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256. Abraham Isaac to Johann Cornies. 2 January 1840.
SAOR 89-1-769/1.

Valued friend and brother in Christ,

Experience confirms the truth of our perceptions that we live in unstable times. We must pay heed to the general circumstances of the day and also to specific matters such as those involving our School Society. The Society was formed in 1820 and signed promissory notes for the capital borrowed to construct the school. Owners of these documents are entitled to interest from the Society’s treasury even though the treasury has never been able to pay such interest or to repay the capital in the past. Persons who made the loans may have done so out of a sense of charity and may be ready to allow this situation to continue. Still, problems may arise when creditors die and the promissory notes pass into the hands of heirs or guardians. Please think of how we might avoid problems of this sort in future. Would it be desirable to talk to the creditors? Might they be willing to arrange matters on a new basis? Perhaps you could visit me or Ohm Peter Isaac and give us your personal views.

Awaiting your visit, I remain your loving friend and brother, Abraham Isaac.

257. Johann Cornies to Civil Governor Muromtsev. 8 January 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/1.

Your Excellency Muromtsev,

Today, 8 January 1840, the Novoaleksandrovka post office correctly forwarded the sum of 6,000 rubles to me. This is money I had advanced
to Yr. Excellency’s administrator Mikhailo Pushkarov on 27 May 1839, at Yr. request and with your signature. Enclosed, with my devoted thanks, is the promissory note Mikhailo Pushkarov gave me for the money. If my humble services might be useful to Yr. Excellency in future, I would ask that you allow me to carry out Yr. Honour’s wishes, as my abilities allow.

Willing and eager to be of service, I strive to be Yr. Excellency’s most devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

258. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 8 January 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/1v.

Most esteemed Mr. Blueher,

When a transport opportunity in Kharkov arises, you will again receive three crates of reeled silk with a net weight of one pud, ten funt, eighteen lot. Please sell the silk in Moscow on consignment and send me the bill of sale. It would be desirable to have you share with me the views of knowledgeable people about the quality, evenness, and fineness of the threads. We would like to avoid flaws in our silk in future.

We have a great deal of snow but little cold. Russian villages seventy verstas to the east suffered a massive storm that buried their houses totally in snow and owners could enter them only through their roofs.

God be praised, everyone is well in our family. On the occasion of the New Year, we wish you and your dear family health for the future and everything positive that you might desire for your body and soul. With love and affection, I remain, as always, your honestly faithful friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

259. Johann Cornies to Kniazevich. 18 January 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/2v.

Yr. Excellency, Gracious Sir,

I submit a short description, “Overview of progress in culture and civilization among the Nogais in Melitopol District,” and respectfully request that, if this description answers to the purposes of the praiseworthy Agricultural Association of South Russia, it be printed in the agricultural newspaper.

I further commend myself to your kindness and assure you respectfully of my lifelong fidelity as Yr. Excellency’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

Mr. Kniazevich in Odessa
260. Johann Cornies to Johann Cornies, Jr. 20 January 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/3.

Dear Son in West Prussia,

We received your letter of 29 November from Neuteich with the greatest pleasure and are happy to see that you and your travelling companions arrived safely. The letter arrived rather late, on 8 January. Thank God, we are all healthy and there is nothing new in Steinbach to report. In general, nothing noteworthy has transpired since you left.

Rainy weather commenced immediately after your departure and the winter seeding in Tashchenak could be finished in time for the seed to sprout. It snowed for several days. The frost was moderate and the snow lay evenly to a depth of a fut on the steppe, a little deeper at Tashchenak. A severe snowstorm in the eastern part of the District, however, continued for days and cut communications with villages. The villages hit hardest farther to the east were Rudnerweide and Pastwa where mounds of snow the size of houses crushed two granaries. Here most snow disappeared ten days ago and rivers overflowed their banks, flooding lowlands. Fortunately the thaw was moderate, but if rain had suddenly melted the snow, many villages would have had serious flooding. Although the snow has disappeared almost completely in our area, many villages may well suffer severe flooding from the two feet of snow that remains on the flat steppe around Tokmak mogila, unless there is considerable frost within a short time. Last night we had two degrees of frost, with winds from the north.

Wiens just arrived from Popovka and reported that in the area beyond Pastwa, many houses have been completely covered with snow, and owners can only enter them through their roofs. Most rabbits have been killed and heaps of rabbit skins are arriving at local markets. In Tashchenak alone our people caught more than 400 rabbits and sold their pelts.

At Tashchenak, the dam beside the old threshing floor has been completed and the buildings constructed last summer have been roofed. The sheepfold is already in use. The sheep at Iushanle are doing moderately well and the sheep at Tashchenak very well. Cattle plague is no longer raging in our villages, but is still a serious problem in Akkerman, Astrakhanka, Novonikolaievka, and on the Martens estate in Tashchenak.

The future of the cloth factory awaits a decision that will require a choice between two alternatives. It is hard to say if Klassen will stay
on as owner since he is responsible for its accumulated debt.¹ In Steinbach people eagerly await Lange’s return because the school cannot continue without him.

It is essential that you buy a Nivellier level and receive instruction on its use.

Look after yourself. When appropriate, give our greetings in places where I am remembered with love. Also to your travelling companions.

We send you thousands of special greetings from your mother, your sister, and from everyone here at Iushanle and Tashchenak.

Longing for an early happy reunion, your father who loves you,

Johann Cornies.

P.S. As they would likely not reach you before your departure, I will probably not write further letters to you. Please write four weeks prior to your departure.

Letters from Novoaleksandrovka are now sent directly to all regions of the world.

Mengbase arrived from Tashchenak bearing news that all dams are full of water.


SAOR 89-1-647/4v.

Esteemed Mr. Wiebe, dear friend,

I must finally contact you and not strain your patience any further. You are kind in writing to me despite my negligence in not answering your letters. If we all did this surely many more bonds of mutual friendship and more faithfulness and love would exist. In my heart, I preserve the old bond of love and affection for you. It is as firm as ever and always the same. Yet, despite my intentions, I cannot conduct a correspondence with you and other good friends since the number and variety of my business affairs make this impossible. Still, I will continue to write because a matter postponed is not a matter ended.

Out of the kindness of your heart, please excuse me as you are able. I will try to throw off my nagging guilt and answer you more diligently.

Now, down to business. I received 240 thalers from Johann Sprung and in accordance with your instructions bought sixty good, young, well-matched ewes at twelve rubles per head and one ram at fifty

rubles. The total comes to 770 rubles, or 240 thalers. At an exchange rate of three rubles, nineteen kopeks, 240 thalers equal 765 rubles, sixty kopeks.

The terms under which I now place my sheep with the Nogais have changed. To some they seem less advantageous for the owner, but basically they are better for both parties. Briefly, they are as follows. After four years, the owner divides the flock into two equal parts as follows. Should an owner transfer fifty sheep to a Nogai for four years and if this number were to increase to 100 or more ewes at the end of that period, the owner would have the right to select fifty of the best ewes from the flock that is to be divided. The Nogai, on the other had, would receive fifty ewes as they pass through a gate, without making any selections. If there are fewer ewes than double the number given initially to the Nogai, the owner selects the best half of them and the rest of those bred would be selected individually by the owner and the Nogai, alternately, the best each time. The rams would be sorted evenly by the parties according to their quality. At the time of a division, every sheep lost or for which no pelt can be produced and every sheep slaughtered without agreement must be replaced by the Nogai, in kind. The latter must be a living sheep of exactly the same age and quality from the Nogai’s own flock after the division has been made. The Nogai no longer pays half as his part of the rams, but only twelve rubles per head. Additional costs incurred for the rams are assumed by the owner.

I have placed your sheep with the Nogai Irsamambet in Edinokhta on the above terms and have concluded a legal contract with him. I hope he will work well with them, as you wish. Last year, conditions for sheep in all of southern Russia were dreadful. Estate owners lost many thousands to liver rot. Even among Mennonite sheep owners many were totally ruined. This winter sheep are still dying here and there, but the Nogais’ sheep are healthy and the situation favourable. Since the government has taken measures to ensure that Spanish sheep will be better protected from raging infectious diseases and starvation, Spanish sheep breeding is sure to develop more favourably. This should soon bear fruit in the speedy blossoming of agricultural endeavours among the Nogais.

On my initiative, I established a commission in this regard that charges an annual fee of ten kopeks per sheep. The commission consists of two industrious Mennonites who know how to manage Spanish sheep breeding. One is a sheep doctor. With the addition of a dependable Nogai member, the commission supervises and regulates sheep
breeding under the protection of the District Administration for State Domains and on the basis of the latter’s essential orders.

I have taken the liberty of sending my son directly to you. His main purposes are to note methods of winter feeding of livestock by estate owners and to see the land of his fathers.

We are in a dilemma about our Prussian brethren who visited us last year, and earlier, especially those who do nothing profitable and useful for themselves, even in their fatherland. They have absurd attitudes and antiquated ideas about Russia. I can scarcely believe that they are Mennonites from such an enlightened state as Prussia. Some have told me that they have absorbed such ideas from preachers and prominent community leaders.

As you well know and frequently hear, we are in a constant battle here in our community because people are alive. If they were dead, there would be no struggle nor would anything positive be achieved. What is dead produces nothing. What the English Parliament is on a large scale, the Molochnaia Mennonites are on a small scale. Yet once something is finally decided, it is not necessary to discuss it further. Should you ever hear that the Molochnaia Mennonite community is calm, you can safely conclude that it is in a state of advanced decay.

If you can, please ask Hamm and Schroeter to have my wife’s family choose someone to receive the previously mentioned sum of money this spring.

With earnest greetings to you from me and my wife, I remain your honestly sympathetic Johann Cornies.

262. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 20 January 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/8.

Esteemed Mr. Blueher,

I hereby inform you that I received the sum of 15,000 rubles in good order.

My sincerest thanks for your kind interest in what is happening in our family. Be assured that my family and I think of you often and with much love, especially my children who thoroughly enjoyed their stay with you and so many good things in your family. As parents we are pleased that we have children who do not forget such kindness.

Our region had unusually deep snow for all of December, but it has now almost totally melted and properly moistened the soil. Grain prices now are seventeen rubles per chetvert for wheat, twelve for rye,
ten for barley, ten for oats. Sheep are surviving better this year, but are still dying in some places.

When Mr. Doehring was here, I suggested that Spanish sheep be introduced in larger numbers in Sarepta, and offered to make 500 ewes or more available on credit at low prices, with payment over two or three years. In this way it would be easier for individuals with limited means to acquire sheep and redeem the purchase price completely or almost completely from the sale of wool. What do you say to this? I have not yet had an answer from Sarepta. You can see that I am bombarding Sarepta with suggestions, chiefly because I noticed an interest in sheep raising there and am convinced that efficiently managed sheep breeding can enrich the community and cause it to flourish. Granted, all beginnings are difficult but difficulties will continue unless someone tries to introduce change. I have by now introduced more than 40,000 Spanish sheep among the Nogais. The efforts and struggles were great indeed, but since the Nogais now have thousands of silver rubles jingling in their pockets from the annual sale of wool and sheep, they recognize the great advantages to be gained from Spanish sheep-breeding.

I do not tire easily if convinced that I can direct change to the advantage of others. Nor do I give up easily, even if I suffer a few disadvantages myself. This is simply the way I am. The impetus and strength for this comes from Him, who is not of this world. I know my duty and, as long as I can see, I will work hard to bring about anything that redounds to the advantage of my neighbour in whatever direction that may be and to the limit of my powers.

With warm greetings, I commend myself to your further love and remain your willing friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

263. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 21 January 1840.²
SAOR 89-1-647/10v.

Mr. State Counsellor Steven,

Two Molokan peasants in Novovasilevka village, Mikhailo Andreev and Larion Voroshchev, both wealthy agriculturalists, laid out small fruit orchards beside their houses several years ago. They also planted seeds and raised trees to be transplanted from nurseries. Determined to

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² Regarding the efforts of the Molokans Andreev and Voroshchev to establish a tree nursery, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 263, 300, 333, 360, 466.
acquire the needed knowledge for tree planting, they frequently visited my plantation.

A year ago, because the area beside their houses was too small, they asked me for advice about acquiring land near their village to establish larger orchards and tree nurseries, and to do so properly. They suggested a piece of land situated close to their village, four desiatinas, 400 faden in size and enclosed by a ditch. Seven years ago, on the administration’s orders, this area was designated as a village fruit tree plantation. Not a single tree was planted, however, and it was allowed to lie waste, unused and covered with weeds. The two had already asked the community for the plot but the community would not agree, partly out of envy and partly because it feared that this might prompt the administration to take notice of them and force all of them to plant trees.

I told them not to lose hope and suggested they postpone the matter until the new administrative office was opened and they could then send a petition directly to the office director. I suggested that their usefulness would be recognized if they did their part by undertaking to plant the whole piece of designated land with good fruit trees and by keeping them alive and well cared for. Moreover, by raising nursery trees in large numbers, they might demonstrate qualities of good management and industry and be accorded the use of this piece of land with its plantations as if it belonged to them, to be passed on to their descendents in return for the payment of legally required taxes.

Yesterday, however, I got a letter from these men, and it has discouraged me greatly. I take the liberty of enclosing the original. It is rude and daring for lower officials to circumvent the Imperial government’s philanthropic attitudes on behalf of the well-being of its inhabitants and mislead the peasants for hostile purposes. This Mr. Kalenichenko was formerly a local assessor (zasedatel) and he still acts in that spirit.

I would urgently ask Yr. Honour to intercede with the appropriate authorities and help these wealthy, diligent, and orderly Molokans in whatever way you can. It would arouse greater zeal for the planting of trees, and teach lower officials a lesson not to frighten peasants away from such good and useful endeavours.

Both of these Molokans are ready and willing to start planting at the first sign of good weather in spring. It would be best for them if this matter were resolved soon. This is my plea.

It embarrasses me that I have not yet sent you a full and accurate overview of the progress we have made in livestock and sheep
breeding. The survey is done by the District Office and not completed by the New Year.

I have not yet found a suitable way to send you the cheeses.

Frequent rains at the end of November made for favourable weather in the region, and winter seeding was done. This allowed the seed to germinate even though the season was well along. One fut of loose snow on 8 December made for difficult sledding. The eastern part of our district had a great snow storm of several days’ duration that piled up drifts the size of a house. There were three fut of snow on the open steppe to the east of us, but most of this has now disappeared. The temperature dropped to fifteen below zero for a few days and seventeen for one day. Otherwise it has been mild.

The cattle plague still rages among the Nogai and Molokans and in a few Russian villages. Sheep are doing better this year, although there are places where liver rot has caused many deaths.

264. Johann Cornies to Civil Governor Muromtsev.
15 February 1840. SOAR 89-1-647/16.

Civil Governor Murmotsev in Simferopol, Yr. Excellency, Gracious Sir,

I am privileged to answer Yr. Excellency’s esteemed communication. It is not possible to obtain two wagons to transport hay and grain for the same price as those constructed for His Highness Count Vorontsov two years ago. Everything has meanwhile become more expensive, especially iron. I have asked our best wheelwrights and blacksmiths to quote me prices for a wagon that could bear a load of 150 to 160 puds. They have responded as follows. The wheelwright would charge sixty rubles for work on the wheels and undercarriage, and the blacksmith [would charge] 180 rubles, for a total of 240 rubles. Ladders and other fittings produced by the wheelwright would cost an additional twenty rubles. Painting the wagon with oil paint, which is especially necessary, costs ten rubles. The cost of each wagon with complete fittings, capable of carrying a load of 150 to 160 puds would total 270 rubles. Both could be manufactured and ready for delivery by 15 May 1840.

Should this price be acceptable, please inform me as soon as possible. The craftsmen could then be advanced down payments and the wagons would be completed by an agreed-upon date. Will the wagons be drawn by horses or by oxen? This information is needed to arrange the shafts.
Yr. Excellency can buy from me as many trees as you desire of all varieties listed in the enclosed catalogue. However, by St. Germain’s Day [28 May] only about one hundred of the one-to-three year exceptionally well-developed saplings will be available. A further several hundred one-, two-, and three-year-old saplings of each variety will also be available, all growing well with substantial stems. My price is the same for all ages of trees, fifteen silver kopeks each.

If Yr. Excellency should wish to buy trees from my nurseries, I request that you kindly inform me in good time about the quantity and varieties, so that I can mark them in the nurseries and keep them for you. At the same time, I promise that they will be available promptly. It would be desirable to have them picked up as soon as possible when spring arrives.

With exceptional devotion and respect, I endeavour to remain Yr. Excellency’s willing servant, Johann Cornies.

265. Johann Cornies to Peter Keppen. 6 February 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/17v.

Mr. Keppen, Yr. Honour, State Counsellor,

I was pleased to receive your esteemed communication of 8 January 1840 and thank you for your gracious good wishes for this coming year and for the printed reports you sent. It gives me pleasure, worthy State Counsellor, to convey my most sincere and heartfelt good wishes to you on assuming a position that will open up an attractive new sphere of influence for you. May your philanthropic intentions be honestly recognized and actively promoted by all noble persons. May providence grant you enduring good health to fulfil your high calling in advancing the well-being of the state, and bless you with life’s greatest pleasures. These are the simple wishes and the solemn testimonial of a man who loves you honestly and values you greatly.

In accordance with your directive for next summer, I am prepared to institute weather observations, to measure the temperature in wells, and to set aside three square sazhen of land to accomplish this. However, with the exception of ordinary Reaumur thermometers, none of the instruments required are available here. I enclose 300 rubles with the request that you kindly use this money to have the required instruments prepared. Also, please teach us how to use them. I think three rain measuring devices would be required. I have observed over the years that the Mennonite District has three different climatic zones. If these 300 rubles are insufficient, I will send the required sum when appropriately notified.

With all esteem, I endeavour to remain Yr. Honour’s most devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

266. Johann Cornies to Peter Keppen. 6 February 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/18v.4

Mr. Keppen,

In regions of West Prussia along the Vistula, from the low-lying areas of Culm to the Frisches Haff, a few hundred Mennonite families live on entailed estates with forty-year leases. Most have prospered and a few can even be called rich. An edict from the king has informed these Mennonites that all entailed estates will cease to exist by 1845 and be incorporated in with the rest of the crown’s estates. As a result, they will have to leave their estates or, remaining on them, make themselves eligible for military service. Caught up in this dilemma, they are exploring where they might go if they were to leave Prussia. Since Russia takes the position that immigration has ceased, some are thinking of boarding ships and going to America. Others have written to make inquiries here, asking if Russia’s Imperial Government might permit them to purchase land with their own means, on specific terms that they would pledge to fulfil to the benefit of the state.

Might it be possible to arrange specific terms for these Mennonites that ARE in the state’s interest and lead to the purchase of some of the many noble lands now for sale in the Crimea? This land is almost

4 Regarding the situation in Prussia, see Mark Jantzen, Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion, and Family in the Prussian East, 1772–1880 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 107–36. Regarding Cornies’ efforts to advise these potential Prussian immigrants, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 266, 323, 324, 361, 392, 422, 447.
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completely unused and lying waste because of the indolence of its resi-
dents. I believe that the Mennonites would agree to conditions that
would put the land they buy under the crown’s estate administra-
tion to be administered according to its rules and also pledge themselves to
plant a specified number of desiatinas of land with fruit and forest trees
within the first twenty to thirty years of their settlement. Every Men-
onite immigrant would be limited to three hundred desiatinas of land,
which they could only resell to other Mennonites. Small settlements
could thus be formed here and there in the Crimea to serve Crimean
inhabitants as examples of active diligence.

With your wise insight, esteemed State Counsellor, you will be able
to judge how useful these ideas might be. Cornies.

267. Johann Cornies to District Office. 7 February 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/20.

District Office at Halbstadt,

Since all of my debtors have appeared for an accounting by this date,
I would obediently ask the highly respected District Office to call upon
the inhabitants listed on the enclosed record to appear without fail by
25 February, either to make a payment or to give an accounting, with a
further signed statement of their debt.5

268. Fedor F. Rosen to Johann Cornies. 8 February 1840.
SAOR 89-1-658/2.

From the Superintendant of the Tavrida Bureau of State Domains, Bar-
on Rosen.
Mr. Cornies,

The Ministry of State Domains carefully observes the progress being
made by state peasants in all branches of agriculture and uses every
opportunity to promote, encourage, and support developments that
can arise from the work of its inhabitants. These provide security both
for the agriculturalist and the state.

In accordance with the benevolent government’s views, my endeav-
ours on behalf of the state peasants entrusted to me in this guberniia
have been to improve their economic situation through orderly and

5 The list of debtors is not extant.
advantageous agricultural practices. Although state support is occasionally necessary, good examples of enterprise are often most useful among inexperienced and neglectful agriculturalists. I have had the opportunity to convince myself of this truth while travelling around your neighbourhood in the Melitopol District, specifically among the Nogais, a people living in ignorance and far removed from any culture.

Since your undoubtedly praiseworthy and exemplary arrangements and establishments have been developed in a practical and economical manner, they must have been a useful example for your neighbours. I am also well aware that you have encouraged your neighbours, offered them guidance, and afforded them every manner of help. As a result, I ask you, Mr. Cornies, to respond to the following questions.

1. How was it possible to make these people willing to change from their accustomed practices to a better method of agriculture?

2. How did Ali Pasha begin his plantation and continue to plant it? What kind of zeal did he display? How much did he achieve and in what time period? Did he make an impression on his comrades? In what way? Please provide an accurate general description of the way Ali Pasha proceeded with his undertaking, whether he encountered obstacles, how he overcame them, and anything else occurring in this process.

3. What are the origins of the little village of Akkerman, built according to European guidelines? What methods did you, in this instance, apply to motivate these people to decide [to settle in this way]? 6

I intend to present your accurate and detailed replies to these questions to the Ministry of State Domains, so that, with its benevolent intentions on behalf of the state peasantry, it might use its economic newspaper to publicize the investigations and practices useful to villagers.

Accordingly, you would oblige me greatly if, in future, you would from time to time inform me about the step-by-step progress made by state peasants and about their useful undertakings in agriculture. Kindly name those who should receive recognition for their improvements in branches of agriculture. Include any who show understanding and a desire to undertake useful enterprises and make improvements on their establishments, even if they have not yet attempted to do anything because of outside obstacles or indecision.

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Because of my special interest in this matter, I would encourage you to give me special help in my undertaking. You have shown understanding and insight into the importance of improving agriculture.

I am confident in advance that I will satisfactorily reach my purposes through you. Baron F. Rosen.

269. Johann Cornies to Gerhard Dueck. 8 February 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/20.

Mr. Gerhard Dueck in Rudnerweide.
Dear friend,

I received your letter of 11 January 1840 and read about your concerns. First, there is the matter of selling the cottager lot. It must be understood that if the former owner of your hearth site kept the lot in reserve for his lifetime, and if a document exists to establish the accuracy of this, then it really should be kept in reserve for him as long as he lives. It does not matter whether Goerz uses the cottager lot himself or not unless the contract stipulates that he should build on it and live there. The village community is also required to be satisfied with this.

On the second matter, your good friends who repeated my remarks about you reported them truthfully. My remarks about your circumstances were favourable. I affectionately wish you all positive support to enable your existence to become more secure, as I wish this for everyone in need of such wishes. I am prepared to support everyone with advice to the extent of my abilities. However, if your friends gave you hopes of borrowing 2000 rubles, as you suggest in your letter, they did not understand me correctly. This was also the reason I was so surprised that you immediately requested a loan from me when I visited your home last summer.

Dear friend, we cannot allow ourselves to assume that we can take giant steps forward. All our powers are insufficient for this. Our region is too young, too sparsely populated, and too unenlightened to make it possible to carry out extraordinary things. We must cut our coat according to the cloth available. We should adjust our efforts and industry appropriately to time and circumstance, and remain contented even when the progress we make is not huge. This should be understood. A small piece of bread consumed under one’s own roof is worth much more than a whole loaf under someone else’s. Eventually the
creditor must be repaid, something the debtor must naturally consider in advance.

I do not know your circumstances exactly, but I do know that to do improved winter feeding in a barn, more human hands are needed than are usually available here. They are expensive and all the agricultural buildings must be suitably arranged. Where could your agricultural machinery be stored? Also, of how much use is a pearl barley mill here? It would not cover the interest charges. It might be possible to spend one’s own money on experimenting with such an installation but it seems too risky to borrow money for this purpose, basing it on hopes for good luck. This is the reason I am not inclined to provide you with an advance.

On the third matter, perhaps the Chief Curator forgot to pass along the letter and package to Baron Frank in Odessa. One cannot be offended if the old gentleman, with his many business affairs and his physical suffering, neglects private matters he undertook with his best intentions. I cannot tell you how to have your drawings returned. The General is not in Odessa, but on a charitable journey. It is no longer fashionable to obtain money from gentlemen as promptly as you think you should be able to get it from Baron Frank. I doubt if you will be able to obtain anything more than the contract you now have in your hands, since you let these things leave your possession without first getting the money. The Baron is involved in important business matters, and cannot pay attention to small ones like yours.

I wish you the best of success, but I request that you show moderation in all matters. If, from among all the things you consider to be necessary, you wisely select those most necessary for your situation, matters, dear friend, will improve shortly. Should I have brought discredit on you with my words, I kindly request that you forgive me.

With polite greetings to you and your dear family, I remain your friend, Johann Cornies.

270. Johann Cornies to District Office. 20 February 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/26v.

District Office in Halbstadt,

On 16 September 1839, master smith Johann Schulz in Sparrau borrowed 1001 rubles from me for two months for a transaction involving iron. He was not in a position to pay at the set time and his signed
record was extended to 1 January 1840. He did not appear to pay his debt even at this date, and I gave him a written extension until 1 February, warning him that I would not hesitate to report him to the appropriate authority if he did not appear.

Since Schulz has not appeared by this time, I obediently request that the highly honoured District Office take the necessary measures to ensure that the above-mentioned Schulz appear before me by 1 March without fail to pay his debt.

271. Rempel to Johann Cornies. 20 February 1840. SAOR 89-1-623/25.

Very esteemed friend,

The Altonau Village Office indicated to me that, on District Office orders, I am to appear before you by 25 February to settle the debt I owe you. Recently I sent a petition to the District Office requesting that it collect my claim against a debtor of mine. Please inform my son about the sum I owe you. I will then ask the District Office to settle your claim from the proceeds of the claim they are collecting for me. I return my most obliging thanks for the patience you have shown me and hope very much that the settlement of this matter may follow soon.

Your obligated Rempel.

272. Forestry Society to District Office. 23 February 1840. SAOR 89-1-646/16.

To the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office in Halbstadt,
From the Society for the Advancement of Forest-tree and Orchard Cultivation, Sericulture, and Viticulture,

In response to your communication No. 77 of 3 February, the new immigrant, the Mennonite Gerhard Neufeldt, Rudnerweide village, was read all pertinent rules relating to tree planting in the local District. Now, with a signed undertaking, he has bound himself to carry out promptly, to the extent possible, everything the Society ordered in the past and will order in future, according to its rules and organization. He has taken over the fullholding number twelve from Johann Sudermann, Mennonite of the same village. This signed obligation was properly entered as number nine in the Society’s record journal.

The District Office is hereby notified accordingly to enable it to make further arrangements.
Esteemed Mr. Blueher,

Yesterday, from the Novoaleksandrovka post office, I received the account of sale and remainder of your payment for wool sent to you on consignment last year. Enclosed is a general receipt.7 I am completely satisfied and thank you for your kind efforts on my behalf. I would ask you to sell my wool again this year.

Winter continues but fodder shortages are occurring in only a few individual spots. Sheep, on the other hand, are still dying in considerable numbers. Sheep will generally produce little wool in most areas. The extravagance of keeping unreasonably large numbers of sheep has passed. People have generally become convinced that it is necessary to treat sheep differently if sheep raising is to remain profitable.

Even though I have suffered no losses among my own sheep, I have nevertheless introduced a totally different method of caring for them last fall that would improve and strengthen the quality of their wool. My purpose is to provide the sheep with a better life that would enable them to develop properly and produce a much higher yield of wool. This approach cannot be imitated by everyone who is simply thinking of keeping sheep.

Mr. Fadeev, our friend in common, is now Director of the Finance Bureau in Saratov. As you know, I am pleased to think that Sarepta will consider him a great support in economic matters once they have learned to understand him. So far, I have heard nothing from Sarepta.

Thank God that we are all healthy, which we wish you and your dear family.

I commend myself to you as your faithfully united friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

P.S. I would also like to request a volume of the Halle Allgemeine Landwirtschaftliche Zeitung (Halle General Agricultural Newspaper) for the year 1839. Also, please purchase for me a magnifying glass that can enlarge objects close to the eyes and can be carried on one’s person.

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7 A copy of a receipt for 35,165 rubles for 748 puds of wool appears as the following document: 89-1-647/33.
274. Johann Klassen to Johann Cornies. 4 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/39.\(^8\)

Mr. Johann Cornies, most worthy friend,

When I visited you almost three weeks ago, you were kind enough to promise me definite news within four or five days. I have, however, heard nothing yet, which arouses my suspicions. During this time I could have acquired five to ten thousand rubles and begged for voluntary contributions. Spring is on the doorstep.

I expect to receive detailed information from you and sign myself, with the kindest greeting, as your devoted friend, Johann Klassen.

275. District Office to Johann and David Cornies. 4 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/40.

To Johann and David Cornies in Ohrloff,

According to Inspector Pelekh, you have living on your sheepfarm a Russian crown settler called Stephan Barde. If he should be in your service, send him to this District Office as quickly as possible so that he can be sent to his place of residence to pay his crown debts.

District Office in Halbstadt, 4 March 1840. District Chairman Regier.
Message 13 March 1840 to District Secretary Reimer.

276. Johann Cornies to Johann Klassen. 5 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/31.\(^9\)

To Johann Klassen in Halbstadt,
Dear friend,

In response to your letter of 4 March letter, I send the following reply. I promised you that the Society would meet in four or five days’ time and that I would speak with the District Chairman and the Society’s members about your affairs in the manner that you and I discussed. Since my intentions towards you were honest, I did not neglect to do so. I thought I was advising you to promote your own best interests since I am not, in any way, indifferent to your fate. I could not foresee that

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9 Ibid.
you would accuse me of having caused you a loss of five to ten thou-
sand rubles, as you believe. I asked the District Chairman to discuss the
details with you. He was feeling ill at the time and had to go directly
to Schoensee from the meeting. However, he promised that he would
speak to you when he got to Halbstadt.

I did not concern myself with the matter further, or whether you had
submitted a written explanation to the District Office or the Commis-
sion that would have warranted a meeting of the creditors. The purpose
of the Society’s meeting, however, was not to discuss your affairs and
to make decisions accordingly. This is a subject for the District Office
and the Commission, which are obligated to do so by the Guardian-
ship Committee’s confirmation in this matter. You are quite mistaken to
think that I am personally obligated to give you a prompt and thorough
explanation. Since I hear almost every day from all sides that you mis-
trust the Commission, I am not at all surprised that your suspicions are
easily aroused in such matters, and now involve me too. I am, however,
sorry that the attitude you harbour seems to be unrealistic.

Despite all of this, I honestly wish you the best from the bottom of my
heart, and therefore greet you as a friend, Johann Cornies.

277. Johann Cornies to Johann Penner. 6 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/32v.

Johann Penner in Pastwa, dear friend,

Although I am unable to tell you definitely what limits foreigners
face who wish to buy noble lands in Russia, I do know that they cannot
be admitted into the category of colonists if they wish to be registered
here. They assume the same position as the category of free people who
do not receive special rights such as those we enjoy. We are under the
administration of a Guardianship Committee that exists exclusively for
the administration of [foreign] settlers in southern Russia. The former,
however, are individuals under the general administration. This is the
main reason for questioning the advisability of Mennonites moving to
Russia in this way.

I would give your relatives and friends in Prussia the following
advice. If they are really in such a difficult situation in Prussia that they
must fear for the loss of their freedom of conscience, and are conse-
quently forced to emigrate, they should select several able men from
their midst to be sent here this summer. The group could then make
preliminary inquiries with the local government about the details of
their acceptance in Russia, and learn about the terms of the Russian state for their purchase of land in the Empire. They would further have an opportunity to inspect the noble lands for sale in the Crimea, and convince themselves of their quality. Recently, I was offered several such estates of 1500 to 2500 desiatinas in that area at very low prices. I am prepared to give you my best advice in this matter.

Your friends and relatives will never accomplish their purpose by writing back and forth. All speculation by local relatives and acquaintances will not enlighten our Prussian brethren about Russia’s imperial constitution. It will confuse them instead. Most Mennonites here do not even possess an accurate knowledge of their own colonial administration, under whose immediate direction they stand. It would thus probably be best if they sent a few intelligent and solid men from their midst into this area. These men could learn directly what is possible and impossible from our philanthropic and honestly concerned state administration. They could familiarize themselves with the laws of the land and the relationships that various estates have to the state itself. I do not know anything more dependable to tell you in this situation.

I send you and your family the friendliest greetings and remain, as always, your honest friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

278. Johann Cornies to Andrei Fadeev. 6 March 1840. 
SAOR 89-1-647/35.

Mr. Fadeev,

Before I received Yr. Honour’s letter of 29 December 1839 from Saratov, I read in the newspaper that you had been transferred from Astrakhan to Saratov. I congratulate you, State Counsellor, on your new position. An attractive new sphere of activity has been opened to your talents. With interest, I appreciate the happiness inhabitants there will enjoy under your direction and guardianship. God rewards everything good. He will also grant you the strength and good health to oversee the well-being of so many thousands and crown your efforts with the best of success.

The year just past did not see the most favourable harvest locally. Yields were only moderate, indeed quite small, four and three-quarter fold on average. A surplus of almost 12,000 chetvert of wheat were sold at seventeen rubles per chetvert. Quantities of soft grains, oats and barley, were considerable in several villages. Potatoes were less successful and we harvested only a little more than 10,000 chetvert. I believe
that only slightly more favourable weather right after the seeding could have yielded a crop of more than 25,000 chetvert of potatoes. Flax was more successful and a little more than 1600 puds was broken. As a result some 2620 persons will be occupied this winter with its spinning and weaving. The hay crop was abundant and, despite our long winter, we are feeling no fodder shortages.

Despite the cattle plague that raged in eight of our villages, 57,000 rubles worth of butter was produced. Dairying continues to gain ground and is being pursued more efficiently. It almost equals sheep breeding in the clear profit it produces. For example, Blumenort village sold butter for 3327 rubles while its income from wool was a little more than 3500 rubles. The Society is attempting to widen the range of sources for agricultural income to insulate villagers from the economic instability that would follow from unfavourable conditions in one area. This would enable them to maintain their economic situations. At the same time, we are witnessing the awakening of intellectual and physical strength in our community that will lead our inhabitants to happier, quieter lives. In this way we can discover the essence of wisdom that will make our community more healthy, happy, and wealthy. This is more valuable than possessions and material power as evidenced in thousands upon thousands of figures and numbers tabulated in tables and indexes.

Khortitsa provides a concrete illustration of what I mean, since sheep raising is its only major branch of economic activity. This has put it so deeply in debt that it will hardly be able to extricate itself from this situation in twenty years’ time unless a better administration is imposed that compels inhabitants to become more industrious and active. Almost all of its private capital has failed along with its sheep raising.

In contrast, Molochnaia is flourishing. All crafts are supported as each promotes the other. Both rich and poor inhabitants are in a state of well-being. The habit of active diligence seems to be developing here as individuals strive to distinguish themselves. Each year, villages take initiatives to promote their own beautification through the construction of better, more durable and tastefully designed houses. A total of 137 new buildings were constructed last year, twenty-seven of fired brick. Presently, four brickworks are operating as well as an enterprise that produces Dutch roof tiles and a lime kiln. A further four brickworks will be established this year.

The plantations are developing remarkably. Last year an additional 10,744 trees were planted in fruit orchards and preparations have been
made to plant another 8707 fruit trees. In nurseries we have 78,369 improved fruit trees ready for transplanting and in seed nurseries 281,365 trees. Outsiders bought 1110 rubles 61 kopeks of trees. Enough fruit was sold to earn 5804 rubles, 98 kopeks. Considerable quantities of fruit were also exchanged for millet with the Nogais. Last year, an additional 33,034 trees were planted in the thirty-nine forest-tree plantations. There are now a total of 181,494 forest trees growing in all forest-tree plantations. More significant progress each year is visible in the laying out of hedges and in the improvement of forest-tree plantations and fruit orchards. Silk production will soon be worthy of notice. One pud, ten funt, eighteen lot of silk was produced and reeled in our community. We believe that the large demand for silkworm eggs nourishes the hope that interest in silk cultivation as an occupation is rising. The Society does not have enough eggs in stock to satisfy the demand.

Field cultivation is advancing annually in its extent and is also being pursued more systematically. Wherever it was conducted in this way, it provided good results that can serve as an example worthy of imitation. For example, in Ohrloff, Altonau, and Muensterberg villages, land cultivation is pursued with more insight. Soils are being improved and the results have been crops of seven times the seed. Some individual fullholders, who were even better at improving the soil, had ten- to twelve-fold yields. Villages and fullholders who treated their soil as a stepchild might receive only a three-fold return or as little as one and three-quarter fold return.

The District has a total of seventy-five threshing machines and thirteen chaff cutters driven by horses. The latter have proved themselves exceptionally useful. The sheep breeding cycle has been changed so that sheep now lamb in the middle of February. The lambs thrive and can already graze on the pastures with the old sheep when spring arrives. The earlier lambing results in larger sheep that also produce much more wool.

The village of Landskrone, newly founded last year, is a model of beautiful, regularly constructed houses and is superior in its calm, orderly appearance and quiet, industrious diligence. There is a growing desire here to learn skilled trades and the time may not be far off when a tradesman will consider his occupation more successful than that of an agriculturalist. Tradesmen can earn a great deal of money in summer and winter. With better teachers our schools are making progress. Our people desire and seek improvement, but direction is needed to encourage, support, and give thought to the introduction of improvements.
The Ohrloff house of worship was built for about 15,000 rubles. It is in the style of the former Ekaterinoslav Bureau building with the difference that the house of worship is much larger, with two storeys and a wooden roof instead of an iron one, though it too is painted grey.

As people strive for perfection, there is activity and movement on every side, openly or in seclusion. Our grandchildren will be able to enjoy the goals that their forefathers determined for themselves and set out to reach. They will take pleasure in what we have accomplished and what we have hoped for. We, for our part, can go to our graves with good consciences, joining our forefathers who worked on our behalf.

Martens came back from the baths in autumn with broken sails, a hypochondriac to the highest degree. He was dissatisfied with all the doctors there and even seems not to have said his farewells. He is suffering under a heavy load and becoming a great burden to himself and his entire family, who must tend him. He wanted to travel to Karlsbad in spring but his people are now asking me to advise him to return to Piatigorsk. Nothing has yet been decided, but I think that he will undoubtedly go back to the Caucasus.

On 20 October 1839 my son and Peter Schmidt’s two sons left for Prussia, travelling with post horses. They are supposed to receive instruction in barn feeding as it is done there during the winter. My affairs continue as before. I feel honoured to be able to report to you that everyone in our household is well. We had lived in the happy anticipation of your proposed visit, as you had kindly informed us. Now, however, with your unexpected transfer, we are in doubt whether we will experience that pleasure.

With the appropriate esteem, and the most genuine respect, I remain, Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

279. Johann Cornies to Heinrich Schmidt. 9 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/40v.10

To Heinrich Sch[midt], Pastwa,
Dear friend,

Since you are kindly prepared to make observations of atmospheric temperatures in Pastwa throughout the year, I take the liberty to inform you of major matters you should daily note.

10 Regarding Cornies’ role in collecting environmental data, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 265, 279, 324, 423, 499, 513, 555, 556, 574, 576.
In addition to the twice-daily observations of the temperature, before sunrise and at two o’clock in the afternoon, please note the occurrence of the following: heavy or light snowfalls; penetrating or gentle rains; violent or weak thunderstorms with violent or little lightning; fog; winds; storms; snowstorms; hoarfrost; glare ice; heavy or light night frosts; heavy or sparse, large or small hail stones; cloudy skies; clear skies; and other natural phenomena.

You should also note the beginning and completion dates for ploughing and seeding and the blossoming of apricot, cherry, and apple trees. When did the seeded rye and wheat come up, sprout, and blossom? When did haying begin and end? When did the grain harvesting begin and when was it completed? What progress is to be noted in the development of fruit orchards? For which varieties was the weather good and for which bad? In general, when was the winter grain ploughed in? On how many days were livestock fed in barns?

Please omit information about weather occurrences when you are away from home. I would be much obliged to you if you could give me only correct information on the subjects mentioned above.

Please be brief in making your notes, citing the necessary information in words in the accompanying notebook. You will surely be able to orient yourself in its use.

With a friendly greeting, I remain your friend who is willing to be of service, Johann Cornies.

280. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 10 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/41v.

His Honour, State Counsellor Steven,

The demand for alfalfa seed has grown so quickly that I must again ask Yr. Honour to send me another ten funt. Kindly, if possible, as a special request, also send me some shoots of the beautiful plantain tree in your garden, if this can be done?

Our late winter was moderate with some snow, but the soil was moistened to a good depth. Since December the steppe in the eastern part of the District above Steinbach has been covered with one and a half feet of snow and a crust of ice. In villages in that area snowstorms drove ten to fifteen feet of snow into a number of plantations and broke many trees. Winter is now disappearing with rain today. All the ravines are full of running water. No one is suffering fodder shortages despite the long winter. Sheep are in better shape this year, but in many individual
flocks almost all young sheep died again this winter. From what I have 
heard, wool prices have fallen. Johann Cornies.

281. Johann Cornies to District Office. 13 March 1840. 
SAOR 89-1-647/42.

District Office in Halbstadt,
In response to communication No. 678 of 4 March, I wish to inform 
you that Stepan Baran, Russian state peasant from Preobrazhenskoe 
village, is not living with me or with David Cornies.

282. Johann Cornies to Fedor Rosen. 14 March 1840. 
SAOR 89-1-647/42v.

His Honour, Director of the Tavrida Bureau of State Domains, State 
Counsellor and Sir, Rosen,
From the Corresponding Member of the Learned Committee in the 
Ministry of State Domains, Johann Cornies.

Reluctantly I must intrude on the time you normally devote to your 
demanding administrative duties, to inform you of serious matters that 
touch on the fundamental well-being of the Nogais. They are discussed 
in a letter from the Nogai District Chairman, Timir Tenbaiev, a copy of 
which I enclose.

Since the Nogais became my neighbours, speculators of various 
nations and estates have tried to pursue their own advantage, deceiv-
ing the Nogais in numerous ways. They oppress their households and 
incite quarrels and strife among them. Now Berdiansk merchants are 
travelling around the Nogai district, purchasing wheat that has not yet 
been grown at a price of nine rubles per chetvert and making advance 
payments. It is said that one of these merchants has already distributed 
close to 9000 rubles among the Nogais in this manner. Another is dis-
tributing seed wheat on the basis of an agreement that, after the har-
vest, the Nogai will return two chetvert for every one advanced. If the 
wheat crop fails, the recipient must pay twenty rubles for each chetvert 
of seed received.

Such premature sales and agreements keep Nogai households in a 
state of poverty, lead to quarrelling and strife, and ruin their character. 
These agreements can achieve nothing worthwhile. The Nogais gener-
ally still find it difficult to keep their word in a timely manner. Also, 
very few speculators who have entered into such agreements with the
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Nogais to deliver wheat not yet sown are accurately measuring the seed dispersed at the time of delivery. They intend to cheat the Nogais in this way.

It is highly desirable that such purchases by the Nogais be prohibited and that the Nogais be ordered to return money advanced by the merchants. No complaints should be accepted from either side. This would serve as a warning for both the Nogais and the merchants.

Corresponding Member of the Learned Committee, Johann Cornies.

283. Johann Cornies to Daniel Doehring. 22 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/45.

Mr. Doehring in Sarepta,

I received your dear letter of 22 February 1840 on 18 March. Its interesting contents pleased me, especially since you are all reportedly well.

Our winter was a long one as well, but the cold was not particularly severe. Fodder was in short supply in only a few places in the surrounding region. Cattle plague caused great devastation among cattle in Russian and Tatar villages and still continues there. It also raged in seven villages in our district. The others protected themselves by guarding their livestock and blockading their villages in the manner that I have described to you. As a result, the cattle plague was banished from our district by the New Year.

I am very pleased that your sheep and cows are progressing as well as one could wish. Almost a thousand sheep in my herds have already lambed. If you can arrange to have your sheep begin to lamb by 15 February in future, I advise you to do so. The rams are then admitted to the sheep for breeding on 15 September. Warm stabling and good fodder that increases milk production are required for this method. However, early lambs amply make up for the costs. It might be possible for me to visit Sarepta soon again and then I can personally tell you many useful things about improvements in livestock breeding that would be of advantage to you, something I cannot possibly do by letter.

As promised, you will receive the accompanying six small staghorn sumach trees, ten ashes, and eighteen cuttings of mock willow. They should be planted deep into the soil so that only two eyes remain above the earth. If the soil is not moist, these cuttings must be watered from time to time to keep the soil somewhat moist. They take root easily and
grow well. Should the shoots and the roots of the small trees be a little dry by the time they arrive, place them in river water the night before they are to be planted, and then plant them immediately. I hope they all take well.

I am pleased that Mr. Fadeev is now Director of the Bureau of State Domains in your gubernia. Here, it has not yet been possible to decide about rebuilding the cloth factory destroyed by fire.\textsuperscript{11} There is no doubt that it will be rebuilt, but who will do this has not yet been decided. We are expecting my son to return [from W. Prussia] by 20 April. The prices of wheat and various other grains have fallen and we have little trade in grain. However, land prices are rising constantly. There is little demand for sheep, although ten to twelve rubles are still paid for ewes. On the other hand, horses and cows are in demand and prices for them are good. Sericulture is increasing and people are beginning to grow tobacco.

Please give all my good friends there a thousand heartfelt and sincere greetings and tell them of my love. I, my wife, daughter and our whole household are healthy, thank God. We wish you and your dear family the same.

With friendly and sincere greetings from me, my dear wife and daughter to you and your loved ones, I remain, as always, your friend and servant who is willing to be of service, Johann Cornies.

284. Johann Cornies to State Counsellor [unknown].
22 March 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/47v.

Honoured State Counsellor,

I have the honour of sending you not one but two maps of the Molochnaia [German] colonist district in response to your wishes. Here one of these maps costs seventy-five kopeks silver. Using a lead pencil, I found it necessary to mark on the maps: the location of the neighbouring villages, the Tokmak mogila [burial mound], the [German] colonist village Kronsfeldt which is not given on the map but has been in existence for a long time, and the Mennonite village of Landskrone established in the year 1839.

The weather here is warm and very fruitful and the seeding of summer crops started today. May God give his blessing that they will thrive.

\textsuperscript{11} Regarding the Klassen mill fire, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 240, 245, 260, 274, 276, 283, 293, 295, 341, 399, 405, 431, 710.
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With the appropriate esteem and respect, I remain Yr. Honour’s willing servant, Johann Cornies.

285. Johann Cornies to District Office. 26 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/48.

District Office in Halbstadt,
According to the enclosed announcement, three estates are for sale in the Crimea. I humbly request the honourable District Office to publicize this matter in our District. Johann Cornies.

286. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 27 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/48v.

Mr. Steven,
Since I have found a good opportunity to send you the cheese, I also take the liberty to include a little barrel of butter. Please, Mr. State Counsellor, be so kind as to accept it. With our great abundance of butter, such a small quantity is of no consequence for us. Your cows may well not be giving milk yet and it is possible that, before the holidays, a little butter for your kitchen might be welcomed by your most worthy and esteemed wife.

The two cheeses sent with this transport and the one I sent earlier by mail weigh a total of thirty-six funt. At thirty-five kopeks per funt this makes twelve rubles, sixty kopeks. Please apply this amount to my account for alfalfa seed. No freight charges should be paid for the cheese or the butter.

With esteem and devotion, I remain Yr. Honour’s devoted and ready servant, Johann Cornies.

287. District Office to Johann Cornies. 29 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/58.

To esteemed Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,
According to directive No. 1816 of 15 November 1839 from Inspector Pelekh, you are hereby informed that, in future, you should send the land taxes due on your own land directly to the revenue bureau. District Office in Halbstadt, 29 March 1840.
District Deputy Chairman Braun, Secretary D. Hamm.
288. Friedrich Fein to Johann Cornies. 30 March 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/62.  

Treasured Mr. Cornies,

Please do not take offence when I venture to burden you with a request. You would do me a great favour, and someone else as well, if you could lend me five to six thousand rubles for a short time determined by you. I will discuss the applicable interest rate with you. Should you be so kind as to consider my request please inform this messenger of a time when I might drop by. With hope, I have the honour to be your devoted servant, Friedrich Fein.

30 March 1840. Another letter is enclosed [not extant].

289. District Office to Dirk Wiens. 3 April 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/68.

To the manager of Iushanle estate, Dirk Wiens,

You are hereby required by this District Office to give the bearer, for his own needs, the dark brown mare found on the Iushanle estate and to notify the Office accordingly. District Office in Halbstadt, 3 April 1840.

District Deputy Chairman Braun, Secretary Somerfeld

[Marked] The mare died during the winter and, because it was frozen, was buried with its hide.

290. Johann Cornies to Friedrich Fein. 4 April 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/50v.

Most worthy Mr. Fein,

I was away from home when your letter arrived. Tomorrow, Friday, I am at your service and will lend you the desired sum of money. I cannot, however, agree to a repayment term of more than two months.

Your servant commends himself with respect, Johann Cornies.

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12 Friedrich Fein, a German colonist, was one of the largest landowners and wealthiest men in New Russia. Included in his holdings was the 5,900-hectare Elisabethfeld estate near Cornies’ Taschenak estate. See Myeshkov, *Die Schwarzmeerdeutschen*, 75–6.
291. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 4 April 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/49v.

Mr. State Counsellor Steven,

On 3 April I received your esteemed communication of 18 March. Please accept my family’s most obliging thanks for the flower seeds. They have given us much pleasure. If you can, please send us some stock seeds as well.

I gladly accept your offer that we conduct a trial with timothy grass on our land. Please send us as much of this seed as you can spare.

The weather continues to be cold, under a cloudy sky, with snow and north winds yesterday and the day before yesterday. Seeding is proceeding slowly because the soil is very wet. The grass is not sprouting.

With complete esteem and constant devotion, I remain Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

292. David [Wiens] to Johann Cornies. 8 April 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/16.

Well respected Johann Cornies,

In 1837, I took receipt of fifty-one or fifty-two tree gardening books by Khrist and several schoolbooks from the esteemed Jacob Wiebe in Neuteich, Kingdom of Prussia that I delivered to you. You were to pay me the freight charges. This has not yet been done. I delivered the books to you through my brother-in-law Jakob Loewen in Ohrloff. I know that you have received the books because every village already has a copy on hand. Please notify me when I will receive the freight charges owing.

Your servant, David [Wiens].

293. Johann Klassen to Johann Cornies. 10 April 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/20.13

To Chairman Johann Cornies of the Garden Society,
Request from Johann Klassen, Halbstadt.

We cannot obtain concrete information about the factory business from anyone. As a result, the master craftsman, several good cloth

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weavers, and various workers with families here on passes will be leaving after Easter or, at the latest, immediately following the Prischinger market. This development would make it most difficult to begin work in a new factory again.

Please put your faith in my twenty-four years of experience. The factory cannot function without energetic, knowledgeable people, who are more indispensible than the entire capital fund. With such people the factory would soon be earning income. With inexperienced workers, on the other hand, the capital fund could easily be lost. I have learned this lesson from sad experience that determined my previous fate. I do not want to begin a second time with entirely unknowlegeable people because people as useful as the ones I now have cannot be found so easily.

The business can naturally not be started without money, but the community is prepared to help. It stands to lose a developed concern that belonged to an unhappy family that has lost everything. Since the situation can be improved with several thousand rubles, why would these monies not be granted? Why can we not meet to discuss this whole matter together, as I requested at the beginning, and now repeat? My hard-pressed family would, in this way, be served without being plunged into extreme debt. Please put yourself in our position and ease our situation with a friendly discussion and some words of consolation or encouragement.

All the leaders and the greater part of this community would like us to restart the business ourselves. The sooner it can be restarted, the sooner we can eradicate new debts and repay old creditors. We will gladly accept all good advice and submit ourselves to conditions. I believe that the one thing required is a definite plan, and I urgently request definite information. I am tired of such a life and this uncertainty. If we cannot reach a conclusion in this matter, and the workers are let go, the whole matter must be abandoned.

I again commend myself to your kindness and generosity and sign myself with respect as your devoted, Johann Klassen.

294. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 12 April 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/51.

State Counsellor Steven,

Please forgive me, State Counsellor, that in sending you my 1839 report about the Molochaia Mennonite District, I did not add my wish
that the report, if you think this appropriate, should be forwarded to
the esteemed Ministry.

Thank you for the 1839 leaflet about the teaching of sericulture. I
request that twenty to thirty copies, if possible, be ordered for our local
inhabitants, at cost.

With complete esteem and respect, I remain Yr. Honour’s most
devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

295. Johann Cornies to Johann Klassen. 12 April 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/51v.14

Johann Klassen in Halbstadt,
Dear friend,

If all Elders and the largest part of the community want you to restart
your business and if they wish to assist you in this matter then give the
Commission a written declaration stating the date on which you intend
to begin again and also when you will complete the repayment of the
debt you owe your creditors. Naturally, the creditors should then be
called together so that they can be informed of your declaration. If they
agree, a legal document should be drawn up.

However, if they do not agree to all or to some of the details, then
they are required to negotiate with you and you must deal with them
through the Commission. If agreement is reached, then the matter will
be concluded. If no agreement is reached the matter must be submitted
to the Guardianship Committee for a decision without delay. It does
seem to me that things of such importance cannot be regulated in any
simpler way. Otherwise, there could be considerable unpleasantness
or even legal proceedings. A large sum of money is involved in this
matter and there are many interested parties who would prefer to gain
something and not sustain a loss. They also have a right to make their
claims. These aspects should be considered before a decision is made
to agree with an adviser who wishes to gain more than he intends to
lose.

I cannot tell you anything more definite because I am not authorized
to do so. I request that in future you not demand of me that I should
determine something concerning this business.

With a greeting, I remain your friend, Johann Cornies.

14 Ibid.
My dear and most valued Cornies,

It gave me the greatest pleasure to receive your letter of 9 June. It was your first letter to me in Saratov and I was in doubt whether your sentiments towards me might have altered after my transfer from Astrakhan. Believe me my friend, if it depended on me, I would return to New Russia and deal only with your good Mennonites. The administration, however, acts according to its own purposes and not our wishes. It is difficult where 320,000 peasants left to themselves are supposed to develop until they have reached a human condition. Equally, 100,000 souls are to be received and settled, all within a few years. About the same number of German colonists will soon be under my administrative jurisdiction. These are the challenges I face. I will do what I can but God’s will be done. My conscience will comfort me and the Almighty support me.

I much appreciated your interesting description of present conditions among your brethren. I have passed it on to a few well-intentioned settlers. These people really need such instruction. The old sleepy and humdrum way is deeply rooted here and the upshot is two extremes, people who are either very rich or really poor.

In my opinion, it would be best for Martens to travel to Piatigorsk instead of to Carlsbad, but only in spring and not in fall. Give him my greetings and tell him that I heartily wish him a full recovery.

Because of the circumstances mentioned above, it is quite impossible for me to visit you this year. May God grant that this can be accomplished next year. Otherwise I fear my estate near Odessa will fall into complete ruin. The Tsar has given me 1550 desiatinas of land here but I am not thinking of establishing myself in this area. The climate is far too severe for my sick wife and my inclination will always call me back to New Russia, if only for burial. I hear from Petersburg that they will send me your proposal for the establishment of a craftsmen’s colony in Molochnya. I am to review it. Were this really to happen, please send me your honest thoughts on the subject.

Stay well and remain active in support of the well-being of all your brethren. Our heartfelt greetings. A. Fadeev.

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15 Regarding the establishment of Neuhalbstadt, see TSUS, vol. 2, note 10, and docs. 31, 227, 296, 321, 368, 383, 401, 423, 424, 468, 499.
297. Aron Rempel to Johann Cornies. 14 April 1840. 
SAOR 89-1-628/22.

Valued friend,

The accompanying small bag contains the beet-root seeds you asked for. I cannot serve you with more at this time. If you can make do with ordinary beet seeds in the meantime (which can yield as much as the former), I have enough for you. I have also seed for the best sugar-beets in Prussia. These I will send along in future.

With heartfelt greetings, I remain your friend, Aron Rempel.

298. Johann Goertz to Johann Cornies. 16 April 1840. 
SAOR 89-1-628/24.

Esteemed Mr. Cornies,

I send you the enclosed grass seed from Prussia, specifically French grass and Dieseschwingel grass. These varieties are said to be suited to our weather, although the soil must be well cultivated, well fertilized, and friable. The grasses should thrive not only in lowlands but on the high steppe.

I send you obedient greetings and call myself your friend, Johann Goertz, Schardau.

299. Cornelius Wall to Johann Cornies. 21 April 1840. 
SAOR 89-1-628/27.

Most esteemed Mr. Cornies,

Our local Wool Improvement Society should long ago have responded to the Society for the Dissemination of Plantings in regard to plantings of trees along the banks of the Kurushan [stream]. Since this is an important subject, the meeting decided to plant trees along its banks over a period of ten years. Our formal response will be delayed until the next meeting when we can consider the matter again.

I am involved in this work, and am convinced that it can be completed in four, not ten years. I will try to have this matter confirmed at the next meeting and then report the decision to the Society for the Dissemination of Plantings.

Please do not be offended if I raise a further issue. I would be grateful if you could speak to the carters from Veselov again to ensure that when you hire them to transport your wool to Moscow they also agree to
take the community’s wool. It should not exceed 300 puds. Lambing is proceeding with such difficulty that I am almost in despair, but I hope that more shelter should create a more favourable situation in future.

With a friendly greeting, I am your devoted Cornelius Wall.
Community sheepfarm. 21 April 1840.

300. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 1 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/52v.\(^\text{16}\)

His Honour, State Counsellor Steven,

Enclosed, I send the original of a letter from the previously mentioned two Molokans, Andreev and Voroshchev, who are determined to establish a tree nursery in Novovasilievka. Please excuse me for bringing this matter to your attention, but huge obstacles to tree planting exist among the Molokans and others, many of whom would rather follow bad examples than good ones. Another matter is the craftiness with which part of the village community of Novovasilievka gets around administrative orders. The District secretary, Stoialov, is the principal leader of these intrigues and naturally knows who his supporters are.

The above-mentioned Molokans are in great difficulty, not only because they are frustrated in their efforts to lay out an orderly garden, but because a large portion of the community curses them as iconoclasts, and tries, at every opportunity, to abuse them in the most vulgar and degrading manner. If authorities do not address this matter strongly and with great severity, both Molokans will loose heart. Should this happen a desire to establish tree plantations will not soon again see the light of day.

With all esteem, etc. Johann Cornies.

301. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 1 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/53v.

Esteemed Mr. Blueher,

I received your valued communication of 1 April today and hasten to report that I am prepared to make a cash advance for the purchase of 800 puds of wool for you here, as I have in the past. No news about wool prices is available at this time. Sheep breeding has decreased to an astonishing degree and the smaller number of sheep still alive will

\(^{16}\) Regarding the efforts of the Molokans Andreev and Voroshchev to establish a tree nursery, see *TSUS*, vol. 2, docs. 263, 300, 333, 360, 466.
produce little wool. I would have preferred if you had quoted me a price as a guideline, but since this is not the case, I will deal with the matter to your advantage as best I can.

I would like to have a specified account for the silk as soon as possible. The silk producers do not wish to wait and the Society can make the payments as soon as it gets the account. We would also like to know whether our silk should be reeled thicker, or finer, and how it can be improved to achieve the best price possible. Sericulture is being accepted widely, but is still in its infancy. We seek every possible means to establish it on a more secure and enduring footing.

Praise God, we are all quite healthy and well. My son is not yet home and we wait impatiently for his arrival. My business affairs threaten to overwhelm me and I urgently need his help.

Johann Cornies.

302. Johann Cornies to [C. Steven]. 6 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/55v.

His Honour, State Counsellor,

On 3 May I received the ten funt of alfalfa seed you kindly sent me by mail. Many thanks. What is the price?

The continuing cold and wet weather has impeded the seeding of grain. The grass is growing feebly but the planted seeds came up strongly despite the bad weather. Winter grain suffered much and several fields had to be ploughed under. Many fields, however, are in moderately good shape and I hope we will not have to purchase any bread grains. Apricot trees began to blossom weakly on 29 April, but the other trees still lack blossoms. The first warm and quiet days started on May 2 and it is now clear that everything is coming up and we may well have a good year for grain and fruits. Even the grass is shooting up.

I have had to keep to my bed for the last few days, but the illness is fleeting. My son returned from abroad on 2 May. Wool prices have been falling and reports from Moscow are of price drops for wool and silk.

With exceptional esteem etc. Johann Cornies.

303. Johann Cornies to Kaull. 6 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/54v.

Most valued Mr. Kaull,

I have no knowledge about the transaction with Denser and Sommerfeldt and whether the rams purchased from the Anhalt-Cotta flock
came from there or elsewhere. I have no information nor names of people who were supposedly eyewitnesses. By coincidence, when Mr. Tietzman visited from Askanianova, he told me that Sommerfeldt was reputedly a swindler involved in illegal transactions. Generally, however, he is considered to be an upright and truthful German. It was in this sense that I mentioned the matter in the presence of your esteemed brother.

Just as I was writing this letter, a neighbour in the region of the Anhalt-Cotta settlement visited me and explained matters in greater detail. He rejects the idea that Denser and Sommerfeldt purchased 300 rams, perhaps even a few more, from the Anhalt-Cotta administration. He cannot believe that Denser would have added rams from his own herd since he had already sold all his sheep to a nobleman. My informant arrived at the Anhalt-Cotta settlement the day after the sheep had been delivered, but was not present at the actual delivery. I would describe this man, Carl Mathias, as someone who loves the truth. He is a colonist who leases about 10,000 desiatinas of land and manages it well. Having known him for a number of years, I can give you this testimonial.

With respect, your humble servant, Johann Cornies.

304. Johann Cornies to District Office. 12 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/57.

To the District Office in Halbstadt,

Today, 12 May, Luka Maloi, head shepherd for the Chernigovka settlers, reported to me that when he was away from his home area, the shepherds discovered a fresh grave on the crown steppe, hard by the Bakhmut Chumak road and near a small mogila approximately one versta from my khutor in the Arrap. They examined it with a stick and noticed a human face at an approximate depth of three-quarters of an arshin.

305. Johann Cornies to Johann Wiebe. 17 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/57v.

In response to my direction, the merchant, Mr. Johann Wiebe in Neuteich, is requested to pay the bearer of this, Mr. David Schellenberg from here, four hundred Prussian thalers. Mr. Schellenberg has been authorized to receive an inheritance for me in Prussia. When he does so he must transfer the money to my account, interest included.

Johann Cornies.
306. District Office to Johann Cornies. 18 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/106.

To the authorized representative for the survey and settlement of land in the Molochnaia Mennonite District, Honourable Johann Cornies at Ohrloff,

In [notice] No. 721, Inspector Pelekh informed this District Office on 16 May that he had made representations to the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in South Russia regarding the survey of the boundaries of land assigned to the villages Sparrau, Conteniusfeld, Gnadenfeld, Waldheim, and Landskrone. In response, the Committee informed him that the district surveyor cannot be assigned to surveying the present boundaries of the above-mentioned villages. He has been assigned various other surveying projects, which he can hardly complete by autumn. Pelekh was asked to invite the Uezd surveyor to determine the boundaries of the above-mentioned villages. The Inspector therefore turned to Mr. Tushchevskii, requesting him to carry out the mentioned land surveys.

The District Office hereby informs you that these village offices have been sent instructions in this regard. You might notify the District Office as soon as possible about the arrangements you must make in this matter.

District Office at Halbstadt, 18 May 1840.
District Deputy Braun. Answered 19 May 1840.

307. Johann Cornies to District Office. 19 May 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/58v.

In response to communication No. 1588 of 18 May from the District Office, I have the honour to report that I gave up my position as authorized representative for settlement and surveying land in the Molochnaia Mennonite District in 1827 and therefore can no longer accept commissions of this kind.

My advice would be not to hire the Uezd surveyor Mr. Tushchevskii to survey and establish boundaries for the villages in question. His work could well lead to confusion. It would be better if the District Office were to propose that not Tushchveskii but Mr. Orchininov of the Tavrida financial bureau be commissioned to undertake this matter. He is generally well known for accuracy and dependability in such matters, and does not pursue his own interests.
308. Johann Cornies to Lange. 20 May 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/60v.

Mr. Lange in Steinbach,
   Thank you for your kind communication about the written answer from Mr. Keppen. I am pleased that you did not misunderstand his honest sincerity, compassion, and stern sense of justice. You are quite right, he is really an admirable man, whom one must honour, love, and treasure.

   I cannot tell you definitely how soon I will be writing to St. Petersburg. It is not necessary for you to thank Mr. Keppen for his answer now, but do so when you apply to him again for advice in this matter. But you know yourself how far you should follow my advice. Johann Cornies.

309. Johann Cornies to Tietzmann. 31 May 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/61v.

Mr. Tietzmann,
   I have been asked by a gentleman I know in Kharkov Guberniia to inquire if the Askanianova administration has as many as 1,000 ewes for sale and about prices, age, breed, and the time of year when they might be available. I humbly request that you, highly esteemed sir, inform me about this matter with the next mail. Johann Cornies.

310. Nicholaus Schmidt to Johann Cornies. 31 May 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-623/97.

Most esteemed friend,
   Please forgive me that I am still unable to repay you on the date set, Monday. I wanted to visit you myself but was busy shearing sheep this week and it was almost impossible for me to get away. I had also hoped from day-to-day that buyers might appear for the one hundred wethers I have for sale that would immediately have provided me with the money I needed. Once I have sold these wethers, I will bring you the money.

   With heartfelt greetings, I am, with esteem, your loving friend, Nicholaus Schmidt.
311. Johann Cornies to Johann Wiebe. 31 May 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/62.

Esteemed friend Johann Wiebe in Neuteich,

First and foremost, I report the safe return of my son and his companions on 2 May. I thank you and your dear wife for the love and the friendly reception you bestowed upon him in your home. How can I repay you, even if only in some measure? Please, suggest something. I am prepared to be of service at any time.

The fact that my son had to stay in Prussia ten days longer than planned resulted in the heaping up of such a mountain of business that I was overcome with work and anxiety. I was less concerned about my own affairs than about those of the state and the colonization of the Nogais. Since 20 April government communications and Nogai deputations had put me under pressure. Thank God that everything was completed in time for spring. My son is now managing Tashchenak on his own, as he did in the past.

Please let me make another important request. Through the Guardianship Committee for the Colonists in Southern Russia, our Society for the Advancement of Trades agreed to give your name to the Russian Imperial General Consulate in Danzig if it must withdraw money, specifically several thalers, from my account. I humbly request that when the demand is eventually made, you kindly make the advance on my behalf and then report it to me. When I receive the appropriate communication from you, I will most thankfully repay the sum advanced, that cannot yet be determined.

Shearing is done and it would seem that wool prices are quite good. Lambing turned out moderately well. Spring here is very fruitful. The grass and grain are lush and everyone hopes and looks forward to an ample harvest.

With a heartfelt and friendly greeting, I remain, with love, your friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

312. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 31 May 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/64.

Mr. Blueher,

I received the magnifying glass as well as the account and payment for silk. Many thanks. Wool prices have risen to thirty rubles, some lots even sold for thirty-four rubles, fifty kopeks with down payments.
Because many sheep have only light wool this year, only about 100 puds have been bought on your account at twenty-eight rubles to date. Most of the wool here is being sent to the wool market at Romen. Purchasing wool [for you] must proceed quickly, since all wool will be cleared out of this area in a week or two. Johann Cornies.

313. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 7 June 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/64v.17

His Honour, General Inspector for Sericulture, State Counsellor Steven,
   Report from Johann Cornies, Mennonite in the Molochnaia village of Ohrloff.

1. On 10 May 1840, the Melitopol area Domains administration sent Stepan Efimenko, a young peasant from Chernigovka village, to me to learn practical agriculture, and also to teach his future comrades reading and writing. I gave him minor agricultural tasks to do. However, on 17 May he was not at his assigned work and could not be found on the estate. According to several of my workers who had worked with him, Efimenko, on 16 May, had stated that he had been appointed as a teacher and not as a worker, and would therefore leave his position. I reported this incident to the Domains administration on 3 June and the apprentice Efimenko was sent back to me under guard.

In the meantime I have made inquiries among the Chernigovka peasants about Efimenko’s schooling, and learned that Efimenko had attended school for four years. After he left school on 1 July 1838, he was appointed as copyist in the Chernigovka District Office and served there until 6 February 1839. Then he was hired for one year at eighty rubles to apprentice with Tverdokhlebov, an official in Velikii Tokmak. He was released from this job on 6 February 1840 and, in April 1840, assigned to my estate to learn agriculture. Chernigovka peasants could not say anything good about Efimenko’s conduct because he had been involved in all kinds of trouble during the short period he had spent in his father’s house. Accordingly, I sent him back to the Uezd Domain administration with an explanation.

2. With communication No. 3394 of 17 May from the Tavrida Domains administration, the Perekop District administration forwarded the Tatar Pirmambet Dosmainbestov from Mashur-Kobshi village to be

17 Regarding the apprenticeship program, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 186, 195, 211, 313, 317, 326, 328, 334, 340, 352, 393, 403, 443, 467, 472, 485, 571, 603, 701.
taught agriculture. He claimed to be twenty years old. I assigned him small, easy tasks on my estate, but found him lazy, cunning, and without much ability to learn or grasp anything. By not assigning him specific tasks and having him work with a number of people, I had hoped to encourage him to diligence and greater industriousness, but he remained as he was, phlegmatic and dull. Nothing seemed to interest him in the least, other than eating and drinking well. For these reasons, I sent him to the Gross Tokmak District office to be sent on to the Melitopol District administration for State Domains, with an explanation.

3. On 18 May, the Mikhailov Village Office in Melitopol District forwarded Evdokia Dudkina, a fourteen-year-old girl from that village, to be taught agricultural activities for women. She is located on my Iushanle estate.

4. On 20 May, I received Marta Bishkova, a fifteen-year-old peasant girl from the Novoaleksandrovka Village Office, to be taught women’s work in agriculture. She is likewise located on the Iushanle estate.

5. On 21 May, Mr. Kalenichenko, assistant to the District head, sent me two Nogai youths from the local Uezd to be taught agriculture, one Karlanlov from the village of Ormanchi, the other Bigeld Allakaiev from Iurtamgale. Both are approximately twelve years of age and still too weak. I immediately returned them to Mr. Kalenichenko without explanation.

314. Friedrich Fein to Johann Cornies. 10 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-623/71.

Treasured Mr. Cornies,

I am observing the terms of my loan period by sending you 6000 rubles and 130 rubles interest for two months and five days. Please be so kind as to accept the money from my secretary and give him a receipt. I thank you for the credit and commend myself to you as your honest friend, Friedrich Fein.

315. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 12 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/68v.

State Counsellor Steven,

I was not in a position to report earlier on Yr. Honour’s esteemed commission No. 250 of 16 May about the seeding and harvesting of field crops. First, I was ill, but more importantly I was not in possession
of the dates when each variety of grain was seeded and harvested annually, as you requested. I made inquiries among agriculturalists in our villages to see if someone had kept such records, but without results. No one seems to have. I therefore enclose only the records in this regard that I kept myself, which [though] incomplete, are accurate and dependable [not included].

With a humble request that my report not be negatively received, I remain, with complete respect and devotion, Yr. Honour’s devoted Johann Cornies.

316. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 15 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/70v.

Mr. Blueher,

On 11 June I again dispatched sixty-three bales of wool to you in Moscow, on twenty-four carts. I would again ask you to sell this wool on consignment, as before. Enclosed is the original copy of the contract between me and the carters, specifying that the carters will receive 1488 rubles upon satisfactory delivery. Please pay this sum, and note it on my account.

According to the enclosed bill of lading, the carters loaded a total of 734 puds, two funt net as follows: J.C.: Select, eight sacks; First quality, twenty; Second quality, twenty; Third quality, fifteen, for a total of sixty-three sacks.

This wool is clean of fodder. When sheep had clotted fodder in their wool, I had the sheep and their wool removed during shearing. By mistake, the wool from Tashchenak estate was dispatched without the designated markings. I would therefore note that sack numbers thirty-two to sixty-three are the thirty-two sacks from Tashchenak. I hope the buyers will be satisfied with the washing.

As in the past, and with complete confidence, I leave this matter to you to be conducted according to your best judgment. My only request is that, if possible, you send the money in small denominations or in cash.

With friendly greetings and all esteem, I remain your friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

[P.S.] Only about forty puds are still needed to complete your order for wool purchased on your behalf. They may well have been bought already at prices ranging from twenty-seven to thirty-one rubles per pud. Most wool sold at these prices, although a few lots fetched
thirty-four rubles and more and a few twenty-six. A large proportion of our wool now goes to the wool market in Romen where prices over the last few years were better than here. The few wool buyers to come to our area bought hastily. This leads me to doubt that even a few hundred puds of wool could be purchased in our region. I do not know with any precision what the average price for your wool will be, but I think it will yield prices not higher than twenty-eight or twenty-eight-and-a-half [rubles] per pud. It will be loaded and sent to you in Moscow next week. The same, Yr. Servant

317. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 17 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/72. 18

His Honour, the General Inspector for Sericulture, State Counsellor Steven,

Report from Johann Cornies, Mennonite in Ohrloff village.

On 13 June two Nogai apprentices were sent to me to be trained in agriculture with a communication from the assistant to Mr. Kalenichenko, head of the local Uezd. They are Abitalip Dshunugsov, twenty, and Adshigelde Tomigsov, eighteen, though they appear to be several years older. Both Nogais come from the public school in Nogaisk where they had taught for four years. They tell me that they were sent not to work or to be trained in practical agriculture, but to spend two years on my estate perfecting their reading and writing of Russian and to learn tree planting and planning for new Nogai villages. No amount of money will persuade them to do heavy forestry work with hoes and spades. They gave me their written declaration in this regard, of which I enclose the original. I immediately sent both Nogais back to Mr. Kalenichenko with an explanation.

I repeatedly hear that lower officials do not explain to peasants why they should apprentice their children to me. On the basis of Imperial directives, they simply order district offices to select peasant sons and deliver them to me on my estate. Under these circumstances, the most peculiar assumptions have arisen among the peasants. Many believe that apprentices placed in my care will, after several years, be sent abroad and never see their families again. For this reason, orphaned children are selected, good-for-nothings left to themselves at an early

18 Ibid.
age, who have knocked about on their own. It would be highly desir-
able for lower officials to select the apprentices themselves and explain
to the peasants the government’s humane objectives thoroughly and
clearly, especially to the parents. This was done by the other assistant
to Andreevskii, who selected the two girls who are now on my estate.

318. Nikolaus Schmidt to Johann Cornies. 27 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/14.

Most honoured friend Cornies,

Please do not be offended that I take the liberty of sending you money
with my foster son. As you know, we farmers must stay at home during
haying to keep things functioning well.

I hereby send you 25l3 rubles toward the repayment of my debts.

With a heartfelt greeting, I am, with respect and love, your friend
Nikolaus Schmidt.

319. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 28 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/75.

Esteemed Mr. Blueher,

Permit me to make a request. A case with meteorological instruments,
weighing four puds, twenty-five funt, was sent by State Counsellor
Keppen from St. Petersburg to State Counsellor Schroeder, Director of
the Moscow Academy of Commerce, for forwarding to me. Please take
receipt of it and have it forwarded to me with a good carter, if possible.
Kindly pay whatever expenditures are required by State Counsellor
Schroeder and withdraw this amount from my account. Please pass on
the enclosed letter to Mr. Schroeder.

As always, I remain your friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

320. Johann Cornies to State Counsellor Schroeder. 28 June 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/75v.

His Honour, State Counsellor Schroeder in Moscow,

On 5 June State Counsellor Keppen in Petersburg notified me that
he had forwarded a crate of meteorological instruments to you via the
St. Petersburg Transport Bureau. These were to be sent on to me. The
label stated that the crate should be forwarded to Mr. Blueher, head
of the Sarepta Trading Company, whom I have informed accordingly.
I urgently request that if the crate has already been delivered to you, Yr. Honour have it forwarded to Mr. Blueher who will pay the necessary costs.

May I sincerely thank Yr. Honour for taking receipt of the above-mentioned items. I remain respectfully Yr. Honour’s obedient servant, Johann Cornies.

321. Johann Cornies to Andrei M. Fadeev. 2 July 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/77.19

Yr. Honour, Gracious State Counsellor Fadeev,

Please forgive my long neglect in answering your esteemed letter of 14 April 1840. It is my fault entirely, since business matters had kept me away from home for some time and I was ill for about eight days.

I treasure your valued letters. They are a blessing for me, encourage me, give me joy and pleasure, and spur me on to new endeavours. I will never be indifferent to the many benefits I have enjoyed at your hands, nor will I forget them or change my sentiments towards you. May God preserve me from this.

The establishment of a settlement for tradesmen will be of benefit not only for our district and tradesmen, but also crucial for the whole region. We cannot exist without tradesmen. Of the considerable number we already have, most work at their trade for only half the time, live on neighbouring land outside villages, and pursue agriculture for the rest of the year. Their sole aim is to feed themselves and provide fodder for a few head of livestock. They could clearly and more advantageously use their time by working at their trades [full-time], but they cannot do this until a number of them, with a variety of crafts, live together in one settlement.

Such a development would permit agriculturalists to more easily and economically obtain the products of the crafts and trades that they often need urgently in summer. They could also supply the tradesmen with all of the necessities for their work more cheaply and efficiently than if they had to travel around to various villages. For example, when the cloth factory was still functioning [in Halbstadt], villagers would bring an abundance of foodstuffs, fuel, and even livestock fodder to the factory and sell these products at reasonable prices.

19 Regarding the establishment of Neuhalbstadt, see TSUS, vol. 2, note 10, and docs. 31, 227, 296, 321, 368, 383, 401, 423, 424, 468, 499.
Tradesmen gathered in one place can perfect their skills more readily when others of the same trade live nearby. Many advantages both for husbandmen and tradespeople will follow from such a development. Many of the tradesmen are already convinced that if they are to improve their incomes everything essential for their existence should be brought to their doors. Some thirty good tradesmen have already affirmed that they would like to establish themselves in a tradesmen’s village near Halbstadt, should its creation be confirmed.

The site is superb for this purpose and villagers in Halbstadt will suffer no loss as a result, benefiting, in fact, when they are given better land elsewhere. A majority of residents in Halbstadt understand these advantages and have already given their written consent. Only a few tradesmen already in Halbstadt fear that a tradesman’s village might damage their interests by offering better and cheaper craftsmanship from nearby competitors. Since they now have a monopoly in Halbstadt, this fear is natural, and expresses itself in opposition to anything in this regard that might be generally useful.

I hope that authorization for the creation of a tradesmen’s village might not be long delayed, leaving our industrious tradesmen in uncertainty for so long. I humbly request that Yr Honour, State Counsellor, might kindly work at the higher levels [of state authority] to elicit this confirmation, according to your own best insights.

In commending myself to you, I send you my heartfelt wishes. May our two heavenly friends, hope and patience, remain and accomplish your initiatives that are as demanding as they are useful.

Trusting in your further benevolence, I remain, with boundless esteem and sincere respect, Yr Honour’s most devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

[P.S.] The year promises a blessed harvest. All grains are growing so magnificently, even, in places, luxuriously, that no one can remember a better year. Grass, too, has already grown into hay. Our trees, however, are bearing little fruit. Trades and crafts develop with uninterrupted industry, improving visibly as the months pass. Because of improvements we have introduced, field cultivation, too, is advancing rapidly. Our plantations of trees are developing at a moderate pace, as planned. Sericulture, with an estimated production of some three puds of silk this year, is being more widely accepted. Ideas to improve horse and cattle breeding are under discussion and improvements have already begun. The introduction of oil-producing plants such as oil radish started this year and its success is not to be doubted if overseas markets develop as
expected. This oil plant may well provide the Molochnaia with a gold mine fully as bountiful as Spanish sheep-breeding.

Desperately ill, Martens left for Piatigorsk on 2 May. May God give him improved health. Otherwise, nothing much has changed. The same, Johann Cornies.

322. Johann Regier to Johann Cornies. 3 July 1840. SAOR 89-1-628/1.

Most esteemed friend, Johann Cornies,

I have prepared a presentation to the General Consul in Danzig on behalf of the five foreigners who still need consent forms. The latter, including a listing of names, are attached in draft form. Please examine them, and after improving inadequate expressions, return them to me for my signature and forwarding. With esteem and heartfelt greetings, I am your honest friend, Johann Regier.

323. Johann Cornies to Johann Wiebe (Neuteich, W. Prussia). 5 July 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/81.20

Esteemed Friend,

This year I received several letters from Prussian brethren lamenting their distressing situation. According to royal directives, their rights on entailed estates will end by 1845. All such owners will then be required to subject themselves to military conscription or vacate these estates. As a result, I have made a respectful submission to the High Imperial Russian Ministry for State Domains, through State Counsellor Keppen, Section Head in the Third Department, asking if it might be possible to make crown lands available to Mennonites who live on entailed estates in West Prussia. This would be done on conditions that would permit them to settle in the Russian Empire with all of the rights and privileges legally available.

In response to my petition, State Counsellor Keppen has submitted a memorandum to His Excellency, the Minister for State Domains, Count Kiselev, that contains the accompanying resolution. The Minister thinks it possible to settle more Mennonites in Russia with the selfsame legal

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20 Regarding the proposed immigration of Prussian Mennonites, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 266, 323, 324, 361, 392, 422, 447.
rights and privileges that we presently enjoy. I have been authorized to conduct further correspondence in regard to this matter.

If our brethren in faith wish to move to Russia and their church leaders are prepared to work together in support of what is beneficial for their community members, a deputation of two or three enlightened and efficient men, representing those desiring to emigrate, should proceed directly to St. Petersburg. There they should discuss the applicable terms of settlement with State Counsellor Keppen in person and conclude an appropriate agreement with the government.

Having given you this information, dear friend, I would ask you to inform the honourable church leaders in West Prussia as soon as possible that, if they wish to further the well-being of our brethren in faith, they must act quickly and not allow this auspicious moment to pass. The time when such advantageous arrangements would be granted Prussian Mennonites by the Russian state administration may not come soon again, if ever.

[PS.] 6 July 1840. To the same,

I think it necessary to explain the following to any such deputation to St. Petersburg that I hope succeeds in achieving the intended emigration from Prussia. The deputation should not begin its discussions on behalf of people of a poorer class. This would be detrimental to their cause, and be determinedly rejected. The submission requesting immigration must specify the exact number of families making application, as can be seen in the Minister’s explanation. Moreover, it would be preferable to petition on behalf of families who do not live on their own land in Prussia, but on leased lands. I have made an appeal only for these people. We must remember that the Russian Imperial government is sensitive about receiving foreigners and especially about granting them privileges. In this matter it proceeds carefully and wisely in order that state interests not be endangered.

If a deputation arrives in St. Petersburg it must be careful to take up lodgings in a respectable inn, for example in the hostels of Weimar, Berlin, London, and others, but under no circumstances in those of Riga, Reval, and others that do not have the best reputation. In Petersburg the first question is, where have you taken your lodgings?

State Counsellor Keppen is not now at home. He is travelling around gubernias in the Russian interior but will be back in Petersburg during the first days of September. The Minister [Kiselev] has travelled abroad and is only expected back in October. The deputation should not arrive in Petersburg before mid-September. Inquiries about Mr. Keppen’s
place of residence can be made at the Imperial Academy of Sciences or also in the Third Department of the Ministry of State Domains.

I know Mr. Keppen as an honest, upright German and I can recommend him, in good conscience, to anyone who loves truth. He will certainly act quickly and effectively to do everything he can possibly do for the deputies. He is an intelligent man who loves the Mennonites and is highly respected within the government.

With the next mail, I will write to Mr. Keppen in the guberniia city of Vladimir explaining that I have notified my Prussian brethren in faith about the Minister’s resolution regarding the purpose of immigration to Russia. I will also inform him that a deputation of Prussian Mennonites will presumably find its way to St. Petersburg by the end of September and appear before him with a petition requesting that he assist the deputation as an intermediary.

I request, cherished friend, that you send me a report as quickly as possible detailing the views on this subject of the church leadership. What are its reactions and does it intend to act? Only in this way can I make the appropriate reports to St. Petersburg.

The last call favouring Prussian Mennonites has been made by the Imperial Russian government. I have done my best and can therefore be content, regardless of whether action is taken or not on a matter that would benefit many thousands of my brethren. Whether this venture comes to fruition or not, the future will prove its timeliness.

To make it possible for our poorer brethren to immigrate to Russia as well, the deputies would also apply on their behalf explaining that a settlement founded only by the wealthy could not exist well on its own but needs tradespeople of all types, servants, maids, and day-labourers. Such reasons will, without doubt, warrant special consideration and be accepted.

324. Johann Cornies to Peter Keppen. 10 July 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/87.21

His Honour, State Counsellor Keppen,

After receiving your esteemed and agreeable communication of 21 May 1840 regarding the settlement of additional Mennonites, I immediately wrote to my brethren in faith in Prussia, enclosing the Minister’s

21 Ibid. Regarding Cornies’ role in collecting environmental data, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 265, 279, 324, 423, 499, 513, 555, 556, 574, 576.
resolution, translated into German. If they were inclined to immigrate
to Russia, I encouraged them to send their own deputation to St. Peters-
burg, and apply directly to you, State Counsellor, with their petition. In
my opinion such an important subject could be concluded more quickly
and satisfactorily if pursued in this manner, rather than through letters
back and forth.

Meanwhile, my Prussian brethren have written that their dire situ-
ation had led them to petition the king, requesting an extension of
the time designated for the abolition of their hereditary rights on the
estates where Mennonites live.\textsuperscript{22} In response, a gracious resolution has
been handed down postponing the abolition of their hereditary rights
to estates where they presently live for a further twenty years, specifi-
cally to 1865. Meanwhile, I am sure that when they learn of the Russian
Imperial government’s inclination to permit the settlement of addi-
tional Mennonites in Russia on specific terms, they would not let this
favourable moment for themselves and their descendants pass. They
would still send a deputation to St. Petersburg in fall to request their
settlement in Russia and to conclude appropriate terms of settlement.

With the most complete esteem, I remain Yr. Honour’s humble ser-
vant, Johann Cornies.

[P.S.] I request your forgiveness, Mr. State Counsellor, that I have
found it necessary to delay my answers to your esteemed and welcome
letters for so long. My business often requires my absence from home,
there are many distractions that intrude on my time, and I cannot
always do what I should do and what gives me pleasure. This spring,
for instance, I was occupied in settling the Nogais [in new villages] and
in duties in various of our villages.

[The Nogai village of] Akkuia is laid out in a regular fashion on site
and a large number of hearth-sites have been surrounded by a ditch.
Steps can now be taken to construct houses. First-Kahash, Kisildinoglu,
and Burkut are planned and will be doing their construction in a regu-
lar fashion next spring. Edinokhta also submitted a petition express-
ing its wish to found a regularly planned settlement next year. Russian
peasants are showing a lively interest in these developments, especially
Semenovka, which has intentions of building a section [of its village]
in a regular fashion before the end of summer. A sketch was made of
this location, and it will be planned on site next week. People make

\textsuperscript{22} Regarding the proposed immigration of Prussian Mennonites, see \textit{TSUS}, vol. 2, docs.
266, 323, 324, 361, 392, 422, 447.
progress and encourage one another. Baron Rosen makes frequent visits and his benevolent exhortations to the peasants have contributed a great deal in this area.

Spring arrived late again this year. Flowers in gardens, fields, and on fruit trees blossomed fourteen days later than usual. There will be little fruit this year. The grain simply shot up and recurring rains promoted rapid growth, but the sudden onset of extreme heat that rose to twenty-nine degrees from 26 to 29 June will undoubtedly hinder the grain, which will ripen too soon. The grass has grown moderately well this year, but many other plants failed to germinate because of the late spring. The weather, however, was favourable for sericulture, and its acceptance [among our Mennonites] is increasing. It is expected that about three puds of reeled silk will be produced this year. Shearing was light and sheep in many flocks died as also happened in the last two years. At present, cattle are affected by hoof-and-mouth disease and this has seriously affected the production of butter.

On 17 June, His Excellency, Acting State Counsellor Bradke, visited us.23 I had the pleasant honour of attending upon him in my home where I presented him with a mounted map of the settlements. The Acting State Counsellor spent two days in our villages inspecting the many noteworthy features of progress in land cultivation and other branches of industry in evidence everywhere. Mr. Witte, an admirable agronomist who accompanied His Excellency, has a thorough knowledge of practical agriculture.24 He greatly obliged me with his systematic information and explanations of developments in higher levels of field cultivation.

Immediately after receiving your letter, I wrote to my correspondent in Moscow, asking him to take delivery from State Counsellor Schroeder of the meteorological instruments you kindly sent him. I also wrote a few lines to the State Counsellor himself, requesting that he release these objects to my correspondent, Mr. Blueher, manager of the Sarepta Trading Company.

23 Bradke was the Director of the Third Section of the Ministry of State Domains.
24 Probably Iulii Witte, an employee of the ministry who was an expert in New Russian agricultural practices. Witte married Fadeev’s daughter Helena; their son, Sergei Witte, went on to fame as Russia’s Minister of Finance. See Iulii Witte’s “O Sel’skom khosiaistve v Khersonskoi, Tavricheskoi i Ekaterinoslavskoi guberniakh,” ZhMVD (1834): 58–75, 101–22.
If they are still available, I will not fail to send ten to fifteen copies of maps of the German settlements to you in St. Petersburg and will also send you a sketch of the steppe after mowing.

Many thanks, State Counsellor, for the highly interesting leaflets you kindly sent me.

The teacher Wilhelm Lange came to my house to discuss the establishment of a printing press with State Counsellor Bradke. The State Counsellor clearly explained the difficulties involved in such a development and said that a press could not exist here, even if there were sufficient work for it, which the State Counsellor seriously doubted.

The intention of founding our own printery has therefore been abandoned.25

Please permit me to ask you that the thermometer being sent be adjusted to accurately measure the temperature of water in wells. I will repay your costs in St. Petersburg with thanks.

325. Johann Cornies to [Johann Regier]. 12 July 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/92v.

Most esteemed friend,

Please forgive me for the long delay in sending back the draft to the General Consulate that you asked me to look over. I can think of no useful observations to add to what it already states. Since there are also settlements and villages called Neuteich in Prussia, it occurs to me that one should add [to the address] J.W. in Neuteich, West Prussia, to prevent possible errors.

With heartfelt greetings, I remain your true friend, Johann Cornies.

326. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 12 July 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/91.26

Report to State Counsellor Steven,
Notification No. 3317 from the Domains Administration for the Melitopol District, responding to No. 4777 from the Tavrida Domains

25 In the original draft, this sentence replaces the following, which was crossed out in the document: “I believe these dear people will now be quiet and not talk about establishing something that is not really necessary and would provide nothing useful.”

26 Regarding the apprenticeship program, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 186, 195, 211, 313, 317, 326, 328, 334, 340, 352, 393, 403, 443, 467, 472, 485, 571, 603, 701.
Bureau, asks me to explain why the apprentice Permambet Dosm proved himself unqualified to learn practical agriculture. What abilities should such apprentices possess? According to the terms agreed upon with me to accept apprentices to learn agricultural practices on my estate (specifically the second section), I did not consider it necessary to give the Domains Bureau an explanation as to why Permambet is unqualified, etc. But according to this particular section, I was duty bound to report to you, Yr. Honour, why I consider Permambet unqualified and sent him away. I did this most obediently on 7 June 1840. Enclosed is my explanation to the Melitopol District Domains Administration.

I also enclose copies of the communication from the Tavrida Domains Bureau to the Melitopol District Administration and of the notification sent to me from the latter by the local District director.

Johann Cornies.

SAOR 89-1-647/93.

Dear friend,

The reason for this letter is not simply to respond to your request for a report regarding the discussions you asked me, David Schroeder, and Johann Neufeld to hold concerning the cancellation of the sale of your mill.

Mainly I wanted to offer a word of consolation in regard to your illness. Although I deeply regret that your illness shows no signs of improvement, I must honestly advise you not to change your doctors as you have frequently done. This may arouse mistrust and aggravate your illness even more. Dear friend, even if your convalescence is not progressing as quickly as you would like, try to be patient, be consistent and stay with your original intention to seek recovery at the baths. You must pay attention only to the doctor you trust, not to everyone you meet. In this way you will definitely improve, even if your recovery is not complete. I find it necessary to tell you this faithfully and openly as your sympathetic friend.

Your wishes with regard to the sale of the mill cannot be carried out. Schellenberg will not give it back voluntarily and no one can force him to. It would also be a great injustice. Try to dismiss the mill from your thoughts, and keep in mind that a good conscience is the best resting place for you.
Your whole family seems to be healthy and well. With heartfelt greetings, I again wish you perseverance at the health baths and commend you to God who is the best doctor, comfort, and support for all of us.

I remain as always, with honest love, your sympathetic friend, Johann Cornies.

328. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 24 July 1840.

His Honour, General Inspector of Sericulture, State Counsellor Steven,

Report from Johann Cornies, Mennonite in Ohrloff village,

With communication No. 3149 of 27 June from the Melitopol District Domains Administration, Dschanaidin, a nineteen-year-old Tatar from Kipchak village in Evpatoria District was sent to learn agricultural practices with me. When he entered my service, he was found to be healthy, strong, and capable of carrying out all agricultural jobs assigned. He was also possessed of intellectual abilities that allowed him to understand all branches of work on my estate.

To my great sorrow, on 14 July this capable apprentice fell ill with a brain inflammation. We called a doctor, but the illness developed into typhus and he died on 20 July.

The deceased’s possessions and clothes are listed below, piece by piece. I enclose the list with the request that you let me know where I should send his effects. Please, Yr. Honour, have the enclosed document in the Tatar language passed on to the deceased’s surviving relatives. It would inform them about his death, about his burial according to Muslim practices, and help them to find peace.

Without any communication, the District Chairman of Schnuet Dshukel District in Melitopol Uezd sent me, on July 10, the Nogai Kutlale Keldaliev from First Edinokhta to learn agricultural practices. His age is not known. He is healthy and physically strong so that he will be able to carry out all jobs on my estate. He possesses a healthy, natural intelligence and good will.

Johann Cornies.

[P.S.] Inventory of possessions left by the Kipchak Tatar Dschanaidin, deceased 20 July 1840, who was learning agricultural practices with me: 1 pair of new, cloth trousers; 1 striped, cotton jacket; 1 calico vest;
1 comb; 2 pairs of linen trousers; 2 linen shirts; 1 calico shirt; 1 new black fur cap; 1 nankeen coat; 1 calico pillowcase; 1 linen bed covering; 1 pair of old boots; 1 woollen scarf; 1 handkerchief and fifteen silver rubles.

329. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 24 July 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/96.

State Counsellor Steven,

Yr. Honour was most kind in sending me the articles about activities of the Hohenheimer Akkerbauschule [Hohenheim School for Field Cultivation] at Stuttgart. I have only read them hurriedly but can easily understand why such an institution would be of great value to the peasantry and a similar one, with modifications, would be useful here as well. I have had copies of the articles made and am returning the originals with my most obliging thanks.

Grain harvesting will be completed this week. Since the founding of the Molochnaia villages, it has never before been necessary to complete both haying and grain harvesting as quickly as this year. All of the work, from the onset of grass mowing until the last sheaf of grain was cut, was completed within five weeks. The persistent drought, with temperatures of twenty-eight to thirty degrees, speeded the ripening of grain. All varieties demanded the mower’s attention at the same time and many will have correspondingly small kernels. Fortunately a large number of workers from the interior of Russia found their way to this area, making it unnecessary to leave the grain until it was overripe. It could be cut and brought in without damage. Our harvest turned out much better than last year’s and we anticipate tenfold returns, fifteenfold in some places, except for rye, which mostly failed.

Flax shot up sparse and long-stemmed, and promises a good return. Oil radish was cultivated more widely for the first time and likewise promises rich returns. The crop of potatoes will be small, since the great heat wilted their foliage. Sufficient hay was mowed to satisfy our needs and its quality is better than last year. Grain prices here are as follows: wheat, fourteen rubles, oats and barley, eight rubles, and rye, twelve to thirteen rubles per chetvert. All mills here have mill-stones that produce bagged flour but this season everyone is overloaded with agricultural work and has no time to travel away from home, even when the prospects of a good profit are high.
People are healthy and have endured our great drought and heat well. The exceptions are cases of diarrhoea here and there, but no deaths. Foot-and-mouth disease broke out among the cattle in various places. Prices for cows are high, from eighty to a hundred and twenty rubles apiece, with similar prices for horses. There is, however, no demand for ewes. Fat-tailed geldings are selling for eight rubles. Washed wool sold here for twenty-six to thirty rubles, with several lots going as high as thirty-four rubles. The crafts and trades continue their lively growth. Construction of better, more attractive houses has visibly improved the beauty of our villages. In a word, the progress of our local civilization lacks nothing except a capable administrator who will lead it in accordance with the customs and usages of the Mennonites, and maintain the good things that we have already begun.

I owe you a debt of gratitude, esteemed State Counsellor, and would gladly repay you if only you could let me know, how and when.

With the most complete esteem and constant devotion, I endeavour to remain Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

SAOR 89-1-647/98.

Honoured Baron,

I have increased the plantations and fruit-tree nurseries that I have established myself to provide for the needs of our Mennonite villages and can even supply a substantial number of improved fruit trees to persons not resident in our villages. When I founded my plantation and increased my nurseries, I was especially concerned that I should not confine myself to the needs of the Mennonite community. I wished to make my improved fruit trees useful to the whole region. I thought, in particular, about making well-raised and improved fruit trees available to peasants in Melitopol and Alesk uezds.

My humble request is that Yr. Honour kindly publicize wherever appropriate that, on 1 October 1840, my estate of Iushanle in Melitopol District will make available from 50,000 to 60,000 two- to three-year-old, improved and well-grown fruit trees, with tall, healthy, and vigorous growth. Most are apple, pear, plum, and cherry trees at the following prices: two- and three-year apple and pear trees at thirteen kopeks each, plum trees (pruno domestica) at ten kopeks, and Vladimir cherries at five silver kopeks. I have twenty-nine varieties of apple trees and twenty-six varieties of pear trees, all of exceptionally choice quality.
for household and table use, including summer, autumn, and winter fruit.

Anticipating that my request will be granted, I remain with most excellent esteem, Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

331. Johann Cornies to F. Rosen. 26 July 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/99.

Ali Pasha
This is the name of a Nogai, forty-seven years old, who lives in the village of Edinokhta, Melitopol District, Tavrida Guberniia. In the eighteenth year of his life, he along with three other Nogai youths was chosen by Count Demaison, commanding officer at that time, to accustom himself to domestic life at the Count’s court in Nogaisk and to assist in the establishment of a fruit orchard. At the same time, Ali Pasha wanted to learn something about tree planting himself. The Count encouraged Ali Pasha in these interests. Ali Pasha was strong, vigorous, and possessed of natural abilities that enabled him to comprehend and patiently apply every operation according to the Count’s wishes.

When the Nogai people were settled in villages after their nomadic existence, the Count gave Ali Pasha the opportunity to lay out a very small orchard at his father’s house, and from time to time released him to work on it. Due to the scrupulous care that Ali Pasha lavished on his orchard, his trees grew quickly, to the great vexation of the Nogais. The Count always placed a high value in the plantation laid out by Ali Pasha and visited it several times a year. Duc de Richelieu, Civilian Governor of Tavrida at that time, honoured Ali Pasha’s orchard with a visit and because of his exemplary plantation, a special presentation released him in perpetuity from obligations to furnish transport and other local compulsory services.

As long as Count Demaison protected Ali Pasha’s plantation, the Nogais did not dare to destroy his trees. When the Count obtained his discharge as commanding officer over the Nogais in 1822, however, Ali Pasha already had a larger area for a new fruit orchard enclosed by a ditch, had made the necessary preparations for tree planting, and had sown a considerable quantity of seeds. The Nogais became so enraged at these innovations, which they feared would eventually force all of them into similarly toilsome work, that about 200 persons who had gathered at a funeral decided on the spot to destroy Ali Pasha’s tree plantations completely. Young and old, they appeared around Ali Pasha’s new tree plantation and called Ali Pasha to appear before them from the village where he
lived. There they cursed him for his innovations and abruptly destroyed everything he had created through his diligence and toil. They left only one small orchard beside his house undamaged in order to test whether the provisional commanding officer would place the same high value on Ali Pasha’s tree planting [as Count Demaison]. When they discovered that the provisional officer of the Nogais had little interest in plantations, they secretly also destroyed the small orchard beside Ali Pasha’s house even though its trees were still bearing fruit. Ali Pasha launched a court case with the Melitopol District Court, demanding compensation for the outrage done him. The decision was finally rendered a full seventeen years later. It ordered the Nogais to pay Ali Pasha 1000 rubles compensation. Graciously, Ali Pasha accepted only 700 rubles.

Until 1834, Ali Pasha was without an orchard. As much as he wanted to establish one, he was afraid that the provisional commanding officer, who had no interest in the laying out of tree plantations among the Nogais, would not protect him from similar outrages. Then the position of the commanding officer was abolished and the Nogais were made subject directly to the lower courts. Kolosov, judge at the time, protected all arrangements of benefit to the Nogais. Encouraged anew, Ali Pasha obtained a place for an orchard at the east end of the village of Edinokhta. There he first built a house and then, in 1834, arranged for the planting of fruit trees and proposed the establishment of tree nurseries to raise large quantities of fruit as well as forest trees. For three years he has annually sold not inconsiderable quantities of wild and improved fruit and forest trees from his nurseries to nearby estate owners and peasants.

Poor himself, and without male children, he had to do all the work on his property and in his orchard himself. He also accepted fifty ewes on local terms, for half the profits, cared for them in an exemplary fashion, and through exacting and economically careful management of other branches of agriculture, soon attained a position of moderate wealth.

His orchard plantation can serve as an example not only for the Nogais, but also for others. Deserving of special notice are the consistency of the tree plantings, the establishment of nurseries with several thousand growing and thriving fruit and forest trees, the cleanliness and order with which this small plantation adorns the treeless region, and the fact that all this was established and is worked by a Nogai.

As our humane Imperial government is pleased to promote everything that is good for the subjects of the empire, it also rewards those who persevere and show themselves to be directly and indirectly useful to the general good. Ali Pasha’s example in tree planting in the past
year, 1839, was specifically recognized by the government, which did not leave him unrewarded. His chest is now adorned with a silver medal inscribed with the words “For zeal.” He wears it on a special ribbon around his neck. This he has earned and is worthy of our respect.

Ali Pasha continues to plan the improvement and extension of his agricultural arrangements. He wishes to increase his income and to be useful to his fellow Nogais through his example. This year he raised more than 3000 silkworms, which he fed to the chrysalis stage with the foliage of the mulberry trees he had himself planted in his orchard. As evidence, I have the honour to send along one of these to Yr. Honour. He has about 3000 mulberry trees and has decided not to sell any more from his plantation until he has planted a whole desiatina with mulberry trees. He can then pursue sericulture on a large scale.

The story of Ali Pasha’s orchard plantation can serve as an example of how quickly it is possible to accomplish the noble striving of our benevolent, high government that does what it can to select suitable and secure measures that increase the happiness of the country and the wealth of its subjects. If peasants take note of the fact that appointed administrators have the promotion of their happiness and well-being at heart and are assured that they value the good things they have initiated, the state can reach the highest degree of perfection. Johann Cornies.

SAOR 89-1-647/102v.

Most Honoured Baron,

In the accompanying small case, marked A.T., there are 3100 individual cocoons from Ali Pasha, sorted into two varieties, yellow and white, of which the latter form the larger part and are packed in such a way that they can be forwarded by mail without damage. Johann Cornies.

SAOR 89-1-647/102v. 28

Honoured Baron,

In accordance with your wishes, I designed a plan for the projected fruit tree plantation on a piece of land designated by the Molokan

28 Regarding the efforts of the Molokans Andreev and Voroshchev to establish a tree nursery, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 263, 300, 333, 360, 466.
village of Novovasilievka for a plantation enclosed by a ditch. According to verbal information from these Molokans, this piece of land is 155 fathoms wide and long. I prepared the accompanying plan accordingly, dividing it into nine main sections. These sections would be too large to be cleaned and worked most effectively and so I divided each one into four parts, as can be seen on the plan. I found it to be more suitable to plant the apple and pear trees in their own particular rows, and the stone fruit between them, as the green, yellow, and black dots show in section No. 1. According to this plan, twenty-five apple and twenty-five pear trees and fifty stone fruit trees (cherry, plum, and apricot trees) would then be planted. In total, 3600 fruit trees will be required to complete the plantation, and according to these rules, half must be fruit with kernels and the other half stone fruit, planted at the specified distance of every five faden for each kernel fruit tree, with a tree bearing stone fruit between them.

It seems to me that planting would proceed much better and more quickly if the whole community arranged to have a specific number of families or souls assigned to plant each small section. They could divide the rows of trees again as their particular property for planting. This would enable them to vie with one another in planting their particular portion quickly. They would also be animated by the hope of eating fruit from trees they had planted themselves.

With complete esteem and respect, I am honoured to be Yr. Honour’s willing servant, Johann Cornies.

334. Johann Cornies to Baron Rosen. 8 [August] 1840.

SAOR 89-1-647/105.29

Report to Baron Rosen,

I have the honour of obediently submitting the enclosed special report to Yr. Honour about ten individuals sent to me this summer by the Domains administrations in Melitopol, Evpatoria, and Perikop uezds to learn practical agriculture on my estates. I decided that six of these ten individuals were not suited to learn agricultural practices on my estates and sent them back. One person died on my estate and the three I considered as suitable for this purpose are still there.

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29 This report regarding agricultural apprentices in part repeats several previous letters to Rosen. Regarding the apprenticeship program, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 186, 195, 211, 313, 317, 326, 328, 334, 340, 352, 393, 403, 443, 467, 472, 485, 571, 603, 701.
Part One: Correspondence, 1836–1842

Individuals sent to me to learn practical agriculture from Melitopol, Evpatoria, and Perekop uezds of Tavrida guberniia:

1. On 10 May 1840, the Melitopol District Domains administration sent me the peasant youth Stepan Efimenko from Chernigovka village. It was also planned that he would teach reading and writing to his future comrades. On 17 May, Efimenko could not be found at the jobs assigned to him or anywhere else on my estate. Several of my employees declared that Efimenko told them he had been sent here not as a worker but as a teacher and would leave for this reason. I immediately reported this incident to the district administration. It returned the runaway under guard to my estate on 3 July. In the meantime, I made inquiries about Efimenko’s education among the peasants in Chernigovka and learned that he had indeed attended school for four years, leaving on 1 July 1838. He had then served as copyist in the Chernigovka office until 6 February 1839, when he was hired as assistant to the priest in Gross Tokmak for a year at eighty rubles. He completed his service 6 February 1840. In April 1840, the community decided that he should learn practical agriculture under my supervision. They could give little further evidence about his conduct, except that the short time Efimenko had lived in his parental house was spent in idleness. I sent him back to the Melitopol District Domains administration with the explanation that Stepan Efimenko showed no desire to learn practical agriculture and was therefore not suited for the position.

2. On 17 May, with communication No. 3394, the Perekop District Domain administration forwarded the orphaned Tatar Permandet Dohmambetov from Mashut Kobshii village to me. Twenty years of age, according to his own evidence, he was lazy, deceitful, and showed hardly any ability to comprehend or to learn anything. He was interested in nothing further than eating well and sleeping. Therefore, I found him unsuitable to learn practical agriculture and, with this explanation, sent him back to the Melitopol District Domains administration for further dispatch.

3. On 18 May, the Mikhailov village administration in Melitopol District forwarded the orphaned peasant girl, Evdokia Didkin, fourteen years of age, to learn women’s agricultural jobs. At this date, she seems suitable for the purpose and is still on my Iushanle estate.

4. On 20 May, the Novoaleksandrovka village administration forwarded the orphaned peasant girl Marfa Bichkov, fifteen years of age, to learn women’s agricultural tasks. She has also shown herself to be suitable and is presently on my Iushanle estate.
5. On 21 May, the assistant to the local district supervisor, Mr. Kalenichenko sent two boys to learn practical agriculture. Nigara Kartabov is from Ormanhy village and Bigelde Alakaiev from Furтомгale. Both boys of about twelve years of age are physically weak. I immediately sent them back to Mr. Kalenichenko without explanation.

6. On 13 June, Mr. Kalenichenko tried to leave two Nogais, Abitalip Dchonahrov and Adchigelde Tomishrov, with me to learn practical agriculture. According to their appearance, the former was twenty years old, the latter eighteen, but both were probably several years older. They came from the Nogai elementary school in Nogaisk where they had been for four years. They told me that they had been sent to my estate not to work and learn practical agriculture but to perfect their ability to read and write the Russian language. At the same time, they were to learn tree planting and planning for new Nogai villages over a period of two years. They refused to do rough peasant work with hoes and spades for any money, declaring this in writing. I sent the original declaration to His Honour, State Counsellor Steven, and immediately sent both of these Nogais back to Mr. Kalenichenko, explaining that I could not accept them on such conditions.

7. On 30 June, with communication No. 3749, the Melitopol District Domains administration forwarded Dschanaidin, a nineteen-year-old Tatar from the village of Kipchak, Evpatoria District. When he entered my establishment, this apprentice was healthy, physically strong, and capable of carrying out all agricultural tasks. He possessed sufficient mental abilities to understand all branches of my establishment. To my great sorrow, however, this capable apprentice fell ill with an inflammation of the brain on 14 July. A doctor was called, but the illness developed into typhus and he died on 20 July.

8. On 10 July, the Melitopol District forwarded Kutlale Keldaliev, a Nogai from the village of First Edinokhta, to learn practical agriculture. Presumably eighteen years old, healthy, lively, and physically strong, he is able to carry out all the work done on my estates. He also possesses good will and a healthy, natural intelligence.

335. Ruekel to Johann Cornies. 14 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/33.

My dear benefactor, Mr. Cornies,

Although I am unable to repay my debt and cannot visit you personally, I must at least reassure you again that, with God's help, I will
repay you honourably and with thanks, sooner or later. Please continue to show me your kind patience and spare me any warnings, as you have done until now. Making you wait such a long time is painful for me, but I console myself that you are not suffering any need because of this situation. This I feel is my great good fortune. In all candour I must report that I have, until now, had to satisfy other creditors. Had I not incurred other debts than yours when I built my house, I would have been free long ago. You will not believe how heavily this burdens me. Thank God that I will soon have repaid all of them except for the debts to Mr. Neufeld, your brother-in-law.

Last spring I almost sold my house. I was offered 1180 rubles cash for it. The community had given its agreement and two pails of wine had already been drunk on the deal. However, my wife and children persuaded me to back out of the deal and I have decided to stay here.

As to the progress of my much-discussed matter and to the two petitions I sent to the Tsar, I know as little about this at the moment as Mehmed-Ally in Egypt or Abdul Kadder in Africa might. It is remarkable that a poor man can be so oppressed and mistreated here. It is too difficult for him to obtain his legal rights and he cannot undertake legal proceedings against his oppressors and bloodsuckers.

In closing, it is my wish that you and your loved ones might be in the best of health when you receive this communication and that you might not blame me for being unthankful in my frugal circumstances. With God’s grace, I hope to rectify everything and should I not live so long, my descendants will do so.

Greetings and remembrance from your honest debtor, Ruekel.

336. R. Regehr to Johann Cornies. 15 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/35.

Mr. Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,

I hereby request that you kindly remit, with my son, a loan of 2000 rubles for one or two months, at which time I will repay you. I would like to have silver, if possible, and I will repay you in silver. I would have come over myself, but am too unwell to drive. With friendly greetings, I am your devoted R. Regehr.
337. Johann Cornies to Bradke. 17 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/108v.

[Mr.] Bradke, Yr. Excellency, Gracious Sir,

When I enjoyed the honour of showing you my respect personally in my house in Ohrloff, you graciously granted me your trust by having Mr. Esipov prepare exact sketches and depictions of the dwellings and agricultural buildings usually found here on peasant yards in Mennonite villages. In accordance with this esteemed commission, I hereby send a roll in waxed linen marked Litt: E. It contains:

1. A floor plan of a dwelling house in the Mennonite villages, the scale in Rhineland feet, exactly depicting its features as well as the livestock barn and granary.
2. A side view of a dwelling and a livestock barn, and a gable view of the granary.
3. A gable view of the dwelling and side views of the livestock barn.
4. A cross section of the dwelling house and livestock barn.
5. A lengthwise cross-section of the granary and profile of the livestock barn.

I promised Mr. Esipov that I would send these sketches to Yr. Excellency’s address in St. Petersburg by 1 August at the latest, but was not able to do so earlier. In light of Yr. Excellency’s well-know kindness, I beg you to forgive the delay. It was not in my power to finish pressing matters of business that caused me to postpone this work for longer than I had expected. Though deeply pained, I was unable to meet your wishes according to expectations, but I flatter myself with the hope that I may do so in future. I assure Yr. Excellency, that it would be a great honour for me to be included in your well-disposed orders and commissions in future.

With these honest intentions, and with esteem and devotion, I have the honour to sign myself, Yr. Excellency’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

338. Johann Peters to Johann Cornies. 17 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/43.

Valued friend,

When I visited you last Saturday you said that on Tuesday you would inquire whether there was a possibility of renting the two pieces of land
we discussed. You said I should remind you of this promise in writing lest you forget. This I now urgently request. With greetings, I sign myself as your friend, Johann Peters.

Gnadenheim, 17 August 1840.

[Note (possibly dated 22 August 1840, but not in journal) in Johann Cornies’ hand seems to say:] The district head promised me he would make inquiries about the pieces of land in question. He told me one had already been rented by [indecipherable] and would only be available next year.

339. Johann Matthies to Johann Cornies. 19 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/45.

Valued Mr. Cornies,

We received your communication. Please forgive me that we were unable to make the payment at the agreed upon time. Trade is now so bad that we have no income in prospect. Please be patient. Father is not at home. When he gets home he will repay you as soon as possible.

I remain your faithful servant, Johann Matthies

340. Johann Cornies to Fedor Rosen. 19 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/110v. 30

His Honour, Baron Rosen,

Yesterday Sergei Shumkov, son of a peasant from the village of Timashovskii in our area, gave me a written petition at my home in Ohrloff. I enclose the original. He asks me to accept him as an apprentice to learn practical agriculture. He seems suitable and his conduct is said to be beyond reproach. He has parents, helps them to work their holding, and, were he to be accepted [as an apprentice], has enough schooling to be able to teach reading and writing to his comrades. He may, however, be slated for selection in the next recruitment. This leads me to think that in the event that I should accept Shumakov as an apprentice and should he later prove to be unsuitable (forcing me to send him away), his community might be burdened with an obligation to provide another recruit to fulfil their obligation. Would the community still be able to send him into the military as a recruit?

30 Regarding the apprenticeship program, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 186, 195, 211, 313, 317, 326, 328, 334, 340, 352, 393, 403, 443, 467, 472, 485, 571, 603, 701.
I would therefore most humbly request that Yr. Honour give me a
definite reply as soon as possible. Can Sergei Shumakov, a peasant’s
son, be accepted among the apprentices assigned to me without caus-
ing a disadvantage to his community?
With highest esteem, I remain Yr. Honour’s humble servant,
Johann Cornies.

341. District Office to Johann Cornies. 20 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/47.31

To esteemed Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,
Since the creditors of Mennonite cloth manufacturer Johann Klas-
sen in Halbstadt are being summoned to the District Office at 9 a.m.
on 31 August to reach an agreement, you are also requested to appear
at the District Office at the same time. District Office in Halbstadt,
20 August 1840.
District Deputy Braun, District Office Secretary Fast.

342. Johann Cornies to Fedor Rosen. 22 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/112v.

Baron Rosen (Official),
On 15 August, the Ulkonbeskeklie District Office dispatched the
Nogai Diusenbe Tulesgov, eighteen years of age, to learn practical agri-
culture. I found him to be suitable for this purpose and he is now work-
ing on my Iushanle estate. With the addition of this apprentice, I now
have two Nogai apprentices and two Russian girls learning agriculture
with me. I hereby inform Yr. Honour accordingly.
A notice with this information also sent to State Counsellor Steven.
(Private):
Yr. Honour will forgive me if I most respectfully request several off-
prints of the description of Ali Pasha, should it be found suitable for
publication. I urgently endeavour to remain Yr. Honour’s honest ser-
vant, Johann Cornies.

31 Regarding the Klassen mill fire, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 240, 245,
260, 274, 276, 283, 293, 295, 341, 399, 405, 431, 710.
343. Johann Cornies to Esipov. 22 August 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/113.

Mr. Esipov,

Trusting in the kind sympathies you showed me when I paid you my respects during your visit to my house in June 1840, I make this humble presentation.

An issue of the general agricultural newspaper published by A. Rueder, Halle, in 1835 carried an article about the Tavrida colony of Askanianova that was meant to refute and correct several reports about this area that had appeared earlier in the newspaper.

Our local Society, established and confirmed by the authorities to advance and disseminate forest-tree, orchard, sericulture, and viticulture, and to support agriculture, finds several points in the article that are of great concern to Molochnaia Mennonites. I would request that my remarks be published in order that truth might be established in this matter. Kindly, if my remarks are considered appropriate for printing, send me a few off-prints of my submission.

With a request that you accept the assurances of my commitment to you. I remain, with due esteem, Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

344. Corrections to “To Establish the Truth” [Zur Steuer der Wahrheit]. 22 August 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/114v.

No. 37 of the “General Agricultural Newspaper” for 1835, published by F.A. Rueder in Halle, contains an article about the Anhalt-Koethen colony of Askanianova, situated in Tavrida gubernia. No. 49 of the same year contains a second article by Financial Privy Counsellor A. Behr under the title “Refutation and Correction.”

We recognize that other well-informed neighbouring landowners may offer further corrections. We direct our attention only to a few points that affect us in particular.

A statement on page 438 of the above-mentioned publication (Litt. e) describes the soil and climate as inimical to the growth of mulberry trees and hence of silkworms. It concludes that it would be an absurd undertaking, without purpose, to attempt to raise mulberry trees under these conditions.

We can respond with the following information: The Molochnaia Mennonite District lies thirty-six verstas from the Askanianova settlement. We share the same climate and soil with it and have ventured to grow
mulberry trees and raise silkworms. At present, this district has 66,322 individual mulberry trees already suitable for sericulture. The existence of these trees and the silk harvested (about four puds this year) and sold at an attractive price over a number of years provides sufficient evidence that the soil and climate here are not resistant to the cultivation of mulberry trees or silkworms and that this undertaking is therefore hardly absurd or without purpose. The Privy Counsellor for Finance is of course correct in saying that “mulberry trees are essential to the raising of silkworms.” If individuals make the effort to prepare the soil and plant mulberry seedlings as required, the results will indeed be rewarding.

With respect to tree planting, the article on pages 438 and 439 states that willows and acacia are the only trees that thrive [in this area] and on page 440 that the cultivation of fruit trees and the development of orchards remain a matter of luxury for the distant future. This is not as has been proven in the Molochnaia. The wooded areas established here nine years ago contain not only willows and acacias, but also 3,474 oaks, twenty-eight common beeches, 5,863 birches, 531 alders, 28,932 ash trees, 24,048 maples, 27,412 elms, 5,536 lindens, 6,437 poplars, 1,531 wild olive trees, forty-six hornbeam trees, 2,381 service trees, 272 hawthorns, 109 chestnuts, and 1,224 pines (pinus Silvestrius) etc. All varieties are growing and thriving.

Further evidence is provided by some of the large, beautiful fruit orchards in individual villages in our district, where a total of 110,145 trees are in place. There are an additional 78,369 improved two- and three-year-old trees in nurseries and 281,364 in seed nurseries. In addition to providing abundant fruit for household use in the year 1839, for example, they produced a cash income of 5804 rubles, 98 kopeks for fruit and 3796 rubles, 14 kopeks for trees.

To the statement on page 440 that “the settlers [on the Molochnaia] have a beautiful, irrigating river, and fruitful soil,” we would, on the basis of personal observations, refute these rumours as follows. The river is not really beautiful and the water is not sufficiently abundant to ensure that field agriculture and the growing of forest and fruit trees, etc., will thrive better here than in the Askanianova settlement. It is not true that Askanianova must lag behind because we have more fruitful soil. We know the soil in Askanianova well and are absolutely convinced that if it were cultivated diligently, it could be as useful for the branches of economy mentioned above as is the soil on the Molochnaia steppes.

The Financial Privy Counsellor ends his statement by saying that even in our area [of the Molochnaia] “we almost starved because of drought in the summers of 1833 and 1834.” In the interests of truth I
would challenge the Financial Counsellor to identify even one family in a Mennonite village on the Molochnaia that suffered hunger during those years of crop failure, let alone “almost starved.” We thank God that after those dry summers, He permitted a succession of fruitful and blessed years to follow. But even if He had withheld His blessing longer, it would have been hard to find evidence of hunger, and even less of starvation in our midst. Our high authorities can provide irrefutable evidence that during those times of dearth, Mennonites, with their own means, strongly supported members of their communities in their distress as well as numberless Nogais, etc.

From the Society. August, 1840.

345. District Office to Johann Cornies. 28 August 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/51.

To the esteemed Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,

The demand of Police Inspector Tverdokhlebov in Bolshoi Tokmak, requires you to pay nine rubles sixty-two kopeks silver to the District Office by the 31 August for land taxes on the land you own, covering the year 1840. This money must be forwarded to the Melitopol District Taxation Office in order that it may be reported to the Police Inspector.

District Office in Halbstadt, 28 August 1840. District Deputy Braun.

346. Johann Cornies to District Office. 1 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/118.

District Office in Halbstadt,

In response to a summons, nine rubles sixty-two kopeks silver are enclosed as taxes on the land occupied [by me] on the Tashchenak, with a request that I be notified of its receipt.

347. Phillip Wiebe to [David] Epp, Khortitsa. 1 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/119v.

Seventy-nine rubles and thirty and a half kopeks have been received for the sale of books of Holy Scripture. The surplus of sixty-two and a half kopeks appears as a credit.

You will receive the accompanying crate marked D.E. containing seven Bibles for seven silver rubles, seventy kopeks, and nine Bibles for nine silver rubles, for a total of fifty-eight rubles, forty-five kopeks,
plus ten New Testaments for twenty rubles and eighteen Bible stories at 105 kopeks for eighteen rubles, ninety kopeks. The final total is ninety-seven rubles, thirty-five kopeks.

It was not possible to meet your wishes completely with respect to the Bibles, since the supply in the local depot was not sufficient, as is the case with New Testaments for one ruble eighty, of which there are only three or four left. They are preferred here as they are there. Mr. Cornies also requests that you kindly take the eighteen copies of Bible stories on consignment. Please notify my employer, who is cashier and depot director, about the receipt of the crate.

With complete esteem, your servant Phillip Wiebe.

348. Abram Wiebe to Johann Cornies. 4 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/58.

Esteemed Friend,

I again urgently need 10,000 rubles for one to two months to enable me to purchase wheat quickly. If possible, I request that you kindly forward it to me with the carrier of this letter, Jacob Sudermann. I really would like to have half of it in gold, half in Banco, but would ask that it not be sent in large bills.

With heartfelt greetings, I am your friend Abram Wiebe.

349. Peter Schmidt to Johann Cornies. 4 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/59.

Dear friend Cornies,

When I got home today, friend Sudermann told me that he was going to receive money for A. Wiebe from you. If you are able, I would request a loan of 5,000 to 6,000 rubles for an extended period of time. Should this not be possible, I would request that you notify me with this messenger.

With friendly greetings, I remain your friend, Peter Schmidt.

350. Johann Cornies to Isbrand Riesen. 6 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/121v.

To the Acting Manager of our establishment in Tashchenak, Isbrand Riesen,

In transferring the management of our Tashchenak estate to you, I and my son appoint you as its actual manager. We do so with the confidence that, as a conscientious man, you will zealously endeavour to
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advance our interests, and improve the estate entrusted to you, making all of its sections and branches more productive. You should maintain its peace, order, and decorum and adorn it with cleanliness.

With our confidence we affectionately remain your benevolent Johann Cornies and Son.

351. Isbrand Riesen to [Johann Cornies]. 10 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-645/61.

Esteemed Sir,

The well in the cattle barn measures twenty-three feet from its bottom to the surface of the covering floor.

If you can, please send 500 rubles soon, instead of 200. Almost all funds here have been spent because two annual employees have been paid and there were some chumak payments to be made as well, etc.\(^{32}\) It must be expected that more chumak payments will be necessary over the next few days. I cannot send Mambet for the money because he is needed to maintain the peace and to prevent disorder.

I enclose the account for the mill shaft.
Your servant Riesen, Molochnaia Estate

352. Johann Cornies to Fedor Rosen. 16 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/123.\(^{33}\)

Baron Rosen,

On 10 September, the Iugasilamgale District Office in this Uezd sent Salzakai Shamenov to learn agriculture from me. He is eighteen years old, son of a Nogai in the village Kondshale. I kept him on my Iushanle estate as being suitable for this purpose. I now have three young men and two girls here for this purpose.

353. District Office to Johann Cornies. 18 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/65.

To esteemed Johann Cornies, Ohrloff,

You are hereby requested to give Jacob Tesmann from Landskrone, bearer of this note, the brown mare you found on your Iushanle estate

\(^{32}\) The chumaks were transporting salt – see SAOR 89-1-645, 18 August 1840.
\(^{33}\) Regarding the apprenticeship program, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 186, 195, 211, 313, 317, 326, 328, 334, 340, 352, 393, 403, 443, 467, 472, 485, 571, 603, 701.
on 31 August 1840. Kindly notify the District Office of this matter as soon as possible.
Halbstadt, 18 September 1840.
District Deputy Toews, District Office Secretary Sommerfeldt.

354. Johann Cornies to District Office. 19 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/123.

District Office at Halbstadt,
The three-year-old brown mare branded with the mark C on the right hind haunch, which was reported to you on 4 September, ran away from my herd of horses during the night of 18 to 19 September. No one knows where it went.

355. Johann Cornies to Peter Neufeld and Abraham Isaac.
20 September 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/123v.

To the esteemed school supervisors of the Ohrloff Society School, Peter Neufeld in Ohrloff and Abraham Isaac in Tiege,

Yesterday, 19 September, I travelled to Gnadenfeld on behalf of the Ohrloff School Society to request that the village community there release schoolteacher Franz [from his contract] in order that he might fulfill the vacant schoolteacher’s position in the Ohrloff Society School. In response to this request, the village community of Gnadenfeld declared that it could not release its schoolteacher Franz before the end of his contract as their children would then have no one to teach them. This confirms that schoolteacher Franz cannot be hired by the Ohrloff Society School before 1 January 1841 and he cannot assume his position in Ohrloff before 1 April. To the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any other well-qualified teacher suitable for this position.

It is likely that a teacher will not be found for the school until 1 April. It is therefore necessary to do an accounting for the school. I lack the authority to direct and make decisions in a matter in which the schoolhouse and its side buildings could be occupied and used to the advantage of the Society. Since money is required to repair the buildings, members of the Society must discuss this subject and decide it jointly. It should be noted that contributions from Society members for the support of the school and the salary of the teacher have stopped flowing into the Society’s treasury.

I have been told that Teacher Heese wishes to give children private lessons on his own, using the school building for this purpose and also
as his own dwelling this winter. In my opinion, he should be required to apply in writing to the Society members, declaring the conditions under which he would be inclined to use the school buildings for his purposes. A speedy decision on this matter is needed. I most urgently request that you, most honourable supervisors, make arrangements to this end.

Respectfully, I remain your willing business manager, Johann Cornies.

356. Cornelius Wienss to Johann Cornies. 22 September 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/71.

Treasured friend Johann Cornies,

A little Russian girl, Vierka Selensheka from Mikhailovka, about twelve years old, has lived with us since January 1836. Almost frozen in the severe cold that winter, wearing poor clothing and covered with vermin, she became ill and could no longer go from door-to-door begging for her sustenance. Moved by Christian compassion, we have kept the poor child with us for almost five years, caring for her and training her. She is so well adjusted to us and our care that she does not want to leave. If the authorities were to allow her to stay, we would like to keep her in our service and continue to train her.

I am approaching you with a request that, if you are prepared to show us your love, you might obtain an appropriate document from the authorities to permit this.

I remain, your devoted Cornelius Wienss.

357. Bradke to Johann Cornies. October 1840.
SAOR 89-1-658/18.34

Since His Highness, the Minister of State Domains, has asked for my views regarding the introduction of potato cultivation among state...

34 Motivated by an empire-wide crop failure in 1839, in 1840 Nicholas I initiated a program to diversify food crops by promoting potato cultivation. Cornies was enlisted to oversee the program in the Molochnaia, and it is a recurring topic throughout the correspondence from this point forward. Regarding the potato program, see Staples, Cross-Cultural Encounters, 146–7, and TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 357, 374–5, 377, 380, 394, 397, 417, 420, 425, 438–9, 456–7, 478, 480–1, 488, 494, 511, 514, 518, 525, 529, 540, 549–50, 559, 564, 566–8, 583, 616, 630, 635, 637, 639, 650, 665, 667, 699.
peasants, I would like to obtain information about the way in which this branch of field cultivation is being pursued in the Molochnaia villages. The best answers to the following numbered questions are most likely to come from you as an experienced agronomist, familiar with your local conditions.

1. On average, how many potatoes are seeded per soul, and what quantity of potatoes are needed annually to nourish a family of four souls?

2. On average, how much land is needed per soul to pursue potato cultivation? Are potatoes grown in gardens, on fields now assigned to each inhabitant, or on a community field?

3. Are potatoes used for purposes other than human consumption? What methods are used to ensure that potatoes have a market?

4. Do the settlers manure the land for potato cultivation?

5. Have inhabitants in neighbouring areas followed the example of your settlers by growing potatoes? Did they buy potatoes from you in years of crop failure?

I am urgently in need of this information and would ask you to send it to me as soon as possible. Director von Bradke, Section Head.

358. Johann Cornies to District Office. 2 October 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/128.

To the esteemed Molochnaia Mennonite District Office in Halbstadt,

According to his signed note of 21 February 1840, Heinrich Quiring, Conteniusfeld fullholder, borrowed sixty-nine rubles, seventy-five kopeks from me until 9 May 1840. I reminded him several times of his obligation to settle his debt, but Quiring failed to respond. When I was away on 24 September, Quiring appeared in response to my latest claim and left behind one ruble to reduce the mounting interest. He said that he could not repay the principal.

For this reason, I would ask the esteemed District Office to demand that Heinrich Quiring repay the sum of money owing, sixty-nine rubles, seventy-five kopeks before long, even if it is paid to the District Office. I would not ask for any interest. The silver ruble in question can be deducted from the principal. Johann Cornies.
359. Johann Cornies to C. Steven. 5 October 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/128v.

State Counsellor Steven,

I was unable to find a good opportunity to send along the cheeses to Simferopol that you had ordered. Jacob Reimer, the Mennonite we both know, plans to leave here shortly and I will send the cheeses along with him.

If it should not occasion too much effort on your part, I would ask that you obtain two chetverik of red beech seeds for seeding by our local inhabitants. Please pass them on to Jacob Reimer for transport to this area. He will be authorized to settle the charges incurred. I would in addition be most thankful if you would kindly purchase one pud alfalfa seed for me at some later time.

Thank God that it rained heavily yesterday and today after a long period of drought. The soil is now moist to a depth of one foot and more. At the moment, we are having heavy thunder and lightning and rain is pouring down in torrents. Winter rye can now be sown. Wheat prices have fallen, with sixteen rubles paid for a chetvert of Hirka, fifteen for Arnautka. Grapes appeared in my vineyard at Tashchenak this year and they ripened completely. There were only a few, about twenty funt, but they gave me great pleasure.

With constant respect, I endeavour to remain Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, J. Cornies.

360. Johann Cornies to [Fedor F. Rosen]. 7 October 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/129v.35

Mr. Baron,

On 1 October, responding to a request from the Nogai village community of Koesoeldan Oglu, I travelled to the location intended for their new village to determine the construction site for each family as drawn by lot. My route led me through the Molokan village of Novo-vasilievka, where I was agreeably and pleasantly surprised to meet two Molokans from this village, Larion Voroshchev and Mikhail Andreev, who will each gain ownership of two desiatinas of land on which they intend to establish fruit orchards provided that they plant fruit trees

35 Regarding the efforts of the Molokans Andreev and Voroshchev to establish a tree nursery, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 263, 300, 333, 360, 466.
according to established rules and regulations and keep them growing well. Despite the great drought and the dry soil, they have ploughed their entire parcel of land to a depth of eight vershok and encircled it with a ditch. More than 300 trenches of the required size are ready for tree planting. It gives me much pleasure to see that these good and industrious people are staunchly and actively endeavouring to fulfil their promises with great perseverance and without sparing any cost. Nor do they pay attention to the insults of their envious neighbours. To give these two Molokans even greater courage and zeal in pursuing these beginnings, it would have a positive effect if you, honoured Baron, were graciously to take a route through Novovasilievka during your first tour of this district and enter the home of even one of the men. They would treasure this honour highly and it would encourage them to increase their activity even more.

In contrast, the village community’s plantation is still unworked except for a narrow strip of land ploughed in the centre of the plantation. No further preparations are visible and I am informed that few other measures, if any, have been taken to prepare for tree planting. It is my opinion that Yr. Honour could stimulate activity in this regard were you to make inquiries before beginning your journey about the extent to which this village community has prepared its plantation for tree planting.

With the most genuine respect and devotion, I remain Yr. Honour’s devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

361. Johann Cornies to Johann Wiebe (Neuteich, W. Prussia)  
7 October 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/134v.36

Mr. Johann Wiebe in Neuteich [W. Prussia],

Very dear and treasured friend,

Your two communications of 28 August (new style), both with the same message, arrived in good order on 22 September and I hasten to reply.

Important as it is to do what I can to further the happiness of my brethren in faith in Prussia, I still cannot petition the high Ministry about the five points submitted to me. They do not correspond in regard to the matters raised by the Minister himself:

36 Regarding the proposed immigration of Prussian Mennonites, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 266, 323, 324, 361, 392, 422, 447.
1. You write that a large number of families cannot be expected to announce their emigration at one time. In accordance with the Minister’s resolution, a large number of immigrants is not desired. On the contrary, only a few families, perhaps a hundred or even fewer are wanted. We cannot count on a policy of unlimited immigration. This has never occurred since German colonists began immigrating to Russia after 1765. For each immigration, deputies appeared in St. Petersburg or in Russian embassies to bargain with the government about the number of families [to be considered], the land required for this number, and other conditions.

2. The government realized that, by assigning large districts of land to foreign settlers in advance, it was not reaching its objective of increasing population quickly and establishing agricultural trades in an exemplary, well-managed way. It therefore issued an ukaz in 1834 stating that future allocations [of land] could only be made in small parcels required by settlers for a house, garden, and enough land to maintain and support their families. Differences in climatic regions and the state of agricultural knowledge in these regions were also to be taken into account in allocating land. This ukaz has stimulated the settlement of poor German settlers.

3. To the best of my knowledge, no areas of land exist here [in New Russia] that would be suitable for useful model settlements. Land located in this region has already been allocated for the purposes of the government. Though it has pleased the Minister not to reveal where the Mennonite settlement under discussion might be, I believe it would be fairly close to us, perhaps in the Crimea. As you know, the Mennonite Privilegium extends over only the three [southern] guberniias [of Ekaterinoslav, Tavrida, and Kherson]. Otherwise, a request would be needed for a new Privilegium from the Tsar or an ukaz made at the highest level that would put Mennonites settled in other guberniias under the New Russian Privilegium. I doubt this will happen.

4. Although the Minister would like me to conduct correspondence about the matters under discussion, I think it would be more to the point if a number of our Prussian brethren in faith who wish to emigrate would send their own deputies directly to St. Petersburg. They could more easily discuss and decide all outstanding questions there.

Abundant experience has taught me that very few foreigners, especially people of the land, have any knowledge of the Russian imperial
government. The result can be much writing back and forth but without any guarantee that the desired objectives can be reached. This is another reason why I propose that a deputation go to St. Petersburg. I offer to conduct the correspondence regarding this matter myself.

We have nothing to fear from a humane Prussian government that would not object if some of its subjects without citizenship obligations to fulfill (such as military service) were to send a deputation to Russia and if that deputation were to reach agreement on terms to which the Prussia government could not object. The situation would be otherwise if a group of excitable [Prussian] Mennonites were to seek emigration without valid reasons, knowledge of Russia, or any likelihood of making progress once there. To rule out anything of this sort authorities might well place obstacles in the path of enthusiasts desirous of emigration.

I am sorry, dear friend, that I cannot do what you suggest. I can only repeat what I said to you earlier. No one should be offended if I, as a good citizen, observe the law to the letter. That law insists that “absolutely no methods of enticement be used to draw foreigners into the country.”

In every way and situation and with the warmest feelings, I continue to be your faithful, unchanging friend, Johann Cornies.

Most of the land between the Volga and the Akhtuba belongs to the privileged area granted to the Khoshut Kalmyk prince Tiumen. These rich grassy lowlands are fruitful specifically because of yearly flooding. I do not know whether there are any crownlands like this left. In the great [Kabardai] in the Caucasus, beside the mountain Beshtau and the colony Karass, about 6,000 uninhabited desiatinas of the most fruitful land areas on earth were still available a few years ago. Forests there are plentiful, as is brook and well water. There is an abundance of grass and grain and the region is so romantic that one can perhaps find its equal only in Italy. However, the neighbouring wild mountain inhabitants make it too unsafe for settlement. Also, there is still scattered empty crown land in the Crimea, about which I know very little. Still, even if land in this area is not terribly fruitful and productive, it is close to harbour cities where villagers can quickly turn produce into silver if they know how to manage their affairs properly.

I am sure that you have read newspaper reports that all still uncultivated and unsettled crown lands in European Russia are to
be surveyed, divided, and settled as quickly as possible. Jews from Livonia and Courland flock into Kherson guberniia, where they are directed to crown lands for settlement. Ukrainians have received permission to immigrate to the Abasis coast beside the Anaga. A decision has been made to settle no fewer than 500 retired military families among the defeated Circassians in the Caucasus. Also, all families with fewer than eight desiatinas of land for each revision soul may emigrate from guberniias in the Russian interior. There is much activity and movement everywhere, and people are drawing one another from their ancestral hearths.

The Director of the Department of State Domains’ Bureau in Saratov Guberniia wrote to me that the government had decided to settle 200,000 families of Russian peasants in his guberniia in two years’ time. The number to be settled in Orenburg guberniia is equally large, or even larger. The stream of Russian emigrants to the Egerlik steppes in the Caucasus guberniias this side of Stavropol has been unbelievable in the last five or six years, and this continues. Since last year, a large number of Russian peasants from the Russian interior [have] found their way into our district, where they [have] sought permission to stay. Many of them have already been registered.

When I consider the measures that the government is taking to populate uninhabited land in the Empire and how much immigration has increased the population of our surrounding Russian villages in the past two years (where there had previously been an excess of land), I doubt that there will be any uninhabited crown lands left in this guberniia in ten years’ time.

I write to make it absolutely clear that the Russian Imperial administration is not concerned about drawing people from abroad simply to settle empty crown lands. It has enough native-born people to do this. It is principally concerned about good agriculturalists and industrious people who can serve as models, examples for Russian peasants, and, in this way, make themselves useful to the country. The old is disappearing. Everything is new. [Potential] immigrants need to know this, especially those sent to St. Petersburg as deputies.

Let me repeat what I have said. If Prussian Mennonite communities want permission for numbers of them to immigrate into Russia, even if there are only thirty or forty families at the outset, it would still be worthwhile to send deputies directly to St. Petersburg first. I doubt permission can be obtained in any other way. Such an important matter needs to be discussed thoroughly. Moreover, the land the
government proposes must then be inspected by the deputies on site, to see whether the location is advantageous and the soil of a quality that would allow settlers to keep promises made to the government and discharge the obligations they have assumed. Such an approach could accomplish something useful and might also benefit our Prussian brethren in future.

Because this matter has already been broached in Petersburg, the deputies would not have to stay there for two years as did those for Khortitsa [several decades earlier], but only two to three weeks. Please examine everything, accept the best of it and kindly report your decision to me.

Adieu, Johann Cornies.

362. Klaas Wiens to Johann Cornies. 11 October 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/113.37

Valued Friend Cornies,

After returning home safely, I discussed with my son Peter the construction of a mill in Tambovka. He would like to undertake this project. He is of the opinion that the mill should be built with stone and brick since wood is not durable if it gets wet continuously and then dries out. Should Peter have a long life, he might well have to build the mill twice. If only he could accomplish his goal! Actually the mill could be built if the Doukhobors were to transport the stones cheaply. We have decided on stone, even though it seems that bricks, made nearby, would be easier to get.

I cannot remain here any longer as my contract has ended, nor do I want to, but I have one more request. Can I definitely count on this project? I know you are burdened with business matters, but I do not know anyone else to whom I can turn. There is probably no one else to give me the information I need. I firmly hope that you will not be annoyed with me. I will also try at all times to keep you from being ashamed of me.

I send you my esteem, love and good wishes, Klaas Wiens.
Kremenchuk, 11 October 1840. Received 19 November 1840.

37 Regarding the project to build a mill in the Doukhobor village of Tambovka, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 362, 381, 386, 395.
SAOR 89-1-647/141.

In response to your request, you are hereby notified that the deceased Peter Neufeld of Blumenort borrowed 400 rubles from me on 11 September 1840 for four months at one-half percent to pursue his handicraft. Ohrloff, Johann Cornies.

364. J. Martens to Agricultural Society. 19 October 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-910/8. 38

Report from Member J. Martens.

In response to the Society’s inquiry No. 55 of 14 October about seeding and harvesting Whittington wheat, it soon became obvious that Whittington is not a summer but a winter wheat and should be seeded in fall. Despite dry summer months, at least half of this wheat growing on a raised loamy ridge, is still green. Under present highly fruitful weather conditions, one might express hope for a productive harvest next year, should there be no unfavourable dry winter frosts. At present the wheat is nice and green, with strong plants.

Society Member J. Martens.

365. Johann Cornies to Governor Muromtsev. 20 October 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/141v.

Governor Muromtsev, Yr. Excellency, Gracious Sir,

I was unable to respond to Yr. Excellency’s honoured communication of 9 August because I was waiting for forest-tree seeds to ripen. I can still send only two varieties, namely ash and white maple seeds. I will be happy to send you additional varieties of forest-tree seeds later this fall.

These two varieties must be seeded immediately on well-prepared soil in one vershok deep trenches made across the bed. A one-quarter arshin layer of foliage, or even more, should then be laid over them. In March, the foliage must be cleared off carefully and the maples should come up vigorously. The ash will only come up during the second year, although plants often make their appearance during the first year. Johann Cornies.

38 Regarding Whittington wheat, see docs. 252, 364, 371, 378, 508.
366. Johann Cornies to Fedor F. Rosen. 20 October 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/142v.

Baron v. Rosen,

Favouring me with special kindness and confidence, your letter not only obligates me to report the following, but puts the matter close to my heart. On 8 October, commissioned by the local district chief, I made the first arrangements to settle thirty-one peasant families from Semenovka village on their land where they will found a regular village as follows. I ordered all peasants from Semenovka who wished to resettle to appear at their place of settlement where construction sites had already been marked off by ploughed furrows following the [official] rules and regulations. I explained to them our humane government’s intentions to develop their village in a regular pattern as had their neighbours, the Mennonites, with all attendant advantages. They should also try to set up their fullholdings similarly, to the degree possible.

I told them that I had been commissioned to advise them and, if they were of one mind, serve them as an adviser and leader during the construction and arrangement of their orderly fullholdings. They would also, with punctual obedience, have to follow regulations I might find necessary for the firm and enduring foundation of their well-being. Once they had unanimously agreed to this, I had the first rules necessary for the founding of an orderly settlement given to them. These they accepted, signing and confirming their complete and obvious satisfaction with handshakes. I sent the original document to the district chief and have the honour of sending Yr. Honour a copy. 39

After this, construction sites were distributed by lot, and the name Fedorovka conferred upon the village. It was further decided that deputies be sent to the district administration in Orekhov. Commissioned by the community, they were to request that the district administration kindly make presentations to the appropriate authorities to exempt the settlers of Fedorovka as inhabitants of a regular village from all taxes and compulsory services during the three consecutive years necessary to construct and arrange their fullholdings.

With this beginning, it is desirable that these settlers be supported, encouraged, protected, and effectively led. I remain convinced that this

39 This document is not extant.
village will blossom in a few years’ time and become a model of order and diligence to the area. Johann Cornies.

367. Johann Cornies to Fedor F. Rosen. 20 October 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/144.

Baron Rosen,

A few weeks ago, the Nogai Ali Pasha brought me samples of two kinds of tobacco he had grown himself. Since I found its cultivation and preparation to be sound, I decided to submit samples of these two kinds of tobacco to you, for your judgment. I therefore have the honour of sending these samples to Yr. Honour in waxed linen marked A.P.

Johann Cornies.

368. Andrei M. Fadeev to Johann Cornies. 22 October 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-661/3.

Best of friends,

Do not be displeased that I have delayed answering your letter for so long. The responsibilities of my service and my frequent travels over considerable distances are really the only causes. I think of your villages every time I arrive in any village on my journeys. This happens frequently, since there are a hundred and two villages in this guberniia. Each time I feel regret that there are no Mennonites here, and no local Cornies. There are rich people living in large houses but they make no effort and have no zeal to advance agriculture and plantations in a way that would improve the well-being of the surrounding population. Many villages deteriorate before my eyes. The Director of the Third Department, von Bradke, understands the dilemma. He and I speak about you often.

The crop of summer grains here is good. Only rye failed.

Mr. Bradke also understood how well-founded your opinions are about the necessity and usefulness of founding a craftsman’s village in your area. It is, however, his opinion that it would be better to found such a place in the middle of your district and not at Halbstadt. Please let me know how this matter now stands, and if your committee has made its final presentation regarding this matter in Petersburg.

40 Regarding the establishment of Neuhalbstadt, see TSUS, vol. 2, note 10, and docs. 31, 227, 296, 321, 368, 383, 401, 423, 424, 468, 499.
concern is to ensure that this presentation has been thoroughly and fully put together.

I am curious whether our good Martens has come back safely from the spa and if his health has improved, which I wish him from the bottom of my heart.

May you fare well. Do write whether your harvest had been completed and to your advantage. Are grain prices high in your area? Heartfelt greetings to your good wife. When are you thinking of marrying off your children?

Your always devoted, A. Fadeev.

369. Inspector for the Colonies of the Second District
Pelekh to the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office.
23 October 1840. SOAR 89-1-725/22.

The Guardianship Committee for Foreign Colonists in South Russia responds to a report from the Muensterberg Village Office, dated 18 September 1840, that the Village Office, in reacting to directives from me and the District Office, refused to send former Muensterberg Village Mayor Johann Klassen to [do community] work. The reason given is that, according to the Mennonite faith, one brother cannot punish another. When someone transgresses, he must be reported to the spiritual leadership. It will then, before [further] steps are taken, consult [with the civil authority] about the reprimand and instruction to be given the offender.

In No. 4633 of 11 October, [a directive] was sent to the Muensterberg District Office regarding its failure to follow my orders and the orders of the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office to send former mayor Johann Klassen to do community work. It was a severe reprimand issued for his failure to carry out directives on various subjects of the Mennonite Society for the Advancement of Agriculture and Trades and by the District Office. The Mayor and Village Office were also to be punished with a five Ruble Banco Assignat payment that was to be assigned to the benevolent fund.

The village Elders should know that if, in future, they are obstinate and disobedient they will be severely dealt with to the full extent of the law. The Mennonite Klassen, however, must be arrested by persons sent by the Molochnaia Mennonite District Office for his failure to do work that he was specifically ordered to do. He must also be ordered to do an additional two days of work because of his failure to cooperate with duly constituted authority.
The District Office is duly informed that the Muensterberg Village Office has been apprised of this matter and ordered to publicize it in the villages, namely that the [former] Mayor has received a severe punishment for not carrying out administrative orders plus a further two days of punitive work. This is done lest other Mennonites think that, on grounds of their religious rights, government authorities are not entitled to punish them.

23 October 1840. Original was signed by Inspector of the Colonies Pelekh.

(Copy of an order by District Chairman Regier)
To the Village Offices. Order.

Reference is made to the administrative action published earlier about the punishment meted out to Johann Klassen, the former village mayor in Muensterberg. After Klassen and the Muensterberg Village Office refused to submit to duly authorized administrative action, a directive was repeatedly received from the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in Southern Russia and from the Colonial Inspector. It spells out in greater detail the measures required to fulfil administrative orders. In sending village offices an accurate copy of the above-mentioned directive, the District Office directs that this order and the above-mentioned copy be entered into the journal of regulations. It must then be forwarded to the next address. All inhabitants must be forcefully informed of this matter, to impress upon them the fact that, in transgressions of a similar nature in future, they are to consider this as a guideline according to which the higher authorities will proceed with strict legal measures. The pretext of the Muensterberg Village Office in this matter, that our confession of faith does not recognize the punishment of one of our disobedient members, can absolutely not be applied here. On the contrary, it contradicts our confessions of faith and our principles. As is generally known, we recognize an authority over us and should conduct ourselves accordingly as peace-loving and obedient subjects.

It is therefore necessary that village offices teach every inhabitant not to believe such unsubstantiated prejudice that originates in malice and obstinacy and emphasize that we must give the authorities unqualified obedience in accordance with our principles and our confession of faith. Contrary-wise, the disobedient will be dealt with according to the full severity of the law.

Village offices are, in particular, subject completely to the local secular authority. They must watch zealously to maintain the orderliness
and moral behaviour [of inhabitants] in villages for which they are responsible and report to the District Office anyone who violates this rule and fails to follow to the letter the directives of the authorities.

Prompt attention must be paid to this directive. District Office in Halbstadt, 9 November 1840.

Original was signed by District Chairman Regier and Deputy Toews.

370. David Voth to Johann Cornies. 30 October 1840.
SAOR 89-1-628/91.

Sincerely beloved Brother Cornies,

Since the loan period for my debt has expired, I arrived here today at noon to ask you earnestly to extend my loan by several months. I have left behind at your place the interest due, namely forty-six rubles, forty-four kopeks. I seriously wanted to talk to you, and waited around until nine in the evening when pressing matters did not permit me to stay overnight.

I have several reasons for requesting an extension. In the first place, the merchant Tarchovo sternly warned me to pay off my debt to him. Because he needed the money and I could not get rid of him, I paid him all that I could raise. I have also extended loans to several people who cannot repay them. I travelled around for days, but collected little. Everyone complained that they had not yet received payment for their wheat. I will come back soon. Please do not reject my request.

With hope, your loving friend, David Voth.

371. Johann Regier to Agricultural Society. 4 November 1840.
SAOR 89-1-910/7.41

To the Society for the Advancement of Agriculture and Trades in Ohrloff,

Report from Johann Regier, Schoensee, the Society Chairman’s First Colleague,

In answer to the Society’s communication No. 83 of 20 December 1839 and communication No. 56 of 14 October 1840, I have the honour to report regarding the seeding and harvesting of Whittington wheat, Hamala barley, and other varieties of grain seed that it has received.

On 21 April 1840, all foreign grain and barley seeds sent to me with communication No.83 were seeded on well-prepared land. Only two

41 Regarding Whittington wheat, see docs. 252, 364, 371, 378, 508.
varieties came up, specifically Whittington wheat and Hamala barley. The wheat ripened and on 21 July I pulled out a few blades and rubbed the grain ears together. Because of a long drought in spring, it returned only the amount seeded and provided few good kernels. Still green, the barley was largely consumed by birds, producing little more than what was seeded. The other varieties of seeds did not come up at all.

I have still not decided whether seeding should be done in autumn or in spring. I believe, however, that autumn seeding might enable the wheat to grow better in our region because the seed kernels could absorb sufficient moisture in winter. This would likely make for a better development of roots under conditions of a rainless spring or of drying winds that parch the soil.

Johann Regier

372. Fedor F. Rosen to Johann Cornies. 6 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-658/10.

Dear Mr. Cornies,

I always read your communications with great pleasure. I offer you my warmest thanks for your influence in promoting the speedy development of the state peasantry. Your advice and example are thorough and enduring and of special value to these people. They help them to move ahead in the useful endeavours they have already begun.

After receiving your report of 20 October about Fedorovka, the new village to be established, I am again moved to say how much I value everything you do to promote the interests of our state peasants. Please continue to use your good influence to promote active and useful lives for these people. Be assured that while I follow your activities, they are also observed at a higher level, as they should be.

Let me assure you that I will be pleased to do everything in my power for Fedorovka. Please continue to do the good work you have begun.

With constant best intentions, Baron F. Rosen.

373. Molochnaia District Office to Ohrloff School Society. 6 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-628/101.

In response to Inspector Pelekh’s order No. 1751 of 4 November, the enclosed form is sent to the Society in order that it might record the
names of teachers in the Ohrloff Society School for the year 1840. The Society is requested to prepare an exact record according to this form and submit it to the District Office by 13 November.

District Office in Halbstadt, 6 November 1840.
District Deputy Braun, District Office Secretary Hamm.
Reported 11 November 1840.

8 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-910/12. 42

To the Society for the Advancement of Agriculture and Trades,
Declaration regarding the potatoes used in our households to feed four persons, and as seed. We also specify the garden space, well worked with a spade, that is required to grow these potatoes.

1. In one year four persons need two chetvert, six chetverik, two garnitz potatoes for their own consumption and as seed for 180 square feet of land (or thirty fathoms).
2. Twelve plants, each using two or three potatoes, are set on each square fathom, i.e. three hundred and sixty plants on 180 square feet of land.
3. Calculated on the basis of the ten immediately following years, each plant produces a half garnitz of potatoes, on average. Therefore, five chetverik, four and one-half garnitz is estimated for each person.

If estimates are done by weight, one garnitz of potatoes weighs five funt. Therefore, for every day, nineteen and five-ninths loth 43 are consumed and seeded per person and twenty-two puds, fourteen funt are needed yearly for four persons.

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43 The “loth,” a measurement in use in the German states, varied from place to place but usually was equivalent to around 15 grams.
375. J. Martens to Johann Cornies. 8 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-910/14.44

My calculations about the seeding of potatoes needed annually for consumption by four persons are as follows:

1. Twenty garnitz are needed to seed twenty-five square fathoms of deeply and well worked garden soil, estimated at thirty plants per square fathom.
2. Four chetvert of potatoes are harvested from such a plot annually, estimated at one-third garnitz per plant.
3. If one garnitz per person is needed for weekly consumption, then four persons together need three and one-quarter chetvert annually. Accordingly, from four chetvert of potatoes three-quarter chetvert remain as a surplus.

376. Johann Cornies to Pastor Grunauer (Sarepta). 12 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/148.

Most worthy and highly esteemed Pastor,

I received your esteemed communication of 30 September and am honoured to answer, as requested.

Milk cows of exactly the same breed as those bought here by the Sarepta brethren a few years ago can still be purchased here annually. Their price, according to the quality and quantity of their milk production, is from eighty to one hundred and twenty rubles. I cannot tell you exactly how many head of such cows will be available for sale, but I believe that in April and May one hundred head could easily be available. In general, every inhabitant of our forty-two villages has cattle of this breed and a purchase of this number must be accomplished by travelling around to each village.

With complete esteem, I have the honour to remain your humble servant, Johann Cornies.

377. Johann Cornies to Bradke. 15 November 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/156.45

State Counsellor Bradke,

In response to Yr. Excellency’s gracious invitation No. 8540 of 8 October 1840 requesting answers to five questions about the management of potato cultivation in the Molochnaia colonies, I have the honour to report as follows:

1. The quantity of potatoes sown here does not exceed an average of just over two chetverik per soul, male and female. Potato cultivation cannot spread further because of a shortage of able-bodied hands. In Molochnaia Mennonite villages, experience shows that the annual requirement for potatoes to feed a family of four souls, when added to flour, meat, and milk dishes, can be estimated to be no higher than two and one half chetvert. Average use among the Molochnaia [German] colonists is three and one eighth chetvert. In Josephsthal, near Ekaterinoburg, the colonists must subsist on potato cultivation, due to a shortage of land and because of sandy soil. There, five chetvert are estimated for a family of four persons that has few other means of nourishment.

In Landsberg district on the Warthe, in Brandenburg province, Kingdom of Prussia, where peasants eat potatoes three times a day, experience shows that it is necessary to provide ten Berlin sheffels or two and one half chetvert potatoes per year to nourish each person, whatever his age or household position.

2. To cultivate two and one-half chetvert of potatoes for every soul in a garden, ninety-four square fathoms are sufficient when potatoes are set every twelve to thirteen vershok. However, on a cultivated field, potatoes are set at intervals of eighteen vershok and one hundred and twenty-five square fathoms of land are required. In our villages, some potatoes are cultivated in gardens beside every house but most are grown on a field designated for each settler [family]. Communities here do not cultivate potatoes on communal fields.

45 Ibid.
3. In addition to providing human nourishment, some potatoes are sold, but the largest portion is used for livestock fodder, especially among Mennonites. There is no secure means of marketing potatoes at this time, other than by fattening livestock with them, and this, whenever there is a large surplus of potatoes, could continue to be most advantageous and secure in future as well.

4. Settlers generally manure the soil in their gardens to cultivate potatoes. On cultivated fields not every settler manures the soil because of a shortage of manure.

5. Inhabitants of several neighbouring villages have followed the example of our settlers by cultivating potatoes, but only in their gardens. Neighbouring Russians and Nogais regularly buy potatoes in our villages to use as nourishment, not only in years of crop failure but every year. Johann Cornies.

378. Johann Cornies to Ministry of State Domains. 15 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/156v.46

To the Third Department of the esteemed Ministry of State Domains,

In response to the Third Department of the Ministry of State Domains’ gracious communication No. 8094 of 24 September, I have the honour to report about the disposition of one funt of Whittington wheat sent to me last year, 1839. I seeded one half immediately after its receipt on 5 October 1839, and the other half on 17 April 1840 using four sites differing in the nature of their soil, specifically: 1. on clear, black soil; 2. on black soil mixed with sand; 3. on clay soil mixed with black soil; and 4. on soil with a high clay content.

The results are as follows:

The autumn seeding sprouted well and we expected a good harvest. Snowless winters and persistently heavy frost often detrimentally affect winter seeding in this region, as they did last winter, and the sprouts of Whittington wheat were totally destroyed.

The spring seeding germinated just as well and formed splendid plants. On clay soil mixed with black earth, several stalks shot up but formed ears late and in pairs, providing few good kernels. The other seeds formed no stalks and remained close to the ground like grass, without further development. The stalks of seeds sown on black soil dried up during the

46 Regarding Whittington wheat, see docs. 252, 364, 371, 378, 508.
drought and heat of June, while seeds sown on black soil mixed with sand lasted longer, but many plants still failed. Seeds sown on soil with a high clay content lasted the best. If the soil here is covered with even a light snow blanket a few inches in depth next winter, the harvest could be high next year, especially for seed sown on clay soil. I will have the honour of submitting a report about this matter at the appropriate time.

According to my observations, I conclude that Whittington wheat is a winter and not a summer variety of grain. Johann Cornies.

379. Johann Cornies to Ministry of State Domains. 15 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/159v.

To the same Third Department,

In response to the Third Department of the Ministry of State Domains’ gracious communication No. 6491 of 5 October 1839, I have the honour to report about eight varieties of foreign wheat, two of barley, one bottle-gourd, and one variety of cabbage that were sent to me. They were all seeded on well-prepared soil on 17 April 1840. Not one single sprout appeared of any of the wheat varieties, nor of the first variety of barley. Presumably these grain varieties lost their ability to sprout on the journey. The Hamala barley sprouted and yielded the same amount sown, but the incomplete maturity of these kernels made them unsuitable for seeding. The bottle-gourd sprouted, grew long vines, and blossomed until October but set no fruit. The cabbage grew into a plant similar to mustard, blossomed, and grew seeds. It seems to have no special qualities that would provide a tasty and nourishing food to improve on local varieties of cabbage. Johann Cornies.

380. Johann Cornies to Steven. 17 November 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/151. 47

State Counsellor Steven,

In response to Yr. Honour’s well-inclined communication No. 497 of 28 October, I have the honour to most respectfully answer the seven questions relating to potatoes that were sent to me:

1. A few peasants in some Russian villages in the neighbourhood of our villages cultivate potatoes, but not enough for their household

needs. The Russian peasants annually buy a large number of potatoes in the Molochnaia villages.

2. In Mennonite villages, potato cultivation is not limited to household use as food for humans. Many potatoes are sold but most are used as livestock fodder, especially for cattle, to increase milk yields and to improve the growth of young cattle. Other settlements on the Molochnaia only cultivate enough potatoes to supply the amount needed for human consumption in a year. The highest price for potatoes over the last twelve to fifteen years, the drought year of 1833 excepted, was twelve rubles per chetvert, the lowest four rubles.

3. How many potatoes does a family consisting of four persons need for a year if it has almost no other nourishment? This is a question I am not in a position to answer.

I also have no explanation for the assumption that potatoes are only supposed to be one-quarter as nourishing as wheat, making it necessary to provide twelve chetverts of potatoes to nourish one person annually. In my opinion this estimate is much too high, because one chetvert of medium-sized potatoes weighs ten puds and contains 4,800 potatoes. Thus twelve chetverts would weigh 120 puds and contain 57,600 potatoes, providing ten puds or 4,800 potatoes for every month and thirteen and one third funt or 160 potatoes for every day in a month of thirty days. It seems to me that it is impossible for one person to consume fifty-three and one-third potatoes the size of a hen’s egg at each of three meals a day.

In Molochnaia Mennonite villages, when combined with flour, meat, and milk dishes, the average annual potato consumption by a family of four souls is generally considered to be no higher than two and one-half chetverts. The Molochnaia [German] colonists consider the amount to be three and one eighth chetverts. In Josephsthal near Ekaterinoslav, where the colonists are mostly occupied with potato cultivation because of their sandy soil and shortage of land, they must also use them for nourishment. Their exact estimate for a poor family of four persons that rarely enjoys a little bit of meat, is five chetvert potatoes and ten chetveriki of rye. In Brandenburg province in Royal Prussia, in Landberg district on the Warthe, families of poor peasants and labourers eat potatoes three times a day and this is almost their sole nourishment. Here, peasants have found from experience that ten Berlin Scheffel or two and one half chetvert of potatoes are needed to satisfy every person of all sizes in every domestic position. This provides one person with two and one half puds, or 1000 potatoes per month, two and four fifths funt or thirty-three and one third potatoes for one day, so that almost
one funt, or something more than eleven potatoes, are available to be eaten at every one of three meals a day. It seems to me that this quantity is the most accurate and also the most acceptable for the Russian peasants. I doubt that it is possible for a human being to live only on potatoes and on no other nourishment, without finding that his health and physical strength suffer.

4. In order to cultivate such a quantity of potatoes in a garden, 375 square fathoms of land are sufficient, even if it is not manured, but is dug deeply using a spade, and the potatoes are not set into the ground any later than 100 days after 1 January. Two chetvert, two chetverik seed are needed for 375 square fathoms, which would produce ten chetvert, even if only an eightfold return is calculated. Using the potato cultivation method introduced in gardens here, seed is set in twelve to thirteen vershok squares, fifteen to sixteen plants in every square. It can be estimated that eight chetvert of hen’s-egg-sized potatoes are needed to seed one desiatina. However, on fields cultivated with a plough, potatoes are set at intervals of eighteen vershok, with about eleven plants in one square fathom, and five and one half chetvert are estimated to seed one desiatina. The return for field potatoes, if the field is given good, purposeful attention, is really the same as that in individual gardens. Generally, however, potatoes succeed better in gardens, where they are close to the family and can be given better care. For this reason, I believe it would be more to the point if potato cultivation in the Russian villages were not introduced on fields. Instead, potato cultivation should first be established in gardens or in areas lying close to villages. It is not unusual here to harvest 100 chetvert potatoes from one desiatina. This was a bad year for potatoes and yet I harvested forty chetvert from one desiatina, although the yield was 110 chetvert in 1838. However, to make them thrive, a great deal still depends on the good preparation and management of the soil and of the potatoes while they are growing.

I am also of the opinion that similar quantities of land sown with potatoes provide twice as much nourishment as when sown with wheat. Two chetverik of wheat are sown on 1 morgen or 300 square rods, obtaining a twelvefold harvest in good years, or twenty-four chetverik. If twenty-three chetverik of potatoes are set out on the same quantity, 1 morgen of potato land, an eightfold return is obtained even in a very moderate potato year, which amounts to 184 chetverik. Potato returns are estimated to be from six- to twenty-fold here.

5. At this time, very few potatoes or none at all are shipped to Berdiansk and Taganrog from our villages and I do not know if any potatoes are
shipped from these harbour cities. The best means of turning a surplus of potatoes into silver is to use them as livestock fodder. I have fattened oxen with them, including four head this year. Extremely thin when brought into my barns, they eventually produced a total of fourteen puds of tallow. Their meat is very tasty and the tallow somewhat soft.

6. In gardens, potatoes are set using a spade and are also dug up with a spade. Out on the fields, they are set using a marker and a mounding plough. The marker designates the spots where the potatoes should be set, the mounding plough covers them with soil. This plough is also used to weed fields and mound potatoes two or three times during the summer, depending on the weather. A two-pronged vine-dressing hoe is used to lift the potatoes. A man thrusts the hoe into the soil in front of the potato plant and drags the plant and its tubers out of the ground with one stroke. Then the potatoes are gathered up by hired women and children. One man with one of these hoes can provide work for twenty or more potato gatherers.

7. & 8. In my opinion, the purpose of introducing potato cultivation and making it more general among Russian peasants would best be served by the following. A suitable piece of land should be designated for potato cultivation in every village. It should be large enough to provide for the number of inhabitants in the village and it must have the qualities that will make it possible for potatoes to thrive without employing a great deal of effort. The land could even be in several spots, as long as they are close to the village. These areas must be enclosed by ditches and apportioned by lot to each soul, preferably to each family, and this allotment should be maintained forever. Community seeding would be contrary to the purpose because this would cause argument and strife, most detrimental to the peasants’ agricultural management, and give rise to more extortions of money by lower officials.

Johann Cornies.

381. Johann Cornies to Fedor F. Rosen. 18 November 1840.

SAOR 89-1-647/161v.48

Baron Rosen,

There are absolutely no mills in the Nogai district, which is a great drawback for the Nogais as they attempt to improve their households

48 Regarding the project to build a mill in the Doukhobor village of Tambovka, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 362, 381, 386, 395.
and advance their well-being. For more than twenty years, I have been preoccupied with the thought of finding the possibility to introduce good, properly functioning mills in order to improve the Nogais' domestic situation and make better nourishment available to them. I have persuaded one of my brothers, Heinrich Cornies, to build a water mill in the middle of the Nogai district, with two or three good mill runs. He will do this on specific terms and on condition that he move there himself to give the Nogais practical examples in improved field cultivation and tree planting while he is managing his mill business.

Also, I have found a prosperous industrious Mennonite to build a mill at the village of Tambovka, using stone and brick in its construction. He is a man who will carry out the duties to which he is obligated punctually and conscientiously and will be a model of orderly, ethical behaviour, something the Doukhobors need so much. He and his son-in-law thoroughly understand all branches of practical field cultivation, both having arrived recently from Prussia, where they learned to practise agriculture advantageously, according to the improved methods employed there.

I have also submitted these two subjects to the Uezd supervisor, but he is so busy that I am afraid that developments in this matter could take some time. If there is a long wait, these men might seek different sources of income in our settlements, especially since neither my brother nor the other Mennonite has a fullholding at this time. Winter is also the best time to make the arrangements for construction to begin as soon as spring arrives. Work could continue in summer and the mills would be ready by fall.

I humbly request that Yr. Honour inform me to whom, by name, we must apply, to ensure that this matter is negotiated and settled quickly. I just learned that the Doukhobors may have leased the mill site at Tambovka to a Mennonite resident of Kremenchuk for a twenty-year term, but that the mill will be constructed with wood, not stone. In my opinion, this would not be useful for the community. I do not know if this Mennonite can serve as an example to the Doukhobors in economic matters or if he can raise the required security.

382. Johann Cornies to Mathias. 28 November 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/164.

Dear Mr. Mathias in Berdiansk,

Almost eleven months ago you obtained a four-month loan of 4000 rubles from me. You have now been sent two requests to repay the
above-mentioned loan but without results. I again request politely but urgently, that you pay this sum to the bearer of this letter, my neighbour Johann Neufeldt, and settle the matter in return for a receipt. I assume that this will definitely occur. If you postpone repayment any further, I would be forced to refuse any services of this nature in the future, although I would find it difficult to cause you such unpleasantness. In expectation of prompt repayment and the maintenance of friendly connections, I remain, with a greeting, your friend and servant, Johann Cornies.

383. Johann Cornies to Andrei M. Fadeev. 29 November 1840.  
SAOR 89-1-647/164v.

Yr. Honour, State Counsellor Fadeev,

On 2 November, I received your gratifying letter of 22 October. As I begin my letter, I must repeat that I value Yr. Honour highly in a special way and that my love for you will remain unchanged in all of the ups and downs of life. Granted, you have heard this said often enough, but it gives me a real sense of well-being to frequently remind upright persons, worthy of high esteem, about these pleasant sentiments. Since you are a person with delicate feelings, you can impossibly remain indifferent to the recognition and honour given your merits and your amiable qualities by others, as humble as these persons may be. My heart and my honesty will serve as your guarantee that my expressions are not the deceitful flatteries so current in the world. I feel especially fortunate because you perpetually honour me with the totally undeserving kindness of your friendship. This makes me contented, and I feel that I need not hesitate to report quite openly about our local area.

It is gratifying to see that significant and increasingly visible progress is being made in our villages every year. Field cultivation is the basis around which all trades now revolve. It provides many benefits to the inhabitants and occupies many human hands, thereby increasing our prosperity continuously. Scattered through our Mennonite villages are already individual agriculturalists who apply insight and effort and know how to prepare their fields as well as the best agriculturalists in Germany. For example, there are two individuals in Ohrloff who harvested a twenty-two-fold return from their wheat this year. In comparison, others in Ohrloff had eighteen-, twelve- and eleven-fold returns. These two individuals were the best this year and had also obtained the largest return from their fields in other years. The proverb “the deeper a peasant plows, the higher he will rise, and the more he turns up the soil,
the more implements he uses,” can be applied to them. On the whole, this was a moderately good year for grain. All field crops turned out well except rye. I cannot yet cite precisely how much wheat was sold to Berdiansk this year from the Mennonite villages, but the quantity was definitely not less than 25,000 chetvert at an average price of seventeen rubles [per chetvert].

Sheep breeding has fared badly for several years and sickness swept away many thousands of sheep. Things are better now but wool prices have suffered a great decline. In Romen, prices were twenty-six to twenty-nine rubles per pud for washed wool. On the other hand, dairying is increasing with the sale of butter and cheese. I believe that this year’s sales from our villages were valued at about 100,000 rubles. Horse breeding produces little income. Horses have lost the quality and form they once had, which can be blamed on excessive sheep breeding. Now, interest in improving horse-breeding is evident in efforts to return our horses to the quality they once had.

New trades arise annually, while trades more dependent on home industry are in the process of development, increasingly binding our inhabitants to their house and land. It seems to me that this is the only way that an agriculturalist can live happily and base his existence on morality and propriety.

We have heard nothing more about establishing a settlement for craftsmen beside Halbstadt, but we know that these professionals would like to have this village confirmed soon.49 Unless this craftsmen’s village is established in the middle of the district, it will fail to fulfil its objective of keeping the craftsmen busy and providing for their maintenance. Halbstadt is now the specific location where many roads intersect, and since many people meet there, it is already busier than any other village. Also, in considering communications with the villages above the Molochaia, Halbstadt is situated at the centre of our district. Mr. Evdokimov was commissioned by the Guardianship Committee to come to this region to examine the usefulness of establishing a craftsmen’s settlement. He was here in August 1839 and took all these points into consideration for a presentation about it in Petersburg. I do not know whether such a presentation was made or if it was drawn up in sufficiently thorough detail to make it advantageous for

49 Regarding the establishment of Neuhalbstadt, see TSUS, vol. 2, note 10, and docs. 31, 227, 296, 321, 368, 383, 401, 423, 424, 468, 499.
this region. It would be most desirable to have this matter resolved soon to end the present uncertainty for our poor professionals. I most urgently request that Yr. Honour do whatever it is possible for you to do in this matter.

Martens returned from the baths, though he is no better or worse than he was when he left. He is now preoccupied with a situation that is just as irksome as one he had ten years ago. As you remember, at that time he sold his iron business in Tokmak during an attack of hypochondria and then he regretted it and the sale had to be reversed. He sold his watermill this time and now wishes to retrieve it. Neither his family nor the community can permit this, since the purchaser does not want to give it back.

The Society for the Dissemination of Plantings and Advancement of Agricultural Trades is still standing firmly on two feet. Without waver- ing or staggering, it continues to introduce everything it possibly can to improve and establish industry on a firm and enduring foundation. Although it had not expected to, it can take pleasure in seeing the fruits of its labours. This is encouraging, giving it perseverance and zeal to think of more good things and improvements. To be sure, it consists of only four members, but they are inspired by the best convictions and intentions for the well-being of their community. Their activity, zeal, and their continuing projects have brought them the community’s esteem and respect.

As industrial activity increasingly animates our villages, our Russian and Nogai neighbours also show a desire to change and improve their households. In addition to seven Nogai villages just beginning to build and make agricultural arrangements according to a regular design based on the Nogai model village of Akkerman, a Russian village fifteen verstas from Altonau has decided to follow this example and build according to a regular design next spring.50 Appropriate arrangements for this have already been completed.

Yr. Honour’s continuing kind sympathy for the happiness of our family and household and your loving questions asking how soon I will marry off my children, encourage me to tell you trustingly that Mennonite practice does not allow parents to marry off their children. One of our principles is not to attempt to arouse a desire to marry in our children. They are permitted to make their own decisions whether

50 Regarding Akkerman see TSUS, vol. 2, note 12, and docs. 32, 97, 117, 197, 200, 222, 237, 268, 383, 457, 536, 610.
they want to marry. The blame for an unhappy marriage, should this occur, is then not attributed to the parents. This makes it much easier to assist them and lead them back to a peaceful marriage. When they want to marry, it is their duty to inform their parents about the person to whom they are inclined. They must ask for parental advice in this matter and follow it.

May you continue to favour me with your active benevolence, as I remain, with unbounded esteem and deepest respect, Yr. Honour’s most devoted servant, Johann Cornies.

384. Johann Cornies to Traugott Blueher. 2 December 1840.

Esteemed Mr. Blueher,

Your esteemed communication of 21 October arrived on 21 November. It truly is a long time since I wrote to you but do not assume that this was due to indifference or negligence. My outside business affairs kept me from maintaining an exchange of letters with dear friends like you and many others. I flatter myself with the hope that your kind heart, which I know well, will spare me and not receive my absence unkindly.

Even though food shortages are generally harsh in the guberniias situated in the interior and are causing business to stagnate, agriculture is flourishing here and crafts are proceeding with great vigour. Only the wool business is quiet. At this time of year, a large number of peddlers usually buy up sheepskins for a wide range of prices, but none at all have appeared this year. Prospects for the next shearing seem to be good. The sheep are healthy and promise a rich return.

I have always delivered my wool to you on consignment with complete confidence, leaving its sale to be decided completely according to your best insights. It would never occur to me to permit you to assume the loss when the manufacturer to whom you sold my wool advantageously becomes unable to make his payments, and I am certainly not inclined to do so now. This would be unjust on my part. I am completely convinced by the many years that we have had a trusting business relationship that you will continue to promote my business interests as realistically as if they were yours. Therefore, I will be contented if you decide it is more advantageous to keep my wool in storage for another three or four months or even longer to enable you to complete a better, more secure sale. On the other hand, I will also be
contented if you do not anticipate better, higher prices, and decide to sell the wool soon in the most profitable, advantageous sale you can make, for cash or for future payment. I assure you that I will not cause you any difficulties.

I report that the meteorological instruments were received from the Russian carter. They are all in good condition, as is the small case with seventy-five copies of children’s books.

We were all truly interested in your friendly announcement that your eldest spinster daughter, Emilie, has entered into a matrimonial union. May our generous God bless the marriage with many joyful days. May he provide strength and solace in pain and sorrow and give them the hope that their temporal life cannot equal what blessed eternity holds for us all when it eventually comes. In friendship, I request that you give your newly-wed children friendly and heartfelt greetings from all of us.

I commend myself and those who are mine to you and your dear wife and children for your future loving remembrance in friendship. In all circumstances of life, with my whole heart and soul, I remain, as always, your Johann Cornies.

385. Johann Cornies to District Office. 2 December 1840.
SAOR 89-1-647/171.

District Office in Halbstadt,

Several inhabitants of this district who borrowed money from me for their own use absolutely refuse to respond to my written reminders and I find it necessary to complain to the esteemed District Office with the humble request that it kindly collect the monies listed below and forward them to me:

2. Aron Peters, Ruekenau. Fifty-two rubles, twenty-eight kopeks at six percent annually starting on 2 January 1840 (account settled until then).
3. Gerhard Schierling, Fuerstenwerder, fifty rubles, fifty-seven and a half kopeks at six percent annually since 21 February 1840 (account settled until then).

Expecting an early resolution, the esteemed District Office’s respectful Johann Cornies.
386. Johann Cornies to unidentified correspondent. 5 December 1840. SAOR 89-1-647/171v.51

Dear Fr.,

In response to a letter from Claas Wiens in Kremenchuk about the mill site near Tambovka, I request that you report to Fr. Regier that the recently arrived foreigner, Abram Sudermann, is applying to me to take over and build up the mill site according to requirements of the Department of State Domains. He states that he has sufficient cash on hand to do so. Some time has passed since I submitted Abram Sudermann’s application to the Uezd Domains Administration and to the Tavrida State Domains Bureau and I await a resolution with every mail. In my view, Sudermann might be better qualified for this than Wiens. He has sufficient means to build the mill and to set it up according to the government’s requirements. Most important, the government wishes to have the family settling with the Doukhobors to be a model of propriety and moral behaviour. Even though I cannot mention anything improper about Wiens, it still seems to me that Sudermann’s family is more suitable to improve the community’s reputation. Wiens has never acted in a way that suggests that he has a sense of community. I am sending back the letter from Claas Wiens.

With a friendly greeting, your friend, Johann Cornies.

387. District Office to Johann Cornies. 11 December 1840. SAOR 89-1-628/128.

To esteemed Johann Cornies in Ohrloff,

In response to your petition of 2 December 1840, this District Office has sternly urged your debtors Clas Wiebe in Tiege, Aron Peters in Ruekenau, Gerhard Schierling in Fuerstenwerder, and Heinrich Quiring in Conteniusfeld to pay their debts. In no case was it possible for these persons to pay immediately but they are obligated to pay by the following due dates: Aron Peters, Ruekenau, promised to pay by 10 December 1840; Gerhard Schierling, Fuerstenwerder, promised to pay by February 1841; Heinrich Quiring, Conteniusfeld, pledged to pay within six weeks after 7 December 1840. A receipt from Clas Wiebe is enclosed.

District Office in Halbstadt, 11 December 1840.
District Deputy Toews, Secretary Sommerfeldt.

51 Regarding the project to build a mill in the Doukhobor village of Tambovka, see TSUS, vol. 2, docs. 362, 381, 386, 395.
Part One: Correspondence, 1836–1842

388. Johann Cornies to District Office. 18 December 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/172.

District Office in Halbstadt,
   I herewith have the honour to report that my debtors, the Menno-
   nites Claas Wiebe from Tiege, Aron Peters in Ruekenau, and Heinrich
   Quiring from Conteniusfeld repaid their debts in full.

389. David Voth to Johann Cornies. 20 December 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-628/132.

Most esteemed brother Johann Cornies,
   With this meagre communication, I must report that I am presently abso-
   lutely unable to scare up any money, despite my best efforts. I have written
   to individuals who owe me considerable sums of money and threatened
   to report them since all my warnings have been of no avail. Regrettably,
   this did not work. Last week I submitted a petition to the District Office,
   requesting that a directive be given everyone indebted to me that they pay
   their debts to me. I therefore again ask you to be patient with me. As soon
   as I can gather even the slightest amount, I will come to discharge my debt.
   Your friend who loves you and sends you his heartfelt greetings,
   David Voth.

390. Johann Cornies to District Office. 22 December 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/174.

District Office in Halbstadt,
   It is my duty to report that George Bliwernitz, the settler from Rosen-
   berg in the Mariupol settlement who served on my Iushanle estate, died
   on 18 December from natural pox and was consigned to the earth
   on 20 December.

391. Johann Cornies to Christian Klassen. 22 December 1840.
   SAOR 89-1-647/173.

Dear Friend Christian Klassen,
   Though I send you many good wishes, I must report that George
   Bliwernitz who was in my service, fell ill on 8 December.
   At first his illness was of no concern, but then on 10 December pox
   appeared and his condition quickly turned serious, with pox blanketing
his entire body and especially his face. There was no healthy spot to be seen. For two days he was delirious, his speech confused. Then he became peaceful again, his consciousness was fully restored, and he spoke sensibly. On 18 December he was completely conscious and his usual self when death ended his earthly life. He was appropriately consigned to the earth on 20 December in the graveyard on my estate. His last will, as expressed to my manager Wiens, was that his possessions go to his son.

I request that you report this death to his brothers and also notify the appropriate persons to fetch items from my manager belonging to Wiens that the deceased left behind on my Iushanle estate. These persons must possess a certificate from the District Office stating that specific persons, by name, are authorized to receive the effects belonging to the deceased George Bliwernitz. I am confident you will see this matter through as soon as possible. Your honest friend, Johann Cornies.

P.S. If you are in a position to recommend for service on my Iushanle estate as good, industrious, and peaceful a person as George was, I would be much obliged.