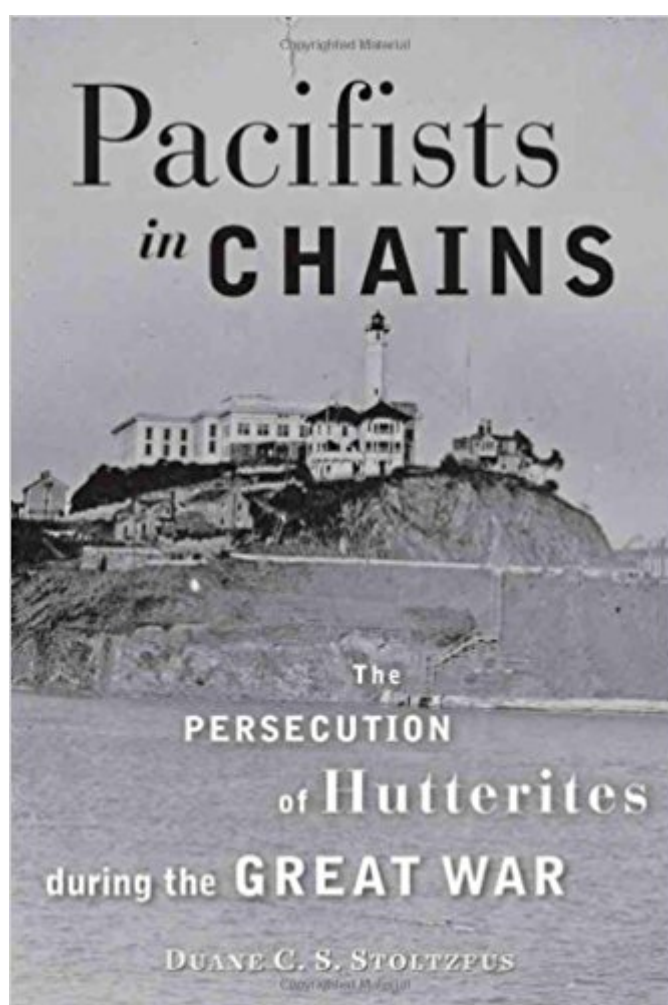


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Pacifists In Chains: The Persecution Of Hutterites During The Great War (Young Center Books In Anabaptist And Pietist Studies)



Synopsis

To Hutterites and members of other pacifist sects, serving the military in any way goes against the biblical commandment "thou shalt not kill" and Jesus's admonition to turn the other cheek when confronted with violence. *Pacifists in Chains* tells the story of four young men—Joseph Hofer, Michael Hofer, David Hofer, and Jacob Wipf—who followed these beliefs and refused to perform military service in World War I. The men paid a steep price for their resistance, imprisoned in Alcatraz and Fort Leavenworth, where the two youngest died. The Hutterites buried the men as martyrs, citing mistreatment. Using archival material, letters from the four men and others imprisoned during the war, and interviews with their descendants, Duane C. S. Stoltzfus explores the tension between a country preparing to enter into a world war and a people whose history of martyrdom for their pacifist beliefs goes back to their sixteenth-century Reformation beginnings.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Duane Stoltzfus... presents a well-written and moving case study of the Hutterites' imprisonment, as well as a more extensive examination of violations of American religious and political dissenters' civil rights during the Great War... Engaging with history in works like this one reminds us of the richness of our immigrant history, the fragility of the rights that immigrants come to this country to enjoy, and the obligation to defend those rights, even under exigent circumstances." (Carol A. Leibiger Yearbook of German-American Studies)" *Pacifists in Chains* is a well-told and carefully

documented account... Stoltzfus's book shows how religious faith may substantively inform not only the opinions but also the practices of persons who choose to express their love of country in nonviolent ways during times of war. The study is particularly relevant in pointing out that even democratic governments often punish those who hold divergent perspectives." (Rod Janzen, Fresno Pacific University)"Duane Stoltzfus has written a powerful account of four Hutterite conscientious objectors during World War I. The way the men livedâ •and diedâ •posed difficult challenges to the country's commitment to freedom, challenges that resonate still. Stoltzfus has done the men justice." (Louisa Thomas, author of *Conscience: Two Soldiers, Two Pacifists, One Family*â •A Test of Will and Faith in World War I)" *Pacifists in Chains* is a first-rate contribution to the understudied history of conscientious objection and religious persecution in the United States. Duane Stoltzfusâ™s scholarship is excellent, his writing is beautiful, and his narrative of Hutterites bearing witness to their nonviolence is poignant. A learned study and an inspiring read." (Michael G. Long, editor of *Christian Peace and Nonviolence: A Documentary History*)

Duane C. S. Stoltzfus is a professor of communication at Goshen College and the copy editor of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

The soldiers and Generals misunderstanding of how the CO's convictions kept them from any war effort duty. And how a true CO is not seeking to shirk from duty, but only because of truly following Christ, even unto death. God bless all His Children!

I heard a brief mention of these war resisters in the movie *Matewan* and have been looking for a good book about the group ever since. This is the ONE! Tremendous research by the author. The author has an engaging style and it explains why there is always so much war hysteria at the beginning of a war--like Japanese internment in WWII. This is great read not an academic sleeping pill.

The Book was very nice like promised.

Duane C.S. Stoltzfus carefully researched and retells the story of four Hutterite pacifists from South Dakota who consistently refused to participate in the U.S. military effort in World War I. After being drafted, they were tortured and imprisoned at Camp Lewis near Tacoma, Wash., at Alcatraz in California, and at Ft. Leavenworth in Kansas, where two of them died. Today's Hutterites consider

them martyrs for their faith. Stoltzfus literally retraced the steps of the four Hutterites and interviewed surviving family members in Montana and in Canada. After library and archival research, he also sets the story in the context of an all-out political and propaganda effort by the Wilson administration to enlist support for World War I and to suppress dissent from various religious and political groups. *Pacifists in Chains* is well-written -- a compelling read, especially for anyone who cherishes religious freedom and civil liberties.

Initially, I wasn't reading this book to review, however, before I was half way through, I felt strongly compelled to tell the world about it. Then I had the opportunity to attend a book signing and listened to Duane and others talk about this heart-wrenching story, which sealed my resolve to share "*Pacifists in Chains*" with my readers. Which I should have thought of doing so, in the first place, alone on the basis that this story is a horrific chapter from of my own Hutterite history, and it bears telling. This narrative is well-researched, richly detailed and has an amazing amount of background information - all of which helps the reader get a better understanding of the complexities of this terribly sad, but true story. The various perspectives the author presents, enhances this historic account, giving it depth while creating interesting angles and a broader view of that particular era. 'The nation was going to war with one-third of Americans having been born overseas or being the child of an immigrant and with one of every five soldiers having been born overseas.' Turned out, that history was repeating itself for some of those children of immigrants, just like their forefathers in Europe, their faith was being severely tested in their relatively new homeland. The letters included in this book, provide not only authenticity but also poignancy. The voices of the three Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf, draw you into the story and enable you to get a feeling of their love and concern for family and community, their emotional state, and their firm faith in God, even though the letters were censored. Their longing to be with their loved ones is evident in every letter, but they believed that will likely not happen in this life. For two of the four, that was true; they came home in a coffin. The book is written in such a fashion that it gets the reader thinking about how perhaps things could have gone differently, on a number of levels, including the timing of some events that closed a door for them: Shortly after the four Hutterites arrived at Camp Lewis, and were sent to the guardhouse for refusing to obey orders, the furlough program was approved. Because they were awaiting trial this opportunity came too late for them. One cannot help but wonder if their treatment had been less harsh, had they agreed to work during imprisonment, as some other conscientious did: After being court-martialed, one Mennonite decided to work, reasoning that 'he was no longer a soldier' and the work at Leavenworth did not include services in support of the war. That being said,

it's likely the Hutterites were also strongly opposed to supporting any organization that would use torture methods on fellow human beings who, because of their faith, dared to take a stand against war. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in WWI history and the unsung brave souls who steadfastly endured horrendous torture and deplorable living conditions all because their conscience would not allow them to kill fellow human beings.

There is not enough written about the conscientious objectors in America, especially in the First World War, when the US war effort was backed by sedition laws curbing almost all criticism of the war, the first major modern propaganda effort, and quasi-official vigilante mobs. Duane Stoltzfus' book is a good start. He looks specifically at one group of Anabaptists, four Hutterites who refused to fight or be part of the military in any way, and how the government responded to them. It's a compelling and fascinating story. Unfortunately, the information about the Hutterites themselves is a bit thin. The book is padded out with lots of side discussions, for instance on the history of the prisons where the men were kept. The more focused sections are good, though, and will hopefully prompt others to investigate the history of American conscientious objectors.

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