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New letters from the Volga region

Today we publish the following extracts of letters from our fellow countrymen about the situation in the Volga region.

Letter from Huck, 15th July '20

On the 9th of June we had terrible weather with hail. Everything in the gardens got ruined, so that all of us had to sow and plant again. It was already the third time we had to do that this year. The weather was so terrible that whoever believes in the Great Flood could have thought it was about to happen again. I was taken by surprise being out in the garden. In the shortest of times the garden was flooded in a way that dead sheep, being surprised on the meadow by the cloudburst, were floating into the garden. To complete the picture of the Great Flood I can add that like Noah in the Ark we had to escape to the loft of the garden house, as the water had risen here by a fathom. Even the highest points of the garden were covered with water by at least an *arschin*. It was also very cold. It was already after sunset before the water level had dropped enough to leave the garden and to return to the house. There another surprise was waiting. All windowpanes facing the street were broken by the hail and the water was streaming along in the rooms.

Summer 1919 was a difficult time. The 10th Red Army was around for twelve days. The school was used as a hospital and in our flat we had soldiers billeted on us. When the front was moved on there was an outbreak of cholera amongst the population. The school was now used as a cholera camp. After the 10th army had been around we had a lot of flies who almost ate us. In addition to the fly plague we had the cholera plague on the farm – it was superhuman what we had to endure.

I would like to write something about the prices here: 1 *arschin* cotton 1500 rouble, 1 *arschin* bad quality Sarpink (?) 1200 rouble, 1 sack of flour 30 000 rouble; 1 pud potatoes 500 rouble; a jar of milk 200 to 400 rouble; a pound of butter 1200 rouble; a pound of beef or mutton 225 rouble; a pound of pork 500 rouble; a pair of shoes of low quality leather 20,000 rouble; 1 pud salt 12 to 15 000 rouble, further to the south it costs 4 to 5000 rouble more in the summer, i.e. up to 30,000 rouble. A *pjaterik* (?) wood costs 50,000 rouble; a middle sized pig costs 70 to 80,000 rouble, cows from 100,000 rouble onwards. A better cow costs already 150,000 rouble. These are obviously all speculation prices. From the Soviet shack we receive from time to time half or sometimes a whole *arschin* cotton per person. Teachers receive 2000 rouble monthly, which means we can't pay these prices. We have been promised by the association three fathoms wood and our yearly corn allowance for the requisition price. Last year the fixed price for a pud of rye was 46 rouble and for a pud of oat it was 52 rouble. For the current year the prices have not been fixed yet. At the side facing the mountain and the meadow the harvest is very bad, but still better than in the south. There they sell already their cattle. The fields couldn't even be used as meadows. Although the hail destroyed 4000 desjatin our colony will just get enough for its population. They calculated about 10 to 12 pud per desjatin (*approximately 1 hectare*), but there will be a little bit more.