

62. See Waldner's letter to the "dear sisters and brothers" [*Liebe Geschwistriget*], April 23, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0484_01. There he writes: "Yesterday we were in Fulda . . . We did not see the brothers. The district officials did not allow it because we had visited them two days ago. But Horsch did visit them and found them to be happy and in good spirits."

63. Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung des Rhönbruderhofes." This portion of his report is headed with its own subtitle "Michel Horsch, a Mennonite, visits us in prison." All the quotations cited in the following come from this report.

64. According to Römer, there was generally a strictly enforced short time limit for such visits. See the letter from Hella Römer to Hans Zumppe, dated May 3, 1937, which reads: "can only talk to them for a brief period, because the supervising official did not have much time." In a postcard from April 23, 1937, Römer reports that the conversation between the incarcerated leaders and Horsch on the previous day had lasted an hour; this information is also included on a note accompanying that letter, underlined twice. Apparently, Römer had been impressed that the visit was allowed in such a manner.—BHA Coll.0118.

65. Notice the reference to the Rhön Bruderhof's "account books." These books, to the extent that they had not been finished by the bookkeeper, had certainly been seized and taken into the possession of the district attorney who was to examine the evidence for formal charges. This is not the only indication that Horsch had access to official documents. There

The incarcerated leaders were shocked by their friend's opening statement, especially considering their fond memories of his visit in January:

When we drew his attention to the fact that during his visit in January we had spent hours speaking with him about and calculating the worth and potential yields of our fields and meadows and the worth of our livestock and buildings, he simply replied that we had given him the wrong numbers and had misled him. We became quite upset over this [allegation], and the ensuing discussion was heated.

Keiderling's reaction was understandable. In Horsch's January 20, 1937, letter to his brother John, he had spoken of the farm's "agricultural yield as reported in the accounts." These words suggest that Horsch had reviewed the community's account books in January 1937 and thus that his earlier positive report had been based on hard figures, not mere hearsay. Now, however, Horsch took an entirely different stance:

He also said that he wouldn't even give 30,000 marks for our farm; that would still be much too much. Indeed, he wouldn't consider moving here in the first place because the area is so desolate.⁶⁶ The Mennonites would never work such poor soil. In response to our argument that the land has become much better and yields have improved since we began cultivating it, and that we had increased the area we work through reforestation and the planting of orchards, and that the German agricultural minister himself had recognized

are also clear indications of this in the texts that Horsch later published. In his "Feststellungen," for example, he reported that the community had mortgages worth 76,009.09 Reichsmark.—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 16. The precision down to the cent is surprising. The report of the financial auditor in April 1937 uses rounded sums.—HHStAW Abt. 519/3 No. 16656 53. A close examination, however, finds a further calculation in this document. On the left side of the page, in minuscule numbers, presumably written with a fountain pen, the amounts are tallied. This results in the exact sum that Horsch reports, down to the cent. It seems that he had apparently added two additional entries that were not direct mortgages (the right of residence and use and obligations to Emil Möller) and had thus arrived at the sum named. In this instance, it seems implausible that this was a coincidence. The only logical conclusion is that Horsch had access to the official governmental reports, some of which had been prepared at the explicit direction of the Gestapo.

66. Keiderling reported once again in impressive detail, for in Horsch's later publication it is this very same, rather out-of-place accusation that the "fundamental mistake was the purchase [of this farm] at such an unfavorable elevation."—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 22. Can a farmer really blame others for such a purchase, knowing that more favorable locations are hard to come by and expensive? Is it really conceivable that a farmer fortunate enough to have a better location should speak so pejoratively about upland farmers? Which voice do we hear in the text of Michael Horsch? In the course of the so-called "Dr. Hellmuth Plan" for the development of the Rhön, National Socialist authorities did discuss the issue of resettling residents of unfavorable elevations. Should such statements from Horsch thus be read as a sign of his conforming once again to the stance of the National Socialist authorities?

our work at the farm as a valuable agricultural activity, he answered: We [Bruderhof] aren't needed to provide for the German people [Volk], they [the Mennonites] are doing that. The young junior jurist, perhaps thirty-five years old, believed Horsch, of course, and told us that we should listen to the old man, he is an experienced farmer who knows more about farming than we do.

This passage suggests a surprising level of aggression toward the community. The question arises: Was Horsch acting as he did as the result of pressure from a third party?

It is interesting to note that he spoke of 30,000 Reichsmark—the same sum that Meier recounts as having been named by Inspector Kaslowski during the first round of interrogations. Again, it seems that Horsch not only had access to the police files but also accepted these at face value.

From the very first interrogation by Inspector Kaslowski, another issue came to the fore, according to Keiderling, who recalled being asked: "Why did [Bruderhof European leader] Hans Zumpe go away last week? He was the smartest of you all. He had made himself scarce just in time."⁶⁷ On this point too, Michael Horsch was of one mind with the interrogators,⁶⁸ telling the imprisoned brothers:

"Really, Hans Zumpe should be here instead of you," he said angrily. And Hohmann said, too, that we should ask Hans Zumpe to come, so that we might be able to return to our wives and children, and the authorities would then have to deal with only one man. This, too, made us furious, and we rejected it most vehemently.

The Gestapo's interest in arresting Zumpe made sense. During the April 14, 1937, raid of the Bruderhof, several things had gone wrong: two international witnesses (the Hutterite elders) were unexpectedly present, while the overall leader of the European Bruderhof communities, Zumpe, was absent. As a result, the Gestapo had only been able to arrest the community's local leadership. Unfortunately for the authorities, in so doing they had ended up arresting two Swiss citizens, Meier and Boller—an outcome that raised the specter of unwanted international attention. For the Gestapo, this tricky situation would have been solved if Zumpe were to be arrested and if the three prisoners could be persuaded to make

67. Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung."

68. Horsch and Hofer also had a disagreement about Zumpe. Hofer wrote: "I didn't get along very well with Michael Horsch, who very much urged that you, dear Hans-Vetter [Hans Zumpe], should appear in Fulda before these authorities, to which I, however, could not agree, because they had already told me that it's really about you and if they had you, they would have the right man, for they think that these three are not guilty."—Letter from David Hofer to Hans Zumpe from May 8, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0484_01.

an admission of guilt. Such an admission, in fact, seems to have been Horsch's objective when he visited them on April 22, 1937, according to the later reports of Meier⁶⁹ and Keiderling:

Michael Horsch said, too, that we must pay back all the money that we owe. This was not ransom for us; we were still to be tried before the court on charges of fraud.

Again, Horsch was here clearly adopting the stance of the Gestapo and the office of the *Landrat* (district administrator).⁷⁰ Yet Horsch's view of the legal situation was not shared by everyone, including the district attorney responsible for prosecuting the case that the Gestapo had initiated. The district attorney, having examined the accusations of fraud and of continuing financial obligation, would later decide to drop the charges. Apparently he was less willing to believe the Gestapo's case than Michael Horsch was.

Horsch's April 22, 1937, conversation with the three brothers in the jail ended bitterly. In addition to rebuking the prisoners for their financial dealings, Horsch offered them a rehearsal of local gossip:

Michael Horsch told us a number of things that he had heard from our neighbors and which he believed. There were a number of defamations, especially of Eberhard [Arnold], that I don't want to put in writing.⁷¹ We protested, but it was useless, even though we

69. Meier, *Solange das Licht brennt*, 64: "visited us . . . to convince us that we . . . had manipulated our accounts with criminal intent."

70. Horsch also did not protest when the junior jurist Hohmann accused the stunned prisoners of using the remainder of the money that Cotswold had sent for the costs of the community's emigration to buy new seed and artificial fertilizer. According to Hohmann, who grilled the prisoners at length, this was in violation of a supposed agreement to use these funds to satisfy their creditors. Hohmann's line of attack confirmed Hofer's fears: he had argued against payments from the Cotswold Bruderhof because of the danger that the German authorities would confiscate these funds for their own purposes.—Letter from David Hofer to Hans Zumpe, dated May 8, 1937 (BHA Coll. 0484_01).

71. Later in 1937 Michael Horsch would go on to target Hans Zumpe as well, spreading serious allegations (probably of a moral nature) against him, including in a report to the board of directors of the association of German Mennonite churches, the *Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden* (VDM). On the basis of this report, the VDM official Emil Händiges penned an open letter to the Dutch Mennonite magazine *Zondagsbode* (June 27, 1937) claiming evidence of "serious reservations about the leader of the group . . . about which you will likely receive further information."—Reproduced in Horsch, *Die Auflösung*, 10-11. These accusations sparked vehement protests, not only from the Bruderhof but also from the Dutch side. As Benjamin Unruh reported in a July 18, 1937, letter about the discussions with the Dutch Mennonites, Horsch "will now tell everything he has been told about Zumpe. Perhaps it is for the best if it is all spoken out."—*Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Christian Neff*, Mappe 163. Michael Horsch was, however, not forthcoming. "Everything should be done to move Brother Horsch to take charge and to talk over the entire matter openly and clearly. . . . I think it is essential, dear

reminded him of the history of the Anabaptists, as it has always been that all those are the victims of such slander who are persecuted by the government. But he did not believe us but rather the slanderers (and vicious tongues). Our discussion was quite heated, and the official was so mad that his face turned quite red. When we parted, we did not shake Michael Horsch's hand, for even as he opened the door to go, he was angrily speaking against us and said that "he wanted to have nothing to do with us; we deserved what we got, the government had to take action against us." The whole discussion had lasted about an hour.

Keiderling's report, from which this description is taken, was based on his prison diary.⁷² Reading his account of Horsch's visit from today's perspective, it is noticeable how the unusual and preferential treatment that Horsch received from the authorities, including his unrestricted access to the prisoners, corresponds quite clearly to the positions he took in his discussion with them. The positions Horsch took, in fact, seem to have been in full alignment with the interests and objectives of the Gestapo.

FROM HOSTILE WITNESS TO HISTORICAL EYEWITNESS

Horsch's appearance in the jail in Fulda on April 22, 1937, alongside the junior jurist Hohmann seems to be the end of his direct involvement in the dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof. Neither the notes kept by Waldner and Hofer nor Keiderling's memoirs mention further encounters with him.

Brother Händiges, that you ask Brother Horsch for such a text."—Letter from Abraham Braun to Händiges and Crous, Sept. 27, 1937.—Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Christian Neff, Mappe 163. It seems that Horsch simply ignored Händiges's request to refrain from printing the VDM's open letter in his "Feststellungen" booklet unless his allegations could be "clarified"; he proceeded to include the text without explanation or commentary. The letter from Emil Händiges to Michael Horsch, dated Nov. 16, 1937, also refers to the meeting in Berlin and excerpts of letters to the Cotswold Bruderhof.—Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Christian Neff, Mappe 163. Interestingly, Horsch's booklet concludes with commentary on Hans Zumpe's role, quoting from a memorandum to the Kassel tax office which (says Horsch) is located in that office's "Files on the Rhön Bruderhof," to the effect that among the "Hutterites in Canada" Zumpe would never have been permitted to serve as the community's leader.—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 32. This vague and oddly sourced accusation is most peculiar, forcing one to ask whether these words and thoughts can really be those of a Mennonite elder.

72. "If everything I report here did not happen in exactly this order or literally these very words, I have written everything based on the journal I kept in prison, which I wrote at the time on the same day or the next day under April 22, and which I then expanded based on my later memories."—Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." Keiderling's memories concur with the various accounts of Meier and with Boller's report.

Nevertheless, Horsch was hardly finished with the topic "Bruderhof." After April 22 he transferred his activity to a new sphere: that of author, commentator, and advisor to the German Mennonite community. From being a hostile witness, he now adopted the role of historical eyewitness.

The first step he took, on May 5, 1937, was to write a letter to his brother John Horsch in the United States. It was John, of course, who had first asked him to visit the European Bruderhofs in autumn 1936 to report on his impressions. Understandably, Michael now felt duty-bound to summarize the latest developments. His letter began matter-of-factly:

I must inform you today that the Rhön Bruderhof has been dissolved and the property seized by the government, but the debts are at least twice as much as the estimate of the market value of the Bruderhof and everything that belongs to it.⁷³

In contrast to Horsch's earlier letter from January 25, 1937, there was no expression here of religious sentiment or, for that matter, of regret.⁷⁴ Instead, Horsch stressed that "the authorities have no objections to the religious position of the Bruderhof community." Indeed, the "refusal to perform military service . . . has thus far not led to any reprisals"—statements hard to square with the constant harassment that the Bruderhof had experienced ever since 1933.⁷⁵

In his letter, Horsch seems concerned that readers in the United States might interpret the actions of the German authorities as a type of religious persecution. As a result, the letter expressly stressed that the dissolution was undertaken by the authorities with the sole purpose of "protecting the creditors . . . from further losses and to ensure the proper cultivation of the fields." Again, the statement is absurd: there was no way that creditors could be protected from losses at the planned forced auction, and proper cultivation of the fields was precisely what the community had been engaged in up until when the property was seized.⁷⁶ The letter closed

73. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, dated May 5, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 8/2.

74. In the letter from May 5, 1937, there is no indication of what the expelled community members told Zumpe regarding Michael Horsch's reaction: "Your dear brother was deeply moved by the sad end of our Rhön Bruderhof."—Letter from Hans Zumpe to John Horsch, April 23, 1937; AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

75. For a detailed study of the concerted campaign of political and economic harassment by the German authorities against the Bruderhof, see Thomas Nauerth, *Zeugnis, Liebe und Widerstand. Der Rhönbruderhof 1933-1937* (forthcoming).

76. Compare Keiderling's report: "We, however, continued caring for our fields, sowed oats and barley, spread manure, and plowed the potato fields, turned the soil for the cold frame, and planted salad, cress, radishes, and spinach, and everything else that was necessary, and also repaired the paths and distributed the turned soil in the garden beds. For even if we are forced to give up the farm, we want to leave it in good order and in such a

with a request to send this report "to all the Mennonite newspapers and periodicals," in order to prevent misinformation over the dissolution. Horsch closed his letter with the puzzling sentence, "I assume that the Mennonites in America are interested in the Bruderhof in Germany."

Then something unusual happened. Soon after posting his letter Michael Horsch seems to have sent his brother in the United States a telegram asking him to "wait for further news." In a second letter, dated May 20, 1937, Michael Horsch then sought to explain:

I sent the telegram because I was uneasy about having written that you should publish the news in the American periodicals and give my name [as a contact] for more detailed information. I did this to avoid misinformation. But I cannot judge whether this would be good in America—whether Mennonites are even interested in this.⁷⁷

John Horsch does not seem to have taken exception either to the telegram or to his brother's convoluted explanation of it. But today's reader might read these missives more critically, for example by asking: Was Horsch really the sole actor here? Is it possible that he was put under pressure to write the first letter and then tried to neutralize it with the telegram, only to find himself forced to write the second letter? It seems possible, too, that Horsch was attempting to convey a message between the lines. Why else, after urging his brother John to publish the account, would Horsch repeat the odd statement he had already made in his first letter: "But I cannot judge whether [American] Mennonites are even interested in this"? It was the American Mennonites, after all, who had sent him to the Bruderhof in the first place—presumably he could take their interest for granted. Was he attempting to raise his brother's suspicion as to the integrity of the report?

state as would befit the season."—Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." Keiderling's description seems credible in part because Waldner reported on this work, too. "First they told the brethren to unharness the oxen and bring them into the barn; the brethren had used the oxen to take manure to the orchard. The second command: unharness the horses and put them in their stalls. The brethren had sowed."—Waldner, *Reise Bericht*, 36. It is even more credible because it was precisely this question—of how, "when they withdraw from the Rhön Bruderhof, everything can be disposed of in a proper and advantageous way" (as Michael Horsch related in his letter to his brother of Jan. 25, 1937)—that Horsch had discussed with the community members in January, as evidenced in an interesting passage in the letter Michael Horsch sent to his brother John shortly thereafter: "The American help should enable the Bruderhof to once again properly cultivate their fields so that, with God's blessing, a harvest can be expected. If the Bruderhof is then left before the harvest, everything can be sold most favorably, and the brethren cannot be accused of having neglected the fields."—Ibid. Apparently the Bruderhof community was following exactly this course in April 1937.

77. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, May 20, 1937.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 8/2.

Such questions illustrate the challenge of understanding texts produced in an era of dictatorship and censorship. The same challenge surfaces repeatedly in respect to publications appearing under Michael Horsch's name in the months that followed.⁷⁸ These publications were sparked by the international reaction to the expulsion of the Bruderhof members on April 16, 1937, and the resulting internal wrangling within the German Mennonite association (VDM).⁷⁹

The first of Horsch's publications was an article in the *Gemeindeblatt der Mennoniten* whose account of the events is similar to that given in his letters to his brother.⁸⁰ Referring to articles in the *Basler Zeitung* and in *Het Volk* reporting that Mennonites had been expelled from Germany,⁸¹ Horsch responded forcibly using spaced text for emphasis: "Not only were no Mennonites deported from Germany, but also no 'members of the Bruderhof' or 'Hutterite Brethren' were deported either." To back up this dubious claim, Horsch appealed skillfully to his special status as an eyewitness with knowledge of "both the economic and spiritual life of the

78. The historical reconstruction and depiction of these events can only be advanced by expert linguistic analysis of these texts. On the topic of so-called forensic linguistics, see the overviews in John Olsson, *Forensic Linguistics*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Eilika Fobbe, *Forensische Linguistik: Eine Einführung* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2011); and Christa Dern, *Autorenerkennung: Theorie und Praxis der linguistischen Tatschreibenanalyse* (Stuttgart: Richard Boorberg, 2009).

79. In his discussions with the VDM, Horsch seems to have named the American Mennonites as the source of the request for him to research the facts about the Bruderhof's dissolution. See, for example, the letter from Händiges to Horsch, dated Nov. 16, 1937, in which Horsch writes that he had been "asked for information by the Mennonite circles in America." In his second publication in 1937, by contrast, Horsch emphasized: "I was pressured and forced by the events and occurrences and do it on my own responsibility.—Horsch, "Feststellungen," 15.

80. Michael Horsch, "Ergänzung zu der 'Notwendigen Berichtigung' der 'Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden,'" in *Gemeindeblatt der Mennoniten* 12/13 (1937); cited in the following from the reprint of this text in Horsch, *Auflösung*, 8-10.

81. See *Het Volk*, April 20, 1937, morning edition, "Deutsche Mennoniten ausgewiesen," handwritten copy of a translation with note: "At request of Br. B.H. Unruh."—Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Christian Neff, Mappe 163. On May 19, 1937, the German envoy to the Hague appealed to the German Department of State for information. They reported that "groups of German Mennonites and Darbists [Plymouth Brethren] had arrived in Holland" and that the reasons for this were somewhat unclear. For this reason, "I would be grateful for some instruction as to what the press here should be told to clarify this matter."—Letter from the German envoy to the Hague to the *Auswärtige Amt*; BAArch 5101/23410, pag. 00232. Apparently, the leadership of the VDM was also soon alerted. On the topic of the developments within Mennonite circles following the expulsion of the Bruderhof, see the overview in Horst Quiring, "Die deutschen Mennoniten zur Auflösung des Rhön-Bruderhofes 1937. Eine Dokumentation im Spiegel der Korrespondenz," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 38 (1981), 23-32. In the *Basler Nachrichten*, which simply adopted reports from the Netherlands, the clarification on the part of the VDM was published already on May 23, 1937. The ministry also turned to the VDM.

community." He had received inquiries from America, he wrote, asking him to investigate the situation of the Bruderhof; he had visited both Liechtenstein and the Rhön ("with a second visit in the spring"⁸²) and could thus state that it was "for economic and practical reasons [that] the German government had dissolved the 'communal life' and community of goods at the Rhön Bruderhof and confiscated the property of its registered association." Expulsion, he continued, was the wrong word for what had occurred: "The government instructed the members to each return to their homelands and look for work there." Only after the members had refused and asked "to be permitted to leave" was their request granted; what is more, "the Landrat's office assisted them" in organizing this journey. Indeed, the authorities had proceeded throughout with tactful sympathy. According to Horsch, "the officials from the Landrat's office treated the members of the Bruderhof most considerately and benevolently."⁸³ Horsch went on to outline the economic and practical background for the community's dissolution in more detail, before concluding his revisionist account with a sentence intended to once again emphasize his special credibility as an eyewitness: "By chance"⁸⁴ I happened to be present at the Rhön Bruderhof during the dissolution and seizure of the property."⁸⁵

82. There is no supporting historical evidence of such a second trip in the spring of 1937; perhaps he falsely claimed to have undertaken such a trip to support his status as a knowledgeable witness.

83. See, by way of comparison, one example from Keiderling's account: "Further, our single, nineteen-year-old [brother] Bekir Mehmet was interrogated in a fully inappropriate manner regarding our marital life and our relationships to our sisters." In response to the many hateful remarks to which Bekir had been subjected because he had not yet mastered the German language and did not understand all the questions, he said only: "You are a disbelieving person."—Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." Keiderling's account is confirmed by the letter which Gertrud Arnold sent to Hermann Arnold, dated April 22-23, 1937, which speaks of a "crowd of about sixty men (Gestapo, SS, etc)" who had behaved in an "extremely crude and derisive manner" and demolished "the furniture in some rooms."

84. The quotation marks around the term "by chance" [zufällig] in the original draw attention to themselves but are difficult to interpret. In a theological context, this convention is sometimes used as an indication of the role of divine providence. But does such an interpretation make sense here? At any rate, Hans Zumppe had also remarked on this coincidence: "[It] is a curious coincidence that in these same days in which the police occupied our Rhön Bruderhof, . . . your brother Michael arrived from Ingolstadt at the Rhön Bruderhof."—Letter from Hans Zumppe to John Horsch, April 23, 1937. AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, H. S. Bender 12/9.

85. In the booklet he published in late 1937, he also insisted on the validity of his account as an eyewitness of the events. The claim that the author is someone who has experienced these events firsthand permeates the entire account. "I remember one image particularly well: in the evening, the entire community was gathered in the dining room, with two officials from Fulda in the middle. They spoke and discussed everything in a trusting manner on the part of the Bruderhöfer and in an attentive way on the part of the officials."—Ibid., 24. There is no further recollection of such a meeting in any of the other primary sources.

As shown above, however, Horsch was in fact not present as an eyewitness on April 14, the day of the "dissolution and seizure"; quite likely he was also not there on the following day either. His presence as an eyewitness was probably limited to a few hours on April 16, 1937. Yet to the readers of his article Horsch appears not just as an eyewitness but also, in literary terms, as an omniscient narrator.⁸⁶ He knows, for example, that the personal effects of the families were not touched;⁸⁷ he knows what "the government" had said, and he knows how benevolent the proceedings were. He writes as if he had personally been everywhere, heard everything that was said, and had full knowledge of everyone's motivations. Thus, he somehow also knows that the government had intervened out of a concern for "proper cultivation and management." If we accept his version of what happened, then we must be prepared to believe that the Gestapo and the SS's intelligence agency⁸⁸ have raided a Christian community purely in order to ensure that the fields and pastures are properly cultivated and that no creditors come to harm. Needless to

86. On the topic of this type of narrative, sometimes called "intrusive narrator," see the depiction in Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

87. See, contrariwise, Keiderling's memoir, according to which "the Gestapo officials had confiscated many personal objects, including nearly all the English letters of our foreigners, multiple Bibles and New Testaments, the Latin history book on the Anabaptists by Joseph Beck, which we had borrowed from the university library in Marburg, plus a pair of binoculars, a barometer, and a photograph."—Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." Waldner also describes a different situation in a letter after his arrival at the Almbruderhof in May 1937; he wrote that not only was "their entire property impounded" but rather that "they were seriously instructed that no one was even allowed to take from the house that which he had on."—Letter from David Hofer and Michael Waldner to their home Hutterite community, Feb. 28, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0484_01.

88. The participation of members of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) is confirmed by a telex message from the Gestapo in Kassel on April 12, 1937, to the Gestapo in Frankfurt, intended to be forwarded to the *Ermittlungs- und Strafabteilung der Devisenstelle Frankfurt* (Office for Investigation and Punishment of Foreign Currency Exchange).—HHStAW Abt. 519/3 No. 16656, pag. 48. This, presumably, was the background for Kathleen Hamilton's report that spoke of "about sixty men (Gestapo, SS, etc.)."—Letter from Gertrud Arnold to Hans Hermann Arnold, April 22-23, 1937. Keiderling observed the following groups of individuals: "20-30 rural police in their green uniforms . . . , about the same number of Gestapo officers . . . , a group of 4-5 men in civil dress . . . , authorities, who had already visited us repeatedly, and also financial officials from the *Devisenstelle Frankfurt a./Main*, and two representatives of the district office of Fulda, Laraß, and Haßler." The "rural police" were presumably members of a special division of *Feldjäger* to which the Gestapo in Kassel had had recourse since December 1933 for making arrests. It was composed of members of the SA, "who were considered especially 'trustworthy' and trained for police tasks."—Gunnar Richter, "Die Geheime StaPoKassel," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde* 106 (2001), 229-270, here 242. Lichti, however, seems to accept Horsch's account, which speaks only of "local police" and "provincial officials," at face value.—Lichti, "German Mennonites," 104. The fact that Horsch avoids using the term *Gestapo* is noteworthy in itself.

say, neither creditor security nor agronomy belonged to the Gestapo's or the intelligence agency's usual concerns.

Although this omniscient narrator seemed to know so much, Horsch noticeably failed to mention the presence of two people who actually were eyewitnesses of the "dissolution and seizure," namely the Hutterite elders. Also unmentioned in Horsch's account was the fact that he had remained in the Rhön area for a week after the community's expulsion.

Overall, it is hard to evaluate Horsch's article except by adopting the same words Hofer used to describe the Mennonite elder's behavior: his account is not just a case of presenting an alternative view of complicated events, but rather of telling "made-up lies [*erlogene Dinge*]." The false statements in Horsch's article are too numerous to be plausibly explained as resulting from mere naïveté, as if Horsch just happened to find the German authorities' claims more believable than those made by his own brothers and sisters in the faith.⁸⁹

THE TRAGEDY OF A MENNONITE ELDER

It's easier to establish the unreliability of Horsch's account than it is to determine why he wrote as he did. After Horsch's article appeared in the Dutch newspaper *Zondagsbode*, Simon Gorter, a leading figure among the Dutch Mennonites,⁹⁰ responded with his own article in July. Gorter opened by saying how difficult it had been to reply to Horsch's article, which he characterized as "a prime example of an all-too-common style of writing today that is simultaneously both true and not true."⁹¹ He then went through Horsch's claims one by one, referring to information provided by Adolf Braun, who had spoken with him about Horsch's

89. In his comprehensive text from 1937, Horsch expands on this aspect: in order to preserve the credibility of his account, he has to explain why his impressions and appraisals during the first visit were so much different than those during his second visit. He writes that he feels he has been deceived and now sees more clearly. That he had only later been granted access to the written documents. At first this story seems plausible. It has often been suggested that Horsch was acting out of frustration at some real or perceived deception, that he was appalled by the facts which he had found out or which had been revealed to him. According to this interpretation, he had perhaps been naive in his first encounter with the Rhön brethren in January 1937 and now believed other sources. Such an interpretation, however, cannot account for the two letters he wrote to his brother John Horsch shortly after that visit in January. The list Michael Horsch compiled of the possible aid to be sent by American Mennonites to help the community survive until the next harvest includes 1,600 Marks for "interest." This means that Horsch must have already been aware of the community's debts. In addition, this hardly provides an explanation for the fact that someone is claiming to be an eyewitness of events he did not personally witness.

90. On Gorter himself, see Jelle Bosma, "Gorter, Simon Henri Nicolaas," *Mennonitisches Lexikon V*, Section 1.—www.mennlex.de/doku.php?id=art:gorter_simon_henri_nicolaas.

91. Report by Simon Gorter, *Zondagsbode*, July 18, 1937, p. 11.

account. In the end, Gorter concluded that Horsch "had to write" as he had, and that he (Gorter) had "heard from a very well-informed source . . . what had caused [Horsch] to do so." Gorter continued: "And in the last sentence of his article there is a reassuring expression of a degree of remorse concerning his actions."⁹²

This last sentence refers to a passage noting that although the mayor and local farmers' representative had complained about the community's management and debts, they had also conceded "that the members of the Bruderhof live in peace and friendship with the population of the surrounding area and that, morally speaking, there was no evidence of any infractions."⁹³ Whatever the actual attitudes of the mayor or the local farmers' representative may have been, Gorter regarded this final passage as evidence of Horsch's troubled conscience after having been forced to write things that he would never have written of his own free will.

Gorter's explanation for Horsch's behavior and fictitious "eyewitness" account seems persuasive. Horsch, after all, was a socially engaged, devout Christian, and former friend of the Bruderhof community.⁹⁴ Such a person would not suddenly begin spreading falsehoods of his own accord. Such a person, even if he learned something unfavorable about his friends, would at first try to remain silent. There must have been compelling factors that caused this devout Mennonite elder to publicize "made-up lies." Hans Meier, for one, shared Gorter's assessment of Horsch, surmising that the "the Gestapo [had] put pressure on him."⁹⁵

Horsch emphatically denied this interpretation of his role when he wrote his "Feststellungen," a booklet intended to counter Gorter's article that he self-published in late 1937:

92. *Ibid.*, 13. One wonders why exactly Horsch included this text by Gorter in its entirety in his booklet. Are we to interpret this as an expression of remorse for the highly peculiar claims which he makes in his own text?

93. In the letter from Gertrud Arnold to Hans Hermann Arnold, dated April 22-23, 1937, she writes: "In all the villages, the farmers stood at their doors and quietly watched the travelers go by." Kathleen Hamilton's memory speaks to the neighborly peace and amity with the population of the surrounding area.

94. Boller recalled that during Horsch's first trip to the Rhön Bruderhof, Horsch had "appreciated our lifestyle to such a degree that, at our general meeting, he encouraged us with moving, heartfelt words to continue on our path."—Boller, "Bericht über die Gefängniszeit."

95. Meier, *Solange das Licht brennt*, 64. Perhaps one must also read more between the lines in Händiges's account. Händiges wrote to Michael Horsch on June 23, 1937, that, in his opinion, they should "not publish any more negative details on the financial situation, barring outside coercion."—Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, Nachlass Christian Neff, Mappe 163; also cited in Quiring, "Die deutschen Mennoniten," 30. The keyword "coercion" [*Nötigung*] raises red flags. The Gestapo had already succeeded in coercing one of the main creditors to a preliminary agreement (see note 58).

In the strongest terms and with great emphasis, I deny the insinuation that I wrote my first "Ergänzung" [his first article] under the influence of any third party, or indeed under pressure from or out of fear of the German authorities, as if they had somehow caused me to deviate from the truth on any point whatsoever.⁹⁶

When writing his article, Gorter had phrased his brief explanation for Horsch's behavior only very generally.⁹⁷ Horsch, by contrast, responded in detail, letting drop a number of words that Gorter had never used: *influence, pressure, fear, German authorities, truth*.

Here again, it is tempting to ask whether Horsch was deliberately trying to say more between the lines than he was allowed to say openly. It is perhaps relevant that the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) and the Gestapo had likely known about Horsch's first trip to the Rhön in January 1937 and about his plans to visit again in April, thanks to the surveillance to which the Bruderhof was subject, including its written correspondence and visitors.⁹⁸ It may well be that when Horsch arrived at the community, now dissolved, the Gestapo was waiting for him—and had plans for how to use him for its own purposes.

In a letter to Emil Händiges, a pastor in Elbing and chairman of the German Mennonite Association (VDM), Horsch himself mentioned the Gestapo. Upon sending Händiges the "Feststellungen" manuscript in October 1937, he wrote that the "draft has been approved by the Gestapo for abroad; it is to be printed just as shown in the enclosed copy."⁹⁹ That Horsch names the Gestapo in Kassel as the approving authority for his booklet, rather than concealing their involvement, is surprising. Did he perhaps think that Händiges would consider it normal for the Gestapo to review the text as part of the Nazi regime's usual censorship process?¹⁰⁰ Did he want to discourage Händiges from making changes to the draft?

96. Horsch, "Feststellungen," 15.

97. It might be possible to criticize Gorter for unfairness in leaving his insinuation so vaguely expressed, but this would be to make judgments about matters about which too little is known. Perhaps Gorter had his legitimate reasons.

98. As one of the Hutterite elders observed, "Our letters were held, and the letters sent to us were also held up for three days. They were all read and checked."—Waldner, *Reise Bericht*, 48.

99. The letter itself is no longer extant, but Händiges wrote about it in a letter to Christian Neff on Oct. 28, 1937. Händiges reports that he had received a "manuscript of eighteen typewritten pages" from Michael Horsch the previous evening and copies passages from the accompanying letter verbatim.—Weierhof, *Nachlass Christian Neff*, Mappe 163.

100. Based on current research, it does not seem that the Gestapo offices served as censorship centers. On the topic of censorship in the Third Reich, see Jan-Pieter Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im NS-Staat. Von der "Gleichschaltung" bis zum Ruin* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2010).

Or was he trying to send a signal about this publication's origins that he could not articulate openly?

Especially noteworthy is Horsch's remark that the draft has been approved "for abroad." Indeed, it seems that the main intent behind the publication of Horsch's "Feststellungen" was to influence foreign opinion. According to Horsch's text, the German authorities had done nothing in respect to the Bruderhof "that cannot openly be brought to light [either] internationally or in the German Reich."¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the booklet singles out as the worst misdeed of the Bruderhof ("reprehensible to the core") the fact that its leadership "travels in foreign countries and exploits the hostile attitudes toward Germany in order to load all the blame . . . onto the German government."¹⁰² In order to ensure that his booklet was distributed in these foreign countries, Michael Horsch again made use of his brother John:

I would appreciate it if you would send a copy [of the "Feststellungen"] to the newspapers and magazines that you think suitable along with a request, if the editorial boards think it called for, for them to publish a short clarifying report [*Aufklärung*] in their publications.¹⁰³

Michael Horsch's goal here of clearing up the facts for a foreign audience (*Aufklärung im Ausland*) converges once again with the priorities of the German government. In these years, German authorities treated such "clarification" as a key task, distributing information to counter international animosity toward the Nazi regime. Michael Horsch seems to have been used for precisely such a purpose.

It is thus possible to draw a number of conclusions about Horsch's publications, based both on the internal characteristics of the text and on the historical background outlined above.¹⁰⁴ That Horsch's article and

101. Horsch, "Feststellungen," 15.

102. *Ibid.*, 21.

103. Letter from Michael Horsch to John Horsch, dated March 14, 1938.—AMC-G, Hist. Mss. 1-278, John Horsch.

104. This assumes that historical study is about more than just description but also constantly seeks to explain the past, meaning that there is always "interference between legal discourse and history."—Achim Saupe, *Der Historiker als Detektiv - der Detektiv als Historiker. Historik, Kriminalistik und der Nationalsozialismus als Kriminalroman* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 15. Saupe identifies the appropriate mode of reasoning as abduction: "Abduction or reproduction is, according to Peirce, the first step toward developing knowledge. The starting point is the confrontation with surprising [information] and the explanation of contradictory facts. In order to explain these surprising facts, a hypothesis is generated or a theory formulated."—*Ibid.*, 237. See also, concerning abductive reasoning, Nora Hannah Kessler, *Dem Spurenlesen auf der Spur. Theorie, Interpretation, Motive* (Würzburg:

booklet support the self-justifications of a regime that “systematically dispossessed those thought racially displeasing and [who were] its ideological opponents” cannot be regarded as pure coincidence.¹⁰⁵ These documents almost certainly do not say what Horsch would have said if he had been free to speak his true opinion. Instead, they are a message that the Gestapo wanted to have spread around the world. Horsch was almost certainly forced to speak and write in the way he did.¹⁰⁶ He did not carry out an independent investigation. To what extent he, under the influence of skilled manipulation, actually believed the allegations he was induced to make is impossible to determine.

This, in turn, casts a sharp light on the question of the value to historians of the “Feststellungen,” the account Horsch self-published as a booklet in late 1937. The booklet can no longer be regarded as an independent primary source or as a reliable perspective on the dissolution

Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 114-117 (“Die Abduktion als Legitimation des ‘konjekuralen Paradigmas’”).

105. Contra *Lichti*, “Rhönbruderhof,” 4. Lichti states that Horsch’s sudden “change of front” is inexplicable “unless he had found evidence which he found compelling.”—*Ibid.* But Horsch’s writings go beyond a mere “change of front.” The inclusion of blatant falsehoods, coupled with a closeness to the positions of the hostile state authorities, demands an explanation. For example, Horsch’s claim in the “Feststellungen” that on the community, there was no income-earning “work except for agriculture being performed” is so clearly false that one asks oneself why such an easily refutable claim was even made.—Horsch, “Feststellungen,” 19. Is this an attempt to exaggerate to the extremes? The community survived financially from 1933-1937 through the door-to-door sale of books and wooden craft items. Both the communities in Liechtenstein and the Rhön had active commercial workshops. It was “impressive that they made such beautiful things out of walnut timber. In Germany and Liechtenstein they sold goods worth 4,000 marks, this is their best and only [source of] income.”—Letter from David Hofer to his home Hutterite community, Feb. 28, 1937.—BHA Coll. 0481_01

106. In fact, in some places in the “Feststellungen,” one has to ask whether the Gestapo (or district officials) were involved in the composition of the text itself, for example, in the passage that reads: “If the Bruderhof community, according to their fundamental Christian principles, rejected military service to their fatherland, then they would have also, based on the same principles, not been permitted to defend themselves when their own material interests in the Bruderhof were at stake.” Is this the sentiment of a Mennonite elder whose own brother emigrated to the USA to avoid compulsory service? Or is this the voice of someone who, because of his own interests, is angry that the Bruderhof community had looked after their own material interests? Why does the author write, in the introduction, that he wants to deal with the Bruderhof “primarily from the material, commercial, financial perspective” (*ibid.*, 15), and then go on to write that “the church community’s internal life . . . was not healthy” (*ibid.*, 30). Concerned parents are adduced as evidence: they want their son—an adult who had freely decided to join the Bruderhof—back. These are problems known in any monastic community, and, for someone who is open to the idea of a religious vocation, not really worth noting.

of the Rhön Bruderhof; at most, it is evidence of the cunning of the Gestapo.¹⁰⁷

Notwithstanding Lichti’s efforts to show otherwise, the aim of Horsch’s 1937 “Feststellungen” was not to highlight two contrasting approaches to economics within the Anabaptist heritage, with one supposedly focusing on “stewardship norms” and the other relying on a “‘manna-from-heaven’ approach.”¹⁰⁸ Instead, Horsch’s text is a skilled ideological attempt to discredit the idea of Christian community of goods by falling back on a version of “stewardship norms” taken from secular society. This dynamic was already obvious to Keiderling during the first rounds of interrogations:

We realized very clearly after this interrogation: the accusation of fraud was not directed personally at the three of us brothers, but intended to discredit the cause. It was targeted at the Christian witness of the Rhön Bruderhof. It sought to prove that this communal, brotherly life in community was only possible at the cost

107. Lichti writes (“German Mennonites,” 104) that, according to “the conventional standards of the ‘historical method,’ Michael Horsch’s version would be gauged more reliable” because Horsch relied on documents and financial records. Yet Lichti fails to ask a prior question demanded by the same standards of historical method: Did Horsch in fact have access to such documents in the first place, and if so, how? After all, even if Horsch had been an eyewitness, that does not explain how he managed to see the community’s internal records. Horsch himself recognized that he needed a credible explanation for the origin of the documents to which he refers: “The material for the following details comes primarily from the files and account books which I found in the former Bruderhof” and “in part from the files of various governmental offices.”—*Ibid.*, 15. Given the historical weight the literature has given to Horsch’s publication, it is remarkable that no previous study has investigated these details. Why would a Bavarian Mennonite farmer, himself not affiliated with the Rhön Bruderhof, be granted access to the “files of various governmental offices” just because of his personal interest? How could he as a stranger to the case have convinced the authorities to give him confidential information about an active investigation (for as long as the Rhön Bruderhof was not yet sold, the proceeding remained open)? The second “source” Horsch gives for his access to documents seems equally suspect. Supposedly, weeks (months?) after the property was seized (“I was held up quite some time by my own work during the harvest”), he returned to the Rhön to visit the Bruderhof and study the account books which were still in the buildings there. Yet is this likely? Keiderling, in his memoirs of the events of April 14, 1937, recounted: “Fischer from the *Devisenstelle* came in several times to ask about the account books and papers.”—Keiderling, “Bericht über die Auflösung.” At the time of the raid, the Gestapo had brought along a financial specialist and then had arrested three members of the leadership, whom they held while working to bring charges for financial fraud. Under these circumstances, would important financial papers really have been left lying at the Rhön Bruderhof, much less returned to the now-abandoned property after the community had departed and the investigation been closed?

108. Lichti, “German Mennonites,” 85.

of other people, and that we had duped our business partners, acquaintances, relatives, and other gullible souls.¹⁰⁹

Without its faith in a "'manna-from-heaven' approach," the Rhön Bruderhof would have had to disband already in late 1933, as soon as it became clear the Nazi regime intended to drive the community to ruin. Yet had the community given up its spiritual attitude toward economic questions, it would also have had to abandon any role of resistance as a Christian intentional community living in a dictatorship.¹¹⁰ Horsch himself, on his first visit to the Bruderhof, seems to have originally been open to the Bruderhof's perspective: according to Boller's memoir, he had remarked that the "Mennonites, due to their financial prosperity, had neglected their inner spiritual life."¹¹¹

It is therefore all the more remarkable to find this same Michael Horsch just months later actively publicizing accusations which, at the time his "Feststellungen" appeared in late 1937, had already been rejected by the district attorney investigating the Bruderhof's case. This district attorney had examined the same financial data referred to in Horsch's booklet and had, despite the Gestapo's obvious desire for a conviction of fraud, dropped all charges. His decree suspending the proceedings¹¹² can hardly have sprung from any sympathy in the prosecutor's office for a "'manna-from-heaven' approach." In any event, once the criminal case had been dismissed and the prisoners released, the Gestapo had only one tool left for discrediting the community: the testimony of Michael Horsch.

The story of Michael Horsch in 1937 is thus not a tale of disillusioned friendship. It is, rather, the tragedy of a Mennonite elder who attempted to organize support for his newfound friends in a Hutterite community but was thwarted because of Mennonite doubts about community of goods; who, when he visited his Hutterite friends once again, fell into the hands of the Gestapo; and who, from that point on, bore witness against his friends so effectively that his testimony is still being cited even today to justify reservations about their communal way of life.

109. Keiderling, "Bericht über die Auflösung." Boller also remembered this accusation from the first round of interrogations.—Boller, "Bericht über die Gefängniszeit."

110. On these aspects of the financial question, see the detailed account and discussion included in Thomas Nauerth, *Zeugnis, Liebe und Widerstand. Der Rhönbruderhof 1933-1937* (forthcoming).

111. Boller, "Bericht über die Gefängniszeit."

112. The decree was preserved due to the fact that the state police in Kassel forwarded a "Copy of the Decree of the District Attorney Suspending Proceedings" to the Oberpräsident in Kassel on July 22, 1937.—BArch R 5101 23410, pag. 00249.

Research Note:

The 1938 Edition of *Martyrs Mirror*: Why Only Fifty-Five Luyken Images?

DAVID WEAVER-ZERCHER*

In 1938, the Mennonite Publishing House (MPH) published an updated English version of *Martyrs Mirror*, the Anabaptist martyrology compiled by Thieleman van Braght and published in Dordrecht in 1660.¹ The 1938 edition was not a new translation of the work, but it did include new features, none more important than the reintroduction of illustrations that first appeared in the 1685 Dutch edition of the work but had rarely appeared in subsequent editions.²

The illustrations reintroduced in the 1938 MPH edition were photographic reproductions of Jan Luyken's copper etchings. Luyken, a renowned Dutch artist, produced 104 etchings for the 1685 edition of *Martyrs Mirror*, each of them illustrating a specific account in van Braght's text.³ With a few noteworthy exceptions, each of Luyken's illustrations depicted one of six moments in the drama of martyrdom: capture,

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1. Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians...* trans. Joseph F. Sohm (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1938); and T. J. V. B[raght], *Het Bloedigh Tooneel der Doops-gesinde, en Weereeloose Christenen...* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Jacob Braat voor Jacobus Savry, 1660).

2. The 1938 edition used the English translation produced by Joseph F. Sohm in the early 1880s. In addition to adding illustrations, the 1938 edition featured new type, new pagination, and a red sprinkled edge. The illustrations, described in the next paragraph, were included in the Pirmasens edition of *Martyrs Mirror*, a German-language edition that was published in 1780, but they did not appear in any North American editions until 1886 (and even then, as explained later in this article, they were only proximate replicas).

3. T. J. V. Braght [and Jan Luyken], *Het Bloedig Tooneel, of Martelaers Spiegel der Doops-gesinde of Weereeloose Christenen...* (Amsterdam: By J. vander Deyster et al., En Compagnie, 1685).

a wide range of readers why these illustrate matters of both Mennonite and larger Kansas politics.

Works of this type walk a fine line between denominational history, denominational hagiography, and scholarly analysis. As part of the Cornelius H. Wedel series, Juhnke's book belongs to a larger body of literature rooted in exploring the Mennonite story. Fortunately, it is not, like so many denominational histories, geared only to the interests of a small cadre of insiders who know the jargon and revel in the internecine barbs of denominational political squabbles. Juhnke takes care to explain, but not necessarily celebrate, the figures he discusses. The result is a sensitive treatment of the individuals, movements, and causes without the fawning admiration that can so often plague works of this type. Readers interested in Kansas politics in general will find this work of great use, if for no other reason than it provides an alternative perspective to what is too often covered over with the broad brush of "red state" religious politics.

That said, *A People of Two Kingdoms II* is still primarily an anthology of personal sketches and vignettes instead of a work of political science or political history. With chapters skipping between short biographies of political careers spliced with issues that appeared in Mennonite journals, the text reads more like a set of encyclopedia entries rather than a single synthesis. Today, religion and politics is a huge topic with a rapidly expanding literature. Juhnke's book is an insightful companion to works such as Darren Dochuck's *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*; Ferenc Szasz's *Religion in the Modern American West*; Robert Wuthnow's *Red State Religion*; Philip Barlow and Mark Silk's *Religion and Public Life in the Midwest: America's Common Denominator*; or *Kansas Politics and Government, The Clash of Political Cultures*, by Ed Flentje and Joseph Aistrup. Connecting Juhnke's narrative to these contexts of region and faith would benefit both Mennonite scholars and those of Kansas history. However, it is up to the reader to fold in larger contextual discussions on their own as these larger trends are referenced mostly in passing in this work.

As an embodiment of Kansas politics and yet strikingly at odds with it, Mennonite politics is a valuable study, both as a significant subculture in central Kansas and as a foil to better understand how Kansas political cultural has shifted and unfolded. *A People of Two Kingdoms II*, is a welcome contribution to this story, both for those within and outside of the tradition. Those who can place the anecdotes and stories into the larger narrative will be rewarded with insights that deepen our understanding of faith, region, ethnicity, and politics.

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JAY PRICE

BOOK NOTES

Called to Community: The Life Jesus Wants for His People, ed. Charles Moore (Walden, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 2016). Pp. 359. \$18.

This collection of short passages on the general theme of Christian community—drawn from the full sweep of church history and an impressive range of ecumenical voices—is divided into four parts, and further divided into

fifty-two topics. Part I focuses on the "call to community"; Part II on "forming community"; Part III on "life in community"; and Part IV on life "beyond the community." The topical themes are intended to be used as a weekly devotional guide, with biblical texts and discussion questions for each theme included at the conclusion of the volume. Most of the selections in the volume were written by people who have lived in intentional Christian communities. Stanley Hauerwas contributed the introduction. Charles Moore, the compiler of the collection, is a pastor and member of the Bruderhof community.

Forever Summer, Forever Sunday: Peter Gerhard Rempel's Photographs of Mennonites in Russia, 1890-1917. ed. John D. Rempel and Paul Tiessen (St. Jacobs, Ont.: Sand Hills Books, Inc., 1981 [2015]). \$50.

First published in 1981, this re-issued collection of photographs captures the spirit of the cultural "golden age" in South Russia in the decades prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. The volume consists primarily of reproductions of negative glass plates by the studio photographer, Peter Gerhard Rempel (1872-1933), which Rempel brought with him as a refugee to Canada in 1923. The volume opens with a historical introduction by the editors. Interspersed throughout the collection of ninety-three black-and-white photos are excerpts drawn from the diaries of Peter Rempel during the turbulent year of 1923 as well as excerpts taken from letters that Rempel exchanged with his wife, Sarah. The republication, sponsored by the Henderson (Neb.) Mennonite Heritage Museum and Park, includes a new foreword by John Rempel, grandson of Peter Rempel.

Kertin Lundström, *Polemik in den Schriften Melchoir Hoffmans: Inszenierungen rhetorischer Streitkultur in der Reformationszeit* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2015). Pp. 318.

Although he began his theological career as an early supporter of Luther, the radical reformer Melchior Hoffman soon came into sharp and sustained conflict with representatives of the Lutheran and Zwinglian Reformation. Hoffman vigorously defended his understanding of the "true teaching of God" in a variety of contexts and textual forms, including published polemics, correspondence, debates, and biblical commentaries. This book, a revised 2013 dissertation at the University of Stockholm and the Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen, analyzes Hoffman's writings as a performance within a rhetorical culture of debate. The arguments presented in his writings express a complex cultural interplay between rhetorical norms and traditions on the one hand, and individual creativity on the other. Lundström explores Hoffman's polemical style drawing on a combination of rhetorical theory and modern methods of communication and performance analysis. For Hoffman and others, polemical speech served as a catalyst for cultural and social change.