Transformation on the Southern Ukrainian Steppe

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PART ONE

Correspondence, 1836–1842
1836

1. Johann Cornies to Andrei M. Fadeev. 26 February 1836. SAOR 89-1-388/10.

Honourable Sir, Gracious State Counsellor Fadeev,

I received Yr. Honour’s letters of 24 January and 11 February. They do me honour and I will govern myself according to their contents.

Because appropriate regulations have been implemented in this District, activity has increased visibly. The time has perhaps arrived to establish a society with responsibilities for the improvement of field cultivation, pasture crops and farm implements.¹ When Yr. Honour was here two years ago, you expressed a wish that such a field cultivation society might be established. At that time, it was not quite clear to me whether Forestry Society members were to combine their current activities with those having to do with the improvement of field cultivation. Now I understand that it would be desirable to combine our Forestry Society with a society promoting field cultivation, since these two branches of industry have so much in common. Speedy progress could be made if both were pursued in tandem.

I therefore respectfully submit for Yr. Honour’s wise consideration my humble opinion that the existing Society for the Dissemination Forest-trees, Orchards, Sericulture and Viticulture pursue the improvement in all branches of field cultivation in this District. If Yr. Honour agrees, you might kindly make a benevolent submission to His Excellency, the

¹ This is Cornies’ first mention of the Agricultural Society, which would be formally established in May 1836. See TSUS, vol. 1, Introduction; vol. 2, docs. 1, 9, 10, 13.
Chief Curator to have this established and confirmed. The Inspector and the District Office should then be notified and ordered to publicize this new development to all inhabitants. The current District Chairman Regier would be a very useful member of the Society to Improve Field Cultivation, as vice-chairman of the Society. In my opinion, were Yr. Honour to agree in regard to Regier, the latter should be confirmed in office when the Society is established. Perhaps a formal directive is not needed. Instead an order could be publicized that includes a detailed explanation of the Society’s obligations. These obligations might be simplified by no longer requiring a declaration, at the start of each year, spelling out improvements that the Society planned on making during that interval. An annual report might alternatively be required at the end of each year listing all improvements accomplished during that year in various branches of field cultivation.

Respectfully, with esteem, I endeavour to be Yr. Honour’s totally devoted Johann Cornies

2. District Office to Johann Cornies. 1[?] March 1836. SAOR 89–1-367/16.

To esteemed Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,

This District’s orphan administrators have found it necessary to revise the inheritance rules hitherto followed here through various additions that would render them more suitable for current needs. Enclosed is a copy of the inheritance rules presently in force, with the request that you examine them and return this copy with your proposals to the District Office.

District Office at Halbstadt, 1[?] March 1836. Deputy Driedger [?]

3. Johann Cornies to Khariton T. Pelekh. 2 March 1836 SAOR 89-1-388/11.

Honoured Inspector Pelekh,

In response to Yr. Honour’s communication No. 209 of 26 February 1836, I respectfully submit the records of the Russian persons situated on my sheepfarm for your consideration. I should explain that I submitted records with this information to Regional Captain Kolosov on 9 January 1836, asking him to have these records checked against records in the villages where these people are registered to verify that they have paid their taxes and have permission to live on my property. I have not
received the Regional Captain’s reply. Eight days ago I hired another three persons, not listed in this record. They are Ilia Chernashinen of Petropavlovka, and Janos Iaremenko and Omelko Malorenko of Grigorievka. The first two are in possession of legal tax certificates for this year. The latter has none, but his father has obtained monies from me to pay his soul tax. Would Yr. Honour kindly investigate the tax payments of these three individuals, and also of persons listed on the submitted record? Do they have permission to be in my service?

As to religious practices, I sternly insist that everyone follow their religious practices correctly and behave accordingly. I am convinced that a person who is negligent in regard to the demands of his religion is capable of every evil and cannot be a faithful servant.

The Molochnaia colonists in my service are the gardener August Wilke, and Johann Garwasser. Should they have fallen behind in their tax payments, I will send them to pay their debts immediately upon notification.

Karl Ulrich, W. Ulrich and Friedrich Krausse live on crown lands on the Tashchenak in their own zemlianka [sod hut]. I ordered them to remove themselves and their possessions this month and not to live there further.

I also have two apprentices from the Mariupol Colonist District that were sent to me to learn sheep breeding under an arrangement with State Counsellor Fadeev. Since November 1835, I have in my care a boy of sixteen years whose parents, because of their poverty, could not feed and clothe him. My servant, Georg Bliwernitz is from Rosengart and my cook Regina Fast is from Kirschwalde. They have been with me since December 1835. Although their relatives promised to negotiate [tax] certificates for them, I do not yet have them, and would appreciate help in obtaining them.

4. Johann Cornies to Heinrich Cornies. 4 March 1836.

SAOR 89-1-388/12.

Dear brother Heinrich,

With this mail, I am sending forty-five paper rubles [Rubles Banco Assignant] for Mina’s father and twenty-five paper rubles for Prokop’s brother Cornei Lananenko. I urgently ask you to have the enclosed copies of passes and letters passed on to the relatives of these two people in Koydak and Deevka. They need them to obtain their new passes. Let them come to you, and put their expenses on my account. Should the
money reach you later than this letter, kindly advance seventy paper rubles to them on my behalf. You will definitely have it returned with the next mail. Then set aside money for these passes, forty rubles for Mina’s tax money and twenty for Prokop’s. Do not give the relatives any money until they have submitted these annual passes to you and then send the passes to the enclosed address. Do it quickly, because the passes have already expired, and I do not wish to be embarrassed in regard to this matter.

I am sure you will take care of this matter as quickly as possible. Thank God that we are all well, except that Peter Cornies is somewhat sickly.

Best of greetings to you and your wife and children. I remain your loving brother J. Cornies.

5. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 6 March 1836.
   SAOR 89-1-388/13.

Honoured Mr. Blueher,

I received your valued letter of 14 January 1836 and the four seals for which I thank you. I also send you my most obliging thanks for the advance you gave my children on the understanding that if they should need money in future you will give it to them on my account. I will repay punctually, with interest, when and in whatever form you request.

I would do my best, as you ask, to purchase 600 to 800 puds [one pud = 16.38 kg] of wool in spring on your behalf, but I fear that I will be unable to purchase this precise amount at the price you have specified because speculators are already bargaining for our wool. I will, however, keep an eye on the market and have the purchases made on your behalf as cheaply as possible.

District Chairman Bartsch in Khortitsa informs me that, instead of selling its wool locally, the community would prefer that it be sold by you on consignment in Moscow. By special messenger to Khortitsa, I immediately asked for precise information regarding the price at which they would be prepared to sell their wool.

Together with my wife, I send heartfelt greetings to you and your dear wife with a request that you inform our children that we are both well. Please give them our greetings. I remain your loving and faithfully obligated friend and servant, Johann Cornies.
6. Johann Cornies to Johann Cornies, Jr. 14 March 1836.  
SAOR 89-1-388/14v.

Dear son Johann in Moscow,

Your letters of 20 January and 11 February have arrived informing me that you and your sister are well. We thank God that we too are in good health, as are all of our relatives. We are pleased that you and Agnes are both diligently engaged in useful activities. The larch seed arrived, but regrettably half of it is sterile and incapable of sprouting. The stone-pine cones (that you call cedar) have already germinated and have grown three to four inches tall. Your dear mother welcomed the various flower seeds. I know of no piece of land for sale in this vicinity as large as 30,000 desiatinas. Perhaps there is one in Alesk Uezd.

Winter was uncommonly long with much snow, but without severe frost and snow storms. The soil has been well moistened and we hope for a blessed summer. We have, since 1 March, had beautiful warm May days and the grass is greening quickly. Blessed with such weather, everyone has begun their planting. Our farmwork is proceeding normally. Jacob Klassen, Tashchenak, suffered painfully from gout this winter and is still very weak. The entire post road can now be used, across Tashchenak and along the villages.

The large bull and one of the Dutch cows have died. The cow was already lame and sick when it arrived but the bull was strong and healthy. It developed a serious neck infection and died of the malady about a month ago.

Mr. Fadeev has been appointed Chief Curator for Kalmyks in Astrakhan Guberniia as you have probably read in the newspaper. According to his instructions he will pass through here in early or mid-April. He hopes to see both of you privately in Sarepta, but I do not think that you will be there when he arrives. It would be to your advantage if you could gain practical experience with surveying, even if you have to stay in Moscow for a few weeks longer. Try to acquire a good, comfortable travelling vehicle with a shaft for your journey. We could use it here on your return.

More on the next post day. I, your dear mother and everyone in our house send you many greetings and your mother sends her heartfelt compliments to Madame Blueher. Adieu

Your Father who loves you, Johann Cornies
7. District Office to Johann Cornies. 15 March 1836.
SAOR 889-1-376/37.

To honourable Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,

Mayor Gerhard Wall and Johann Reimer, Jacob Penner and Clas Epp, Prangenau, have been punished by the District Office with a day of work. They are thought to have been the main culprits in cutting through the dam. The District Office asks you to make appropriate arrangements in regard to the condition of the dam, if this is possible, so that water can be released as desired in future.

15 March 1835. District Office in Halbstadt, Chairman Regier

8. Johann Cornies to Johann Cornies, Jr. 18 March 1836.
SAOR 89-l-388/16.

Dear son Johann in Moscow,

Further to my letter of 14 March, I would add that your mother would like you to spend a month in Sarepta, perhaps even six weeks, to acquire knowledge useful for your temporal and spiritual lives. Visit all of its institutions and take note of anything of value that you see. Travel across the land of the Sarepta Colony, noting the composition of its soil and any of its facilities. You might also find it useful to visit Astrakhan by steamship or overland on a safe, fast road to see this city with its varied inhabitants. Mr. Fadeev would be greatly pleased to have a visit from you. Agnes might use this time to occupy herself doing something useful in the Sisters’ House in Sarepta.

When you leave Sarepta for home, I would advise you to take the road along the Don through Cherkask and Taganrog. It would be most economical to hire horses from Tsaritsyn to Taganrog or even better to Mariupol. You could easily hire horses for a reasonable price from Mariupol to the German colony Kirschwalde, and German ones home from Kirschwalde. These are just my assumptions. Make the most suitable and pleasant arrangements for yourselves, and write me when you reach Saratov and Sarepta. Give me an address in Sarepta in plenty of time so that my letters can reach you.

As for your question as to whether 30,000 desiatinas of land are available for sale nearby, I have made inquiries with General Rakhmanov and discovered that he is ready to sell 30 to 40,000
desiatinas, with buildings, in Alesk Uezd about sixty to seventy verstas from here. Well water is available at a depth of from eight to ten faden.

Thank God that everything here is much as Agnes left it, except that we have two new neighbours. Warkentin, son-in-law of P. Enns, has replaced D. Penner and H. Hiebert and Elisabeth has replaced H. Wiebe. David Penner is building a house on his cottager plot and Wiebe is living in Pastwa. Peter Friesen has bought a fullholding in Muensterberg and lives there. Sawatsky’s Sara married someone in Lichtenau.

We are all happy and well in our house and wish you the same, with all my heart. Your dear mother sends greetings to you and Agnes. Please write often. Every letter is a joy. Agnes should write her dear mother a few lines. Give my respectful greetings to Mr. Blueher. Mother asks you to give Madame Blueher her heartiest greetings. Conduct your life in God’s presence and be pious.

Adieu, your loving father, Cornies


Dear Cornies,

I received your letter of 26 February and its contents pleased me very much. I am convinced that the Society’s members are well-intentioned and will continue to be useful in planting trees and in other branches of agriculture. Field cultivation will always be of great importance and I hope to receive a formal order about this matter from the Chief Curator next week.²

I unexpectedly found Russian drivers here who have undertaken to convey all of my belongings and people as far as Sarepta for a low price. I will presumably no longer need drivers from Molochnaia, and hope to see you about 20 April.

May you fare well, your friend, A. Fadeev

Received 5 April 1836.

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² A reference to the proposed creation of the Agricultural Society. See TSUS, vol. 1, Introduction; vol. 2, docs. 1, 9, 10, 13.
10. General Inzov to Johann Cornies. 21 March 1836.
SAOR 6-1-4389/1.3

To the Molochnaia Mennonite Society to Develop Agriculture,

Recognizing the exemplary attention that Molochnaia Mennonites have paid to the development of agriculture and also the special privileges granted them as compared to other foreign settlers in this region, and in view of their well-known industry, prosperity and the services rendered by a number of well-intentioned people, most notably the Forestry Society members, I deem it highly useful to incorporate further measures into this Society’s work. In addition to advancing tree planting, it should also improve other branches of the economy, using all necessary means.

The administration of this work should be organized after all significant obstacles to the development of agriculture and trades in the Molochnaia Mennonite District have been identified and analyzed. Methods in keeping with local circumstances must be found to eliminate all obstacles. Members of the Society will use economic studies and journals to learn about ideas, experiments and demonstrations in agriculture that they think can be usefully adapted to their own region. These they will publicize and disseminate among well-intentioned Mennonites. They should conduct experiments themselves, create models to encourage others and provide detailed instructions and assistance to improve agricultural machinery. As a result, fodder crop yields will increase markedly as will those of useful garden crops, dyes, manufactured goods, etc.

To assist the Society in this matter, I consider it useful to appoint an assistant or first deputy chair. I have appointed Chairman Regier of the Molochnaia Mennonite District to this position, since I know him to be well-intentioned and knowledgeable.

At the end of each year, the Society must submit detailed reports to me describing specifically those activities that were carried out during the previous year, including those of its tree planting program.

I have complete confidence that this Society will make every possible effort to complete its mission successfully. I believe I am correct in

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3 This letter is Ivan Inzov’s formal authorization for the creation of the Agricultural Society. Inzov was the Chief Guardian for Foreign Settlers in New Russia. See TSUS, vol. 1, Introduction; vol. 2, docs. 1, 9, 10, 13.
trusting it to fulfill a good Christian’s obligation to serve the interests of his community to the greatest degree possible. I append orders and instructions to the Molchoinaia Mennonite District Office to render all necessary assistance to the Society in so far as this can be done.

11. Johann Wiebe (Neuteich West Prussia) to Johann Cornies.  
19 April 1836. SAOR 89-1-377/18.

I am hereby sending you one-half metz [1.72 litres] of oil radish seeds (marked n.I) and one-half metz summer rape-seed (n.II). Both varieties are summer crops demanding a well-worked field. They should be sown with a drill-machine and the spaces between [rows] later worked with a weeding plough. Rape-seed must be handled carefully when harvesting. Radish is hard to thresh because it has very oily pods. It is hence advisable to leave it on the field for a long time, even if it gets wet and dries again. A nice table-oil can be made from this radish and nine to eleven thaler are paid here for a scheffel [bushel]. I will get four metz [13.76 litres] of winter rape-seed for you later.

Sugar will be made from beets here in our region. A factory is being built in Elbing and many beets are growing in the surrounding region. By winter I might be able to inform you about the success of this industry. You will probably have received my earlier letter. I notified the Clasen heirs that their inheritance has been put in order and I await a reply. Could you, when possible, send me news about my cousin J. Wiebe?

Greetings to you and your loved ones. Commending myself to you and your brothers in friendship as Joh. Wiebe.

I have just received some winter rape-seed and send a metz [3.44 litres] of it in a bag. In this area, up to two metz are sown per morgen [acre], but only one and one-half metz of the summer rape-seed.
Answered 7 November 1837.

12. Johann Cornies to Johann Cornies, Jr. 28 April 1836.  
SAOR 89-1-388/21.

Dear son Johann in Moscow,

I received your letter of 7 April yesterday, just after I returned home from escorting State Counsellor Fadeev. He arrived in Halbstadt with his family on 23 April. On 24 April, they took their midday meal with us in Ohrloff and spent the night at our sheepfarm with me and your dear mother. From there, I accompanied them through Steinbach to Pastwa
and took my leave of this unforgettable guardian and benefactor on 26 April. I had to promise him and Madame that you would visit them in Astrakhan. Therefore please do so and pay your respects. Such a trip will definitely be useful for you. Find lodgings for Agnes in the Sisters’ House or with other good people in Sarepta. The State Counsellor had great difficulty in taking leave of the Molochnaia Mennonite settlers.

I am waiting for an address in Sarepta so that I can write to you there. Make sure Agnes keeps herself warm at all times on the journey, especially in the morning and evening. The cool humidity of spring in those regions can cause great harm to one’s health. Never travel at night. Always find night quarters in time, but get up early in the morning. Avoid drinking water that comes from many different sources. We are not setting a time limit by which you must be home, leaving this to your decision, even if you only arrive here in late August. Mother especially wishes that you might stay in Sarepta four to six weeks and more. Do write often about your journey, even if only a few lines. We are expecting early news that Agnes is better – healthy and well again. We are healthy, cheerful and contented, something we also wish for you from the bottom of our hearts. Give Mr. Blueher and his esteemed family our friendly greetings.

With parental greetings, we commend both of you to our all-knowing God’s protection. Live piously and in God’s presence.

Your loving father, Johann Cornies

SAOR 6-1-4389/5.4

His Excellency, Chief Guardian for Foreign Settlers in Southern Russia, General of the Infantry and Knight in several Orders, Mr. Inzov,

From the Society for the Advancement of Forest-tree and Orchard Planting, Sericulture and Viticulture in the Molochnaia Mennonite District. Report.

The Society is honoured to respond to Yr. Excellency’s Directive No. 1825 of 21 March 1836 with respect to the improvement and elevation of agriculture and trades in the Molochnaia Mennonite District. In accordance with the above mentioned Directive, a meeting held on

4 Cornies here confirms the creation of the Agricultural Society. See: TSUS, vol. 1, Introduction; vol. 2, docs. 1, 9, 10, 13.
1 May by the Society for the Advancement of Forest-tree and Orchard Planting, Sericulture and Viticulture established a Society for the Improvement and Elevation of Agriculture and Trades. To provide better cooperation, Johann Regier, present District Chairman, confirmed by Yr. Excellency in the Molochnaia Mennonite District, took his seat as the assistant, or First Colleague to the chairman, and was inducted into his functions.

This Society will zealously strive to fulfil Yr. Excellency’s wishes in improving and elevating agriculture and trades in the Molochnaia Mennonite District. It will demonstrate by deeds that they will continue to earn Yr. Excellency’s gracious trust and approval. Chairman Johann Cornies, Member Gerhard Enns, Member Abraham Wiebe, Member Wilhelm Martens.

14. Peter Hahn to Johann Cornies. 6 June 1836. SAOR 89-1-376/84.5

Most valued Mr. Cornies,

I turn to you with a sincere request that I hope you will not reject. My circumstances force me to take this step and you are the only man I know who can help me.

I have been summoned to Petersburg to be returned here as commander of an artillery battery. The journey from Ekaterinoslav with my family has already cost me quite a bit. Now this journey to Petersburg and my stay there, probably lasting from three to six months, are creating great difficulties for me and force me to claim your kindness. I will be your thankful debtor and my father-in-law, Chief Judge Andrei Mikhailovich Fadeev will be my guarantor. Kind Mr. Cornies, I most urgently request that you assist me with 3,000 rubles, or at the very least, with 2,500 rubles. Without this money I cannot possibly survive in Petersburg. You may be assured that I will not abuse your kindness and I give you my word that you will get your money back after a year and a day, because I have a bill of exchange for 4,000 rubles deposited in Shlakhtin and I cannot get this money before April 1837. Should you find it difficult to raise this sum by yourself,

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5 Peter Hahn was the son-in-law of Andrei Fadeev. Cornies’ efforts to gain repayment of the loan would stretch on for more than a year. Regarding this loan, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 14, 23, 66, 70, 71, 104, 105, 132, 133, 206, 241.
there is of course good Mr. Martens who would probably not turn down this arrangement. I therefore request that he, too, might show me his kind favour.

If you are kind enough not to reject my request, address your letter directly to Petersburg to the address given here. I leave for Petersburg on 15 June. If you want a bill of exchange or receipt from me, please let me know and I will send it straight to you or to Mr. Biller in Josephsthal. In any case, you are definitely assured of a conscientious debtor who will thank you with all his heart. Peter Hahn.

Received 23 June 1836. Answered 24 June 1836.

15. Heinrich Cornies to Johann Cornies. 12 June 1836.
SAOR 89-1-376/88.

Dear Brother,

Thank God we have all arrived home healthy and happy, and have found everything in order. I have had lead numbers cast as a test. The foundry cannot make numbers in cast-iron because the Crown is no longer giving them work and smelting a few numbers is hardly worth the effort for such a large concern. The cast numbers will be like the ones I sent you. They assure me that these are preferable to ones made of cast-iron. They neither rust nor crack and do not need to be painted black. Cast-iron numbers do not last long unless they are painted because they are so thin that frost cracks them. The price is fifty kopeks per letter. They will also cast brass letters at one ruble apiece.

I paid five rubles, fifty kopeks for these eleven numbers. If they do not cast further numbers for us, they also demand a four ruble payment for moulds. In my opinion, these numbers are suitable. I should let these people know what to expect. If you want them, write to me soon and tell me how many numbers you need.

I spoke with Gulefsk about grave markers. They make lead markers for twenty-five rubles each, with colours and gold provided by the owner. If I should order them, please let me know about the wording of the inscriptions and if the background should be black or blue.

The letters to Prussia had not been sent because no letter had arrived from Neufeld to break the contract. I have sent them.

With many greetings to all of you, I remain your brother, Heinrich Cornies.

Am sending the package and this letter with Larion, the mason. The same.
16. Johann Cornies to Johann Regier. 20 June 1836.  
SAOR 89-1-388/27.

Honoured friend Johann Regier, District Chairman,

I write only to say that if your circumstances permit please make the inspection tour to Rudnerweide, etc., before you travel to Ekaterinoslav. On Monday, I will begin an eight day inspection trip of villages on Society business. I could use this opportunity to speak forcefully to the directors we have mentioned, placing the whole matter close to their hearts. May you fare well.

Greetings from your friend, Johann Cornies

17. Andrei M. Fadeev to Johann Cornies. 20 June 1836.  
SAOR 89-1-367/1.

Dear Cornies,

It is only two months since I left your dear Molochnaia settlements but I have not received any news for a very long time. How are conditions and what price did you and your brethren receive for your wool? How is the harvest going? Believe me my friend, I will never, in any way, be able to break the habit of taking the keenest interest in New Russia and especially in the Molochnaia settlements.

I arrived here safely two weeks after my departure from Molochnaia, though not without problems because of the heat and of the water on the Don and the Volga. We spent two days in Sarepta. It is a pleasant little place, markedly different from the wild steppes surrounding it, but it is only a settlement of craftsmen, and no attempts have been made to develop orchards or economic arrangements such as those of the Molochnaia Mennonites. They buy almost everything to sustain themselves.

What shall I tell you about my dear Kalmyks that you do not already know? They are a good-natured but still wild people, very poor, scattered across eleven million desiatinas with no industry or useful activities and oppressed by their nobles and officials. Disorder exists at every level of every administrative branch. I will probably be able to accomplish little, very little, in improving this area, yet I must make the best effort possible, even if only for a while. I am totally occupied now with official papers but am thinking of touring this desert region in August.

I hope your son will arrive here soon. I will acquaint him with everything worth seeing, although this will not take much time. The city is large but not at all prosperous. Trade with Persia is deteriorating. Only the fishery provides much economic activity.
Local orchards are similar in appearance and condition to the mulberry plantations in the old village of Khortitsa. They say that the fruit is good, but I have not yet seen any. Vineyards have suffered badly from severe cold and drought in the last four or five years. Trees, vegetables, everything needs watering. Only the mulberry trees seem to be doing well, but few people are interested in occupying themselves with sericulture.

This is all that I can tell you about this region in contrast to what I expect you will report from the Molochnaia villages. How is our good Martens and how is his business going? I send heartfelt greetings for him and also for all the good Molochnaia Mennonites, especially to Regier and Enz.\(^6\) Give my greetings to your wife as well.

May you fare well and happily, that is my sincerest wish, your devoted A. Fadeev.

Received 24 July 1836.

18. Johann Cornies to Heinrich Cornies. 8 July 1836.
SAOR 89-1-388/34v.

Dear Brother,

I urgently ask you to forward, by the first mail, the enclosed letter to Heinrich Dyck in West Prussia. Advance the postage for me and inform me of the charges.

Praise God that I and my wife are in very good health. According to a letter from Johann from Saratov, dated 4 June, he and Agnes have arrived there in good health. At this time Johann will probably be in Astrakhan and Agnes in Sarepta.

With friendly greetings to you and your dear wife, your loving brother Johann Cornies.

19. District Office to Johann Cornies. 27 July 1836.
SAOR 89-1-376/62.

To honourable Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,

An order from Inspector Pelekh requires you to send the newly immigrated Cornelius Fast and Johann Dyck, living on your sheepfarm, to

\(^6\) This unusual variant on the surname “Enns” is an accurate reproduction of the original letter.
the District Office. They have been added to the Mennonite population count. On Monday, 3 August, they should sign the documents affirming their loyalty to the Russian throne.

District Office, Halbstadt 27 July 1836. District Chairman Regier.

20. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 17 August 1836.
SAOR 89-1-388/41.

His Honour, Gracious State Counsellor Steven,

I hereby send Yr. Honour a crate with three cheeses, weighing one pud, with the respectful request that you kindly forgive the long delay. These were too fresh to send along until now. Other cheeses will follow once they have ripened sufficiently. You are not to pay the messenger delivering the cheese. Johann Cornies

SAOR 89-1-388/41v.

Esteemed Elder Wilhelm Lange in Gnadenfeld,

My wife sends you some apples with Anau, my Cherkessian servant. Please accept them with love. My wife and I would find it especially agreeable if this sign of our love might not displease you. Do not consider the value of this gift but only the well-disposed intention behind it. We hope and pray that our loving God might grant you the undisturbed enjoyment of Yr. life.

22. Wilhelm Lange to Johann Cornies. 18 August 1836.
SAOR 89-1-367/29.

Valued Ohm Cornies,

Your valued and treasured wife’s love has not only astonished me and my dear wife but has moved us to tears. How could we possibly be offended by such evidence of your love? I would surely be the most unthankful person in the world. We are in a dilemma as to how we might return it. No matter how much we thank you, we have no idea how we have managed to gain your love. In the meantime we send you our heartiest thanks. We know that you and your treasured wife have done this through love for our faithful Saviour. You see me as His servant and want to show me love for His sake. Humbly and in childlike manner we entrust our response to him, who leaves no drink of water
unrewarded, even to the lowliest. At the Resurrection, He will justly reward this evidence of your love, done for His sake.

Our thousand-fold greetings to you and your beloved, valued wife. With honest and thankful love, we remain your faithfully obligated friends, the Wilhelm Lange family.

23. Traugott Blueher to Johann Cornies. 18 August 1836.
SAOR 89-1-366/6.7

Beloved friend Cornies,

I am transferring to you the enclosed credit note for 2,500 rubles received from Captain Hahn. He was not in Petersburg and this delayed the carrying out of your commission.

I have received no further news from your children in Sarepta. It is probably time for them to think about continuing their journey.

I sold the Spanish wool our firm received on account on good terms for six months. Should there be anything noteworthy about the wool, I will let you know later, after the wool is sorted and a more definitive assessment can be made. Thank you again for your loving assistance in this matter.

With greetings of heartfelt love to you and your wife, I remain your faithfully obligated friend, Traugott Blueher.

SAOR 89-1-587/1.

Dear Cornies,

You have forgotten me completely. I have not received a single syllable from you since my departure. Please write to me, and inform me about everything that concerns you and your brethren. Never and at no time will I stop taking an active interest in the good Molochnaia Mennonites, in their happiness and well-being.

I intend to compare the conditions under which the settlers and Nogais live to show the contrast in well-being between settled and nomadic peoples. I would like to obtain the necessary information, accurate even if brief, about the total population and the livestock kept and also the number of villages established in Melitopol and Dnieper

7 Ibid.
uezds, especially with reference to the Nogais. If it is possible for you to do so, please send me a comparison of advantages and differences between their present settled life and their earlier nomadic existence. This information would put me deeply in your debt.

Tomorrow I am travelling to the Horde and to Sarepta but I doubt it will be possible for me to meet your son.

May you fare well and do not forget your completely devoted A. Fadeev.

N.B. I think I will travel to Petersburg this winter.

25. Guardianship Committee to Inspector Pelekh.
27 August 1836. SAOR 89-1-377/10.⁸

To Inspector Pelekh for Settlements in the Second District, and to the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office,

The Minister of the Interior has notified the Chief Guardian of Colonists that the Governor-General of New Russia and Bessarabia, in agreement with His Excellency, has applied to the Minister to reward one of the best land owners in Tavrida, the Molochnaia Mennonite Johann Cornies, for his activities. He is being assigned for his perpetual use, five hundred desiatinas of the land he now leases and on which he has established various of his plantations. The Minister appeared before the Ministers’ Committee that made this decision, whereupon His Majesty, the Tsar, deigned to order that five hundred desiatinas of land be allotted to the Mennonite Cornies for his perpetual use, with the stipulation that he and his descendants, in using this land according to the rights and privileges of the Mennonites, should sell the land only to Molochnaia settlers and not to anyone else. His heirs must pay annually, as a perpetual rental, an eighth of the rental amount presently charged for all the land he now leases, which is four thousand desiatinas.

When the district administration allots these five hundred desiatinas of land to the Mennonite Cornies, it is required to ensure that the adjoining land not be rendered useless for settlement because of the manner in which the above mentioned part is separated.

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⁸ Regarding Cornies’ efforts to acquire permanent ownership of his leased land at Iushanle, see note 6 and TSUS, vol. 1, docs. 1, 5, 152, 177, 178, 185, 531, 535; vol. 2, docs. 25, 26, 27.
As the Guardianship Committee informs you and the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office of the contents of this order from the Minister of the Interior, it orders you to give close consideration at the site where these five hundred desiatinas graciously assigned for the Mennonite Johann Cornies are set apart from his four thousand desiatinas of rented land to ensure that it is done most advantageously for his established plantations and in such a way as to prevent the neighbouring land from becoming impossible to settle. A sketch must be prepared of the surveys done to determine this separation and submitted to this Committee for preliminary approval. A special order can be expected.

The original was signed by the General Chairman of the Infantry Inzov, Secretary Volodovskii, Desk Supervisor Bakun[–?].

26. Johann Cornies to His Excellency [Vorontsov?].
September 1836. SAOR 89-1-388/43.9

I was pleasantly surprised and deeply moved by Inspector Pelekh’s message that, on Yr. Excellency’s representations, five hundred desiatinas of land were granted me for my perpetual use and for the use of my descendants. They have been designated at the location where I have established agricultural arrangements for the last few years. I hereby offer Yr. Excellency my most heartfelt and sincere thanks for Yr. great sympathy in securing for me the foundation of my well-being. I rest secure in the hope that Yr. Excellency’s benevolence will never fade in the hearts of my descendants.

Yr. Excellency’s obedient servant, Johann Cornies

27. Andrei M. Fadeev to Johann Cornies. 20 October 1836.
SAOR 89-1-367/51.10

Dear Cornies,

I was sincerely pleased to hear that your zeal and unceasing activity on behalf of your community and its well-being have been rewarded,

9 Ibid. Cornies sent a comparable letter to Andrei Fadeev: see SAOR 89-1-388/45v, 2 September 1836.
10 Ibid.
even if only in a small way. Now you are at least assured that your agricultural establishment and the beautiful plantings on your khutor [private landholding] will remain undisturbed and continue to be your property and the property of your children.

Continue the useful endeavours you have pursued on behalf of the happiness and well-being of your brethren. Further progress is possible. Whatever time and circumstances may bring, I hope that you will also remain peacefully in possession of the remaining part of the Molochnaia Mennonite land you need. I recommend that you make an effort to express your thanks to Count Vorontsov himself, as the actual mediator of this benevolence from the highest level.

I would gladly carry out your wish that I recommend Mr. Pelekh’s recall to Odessa but to whom? Why would I write about this? You have probably heard about the unhappy incident involving General Inzov. It will probably end his participation in colonial matters. There is no longer even one single soul left in the Guardianship Committee except for General Inzov who would have any interest in the settlements and their well-being. Have patience and persuade Mr. Pelekh to have it as well. Sooner or later, the high authorities will become aware that colonial administration needs sensible directors blessed with the broadest insight. Meanwhile, you must both do your part to prevent even the slightest deterioration of what was founded with such effort and good insight by the late Contenius. That is all I can tell you under present conditions.

By now your children have probably arrived at home. It gave me great pleasure to see them again in Sarepta a month ago. Please let me know if they returned home safely and in good health.

We are having the nicest fall weather here although we have been in need of rain since August. The local inhabitants here pay little attention to this. They seed or plant almost nothing.

May you fare well and give my greetings also to all of your loved ones as well as to good Martens, Enz, etc.

Always devoted, A. Fadeev

28. Johann Cornies to Johann Regier. 27 October 1836.
SAOR 89-1-388/53.

Honoured friend, District Chairman Regier,

Under the usual terms, I have distributed your sheep to the Nogais as follows: thirty-six old ewes and seven ewe lambs to Dshuma
Keldakalko from Uebe; thirty-five old sheep and eight lambs to Kuscp Matashev from Dschotsheret; and thirty-five old ewes and eight lambs to Koshale Barteleish from Dshotsheret. In total, I transferred over one hundred and six old ewes and twenty-three ewe lambs to the above mentioned three Nogais. I have promised them another twenty-nine old ewes within eight days so that each Nogai household will then be in possession of a total of forty-five old ewes.

29. Johann Cornies to Jacob Reimer. 27 October 1836.  
SAOR 89-1-388/53v.

Dear friend Jacob Reimer,

I have selected the messengers bearing this communication, Nogais Tangat from Akkerman and Oshobai from lower Burkut, as good householders to receive fifty ewes from you. On your account, I released two rams to them today to accompany the one hundred ewes to be received from you. Each ram cost thirty-five rubles for a total of seventy rubles. Another ram is still required to complete your flock at a price of thirty-five rubles. I hope you will be pleased. I hereby request that you release the one hundred sheep I promised these Nogais (fifty each). I enclose the written requests that should enable you to write the contracts accordingly.

Adieu. Your friend, Johann Cornies

30. Johann Cornies to Neufeldt. 18 November 1836.  
SAOR 89-1-388/54.

To esteemed Mayor Neufeldt in Muensterberg,

Thank you for your attention to the antiquities sent to me. Although they may have no actual value here, they could possibly provide illumination for people able to decipher the vague prehistory of this region. If other antiquities, pots, little pieces of iron and other similar objects are found in the soil in your village in future, I would request that they not be thrown away, insignificant though they may seem. Please have them forwarded to me. If things of value are found in future, the finders should be remunerated. With a greeting, I remain your friend, Johann Cornies.
Excerpt from remarks made by the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office about improving the prosperity of Molochnaia Mennonite villages, submitted to Inspector Pelekh on 25 November 1836.

The total number of master craftsmen practicing crafts in this District is 526. Of these, 275 possess a fullholding with sixty-five desiatinas of land per family in addition to following their handicraft, while 251 do not have a fullholding and occupy themselves exclusively with their handicrafts and trades. Because these latter artisans live scattered around the District and do not have sufficient resources to purchase materials and keep a ready supply of their products on hand, they only produce work when it is ordered from them. It is, moreover, of no great advantage for an artisan to keep a supply of products on hand when the great extent of the District makes it difficult for buyers to know that a product answering to their needs is available for sale from one or another of the artisans. Maintaining a supply of finished products and advertising them for sale also robs artisans of their time and is costly for them. Another problem is that artisans are too distant from the raw materials required for their work. Wasting time looking for materials, they often have to hire horses and wagons to take them around in search of these or keep their own horses and wagons ready for this purpose.

Agriculturalists, too, experience great disadvantages when artisans live scattered throughout the District. Most craftsmen practice their craft only moderately well and produce work accordingly. Agriculturalists waste much time and expense in finding the best artisans, and are often compelled to buy items for their work from an artisan living nearby. The result is considerable expense and poor workmanship.

11 SAOR 89-1-367, only indirectly part of Johann Cornies’ correspondence, includes submissions and correspondence regarding the establishment of an artisans’ village at Halbstadt, which eventually became Neuhalbstadt. Its establishment was finally approved by the authorities in late 1841. Regarding the establishment of Neuhalbstadt, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 31, 227, 296, 321, 368, 383, 401, 423, 424, 468, 499.
There are also disadvantages when many apprentices receive one-sided, defective basic training from artisans, a majority of whom learned their craft only moderately well themselves, and are unsuited to teach boys apprenticed to them to the level demanded by their crafts.

The above points summarize the disadvantages for existing artisans as well as for all inhabitants in this district that result from a scattering of artisans around the District.

The goal of having a group of artisans well-trained and strong enough to improve their own livelihoods while providing better and cheaper products for their clients could be met by settling a portion of the artisan class in one location. This would encourage many to improve their products that could be sold more easily while enabling agriculturalists to better and more cheaply fill their own needs. Apprentices would benefit from better teaching if they were able to learn from other masters who also understand the craft.

Under such circumstances artisans would naturally obtain a better knowledge of the differences inherent in the materials needed for their craft and pass this understanding along to their apprentices. Also, they would not have to transport their own necessities of life from distant places, since agriculturalists could deliver them to their homes at lower prices, especially if a weekly market day were introduced in the artisans’ settlement.

The best location in our District for such a settlement is likely the village of Halbstadt. The village is already the centre of communications for both the Molochnaia Mennonite and [German] colonist districts and serves as an administrative and commercial centre. Here are located the District Office, brandy, beer and vinegar vendors, a cloth factory, several dye houses, and several companies trading in various raw materials. Artisans could obtain their materials close to where they live and not have to keep a large supply of them in reserve.

To encourage the founding of such a settlement and its rapid growth and prosperity, each artisan-settler should be given three desiatinas of land [in Halbstadt] for a dwelling, a garden and pasture for a milk cow. He would be required to pay land taxes to the crown equal to what is required of land-owners. If some 200 artisans comprised the population of such a village (a smaller number would probably be too few), some 600 desiatinas of land would be needed. This amount could easily be partitioned off from the existing land of Halbstadt village which might be recompensed for this loss from surplus crown lands of the local community sheep-farm. Indeed, this latter land would be preferable for the
Halbstadt fullholders since it includes a ravine where livestock watering places presently lacking could be created.

32. Andrei M. Fadeev to Johann Cornies. 26 December 1836. SAOR 89-1-367/8.\(^\text{12}\)

Dear Cornies,

I received your letters of 31 October and 10 November with great pleasure and am very pleased that you have not forgotten me. I am deeply indebted to you for your description of the Nogai village of Akkerman.\(^\text{13}\) I had it translated into Russian and would like to use it with our Kalmyk gentlemen in the hope of perhaps awakening among them some thoughts [about the future]. I doubt, however, that this will happen, but a try will not hurt. Some of their houses are in so dismal a condition that they must be aware of the need to grasp measures to improve their critical situation.

Your proposal to establish a sheep-farm in this region is not, I think, a bad one. Were it to thrive it could provide advantages for the local inhabitants and your partners. I do, however, question whether it would be possible to reach an agreement regarding land with the Moravian Brethren [at Sarepta]. They seem too slow, too miserly and too undecided to bring something like this into existence without the greatest difficulty. We will await their answer. Should their demands be excessive or they even reject your proposal, there are other means to accomplish so useful an idea. There is Kalmyk land with good water and pasture adjacent to Sarepta, only six verstas away. It belongs to a young nobleman with whom one can do business, although he does not know how to go about using his own land. Your son knows about the land and also knows him a little. Once you receive an answer from Sarepta, I can discuss renting the nobleman’s land to establish a sheep-farm, should that be your wish. All Kalmyk land is under our

\(^{12}\) Cornies pursued the idea of founding a sheep farm in or near the Moravian Brethren community of Sarepta for two years before abandoning the project. See TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 32, 51, 77, 84, 86.

guardianship and permission must be obtained from Petersburg. That would be better for you and more assured if this project were to come into existence. I regret that there is not enough time to receive your reply before I leave for Petersburg. I will, however, use this opportunity to inform them of the advantages the Kalmyks would gain from an agreement with you. Perhaps you could rent land from Sarepta for the sheep-farm itself and the pastureland from the Kalmyks. I do think that the latter arrangement will be cheaper and more cooperative than with the civilized Moravians.

I hereby send you a small package of fresh cotton seeds. You are probably familiar with the way cotton is planted. I wish you much luck with this new experiment on your plantation.

The total absence of proper, orderly agricultural villages in this region is one of the greatest obstacles to promoting a Kalmyk transition from a nomadic to a sedentary life. If the Nogais were not continuously aware of the [development of the] Mennonite settlements, Akkerman would not exist on the Molochnaia steppe. A settlement of two or three dozen Mennonites on the Kalmyk steppe, not too far from Sarepta, might be very useful. What do you think of this? Might there be individuals inclined to take on such a task among your brethren on the Molochnaia (but only orderly and worthy people)? It must be understood that improved sheep-breeding would be their main business. Three to five years free of taxes could be negotiated for them, and the 700 versta journey would not be too difficult.

The Ministry has summoned me to Petersburg and I plan to depart 10 January. I assume I will, at the very least, be away for several months. Please write to me in Petersburg.

Your letter of 4 December has just arrived.

Many thanks for your friendly wishes. Stay healthy and your whole family with you. Your eternal and constant friend, A. Fadeev.

33. Forestry Society to village offices. 29 December 1836.
SAOR 89-l-413/2.

To village offices in the first section [Revier],

In accordance with established rules, village offices are hereby ordered to correctly enter in their planting registers all forest-trees planted by each fullholder every autumn. They should also be listed in the records sent to this Society. Every village office must ensure that strict accuracy is observed in this matter, in accordance with
1836

No. 13 of the rules of order. These rules are to be included in every register.

Forestry Society at Ohrloff, Chairman Johann Cornies

34. Forestry Society to village offices. 30 December 1836.

SAOR 89-1-413/1.¹⁴

To village offices,

The enclosed overview of all twenty-one [village] forest-tree plantations established in the first and second sections [Reviers] is being sent to village offices so that an accurate copy can be made and to provide information for all fullholders in each village. After every village office has copied this overview, it must be sent along without the slightest delay and returned to this Society from Margenau by 20 January 1837.

¹⁴ SAOR 89-1-413 contains multiple copies of this overview, including a chart for each village, then a page listing the best plantings, and a list of mulberry plantations, etc.