

MILITARY IMMIGRATION FROM GERMAN LANDS 1776-1783

As the last German emigrants were on their way to Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1775, the transport of another type of Germans was under discussion in London. Once the British government had resolved to use force against the American rebels, it became clear to military as well as political leaders that the British army was too small to subdue the rebellious colonists. Various schemes were considered. In view of the considerable number of German settlers in several of the colonies, proposals were made to hire Russian troops. Major General Henry Clinton endorsed this project: "We must be reinforced, not with Germans (I fear they will desert)," but with Russians whom he called "my friends" and since they had "no language but their own: they cannot desert." However, according to the report of the British envoy in Berlin, attempts to obtain 20,000 men from Empress Catherine failed, in part because Frederick II of Prussia intervened.

As soon as the British interest in foreign soldiers became known, former officers who had been idle since the Seven Years' War offered their service to recruit individuals for British service. In the summer of 1775 the Hannoverian colonel Albrecht von Scheither obtained a business contract for signing up 2,000 men at £10 a head. He hired fellow ex-officers as recruiters but due to simultaneous solicitations for other armies and the massive recruiting from 1776 on by German princes to fill the ranks of units needed for their treaties with Britain, Scheither never reached his goal. By late September 1776 he had gathered 1,738 men, who were accepted

by Colonel William Faucitt, the British officer in charge of inspecting foreign units.¹ When German princes later concluded treaties to make entire regiments available, such private military business were no longer needed. Besides some former officers, looking desperately for income from such business, at times turned out to be less than trustworthy. Ex-major Heinrich Emmanuel Lutterloh, whose earlier plans to find settlers for East Florida and Nova Scotia had not materialized, reportedly had permission from Count Johann Ludwig of Wittgenstein to recruit men for British service but he suddenly vanished, leaving debts behind amounting to 7,292 gulden.²

Despite some apprehensions, the British had begun early in 1775 to look for auxiliary troops from German principalities. Indeed, offers had come from the count of Hanau in August and from the duke of Braunschweig-Luneburg in September 1775 before any official British move was made, prompting Edmund Burke of the opposition in parliament to remark that German princes had already "snuffed the cadaverous taint of lucrative war." Colonel Faucitt in Hannover was given the task of negotiating the treaty with Braunschweig and then proceeding to Kassel to find out if the Hessian government could be persuaded to furnish troops for generous subsidies and a levy per man. Although the landgrave of Hessen-Kassel had not sought such a contract, the British conditions were enticing enough for the Hessian negotiator, Martin Ernst von Schlieffen, to offer 10-12,000 men, twice as many as Faucitt had been asked to secure. The treaty was concluded in February but

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back-dated to January 15, 1776, to extend the subsidy and cause the landgrave to speed up the mobilization of about 12,500 soldiers. Three other German states, Waldeck (750 men), Braunschweig (4,000) and Hessen-Hanau (900), signed similar treaties. By early February the British were assured of more than 18,000 officers and men.

Toward the end of the year an agreement was reached with Margrave Alexander of Ansbach-Bayreuth for a force of 1,160 men. Finally in September 1777 the duke of Anhalt-Zerbst also concluded a subsidy treaty for a contingent of the same size. In 1777 the number of soldiers in several treaties was revised upwards and as late as 1781/82, 2,988 replacements were furnished by Ansbach-Bayreuth, Anhalt-Zerbst and Hessen-Kassel to make up for losses in the forces.³

The subsidy treaties were no secret undertakings. The English and German versions of the ones involving Hessen-Kassel, Hessen-Hanau and Braunschweig-Lüneburg were openly published in Frankfurt and Leipzig in 1776. As they were debated in Parliament in London, James Luttrell, a member of the opposition who had himself spent many years in America, rose on February 25, 1776, to remind his colleagues of the presence of many Germans in the colonies: "I apprehend that ministry now apply to Parliament for seventeen thousand Germans to send to America. Good God, for what end? To enslave a hundred and fifty thousand of their own countrymen, many of whom fled from tyrants to seek our protection." Luttrell then gave a vivid description of the major German settlements and added to his account of the American Germans "that the encouragement for them to quit

their own country and become settlers in America was so great, so very great, that the German princes found it absolutely necessary to make it death by their laws to carry any more of them out, and the Palatine ships that used so frequently to convey them have of late years ceased to arrive at the ports of our colonies." His speech culminated in remarks expressing fears that were shared by many other Englishmen familiar with the scene:

I think it an excellent opportunity for our hired troops to desert, because they will most likely be offered lands, and protection. These warlike transports we are to fit out may then be considered as good as the Palatine ships for peopling America with Germans.⁴

A few days earlier, the Saxon envoy in The Hague, J. P. I. Dubois, in a report to Dresden voiced the same opinion about the subsidy treaties "as a new emigration for the benefit of the colonies since you can assume ahead of time that these troops will be lost."⁵

In early January 1776 the *Philadelphia Staatsbote* printed a letter which Henrich Miller, its editor and an ardent supporter of the revolutionary cause, had received from Germany. The writer consoled his countrymen in America about German soldiers to be sent over in the crown's service by asserting that once in America they would throw away their arms and take up the ploughs. It was not until the May 7th issue that Miller informed his readers of the news of the actual hiring of these troops to which he added the question: "Oh George! Are these your messengers of peace?"⁶ As soon as copies of the first subsidiary treaties had reached Philadelphia in May, Congress began to debate whether to offer special enticements to Germans willing to desert.

On June 1st the first soldiers from Hanau and Braunschweig landed at Quebec where they witnessed the withdrawal of American troops who had besieged the city. Meanwhile crack units of the Hessian army had left Kassel on May 11th for Karlshafen where they were loaded on boats for the journey down the Weser to Bremerlehe. After inspection by Col. Faucitt, they were taken to Gravesend and transferred unto chartered vessels which sailed in convoys across the Atlantic. On August 17th they arrived at Sandy Hook on Staten Island. Within a few days the Hessians were involved in successful combat on Long Island, and a month later New York was in British hands, leaving the recently arrived German soldiers with rather negative impressions of the American rebels.⁷

Immediate attempts were nonetheless made to attract Hessians over to the American side. As soon as the debarkation of the Hessians was known, Congress had passed a resolution to accept foreigners from the royal armies and to grant them fifty acres of land each if they wanted to become citizens of the new nation. German versions of the offer, signed by John Hancock, were dashed off to George Washington for distribution. Copies were soon found scattered on roads or as wrappers with tobacco inside—a special lure suggested by Benjamin Franklin. The Hessian commander in his report to Kassel cited this as typical treachery and as an example of the "upside-down" thinking of the rebels.

The widely expected defection of German soldiers did not occur in 1776. The first units shipped to America were largely composed of professional soldiers, many of whom had been in service for years. Moreover, the hasty withdrawal of rebel

forces from the St. Lawrence and the initial success of the British and Hessian armies in the New York area would have been discouraging even if some soldiers might have wanted to get away once they were on American soil. The number of desertions recorded by the Hessian command remained low: 66 in 1776 and 109 in 1777.⁸

In order to fulfill their treaty obligations, the principalities involved had to recruit many young men who were not their subjects. Hessen-Kassel was given permission by several neighboring states and imperial cities to enlist within their jurisdictions. Recruiting methods in the 18th century were widely known for their complete disregard for the person. There are contemporary sources describing tricks and bribery. Many were seduced with strong drinks to bring them into the recruiting station. One of the victims, Johann Gottfried Seume, a nineteen-year-old university student, found himself surrounded by a "human medley," fellows from such distant places as Jena, Vienna, Hannover, Gotha, Wurzburg and Meiningen.⁹ After his return to Germany Seume became a well-known poet and the story of his service in America received much attention. There were some men who had volunteered to escape something in their lives. Others did so in order to give themselves to the adventure of seeing the New World. After the arrival of the new units, the Hessian headquarters in America sent an assessment of the additional, largely non-Hessian recruits back to Kassel: "Many of them may have intended to take advantage of the chance of free passage to this country, and finally to quit Europe. They would have had to work about four years to pay the cost of their crossing." While such reports echoed the statements made in Parliament and in diplomatic circles at the

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outset of the use of subsidiary troops, there is little proof that there were many soldiers who had obvious plans for settling in the colonies. Nor is there any record of encounters with relatives in the first year.

The main impetus for defection came from defeated units which found themselves as prisoners of war in the hands of the rebel army. For Hessian troops, of whom 868 rank-and-file soldiers had been captured at Trenton on December 26, 1776, captivity meant their first real contact with the American Germans. After they were marched to Pennsylvania the Americans decided to farm them out for work instead of keeping them in guarded camps. According to detailed lists which have been preserved, 397 Hessians were released between September 10 and November 20, 1777, to work for farmers and craftsmen. Most of their temporary employers were Germans in and around Lancaster, Reading, York and Lebanon. A dozen men, most of them from the artillery company, were sent to the Cornwall Iron Works where they became instrumental in improving the quality of cannons produced for the American army. Later on thirty-nine prisoners of the Hessian regiment von Knyphausen were sent to Mount Hope in New Jersey to work for ironmaster Joh. Jacob Faesch. They had evidently agreed to being hired as indentured servants to escape the awful treatment they had experienced in Philadelphia jails.

Printed appeals to desert were increasingly effective among the still active units as they had more time to observe the obvious prosperity of the local populations, both in the rebellious colonies and in loyal Canada. The American general Israel Putnam issued a proclamation at White Plains in November 1777, urging the

Germans to abandon the British cause and "lead useful and peaceful lives among the free men of America."¹⁰ Among the auxiliary units in the province of New York at that time were regiments from Braunschweig which comprised numerous soldiers from other German lands. The official rolls list men from Brandenburg, Wurttemberg, Hessen-Darmstadt, the bishopric of Mainz, Alsace, the Palatinate, Thuringia and Saxony and many other areas. Individual desertions began in considerable numbers late in 1777 after the battle of Saratoga.¹¹

The British retreat from Philadelphia in 1778 was accompanied by the defection of more than 235 Hessians from their units during the march. Reporting to the Landgrave in July, General von Knyphausen referred to the heavy desertion:

The cause of this, so far as I can guess, is that printed leaflets were spread amongst the men in a secret manner, in which each man who would desert and settle here in the country was promised a quantity of land, two horses, one cow, and similar encouragements. Also those who were exchanged from captivity have made such glowing descriptions of the regions there, and how well they have been received....¹²

In predominantly German communities in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia individual soldiers found acceptance by local people once the prejudice against "Hessians" was overcome through personal contact. In many places, particularly in the western parts, deserters were harbored by their established countrymen. Although the saying "Du verdammter Hess" (you damned Hessian) remained alive for a long time in German settlements, the common soldiers often overcame the barriers. For the offi-

cers, who almost to a man showed no inclination to change sides, there remained the impression of enmity, which was often mutual. Hessian lieutenant Andreas Wiederholt found most of the American Germans "of the lowest class." Even those who offered hospitality "remain raw and unrefined German peasants. They are steeped in the American idea of Liberty but know nothing of what liberty really is and are therefore worse than all others and almost unbearable." Army captain Johann Ewald described his experience in Maryland with less bias: "This region is well cultivated, the inhabitants are mostly Germans but have a very bad opinion of us." Ewald then mentions his encounter with an old woman sitting in front of her home whom he asked for a glass of water. She answered in a true Palatine dialect:

I shall give you water, but I must also ask you, what have we done to you? You Germans come here to ruin us and to chase us from our homes. We have heard enough of your plundering, you will do the same here as you did in New York and New Jersey, but you will be punished for it.¹³

One spectacular example of solidarity of local Germans with a soldier from Braunschweig in the early days of the war has been recorded in a diary and in letters preserved in the army archives. The musketeer Andreas Hasselmann deserted from an outpost of his regiment near Quebec in June 1776. After he was captured, the commander, General von Riedesel, ordered his execution by firing squad. The order was well publicized to set an example for others who might have the same intention. Fourteen German-born residents of Quebec intervened on Hasselmann's behalf. They signed an appeal which was delivered by one of

them directly to Riedesel on August 27th. Two days later the general informed the Quebec Germans of having granted a pardon "although he deserved death." In order to impress the troops, though, the entire execution ceremony was staged on September 4th. Hasselmann's pardon was read only moments before the firing. He was freed from arrest and served with his regiment until the end of the war, when he received a discharge in June 1783 to remain in Canada.¹⁴

In 1778 the Hessian command tried to use executions as a deterrent for others. In August a soldier was hanged for leaving an outpost and in October another one who had left his unit in Newport was executed. Later some Hessian commanders commuted the death sentences of other deserters to running the gauntlet, but in Canadian garrisons Indians were sent after deserters with orders to bring back their scalps the next day. In March 1782, three Hessians caught beyond the lines were shot dead. Although the Margrave of Ansbach-Bayreuth had instructed the commander August Valentin von Voit to replace the death penalty with imposing the gauntlet "since I want no soldier to be sentenced to death," the desertions became so frequent that in 1780 members of the Ansbach troops were executed by firing squads in order to set a warning example.¹⁵

Meanwhile the American endeavors to lure Germans of the conventional army over to their side continued. Since many soldiers were afraid to join the rebel armies outright, special offers were made to exempt them from military service. On February 3, 1781, when the main theater of the war appeared to be in Virginia, Governor Thomas Jefferson issued a proclamation in Rich-

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mond which expressed the true feelings of the American cause more than any other appeal to the subsidiary troops. While referring to the earlier resolution of the Continental Congress, Jefferson stressed the willingness of the states "to extend the protection of the Laws to all those who should settle among them of whatsoever nation or religion they might be." He did not conceal the feelings of the revolutionary movement about the disgraceful "Foreign Princes" and their "habit of selling the blood of their people for money. Besides promises made by Congress to those who decided to stay "in a Country where many of their Friends and relations were already happily settled," the governor pledged to those leaving the enemy armies in Virginia "a further donation of two Cows, and an exemption during the present War." If they continued to live in the state, they were exempted from all war-related taxes, "and from all Militia and Military Service."¹⁶

The British surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, was for all involved the clear signal that the Americans—with considerable assistance from the French—were prevailing in this war. For several months afterwards there were skirmishes, but important places like Savannah, Georgia, were still firmly in British hands. On February 20, 1782, the rebel governor of Georgia, John Martin, with the consent of the Executive Council, issued a proclamation from his temporary seat at Ebenezer in which the state offered a piece of land of 200 acres free of any costs, a good cow and two breeding hogs to every soldier leaving the English service. In March the Hessian commander, Friedrich von Porbeck, sent a report to the ministry in Kassel with which he enclosed a copy of the governor's proclamation in German, "which the Rebel gener-

al Wayne has disseminated in our garrison by slatternly women from Ebenezer."¹⁷

Colonel Alured Clarke in Savannah wrote to his superior General Leslie that the Hessian regiment von Knoblauch had been stationed there too long and there were many deserters. Leslie, in a report to General Henry Clinton, the chief of the royal armies, explained why he found it necessary to withdraw the Hessian regiment: "I am sorry to observe that when the Hessian Troops are sent to out Posts Desertion takes place, they being so long here has been the means of their forming too many connections." The "connections" were indeed responsible for most defections. One of them was with women, but it was most frequently not with the "slatternly" ones. There are numerous stories of German soldiers, some while they were still prisoners of war, who became attached to local girls and their families. The records kept by the Rev. G. C. Cöster, who served two Hessian regiments as chaplain, contain a number of notations of marriages to American women who were pregnant. Cöster cites the responsibility some soldiers felt for mother and child.¹⁸

The use of deserters from German subsidiary units in the American forces was a problem because many rebel officers considered them generally unreliable. George Washington even thought they might cause his own soldiers to desert whenever the fortunes of war seemed to be in favor of the British. For him, men who readily changed sides "have given proof of a treacherous disposition, and who are bound to us by no motives of attachment." Washington's view of defectors changed when two young ensigns of Hessian regiments, Carle Friedrich Fuhrer and Carl Wilhelm Kleinschmidt

convinced him of their enthusiasm for the American cause. He supported their plan to organize a separate corps of deserters and prisoners of war in a letter to Congress on August 18, 1778. Eleven days later Congress resolved, "That a new corps of troops be raised by the name of the German volunteers, to consist of such deserters from the foreign troops as shall be disposed freely to enlist therein." Both ensigns were to be given "for the present the pay of captains in the service of the United States..."¹⁹

Washington had been impressed by Fuhrer's attitude and he had received good reports about him from Virginia. The bright young man had been taken prisoner at Trenton in December 1776, where he received a personal parole. Fuhrer spent most of the time in Dumfries, a seaport in Virginia, until a prisoners' exchange was negotiated in 1778. When he and Kleinschmidt were returned to their regiments in New York, they applied immediately for permission to resign their commission, which was granted on condition that they should not enlist in American forces. Unwilling to submit to this restriction, they hired horses and crossed over to the American lines at White Plains on August 7th. They expressed their motivation while claiming that they had not deserted as prisoners but waited until they could resign their commissions in a public statement. In it they also stated:

Whenever a Prince undertakes to sell his Subjects to a Foreign Power for infamous and wicked purposes, without their knowledge or consent, we are of the opinion, such subjects have a right to vacate the contract as soon as opportunity offers.²⁰

The recruiting efforts of the two officers turned out to be a failure. A number of

Hessian, Braunschweig and Ansbach soldiers volunteered but not enough to make a separate corps a reality. Some, like Fuhrer himself, were assigned to the Pulaski Legion, others to Armand's Legion. A former Prussian officer, Major Bartholimew Van Heer, organized a band of light dragoons as a provost guard which consisted largely of Germans, including deserted Ansbachers and Hessians. It became Washington's mounted bodyguard and served as such until the end of the war. There were also German deserters in state and local militia units. Fuhrer himself returned to Virginia, where he was offered a position with the state cavalry and promoted to the rank of major. Kleinschmidt, his erstwhile companion, obviously had a change of mind. In June 1780, he wrote to his former Hessian commander asking for forgiveness because-as he claimed- he had been duped by Fuhrer, who had also cheated him of his money. He never received a reply and was last reported to have been taken prisoner by the British at Yorktown.²¹

When the war ended, all those who had been impressed by the obvious advantages life in North America offered to the common man and who had not defected had to decide seriously whether they wanted to stay or return home. For those who had wives and children it was a question of whether they could find the means and receive the permission to return to America with their families afterwards. A few stayed anyway. Daniel Arnd of the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops took the oath of allegiance in Winchester, Virginia, in June 1783, leaving his wife alone in Ansbach. The Ansbach army surgeon Sigismund Friedrich Arnold settled in Nova Scotia, deserting his wife and his daughter, who was born after he had left for America.

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The commanders of the German subsidiary troops now had to keep their units together and, above all, gather up all those who had been made prisoners and were scattered on work assignments over a wide area. The Americans had renewed the inducements for those who wanted to stay. They were given the choice of joining the continental army or taking up farming on 200 acres of land with the gift of one cow and two hogs. When there was not the expected response, the Americans began to charge them for food and lodging as long as they did not return to their units for repatriation. The Hessian high command made considerable efforts to contact all prisoners and supplied those they located with clothing and money until their exchange could be negotiated.

When the captive troops of Lord Cornwallis' army were released and marched toward Staten Island for embarkation, 240 men deserted along the way. A last, vain attempt was made to gather Hessians employed in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, but soldiers who had been indentured by local people were no longer considered prisoners of war, and the American War Council had no more jurisdiction over them. The release depended on the contractors and on the intention of the soldiers. If the latter wanted to return to Germany, a cash payment of thirty pounds Pennsylvania currency per man was required. The negotiations with ironmaster Joh. Jacob Faesch at Mount Hope in New Jersey, were particularly difficult. Faesch, known as a hard taskmaster, refused to release them at the end of the war because he considered their indentures as civil contracts which had to be fulfilled. Two of the men had enough cash to pay Faesch and free themselves, eight escaped and joined their

units in New York. The Hessian army redeemed twenty-one men with cash. Only six soldiers chose to remain at the iron works. By August 12, 1783, the embarkation date for the first contingents of the Hessian army, no more efforts were made to gather ex-prisoners.

There was no provision under which the Hessian command could have legally released any Hessian subjects from enlistment. Article 13 of the subsidy treaty expressly forbade any of them to settle in America without the landgrave's approval. As to subjects of other states in the Hessian forces, soon after Yorktown Colonel Ludwig von Wurmb suggested to the Kassel authorities that they be allowed to stay in America "if they so desire, otherwise they will desert and take their rifles with them." Wurmb saw good opportunities especially for craftsmen. There is no record of any official reaction to his proposal.²²

A letter dated February 8, 1783, from Duke Carl Wilhelm Ferdinand of Braunschweig to the commander of his corps in America reveals the rarely mentioned fact that convicts had been included in the units. Major General von Riedesel, who had been given namelists of "delinquents and criminals" when the troops embarked for America, now was reminded that they were to be "now and ever excluded" from the return to the fatherland.²³ The duke also made it easier for others who wanted to remain in North America, mainly because he could not maintain so many troops at home in peacetime. All those unfit for future service were simply to be left behind. Subjects of other states, both officers and common soldiers were even to be encouraged and given a bounty to settle in the colonies remaining under the British crown.

Close to 600 Braunschweig soldiers availed themselves of the opportunity in Canada.²⁴

The regiment of Ansbach-Bayreuth left 680 men behind, many of whom had quit their units while they were prisoners in Winchester, Virginia, and in Frederick, Maryland. Captain Philipp von Molitor, who had married an American woman without the required approval of the margrave, was placed under arrest but released once the troops had embarked for Germany. He led a group of discharged soldiers from various German regiments who were moving to Nova Scotia together with loyalists. Molitor received 700 acres, the common soldiers 100 acres each in Annapolis county.²⁵

The troops from Hessen-Hanau also provided more than 400 settlers to the remaining British colonies in 1783 after having lost numerous deserters in the rebel states. Colonel Joh. Christoph Lentz of the Hanau Rangers wrote to his command in July that he felt "honour bounds" to dismiss all those who had joined under the promise of settlement in North America before his unit embarked for Europe. Many Hanauers stayed in Quebec, but others took part in the westward movement into Upper Canada. Several of these ex-soldiers eventually went south to areas in the United States where they had established contacts earlier. Captain Sigmund Hugget, a Hanau officer from Colmar in Alsace, obtained an official pass to move with his wife to the United States.²⁶

The decision was not easy for all men. Hessian Lieutenant Karl Philipp von Krafft was full of regrets when he had to prepare for the home voyage: "My whole heart is filled with sadness when I see fading from my view the receding landmarks and house tops in whose midst I leave my whole hap-

piness behind." Once back in Germany, he obtained his discharge and returned to New York to marry his sweetheart and settle for good in America. The field surgeon Fetzner, a native of Weingarten in Austria, was already on board the transport vessel *Isabella* in August 1783 when he decided at the last minute to sneak back ashore and remain in Quebec.

Army surgeons were obviously much in demand in American and Canadian communities. The regimental records of Ansbach-Bayreuth cite the desertion of Friedrich Rapp and his servant in Philadelphia. Rapp settled in Germantown and married a local woman. The Hessian field surgeon Philipp Klipstein from Darmstadt opened a successful medical practice in Winchester, Virginia. No fewer than thirty-six such surgeons made Canada their new home and several of them became versatile physicians. A number of ex-soldiers with some education became schoolmasters like Wilhelm Heyden in the town of Frederick, Maryland, or Philipp Goldeiss, who conducted the Lutheran parochial school on Mill Creek in the Virginia frontier country. Hessian ensign Spangenburg, one of the Yorktown prisoners, settled down in eastern Virginia with his American wife and soon was known for giving Latin lessons. Another Hessian officer, Philip Reinhold Pauly of Magdeburg, was hired as a French and Latin teacher in Philadelphia at the new university before he entered the Reformed ministry.

Corporal Joh. Henrich Giese of the Hessian Crown Prince regiment, a native of Lichtenau in Hessen educated at Hersfeld Latin School, was a student at Marburg University when he joined the America-bound troops. In February 1782, he was per-

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sueded by Reformed communicants in Frederick, Maryland, to go into the ministry since many churches were without pastors. Giese began preaching to four Reformed congregations in nearby Loudoun county in Virginia and remained in America after the war. Another Hessian corporal, Theophil Emanuel Frantz of Stettin in Pommerania, was licensed by the Lutheran Ministerium in October 1778, but he was unable to get a congregation because "the people consider him to be crazy and non compos mentis." Joh. Georg Hoehl, a private of the Ansbach troops from near Nordlingen in Franconia, began preaching on his own for pastorless Lutheran congregations in western Maryland and Virginia. The Pennsylvania Ministerium turned him down after the results of his examination were considered "too poor for a common country schoolmaster."²⁷

There were also real ministers who chose to remain in America. Chaplain Joh. Christoph Wagner of the Bayreuth regiment was promised a position as pastor in Maryland, where he had been in captivity. When his unit was freed and ready to return to Europe, Wagner stayed behind in Frederick, but by July 1783 he decided to join the loyalists and moved to Nova Scotia, where he was assigned 400 acres of land. Friedrich Valentin Melsheimer, a graduate of Helmstedt University, came in 1776 as the chaplain of the Braunschweig Dragoon regiment. He was taken prisoner in August 1777 and exchanged for a captured American chaplain in May 1779. In his own words he explained that he did not return to the regiment "on account of some difficulties I had with brother officers, I resigned my commission as chaplain and assumed charge of several congregations in Lancaster county." Frederick Muhlenberg, a

member of the Continental Congress in March 1780 called, Melsheimer "a true Friend of American Liberty." This was the beginning of a long career as a Lutheran minister in Pennsylvania coupled with a systematic study of minerals plants and insects, earning him, the designation as "the father of American entomology."²⁸

Among the participants in this unique chapter of German emigration were men trained in many crafts for which there was a need in American communities. A large number came from rural backgrounds, which gave them an appreciation for the land that was offered to them. Certainly there were some charlatans and crooks among them. Many a peacetime emigrant transport brought such people along with all the good ones. Almost every state of the new United States became the borne of ex-soldiers. Compared with the conditions in Germany, the free atmosphere of the still British colonies to the north likewise proved attractive enough to many hundreds of them.

Joh. Henrich Reuter of Hasselbach in Wittgenstein sent his first letter home from Halifax, Nova Scotia, on October 30, 1783: "I am now a free man, free from soldier's life after eight years, and I am resolved to remain in this country because as a sergeant I have been promised two hundred morgens of land." While he mentions other assistance the colony was offering, he expresses the wish "to have you, dear sisters and brothers or some of my friends here with me because I would be able to feed them here on my land." In a letter from Savannah, Georgia, the Hessian veteran Justus Hartmann Scheuber wrote to his former chief, Friedrich von der Malsburg: "How happy I and others are who have left the

slavish spirit for republican and democratic angels."²⁹

Another group of people associated with the troops was described in a letter Rebecca Samuel, the wife of a Jewish watchmaker in Petersburg, Virginia, sent to her parents in Hamburg: "you cannot imagine what kind of Jews they have here. They were all German itinerants who made a living by hawking in Germany. They came to America during the war, as soldiers and now they wouldn't recognize themselves." Indeed, it took not very long for many of them to prosper. Joseph Darmstadt, a sutler with the Hessian troops became a very successful merchant in Richmond and was soon elected to the city council. Philipp Mark, a native of Waldeck who converted to Protestantism, came to America as quartermaster of the Third Waldeck regiment. In 1783 he opened his own export-import business in New York and soon became active in the local German Society which had been founded after the war to assist newly arrived emigrants.³⁰

The exact number of German soldiers and their camp followers who remained in North America cannot be ascertained. Estimates based on official records in the six principalities which furnished troops range from, 5,500 to 6,500 persons.

On the American side of the war there were a few unemployed officers from Germany who were accepted by the Continental Congress from among a considerable number of military professionals who were seeking jobs. Foremost among them was Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben who had left the Prussian service in 1763 and taken on a position as chamberlain for the prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen which he gave up in 1774. After much futile

searching for a military position befitting his prior experience, Steuben's attention was directed toward the American cause. He arrived during the first week of December 1777 at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on a clandestine French armament transport and was subsequently appointed Inspector General of the American army with the rank of major general. Steuben made the new republic his home after the war.³¹ Among the very few other German officers who stayed on and became citizens was Heinrich Emanuel Lutterloh whose application to serve in the continental army had been approved by the American commissioners in Paris in 1777. Lutterloh's services turned out to be erratic. He resigned as assistant quartermaster in 1778 but seems to have later been used in the supply corps,

After France concluded a treaty of alliance with the United States on March 20, 1778, American hopes for the active participation of French troops against the British were high. It was, however, not until July 1780 that the first units of the expeditionary forces under Count Rochambeau landed at Newport, Rhode Island, after successfully crossing an Atlantic swarming with British warships. Among Rochambeau's army was the regiment Royal Deux-Ponts, a unit which the ruler of the Duchy of Zweibrucken had placed at the disposal of the King of France as far back as 1756. There were some Germans in other regiments. Together with German-speaking soldiers from Lorraine, Alsace and Switzerland, the German element of the entire French expeditionary force in America represented at least one-third of the total. In contrast to the German auxiliary troops of the British, these soldiers did not come as enemies. While their reception was friendly every-

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where, the appearance of a regiment from the Palatinate in areas settled by Germans, many of whom from the Duchy of Zweibrücken, caused much excitement and delight both among the soldiers and among the local population. Private Georg Flohr, a native of Sarnstall near Annweiler in the Palatinate, vividly described in his diary the encounter when the troops reached Pennsylvania early in September 1781. Near the Delaware, at Grandfort, "here we met German people for the first time who welcomed us on the road as fellow-countrymen." Closer to Philadelphia,

there we were met by a crowd of German inhabitants from the city who were looking for compatriots and for acquaintances because they had heard that the Zweibrücken regiment was to be there. In our ranks there really was no lack of such countrymen since it is no exaggeration to state that one third of the regiment met people here from home; among them there were very many brothers and sisters who met and who had not seen one another for many years since they left in their youth to go to this New Land.

In this manner many a soldier also met his father etc. Some had left their children behind in Europe when they fled to this country because they had gone into bankruptcy.

When the regiment set up its camp near the city,

within half an hour so many people gathered that it looked like the largest country fair in front of the camp but all tents were also crowded, one had his brother there, another one his sister, a third one his friends etc.

On the 4th there was even a larger throng than before because country folk came from up to 10-12 hours

away in order to look for familiar faces which they found aplenty.

Flohr continues his description of this "homecoming" with a mention of the need of the local Germans for information from their native land from which communications had been interrupted for several years by the war. They wanted to know if friends and relatives were still alive. Any Zweibrücken soldier who ventured into Philadelphia was taken by his countrymen to the nearest inn and treated generously as long as he was willing to talk. Such contacts with the local population worried the officers. For the first months after arrival, the French had tried very hard to keep the soldiers away from civilians but, after all, they had come as allies and had to accept the kindness and enthusiasm of the Americans. Most of the soldiers under French command had signed up for eight years of service before there was any hint of their being used overseas. Of 316 deserters from Rochambeau's corps, the Zweibrücken regiment accounted for 104, almost one-third of the total. Thirty-three of them left their units during the five months prior to the embarkation which took place from Providence, Rhode Island, for the West Indies in December 1782. Private Flohr noted that some Americans had promised to hide defectors "until the French were gone." The French had sentenced five recaptured deserters to immediate execution in order to set an example. Those who left the troops before their enrolment contract had expired were also punished by the confiscation of all their property and inheritance at home.³² Among those of Rochambeau's corps who remained in America was the army doctor Franz Joseph Mettauier, a native of Sulzbach in Alsace. Others returned with their regiment and as soon as they obtained a dis-

charge headed for America. In September 1784, Father Paul Rignatz, a native of Wurzburg and Catholic chaplain of the regiment Deux-Ponts, arrived in Baltimore on his own and reported immediately to the Prefect Apostolic, John Carrol.

Georg Flohr, whose journal of the American experiences described the impressions of a young man raised in a remote Palatine village, did not return to America until more than ten years later. After he witnessed the violent turn of events of the French Revolution in Paris, Flohr

decided to go to the Robinson valley in Virginia, where several Germans lived who had fought alongside the French corps. He taught school there and studied for the Lutheran ministry under Pastor Wilhelm Zimmermann. For thirty years afterwards Flohr was the leading Lutheran clergyman in southwest Virginia.

The effect on so many Germans on both sides of the conflict having seen the well-being and personal freedom of their countrymen was to be felt in most areas to which veterans returned.

— Klaus Wust New
York City

Notes

- ¹ Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1980), 10, 24-25.
- ² Ulrich Weiss, "Ein Wittgensteiner Regiment?," *Wittgenstein* 47 (1983), 126-128.
- ³ Atwood, 25-26.
- ⁴ *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments 1754-1783 Respecting North America*, ed. R. C. Simmons & P. D. G. Thomas, 6 (White Plains, NY: 1987), 409-410.
- ⁵ Horst Dippel, *Germany and the American Revolution, 1770-1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1977), 128.
- ⁶ *Staatsbote* (Philadelphia) Jan. 5 & May 7, 1776.
- ⁷ Lyman H. Butterfield, "Psychological Warfare in 1776: The Jefferson-Franklin Plan to Cause Hessian Desertions," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XCIV (1950), No. 2, 233-241; Atwood, 186-187.
- ⁸ Ernst Kipping, *The Hessian View of America, 1776-1783* (Monmouth Beach, NJ: 1971), 9.
- ⁹ Johann Gottfried Seume, *Mein Leben* (Bremen, 1969), 51-52.
- ¹⁰ Kipping, 10, 24, 40-45; Atwood, 191, 199-201.
- "Clifford Neil Smith, *Brunswick Deserters—Immigrants of the American Revolution* (Thomson, IL: 1973); Atwood, 193-194.
- ¹² Knyphausen's letter dated 6 July 1778. Staatsarchiv Marburg 41, 410, No. 2, fol. 386
- ¹³ Kipping, 24.
- ¹⁴ Library of Congress (photostat) PreuBisches Geheimes Staatsarchiv—Heeresarchiv Rep. 15A Ms. 382.
- ¹⁵ Atwood, 192-193; Erhard Stadtler, *Die Ansbach-Bayreuther Truppen im Amerikanischen Unabhangigkeitskrieg, 1777-1783* (Numberg, 1956), 66-67.
- ¹⁶ Calendar of Virginia State Papers I (Richmond, 1875), 482-483.
- ¹⁷ George F. Jones, "Georgia's German Language Proclamation: An Appeal to the Hessians to Desert," *The Report* 39 (1984), 21 -22.
- ¹⁸ Leslie to Clinton, dated 2 March 1782, *The Report* 39 (1984), 26-27; August Woringer, "Protocol der Amtshandlungen, die der Feldprediger G. C. Coster verrichtet," *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichts-Blatter* 20-21 (1920-1), 281, 286-287, 289, 292.
- ¹⁹ (Worthington C. Ford, ed.) *The Writings of George Washington* (New York: 1889-1903), XI, 81, 98-99.
- ²⁰ *Pennsylvania Packet*, 24 December 1778.
- ²¹ Atwood, 202.
- ²² Stadtler, 152; Atwood, 10-11, 189; Kipping, 36.
- ²³ Gunter Moltmann, "Die Transportation von Straflingen," *Deutsche Amerikaauswanderung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: 1976), 171.
- ²⁴ Virginia DeMarce, *German Military Settlers in Canada after the American Revolution* (Sparta, WA: 1984), 3.
- ²⁵ Stadtler, 26, 71-73, 151.
- ²⁶ Pages 89-91 in H.W. Debor, "German Soldiers of the American War of Independence as Settlers in Canada," *German-Canadian Yearbook* 111 (1976), 71-93.
- ²⁷ DeMarce, 8, 11, 19; Atwood, 198, 204; Stadtler, 73, 151, 160, 166; *HETRINA—Hessische Truppen im amerikanischen Unabhangigkeitskrieg* (Inge Auerbach & Otto Frolich, eds.) III (1976), #5984, #10951; IV (1976), #2371.
- ²⁸ Charles H. Glatfelter, *Pastors and People* (Breiningsville, PA, 1980) I, 55, 87-88.
- ²⁹ *Wittgenstein* 47 (1983), 122-123; Dippel, 341.
- ³⁰ Dated 12 January 1791 in Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewish Documents—Eighteenth Century* (Cincinnati, OH: 1959), 51-54; Klaus Wust, *The Virginia Germans* (Charlottesville, VA: 1969), 104; Albert W. Haarman, "The Third Waldeck Regiment in British Service," *Journal of the Society for Army History Research* 48 (1970), 182-185.
- ³¹ Edith von Zemensky & Morgan H. Pritchett, "Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben: Soldier of Fortune or Military Professional?," *The Report* 36(1975), 8-25.
- ³² Ernst Drumm, *Das Regiment Royal-Deuxponts* (Zweibrucken, 1936); Rudolph Karl Tross, "Zu Wasser und zu Land: Die Erlebnisse des Georg Flohr im Hochloblichen Regiment von Zweybrucken," *Pfalzischer Merkur*, 1 & 2 September 1976; Robert A. Selig, "A German Soldier in America, 1780-1783: The Journal of Georg Daniel Flohr," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, vol. L, no. 3 (1993), 575-590.

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