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Entry into this territory is not allowed...

Charles Flaxman and August Fiedler, under suspicion by the Prussian authorities, 1840

John Schubert

Almost two years after Pastor August Kavel's followersⁱ left their homeland for South Australia, word reached the Prussian authorities that moves were afoot to personally encourage more emigration to South Australia. Positive written reports had been filtering back to Europe for some time, describing the opportunities and favourable conditions in the Antipodes. But this time the Prussian authorities were presented with the possibility of a visit from South Australia by two individuals known to them: Charles Flaxman and Johann Friedrich August Fiedler.

British-born Flaxman (1806-1869) was employed as a "confidential clerk" by George Fife Angas, who sponsored the Kavel party to South Australia. Fluent in German, Flaxman was sent to Prussia by Angas in 1836 to expedite the emigration to South Australia. His visit, however, was not successful, and it took until 1838 for the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III, to finally grant permission for the Lutheran dissidents to leave. Flaxman sailed with them on the *Prince George* and, as Angas's land agent in the colony, he organised their settlement on land his employer purchased at Klemzig, near Adelaide. Later, in 1839, Flaxman purchased the "Seven Special Surveys at the Barossa Range", on which the German emigrants were to eventually settle.

August Fiedler (1796-1880), a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo, was a forest warden (*Förster*) in Klemzig, Prussia, who played an influential role in organising the 1838 emigration, during Kavel's absence in London. He was a member of a delegation which travelled to England to negotiate terms with Angas; and when royal consent was finally conceded, the official decree was addressed to "August Fiedler and Associates at Klemzig". Later marrying Kavel's sisterⁱⁱ, Fiedler played a prominent and public role with Pastor Kavel in the formative years of the Lutheran church in South Australia, was well-known in the German community generally, and pioneered the wine industry in the Barossa Valley.

Apart from letters written privately by the early settlers to their families and friends in Prussiaⁱⁱⁱ, both Pastor Kavel and Fiedler, individually and jointly, wrote letters intended for a wider audience and with the purpose of encouraging their fellow countrymen to emigrate. Fiedler, whose name was known and respected in areas where interest in migration was growing, wrote firstly to Prussia in June 1839. This letter was sent to relatives and friends with the express purpose that it be circulated, including to Fiedler's former employer and patroness of the church at Klemzig, the Princess Reuss.

A month later, in July-August 1839, Kavel wrote the first of two lengthy letters home, this one jointly signed by Fiedler. In it, he openly encouraged migration by fellow Lutherans and their pastors, reporting on the availability of Angas's land for German settlement, and listing what the settlers should bring with them. Fiedler also wrote further letters to Prussia for circulation, even naming individuals to whom they should be passed. It is believed that some letters back were published in Prussian newspapers, further exciting interest in emigration to Australia. There seems little doubt that it was through reports such as these that word reached the Prussian authorities that a visit by Flaxman and Fiedler was planned.

The documents below were located earlier this year in Berlin, at the Secret State Archive of Prussian Cultural Heritage (*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*).^{iv} They clearly indicate that the Prussian authorities were still smarting from the 1838 emigration which they had opposed and obstructed for several years.^v As a consequence, the return of a leading “separatist” and his English enabler, intent on encouraging more emigration to South Australia, was to be prevented at all costs. The attitude of the authorities is made clear in the overt and negative anti-British undertone in this correspondence. Angas’s support of the Prussian emigrants is attributed not to any philanthropic sensibilities, but is interpreted as a typical example of British cunning: by enticing valuable German emigrants from their homeland and then trapping them in a position whereby they could later be exploited financially. At the same time the British are criticized for cynically preferring German settlers who demonstrated positive attributes such as frugality, perseverance and piety - not because such values were highly appreciated in their own right, but so that future British profits would not be undermined by less moral settlers who could resort to law-breaking!

The genesis of such a planned visit would logically lie in the dire financial ramifications, and distress, Angas suffered as a consequence of Flaxman’s unilateral purchase of the Barossa special surveys. Flaxman and Kavel would have felt under an obligation to ameliorate Angas’s situation by attracting more settlers from Prussia, thus ensuring the success of the colony. Moreover, the choice of Fiedler to travel to Europe with Flaxman to achieve this goal was both obvious and appropriate. In the event, neither Fiedler nor Flaxman returned to Prussia. In his letter of June 1839 Fiedler noted that he had been invited to go with Flaxman to Germany to recruit new migrants, but refused because he couldn’t leave his children alone. Fiedler’s (second) wife had died in December 1838, shortly after they landed in South Australia, and he did not marry Kavel’s sister until after April 1840.^{vi} By then, the moment had passed. The relationship between Flaxman and Angas broke down during 1840 after the purchase of the Barossa land, and Fiedler was focussed on developing his property and assets at Klemzig and the demands of his community and family life.

But the movement the Prussian authorities wished to stop had already started to regain its initial momentum by 1840. It did not need a “recruiting” visit for the trickle of Prussian emigration in the last years of the 1830s to turn into a flood by the end of the following decade, and beyond; the glowing reports of opportunities in Australia, lean economic times and the growing political unrest in Europe, even the desire to escape military service in some instances saw to that, long after any religious motivation ceased to be a factor.^{vii}

As is often the case, the historic value of these documents far exceeds the reason for their original creation, arising from an ultimately unwarranted security fear. Here we can discern the voice of suspicious and somewhat xenophobic officialdom, thereby gaining insights into the Prussian attitude towards those who emigrated in 1838, those who enabled them to do so, and any potential further emigration.

The last communication in this file on the expected visit of Flaxman and Fiedler ends with a note that the documents were to be filed pending further developments. It is fascinating to reflect if reference was ever made to them again, until being plucked out of obscurity 178 years later, in 2018.

A note on the translation:

While some changes in syntax, semantics and punctuation have been made for the sake of clarity, every effort has also been made to retain the essence of the original documents, with their formal and convoluted sentence structure and, in 21st century eyes at least, overly deferential and obsequious language. To the same end, the Germanized spelling of Flaxman’s surname has been retained, and the German honorific “Herr”.

Appreciation is expressed to Christine Greenthaner and Herbert Mees who graciously undertook the difficult challenge of translating these documents.

MINUTES
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
in regard to the scrutiny of forest warden August Fiedler who is suspected of
separatist activities, and of agent Flachsmann
From March 1840 to June 1840
Police matters, Special Cases

Document 1: Letter from the Minister of the Interior von Rochow, Berlin, to Minister of Foreign Affairs von Werther, Berlin, dated 9 March, 1840

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to respectfully attach a notice received from a reliable source, from which it emerges that an agent of the English Colonization Society for South Australia^{viii}, named Flachsmann, in the company of a former Prussian subject named Fiedler, are said to be arriving in Hamburg in some months, in order to travel to the town of Klemzig and surrounding region in the district of Züllichau.

According to the circumstances set out in the attachment, and since the former forest warden Fiedler from Klemzig, who emigrated in the spring of 1838,^{ix} was among the most influential leaders of the Separatists in the district of Züllichau, his return, especially in the company of the agent Flachsmann, can have no other purpose assigned to it than this: to use his influence on the remaining Separatists of that area and to sway them to emigrate to South Australia.

I have decided to grant neither Fiedler nor Flachsmann entry into the Royal Territories. To this end I entreat Your Excellency, most obediently, to be good enough to order the royal envoy in Hamburg should the aforementioned individuals present their passports for ambassadorial validation, to inform them that the journey to our territories is not allowed and, accordingly, to refuse a visa and, in all events, to report their arrival here.

At the same time, however, in the event that the aforementioned persons should present their passports to the Royal Embassy, I would also like to instruct the Police Department there not to issue such a visa, but inform the envoy immediately of the presence of these persons; and to invigilate their background closely, and report the purposes of their journey at once, in which instance the border authorities on this side^x will have been immediately alerted to the impending journey of the same, so that by the latter the turning back of the travellers might be effected.

I have informed the Municipal Council in Perleberg^{xi}, as well as the Royal Police Headquarters here, of the supposed intention of the latter with the instruction, in the case of their arrival, to arrange their deportation across the border.

Your Excellency will greatly oblige me with a report on the orders made from this end.

Berlin, the 9th March 1840

(Signed) Rochow^{xii}

To the Royal Privy Counsellor^{xiii} and Minister of Foreign Affairs Baron von Werther^{xiv}
Your Excellency

[The date, 12 March 1840, written at the top of this letter indicates when it was received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]

Document 2 [Attachment]: Extract from a letter by writer unknown, dated 20 February, 1840 [undoubtedly the attachment to the previous letter]

Copy:

Extract from a letter of 20 February 1840

It will be two years ago next June that many inhabitants of the area around Züllichau emigrated and went to South Australia, close to Adelaide. Since then, about half a year ago, letters have been arriving from there which, in their content, contained a great deal to encourage the idea of a new emigration, although they were still too vague in many areas to have created any especially great excitement. That many a soul would become full of longing for distant relations, already emigrated far away, and might desperately wish to hurry after them could, of course, not be completely discounted. However, in the last days, letters have again arrived. In these, the situation of the emigrants in South Australia is described from a very alluring viewpoint. There is no talk of any difficulties that they might have had there, of course, because they want to attract their family and friends they left behind to join them. Behind this, however, appears to lie a carefully calculated plan of the Colonization Company for South Australia under the leadership of Herr Angas of London, and under the agency of a certain Herr Flachsmann. This company provided for the passage of the German emigrants, and allotted them only the land which had been bought there, at all events, in the typical English^{xv} manner, to be able to call in exorbitant interest later on. For the time being the English are leaving the colonists free of taxes, so they can first of all fully establish themselves and then be able all the better to reel them in. In the same way that the English mission societies prefer to have German missionaries because of their frugality and perseverance, so it seems that the English Colonization Society prefers to have German colonists, perhaps in the hope that they can pay these off for less, and still get more out of them some day. Particularly desirable for them must be those who, in addition to the German frugality and perseverance, also bring a somewhat pious and God-fearing sense with them, so that they do not need to fear that their future profit will be undermined by early law breaking.^{xvi} So it seems then that the aforementioned Angas and the Company intend to continue to use the channel opened to him by Pastor Kavel, to draw more people away from us. One wonders whether this isn't the purpose behind all this, when the people in South Australia are until now only reporting good, enticing and lovely things; whether subtle, commercial English cunning is behind it. Furthermore, it has been reported to the local people by their relatives – and this is particularly important – only in order to induce them and influence them all the more to a decision to emigrate,

that the aforementioned Flachsmann, the agent of the said English Colonization Society, is supposed to have already once again bought 20 and some more thousand acres of land in South Australia^{xvii}, in order to distribute the same among German colonists and, that now the same Flachsmann will himself within a few months - they talk about two - arrive in Hamburg in the company of a certain Fiedler from Karge,^{xviii} and will also visit Klemzig and district - just as he already did earlier^{xix} - where everyone can join him.

One can imagine how much excitement this generates, how disposed to migrate many are made by this, and among these not a few who are by no means Separatists but would still like to go now “for the sake of their faith” – although the better ones of these admit that it would be sinful to bemoan pressure on their faith.^{xx} But, on the whole, it will always be said “for the sake of their faith” and who knows whether the English Colonization Society doesn't keep this leverage to use as an ever-new source for good German emigrants. In our Prussian Legal Code there are specific paragraphs against those who would influence the subjects of the state to emigrate en masse, or assist them.^{xxi} The question would be whether these paragraphs might not also be applicable to Herr Flachsmann and the said Fiedler; whether they could not at least provide grounds to keep these two men away from our borders and not allow them to go about their business undisturbed? - These lines would wish at least, somewhere and somehow, to call attention to all of this, so that, if preventative measures could be taken quietly, they would not be taken too late. Certainly, these defensive measures should be taken as carefully, as quietly, as unobtrusively as possible, because if they were taken openly and very noticeably, they would elicit a so much greater objection.

[This extract appears to have been written in the same hand as the von Rochow letter above. As von Rochow's signature bears no resemblance to the body of the letters, we can assume that they were probably written by an official in the Ministry of the Interior.]

Document 3: Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, to Prussian Envoy von Haelein, Hamburg, dated 14 March, 1840, unsigned

Berlin, the 14th March 1840

To the Royal Prussian Envoy and Consular Minister, Herr von Haenlein,^{xxii}
Honourable Sir,^{xxiii} in Hamburg

Process quickly!

It has been learned by the Interior Ministry of the Royal Government that the former forest warden from Klemzig, in the district of Züllichau, August Fiedler, who following separatist activities, emigrated from his homeland to South Australia in the spring of 1838, intends to visit the district of Züllichau shortly, with the agent of the English Colonization Society for South Australia, Flachsmann, and that both individuals will arrive in Hamburg in the coming months in order to come to these regions over here. Considering the earlier activities of the said Fiedler, the basic purpose can only be the intention of bringing his influence to bear in that district on the Separatists who remained at home, and induce them to emigrate to South Australia; above all, because he is in the company of the said Flachsmann, who has earlier been in Silesia with a similar intention, we believe he intends to come here.

Under these circumstances it has been decided by the Royal Ministry of the Interior and the Police not to allow the entry into these territories of both aforementioned individuals. To carry out this decision the same requests Your Honour, that should the said Fiedler and the said Flachsmann present their passports to you on their arrival in Hamburg, the issue of a visa should be refused under the condition that entry into this territory is not allowed, and that a report should be made straight away after their arrival.

In the case, however, that the two individuals of whom we speak should not present their passports to Your Honour, the aforementioned Royal Ministry requests that the Police Department of the Free State of Hamburg be instructed that such a visa will not be issued from its side; in fact, on the arrival of the said Fiedler and the said Flachsmann there, to turn its attention to them and straight away advise Your Honour of their arrival and the purposes of their journey so that the border authorities here might immediately and expeditiously be made aware of the imminent approach of both individuals, and the refusal of the individuals be effected by them.

The Municipal Council in Perleberg as well as the Police Headquarters here are informed of the state of the matter, and both authorities have received the order that the said Fiedler and the said Flachsmann, should they attempt to cross to this side, are to be escorted back to the other side of the border.

Your Excellency is requested by the undersigned Ministry to tailor your handling of the matter appropriately in accordance with the aforementioned decrees of the Royal Ministry of the Interior and the Police, and to submit the relevant requests to the authorities of the Free State of Hamburg; in addition, you are asked to be good enough to apprise from there without delay the border authorities on our side and the undersigned Minister, in accordance with the current findings, as well as those made earlier, of anything and whatever may come to your attention in Hamburg about the intentions of the said Fiedler and the said Flachsmann.

Berlin

[Some notes in the left margin at the beginning of this letter are illegible. The note "Police Fiedler and F" is written at the bottom of the first page of this document in a different hand; an illegible initial, in another hand again, is found at the end of the document.]

Document 4: Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, to the Minister of the Interior von Rochow, Berlin, undated

To
The Honourable Privy Councillor and Minister of the Interior and the Police
Herr von Rochow
Excellency

Esteemed Sir, the undersigned Ministry has the honour to inform Your Excellency most humbly, as an interim reply to your gracious letter of the 9th of the month, that: the aforementioned esteemed letter in regard to the impending arrival in Hamburg of the former forest warden August Fiedler from Klemzig, and the agent of the English Colonization Society for South Australia, Flachsmann; and the request desired from your side in regard to their own conduct, as well as the requests directed to the authorities of the Free City, have now been delivered to the Royal Ambassador exactly according to your requirements, under today's date.

The undersigned Ministry, in obedience to your request, will not fail to inform Your Excellency in time of the advice received from the Royal Ambassador about the success of these petitions, as well as the possible arrival of the two reported individuals in Hamburg.

Berlin

M. d. a. A^{xxiv}

[Signature illegible, but possibly von Werther; this is followed by an illegible initial, probably by an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is identical with the initials that appear on the two notes on the document below. This whole document appears to have been written in the same hand as the previous letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.]

Document 5: Letter from the Prussian Envoy von Haenlein, Hamburg, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, dated 20 March, 1840

Concerning the contents of the most highly honoured directive of the most praiseworthy Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the 14th of the month, in regard to the possible arrival here of the former forest warden, August Fiedler, and the agent of the English Colonization Society for South Australia, Flachmann^{xxv}: I have immediately informed the appropriate authority and subsequently the local police have been instructed not to issue visas for the Royal Prussian Territories for the passports of Fiedler and Flachmann, and also to advise me of the arrival of the aforementioned individuals without delay.

Hamburg, the 20th March, 1840

(Signed) v[on] Haenlein

To
A Highly praiseworthy Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin

[The date, 24 March 1840, written at the top of this letter indicates when it was received in Berlin. A note at the bottom of the letter, possibly in the same hand, reads "Very respectfully submitted, Berlin 17 June 1840"; this was probably addressed to the writer of the following two notes. The note at the bottom of this communication, almost certainly written by the same official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as in the document above, states that Haenlein is to be requested to report on the present state of the matter (followed by the illegible initial and the date 18/6). A note in the margin, in the same hand, is largely illegible, but a general summary of its meaning would indicate: since advice has been given to the Minister of the Interior, and pending further developments, the matter is to be filed for the time being. This note ends with "Berlin", a date which appears to be 24/8 or 29/8, and the same initial.]

Endnotes

ⁱ August Ludwig Christian Kavel (1798-1860), regarded as the founder of the Lutheran Church of Australia, resigned from his parish at Klemzig, Brandenburg, Prussia after the king's new union or state church liturgy was enforced, and the Old Lutherans were increasingly persecuted. Travelling to London, he obtained the financial backing of English businessman, George Fife Angas (1789-1879), to take his flock to South Australia.

ⁱⁱ Charlotte Sabine Maria Kavel (1806-1880). August and Charlotte Fiedler are the author's great-great-grandparents.

ⁱⁱⁱ One of the earliest letters which survives, dated January 1839, was written by Johann Wilhelm Ferdinand Kavel (1801-1850), Pastor Kavel's brother. Extracts from this and the letters quoted below, along with their sources, can be found in David Schubert, *Kavel's People: From Prussia to South Australia*. Adelaide, Lutheran Publishing House, 1985; and (2nd edition), Highgate, Helen Schubert, 1997.

^{iv} It is worth noting that many more documents of relevance to the Old Lutherans are to be found in this archive. The letters below have been translated in relation to the author's research into the Kavel family.

^v Extracts from documents demonstrating the negative attitude of the Prussian authorities to the 1838 emigration can be found in Schubert, op. cit.

^{vi} No records of the exact date of this marriage appear to exist.

^{vii} Friedrich Wilhelm IV reversed his father's policy in 1845 with the "General Concession for the Lutherans keeping themselves separate from the community of the Protestant Provincial Church".

^{viii} This is a reference to the South Australian Company, founded by George Angas and other wealthy British merchants in 1835, the purpose of which was to encourage the purchase, in advance, of land in the colony, and thereby attract suitable free settlers. Flaxman, it should be noted, was employed privately by Angas, not the South Australian Company.

^{ix} While official consent to emigrate was granted in spring 1838, the party began its journey to Australia on 8 June, the beginning of the European summer.

^x Hamburg was a "free state" or "free city" in 1840, dating from its membership of the medieval Hanseatic League. As the Kingdom Of Hanover separated Hamburg from Prussia until 1866, "this side" is referring to the Prussian side of the border with Hanover.

^{xi} Perleberg is situated half way between Hamburg and Berlin in the current German state of Brandenburg, and has a long history as an administrative centre for local government. It is probable that in 1840 its jurisdiction stretched to the border with Hanover, and encompassed the expected entry point of Flaxman and Fiedler into Prussian territory.

^{xii} Gustav Adolf Rochus von Rochow (1792-1847), regarded as a reformer of the Prussian penitentiary system, was the Prussian Minister of the Interior (and Police), 1838-1842.

^{xiii} The literal translation is "Active Secret State Councillor" (*Königlichen Wirklichen Geheimen Staats*); "Privy Councillor" would be the equivalent in the British system.

^{xiv} Baron Heinrich Wilhelm von Werther (1772-1859), a diplomat, was the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1837-1841.

^{xv} The literal translation is "in good English" (*in gut Englisch*), but there is no doubt that the writer here is being sardonic, and critical of Angas and the South Australian Company, suggesting that their assistance to the emigrants was self-seeking and only offered in order to gain a financial benefit.

^{xvi} There is an irony here in that the Prussian authorities still considered the Old Lutherans to be law-abiding (and God-fearing), despite the fact that they had systematically prosecuted them as law-breakers for adhering to their faith!

^{xvii} This is a reference to the Seven Special Surveys at the Barossa Range.

^{xviii} Karge was a town in Prussian Posen, less than 15 kilometres from Klemzig. Fiedler lived and worked at Klemzig but may have left there before the emigration; it is known he did not leave with the rest of the Kavel group from Tschicherzig, on 8 June, 1838, but was picked up the following day at Deutsch Nettkow. In his 1839 letter Ferdinand Kavel, made specific reference to the people of Karge, which was a short distance from Chawalin where he and his family lived prior to emigrating. All of these towns (now renamed) are found in modern-day Poland.

^{xix} This is a reference to Flaxman's visit to Prussia in 1836, which failed to expedite official permission to leave; Fiedler accompanied Flaxman to the district administrator at Züllichau during that visit.

^{xx} The authorities would not have described their actions against the Old Lutherans as persecution, but simply the prosecution of those who broke the law. With the death of Friedrich Wilhelm III in June 1840 persecution of the dissidents certainly eased, but they continued to be marginalized and disadvantaged even after the 1845 General Concession.

^{xxi} While the Kavel group was granted permission to emigrate in 1838, the authorities had not removed the restrictions and conditions under which further emigration from Prussia was permitted.

^{xxii} Johann Ludwig von Haenlein or Hänlein (1790-1849), Envoy 1834-1849.

^{xxiii} The literal translation is “high and well-born” (*Hochwohlgeboren*), usually translated as “Honourable Sir”.

^{xxiv} Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*M[inisterium] d[er] a[uswärtigen] A[ngelegenheiten]*).

^{xxv} In this communication von Haenlein misspelt the German rendition of Flaxman’s surname used in the other documents.