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<sup>1</sup>Dear children!

First of all, I sincerely hope that these lines will find you alive and in good health. We, too, are in our own way, quite lively again, thank God for that, still have to cough, but considerably less than in winter. The month of May has cured us somewhat, twas very nice and warm, very dry, so that the seed, which was plowed under after Pentecost, grew very poorly and most were after Pentecost, very few were ripe. We were left with a narrow strip to till after Pentecost, a small Gespann (section?), has already come up much thinner and (we) sowed in one, but Kuras (?), pumpkin, potatoes, all planted after Pentecost, nothing has come up yet either. If it does not come now, because the weather has turned all at once on June 13. We already had such dust on the road and with the cattle, drove three taboons <sup>2</sup> twice a day, there was dust without end. Namely Cornelius Neumann<sup>3</sup>, Jakob Philipsen, Wilhelm Philipsen, Jakob Esau<sup>4</sup>, Johann Bergmann<sup>5</sup>, all drove their cattle out to the village. At home the pasture became scarce in the dry weather, but now we have good rains, almost every day and yesterday, June 15 almost all day long. Tonight, again this Sunday morning. As I sit in the corner room and want to chat with you my loved ones, what all will I write you, much has happened, for which the pen is reluctant to write everything down.

You dear Renate<sup>6</sup> write in your letter, the letters that come from Am Trakt, all (tell about) good money in abundance, only your father is to be rebuked / blamed, (he) writes differently, well,

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I want to see if they will continue to send such good letters from Am Trakt, I imagine this thing differently. The good people place themselves in the sunshine, everything is good. I, on the other hand, am in the shadows. It's darker, but basically you can see everything much better from the shade than in the sunshine, than those standing in it. I also want to be brief now, at breakfast I told Mama<sup>7</sup> she should write half a sheet, Peter<sup>8</sup> ditto [also]. Mariechen<sup>9</sup> was not there, was asleep, has to get up early in the morning, milking, spinning, feeding the geese, checking the Küchel<sup>10</sup>, she has enough weighing on her<sup>11</sup>. Hopefully she will write something when she is rested. I would like to send the letters this week. Peter was supposed to go to Cossack City with the pig this week, take some oats along. I wanted Mariechen to go with him, because wild animals are to be seen in Saratov. The second letter is almost ready to go to Heinrich Wall Beiershorst. I wanted them to go early Monday morning, but the road is already getting bad and

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<sup>1</sup> Willi Frese. This letter written by Peter Mathies (1851-1934) (GRANDMA #109037) to the family of his daughter Renate Mathies (1885-1963) (GRANDMA #168775) and her husband Johannes Dyck (1885-1948) (GRANDMA #168774)

<sup>2</sup> Willi Frese. Tabun=Herde = herd

<sup>3</sup> Alex Wiens. Cornelius Neumann (1881-1964) (GRANDMA #1422132)

<sup>4</sup> Alex Wiens. Jakob Esau (1857-1932) (GRANDMA #346669)

<sup>5</sup> Alex Wiens. Johann Bergmann (1844-1936) (GRANDMA #991212)

<sup>6</sup> Willi Frese. Renate Mathies (1885-1963) (GRANDMA #168775)

<sup>7</sup> Willi Frese. Anna Wall (1864-1929) (GRANDMA #109036)

<sup>8</sup> Willi Frese. Peter Mathies (1902-1943) (GRANDMA #1196411)

<sup>9</sup> Willi Frese. Maria Mathies (1909-1993) (GRANDMA #1196425)

<sup>10</sup> Willi Risto. Wahrscheinlich Küken gemeint = Probably meant chicks

<sup>11</sup> Willi Risto. auf der ruht genug=hat viele Aufgaben = has a lot on her shoulders = responsible for lots of tasks

in addition to that, Peter is invited for Tuesday, the 17 June to Peter Neumann's<sup>12</sup> wedding with Johann Bergmann<sup>13</sup> Orloff's daughter Käthe<sup>14</sup>, such a thing must not be missed, yes wedding. And Thursday Gustav Töws<sup>15</sup> Junior has a wedding with Maria Funk<sup>16</sup> from Orloff. The wedding is also supposed to be at Johann Bergmann Orloff's house, because our Tawarians [comrades] look closely at others, but not at themselves. I'll send you Franz Bartsch's<sup>17</sup> golden wedding anniversary from the newspaper, and you can learn a lot from it. None of us is invited to Gustav Töws', not even Peter. You send in your letters for Heinrich Isaaks'<sup>18</sup> silver wedding anniversary, who knows whether there is still silver wedding. Well, we will go there and deliver it, a large drop of wormwood has fallen into the celebration. I already said to Heinrich that he should not send any letter [with the invitation to the wedding]. His friends who mean him well, will come uninvited<sup>19</sup> if we are not in the same situation as those who can't, or are behind lock and key.  
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Namely, here they are quietly looking for fruit, how much each of us delivered to the State from this year's harvest, or "verspüliert" (spooft /cheated) e.g. milled and sold flour. They calculate [with] everyone how much was sowed, so and so much [is] harvested. They know better than the owner himself. At least they want to know, Kuras, pumpkin, potatoes, everything is calculated to the desjatine, on it must be "geschitten"<sup>20</sup> so and so much, if not, (it) is confiscated, the living and dead inventory valued and sold at auction, without mercy, or pay everything, they have worked for a long time like this at our three "Sowjets". In Köppenthaler it went badly, it happened to several already. But I cannot name who all. I will [write] it later. I heard about P. Görtz<sup>21</sup>, Ries[en?], they wanted to take everything from Ries, he went to Cossack City, and they are supposed to have given everything back to him. His property is bequeathed to his wife, whether that is the reason, can not say exactly. Abram Fröse<sup>22</sup> is also on it (the list), several more. In the Sowjet many have debts teacher Janzen and blacksmith Dietrich Penner and Tiede<sup>23</sup> is not man enough for such wild birds, actually the Köppenthal "Politare"<sup>24</sup>. In Lindenau Diet. P. Janzen<sup>25</sup> is supposed to pay 600 rubles, or confiscation, he paid quickly, then they demanded another 700 rubles. It is said that D. Penner was not at home when they demanded the second time. He is said to have later insisted that Janzen be released of the last sum. Whether it happened, I do not know. In Fresenheim [they] have hammered without mercy, it's Hamms turn, Artur Penner's<sup>26</sup> turn with 1500. Heinrich Isaak first time 1500 rubles, then another 500 thrown on top. (They) wrote down

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<sup>12</sup> Alex Wiens. Peter Neumann (1907-1943), Nr. 120 under: <https://amtrakt.de/bewohner-von-hohendorf-1921-22/>, son of #1422132

<sup>13</sup> Alex Wiens. Johannes Bergmann (1881-1943) (GRANDMA #19372)

<sup>14</sup> Alex Wiens. Käthe Bergmann (1910-2001) (GRANDMA #19375)

<sup>15</sup> Willi Frese. Gustav Töws (1904-?) (GRANDMA #1310367)

<sup>16</sup> Willi Frese. Maria Funk (1907-?) (GRANDMA #1310368)

<sup>17</sup> Willi Frese. Franz Bartsch (1854-1931) (GRANDMA #1377858)

<sup>18</sup> Willi Frese. Heinrich Isaak (1877-1934) (GRANDMA #1196412)

<sup>19</sup> Willi Frese. ohngeladen=nicht eingeladen = not invited

<sup>20</sup> Willi Risto. geschitten=geliefert = delivered. Ruth Scott: this could also mean "geschnitten"= cut, harvested

<sup>21</sup> Alex Wiens. Peter Görtz (1870-1933) (GRANDMA #285291)

<sup>22</sup> Alex Wiens. Presumably Abram Fröse (1865-1931) (GRANDMA #4904), also possible that it's his son (GRANDMA #1408785)

<sup>23</sup> Alex Wiens. Presumably Julius Tide (ca. 1890-????) Nr. 147 under: <https://amtrakt.de/bewohner-von-koepental-1921/>

<sup>24</sup> Willi Risto. Politare=Proletare, Proletarier, die Armen, die jetzt Chefs im Sowjet sind = Proletariat, the Poor, who are now the bosses in the Sowjet

<sup>25</sup> Alex Wiens. Dietrich of Peter Janzen (ca.1874-????), Nr. 132 under: <https://amtrakt.de/bewohner-von-lindenau-1921-22/>

<sup>26</sup> Alex Wiens. Artur Penner (1895-1937) (GRANDMA #1118662)

his inventory, all the old horses. How many cows, I do not know. Large work wagon, driller, baler, etc. Whether already auctioned, I do not know. This is the wormwood drop, it is bitter. Aron Esau<sup>27</sup> wrote everything down, a horse and cow they have to leave. I heard his good cow sold at auction [for] 130 rubles. Our Gerhard Dyck drove to Fresenheim

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and returned. I myself did not speak, [he] had said to Peter, in Fresenheim everything is topsy turvy. Joh. Penner<sup>28</sup> had said to Dyck, comes from oben<sup>29</sup> and steigt<sup>30</sup>, but it is (practically) given away, but no one goes there for such an auction. Even Russians and colonists say that who will steigen<sup>31</sup> there.

Preacher Töws<sup>32</sup> was not so high at the beginning, (they) did it again, so that three taus[and] 3000 resulted, also wrote down his inventory, whether already sold, I do not know. (This) is calm before the storm that is about to break. From Johann Dyck they plucked without mercy his inventory, barn, mill. It is said he still retains dwelling house and stable. It was also Johannes' turn, do not know how high. The brown mare from you dears, is supposed to be auctioned at three hundred [rubles]. The rearmost Töws (is) free (could mean the sneaky Töws is free), he made it so that they added another 500 on Heinrich<sup>33</sup>. Namely, last year Töws borrowed 30 poods of wheat from Heinrich, this year he handed it in, it was like it was kept secret, whether there are more, I don't know. People here say that N. Wallen Gerhard is no match for the birds<sup>34</sup> and he is the head<sup>35</sup> of Fresenheim. If Gerhard had done it properly, Heinrich would have had it much easier. Before the sowing season (this) had already happened once, Heinrich had said, after the sowing season 400 "schitten"(will be turned in OR will be cut/ harvested). Driving was no longer possible, after the sowing season 300 were already gone and what was left was doubled 5 times, thus giving a total.

In the Lysanderhoe Sowjet they are now there again, (it's like) one is holding your breath<sup>36</sup>. How it will turn out, they will tear away from the fence, even if it is nailed down. The first time they could take little, when Jacob Franzen was punished with 300 rubles, because our Sowjet had "geschittet"(cut) 8000 Pud more than he should have. That shouldn't be done like that. Now they take people one by one, maybe one or the other is innocent. I feel as if a fever has set in with me, because we are always very soon first (on the list). In the Medemthal Sowjet Gerhard Wallen Hanns wants to be more clever than Gerhard Wall Fresenheim, but it's also going badly in Medemthal. Have heard, there are supposed to be five.

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Mrs. Widow Johann Peters, about whom it was already written in the newspaper, was supposed to still have had a thousand Pud (wheat) at the start of winter, but still on sledges (slays), before the sowing time some of it was driven away. Jacob Hamm [?], Johann Fröse, [who] the other two [are] I do not know yet, Ostenfelder Gustav Neufeld<sup>37</sup>, whether (there are) more, I can not say.

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<sup>27</sup> Alex Wiens. Aron Esau (1869-1943) (GRANDMA #980534)

<sup>28</sup> Alex Wiens. Johannes Penner (1889-1942) (GRANDMA #1196380)

<sup>29</sup> Willi Risto. kommt von oben= comes from the upper villages

<sup>30</sup> Willi Risto. steigt=bietet mit bei Versteigerung = bids at the auction

<sup>31</sup> Willi Risto. steigen=Bieten = place a bid

<sup>32</sup> Alex Wiens. Johannes Töws (1869-1937) (GRANDMA #1014885)

<sup>33</sup> Willi Risto. Heinrich Isaak (1877-1934) (GRANDMA #1196412)

<sup>34</sup> Willi Risto. den Vögeln=den Proletariern vom Sowjet Vögeln= birds, he means the proletarians from the Sowjet

<sup>35</sup> Willi Risto. Haupt = vermutlich Dorfschulze. = presumably the head of the village

<sup>36</sup> Willi Risto. Odem auf=Atem an = hold breath

<sup>37</sup> Alex Wiens. Gustav Neufeld (1897-1943) (GRANDMA #1146257)

One is not Neuschirig<sup>38</sup> in this serious matter. On the Kuter<sup>39</sup> [at the] Cossack City border they are working quite horrifically, one believes it cannot go on like this for long.

But who knows, God will allow us to be humbled. Cornelius Neumann had driven to Cossack City with pigs. At the (Baum) slaughterhouse three men were already waiting at the gate. Neumann wondered whether they were waiting for him, no, for Knob's cattle. Johannes, you will know him, was a rich man. I used to meet him often in Cossack City in the quarters when I was still driving myself. A certain Wolf Friedenfeld, still had fruit. Everything was confiscated, eingesteckt (imprisoned) the sons. They say he is being chased from house and home. Whether this will happen, time will tell, but they are certainly capable. This is a time when one becomes afraid and anxious. It is getting worse and worse, there is no point in hoping for it to get better. Last year they measured the land and put up posts and had to pay well for it. So some of our people said they only wanted to earn money, they wouldn't take the land, but they were really wrong. Already again this year (they) were on our middle piece of land, already have drawn two furrows by Schitnik<sup>40</sup> wheat, oats, potatoes, Kures from the Lauber border, to Waldweg and like that again 2 ½ land parcels further, repeated, until in Medemthal and back from Medemthal, to Gustav Töws in the direction of the Russian border. Now come the longest furrows, how many, I don't know yet, will check, posts are already put in and then comes the class principle: Kulak to the back and in the front friends should still settle behind the Waldweg (forest path) and then our proletarians and the middle farmers. I often say, this is our last, this is enough for the forced downfall to destroy us. From all the land that I bought "erblich" to be inherited, in order not to make our children landless, it has come this far that I am without any land in Russia, and run the Stände (Stans?) over and over.

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Yes, I often say that if instead of demolishing our old dwelling house in 1912 and building a new house, I had rather sold everything, land and building inventory, there would have been a nice sum at that time. I could have bought my grandfather's farm in Vogtei, Germany, could have paid cash. Gerhard Wall Medemthal said you could have bought all Vogtei, of which only the whole village six Hufen (?). Oh, when I think of it, my mind speeds along, as if on a hunting sleigh, but too late. What a pity, after the confiscation and theft, we raised beautiful young horses again. That they all have to go away and be sold cheaply, because our little bit of land what we get (for it), so much and to live too little, but to die too much. When I was still a small boy and the German girls while spinning, in the evening, when our parents were not at home, told many fairy tales, which we liked to listen to and there (it) often occurred, (something was) pulled down, pulled into the pot of buttermilk and that's how it is going for us now. Yes, my dear 9 grandchildren, be glad and grateful to your dear parents that they brought you, even if at great loss, to the land of freedom. There you can live your faith and your profession without obstacles. May our dear faithful Father bless you in the new fatherland.

The newspaper wrote, this is the land of freedom, but this will be a slave country of serfs, for which Alexander 2 had to give his life. Must report, my friend Jacob Esau does not improve at all, can not walk well alone, lies mostly in bed. I wanted to be brief, but there is so much on my mind. Accept it with love, and finally the warmest greetings from Mama, Peter and Mariechen, which I join. I remain your loving father and grandfather.

Peter Mathies

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<sup>38</sup> Willi Frese. Neuschirig (Plattdeutsch) = (Low German) curious

<sup>39</sup> Willi Risto. Auf die Kuter=den Guts. = on the homestead / farm / property

<sup>40</sup> Willi Risto. Schitnik=Sommergetreide = summer grains

On May 19 and June 2, we received two letters from you, to our delight, but write again soon, also the children. Farewell until we meet again, if not here, then up there. Goodbye.

<sup>41</sup>Just now, as I sit this afternoon in the corner parlor and want to chat with you, the rain is pouring in streams down the gutters<sup>42</sup>, the Stander (cisterns?) all full, the bride and groom come driving into our courtyard, Gustav Töws

<sup>43</sup>with his bride and verbally invite our Peter to their wedding. Our driving [to] Cossack City is foiled again.

<sup>44</sup> Jakob Janzen Lysanderhöh, whose daughter Helene married I think a Gustav Janzen (and moved) to Samara, now widowed is here to visit. Walter Schmidt from Khiva was here during the winter, wants to leave after the wedding.

<sup>45</sup> Heinrich Schmidt's son Hermann broke his leg, his thumb came off at the "Scheuertor" (barn gate?), the gate fell on him, our doctor Stretja could not fix it, he is in Warenburg Bolnitsa<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>47</sup>Still want to report that in 1929 the 5th of May at 12:15 at our Helene the second heir immigrated named Johannes, fat boy.

<sup>48</sup>Another time there'll be more .... Love

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<sup>41</sup> Willi Frese. Addition to letter. On the side page 1

<sup>42</sup> Willi Frese. Addition to letter. On the side page 4

<sup>43</sup> Willi Frese. Addition to letter. On the side page 2

<sup>44</sup> Willi Frese. Addition to letter. On the side page 3

<sup>45</sup> Willi Frese. Addition to letter. page 5

<sup>46</sup> Willi Risto. Warenburger Bolniza= Hospital in Warenburg

<sup>47</sup> Willi Frese. Willi Frese. Addition to letter. page 6

<sup>48</sup> Willi Frese. Addition to letter. In the heading page 1