

Letter #4

December 1928.

Dear Brother and Sister, together with your children,

A prior greeting of love. We have just . . . Dück has come from [the] funeral. Their son of three years 2 months and 17 days died from croup; sick only 5 hours. Added to this, the father was in Omsk. On Sunday we buried the old Mr. Thiessen in Kornjejewka. Kornelius Dridiger, his father-in-law, had had a stroke. Last week Thursday we were in Friedensruh at the funeral of sister Wilms. She died of cancer after 11 months on her sickbed. What she suffered is just terrible. You should have seen her in the casket, virtually unrecognizable, like a skeleton. She was just 43 years, had the appearance of an old grandmother. The funeral was in the church, was buried in the Friedensruh cemetery. At present they lived in Petrowka, with the widow of Peter Derksen.

We took this opportunity to visit with the Peter Dücks. We took the time to read a few of your letters, and we reminisced a bit about you. What we always regret is that when you left we didn't go with you; even if we had had experienced great loss, that would have been much better than now. The Dücks are hopeful that they will be able to get away, but we have no prospects, since generally working from here gets us little or nothing. And we also get no answers from you about whether something can be done or not. You, beloved brother, you can't do anything for me either? Or maybe it's very expensive? Maybe you have had so much to do with Peter Dück that you can't get around to everything? It would be very dear to me if, immediately after receiving this letter, you would report exactly whether we might harbour any hope from there, or not. As we understand from the letters of the children, we have . . . [line is illegible].

[In transcription: whether this is a continuation, I don't know]

The crop this year was middling. From (Hac ?) wheat we got 30 pud per desjatin,* from (Cäsum?) wheat 36 pud, barley 30 pud, and oats 50 pud. We got a lot of potatoes. We seeded 33 desjatin of grain. Last summer we had a lot of rain, so much that we became a bit depressed. Initially it seemed as if we would get a lot of grain, but the opposite actually happened. There were so many Dreikant weeds [Dreikant, literally, the weed seeds had three edges] that we got maybe half. Have never seen anything like it. We feed the pigs, the horses and the chickens, everything with Dreikant. It's good feed, especially if it's ground up.

Recently we butchered three pigs and a two-year steer. We marketed three pigs to Omsk, received 7 rubles 25 kopecks per pud. We sold a cow to KREDITKA by Gorkoje for 68 rubles. Considering all the sales, this would provide a tidy sum, if we could ignore the taxes. [Now switching to Low German] *I'm at seven hundred, twice already, and still owe a bit.* **

My brother-in-law Joh. Kasdorf from Slawgorod was here. They have had a good harvest. He's received the *Freikarte**** from his parents, so is thinking to travel as soon as possible. He was in Slawgorod because of some issues.

Our [rotierol ?] is still rather lame in one leg. In our family we're healthy, following the old customs. Lena lives in Waldheim. Jakob is already in the fourth year in Leningrad. He was in the technical school for two years, and now he's in the university for the second winter. Initially it was pretty difficult, especially meagre in terms of food, but now he's getting 30 rubles for food and he's teaching already and getting enough to live comfortably.

Franz and Anna are studying in the high school and Heinrich in the village school. Mariechen (Mary) is a great help to my wife: they're presently busy making ammonia cookies for the holidays. Christmas is upon us now, which reminds us once again in a special way about God's wonderful self-

emptying. When we look back over such a year and remember the variety of our assistance, then we must echo the words of the patriarch Jacob: We are not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.

[Written by Jakob Hübert]

*1 hectare=10 desjatins; 1 pud= 16 kg.

**Erwin's explanation:

Jakob Hübert had not joined the collective, so had to pay very heavy taxes. The crippling taxes were charged in order to force independent farmers to join the collectives.

***Freikarte – literally, “free card,” a guaranteed paid travel passage for emigrants.