



Wolter v. Tiesenhausen

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Family Letter 2019

Of the v. Tiesenhausen Family

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The Tiesenhausen Family during the Protestant Reformation

The influence of the Tiesenhausen family on the public life in the Baltic countries in the 16th Century was legendary. According to a summary by Eduard Tiesenhausen (1806 – 1878), in 1556 the 96 male members of the family owned a total of 6 chateaus and 40 homesteads providing 206 horse mounted fighters. They occupied important roles within the knighthood, served as councilmen for archbishops and bishops, as well as for the German Order. They represented the interests of the knighthood during the congregations. During these days, Livonia, Estonia, Courland and the island of Ösel were part of 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation'. Consequently, they also played an important role during the implementation of the protestant reformation following the ideas of Martin Luther in the Baltic countries.

In 1517 Luther had published his thesis in Wittenberg and his criticism of the Roman Church became increasingly widespread. In 1520 further important writings were published like 'von der Freiheit des Christenmenschen' (about the freedom of Christians), 'an den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation' (to the Christian nobles of German nation), and 'von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche' (about the Babylonian confinement of the church). These thoughts continued to make his ideas known and finally also reached the people in the Baltic countries. In 1523 Luther addressed the people in the Livonia and Estonia directly. He sent a letter 'to the Christians in Riga, Reval and Dorpat'. This letter made a significant impression. During the assembly in Wolmar in 1522 the ideas of the reformation had still been called heretical. However, already on the congregation of the knighthood and the municipal representatives in Reval in 1524 the new ideas were accepted. Among those declaring their agreement with the ideas of the reformation were two members of the Tiesenhausen family who both were named Heinrich. One represented the diocese of Riga, the other Harrien-Wierland.

They participated on the congregation of Wolmar in the next year where Hans Tiesenhausen from Erlaa reinforced the ranks of the knighthood. From the resolutions of the congregation we can see the concern that the struggle for the right belief could have a negative influence on the social and financial situation of the

knighthood. It was agreed 'to maintain everybody in his rights and beliefs' which included freedom for everyone to choose his religion and to continue to enjoy the proceeds from income and profits their possessions would produce. These worries had a real base as the demands of the insurgent peasants in Germany had spread to Livonia and Estonia. There had been riots in the cities and assaults on cloisters and churches which contributed to the reluctance of many land owners to follow the new belief.

In the diocese of the archbishop of Riga the knighthood negotiated an agreement which gave the right of patronage to the land owners. Before that it was not customary that laymen decided on the occupation of rectorates. It was a cumbersome task to include the Latvian and Estonian population into the reformation process. Thanks to the right of patronage, parsons with the necessary language skills were put in place or those parsons who lacked language skills received support from local helpers. This happened for example in Erlaa which was part of the widespread possession of the Tiesenhausen family. Three members of the family – Hartwig, Reinhold and Johann – were among the representatives of the knighthood within the Riga archdiocese on the congregation in Regensburg in 1528. They belonged to the group which demanded the secularisation of their country which meant the government by the German Order in Livonia and Estonia. They wanted to follow the example of Albrecht von Brandenburg who had done the same for Prussia.

Among those who took up the service for Albrecht in 1529, belonged the Livonian principals of the knighthood Hans and Hartwig Tiesenhausen. The brother of duke Albrecht, Count Wilhelm von Brandenburg-Ansbach was supported by the knighthood and the urban citizens to become coadjutor of the Riga archdiocese which meant he held all rights as custodian and future successor of the archbishop. It was hoped that he would convert the government from a church driven to a secularly principality and foster the protestant religion. During the internal struggles he was supported by the former bishop of Reval Georg Tiesenhausen. In the end the count of Brandenburg was not successful, as a majority was fearful about the degree of influence of their mighty Prussian neighbour. With the Russian invasion from 1558 to 1561 the government of the German Order and the church came to an end. The Baltic countries came under Swedish, Danish and Polish government. The protestant ideas however prevailed and even resisted the attempt of a counter reformation by the Polish government.

Family Day 2019

It was a happy family reunion in mid-May when 47 members of the Tiesenhausen family gathered in Schloss Höhnscheid the centre of the association of the Baltic Knighthood. While the continuing rain was annoying, it had no negative influence on the mood. There was plenty to talk about and to trace the degree of relationship based on the sometimes-convoluted genealogic roots.

An especially warm welcome received cousin Andrzej Pietruski and his charming wife Karolina from Krakow. Andrzej's mother is a born Tiesenhausen/Tyzenhauz out of the Lithuanian-Polish branch of the family. Two years ago, Andrzej and Karolina had participated in our family trip to Lithuania and Courland.



It was difficult for cousin Christoph (Gütersloh) to place the entire family on one picture.

During the family meeting it was quickly agreed to continue to have a bi-annual reunion either in Schloss Höhnscheid or in the form of a common trip on the traces of the family.

The directorate und the presidency of Andreas Tiesenhausen (Erbes-Büdesheim), his deputy Max Delwig-Tiesenhausen (Mühlheim), Controller Elisabeth Tiesenhausen (Swistal-Odendorf), secretary Matthias Tiesenhausen (Königstein), and the genealogist Sabine Röder, born Tiesenhausen (Dreieich-Buchschlag) were reelected.

The date for the next family reunion is already determined. It will take place from June 25th to 27th in 2021 at the same location in Schloss Höhnscheid.

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We commemorate our deceased

Maria Freifrau von Tiesenhausen, born von Keudell, died June 22, 2019 aged 90 in Vancouver Canada. She was widow to Hans Dietrich Freiherr von Tiesenhausen. Her father was the painter Kurt von Keudell and her grandfather the sculptor Georg Kolbe. For several years, Maria lead the museum in Berlin in the former atelier and living quarter of her grandfather.

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Family News

Franziska Freiin von Tiesenhausen and Janko Raab married on August 3, 2019 in Hamburg. Franziska is a TV journalist, her husband who took on the family name of his wife, is and officer with the German Federal Police. The family congratulates and wishes the couple lots of luck for their future life.

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The senior of our family Hans Heinrich Freiherr von Tiesenhausen celebrates his 105th birthday on December 16, 2019 in Vancouver Canada. The family cordially congratulates and thanks for the documents he created about the Tiesenhausen family in Canada. Between 1951 and 1963 five parts of the Tiesenhausen family emigrated to Canada. Today 55 members of our family live there.

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