

Page 2, Die Welt-Post, Thursday, the 25th of May, 1922:

A Letter from Russia:

Huck, the 20th of March, 1922. God's love to you brother Georg Philipp and sister Christina and family:

Now that the flow of mail between us and America has once again been set right, I wanted to start corresponding with you but little or nothing has come of it. Therefore, while I'm at home a little (more about that later) and occupied with answering letters from various persons in America, I will try again. I recently met with your brother Georg and he told me that you were interested in receiving a detailed report from here about the conditions but chiefly from a spiritual point of view. In the following letter, written with love to you, I will do this with great joy,

Before everything my family endured, we were 12 souls; myself and my wife with 8 children, 2 sons and 6 daughters. In addition a foster son Heinrich Scheibel (the son of my sister Eva Kath.) and finally my father-in-law who has been staying with us off and on since February of 1921. His daughters are all married and my mother-in-law, sister Christina, died of sugar diabetes in February of last year after a six month long illness. ---To date, praise and thank God, we are all healthy, in spite of the great need we find ourselves in.

I have not spent an entire week at home since the month of August I have been constantly searching for provisions. Twice already I was at the Line, a journey which requires much time, for example: only one trip there and back takes 6 weeks. The difficulties connected with the journey result in many deaths. Mournful sights have I seen along the way that I cannot adequately here describe. My remaining time has been spent going to the Russian villages in our area to barter for various products in exchange for goods and other objects.

Remember that, from the fall onward, there were no stores of provisions of any kind nor wheat, and I had 12 souls to look after! And till now we still hold fast to the Dear Lord. When there is also much weakness, meager provisions, and diminishing hope of relief, there remains, nevertheless, the belief: Almighty God will provide us with enough to eat for today!

Our way of life is plain and simple: From the Line I brought some white flour (*Weismehl*) and deer meat, we cook one meal a day of potato soup and another day of Kascha (*mash or gruel*) naturally eaten without bread. Sometimes there is whole meal and it is mixed together with pumpkin or beets or baked into tasty cakes which are passed out one piece at a time.

Lastly, I have obtained a few potatoes from the Russians and they are also thus parceled out. Besides this we have some milk, sauerkraut, green beans, and so forth and so on.

We have no way of obtaining pigs, the same with chickens. Although here, with the cost, it doesn't especially matter. So we have, so to speak, become indifferent about it and the persistent lack of provisions.

Others in general live considerably worse; many solely on pumpkins and beets, again others on horsemeat and mostly on dead animals. For example: I killed my only horse, which was quickly carried off to be cooked.

Things are far more difficult over on the meadow side (*Wiesenseite*). There are stories of human flesh being eaten, horrible but true! According to accounts, they also took the dying in hand.

Here in Huck, during my two month absence in January and February over 200 adults have died and now the death rate is doubling as it goes forward. Most of the dead are buried in mass graves in groups of 20-25 to a grave. Partly without coffins. Sometimes they are unable to bring them all, so that there are piles of 20 in a day. I can only give you an approximation not an accurate number of the dead from April until now. Where is it among us that one is the worst exploited by the onset of the famine? It is here--located officially and ascertained that 50 percent have died directly as a result of hunger, 25 percent indirectly on account of the devastation caused by hunger and 25 percent of associated diseases.

Now the help that we receive from you: From our government 2 kitchens are set up to hand out food to persons of the poorest class but these are very very meager.

Then we have 4 kitchens each for 300, in total 1200 children, these are fed once a day by the American government through Mr. Nepp. This food is however, very nourishing and has already saved so many dear children from death by starvation.

But now and then you must take on. The ordering of products is very difficult because our railroad system is not totally functional.

Now the beginning of the New Year stands before us. We already see the danger ahead. Yesterday, I myself, went to the commission and yesterday evening we were together and went back and forth and disposed of how we should attack with what little is still here, the receipt of individual gifts which are very welcome, about security through the A.R.A., they always bring everything through to the area punctually and remain on hand. We spoke of much more. I have personally spoken to the American representative about our concerns about the continuing main obstruction of the Russian transportation system, also about the weakness of the newly sown crops. We have received but few healthy seeds from our government, and by their authority, in addition, some wholly enfeebled cattle. Moreover, the people are hungry. No bread, no clothing, the majority go about in loose tatters. Oh that our Dear Lord might have mercy on us! – moreover the spiritual and religious side. The schools have become totally mildewed, by reason of their closure by the government, the same with the church schools. The chief reason being the lack of heating material. The school master's assistant and church elders are against this but are now almost continually employed performing burials.

An additional tragedy came to us not long ago, three church leaders died shortly after one another: Br. Osw. Sack, Br. Georg Schäfer (Wekems) and Br. Ph. Kindsvater (Row 1, the younger). The fourth Br. Jakob Neu alone still remains. Yesterday we appointed three new: Br. Joh. Lickey, Br. Conr. Huck, Row 2, and Br. Joh. Huck, 2. R. If you went to one of our church services you would be shocked at first by the many empty pews and then by the marked few pale corpse-like persons who still attend here. There is a similar decline at Meeting (*Versammlung*).

The majority of the brethren have gone forth in search of provisions. Brother and sister are still at home partly for lack of clothing. Partly the houses are full of sick. Others, because of gnawing hunger, are totally disposed to melancholy, spent and sick, they do not come out. Laziness and carelessness are certainly not out of the question. To put it briefly: It is a complete disaster, spiritually, religiously and bodily!

If our Dear God does not come to us quickly with extraordinary help, there will soon be much larger things in play. Yet we do not intend to let our courage flag, or throw away our faith that the good Lord has the Way always, also the means that do not fail Him in any disaster.

I have made many journeys of faith in the most trying of circumstances as these are to us, for some 8 years now.

I was separated from my family for 2 years and 2 months serving as a soldier in the war (*on the Turkish front*), where the true man's protection, the Dear Lord, proved Himself to me and brought me good fortune:

I lived through the great terror of the revolution and remained unwounded in body and soul. Thus, I hope and strongly believe that a gracious God will also henceforth protect me and mine.

And should it be that I die, by whatever manner and method it will be, there will remain the motto;

"Who will separate us from the Love of God? Misery or Fear, or Persecution, or Hunger, or Nakedness, or Distance, or Sword? Yes, nothing! It is a risk. God stand by us! Amen."

To close I will list for you many of the dead: For one and two years, old brothers: Georg Weber, George Bohl, Row 2; Chr. Beunitz; Jacob Geier; Ph. Geier; Osw. Brotzmann; and Ph. Frick. Since fall till now of Typhus, hunger and malnourishment: Jac. Schuckmann; Br. Osw. Hausch; Br. Joh. Hixt, the younger, Br. Georg's son; Br. Ph. Hein together with son Joh.; your brother Conrad with his wife and daughter-in-law (*Schnur*); a day ago, your Br. Goerg's wife Barbara; Sister Christine, her mother and both her uncle Jakob and Georg Brotzmann, Andrese; (Georg Brotzmann's wife).

From our Meeting (*Versammlung*); Br. Oswald Frick died of Spotted Typhus during my absence, sick for only 9 days; Br. Georg Luther; Schw. Elisabetha Eckerdt, Br. Jacob's wife; Schw. Anna Marg. Hempel, deaf, and yet others who were not yet made members. It is only to a certain extent, that I will invade their privacy. Now, it is enough for this time. Interested as you are to know more, please ask, and be prepared each time to be given less and less in the way of plausible answers.

For the rest, may the Dear Lord's grace be upon you and everyone else!

My heartfelt greetings and those of my wife and children, to you and yours in Christ's love, dear brother.

Philipp Kindsvater