

Letter C 1

Translated by Ruth Dyck Scott, April 2023

Nr. 9

¹Hohendorf the 2nd of March 1928

Dear children Johannes and Renate Dyck and you, our nine dear, dear grandchildren. First of all, greetings from all of us, and we wish from the bottom of our hearts that these lines may find you so far away, all healthy and alive. The same for us, thank God that we can rely on Him. I wrote letter No. 8 to you on February 25. That was also a long letter. It would not be necessary now to write another letter so soon after the other, but I feel like having a bit of a chat with Dycks and deny myself your answer until this arrives in your midst and yours² here. (I'm writing) because now there is a good opportunity, because D. Wall and our Peter³ want to go to Cossack City⁴. David wants to sell a gray gelding and Peter may take our 2-year-old black colt, (also) some butter. Here a pound is 50 kopecks and there, we hear, 70 kopecks. Also, the shaker shaft from the threshing box was broken this fall. A new one must be made. Peter checked in Saratov, but did not find one. He also checked in Cossack city; they will make one for 55 rubles. I have already received your letter with the photographs of the stable and Christmas tree in the previous letter, written on February 20, a delight for of all of us. In it, dear John, you described your house and the way the Americans build. Now it is clear to me, I read the American Mennonite Rundschau in earlier years, why when there was such a storm houses were swept away, knocked down. If the storm hit your house in Lysanderhöh

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the hurricane might have damaged the tin roof, but it would not have swept away the house as easily as it did an American house. Of course, such a hurricane could cause a lot (of destruction), we see that here with us. Our stable [was] pushed completely to one side. [At] Heinrich Isaak's house, Mazifen Gübel⁵ collapsed. At Joh. Esau's, the stable was totally thrown about and (the hurricane) still more damage was caused in several other places.

Dear John, you write that we old people have to allow ourselves rest. I myself agree that would be better for us, but unfortunately [it is] challenging to find rest in these hard-pressed times. Where you are shaken almost every day, if not about this, then again by something else. How glad I was that we kept some old grain and added fresh grain. Now you can give something to the cattle along with the rye. And how to get around? Driving the few good horses into the ground. On top of that to live in fear, maybe they will come check in the Ambar (barn). We've already lent out a lot of rye, hoping for good luck. If there is a good harvest, will it be taken and if it is not (a good harvest), we must be very quiet. We have no rights, only requirements to give and make payments. It is so difficult; then it is hard to be restful. But maybe the dear Heavenly Father will give us a short break, so that they can carry us to the cemetery. There we could rest from all the day's burden and heat, worries and sorrows that have hit us so hard lately. There has been much talk about sharing the land. I also wrote something about this in the previous

¹ Willi Frese. This letter written by Peter Mathies (1851-1934) (GRANDMA #109037) is to his daughter Renate (1885-1963) (GRANDMA #168775) and son-in-law Johannes Dyck (1885-1948) (GRANDMA #168774)

² Willi Risto. Your = Answering letter then. Eurer=Antwort-Brief dann

³ Willi Frese. Peter Mathies (1902-1943) (GRANDMA #1196411)

⁴ Willi Frese. Kosakenstadt=Pokrowsk, (Cossak City) today Engels

⁵ Willi Risto. Mazifen Gübel= gabled roof

letter, but now it's supposed to really get started . In each village a commission of 3 men has to be elected. Hohendorf is Johannes Philipsen, Gerhard Dyck and third

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Cornelius P. Wiens⁶ Lysanderhöh, (who) also belongs to our village. It is again very bad for us and 4 souls will maybe get from 16 to 20 desjatinen⁷ (about 40-54 acres) of land. The many large buildings can almost not be finished (used?) on the current land, but how should we (manage) with 2 cows, maybe 3 horses. Dear Renate wrote: she must not look back, that too painful, only always (look) forward. That's how it is for me too. Had bought all the land for our children to inherit. And now it is such that they also give me a small amount of my own land , but not so much that we can feed ourselves on it. This nags at me and even if one wants to get over it all; it is only earthly (things), there remains nevertheless this nagging (that they) act so unfairly. I often comfort myself with the beautiful hymn verse: Whoever lets only God reign and hopes in Him at all times, He will keep him wonderfully in every cross and sadness. Whoever trusts God the Most High has not built upon sand. You dear Renate wrote in a letter about your immigrant. What does that mean, was this a wealthy man in the past, or how should this be understood? From the 23rd to the 24th of February many people have stolen (from) the Woskresenk church all expensive objects. In front of the windows there were iron bars, cut with a hacksaws, (they) climbed inside and robbed. We already had 3 men in our village, also in the other villages, to take a collection to replace what was stolen and to receive gifts⁸. It is difficult to collect in this depressed time, when everyone is concerned about themselves. The (Jimki) Russian woman, who spins wool for us, was very hurt by the loss and cried a lot about it.

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On February 28, our daughter Helene picked up the heifer that I bought from you a year ago. It has grown big, but will calve late, maybe close to Pentecost. She could have chosen from our cows. There are some that cough a little, (but) were declared healthy in the fall. Most likely they are not quite healthy yet. That's probably why she selected the heifer. Last year, when I bought yours, (it) was fat and big, ours lean, though not skinny, much smaller. Our (strong one) has already calved 3 weeks ago, the second not yet. There is also a calf of Johannes, which calves even earlier than the one from you. (Know) that several cows sold well, demand for the cow calves and with good price. Young cow calves from 20 to 35 rubles. I will go back to the previous letter about the storm weather, which was Sunday, February 19. 22 persons were supposed to have been in the church in Orloff, no preacher. It was Johannes Penner's turn to bring the message, (he) was in Cossack city, did not come home in time. In Köppenthal it was Jacob Penner Ostenfeld ('s turn), he had gone to Schilling⁹, had taken along his Sunday clothes. Came back as far as Fresenheim, stayed with Penner [for] the night. In the morning I drove my Herbert¹⁰ or Artur¹¹ Penner with him to church. At noon Penner's servant had to come with Jacob Penner in his carriage to Köppenthal and [pick him up] after the devotion. Penner was really devoted to fulfilling his duty. Jacob Penner drove as far as Hohendorf. At his brother in law

⁶ Alex Wiens. possibly Cornelius Wiens (1882-1938), #1254331 from Lysanderhöh. He owned the cheese making business in the village. That is why he was called Cheese- Wiens.

⁷ Ruth Scott. Wikipedia. Desyatina or here desjatinen is an archaic, rudimentary land measurement used in tsarist Russia. One desjatin is equal to approximately 2.702 English acres or 1.09 hectare

⁸ Willi Risto. Gifts = Offerings

⁹ Willi Risto. Schilling= today Sosnowka on the right side of the Wolga river
<https://www.google.com/maps/@51.1880958,45.7786271,15z>

¹⁰ Willi Frese. possibly Herbert Penner (1899-1937) (GRANDMA #1196381)

¹¹ Willi Frese. Artur Penner (1895-1942) (GRANDMA #1118662)

Yes, Schmidt stayed for the night. And on Monday he started for home. It won't have gone well for him yet. On the street there were enormous heaps of snow,

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do not think I exaggerate 2 fathoms¹² of snow in places. For us at the ash hut (could be used to fertilize) [towards] the new shed, lies a pile of snow. Never has it been like this time, in all the years. Yesterday I and Mama had gone to visit Heinrich Schmidt. The alley is almost impossible to drive through. At the second well house so strak [probably meant steeply] accumulated. While driving down [the] path, I actually lay next to the sled. Mama¹³ remained happily still sitting in it. Friday morning, February 17, quite a few people were there. (It's) still the case. Schmidt, Ger. Klassen, C. Neumann from Lysanderhöh and Orloff, several drove to Schilling Bergseite (on the mountain side), to Leinkuchen. They had beautiful ploszier¹⁴, arrived the first Sunday afternoon here. The way was dotted with sleds. They had driven from Fresenheim to Lindenau and Köppenthal, but did not dare to go through Walujewka. In Köppenthal at the mountain (they) first unhitched and rode away, because it was not possible to drive up. Up at the top of the mountain sleds are said to have stopped, also left standing on the postal road. At Gus. Töws [there were] 2 sleds. At Gerhard Wall's there was at first only Artur Töws' (sled), but by morning there were already 4 sleds in a row. It is (uncanny) gruselt¹⁵, when one drives along [the] village. Now try driving with a loaded sled, but until May 1 it should be cleaned, soil and Ambar (barn). From the wheat the seed and the Norm (a rye part?) from the rye is (for) a horse 7 Pud and the Norm can remain and what I have already mentioned can remain¹⁶. One does stupid things. We fed the fattening pigs also the winter pigs a lot of kurus¹⁷ and always gave the cattle some hay. We were supposed to withhold all of this, and fed only grist and rye and straw, so that afterwards we would have something to feed them. Through mistakes one becomes wise, but not rich. The birds of prey are not to be trusted, they devour everything. Another time again it's different, it is right again.

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In the previous letter I mentioned that the association had bought 40 or 42 cows for Moscow. These have already been shipped and should be driven to Krasnyj Kut¹⁸. Heinrich Isaak¹⁹ was there when they were transporting them from Ostenfeld, where they spent the night. In the morning one ear was very frozen. It was quite cold that day. On the way to their quarters Johann Wall's, Fresenheim cow calved, a pretty cow calf, left the calf in the quarters and on the way back, very covered, took it home. Was lucky. He was offered 15 rubles for it on the way. Also a few more calved, don't know whose. In the wagons to Moscow several calved, but all were delivered happily (to their buyers). Have already written²⁰ to our association asking for more. The commission that takes in young cattle, horses, as well as beef cattle, had now been through the district and [has] taken pictures. When they were done, they bought 50 head of cattle. Cows and 1-year-olds.

¹² Willi Risto. 2 Faden=3,6 Meter – about 12 feet

¹³ Willi Frese. Anna Wall (1864-1929) (GRANDMA #109036)

¹⁴ Willi Risto. Ploszier=Pläsier – Enjoyment, fun, here it's probably meant sarcastically

¹⁵ Willi Risto. gruselt= scares

¹⁶ Willi Risto. kann bleiben=Wheat seed and food for horses were allowed to be kept, the rest was confiscated n

¹⁷ Willi Frese. Kurus= Corn, from the Russian Kukurusa

¹⁸ Willi Risto. Krasnyj Kut

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Krasny+Kut,+Oblast+Saratow,+Russland/@50.9546768,46.931584,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x41133c8f3c9f0449:0xf14abe80e6900039!8m2!3d50.9471841!4d46.9716105>

¹⁹ Willi Frese. Possibly Heinrich Isaak (1877-1934) (GRANDMA #1196412)

²⁰ Willi Risto. nach mehr geschrieben= asked for still more

Gusav Toev's 3 cows sold - 530 rubles. Esau sold 3 cows - 640 rubles. Cornelius Neumann 3 pieces, also got similar amount, cannot say exactly. The cattle, 1 year old up to 100 rubles. Only nothing is working out for us anymore, the time has passed. Last night Helene²¹ and Gerhard²² came to visit for a few hours. They brought back your letter, which we had brought here the day before. Peter Esau had stayed at home with the aunts and grandfather. Gerhard told us that Cornelius Wiens²³, Ostenfeld (Kutor Wiens) sold 15 cattle to those who sell cows for up to 400 rubles. He is a molidetz²⁴. The man in Fresenheim had such an easy time, and to rise so high in this (amount of) time, when almost everyone is worried about everything; that is saying something. The cattle is supposed to all be brought to Herdenreder, his former (farm, land) cutter²⁵, (they) want to create a great dairy business, which doesn't worry (is not of concern to) them. We have to give them everything and (they) eat to their hearts' content and then they slap

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above the stable door "entrance prohibited". That is no art (skill). Someone could perhaps coincidentally (discover) how they do it and that can and should not be allowed. Oh, the 7th of February our Peter²⁶ was in Lindenau. Tuesday he was at Hermann Nickel's wedding, was invited alone. Heinrich Fröse from there²⁷ married (off) his daughter Ernstine. Hermann had quarreled with his future father-in-law on the wedding day morning. He [the father-in-law] did not even come to the wedding. The mother had only been there long (enough) for the wedding ceremony. Namely, the wedding was at Nickel's. Hermann had informed his father of the engagement by telegram, and his father had sent congratulations by telegram. These are serious matters. Wednesday, February 8, the Kolla [Kolja, Nikolai] Neumann's wedding was in Hansau. He married from Neu Warenburg a widow's daughter, supposed to be a pretty woman. Gerhard Wall with his foster daughter Helene, our Peter and Richart had gone to the wedding, had musicians. So poor, we gave Kolja 2 Puds (measurement) of wheat flour for the wedding and the necessary milk. But even when there is nothing, dancing has to take place. That is at the present time like wind to their mills. At Gerhard Wallen's, Medemtal, Heinrich's wedding was also in Lindenau at Joh. Froese's. We were very lucky. On the wedding day it was very cold, the wedding passed our noses²⁸. How happy I was, because it was so cold and we could stay by the oven. On Heinrich Isaak²⁹'s birthday I, Peter³⁰, Maria³¹ Gerhard Wall (and took his daughter Helene along) had gone there, it was also quite cold. Helene³² and Gerhard³³ Esau also came there to take little Peter³⁴ to Johannes Philipsen. There was a small gathering at the birthday party, Herbert Penner came with his wife and son and Widow Epp. We had all found a place at

²¹ Willi Frese. Helene Mathies (1897-1931) (GRANDMA #347043)

²² Willi Frese. Gerhard Esau (1897-1931) (GRANDMA #347042)

²³ Willi Frese. Info from Alex Wiens: Cornelius (Kutor)- Wiens (17.04.1880 - 18.01.1951) (GRANDMA #19134). He got this nickname to be able to differentiate him from his Cornelius (Käse)- Wiens #1254331 und Cornelius (Bat)- Wiens #1254444. All three were approximately the same age.

²⁴ Willi Frese. Molidetz= Molodez= Молодец (Russian)

Addition from Lilli Banucu: Expression for "Gut gemacht! Gute Arbeit" / "Well done! Good job!"

²⁵ Willi Risto. Kuter=Gut (land that belonged to you)

²⁶ Willi Frese. Peter Mathies (1902-1943) (GRANDMA #1196411)

²⁷ Willi Frese. Dasselbst= in this case means Lindenau

²⁸ Willi Frese. They didn't attend the wedding because of the cold.

²⁹ Willi Frese. Heinrich Isaak (09.02.1877-1934) (GRANDMA #1196412)

³⁰ Willi Frese. Peter Mathies (1902-1943) (GRANDMA #1196411)

³¹ Willi Frese. Possibly Maria Mathies (1909-1993) (GRANDMA #1196425)

³² Willi Frese. Helene Mathies (1897-1931) (GRANDMA #347043)

³³ Willi Frese. Gerhard Esau (1897-1931) (GRANDMA #347042)

³⁴ Willi Frese. Peter Esau (1927-1931) (GRANDMA #982315)

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her large folding table. Driving home was cold, but it went quite well. The horses did not shirk, are already used to walking. In my previous letter I wrote about Julius Bergmann. He has been in court in Kokus³⁵. He was sentenced to 3 years and to pay for the burned grain, about 400 Puds. We've heard that he is to have an additional trial. For this man it is a difficult test not to just despair. May God direct everything so that this innocent man may at least stay at home with his own (family). The "Vermögen" fortune/ wealth disappears, or is very much diminished. We will soon be in the same situation. In spring the land will be surveyed and from those who have had too much land it will be taken away. And in addition, all expenses, which the measuring involves, [we must] pay. If this happens, then it will be our turn. When I was still a boy and I was at grandfather's birthday party, " auf Vogtei "in his bailiwick, I heard grandfather singing, which never happened otherwise. That was something new [for] us children, [we] didn't know the song. Only the first verses: "Oh, what are the worries good for, with which a man weighs down his heart and torments himself with this every morning, so that he consumes himself. And it cannot go on like that." That's how it is for me, too, but our dear faithful Savior has helped me to my 77 years of age and even beyond. [He] will continue to help, but the short span that still lies ahead of me appears very dark for all of us. Last week we had in our midst two traveling preachers from Aliata. They held many evening meetings, I believe in every village.

³⁶We ask for a letter soon from your midst, we are waiting. We have already received letters from Cor. and Peter Wall.

³⁷Dear Renate, your birthday was celebrated in a quiet circle. Helene and Peter came in the morning. In the evening Gerhard, Jakob Esau and Renate came, we thought a lot about you, read letters and such

³⁸ how you are doing there and how we will fare in this difficult time. Here it is becoming more and more gloomy and there is no prospect that it will be better again.

³⁹Yesterday, March 1, Franz Wallen came to visit us. Aunt Mrs. Wall has something on her heart relating to you.

⁴⁰ On the photograph at the stable Johannes is recognized, standing at the stable who is holding the white horses, is that your son Johannes?

⁴¹We have 4 milk cows, 3 cow calves, 1 bull calf died. The 5th cow had a calf, gives very little milk.

⁴²I, Peter, Mariechen went to Gerhard Esau's birthday, Abr. Philipsen were also there, no one else.

³⁵ Willi Risto. Kokus= today Priwolschskoje

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Privolzshkoe,+Oblast+Saratow,+Russland,+413286/@51.0899326,45.9315385,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x4114823596f37ff5:0xa515261dc1760328!8m2!3d51.0896091!4d45.9484874>

³⁶ Willi Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 1

³⁷ Willi Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 2

³⁸ Wille Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 3

³⁹ Wille Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 4

⁴⁰ Wille Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 5

⁴¹ Wille Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 6

⁴² Wille Frese. Supplement to Letter. On the side Page 7

⁴³I heard that Fast, Janzen and N... Siebert⁴⁴ 's wife went to Moscow for eyes. The first two because of the passports. It seems that they really do not want to give out passports.

⁴³ Willi Frese. Supplement to letter, on side

⁴⁴ Alex Wiens. This could be Louise Siebert, nee Johann Bergmann () (GRANDMA). I know that she with her husband Johannes Siebert tried to undertake an attempt to immigrate. They even had to spend some days in the Butyrka Prison in Moscow before they returned to Am Trakt.