A STUDY OF THE HUTTERITES AS A FRONTIER UTOPIAN MOVEMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MAPS

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Purpose of Study

In 1874, members of a religious communitarian society known as the Hutterites migrated from Russia to the United States in search of a new frontier. They moved to find land where, free from persecution, they could establish communal settlements isolated from all influences of the outside world. They sought primarily to maintain a religious, social, and economic order based on 300 years of traditional Hutterian life.

Named after an early leader, Joseph Hutter, the group stemmed out of the Anabaptist movement of the early sixteenth century. A religiously oriented society, the Hutterites believed they practiced the one true Christian faith. Convinced that God commanded all people to share their earthly goods, the Hutterites abolished private property and held all things in common. The American frontier attracted them as it attracted many other utopian or communitarian social experimenters, because of the availability of land and the absence of social structure. In 1874, sparsely populated Dakota Territory offered the space needed. In addition, frontier Dakota offered an unstructured social environment in which the Brethren could recreate their society as it existed in Europe. Unlike many other pioneers, the Hutterites desired no political or social affiliation, but rather sought the social climate which would allow them to isolate themselves from the outside.

A part of the frontier in the nineteenth century, the Hutterites were also a part of the American utopian movement. As the Puritans and many

other groups, the followers of Joseph Hutter believed they exemplified a superior way of life. Unlike many utopian groups, however, Hutterites sought to preserve a tradition rather than reform society. Therefore, the Frontier, without a structured society, offered not a place to experiment and perfect a new social order, but a place to preserve the wisdom of the past. From their social and economic organization, one can class Hutterites as one of the utopian communitarian societies in American history. Hutterites rejected the concept of private property because they perceived communal living as "the divine order of God."[1] As a result, they ate at a common table, lived in common buildings, and worked as a group to satisfy the economic wants of the community.

America fostered many utopias as groups of people strove to build a more perfect society. In most instances that meant a desire to reform society by the elimination of certain features and the promotion of better conditions. Depending upon the social structure of these groups and the particular interest of scholars, writers have used a variety of terms to describe utopian groups. Arthur Bestor in Backwoods Utopias used the terms religious socialism and secular societies to distinguish between religious and economic utopias. Henrik Infield in Cooperative Communities at Work refers to them as cooperative communities. The term, communistic, is used extensively by V. F. Calverton in his book, Where Angels Dared to Tread. Alice Tyler in Freedom's Ferment made a distinction between religious communism (Amana) and utopian socialism (Robert Owen). Ralph Albertson, in a survey article on utopian communities, used the term, "mutualistic". John Hostetler described the Hutterites as a family type Christian communal

group. Many other writers used the term utopia in a very broad sense as it will be used in this study.[2]

This study examines the relationship between the Hutterites, the frontier, and the utopian movement. The Hutterites needed the frontier conditions present in Dakota Territory in 1874 to insure the continuation of their existence. Because of religious persecution in Europe and their distinct social organization, Hutterites not only found themselves attracted to, but in need of the American frontier environment. Utopian in that they believed they had the more perfect life, they felt no mission to reform the world. Indeed, they wanted isolation, as their very existence rested on the fact that they could preserve, not change their society. The final consideration is the relationship between utopia and the frontier. Directly, the frontier offered land--the place to locate a community. Indirectly, the frontier also held out hope for a new life, the building of a better society, the possibility of which rested on the unstructured, flexible nature of the frontier region. In this way, the frontier filled the needs of both the new and the traditional. The zealous reformer could reconstruct society from old patterns and hence provide the world with a model, while the traditionalist could preserve society from change.

As utopians, Hutterites succeeded where most others failed. At present, they continue to live in the same manner as they did in 1874. Therefore, it is puzzling to discover that many historians of American utopias make no mention of the followers of Joseph Hutter.[3] Only recently have economists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians expressed considerable interest in their successful cooperative society.[4]

B. Limitations of Study

This study deals with the Hutterites in their initial years of settlement in South Dakota and does not consider the twentieth century in any detail. The main concern will be the communal nature of the group, their settlement needs, and their adjustment to their new surroundings. Some consideration will be given, however, to their European history to understand Hutterite social structure and goals.

II. THE AMERICAN UTOPIAN MOVEMENT

A. The Attraction of the New World

From the time of the earliest settlements in America, people from all over the globe have regarded this country as a "New World." The very nature of the term implied a new beginning and for several centuries, people came to America to start over in their quest for a better life. Greater opportunity existed because America contained a vast frontier with great stretches of unsettled land and an unstructured social situation. The frontier offered the hope and often the reality of greater economic and social opportunity. Because of these conditions, people regarded America as a utopia where, without tradition and authority, magnificent opportunities awaited settlers. Whether one looked to the New World as a solution for England's unemployment problem, as a home for debtors, or as a haven for the religiously persecuted, it held out the hope of escape from the past and entry into a more perfect society.[1]

While the great attraction was land for settlement, the subtle, psychological effect of the frontier had importance because it implied an opportunity to begin again. It "called out" people's instincts to experiment with social ideas and to attempt to remake their environment, both socially and economically.[2] With great quantities of untouched land, seeds of reform could be planted and nurtured which would then blossom into a more perfect society. This in turn would produce a model community for all the world to see. The individuals coming to America with this dream were known as utopians. Attracted to the new world because of the frontier, utopians believed that only in a new land, like America, did the opportunity

exist to mold and shape a society from its very inception. The possibilities were unlimited and no belief too radical. Escaping from the old to the new, the utopian seekers came with their ideologies to partake of the resources of land and freedom that existed in the New World.[3]

B. The Puritan Experiment

In surveying the utopian movement in America, the Puritan experiment in Massachusetts stands out as the first major attempt to establish such a society. The followers of John Winthrop, however, present an interesting admixture. Coming to the new world in 1630, the Puritans desired to establish a "New England", not a "little England" that would be a replica of the mother country. The Massachusetts Bible State represented an attempt to establish a new life--a holy commonwealth on earth--where the members would experience a higher form of religious life and hence closer communion with God. It was "a covenanted community, existing under a commission from God."[4] Along with the religious goals, however, went a strong desire for material gain. In this sense, the Puritans were both religious idealists and yet economic materialists.[5]

Many of the characteristics of the early Puritan colony appeared again and again as utopian experiments became more common. The first and most obvious was the characteristic of uniqueness. In the eyes of Winthrop and his followers, theirs represented a most unusual undertaking. They believed their life to be more perfect and more desirable and therefore a valuable example for mankind. As well as being unique among men, the Puritans believed themselves unique in the eyes of God. They had, they perceived, a mandate from God to create a more perfect religious society,

closer to God's desires.[6]

By the very nature of their task, the Puritans demanded reform. They were taking the old and reshaping it into a new world. The less desirable elements would be discarded and new forms would come into being. The basis for the new world would be the community, the covenanted community.[7]

While providing a model for the outside world, they nevertheless had to keep themselves separated from that world. Writing the articles for his "Modell of Christian Charity," which provided a guide for Puritan behavior, Winthrop noted that if the group neglected the articles and fell "to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions" the Lord would surely punish them.[8]

To achieve their new life, Winthrop gave the following advice to his Puritan followers:

> ...For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.[9]

C. Religious and Economic Utopias

Like the Puritans, the leaders of many European religious groups looked to the American frontier for resources to build anew. By the end of the nineteenth century, the number of groups attempting cooperative communities reached approximately 260, but most failed within ten years.[10] Many settlements, such as New Harmony, Indiana; and Brook Farm, Massachusetts; collapsed within a year or two. A few groups, however, such as the Shakers and Rappites survived into the twentieth century. Two groups, the Hutter-

ites and Amanas, remain to this day in the United States although the Amanas no longer practice communal living.[11]

The two major types of utopian societies were religious and economic, with the great majority in both categories being reformist in nature and thus seeking to change their environment. Coming from Europe, the religious communitarian groups arrived first with many of their ideologies already formed. Not content with the changes brought by the Protestant Reformation, these groups looked to the new world where they might pursue their particular religious beliefs without fear of persecution.[12] The economic utopians came later, mostly in the nineteenth century, and concerned themselves primarily with the social conditions of their time, particularly the status of the lower class and the conditions produced by the industrial revolution.[13]

The religious utopian groups who flourished from colonial times to the late nineteenth century, shared a belief in the desirability of communal living, the rightness of celibacy, the virtues of simple living, the imminence of the millenium, and the adherence to strict religious dogmas.[14] Many leaders like George Rapp and Ann Lee came to the United States with their visions already formed. Bringing their early followers with them, they came to set up communities where they might practice the belief that they "were 'primitive' Christians who had believed in the apostolic way of life of Christ and his disciples, which was that of communism practiced on a simple but comprehensive scale."[15]

Communism soon became the way of life for many of the religious utopians. Some sects adopted it because of economic reasons while others accepted it for ideological reasons. Many of the groups had little money

or worldly goods and therefore found it necessary to rely heavily on those few members with money capital and possessions. If the group desired to migrate, money from the few would have to finance the entire group.[16] Others abolished private property because Christ's disciples had lived in that manner. Hoping to be Christ's Apostles in the next world, they chose to live like them in the present. These groups did not adopt communal living because of economic reward, as monetary profit meant little. They "wanted to preserve their eternal souls, not their temporal pocketbooks."[17] Communism also created greater cohesion among the members thus insuring their chances for success. It emphasized their separateness from other groups and the need for close relationships between the members. The more unusual the religious tenets, the more necessary was instruction and supervision over the practitioners.[18]

With the coming of the nineteenth century, the economic reformers began to replace the religiously oriented in the utopian movement. Although particularly true of new groups, even many older religious sects became more worldly in their outlook and evolved into secular communities.[19] In 1825, the Rappites changed the name of one community from Harmony to Economy. The change reflected the fact that religious thinking was being pushed into the background by social and economic considerations. They reversed the order of priorities and now thought of themselves as communitarians first and sectarians second.[20]

The fusion of some groups and the "shifts of allegiance" among members also indicated the evolution from religious centered societies to more worldly interests. Robert Owen of New Harmony was "notorious" for his

attacks upon organized religion while groups such as the Shakers were equally well known for their "fanatical sectarianism." In 1825, members from the Shaker Community joined the Owenite Community. Even greater numbers of converts to the Shaker group took place when Owen's experiment failed. The moves from group to group became even more noticeable in the 1840's and 1850's.[21]

In contrast to the earlier religious reformers, the economic groups had little interest in religion. In fact, many were anti-religious. Failing to find comfort in the hereafter, men like Robert Owen concerned themselves with the present world and attempted to alleviate the harmful conditions and make use of the good. They desired a society where "men could realize themselves as men and not as angels." Like the religious zealots, most of the economic visionaries came from Europe. The old world was "sold out", but America with great amounts of land and an "unmolesting government" offered success for anyone willing to try. "Almost every European who entertained dreams of a new society thought of it exclusively in terms of America."[22]

Robert Owen who established New Harmony wrote that he had come to this country to "change it from the ignorant selfish system to an enlightened social system, which shall gradually unite all interests into one, and remove all cause for contest between individuals."[23] In the Constitution of New Harmony, the following stated the ideal for happiness:

> The sole objects of these Communities will be to procure for all their members the greatest amount of happiness, to secure it to them, and to transmit it to their children to the latest posterity.[24]

It reflected a clear case of desiring and striving for happiness in the here and now, not in the hereafter. Like Robert Owen, members of Brook Farm, founded by the Unitarian minister, George Ripley, agreed on the importance of the present. One observer wrote that the "Brook Farmers accepted the philosophy of Here and Now, on the spot with the goods at the moment, not yesterday, not tomorrow, but today'".[25]

The economic reformers of the nineteenth century, differed greatly from their religious brethren. Although they held in common with the former, the need for communities, cohesive membership, and the striving for a better life, they pursued these aims in different ways and for different reasons. Unlike the earlier groups, they were not millennialists, nor did they believe in celibacy. They held communal living to be desirable, not because of the heavenly reward to come later, but rather because of the rewards and happiness it could give its participants here on earth. The economic utopians sought an environment in which" justice, freedom and peace would exist." To achieve these ends, class inequality, private property, and profits would have to be abolished. Searching for the abundant life, the members of such communities as Brook Farm, New Harmony, and groups like the Icarians and Fourierites concerned themselves with material goods, as well as intellectual and artistic pursuits. In their thinking, the best way to achieve these ends was through cooperative living. The group working and living together could produce and achieve more for a person than that person could achieve on his own.[26]

D. Reasons for Failure

The reasons for their failures are varied, but two are of primary importance. Most obvious was the lack of planning and secondly was the problem of leadership. The absence of proper planning affected most of the colonies. In some instances this was evident when the members purchased more land than their capital justified.[27] In the opinion of one writer, many groups never experienced a true trial because of insufficient funds and extreme initial hardships, which again reflected inadequate planning.[28] Another aspect of improper planning concerned selection of members. Although many groups set high requirements initially, in practice they hesitated to turn anyone away because of their reformist nature. That acquisition of members not fully committed to the ideology tended to undermine group goals.[29]

The matter of leadership also presented problems as the death of the original leader brought the demise of many societies. The Labadist, Bethel, and Aurora societies had as their primary bond the power and magnetic personality of their leader. After his death, the organizations fell apart.[30]

Although historians regarded most groups as failures, it is interesting to note that they did not fail because of their communism, nor did more than a limited number fail economically. This does not mean that all made large profits, but in terms of producing a livable wage, most succeeded. Although some groups may have made unsound decisions regarding location and therefore suffered handicaps because of factors such as poor soil and in-

adequate transportation facilities, more often the breakdowns stemmed from quarrels and disagreements among members and the participants' lack of experience in agriculture.[31]

E. The Hutterite Utopia

As other utopian societies faded into oblivion, the Hutterites began their life in the new world. Coming during the 1870's, the Hutterites brought with them a fully developed social, economic, and religious society, which they moved in its entirety from the steppes of Russian to the Dakota frontier. Although not a product of the American frontier, nor shaped in any way by it, the Hutterites nevertheless shared many of the characteristics of the earlier utopian groups. The Brethren practiced communism, which they believed to be the will of God as expressed in the Bible and because of this, they professed to experience the one true Christian faith. Hence, they experienced a superior way of life. With the colony as the center of their existence, the Hutterites were, like earlier groups, communitarian in form. As the Puritans and many others had done, the Hutterites shut themselves off from the world although for different reasons. Earlier groups believed that they must first isolate themselves to properly develop their ideal community. The isolation would soon vanish as once established they would then attempt to influence others in the belief their reconstructed society would provide an example for the outside world. The Hutterites stood in sharp contrast to this, as they demanded isolation for the opposite reason. Because they came convinced they had already achieved the perfect life, the Hutterites intended no change or reform.

Indeed, their sole reason for leaving the old world was to preserve what they had developed and retained for three centuries. Thus, the lure of the frontier to remake and reshape society that had influenced so many of the utopian groups, did not affect the Hutterites in any way. The only demands they made of their new environment were adequate amounts of land and isolation.

Because of their belief that they possessed a superior religion and a superior society, the Hutterites became on their move to America, a part of the American utopian movement. Surviving many hardships in their initial years of settlement, the Hutterites retained their traditions and beliefs, and had within a few years increased the number of their colonies. In examining the histories of the American utopian movement, it is puzzling indeed to find so little mention of these people. At present they are the only survivor of the American utopian movement that still retain their original communal form and have grown in membership, rather than decreased. In terms of historical importance, it would seem the Hutterites deserve more attention than they have received in the past. If longevity and expansion are regarded as marks of success, then the Hutterites stand out as the most successful American utopian group.

III. ORIGIN AND EUROPEAN BACKGROUND OF THE HUTTERITES

Growing out of the religious revivals that accompanied the Protestant Reformation in Europe, the Hutterites originated in 1528, stemming directly from the Anabaptist Movement. Regarded as heretics and hunted down as criminals, the Hutterites wandered from country to country throughout Eastern Europe for almost 350 years before immigrating to the New World. Throughout this period, the Brethren successfully retained their traditional society because when confronted with ultimatums for change, they chose instead to forego their land and possessions and sought new frontiers where they could continue their old ways. Sometimes finding peace and periods of prosperity, but more often finding persecution and hardship, the Brethren made major settlements in Moravia, Slovakia, Transylvania, and Russia. In spite of the extreme hostility encountered, and with the exception of two brief periods, the Hutterites maintained their religious beliefs and preserved their communal living patterns.

A. Origin

The Anabaptists stemmed from Ulrich Zwingli and his followers in Zurich, Switzerland, in the early sixteenth century. Not content with the reforms advocated by Zwingli, a group later known as the Swiss Brethren, demanded even further changes in the church. In 1525, these reformers completely severed their tie with Zwingli when they introduced adult baptism, and thus the taufer or Anabaptist movement began.[1] The institution of adult baptism represented a complete break with the state church and "inaugurated

a new church based on the revolutionary principle of religious toleration and admission to which was based upon confession of faith through adult baptism."[2] Advocating a "voluntary, free and independent" religious group, they were "clearly the extreme Left of that day."[3]

After 1525, Anabaptism spread very rapidly. The reformers had no central authority, however, because so many diverse beliefs developed. Finally, in 1527, Swiss Anabaptists set down a defined confession of faith, the Schleitheim Confession. They believed that each man had the right to interpret Christ's teaching in his own way through his own study of the New Testament. The fundamental principle of their belief was, "The immediate, direct accountability of each individual soul to God in all religious things."[4] Their doctrine included non-resistance, refusal to take any oath, adult baptism, separation of church and State, refusal to hold public office, and exclusion of the Christian from the world.[5] Many members also favored including the common ownership of goods based on the biblical injunction found in Acts 2:44 that "all that believed were together and had all things common." They did not include this principle in the 1527 confession, however.[6]

From the beginning, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Zwinglians regarded the movement as dangerous and in 1526, Zurich introduced the death penalty for the reformers.[7] However, because Moravian officials did not persecute the Anabaptists, many found a refuge there. Out of this welter of Anabaptist factions in sixteenth century Moravia, a group of about 200 gradually emerged as Hutterites and adopted the principle of communal property. Inspired to believe the abolition of private property marked

the first step in achieving a closer communion with God and hence a more perfect religious state, the Hutterites regarded themselves as experiencing a superior life.[8]

The most important individual during the Hutterites' early period was Jakob Hutter (sometimes spelled with one t) who joined the group in 1529. The prosperity and government of these people attracted Hutter and he shared their belief that communal living marked the only true Christian existence. Because of his religious beliefs and activities, Tirolean officials captured Hutter in 1536, and burned him at the stake.[9] During his association with this group that named themselves after him, Hutter provided strong leadership and the "community of goods" principle became a permanent part of the Brethrens' life. The period under his leadership might well be called the "gathering of the tribes;" the institutions he helped develop have lasted for 400 years.[10]

Similar to the Hutterites in both their origin and beliefs, the Mennonites originated during the same period. Following an early Anabaptist reformer, Menno Simons, the Mennonites took their name from him and adopted his teachings as the fundamentals of their faith.[11] In one very significant way, however, the Mennonites and Hutterites differed, as the Mennonites never engaged in the "community of goods."[12] The Mennonites failed to maintain the same unity as the Hutterites, and after considerable internal dissension, the group divided into several distinct branches. All retained the name Mennonite, however, and today there are seventeen branches in the United States.[13]

Although agreeing on common doctrine, in practice the Hutterites proved to be more consistent than the Mennonites. Accepting completely the idea of non-resistance, Hutterite workmen did not produce any weapons or materials that could be used in warfare. In contrast, many Mennonites engaged in the lucrative business of manufacturing gunpowder although outwardly claiming a belief in non-resistance and opposition to warfare. "Blood money" was the term applied to war taxes and again the Hutterites would not acquiesce.[14] The two groups shared a common origin, accepted the same doctrine, experienced the same migration patterns to the new world, but differed in their internal organization.[15]

B. Major Settlements

Shortly after settling in Moravia, the Moravian Landtag in 1532, declared that all Anabaptists and Jews must leave that country. As a result, the Hutterites fled from their homes and did not return for several years. In 1547, severe persecution began again when Charles V attempted to eliminate all Protestants from his empire and the Moravian nobles under whom the Hutterites worked, received orders to expel them. The group then went to Slovakia, located in Hungary. Forced to leave there also, the Brethren spent the next few years in hiding along the Moravian-Hungarian border, constantly hunted down as criminals.[16] During the Hutterites' remaining years in Europe, their movements cannot be clearly traced. In the available material, it is not clearly stated if, when the Hutterites left an old settlement to initiate another, all members migrated as a whole or if some remained in the old homeland. Some dispersion took

place, but it is not apparent to what extent they separated during their movements throughout eastern Europe.

Following the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, the Hutterites returned to their Moravian homes. In that year, the group entered what they called the "Golden Age" which lasted until the end of the century. During this time the society prospered and grew, establishing over eighty-five Bruderhofs or households with an estimated membership of approximately 15,000. The Hutterites engaged in missionary activity during the "Golden Age" and converts from all over Europe joined the colonies.[17] But with the coming of the seventeenth century, the Hutterites felt the full force of the Counter-Reformation. Despite some attrition in numbers, Moravian Hutterites successfully resisted pressure to join the Catholic Church and resisted the suspicious hatred of less prosperous neighboring peasants. However, the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) made the Brethrens' life in Moravia intolerable and in 1622, after the loss of many members and all their capital assets, a substantial number left. The majority went again to Slovakia (Hungary) where they sought out fellow Hutterites in Sabatisch and Leva, colonies established in the 1500's. Another group began a colony at Alwintz, Transylvania (Rumania), further dispersing the Brethren. Within a few years all Hutterites had vanished from Moravia.[18]

In the 1660's, the Transylvanian colonies suffered serious financial hardships and a substantial loss of members. At the lowest point, their membership had dwindled to around thirty or forty members and if it had not been for additional converts at that time it is likely these colonies would have died out. In 1756, however, a number of Lutherans came from

Carinthia and brought "rejuvention of and re-dedication to the old principles."[19] After 146 years in Transylvania, the group, caught in a Turkish-Russian War, left that country and in 1770 settled themselves in the Russian Ukraine, joining other Hutterites from Slovakia. After consultation with an official of the Russian crown who desired settlement in the Ukraine, the Hutterites received long term land rights, exemption from military duty, and exemption from an oath.[20]

In Slovakia, meanwhile, where the majority of Hutterites continued to live, the Brethren were subjected to the hardships and brutality of marauding Turkish Armies as well as renewed efforts by the Jesuits to convert them. In 1733, the State ordered them to take their infants to priests for baptism or suffer a heavy penalty.[21] Under the reign of the Hungarian Empress Maria Theresa, the Catholic pressure reached its peak.[22] The following is an account of that experience:

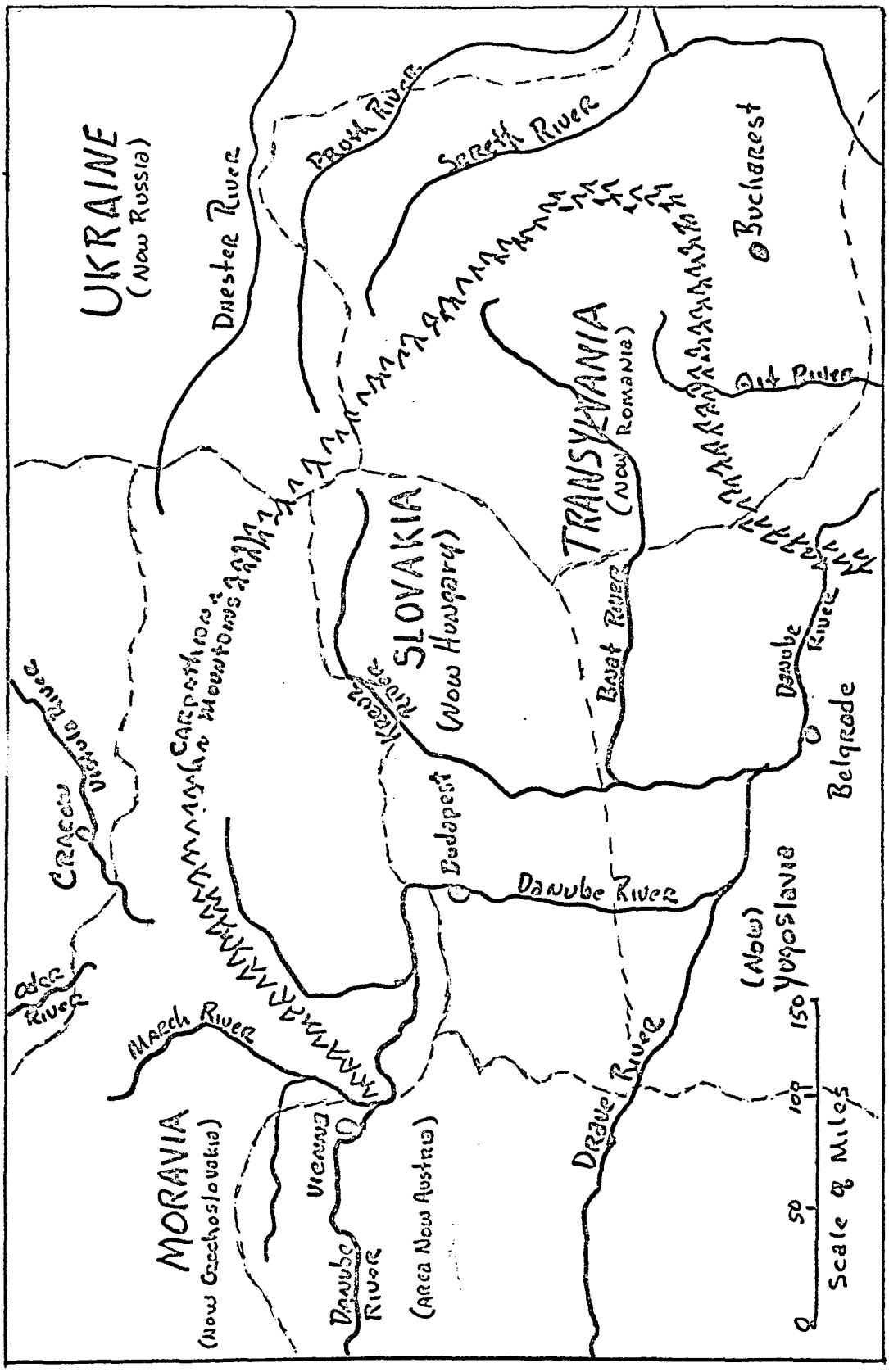
> Their old manuscript books were confiscated...; children were taken away from their parents; and the more important male members were put into monasteries until they either accepted instructions and were converted, or until they died. Catholic services were established at the Bruderhofs and every one was compelled to attend. In short, externally the Hutterite population had now turned Catholic, although in secret they continued to practice their old beliefs, likewise maintaining their cooperative enterprises.[23]

For the majority of Slovakian Hutterites, communal life came to an end as they gradually became integrated into non-Hutterite life. A very small number, however, refused to accept the Catholic faith and eventually found their way to Russia. There they were joined within a short time by the Transylvanian Hutterites. By 1800, all of the "old school Simon pure Hutterites" had left Slovakia and Transylvania.[24] The joining of these

two groups in Russia ended Hutterite movements across eastern Europe. Rejecting demands for change in their old homelands, the Hutterites chose instead to move further eastward in search of a new land. Russia represented such an area, and with the coming of the nineteenth century, the Hutterites, reunited, pursued their utopian ways on the Ukrainian steppes.

After one hundred years of Russian life, the Czar in 1870, declared that the Hutterites must give up their military exemptions, their German language, and their separate schools. The Brethren appealed to the government, but without favorable results. Once again, faced with impending change, the Hutterites refused to give up their rights; they chose to leave Russia. Considerations included migration to New Zealand, South America, and North America. Since a major concern was exemption from military service, the Hutterites gained great hope from the inaugural address by President Grant in which he stated that "within the future there seemed to be no need for armies."[25] However, the United States government made no definite promise concerning military exemptions. After an inspection trip by several members, the entire Russian Hutterite population decided to migrate to southeastern Dakota Territory which they believed was "in scenery so similar to the steppes of Russia."[26]

They arrived in 1874, 1876, and 1877, and settled in three colonies near Yankton, Dakota Territory. The majority of members remained in the Bruderhofs, but some chose to farm individually and those joined neighboring Mennonite Churches. Arriving on a new frontier, the Brethren came well prepared for the experience. The social and economic institutions they



Map 1. Eastern European region where Hutterite settlements located in the countries of Moravia, Slovakia, Transylvania, and Russia between 1528 and 1874

had developed to sustain them in Europe would also help them cope successfully with the Dakota frontier.

C. Hutterite Beliefs

Hutterite society revolved around five central beliefs set down in Great Chronicle, written in the sixteenth century. These beliefs were (1) that God sanctioned their way of life and He must be obeyed, (2) that they must live communally, (3) that they must practice non-resistance, (4) that they must isolate themselves from the outside world and live in a simple manner, and (5) that they must refuse to take any oath. In all of these, Hutterites believed they were accepting God's authority as revealed in the Bible.[27]

The Great Chronicle contained largely a history of their first 137 years and it is to this early period that they continually looked for guidance. Along with their historical record, the book included numerous accounts of the persecutions of early Hutterites leaders serving as an inspiration to the members, as well as evoking strong feelings of cohesion and loyalty.[28] The second work, the Little Chronicle, largely a record of their migration and activities up to 1824, was written mainly by Elder Johannes Waldner. After their migration to the United States, the Hutterites showed little interest in continuing their chronicles.[29] These books, along with their devotional writings, hymns, and the Bible, provided them with the interpretation of God's word. During the middle 1600's, the Transylvanians established the practice of recording all sermons in an attempt to remain pure. These sermons have continually been used in

Hutterite religious services since then, thus eliminating all contemporary interpretations of the Bible. This practice has served the Brethren well in their attempts to resist change and ignore all worldly conditions, as their religious doctrines and practices have not been modified.[30]

The Hutterites defined each new situation with reference to their central beliefs. To the Brethren, no break existed between the past and the present. The past was not a separate bygone age, but continued to live in all their daily actions, their education, their beliefs, and constituted their reason for existence. Hence, their total being continued all that had gone before. Throughout their 400 year history there have been subtle and slight modifications to changing social and cultural situations as the Hutterites moved from one land to another, but the basic beliefs and living patterns remain unchanged.

Religious convictions governed every aspect of Hutterite life, even to the placement of buildings. Because all authority came from God, who created the universe and arranged all things in order and harmony, they ordered their social life and physical world to conform to this ideal.[31] Within a settlement, all buildings had to be placed properly in terms of direction and distance from the others. The buildings faced toward the center of the community, symbolic of the groups' rejection of worldly things.[32] Individuals also had their proper place in society as God had so ordered their lives. Man over woman, husband over wife, older members over younger people, and parents over children.[33]

Their theology governed economic as well as social arrangements. The man who pursued agriculture participated in more than an economic occupa-

tion; he took part in an activity that had not only been approved by God, but was actually holy. The Brethren regarded the life of the tradesman or merchant as sinful because then one must be involved in buying and selling and have full contact with the outside world. In contrast, the farmer could reject the world and be free to live the righteous life.[34]

Perceiving the world as dualistic, the Brethren believed man basically evil and displeasing to God. Nevertheless, man could be spiritually born again, if he accepted God's word as stated in Hutterite sermons, if he repented his sins, and if he daily surrendered his will to the will of God.[35] The matter of will was central to Hutterite faith and behavior. The destruction of the individual will was one of the primary aims of Hutterite education; the goal became self-surrender, not self-development.[36] The Hutterites also believed conscience to be a vital element in guiding one's behavior, and so the formulation of conscience in keeping with the groups' beliefs became a primary goal of Hutterite training in the first 18 years of each member's life.[37] Following many years of training and obedience, baptism took place at age eighteen. The ceremony symbolized that the individual had chosen to give up his will, submit himself to the common will of the group, and had officially joined of his own choice.[38]

D. Institutions and Living Arrangements

From the beginning of the sect, the Brethren worked to be as self-sufficient as possible and because of that the Hutterites practiced all occupations known during medieval times. Farming represented their major

activity, but in addition their colonies frequently had masons, blacksmiths, sicklesmiths, dyers, shoemakers, furriers, wheelwrights, saddlers, cutlers, watchmakers, tailors, weavers, glass and rope makers, brewers and other occupations.[39] Their theology made them singleminded and sober workers and they gained a reputation for industry.

Concerned that communalism would make them appear suspicious in the eyes of their neighbors, the Hutterites placed much emphasis upon leading exemplary lives. To protect themselves against criticism in craft work, their leaders drew up service and manufacturing codes for every area in which they worked so that Hutterite work became known for quality. This reflected the great stress the Hutterites placed on honesty and efficiency.[40]

Although the Hutterites had separate institutions of the family, education, and government, little distinction existed between them because all were parts of the total process of religious unity and purpose--all for doing God's will.[41] They even lacked a separate church organization. Instead, the entire community made up the congregation. To the Hutterites, gathering for a meal, for example, was more than a meal. The act also represented a form of worship and a tribute to God.[42] No distinction existed between church and state with the term, "secular", reserved for the outside world.[43]

The position of the minister, the most important and respected individual in the colony, illustrated the unity existing between the different sectors of Hutterian life. The community government and not a congregation elected him and all phases of life fell under his jurisdiction. He was in effect, the active leader of all institutions.[44]

An elected group of elders or trustees governed the colonies and were in turn supervised by the colony minister. The members referred to the four to seven elders as "headquarters". They outlined and directed all policies and with the minister, supervised a business manager who handled all financial transactions and made the daily work assignments. The latter responsibility involved overseeing the agricultural, kitchen, and garden foremen who in turn would supervise workers in these areas.[45] During certain seasons, all colony members with the exception of the cooks and kindergarten workers helped with the agricultural work, thus giving the colony a mobile work force.[46]

In Europe, the Bruderhof usually consisted of from twenty to 100 people in one colony. Each colony consisted of several large three story buildings and several smaller houses.[47] The number of Bruderhofs varied considerably during their 300 years in Europe. One authority listed around ninety in Moravia at the peak of their prosperity. By 1619, only forty-five collective groups were reported and by 1624, the number had dwindled to around twenty-four.[48] There is no average number given for the different years, nor are there chronological accounts of the existing colonies.

Of all the characteristics of their living arrangements, their "community of goods" stands out as the most unique and the most important. The Hutterites were the only reform group in the early sixteenth century who accepted completely the communitarian principle. This made them "unique indeed within the entire history of the Christian churches on that point."[49]

With the exception of the monastaries, the Hutterites practiced communalism longer than any other group.[50] They had good proof of the wisdom of a communistic society because when they revoked their communal ways they declined and when they accepted them again they thrived. Twice during their European history, the Brethren rejected the community of goods, and both times suffered economically. The first establishment of private property took place in Transylvania between 1685 and 1695, and the second in 1818, after their move to Russia. In Russia, the Brethren lived individually for about forty years, but in 1859, they re-established communism among all the Bruderhofs. Peter Riedemann, one of their greatest leaders in the sixteenth century, summed up their feeling in 1545 when he stated "to give up the true Christian community means to give up God."[51]

Although most aspects of their life have changed little since the early 1500's, missionary activity was an exception. Hutterites followed this characteristic Anabaptist practice with great fervor and some success during their early years. It is unclear why they gradually abolished the practice, but by the mid-seventeenth century, Hutterite proselytizing had ended, and the Brethren had begun their insular society. In their early period, the congregation selected certain Brethren from the preachers to go out as missionaries in the spring and fall. These occasions were very solemn as the departing members carried great responsibility and faced extreme danger.[52] The results were substantial. A continuous stream of people came to Moravia from Tirol, Switzerland, Wurttemberg, and the Rhineland. Gradually the opposition from authorities in these countries grew stronger. Only a few missionaries died a natural death with most

dying as martyrs--being burned, beheaded, drowned, or imprisoned for life. One source states that eighty per cent died a martyr's death.[53] The execution of these men was often a great public event and attracted large crowds. The effect, however, sometimes turned in the Hutterites' favor as the executions aroused much sympathy for their cause and some converts joined as a result of the event.[54]

E. Education

Stressing self-discipline, the Hutterites regarded education as a means of maintaining their way of life. The result was training of emotions rather than training of intellect by means of "indoctrination and habituation." With the proper training and education, responses became automatic and reflected group goals. The extreme reliance on the past to serve as a guide for the present and future eliminated the need for decisions. There existed a right way and a wrong way and to the Brethren both were clear as a result of their past history and their central beliefs. Hence, there was little indecision or worry about making proper choices.[55]

Because of their collective living habits, the Brethren had an excellent opportunity for a "systematic Christian upbringing of youth." The Bruderhofs could adequately take care of all levels of education from nursery school through the grades. Hutterite education did not go beyond grade school because they believed that further education would discourage or weaken the fear of God in the children, and that fear was "the highest goal of all Anabaptist education."[56]

The Hutterites regarded elementary education as vital because the

Bible had continually been viewed as the guide to proper behavior and hence the members must know how to read. The practices and policies used throughout their four centuries of existence were set down in the Hutterian School Regulations of 1578.[57] Every Bruderhof had three types of schools--the "Little School" (nursery), "Kindergarten" (ages 2-6) and the "Big School" or "German School" (ages 6-15). The Hutterites set up their Kindergartens three centuries before the modern European kindergartens came into existence. The "Big School" represented more than a school, as the children lived together for most of the year. The schools were described as having "a free and cheerful discipline in love and the fear of God, peaceful in spirit." The Brethren used discipline sparingly, but children learned to accept punishment willingly.[58]

After their settlement in Dakota, the Hutterites operated two education systems; the self-imposed Hutterite system and the other operated by the state. Viewing the state required education system as contrary to their goals, the Hutterites tolerated it, but counteracted the influence wherever possible. The "German School" in South Dakota was then like "a blanket of counter-indoctrination thrown around the English school session" which the children attended for one-half hour before their regular English session and one-half hour afterwards.[59] In South Dakota, the State Department of Public Instruction required that the Hutterite schools employ state accredited teachers; the first outside teacher came to Bon Homme Colony in 1909. In 1921, South Dakota law required the use of English.[60] Most Hutterites had only eighth grade educations and believed further education unnecessary to be farmers.[61]

When young persons reached the age of fifteen, they left "German School" and entered an apprenticeship. Then permitted to eat with adults, they also began to assume adult responsibilities. The young men rotated from one department to another, learning the procedures in the different work areas. The girls followed the same pattern working in the laundry, kitchen, garden, and doing babysitting.[62] By the time young people reached age eighteen, they had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the Hutterite beliefs and religion, and schooled in all aspects of Hutterian work. They were then ready to be baptized which ushered them completely into the adult Hutterite world.

Thus, beginning originally as Anabaptists, the Hutterites soon distinguished themselves by their "community of goods." Subjected to almost continual persecution for their religious beliefs, they successfully retained their doctrines and practices established during their formative years, moving several times in search of new lands where they might begin again as an agrarian utopian society. The Brethren structured their communal life to maximize cohesion and loyalty and to further strengthen the group will. The Hutterites placed heavy stress upon the education of their children, strongly instilling in them obedience to God, and continually indoctrinating the young in their communal-religious ways. The result of their actions led to a system which ably tolerated stress and persecution from the outside world and yet perpetuated itself for over 400 years. The system remains essentially unchanged even today.

IV. THE DAKOTA EXPERIENCE

A. Background of Dakota and Early Farming Experiences

The first group of Hutterites arrived in Yankton, Dakota Territory, in May of 1874. The Hutterian Brethren left the old world to re-establish their communities on a new frontier and so were ready to begin again as a religious communitarian society. In another sense, their experience was also significant because they came to Dakota just prior to the Great Dakota Boom and would share the problems of adjusting and adapting to a new region with thousands of other pioneers entering Dakota from the prairie states or Europe.

The Hutterites came during a time of extreme hardship as Dakota had proven a hostile environment to the earliest settlers throughout the 1860's and early 1870's. Moving into an area traditionally characterized by marginal rainfall, lack of timber, blizzards, hail, and prairie fires, the farmers also experienced during these years a period of extended drought. The drought and the natural adversities of the region had greatly reduced crop yields and many of the earliest farmers admitted defeat. Indian uprisings presented yet another hardship and in 1862, approximately half of the few people in Dakota left because of an Indian outbreak. The Indian menace continued until 1866. The Hutterites thus arrived at a time when many Dakotans had given up in despair and returned to the east. The Brethrens' first year on the American frontier was, therefore, a realistic introduction to life on the Prairie-Plains.[1]

Prior to the 1870's, settlement in Dakota had been limited to a few scattered homesteads in the southeastern tip of the territory because of several circumstances. The belief prevailed that the central region of the United States consisted only of desert, and the Plains were referred to as the "Great American Desert" and labeled as such on maps.[2] Along with the belief that settlement on the Plains was undesirable was the fact that with land available in the eastern states, few attempted to move farther west for farming purposes. By 1870, however, the Mississippi Valley states had passed beyond the frontier stage and farmers turned their eyes toward the Plains.

Two railroads, the Chicago and North Western and the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, did their best to make the farmers' dreams come true by laying tracks into Dakota.[3] With offices in all major eastern American cities and major European cities as well, the railroads played an important role in attracting more people to the Plains. The Milwaukee Road proclaimed "Dakota the land of promise", and did not deny claims that in Dakota sickness vanished and almost any cereal, vegetable, or flower could be grown in that region.[4]

In addition to the railroads' publicity, climatic changes in the mid-1870's seemed to refute the warnings of men like John Wesley Powell, author of the Report on the Lands of the Arid Regions of the United States, that the region was semi-arid and therefore could not support the type of agricultural practices followed in the prairie states.[5] The grasshopper invasions, droughts, and extreme heat that plagued the farmers in the 1860's and early 1870's seemed to be part of the past, and by 1878, thousands

of farmers again found adequate rainfall, excellent soil, and adequate marketing facilities.[6] The idea that "rain followed the plow" prevailed as farmers reasoned that when plowing loosened the soil it was capable of absorbing more moisture. This process caused more evaporation, which in turn, brought more rain. The higher than average rainfall between 1878 and 1886 seemed to substantiate the farmers' beliefs and resulted in increased settlement in the area.[7]

The railroads' activities, climatic changes, and federal land laws such as the Homestead Act, provided encouragement for potential settlers. In 1878, the great land rush began as thousands moved in to take up land. By 1885, the population of Dakota Territory reached 550,000.[8]

The settlement pattern in Dakota followed that of the prairie states to the east with the settlers coming from two major areas. The greatest number came from the Mississippi Valley States of Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois. Many of these people like the noted Middle Border author, Hamlin Garland, had moved several times previous to their trek into Dakota, moving along with the tide of settlers into newly opened frontier regions.[9] These people were accustomed to the rigors of pioneer life and an agricultural tradition, but not accustomed to the climatic and geographical differences of the Plains from the Prairies. The second largest group were the immigrants from Ireland, Northern Europe, and the Scandinavian countries.[10] Some of these people came directly to the frontier from Russia, Germany, and Holland, while others had settled earlier in the prairie region and then moved farther west during the Dakota boom.[11]

The most important problem facing the farmers moving into Dakota Territory was that of adjustment and adoption to a new environment as their movement signaled expansion out of the Prairie States into the Great Plains. The eastern one-third of Dakota lay in the zone where climatic and geographical features of the Prairies and the Plains merged together. The other major section of Dakota was the Great Plains proper which extended over the western two-thirds of the state. The region where the Hutterites settled, between the James and Missouri Rivers, lay in the transitional zone and presented the most serious problem of adjustment as there the rainfall varied more than in the adjoining eastern area.[12]

As farmers crossed the border into Dakota, the topographical features and weather conditions remained the same. Nevertheless as they moved westward they discovered a gradual decrease in the amount of rainfall and timber, and a gradual flattening of the land. Tall prairie grasses slowly gave way to the Plains cover of buffalo and grama grasses. Soil differences were also obvious as the farther west the settler moved the humus, organic matter, and nitrogen content of the soil gradually decreased.[13]

In regard to climate, the eastern region contained features of both the Prairie states and the Plains. The rainfall averaged twenty-six inches annually with seventy-five per cent coming during the six warmest months. The region included both the warmest and coldest parts of the state, and in this respect eastern Dakota resembled the Plains.[14] The characteristics of wind and moisture evaporation also revealed the areas proximity to the Plains.

When the farmers reached approximately the 98th meridian, they had moved out of the transitional zone into the Great Plains proper. Primarily a steppe covered with short grasses and low herbs, the Plains contained few trees, the exception being some cottonwoods and boxelders located along streams. Rainfall, considerably less than in the eastern section, was also less regular with the average between ten and twenty inches a year.[15] Severe climatic extremes characterized the Plains with rainfall occasionally accompanied by hail. Seventy-five per cent of the rainfall came during the growing months, but the remainder of the year the area was very dry, and droughts lasting for several seasons were not uncommon. Another characteristic which made the area less desirable for agriculture was the high rate of evaporation which reduced the effectiveness of the already limited precipitation. In many areas, the rate of evaporation was from two to five times the average rainfall. Persistent winds were also common, and along with the dry air, were very detrimental to crops.[16] The soils also varied more than in the eastern section.[17] The result of the different geological and climatic features meant that the farther into Dakota the farmer moved, the greater would be the adjustment problem. With uncertain rainfall patterns and the extended drought periods, Plains farmers' fortunes fluctuated between short periods of prosperity and long intervals of depression. The Homestead Act that encouraged many to settle in Central Dakota was not suited to the semi-arid region of the Plains, and in the absence of scientific information the result was often complete failure.[18] For the farmer in the eastern most region there would be less modification

and the farm practices would emulate those of the Prairie States to a large degree.[19]

The living conditions in Dakota also marked a change from the Prairie States as the farmers faced a scarcity of water and fuel, as well as being subjected to extreme heat and cold, blizzards and prairie fires. Water, the most scarce necessity, usually lay from forty to sixty feet below the surface. Lacking machinery, the pioneers usually dug wells by hand. Finding an inadequate supply of wood for fuel, the settlers used buffalo chips, referred to as the "coal of the prairie", for their main source of heat. Hay twisted into knots to prolong the burning time, provided another major type of fuel. Even with substitutes, however, fuel remained a critical problem. During the winter months, the settlers experienced extremely cold weather, as well as being subjected to blizzards, a phenomenon of the Great Plains. In 1873, 1880, 1881, and 1888, the blizzards were particularly severe resulting in extreme hardships. It was not uncommon to hear of deaths by freezing and starvation during those times. With the coming of spring, new problems appeared. Prairie fires occurred regularly and the settlers particularly feared them during the spring and fall when the region was the driest. In 1889, a prairie fire completely destroyed the community of Leola, South Dakota. During the summer the temperatures registered well over the 100 degree mark on many occasions, almost continually accompanied by strong winds.[20]

In the 1870's, grasshopper plagues added to the farmers' problems. Grasshoppers caused extensive crop damage, particularly in 1873, 1874, and 1876. The insects usually came during the last of July and in such numbers

that like a cloud, they darkened the sky. They remained between six and eight days and devoured everything in sight.[21] The situation in 1874 and 1875 presented even greater difficulties, because in addition to their reduced food supply, the settlers also experienced bitterly cold weather and heavy snows during the winter. Many families almost starved and ended up burning their hay to keep warm. The extremity of the situation led to the formation of relief societies in every organized county in southeastern Dakota as well as some northeastern counties.[22] In addition, appeals made to eastern states resulted in Dakotans receiving more than $4,000 in that year. Even Congress appropriated $150,000 for food for disaster areas which resulted in the War Department distributing approximately 75,000 pounds of flour and 25,000 pounds of bacon to nearly 4,000 people in Dakota in the spring of 1875.[23] Many farmers left Dakota as a result of the difficulties. The Depression of 1873 further increased the farmers' problems and during the mid-1870's, movement into the area diminished.[24]

Faced with these many difficulties, the farmers' activities during the first year remained limited, with the actual farming operation conducted on a very small scale. With little machinery, and money, the settlers' usual practice was to break and farm only a few acres, generally planting sod corn, a few potatoes, and vegetables. The Homestead Act required that settlers break a minimum of five acres, although many broke more land and it was not uncommon for a farmer to break thirty acres in the first season.[25] The first few years' experience for the average settler added up to a limited operation because of limited labor, funds, and knowledge. Prac-

ticing a cash crop economy during the first years of farming, the farmer depended upon the market conditions for his profit. The result was that some farmers still succeeded if faced with either a poor crop or low prices, but they could not survive both.[26]

In spite of these adversities that faced the settlers throughout the 1870's, Dakota continued to attract more and more people. In the early 1880's, the farmers experienced several good years and farmers in Brown County reported wheat yields of twenty-five to forty bushels per acre in 1882. The result of the high yields was reflected in increased settlement as the number of farmers in that county increased from twenty-eight in 1880 to 2,441 in 1885.[27]

'Because of the geographical and weather conditions encountered in Dakota, settlers discovered that farming required more capital than in the prairie states.' The farmers faced the initial costs of purchasing food, farm equipment, fencing materials, livestock, housing materials, and well digging. These costs were substantial and the need for credit widespread among the settlers. Railroad companies advised farmers moving west to take up government land in the 1870's that they needed between $800 and $1,000 for initial expenses and operating capital.[28] Farmers often turned to outside employment such as hiring out to local businesses like blacksmiths, to raise money until they realized an income from their farms. During certain years the railroads offered employment.[29] These sources did not provide sufficient capital, however, so many turned to Eastern investors for credit.

In the 1860's and 1870's because of poor farming conditions, farmers' had difficulty obtaining credit. But when heavy migration began in 1878, with temporary improvement in farm prosperity, Dakota farmers found it easier to get credit, although only at high interest rates. Influenced by the optimistic reports coming from Dakota, many small eastern investors quickly picked up mortgages on which they received from six to ten per cent on real estate and from ten to eighteen per cent on chattel goods. In 1889, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Investments, Mortgages, and Corporations reported that the people of his state loaned between $8,000,000 and $12,000,000 annually to western farmers. Larger investors also took part by purchasing municipal bonds of Dakota towns.[30]

The rapid settlement of Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas and the substantial flow of money into these areas resulted in a speculative situation where money was often invested quickly and recklessly with little knowledge about the specific investment. The fever affected the farmers as well as the easterners and many accepted loans quickly although uncertain about their ability to repay. Lack of information concerning the transactions often resulted in fraud. Bonds of Capitola township, Spink County, Dakota were bought and sold many times before the discovery that no such township existed. The result was a period of prosperity built upon credit in a region where the future was anything but certain.[31]

Interest rates varied considerably, and seemed to depend upon the demand, locality, and availability of money. Also, rates were usually higher in newly opened territories than in more settled areas.[32] References to "very high rates" are commonplace and in most areas from the mid-1870's

to the mid-1880's, the rates appeared to be as high as the traffic would bear. The legal rate established in the territory in 1872 was twenty-four per cent annually.[33] In 1874, a Kansas firm, J. B. Watkins and Company, charged sixteen to seventeen per cent annually, and by 1881, farmers along the 98th meridian were paying eleven per cent annually.[34]

The drought which began in 1886 soon brought an end to easy credit. Widespread crop failure in the central and northern plains accompanied by continually falling farm prices spelled disaster for farmers. They found that they could not get further credit, and the number of new mortgages declined. In South Dakota, only twenty-six per cent of the farm mortgages in 1892 had been contracted after 1887.[35] Some eastern investors, afraid to risk more money in the striken areas, also withdrew past investments. With real estate mortgages almost impossible to secure, many farmers turned to chattel mortgages which carried higher rates. Unable to meet mortgage payments, the farmers began to experience foreclosure. In the early 1890's, the mortgage debt of Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota was equal to one-fourth the value of the farm land while in some Kansas and Dakota counties ninety per cent of the farm land was mortgaged. The immediate result was mass migration to eastern regions with 30,498 people leaving Dakota. Two counties, Hand and Hughes, suffered a loss of half their population.[36]

The drought that brought an end to good times in 1886 continued for almost a decade.[37] South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station reported the following rainfall for 1888, 1889, and 1890.

Table 1. Dakota rainfall [a]

Month	1888		1889		1890	
	inches	days	inches	days	inches	days
January			0.86	4	0.65	5
February			1.20	5	0.20	1
March			1.16	1	0.56	3
April			1.03	11	0.79	4
May	2.61	9	1.93	9	3.33	11
June	0.71	11	1.49	10	7.91	14
July	1.61	9	2.92	8	1.54	5
August	3.21	9	0.72	3	2.07	4
September	0.56	4	2.70	3	0.45	4
October	0.62	5	0.01	1	0.31	4
November	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.30	1
December	0.05	1	0.93	3	0.80	2
Year	9.37[b]	48	13.95	59	18.86	58

[a]Calculated from: Report of the United States Agricultural Experiment Station for Dakota for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1888. (1892), Vol. 1-6: 3,4,5.

[b]Total for only eight months.

Severe curtailment in production resulted from the reduced rainfall while at the same time the farmers suffered continually declining prices. In 1890, corn sold for twenty-eight cents a bushel compared with sixty-three cents a bushel nine years earlier in 1881. Wheat also suffered a

sharp decline during the decade as by 1884 the price had dropped to forty-nine cents a bushel, less than half the price farmers received in 1881. Dakota farmers complained in that year that the price of wheat was twenty per cent below the cost of production.[38]

The same weather problems that faced Dakota farmers in the 1860's and early 1870's again appeared after 1886. Continuing throughout the latter 1880's and the decade of the nineties, the farmers experienced almost continual crop failure because of drought intensified by heat and strong winds. The farmers who came to Dakota during the Great Boom were experiencing the reoccurrence of the weather cycle common to the Plains. The good, wet years of the late 1870's and early 1880's had ended and once again drought plagued the Dakotans.[39]

Insects and plant diseases brought still more problems. In 1889, the South Dakota Experiment Station reported that during the 1888-1889 season, Colorado Potato Beetles and cut-worms inflicted great damage to the crops. The report estimated that the cut-worm alone did damage worth $250,000 to the corn crop.[40] In their experiments with wheat, the members of the Experiment Station noted in 1889, that up to July the stands looked good, but then began to show evidence of being "fired" at the base. Eventually blight and rust caused great damage to all stands.[41]

The farmers experienced low crop yields in 1889, followed by a severe winter. In Miner County during the winter of 1889-1890, some 2500 people faced starvation and although the state appropriated no relief supplies, settlers received contributions from outside the state. The poor farming conditions were reflected in the state's census as sixteen per cent of the

counties lost population during that year. Significantly, the region between the James and Missouri Rivers where the Hutterites settled, suffered the heaviest population losses.[42]

By 1890, the great boom had ended. The hard times slightly evident during 1885 and 1886 had increased greatly during the latter 1880's and by the decade of the nineties, Dakota farmers were in dire circumstances: counties postponed tax collections, the state distributed seed grain, many faced ruin from mortgage foreclosure, and the drought and extreme heat continued until 1897 causing almost continual crop failures. Coupled with the Panic of 1893, many settlers rejected pioneering in Dakota.[43]

The pattern thus established was that in good years settlement increased, and in bad years it diminished. By 1900, Dakota again presented a more optimistic picture to potential settlers. With the ending of the drought and the return of higher prices, farmers once more began to move west, this time moving deeper into the Great Plains. Crossing the Missouri River at Chamberlain, settlers began their trek into the state's West River County.[44]

B. Major Crops and Production

The major crops of eastern Dakota during the first years of settlement were cereal grains with wheat being most important. Even though adverse farming conditions reduced the yields, other factors worked in the opposite direction to increase total production. Throughout the period more and more land continually came under tillage as the movement of population from the east continued. The amount of wheat production in the

United States continually increased and after 1870, that increase largely reflected production in Dakota. In 1840, wheat production in the United States totaled 84,823,272 bushels and by 1890, had increased to 468,373,968 bushels. This increase was also reflected in wheat exports which were 4,272 bushels in 1823, and by 1899, totaled 139,432,815.[45] Dakota Territory ranked as one of the top producers of wheat from 1870 to 1900. The following tables give the major crops in Dakota, their national production rank, and other related information.

Table 2. Yields, value, and rank of major Dakota crops in 1899[a]

Crop	Rank	Total number of farms	Farms reporting crops	Acres	Bushels	Value
Wheat	5	52,622	41,621	3,984,659	41,889,380	20,957,917
Corn	27	52,622	43,621	1,196,381	43,402,504	7,213,127
Barley	5	52,622	17,949	299,510	7,031,760	2,003,504
Oats	15	52,622	32,656	691,167	19,412,490	4,114,456

[a]Calculated from: United States Census Bureau. 12th Census, 1900. Agriculture, Part II, Vol. 6: 70, 79, 82, 90. 1902.

Table 3. Total national value, value per bushel, and average yield per acre of major Dakota crops, 1879, 1889, and 1899[a]

Crop	% of total value U.S. crop	Averages 1899			Average bushels per acre		
		Acres per farm reporting	Value per acre	value per bushel	1899	1889	1879
Wheat	5.7	95.7	5.26	0.50	10.5	7.3	10.7[b]
Corn	0.9	34.6	6.07	0.22	27.1	17.5	22.0[b]
Barley	4.8	16.7	6.69	0.28	23.5	9.3	17.2[b]
Oats	1.9	21.2	5.95	0.21	28.1	12.9	28.3[b]

[a]Calculated from: United States Census Bureau. 12th Census, 1900. Agriculture, Part II, Vol. 6: 70, 79, 82, 90. 1902.

[b]Dakota Territory, otherwise South Dakota.

In addition, farm mechanization continually progressed which increased the farmers' productivity.[46] Always receptive to mechanical changes that improved their agricultural output, the Hutterites as well as other Dakota farmers, continually benefited from the advance of farm technology.[47] In 1870, the Oliver chilled-iron plow first appeared on the market. Described as a "light, durable" plow, it was estimated that it would save the nation's farmers $45,000,000 in the expense of plowing. Improved corn planters, cultivators, harrows, as well as mechanical corn huskers, corn harvestors and cornshellers added to farmers' productiveness.[48] The mechanical seeder, already in use by 1860, underwent continual improvement and because of this mechanical device which planted, seeded, harrowed and fertilized all at the same time, it was estimated that the wheat crop would be increased by one-eighth or more. By 1870, the self-binder improved the efficiency of small grain harvesting.[49] With increased mechanization, farmers were then better able to cope with the Dakota environment and farm more extensively. The increased efficiency that resulted from the mechanical devices was shown by the fact that in 1889 it required an average of ten minutes to produce a bushel of wheat whereas in 1830, the time required was three hours and three minutes.[50]

From their first year of settlement, the Hutterites increased their use of farm machinery as well as adopting improved means of production. Although failing to change their social and religious patterns in response to changing social conditions, the Hutterites had from their beginning, responded to technological change and adopted it to their agriculture. With this practice established at the time of migration, the Brethren took

advantage of mechanical improvements for their Dakota farms. In 1875, for example, the members of Bon Homme Colony erected a steam powered mill, and in 1889 they purchased a portable steam engine to replace horse power in the threshing operations. In 1905, Milltown members purchased their first gasoline engine at a cost of $299, as well as gradually adding tractors and other machinery to their inventory. The adoption of technology, however, was selective; such purchases were acceptable only if put to the proper use. Machines could be used to increase production but not for pleasure. Nor was mechanization proper if it broke down old traditions or beliefs.[51]

Coming to Dakota during the 1870's, the Hutterites faced all the difficulties peculiar to the region--drought, grasshoppers, extreme heat and cold, blizzards, lack of wood and water, scarcity of credit, and low prices for their products. Many non-Hutterites who came with optimism and great expectations, retreated in defeat to the more familiar eastern states. To the Hutterites, however, frontier Dakota continued to provide the land and isolation needed for the survival of their society, which because of its own peculiarities proved a successful match to Dakota conditions.

V. THE HUTTERITES IN DAKOTA

The Hutterites as a utopian society not only mastered the environment which brought grief to many others, but soon began a process of expansion that has continued to the present. Sharing the Hutterites early experience were several other utopian groups who attempted settlement at the same time in Dakota. In 1882, two Jewish Agricultural Communities located near Mitchell, only to fail within two years. More similar to the successful Hutterites, were Mennonites who settled in the area during the same period. Unlike the Jewish and Hutterite groups, the Mennonites did not practice communism, but nevertheless possessed strong religious and social bonds which they had successfully maintained for over 300 years.

A. Early Hutterite Settlements and Adjustments

The first American Hutterite colony, Bon Homme, established in 1874, had slightly over 100 members and lay seven miles south of Tabor, on the Missouri River. Not wishing to utilize the Homestead Act, primarily because of the fear that it would place them under an obligation to the government, the Hutterites purchased 2,500 acres of land from Walter A. Burleigh, a former Indian agent. The group paid $17,000 in cash and the balance later in annual installments. The Hutterites' decision to settle in eastern Dakota was probably influenced by the knowledge that Russian Mennonites also planned to settle in the area. In 1873, Daniel Unruh, a Russian Mennonite leader, had visited eastern Dakota to inspect possible settlement sites, and on his return, the group decided to migrate to Dakota.

Upon reaching the United States, however, the Mennonites changed their plans and the majority settled in Kansas and Nebraska.[1]

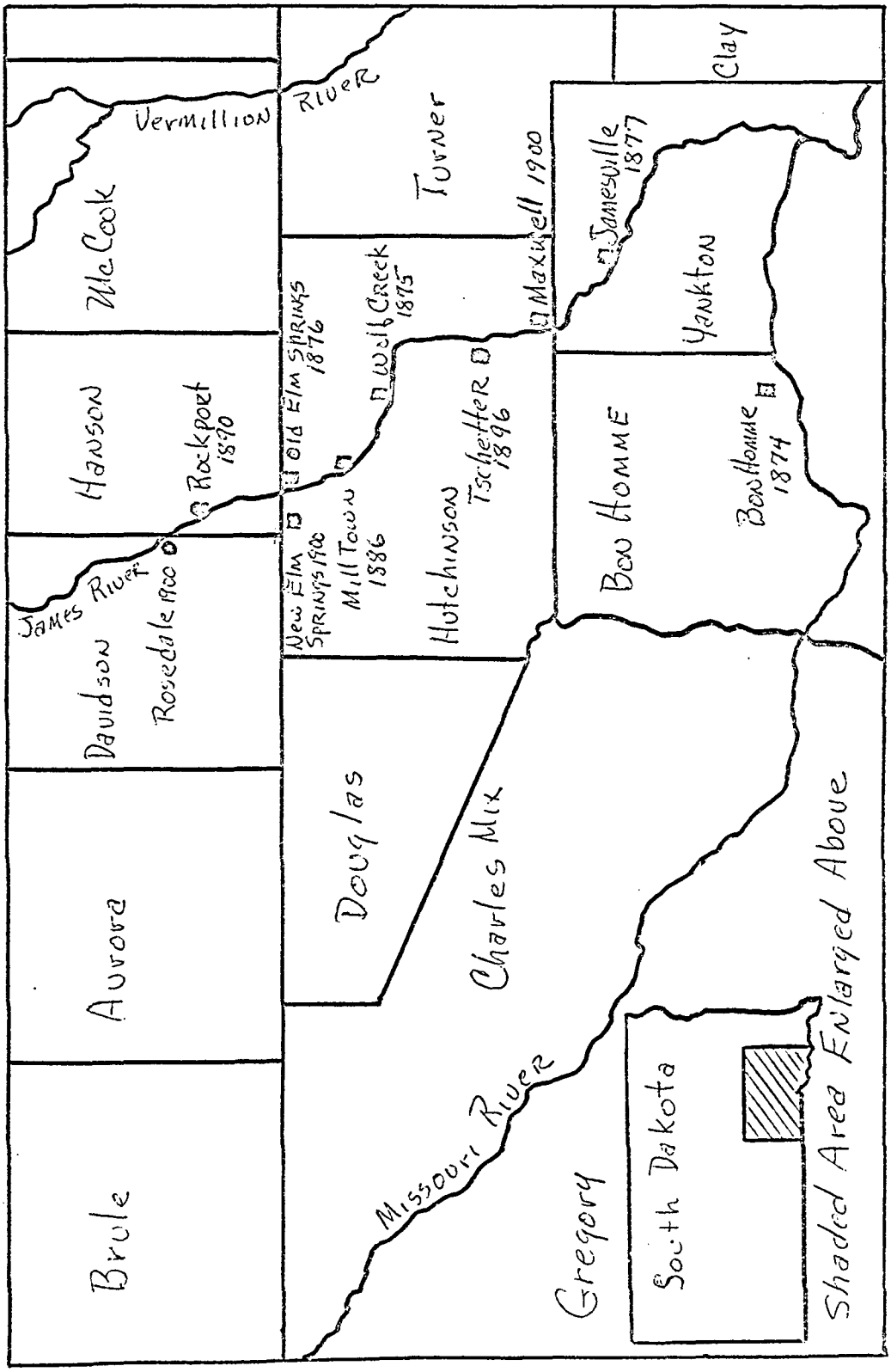
The second group of Hutterites arrived in 1876, and spent the first winter at Silver Lake, Dakota. Purchasing 5,400 acres on the James River, a tributary of the Missouri, they formed the Wolf Creek Colony the following spring. The third major group arrived in 1877, settling the Elmspring Colony. The three immigrant colonies contained about 700 adults and children. The move to a new country resulted in some breakdown of their society as a significant number chose to settle as individual farmers. Eventually the Prairieleut or non-communalist Hutterites joined neighboring Mennonite churches and their relationship with the Hutterite colonies ended.[2]

Four years after its founding, officials of Bon Homme Colony believed it had become overcrowded and made plans for expansion. With the forming of the first daughter colony, the Hutterites established a precedent which has continued to the present. When the mother colony's population increased to between 130 and 150, people began preparations to establish a new settlement. Members drew lots to select those who would make the move to the new colony. Electing a second minister, members purchased land, sent out work crews to erect the necessary buildings, and trained people to manage the different enterprises in the new colony. When the time arrived for the actual move the Brethren divided the assets of the mother colony proportionately among the two groups. Once the new colony achieved self-sufficiency, the tie ended and each group became autonomous. In 1878, Bon Homme founded its first colony (Tripp) thirty-six miles northwest of the

mother group.[3] The second colony established by Bon Homme was Milltown in 1886.[4]

In 1884, the second original colony, Wolf Creek, purchased land for a daughter colony, Jamesville, and in 1890, established a second group, Tschetter, both along the James River. The third original group, Elmspring, reached the expansion stage in 1891 when it established Rockport, six miles north of the original colony. In 1900, the Bon Homme group established the Maxwell Colony along the James, and Elmspring Colony set up New Elmspring.[5] As a result of this expansion, twenty-six years after the initial group settled in Dakota, the Hutterites had increased to ten colonies. Although dispersed to some degree, the colonies all located in the southeastern section of the state and therefore remained in the same climatic zone.

Although being on the frontier and sharing with others the common problem of adjusting to Dakota, the Hutterites were not typical pioneers. Unlike the average pioneer moving westward to set up an individual household, the Brethren came as a "large scale diversified enterprise."[6] In terms of the factors of production--land, labor, and capital--the Hutterites, because of their religion which required them to hold all property and money in common, had a significant advantage over their neighbors. Historians do not know how much capital the Hutterites brought from Russia, but their actions suggest it was substantial as they purchased all their land for the colonies established during this period. Beginning with more capital, the Hutterites purchased very large acreages. This in turn had significant results as the Brethren immediately began extensive, diversified



Map 2. Hutterite colonies located in Dakota from 1874 to 1900

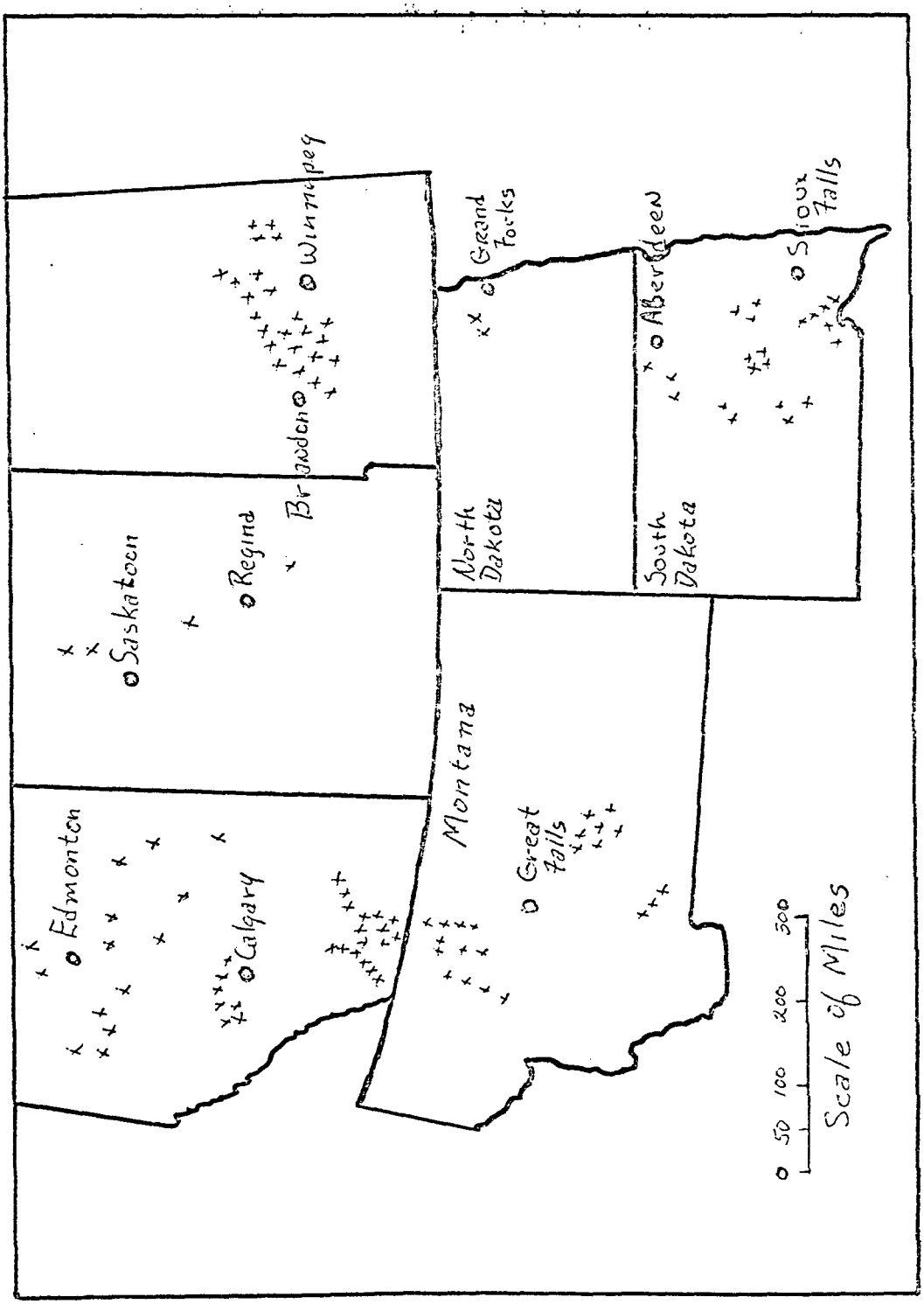
operations. Because of the limited precipitation in the region, agricultural success depended upon extensive farming. The non-Hutterite farmer labored many years before large areas could be purchased and readied for planting operations. In contrast, the Hutterites because of additional land and labor, began extensive, diversified operations in the first year. The result was an immediate economy of scale allowing them to better absorb losses during bad years than individual farmers.[7]

An additional advantage resulting from their religious beliefs was a large labor supply. Because of their communal living arrangements, the Brethren had at their disposal the labor of all members of the group, ranging from the youngest children through the elder members. This made possible their diversified, large-scale economic organization, one which the individual frontier farmer could not afford.[8] This diversification, though of great benefit to Hutterites in Dakota, was not a product of the frontier nor a reaction to it, but rather had long been a part of their European experience. In this way, the Hutterites were not influenced by the frontier in their economic rationality and hence were not forced to fully adopt the cash crop system present in the new region as did the non-Hutterite settlers.[9] It meant they came to eastern Dakota substantially better equipped to deal with their environment than other individuals because of their labor supply and the resulting diversified farm practices.

The Hutterites' "ideal of austerity" also helped them make a successful environmental adjustment. Believing the ownership of personal possessions to be sinful, the Hutterites practiced "consumption austerity" which meant they made cash outlays only for absolute necessities like farm im-

plements and those items they could not produce. Luxury items of any type were forbidden as were entertainment devices such as radios. On a broader scale, the members also limited collective consumption on both religious and financial grounds maintaining that it was necessary for the economic survival of the colonies.[19] The result benefited the society as a whole because the colonies retained all profits as savings to finance future expansion activities or to simply tide them over in times of agricultural distress. Very importantly, however, the Brethren did not use profits to raise the standard of living within the colony. The Hutterites thus minimized their consumption, but continued to maximize their production.[11]

In assessing the Hutterites' experience on the frontier, one must note that while a part of frontier Dakota, they did not possess many frontier characteristics. Because of their settlement in the Prairie-Plains region in the 1870's, the Hutterites experienced all the harsh environmental factors characteristic of the area. Surviving when many around them failed, the Hutterites succeeded in part at least because they were atypical. Having significant advantages in the amount of land, labor, and capital available because of their religious practices, the Hutterites adjusted to and survived the distresses of the late nineteenth century. Because of a past tradition of diversification and their agricultural experience in the Russian steppes, they came already acquainted with many of the problems inherent in Dakota, and hence did not go through the extremely painful and expensive process of discovering that the agricultural methods used in the Prairie States did not work on the Dakota frontier.[12] Always willing to experiment, innovate, and at times farm by trial and error, the



Map 3. Hutterite colonies in the United States and Canada in 1966

Hutterites were a group of successful and "highly rational entrepreneurs."[13]

B. The Jewish Agricultural Communities

At the opposite extreme another communal group tried to pioneer in Dakota and failed miserably because their sense of community did not include patterns that would make them successful farmers in many regions and least of all Dakota with its special hardships. The Jewish Agricultural communities shared the fate of many American frontier utopian ventures. Established during the early 1880's, two Russian Jewish settlements give sharp contrast to the Hutterite success by being forced to admit failure.

Migrating from Russia in 1881, the Jews like the Hutterites left that country because of fear of persecution. Aided in their colonization by the Emigrant Aid Society, an American Jewish organization, approximately sixteen groups colonized at various points in America. The first attempted settlement was at Sicily Island, Louisiana. In 1882, a group containing twenty families moved to Dakota Territory and settled in Davison and Aurora counties.[14] This settlement placed them approximately in the same region as the Hutterites, only slightly closer to the Great Plains proper. They moved to Dakota to escape the heat and Malaria of Louisiana, hoping to find a climate which resembled that which they had experienced in Russia. The opportunity came when the Federal Government opened a former Indian Reservation to Homesteaders.[15]

The two Jewish groups, Cremiux and Bethlehem Yehudah, stemmed out of the Am Olem (eternal people), an organization formed in Russia by young Jewish idealists wanting to establish a new social order based on coopera-

tive agrarian life.[16] The underlying aim of the Jews involved in these ventures was to "prove to the world that the Jews, like other nationalities, can become good farmers." The early settlers held high hopes that through their efforts the "back to the soil" movement could be greatly accelerated so that eventually thousands of Russian Jews could be settled on American land.[17] Unlike the Hutterites, however, the Jews did not have an agrarian background. In fact, most of the settlers in Dakota were professionals and members of the middle class unfamiliar with farming.[18] Herman Rosenthal, for example, a successful merchant in Kiev, Russia, had been one of the Am Olem leaders. Rosenthal desired to "demonstrate that the Jew was a creator, capable of earning his living from the soil". Also significant in the colonization movement was Benoir Greenberg, son of a noted Russian architect and bridgebuilder. Neither of these man had a farm background.[19]

The Cremiux group arrived first in Dakota. The first two families to arrive, the Greenbergs and Samuelwitzs, came to Mitchell on July 1, 1882. Immediately following their arrival by train they celebrated in the streets by brewing and drinking Russian tea. The unusual event attracted almost the entire population of one thousand Mitchellites.[20] Choosing not to live communally, as did members of Bethelhem Yehudah, the Cremiux colonists settled in close proximity to each other. They selected a site described by the group as "beautiful prairie country, with black, fertile, virgin soil." Within a short time the colony numbered fifty people. Rosenthal and Greenberg each purchased four quarter sections while the other members filed government homestead claims. Many took advantage of the rules that

permitted the adult members of the family to file separate claims. As a result some families had two or three claims, thus controlling half or three quarters of a square mile. The colony eventually covered an area of fifteen square miles and adjoined the Bethlehem Yehudah settlement.[21]

The group seemed doomed to failure from the start because of inexperience and poor leadership. After arranging for their land, several went to Milwaukee to buy lumber, stock, equipment, and other provisions, and engaged in a "reckless orgy of extravagant buying." Going beyond their means, they purchased high grade lumber for their houses and fine horses, in one case paying $800 for a single team. When the stock arrived the colonists suddenly realized they had neither barns nor feed. The water supply proved to be another obstacle as it was necessary to carry water for a distance of three or four miles. The Jews dug wells, but they proved to be costly, some as high as $600, and even when they reached water at a depth of fifty or sixty feet, the supply was meagre. The water shortage remained a critical problem throughout the life of the colony.[22]

The inexperience and shortsightedness of the group was also evident in the construction of their homes. Some leaders built eight, ten, and twelve room houses. Many of the others settled for smaller dwellings, but overall their living conditions were much above the average settler living in a sod house.[23] Unlike the Hutterites, the Jews did not practice either individual or collective consumption austerity, with the result being a general weakening of the entire group.

A disastrous prairie fire in the first year destroyed their entire hay supply and necessitated that they buy additional feed from neighbors. The

first winter was very severe and they recorded that "kerosene would freeze in the lamps, and one's very breath congeal on his pillows at night." Several blizzards also plagued them.[24]

The following spring, they planted corn, flax, and vegetables which resulted in a good crop, but low market prices restricted their profits. The following year they concentrated on flax, only to have hail destroy the crop after an excellent start. At this point many began to leave the colony. Others, hoping to stay, mortgaged their lands but discovered the process to be expensive. They recorded that "bonuses of 20 per cent plus other charges brought the cost almost to 50 per cent."[25] Several years of drought, insects, and hail took a heavy toll and by 1885, the colony disintegrated.[26] Although very discouraged, the group might have remained but defaulting on their mortgages, they began to experience foreclosures. Eventually most of the settlers found their way back to New York City.[27]

The second Jewish group, Bethlehem Yehudah, consisting of twelve young men, arrived in Dakota in September, 1882, and settled on government land. Optimism ran high and the members placed much emphasis upon training the Jewish young people to become "productive and self-reliant agriculturists." Additional settlers later joined the initial group.[28] The preamble of their constitution set forth the aims of the colony as the establishment of

> ...a model colony for those who, in the future, may wish to found similar agricultural colonies. The group also aims to help in the liberation of the Jews from economic and spiritual bondage, so as to bring them justice, freedom and peace. It aims to prove that Jews, like other groups, are capable of becoming agriculturists.[29]

Although the by-laws did not specifically state that the group would accept the "community of goods" principle as the Hutterites had done, the by-laws did include several references to a cooperative basis. For example, the group should devote their income to maintain the colony, to aid expansion of their group, and also to finance further Russian Jews in American colonization. Another provision stated that since "the colony was founded on a cooperative basis all the crops will be divided equally between the membership."[30]

A major concern of the group was their social and cultural life. Almost every evening the members met for discussions, dances, or entertainment of some type, one group even published a Russian language newspaper. There was no mention, however, of any religious activity or concern over religious matters.[31] In contrast to the Hutterites, religion played a very minor part in their lives as they had no synagogue, no religious leaders, nor did they hold religious services. Departing from orthodox ways, they raised pigs for food as well as gifts for newly married couples.[32]

In 1885, the Bethlehem Yehudah Colony disbanded. The crops were poor during the previous year and the group failed to obtain additional funds from outside Jewish sources.[33]

The accounts of the two Jewish groups in Dakota were only a small part of the total attempts to settle Jews on the land from the 1880's on through the early part of the twentieth century. Settlements made in New Odessa, Oregon; Cotopaxi, Colorado; Painted Woods, Dakota (North Dakota); Arkansas Colony, Arkansas; Beer Sheba, Montefiore, and Laster Colonies in Kansas; Alliance Colony and several additional New Jersey settlements, were almost

complete failures. Attempts made in the 1890's proved partially successful, but none settled in South Dakota at that time.[34] Primarily responsible for the failure of the Jews was the lack of planning, inadequate capital, and poor selection of their land--all problems common to the failure of many other religious and economic utopian groups. Along with these reasons went the inability of the members to subordinate their individual desires to the welfare and needs of the group as a whole.[35]

C. The Mennonite Settlements

The history and early experiences of the Mennonites are both in contrast and yet similar to the Hutterites and Jews. Growing out of the same European situation as the Hutterites, the Mennonites reflected more diversification in their American settlement patterns. The Russian Mennonites came to Dakota the same year as the first group of Hutterites, migrating for the same reasons. Although possessing a strong group cohesiveness and religious faith that had existed for over 300 years, the Mennonites at no time in their history practiced communal living. Nevertheless they have remained a distinct group without the aid of isolation, or distinct dress and customs.

The earliest Mennonites came to America as Dutch traders and colonists in the mid-1600's, while the first permanent settlement, composed primarily of Dutch stock, was made at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1683. Later Mennonites were primarily Swiss-Germans from the Palatinate.[36] During the following two centuries Mennonites continued to migrate from Europe and reflected the usual American settlement pattern. Descendants of the

original settlers began moving South and West along with the continuous stream of immigrants coming from Europe. By the nineteenth century, Mennonites resided in most of the states.[37]

The first Russian Mennonites came to Dakota in 1874. Originally of Swiss-German ancestry, in 1815 the Mennonites moved to Russia from Poland when Catherine II offered them full religious freedom, exemption from taxation and military service, the right to own property, and other advantages. Although none lived communally, great cohesion existed among the members. In Russia, the settlers lived in "dorfs" or rural villages where each family practiced private ownership of property.[38] In the early 1870's, the Mennonites learned that many of their privileges would soon be taken away and so decided to migrate to the United States. The majority settled in Nebraska and Kansas, but one group decided on Dakota and in May of 1874 they settled in the Turkey Creek Valley about thirty-five miles north of Yankton, in close proximity to both the Hutterites and later the Jewish Agricultural settlements. (Presently in western Turner County.)[39] With most of the land already homesteaded, the members purchased land from early settlers and therefore made compact settlements.[40]

Like all Dakotans, their initial years proved to be difficult ones. For the Mennonites this necessitated their securing several loans from the American Mennonite Committee of Relief. It is doubtful whether the group could have survived without this aid. The first winter of 1874-1875 was one of intense cold, and with the coming of spring, the settlers had no money or supplies left. In that year the group borrowed enough from the Relief Committee to buy 2,000 sacks of flour. In the next two years,

grasshoppers completely destroyed their crops. In 1875, the Mennonites secured another loan from the Relief Committee for $7,400. Only by 1877, did the settlers begin to experience better crop conditions.[41] The majority of original Dakota Mennonites remained and today their descendants reside along the James River Valley in and around Freeman, South Dakota.

The Mennonites brought with them the same agrarian tradition as the Hutterites. Noted for their industrious agricultural ways in Europe, they continued this tradition in America.[42] Although leaving Russia because of persecution and looking to the American frontier for opportunity, the Mennonites differed from the Hutterites in many ways. They did not make continuously compact settlements nor did they view society in the same way. From the beginning the Mennonites maintained contact with the outside world, rather than seclusion from it. By the mid-twentieth century, their activities in South Dakota attested to that fact. In 1900, the Mennonites established the Freeman Junior College. Participation in politics, although discouraged in earlier times, became fairly common and Mennonites have since held local, county, and state offices.[43] Unlike the Hutterites, many Mennonite young people entered the professions of teaching, law, and medicine.[44]

Concerning the American utopian movement, one cannot view Mennonites in the same manner as the Hutterites. Because of their Anabaptist origins, Mennonites believed themselves to be religiously correct, but did not choose to accept communal living and isolation from the world. Maintaining

separate households, religion therefore did not dominate their schools, their work habits, and their community organization as it did with the Hutterites. The Mennonites did however, exhibit strong group solidarity as they migrated to Dakota in groups rather than individually and made compact settlements. Because of their past, one might call them religious utopians although they deviated in many ways. Unlike other utopians, they did not feel a need to reform society, but chose instead to accept their environment and live within the confines of that structure. Rejecting communism, isolation, and reform, the Mennonites nevertheless successfully retained their early religious beliefs and group cohesiveness.

In looking specifically at the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Jewish Agriculturalists, these frontier, utopian societies shared similar characteristics and yet presented some contrasts. Attracted to the frontier for the same reasons, the Hutterites and Mennonites brought with them over 300 years of religious and group cohesiveness while the Jews brought largely a dream. Land held the great appeal, and the Hutterites and Mennonites utilized the resource with a skill acquired over a period of three centuries. To the Jews, land held a promise of the opportunity to build a new, more creative life, but they lacked the knowledge to deal effectively with this new resource. The period in which these groups settled is also of considerable importance. The two agrarian groups settled earlier than did the Jewish groups and thus had more opportunity to adjust and expand diversification during the boom years. In this external sense, the Jews operated at a disadvantage in coping with the physical elements of Dakota Territory.

Internally differences also appear between the three groups. Although sharing a common religion and a heritage of persecution, the Jews coming to the frontier lacked the cohesion and evidence of group will that the other two groups shared. The result was that the Hutterites and Mennonites came better prepared to endure as frontier, utopian societies while the Jews, defeated in their attempts at settlement, returned to the more familiar urban world.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In assessing the Hutterites' experience as a frontier, utopian society, one must first consider the external conditions such as their reasons for migration to the United States, their agricultural tradition, the geographical conditions encountered on the Plains, and their adjustment to these conditions. Then one must examine the internal characteristics of the group: their religious beliefs, group cohesion, and commitment to the past.

From the time of their origin in the early 1500's, the Hutterites have been almost constantly involved in a search for new areas where they could pursue their communal and religious beliefs free of persecution and interference. The move to Dakota in 1874 was but another step in that continual process of seeking isolation. The pattern that emerged from their 300 year European history was one of an almost continual movement toward less populated and less confining areas. The final stay in Europe was Russia. When the Russian government withdrew certain freedoms, the Hutterites believed isolation in Europe no longer possible.

In their move to the new world, the Hutterites came not with a new ideology, nor with any type of new social experiment, but rather with a set religious belief and established community behavior that had endured in spite of 300 years of persecution. The result was strong cohesive bonds between the members with clear-cut goals for their future. In this sense they stood in sharp contrast to many of the other utopians.

In addition to the established customs and mores, the Hutterites also

enjoyed a significant advantage in their agrarian nature with its self-sufficient tradition. Believing they were correct in God's eyes in their religion and their economic calling, they came equipped with three centuries of practical agricultural experience in new areas. They were also well equipped for American frontier existence. Their continual striving for self-sufficiency helped insure survival on the American frontier as it had in Europe.

Agrarian life was well suited to Hutterite society where all activity took place within the confines of the colony. Believing that God commanded them to live communally, the Brethren had decided advantages over their non-Hutterite neighbors in several areas. Possessing larger amounts of capital, the Hutterites farmed larger acreages thus achieving more economic stability. Their living arrangement utilized the abilities of all members, from small children through the eldest people. Life was styled somewhat along the same lines as the plantation system in the ante-bellum South where the division of labor efficiently utilized all age groups. In this sense, large families became economic assets rather than liabilities.

An additional consideration was the need for expansion. Believing that all colonies should be limited to approximately 150 members, the frontier offered the opportunity for expansion. Daughter colonies settled in the same geographical area thus allowing for social interaction, supervision, and initial help in settingup the new group. The process of expansion itself aided their continuation because it constantly kept the group under 150 members which meant closer supervision and more intensive interaction.

Also, though isolationist in theory, the Hutterites helped to insure their economic success by a process of selective adoption. In Europe as well as in America, the Hutterites continually accepted technological change in farm machinery and implements without any corresponding change in other aspects of their lives. The result is that they have constantly been able to compete with other farmers in terms of productivity.

Because of their need to follow their agrarian calling, and their need to isolate themselves, the frontier region of the United States was the only section of the country that could satisfy their needs. Land was the great attraction that the frontier offered. Their second need, isolation, was satisfied by the fulfillment of the first. Only the frontier could offer large unsettled areas and hence, isolation. They were fortunate to settle in the 1870's while eastern Dakota experienced heavier than normal rainfall. This enabled them to increase diversification and expand their operations before the drought began in 1885. This undoubtedly is significant in determining their reasons for success. In contrast, the Jewish Agricultural groups came in the early 1880's and therefore did not have time to achieve much success before the climatic change.

In comparing the Hutterites with two other early Dakota groups, the Mennonites and the Jewish Agricultural communities, agricultural experience appeared to be vital for success. The Mennonites, stemming out of the same religious discontent, had a European history similar to the Hutterites. Following the agrarian calling, the Dakota Mennonites had settled in

Russia for approximately the same time as the Hutterites, and hence brought not only a general knowledge of farming, but a first hand knowledge of the geographical features and climatic conditions similar to those of eastern Dakota. The first Dakota Mennonites settled in 1874, so like the Hutterites there was time for increased diversification. The Jewish groups, however, had a dissimilar background. Plagued by drought, hail, insects, totally lacking in agricultural knowledge, and unfamiliar with Dakota conditions, the Jews remained only three years. Thus in assessing the reasons for failure of the Jews, it appears that external causes played a central role.

In considering the Hutterites in light of the American utopian movement, they appeared to be in the movement, but not of it. They were seekers of utopia, but in an atypical fashion, as they deviated in a significant way from the general group. Inherent in the philosophies of the great majority of utopian groups was the belief that they were constructing a more perfect community that would serve as a model and hence lead to reform in the world at large. The model building would take place in a community setting, apart from society, but it was designed to ultimately change the outside world. The Hutterites shared none of these socio-reformist tendencies. Indeed, extension into the outside world could only undermine and eventually destroy their community. The only hope of perpetuating their society lay in isolation from outside influences.

An additional distinction between the Hutterite and non-Hutterite groups was in their perception of the New World. To individuals like

Robert Owen and Ann Lee, the New World would serve as an experimental model for their ideas. In this sense, the entire nation was thought of as a frontier with unstructured social conditions and the opportunity to plant the seeds of reform. To the Hutterites, the Dakota frontier met the same needs as European regions had done at an earlier time. Thus, it was specifically the frontier, not the New World, that attracted the Hutterian Brethren.

Of most importance, the Hutterites have survived as a utopian community. Indeed, they have flourished so that by 1965 they numbered about 16,500 persons in 170 colonies. At the present time Hutterite colonies are located in eastern South Dakota, eastern Montana, Manitoba, and Alberta, Canada. On the other hand, with the exception of the Amanas (which no longer retain their communal organization), the great number of American utopian societies have faded into oblivion.

In seeking reasons for the demise of the many hundreds of economic and religious utopian groups, one must look at internal characteristics because almost without exception these groups were not economic failures. The breakdown of the non-Hutterite communities stemmed out of lack of group cohesiveness, lack of leadership, lack of attraction for recruits, and lack of planning.

The successful Hutterites experienced none of these problems. Their entire system of child rearing and education produced a community of like-minded individuals who subjugated all needs and desires to the welfare of the group. Because of their agrarian isolation and their community struc-

ture, the Hutterites had an opportunity to pursue their belief that education should produce self-surrender, not self-development as many other utopians believed. The result was that strong group cohesion and future leadership were largely assured. Group cohesiveness was further strengthened by the continual reminder of past persecutions through sermons, hymns, and devotional material written in the seventeenth century. The need to attract outside members was not a necessity since the Hutterites had and continue to have one of the highest birthrates in the world.[2] Planning in terms of future land needs is the only problem pressing the Hutterites at the present time. Since 1917 there have been periodic movements to Canada, but recently groups in that region expressed the need for more land and a fear it would be unavailable.[3] Most other aspects of Hutterian life need no planning as behavior and decisions are based on their firmly established central beliefs and past traditions.

Any discussion of the longevity of the Hutterites must include the importance of their religious beliefs. Although difficult to properly assess, the total dominance of religion over their lives coupled with their absolute conviction that they practiced the one true religion undoubtedly influenced their group unity to a great extent.

Thus the Hutterites because of their distinctive utopian beliefs, and their traditional practice of agriculture, were attracted to the Dakota frontier in the 1870's. Bringing with them a time-tested group solidarity, absolute conviction of their Christian righteousness, and 300 years of agricultural experience, the Hutterites successfully mastered the frontier environment. The ultimate reasons for their success were twofold. First

was the existence of the frontier, and secondly and of equal importance were the groups' beliefs and characteristics they brought from Europe that enabled them to survive and expand in Dakota.

A. A Note on the Hutterites' Future

Although a discussion of the present day Hutterites is beyond the limits of this paper, a comment on their future seems appropriate in light of their past movement patterns. At the present time it is doubtful if much expansion can take place in South Dakota. The Hutterites might be able to purchase small quantities of land, but the opportunity to purchase large blocks of land to set up new colonies is strictly limited. Canada perhaps offers a more hopeful picture, but Canadian Hutterites believe that the possibility of expansion is being curtailed there also. The question then becomes, can the Hutterites survive if their 400 year old practice of seeking less populated lands becomes impossible? Very few frontiers exist today and those that do, such as Alaska or South America, are a great distance away. The present fellowship that exists between the colonies would be a thing of the past if the Hutterites chose to move to a new frontier region. Moving into different geographical areas would also mean a change and modification in the farming practices utilized today in the central portion of North America.

Perhaps what future years will reveal is that the Hutterites' tightly knit, strongly cohesive, and regimented society can survive an increasingly industrialized and urbanized age. The Hutterites recorded that in Europe their groups prospered and exhibited more harmony when outside pressure of

antagonism and persecution increased. When these outside forces subsided, the Hutterites sometimes fell to quarreling among themselves. In the United States it is almost certain that conditions will grow increasingly more urbanized, thus placing the Hutterites in even greater contrast to the majority than they are presently. Perhaps a process of substitution will take place in which the barrier of isolationism will be replaced with the barrier of even greater community rejection and antagonism.

There are some, however, who doubt the group's ability to withstand these pressures. Lee Emerson Deets in a study of the Hutterites in Canada noted that of the Hutterite colonies located near Winnipeg, those that suffered the most dissension, and modification of behavior were the colonies located nearest to the city.[4]

Whether or not the Hutterites will be able to stave off the influences of modern technology and increasing demands for higher education remains to be seen. In looking backwards, however, it is apparent that for over 400 years the Hutterites were able to find new regions which insured their continuance and were in addition able to sufficiently isolate themselves and reject outside influences.

VII. FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

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X. A NOTE ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Of the sources available for this study, none treated the Hutterite movement in its entirety. The majority of works fell into two categories--Hutterite European histories and sociological studies of present day Hutterites with the latter being most numerous. In general, a study of any phase of their movement is restricted because of fragmentary evidence. For the purposes of this study, the most glaring omission is material on the Hutterites' early years in Dakota Territory.

The major primary study of the South Dakota Hutterites is Lee Emerson Deets' The Hutterites: A Study in Social Cohesion. Written in 1939, Deets' book is based upon first hand observations of Hutterite colonies in South Dakota. Deets deals briefly with the group's history and then provides a full descriptive study and analysis of Hutterian society. In his analysis, Deets' placed major emphasis upon characteristics that accounted for their strong cohesion. The result is an enlightening account of the Brethren's society and beliefs. Deets' study still remains the most penetrating of all accounts considered for this study. Although less complete, another landmark study is Bertha Clark's article, "The Hutterian Communities" in the Journal of Political Economy written in 1924. Although emphasizing some characteristics that accounted for the Hutterites' success, Miss Clark's article is primarily descriptive.

Other works dealing specifically with American Hutterites are Paul K. Conkin's, Two Paths to Utopia and Victor Peters' All Things Common: The Hutterian Way of Life. Conkin compares the Hutterites and the Llano Colony

established in California in 1914. Relying on sources like Deets, Conkin compiled a short historical account of Hutterite European experience and then a description of their American life. Victor Peters, combining an historical and sociological approach, concentrates on Hutterite life in the mid-twentieth century. Peters' book is based upon studies of the Canadian Hutterites. Although offering good summations of the Hutterite life, neither Peters nor Conkin offer a new approach nor new insights. A more recent study is John A. Hostetler and Gertrude Huntington's, The Hutterites in North America. Written as a case study in cultural anthropology these authors are primarily concerned with describing Hutterites as they live today. Although of less value for the purposes of this thesis, the book nevertheless gives an excellent view of the Hutterites' beliefs and outlook as well as their daily living habits. Hostetler's book, Hutterite Life, appears to be a shortened version of the The Hutterites in North America. The latest study, Hutterian Brethren, by John Bennett gives a new dimension to this area by concentrating on the economic aspects of the Brethren's life. Bennett's study is excellent as he deals directly with their agrarian traditions and practices in the context of both nineteenth and twentieth century America. His study is vital for an understanding of the economic aspects of Hutterite adjustment in Dakota.

Dealing exclusively with the Hutterites' European experience, the Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. II, gives accounts of early Hutterite leaders, economic development, educational practices, and living arrangements. John Horsch in The Hutterian Brethren, 1528-1931, also deals largely with their years in Europe. C. Henry Smith in The Story of the Mennonites,

includes a discussion of the origins and early history of the Hutterites. Although these authors all basically agree on the major settlements, none clearly traces all the wanderings in Europe.

Two books which deal with the Hutterites only as a part of the American utopian movement are Joseph Eaton's, Exploring Tomorrow's Agriculture and Henrik Infield's Cooperative Communities at Work. Both include short, analytical treatments of the Hutterites which are helpful in understanding their success in the new world.

In regard to the American utopian movement, V. F. Calverton's Where Angels Dared to Tread offers the best treatment of the two major types of utopias, the religious and economic. Arthur Bestor in his book, Backwoods Utopias, stresses the communitarian aspects of utopian groups since 1663, but concentrates mainly upon the Owenite phase of the movement. Alice Felt Tyler's Freedom's Ferment discusses utopianism as part of a general reformist movement. Beginning with the early American experiences such as the Great Awakening, Mrs. Tyler then deals with the religious and economic utopias and ends with a treatment of the humanitarian crusades. Many other authors writing about utopians in America have not included general discussions of the subject such as the attraction of the New World for utopianites and comparisons between different groups. Many writers also deal specifically with the most prominent groups and omit introductory or summary comments. Considerations of the Hutterites as a utopian group and consequently their relationship to the American movement has been explored only slightly. Indeed, some histories of the movement do not even include a discussion of them while others do little more than include

their name.

Joseph W. Eaton's and Saul M. Katz's reference work, Research Guide on Cooperative Group Farming is helpful in listing sources on many of the now defunct religious and economic utopias as well as current cooperative farming ventures started in the 1930's. Included is a section on the Hutterites and Amanas. Written in 1942, the book is now incomplete as much has been written about the Hutterites in the last twenty years.

Specific weather and farming problems which faced the Dakota farmer are presented by Herbert S. Schell in "Adjustment Problems in South Dakota", in Agricultural History, XIV, "Drought and Agriculture in Eastern South Dakota During the Eighteen Nineties", Agricultural History, V, and Harold Briggs, "Grasshopper Plagues and Early Dakota Agriculture, 1864-1876", Agricultural History, VIII. Gilbert Fite in The Farmers' Frontier 1865-1900 includes good descriptions of Dakota immigration, frontier farming conditions, and Dakota living conditions. Fred Shannon's book, The Farmers' Last Frontier, is an earlier and much less complete version of many of the same problems. The most complete work on South Dakota from the time of the early explorers to the post World War II period is Herbert Schell's History of South Dakota.