

Hohendorf February 25, 1928

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¹ Dear children Johannes and Renate Dyck and our dear 9 grandchildren. I greet you all with a kiss of heartfelt love from your father and grandfather and with the wish that these lines would find you alive and in good health, as we are, and thankful to God for it. Yes, we are often dissatisfied about this and that, and yet the dear heavenly Father is so gracious with us and gives us health, which is above everything in this life, because how many a person who has been ill for a long time and can no longer hope for recovery and is still young, what all would he not give away, if he could acquire health with it. But it is not possible and that is why health is a priceless gift from our dear God, for which we should give thanks every day. We received your dear, valuable letter of January 19 on February 20, to the delight of all of us and we see from it that you are all still healthy and lively, which gives us great pleasure when a letter arrives and is read, and this letter with the beautiful portraits in particular, where Lieschen² is sitting at the armonium³ and playing, is like seeing her sitting at the armonium in Lisanderhöh in your old home, only we can't hear what song she is playing and the lovely

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Christmas tree with its ornaments looks pretty. And on the table Cornelius has his horse and carriage, (it) will have given the dear boy great joy, isn't that so. We are glad with you, that our loved ones so far away, have spent such a nice Christmas Eve, also enjoyed the holidays in the circle of friends and neighbors. Here with us everything continues on so sachtig⁴ and you can feel it in a depressed mood. Even though the birthdays are celebrated well as before, but the conversation is what will come, because our government again pulls the breadbasket from the farms, leaves on the eater (?) per month 1Pud and on the workhorses per piece 7 Pud. Cows, pigs, chickens, there is nothing. We had kept 9 piglets because the grain was cheap, wanted to feed them until summer and then sell them, but in this way everything is foiled. Now they are not fed enough to sell, will have to be half given away and the cows as well, when buyers come, how much milk the cows give is always too little for them. I wanted so much to sell some cows, but it does not work out, we cannot feed the cows chaff, only straw. First we gave them hay once a day, but now on this order only straw, to save the hay, if we are not allowed to spread anything more⁵, (we) have nothing more. By spring we will be able to lift them by their tails.

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In this way it is driving the farmer to despair, what good is all his effort and work, all in vain. And yet the newspapers write how they want to get the peasantry up on its feet. There you can really see how it is going, have already said several times, if I were not so old (I already want to be laid to rest in the Hohendorfer churchyard) otherwise I would rather be over there with you, but (I) believe, even if there are still those who desire to go over (to you), they

¹ Willi Frese. Peter Mathies writes this letter (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)

² Willi Frese. Eliese Dyck (1909-2002) (GRANDMA #386634)

³ Willi Frese. Armonium = Harmonium <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harmonium>

⁴ Willi Risto. sachtig= slowly (and carefully)

⁵ Willi Risto. nichts mehr überstreuen dürfen= auf das Stroh noch Schrot draufstreuen= not allowed to spread grist on top of the straw

will not be able to sell. There is a tense mood here about all of this, how it's going to depress (us) again. The farmer can hold back the seed. Keep the standard for people and horses, oats and millet and Kukurus (corn) everything driven away and sold for the Taxt⁶ price. We have been to Beseman⁷ 3 times with wheat and once with rye. First time for wheat 1 ruble 46 kopecks, the second and third time 1 ruble 35 kopecks, rye 72 kopecks and then you can buy bran for yourself, which costs 50 kopecks. In Beseman for 100 Puds of grain, 20 Puds of bran are left off for the same price. We have brought it along every time, they say, the farmer can keep them, but if they see that the farmer buys bran, they will take the oats from him. They are capable of doing that. And on the Beseman's note (receipt) one also gets some bulk goods in the box, but not too much, don't know what percent. All this has an effect on people. Here was a guy in the Sowjet and he told the people everything, but obendrein getrieben⁸,

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don't know if it was like that before. Well now the snow flurries have subsided a bit so that the road is drivable again after all. Yesterday the 1st of March Peter drove again to the Besemane with rye, (I) didn't believe he would come home, the road was closed again. Was quite a wind and that constantly clouded the way, but (he) came, not even that late in the evening. Sold 72 kopecks. Yesterday at the Consum in Köppenthal, 300 Pud rye dropped off, (it cost) 65 kopecks to pick up here. So everything must be taken away for a ridiculous price, whereas many [government conformists] have consistently milled their grain and sold flour, yet nothing big will come of them, now they have it and we are always among the stupid and so it remains, nothing to be done about it.

Dear grandchildren Anna, Irma and Johannes, your dear letter from Rosthern, dated January 19, we joyfully received on 1st of March and saw from it that you are healthy and must study hard. Just always remain diligent. When you get older, another thirty years, you will understand even better the value of good school education for (your) life. How many people who were lazy in school, as I was, have regretted how many times they should have made better use of their time. Because one is young and careless, why learn so much, most of them realize it too late. Therefore, go forward diligently and your parents are making sacrifices for you, so that you will gain good knowledge for your life. For this you will thank your parents, even if not now, but when they rest in their graves. Dear John best of thanks also to you for the photograph of

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the hitch (hitching?). Must be a big horse and on the left you are dear Johannes on the sleigh and on the right your comrade. Is it the Peter, cannot recognize him, is a little dark, but just keep sending more here, we're very much interested. Today Gerhard⁹ brought Helene¹⁰ and her small Peter¹¹ to us, in the morning. (They) had yesterday the 1st of March also received a letter from you and so we read theirs and they ours, each time (this) brings joy and a strong memory, which at times also hurts quite a bit, because here on earth, it looks like, we will never

⁶ Willi Risto. Taxt=vermutlich taxierten, von der Regierung festgesetzten= Tax, presumably set by the government

⁷ Willi Risto.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/51%C2%B019'57.0%22N+46%C2%B026'15.0%22E/@51.3478348,46.4203339,13z/data=!4m4!3m3!8m2!3d51.3325!4d46.4375?hl=ru&entry=ttu>

⁸ Ruth Scott. obendrein getrieben = this could mean: forced from above

⁹ Willi Frese. Gerhard Esau (1897-1931) (GRANDMA #347042)

¹⁰ Willi Frese. Helene Mathies (1897-1931) (GRANDMA #347043)

¹¹ Willi Frese. Peter Esau (1927-1931) (GRANDMA #982315)

see each other again. It is so difficult, especially for us old folk.

Dear son-in-law Johannes, in Esau's letter¹² I looked at everything in the pictures of the wagon and sled, the work wagons seem to be Koszale¹³ carriages, our Russian horses had to work just to move away¹⁴ the empty wagon, for me [even] our work wagons, which were made here by Gerhard Dyck and later by Cornelius Engbrecht, are too heavy. Had rather bought of the Moloschner wagons, they are much lighter and yet strong enough for two horses. Lighter in the gear, the wheels decidedly more durable¹⁵ and were also not more expensive than ours here, but that has all been (history) and won't happen again.


Dear daughter Renate, today on your birthday, I am sitting in the corner room and writing a letter to you dear loved ones over there and [am] completely in your midst with my thoughts. I am not missing on your birthday, but am only in spirit in your midst. I take a seat at the table, wish you good health for this new year in your life and good luck and blessings in your profession, because you need them. There is a lot to be done until everything is finally paid for! You wrote in a letter that Jakob Wiebe¹⁶ wrote to you that you should not be so homesick¹⁷ for the old homeland. I have often noticed, how he can write that, but now

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it is clear to me that Jakob Wiebe does not actually long for his old home / homeland. His experiences at the end here, how he got into their clutches and had to stand in front of their shotgun barrels, so that death was on the tongue (imminent). That, dear children, says something and by God's gracious help escaped from their clutches, also fortunately came over the border and to America and as one hears, they are already supposed to be doing quite well. That pleases me, because when I drive past his farm, I think of him every time. He is not a friend of mine, but his father¹⁸ and his uncle Heinrich Wiebe¹⁹ were our Tawarians²⁰ when we went from Prussia to Russia and went through many experiences on the journey, as young people do. If you ever write to him, give him my regards as well. He will say, what does the old man want? Yes, I still think of him often, because he survived so much and yet the good Lord is merciful to him and helps him again. I think of him in the same way as Job²¹. So you see, miracles still happen in this day and age.

Dear Irma²², you write in your letter that of the Regiers I used to ask about, the ones in

Sa...  Tiefengrund, go to your school and are in your class. Those are their grandchildren then, aren't they? Because [the ones I asked about]. For example, Peta²³ Regier was my age, Cornelius a little younger, Abram even younger. Oh, how the beautiful time has passed, when we were still young and together in Prussia. You wrote in the letter that you buy your flour. It is natural, you have no harvest and grain stock to grind. Someone said to me that perhaps there are no mills to grind yourself, or is the custom there

¹² Willi Risto. in Esauen ihr Brief= your letter to Esau

¹³ Willi Risto. Koszale. Eventuell wurde gemeint kolossale, Riesengroße = possibly he means colossal, gigantic

¹⁴ Willi Risto. fortzuschaffen=ihn zu bewegen, = to get him to move

¹⁵ Willi Risto. durabler=dauerhafter, haltbarer, <https://de.wiktionary.org/wiki/durabel> = Durable, lasting

¹⁶ Alex Wiens. Jakob Wiebe (1887-1967) (GRANDMA #6796) He was threatened with an execution on May 19, 1921 by the military court in Köppental. He succeeded in escaping first to Prussia and after his wife and children had followed, they relocated to Canada (1922) From his memoir.

¹⁷ Willi Risto. bängen=sehnen. Low German = to miss and long for

¹⁸ Alex Wiens. Jakob Wiebe (1846-1914) (GRANDMA #19149)

¹⁹ Alex Wiens. Jakob Wiebe (1850-1915) (GRANDMA #97965) ←HEINRICH???

²⁰ Ruth Scott. Tawarische = comrades in Russian

²¹ Willi Risto. es erging ihm so, wie dem Hiob = his experiences were like those of Job

²² Willi Frese. Irma Dyck (1912-2003) (GRANDMA #444298)

²³ Willi Risto. Peta=Peter

that all flour is bought. It's much more expensive, and when you grind it yourself, [the bran is also worth something. In general, the home-ground] is better, we bring ours each

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time to 100 Puds of fruit, they give us 20 Puds of bran at 50 kopecks each. However, it is so exploited, I know one will not believe me, if one ever questioned, then yesterday they again had none, must just remain, until another time.

Gerhard Wall²⁴ had gone to Balzer with his daughter Helene and Franz Wallen's Helene²⁵. His Helene was hoping, because such famous doctors are there, that perhaps help was possible. (They) Were not able to help, I believe it was an impossibility to remove the Pukel²⁶.

Franz Wallen's Helene is supposed to come again, they gave her Urzine to take along and they saw her through the X-ray. Heinrich Isaacs²⁷ have not been here since my birthday. The way here gets longer and longer, few come, it is also true that the road is worse. Heinrich has to work at getting rid of fruit. In the evening not a single "Fuder" cartload from us, up to the first telephone post on the border of Fresenheim is too little. As we [have] heard, the newly elected preachers, are to be installed in their office by next Sunday, and by March 11. As one hears, it shall be a brotherhood then, namely "Jünglinge"(young men) Fr[anz] Albrecht's son, Peter Joh. Wall's son, the deceased Joh. Dyck's²⁸ son previously was (Kroliger), all three of them left our Gemeinde (congregation). Siebert²⁹ is not happy to accept them, because the parents of the young men are against it.

²⁴ Alex Wiens. Gerhard Wall (1873-1932), Nr. 52 (Nr. 54 his daughter Helene *1897) under:

<https://amtrakt.de/bewohner-von-hohendorf-1921-22/>

²⁵ Willi Risto. Helene Wall (1905-1997) (GRANDMA #109016)

²⁶ Willi Frese Pukel=Buckel. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckel> = hunchback



Helene Wall, wife of Johannes Wall
(son of Franz and Helene Dyck Wall) with their son Hans

From the book „A Pilgrim People“, page 143

²⁷ Willi Frese. Heinrich Isaak (1877-1934) (GRANDMA #1196412)

²⁸ Willi Frese. Presumably Johannes Dyck (1878-1921) (GRANDMA #861314)

²⁹ Alex Wiens. Julius Siebert (1887-1943) (GRANDMA #1015425)

Will close quickly, there is no more paper. The warmest greetings from Mama³⁰, Peter³¹ and Mariechen³², which I join. I remain your father and grandfather Peter Matthis. Farewell all. Goodbye, goodbye.

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[Something is missing here]

also the church in Orloff, also in Köppenthal, with us in Hohendorf once Cornelius Neumann³³ Peter and Mariechen had gone there. The second time I and Mama went to Johann Bergmann. One was a Janzen, a man of about 35 years, is supposed to have been a teacher. The other was Gerhard Regier³⁴, Martin Ekkert's³⁵ son-in-law, 46 years old. I like his way of speaking better than Janzen's, does not make the "I" so sharp³⁶. Our newly elected preachers are not yet installed in office. I understand Alex Quiring³⁷ doesn't want to accept it either. At Bergmanns in the evening Bergmann says to me, there were supposed to have been over 100 people. Now one more thing, I'm worried by my dream, whether one of you might be ill. From Saturday to Sunday, from February 18 to 19, I had a strange dream and so realistic that there was no doubt about its reality. I was alone in the house, Mama was in the garden, and suddenly the door to the parlor was opened from the hallway. First Johannes entered, then Renate, and behind them little Renate³⁸, greeting (me) without a kiss or a handshake. I stand transfixed and don't know what to say, but at last: where do you come from, from America? You just wanted to come in five years. Yes, says Renate, Johannes has bad eyes and I have a bad leg. We want to have these healed in Russia. Well, surely you have good doctors in America, they can't heal them? No. In the meantime I remember, I have to call Mama, run to the back door and shout: Mama, the Americans are here, come quickly, and then we started chatting.

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better than writing letters. Saw quite naturally that Johannes' eyes looked reddish and diseased. Johannes had his gray Beschack³⁹ on and Renate the dark blue dress, which you often wore with us both, so exactly that there was no doubt. There was a lot of talk, but we never got to really sit down properly. I asked yet, how could you decide so quickly and the children ... Lieschen and Peter should take care of the farm, the others go to school. It was a brief joy, then I woke up, it was only a dream, but still a great joy for me. People say, you think of them so often, that's why you dream of them, it's true, but I think about our son Johannes⁴⁰ no less and often long for him. Maybe in a dream to talk to him, but so far never, never anything that I remember. 'Yes, he is forever raptured from this troublesome earthly life. If only in the last moment he could still throw himself into the arms of our Savior Jesus Christ and call out with the tax collector: God be merciful to me, a poor sinner, then let us hope that God will accept him in mercy. It makes us think: healthy and dead.

Gerhard Wall with his daughter Helene and Peter Wallen's Helene drove today to Balzer, Bergseite

³⁰ Willi Frese. Anna Wall (1864-1929) (GRANDMA #109036)

³¹ Willi Frese. Peter Mathies (1902-1943) (GRANDMA #1196411)

³² Willi Frese. Maria Mathies (1909-1993) (GRANDMA #1196425)

³³ Alex Wiens. Cornelius Neumann (1881-1964) (GRANDMA #1422132)

³⁴ Willi Frese. Gerhard Regier (1882-1937) (GRANDMA #529858)

³⁵ Willi Frese. (1856-1936) (GRANDMA #187114)

³⁶ Willi Risto. braucht das „ich“ nicht so scharf=spricht nicht so viel über sich selbst = does not talk so much about himself

³⁷ Alex Wiens. Alexander Quiring (1888-1942) (GRANDMA #665091)

³⁸ Willi Frese. Peter Dyck (1914-2010) (GRANDMA #414049)

³⁹ Willi Frese. Beschack=Pidschak, Russisch. Sakko = jacket , suit jacket

⁴⁰ Willi Frese. Johannes Mathies (1893-1922) (GRANDMA #1196408)

to the doctors, who are supposed to be very famous, almost do miracles, but with Gerhard Wallen's Lene, soon to be 24 years since our Tina's⁴¹ wedding, seems incredible to me that they can help anymore. It's enough for this time, will close. Wish all you loved ones the best of health and well being in body and soul. The warmest greetings from Mama, Peter and Mariechen, which I join. I remain your father and grandfather Peter Mathies. Goodbye, goodbye.

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By the time this letter arrives in your hands, we will have moved a good bit closer to seed time, also dear Johannes to your birthday. Therefore, I want to already congratulate you on your birthday and wish you good health and much happiness and blessing. You need them with the many debts that weigh on you. The same (me too?) Our Helene and Gerhard Wall's Helene, both have also dreamed of you. (Wishing you) have a suitable winter, even if the thick end does not come. Today we have it cold again. Peter and Riesens drove to Besemann.

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In spirit we will all come to your birthday and have lively conversation. In the meantime, many things have already happened, so there will be enough questions and answers, but unfortunately, we must patiently wait for the answer and wait for time to pass.

Please greet Johannes Isaak, Gerhard Fröse, Gustav Fröse. If the letter arrives happily into your hands, for which I wish it luck, do not put the food to be kept warm, rather eat first, otherwise the little girl will go to bed hungry, (the letter) is long, as previous ones when they fell asleep and got no supper.

⁴² Cornelius Wallen Aliata wrote that Hermann Epp is in Tashkent and is being operated on. Now I talked with Gerhard Regier

⁴³ Yesterday morning I carried the letter from you to Franz Wallen. Aunt Franz Wallen was in bed, but seems otherwise in good spirits

⁴⁴ Cornelius Wallen Aliata, have sent us their family picture with Gerhard Regier (pretty), have 8 children on it, too small

⁴⁵ Didn't want to write so much this time, Mariechen was supposed to write a sheet, she said to me

⁴⁶ to me, wants to write a letter alone. Well, for my sake I had started the second page

⁴⁷ as she said. I did not want to send white paper, would have to visit everything to

⁴⁸to make the letter full. Therefore, do not judge if there are defects in it. Also written [too] Elbig (eilig?= too hurriedly),

⁴¹ Willi Risto. Katharina Mathies (1883-1953) (GRANDMA #1196403)

⁴² Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 1

⁴³ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 2

⁴⁴ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 3

⁴⁵ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 7

⁴⁶ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page

⁴⁷ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 5

⁴⁸ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 4

⁴⁹if the emigration went as our forefathers from Germany to Russia, everything went well. On top of that, we can get discharge and passports with a little effort,

⁵⁰ then I would be, if I still lived that long, soon in your midst, because here I am getting tired of it. If they let us (have) maybe 16 desjatines, the big buildings, can't pay much tax anymore. Be glad that you are there.

⁵¹ Peter wanted the № from the song that Lieschen⁵² plays

⁵³Picking it out by ----- did not work

⁴⁹ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 8

⁵⁰ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 9

⁵¹ Willi Frese. Peter Mathies (1902-1943) (GRANDMA #1196411)

⁵² Willi Frese. Eliese Dyck (1909-2002) (GRANDMA #386634)

⁵³ Willi Frese. Addition to letter, on the side page 11