

The *Society of Brothers* is the official name of the *New Anabaptists* founded by Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935) in 1922 at Sannerz, Hesse-Nassau, Germany, holding all goods in common like the early Hutterites, though at that time without knowledge of the existence of the continuing Hutterian brotherhood in North America.

The *Society of Brothers* is a Christian brotherhood which holds all property in common, regards all work as of equal worth, upholds a radical peace testimony with complete non-participation in war and military service, rejects all swearing of oaths, litigation, and office-holding, practices simplicity of life, is governed by unanimous consent of the members in each community.

The *Society of Brothers* bases its membership on unity of faith in Christ regardless of race, class, or nationality. Candidates are received on probation for a variable period, after which they are received through baptism by vote of the group on profession of adherence to the principles of the brotherhood. All property is surrendered to the group upon reception into membership.¹

The term '*Bruderhof*' was first applied to the group when it established the *Rhönbruderhof* at Neuhoof near Fulda, Germany, in 1926, in a conscious imitation of the historic Hutterite term known to Arnold from his study of the 16th-century Hutterites.

Contact was made with the North American Hutterites in 1928, and in 1930-1931 Arnold visited their Bruderhofs. In December 1930 he was ordained a Hutterite elder at the *Stand-Off Colony* near Macleod, Alberta, and commissioned to lead the new German *bruderhof* group as a part of the ancient Hutterite brotherhood.

With the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazism in Germany, the *Rhön Bruderhof* at Fulda in Hesse moved its draft-age men and children to Liechtenstein in 1934 because of their conscientious refusal to serve in the armed forces and to accept Nazi teachers. This community became known as the *Alm Bruderhof*...located at Silum, Post Triesenberg.

Continuing pressure from the *Third Reich* administration resulted in other members moving to England, where they founded the *Cotswold Bruderhof* in 1936 at Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire, England, which grew to 250 by 1938, when a second *bruderhof* was established nearby at Oaksey.

On April 14, 1937, the German secret police surrounded the *Rhön Bruderhof*, confiscated the property, and gave the remaining community members forty-eight hours to leave the country...on the grounds that 'communistic' movements were no longer permitted.

By 1938, all *bruderhof* members had reassembled in England, where the population grew to 350, largely through the addition of young English members seeking an alternative to war. Even before the outbreak of *World War II*, the community's German members and its pacifist stance attracted deep suspicion locally and economic boycotts.

At the outbreak of *World War II*, those members of the *bruderhof* who were German nationals were faced with detention. When confronted with the option of either having all German members interned, or leaving England as a group, the latter option was chosen.

Under heavy pressure from the British government, who feared they would aid the Germans in a possible invasion, they began to look for refuge abroad. Attempts to secure permission to settle in the United States and Canada near the Hutterite colonies failed and, in the end, Paraguay proved to be the only country willing to accept a pacifist community of mixed nationalities.

The movement to Paraguay was made with the assistance of the *Mennonite Central Committee* and the *American Friends Service Committee*. The settlement was made adjacent to the *Mennonite Colony of Friesland* to the east. Several persons were left behind to liquidate *Bruderhof* property. *Primavera* is located eighty miles northeast of Asuncion and belongs to the *Society of Brothers* founded by Eberhard Arnold in 1920 in Germany.

The new community will consist of three separate village communities...*Isla Margarita*, *Loma Jhoby* and *Ibate*. The *Primavera Bruderhof* is expected to comprise at least a dozen different nationalities, with half of the members being English and perhaps a quarter German.

The chief source of income will be agriculture, though eventually some industry will develop, particularly the extraction and bottling of orange juice, tangerines, and grapefruit. It is hoped that by their education programmes and their hospital (*Sanatorio Primavera*) the community will prove helpful to the local Paraguayans.

The official corporate name in Paraguay is *Sociedad Fraternal Hutteriana*. A business office will be maintained in the capital, Asuncion employing several dozen persons

¹ Property is not returned to individual members in the event that they choose to leave the brotherhood later on, but remains under the control of the community leaders in the best interest of the remaining members of *The Society of Brothers*.