6. January 21, 1710. A letter written by Mennonite ministers from Mannheim in the Palatinate to Hermanus Schijn and Willem van Maurik with a vivid report about persecution and a list of names of the prisoners in Bern. This translation is from the Dutch copy, since the original German no longer exists, and the correct spelling of proper names is difficult to discern.

Mannheim, January 21, 1710

Worthy and beloved Hermanus Schijn and Willem van Maurik[[1]](#footnote-1) and all fellow ministers, worthy and beloved brothers in Christ,

Our wish to you all in purely Christian and brotherly love (besides a

happy New Year blessed by God) is the grace of the Lord, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and that they may remain with you until glory. Amen.

The most recent letter from you was answered eight days ago in our name by Jonas Loheer, but in the meantime, after having received that edict on the 17th of this month, we feel the urge to send it to you, along with our heart-felt and most sincere thanks for your good will to assist the poor with money. This consists of three hundred and eighty-seven two-and-a-half guilders, that is 387 rixdollars in our coinage, which, thanks to Mr. d’Orville, we have received in good order. Furthermore, we hope to ensure

that it shall be distributed correctly, and that we may give an accurate account of the congregations to which the money has come.

We have many times attempted and desired to discover that which you want to know concerning the poor imprisoned brothers and sisters in Switzerland, but we have not received this information, although[[2]](#footnote-2) we have sent an express letter there, which did reach the ministers and elders. They, three of them, having met to decide how to answer the letter sent to them, but had not yet finished this completely, when the catchers or servants of the magistrate came, captured them and dragged them away as prisoners. Therefore they scarcely had time to tear the letter to pieces to prevent anything coming to light, and that is why we have not been able to receive an answer. But later, one of our brothers who traveled to Switzerland again wrote to the ministers and elders and brothers in Switzerland [folio 2 verso] and conveyed your sincere affection. Having arrived in the city of Bern, this man, assisted by others who were not of our people, went secretly to some brothers, receiving a little news from the prison via a Servant of the Word, Bentz Brechtbühl [Breckbill, Brackbill][[3]](#footnote-3) (who had also visited us and served us here), and has produced a short report as follows.

Letter from the prison of the City of Bern in Switzerland. These are the names[[4]](#footnote-4) of the imprisoned brothers and sisters: Niklaus Moser, Durs Rohrer, Rudolf Stettler, Hans Bürki [Burky, Birky, Bergey],[[5]](#footnote-5) Daniel Grimm, Ulrich Brechtbühl(?),[[6]](#footnote-6) Peter Hofer(?),[[7]](#footnote-7) Isaac Baumgartner,[[8]](#footnote-8) Christian Steiner,[[9]](#footnote-9) Hans Gasser(?),[[10]](#footnote-10) Christian Kräyenbühl [Kraybill, Graybill],[[11]](#footnote-11) Peter Kohler,[[12]](#footnote-12) Heinrich Wenger [Wengerd, Wingert],[[13]](#footnote-13) Ulrich Salfinger, Jacob Salfinger, Peter Salfinger,[[14]](#footnote-14) Niklaus Blaser [Blosser],[[15]](#footnote-15) Christian Fankhauser, Niklaus Hagi [Hagey, Hege],[[16]](#footnote-16) Jakob Neuenschwander [Newswanger],[[17]](#footnote-17) Hans Jaggi, Christian Berger, Ulrich Fahrni [Farny, Forney],[[18]](#footnote-18) Peter Thönen [Teune].[[19]](#footnote-19)

The sisters are: Elisabeth Garber [Gerber],[[20]](#footnote-20) Elisabeth Steiner, Elisabeth

Krieg, Anna Schank [Shank],[[21]](#footnote-21) Barbara Fahrni, Margreth Engel, Elisabet Mann, Katharina Ellenberger, Katharina Aebersold,[[22]](#footnote-22) Baby [..],[[23]](#footnote-23) etc. Written by Bendicht(?) Brechtbühl[[24]](#footnote-24) in the name of the ministers and elders in Switzerland. We send you friendly greetings, and it is our earnest desire that you pray to the loving God for us. So much for the written report from the prison in Bern.

As a written postscript only that the imprisoned brothers and sisters are in

the Hospital[[25]](#footnote-25) but not in a prison, the brothers by themselves and the sisters by themselves. The ministers are in Rissel[[26]](#footnote-26) in a high tower called Thusu,[[27]](#footnote-27) and no one of us can go to them. We have sought to get hold of some letters patent [official decrees] or edicts concerning the persecution, but, with great difficulty, and secretly, we have been able to get this one only, from which one can see what the intentions of the government are. But from the brothers no reliable report has until now been available. May the dear God give them a gracious solution and enable them to endure faithfully to a blessed end.

Note that those Swiss ministers have visited some of our congregations in the Lower Palatinate and the Upper Palatinate out of love for nearly two years, and have accepted a confession with us, concerning which we are in agreement and united, but they [were] opposed.

I hereby close with very heart-felt greetings, and commendations to God, and that we remember each other in all good things. And [we] wish for a

brotherly response as soon as possible. Live and persevere in the Lord. And [this] was signed by all your worthy brothers, Peter Kolb, Valentine Hütwohl[[28]](#footnote-28) of Kriegsheim, Barthardt Holl of Walfstoly,[[29]](#footnote-29) Thieleman Kolb, and Hans Jacob Schnebely of Mannheim.

1. 6 Willem van Maurik (ca. 1625-1710), Mennonite minister first at Utrecht and later with the Lamists in Amsterdam. ME III, 543-544. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. or, “for what cause.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bendicht Brechbühl from Ranflüh in the parish of Lützelflüh. Hanspeter Jecker, “Der Grosse Berner Täufer-Exodus von 1711,” Mennonitica Helvetica (2011/12), p. 142. North American spellings are in brackets. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Isaac Zürcher, “Die ‘Täufernamen’ in der Schweiz” Informationsblätter [Bern: Schweizerischer Verein für Täufergeschichte] 8 (1985). See also Document 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. North American spellings. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The first six names in this paragraph according to Hanspeter Jecker are probably Niklaus Moser from Friedersmatt in the parish of Grosshöchstetten; Durs Rohrer from Bolligen near Bern; Rudolf Stettler from Stettlen; Hans Bürki from Langnau, Daniel Grimm from Langnau, and probably Ulrich Brechtbühl from Lauperswil. Cf. his article in note 3 above, pp. 142, 157, 158, 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Probably Peter Hofer from Eggiwil, who was deported in 1710. See StABE B IX 486, 215ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Isaak Baumgartner from Buchrüti in the parish of Lützelflüh. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Christen Steiner from Grafenbühl in the parish of Oberdiessbach. See Jecker as in note 3 above, p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Probably Hans Gasser from Guggisberg who was deported in 1710. See StABE B iX 486, 215ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Christian Kräyenbühl from Eggiwil. North American spellings are given in brackets. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Peter Kohler from Walkringen (StABE B iX 486, 215ff.) who later fled to the Röthenbach hinterland (Gemeindearchiv Röthenbach, Schenk-Chronik, VI, 75ff.) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. HeinrichWenger from Wattenwil, later fled to Röthenbach. Kirchenbuch Wattenwil 2, 346. North American spellings can be Wengerd, Wingert. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ulrich Salfinger and Jakob Salfinger from Schangnau; Peter Salfinger lived in Trub, his origins are probably also in Schangnau. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Niklaus Blaser from the parish of Lauperswil; Christian Fankhauser from Trub; Niklaus Hagi from Hünigen; Jakob Neuenschwander (sometimes also called Schwander) from Stocken in the parish of Reutigen; Hans Jaggi or Jäggi from Uetendorf; Christian Berger probably from the parish of Lauperswil; Ulrich Fahrni from Eriz in the parish of Schwarzenegg, later he fled to the Röthenbach hinterland. North American spellings in brackets. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Peter Thönen from Reutigen. See Jecker as in note 3 above, p.168. Teune is the Dutch spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. This version of the names of Elisabeth Gerber, Elisabeth Steiner, Elisabeth Krieg, Anna Schenk, Barbara Fahrni, Margreth Engel, Katharina Ellenberger, Katharina Aebersold from the parish of Grosshöchstetter supplied by Hanspeter Jecker. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Perhaps Barbara Frutiger from Oberhofen who was deported in March 1710. Cf. Schenk-Chronik, VI, pp. 75ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Jecker surmises this instead of Paul. Information in notes 3, 5-18 is from Hanspeter Jecker. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Document 67 note. Isaac Zürcher, “Die Täufer um Bern in den ersten Jahrhunderten nach der Reformation und die Toleranz,” Informationsblätter [Bern: Schweizerischer Verein für Täufergeschichte] 9 (1986), pp. 30-31, 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. This is spelled Rischel in Document 19, probably a mistake for Insel in both occurrences. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. This is unknown. There is a tower in Bern called Tittliger (Tittlinger). Adolf Fluri, “Das Waisenhaus als Täufer-Gefängnis” in Beiträge zur Geschichte der bernischen Täufer. (Bern: Verlag von Gustav Grunau, 1912), pp. 2-3. For towers used as prisons in Bern see Zürcher, “Die Täufer um Bern,” pp. 29, 32, 40; H. Türler, “Die Türme und Ringmauern der Stadt Bern,” Neues Berner Taschenbuch, 1886, p. 143 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Lowry, Documents of Brotherly Love, Vol. I, pp. 372-379, etc.; ME II, 850. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Gotthart Holl and Wolfsheim are probably the correct spellings according to Gary Waltner of the Mennonitsche Forschungsstelle, Weierhof in Germany. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)