

LETTER FROM HOFFNUNGSFELD, BESSARABIA -- 1938

Hoffnungsfeld 11 June, 1938

Dear Miss Pl(?)st!

My sincerest thanks for the interest you have shown in me. That you should see in me a willing usefulness in that you seek me out as a friend to correspond with. You write that you would like to know about me in greater detail. Therefore, I want to describe to you a condensed history of our family. My great grandfather came from Prussia to Arzis Colony, which is located northwest of us. I do not know very much about him. My grandfather was his oldest son. He got married in Arzis to Anna **RICHTER**, who came from Brienne. My grandparents were very industrious people. My grandfather was a master mason. From their marriage came 9 children: 8 boys and a girl. My father is the eldest. He spent 15 years in Gnadenthal under the instruction of a master locksmith. After 3 years study, he went to another locksmith's shop as a journeyman, but only for a short time. Then he again worked with his original teacher. At 22 years, he married my mother, who was only 18. After this, they moved here to Hoffnungsfeld where they rented a home. My father is Ferdinand and my mother Elisabetha [**DUERR**] from Alt-Elff. Here he set up his workshop and worked with apprentices. Then their children were born one after the other. Soon the home was too small. He already had some savings, so he bought an empty yard plus a garden. He immediately put up a 4 room house plus a needed barn. After 18 years, as our boys were big, my father made plans for further construction around 1920. The barn burned down. Within a year, 4 rooms were completed in addition to a shed and barn. Now we have a big white house with a reed roof. In 1923, we built a locksmith workshop with a cement tile roof. Our workshop serves as a place for locksmithing and blacksmithing. We support ourselves through our crafts. We do not have any land.

My parents were presented with 12 children: 9 boys and 3 girls. 3 boys and one girl died. I will share with you their names and occupation. My oldest brother: Reinhold (42), a tax-collector, lives in Friedrichsdorf. His wife is Christine [**RATH**]. At this time, they have no children, only an adopted daughter. (2). Eduard (40), a shoemaker, lives in Plotzk. His wife is Pauline [**RATH**]. Now they have 5 children: 4 girls and 1 boy. (3). Ferdinand (39), a blacksmith, living in Neu-Elft. His wife is Lydia [**LEHMANN**] from Alt-Elft. They have one son. (4). Albert, a blacksmith, living in Minschiuna. His wife is Mathilda [**TSCHRITTER**]. They have 2 girls. (5). Mathilde married Johann **HERBERG** of Dennewitz. They are living in Luxemburg and are farmers. They have 3 boys and 3 girls. She is 32 years old. (6). Oskar, a blacksmith and mechanic, is still single. (7). Artur (24), a blacksmith and also single. I am the youngest. I was born 5 June, 1917. At age 7, my parents sent me to school. I attended for 7 years. Each year I skipped a class and so finished with 14 years of school. I did my exams and received first prize for being a hard working student and for good performance.

I was confirmed at age 14. I helped my mother with housekeeping. I did this until unexpectedly, on 30 March, 1936, death so unmercifully took her. She still prepared for the noon meal. Was in good spirits at the noon day meal. As we ate, we suddenly saw how she sat there so indifferent, and my father caught her. My two brothers, who were still in the house, and my father carried her to the bed. I wanted to sprinkle some water on her, then she looked at me with

such frankness and said to me in a broken voice: "I am cold." She smiled, closed her eyes and was dead in 3 hours. And she left us behind crying. O you dear, good mother. Now you are at home with your Savior, who was everything to you. We determined that it was a stroke [*Hirnschlag*]. She was 59 years and 10 months old. Now there are still 4 of us. My father, two brothers and I. My father is already ill for a year so that he is unable to work. Re-occurring ailments, hardening of the arteries and a weak heart. This 30th of July, he will be 64.

I was 21 on 5 June of last year. I am a lively, strong blond German young woman. I am interested in politics and things of the church. In short, there is nothing that does not interest me. I speak the Romanian language real good. We also make use of the Russian language, although I do not love it. Nevertheless, I also speak Russian.

Our village is a very beautiful village. Mostly big houses. The ornament is the big new church right in the center of the village. It is right there is front of us. With some lime trees [*Linden*] and roses, all natural young trees since the church was first dedicated in 1936. Our village has about 65 families with 103 souls. There is also a mill in the village. We have a German teacher, who is also the sexton, and 2 Romanian government teachers. Our village has 4 radios. There are a few pianos and pump organs. Mostly, I play string instruments. However, my friend plays the piano very well.

There is no society [*Verein*] in our village. Only the Converted-Christians [*Bekehr-Christen*] hold meetings. The pastor serves us 4 times a year. Arzis is our parish. In most other villages, there are youth societies, independent choirs, string music or brass bands. However, at our place the youth are too weak because some are "converted" and so they do not come to us. Our village is absolutely German. We have a Folk Council in Tarutino which also has advanced education schools.

Dear young lady, how thankful I would be to you if you would send me some books or newspapers. I love to read but am unable to buy books because our father is sick and we have to spend so much for the doctor. With genuine eagerness, I plunge myself into a book if I were to get hold of one again to read. Please, if you can, help me with this. I have complete confidence in you.

With German Greetings: Martha Elvira **REICH**

P.S. Dear young lady! I have yet one more request. However, I almost dare not write to you. Yet one is inspired with courage to be fearless, so therefore I want to ask something of you. Maybe you can send me an instruction book for weddings. Even if it is a real old one. Weddings do not always proceed so monotonous among us. Just recently there was a wedding. I was invited and I brought up some things. With true rejoicing, the ideas were accepted. My friend is marrying in the Fall and has asked me to make this request of you. If you can grant my request, then I can in turn grant hers. Thanking you in advance with great expectations: Martha Elvira.

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