56. August 15, 1710. A letter of the Committee for Foreign Needs to Runckel. They report that they have sent letters about a possible settlement in Prussia to the Swiss now at Mannheim. They thank him for his zeal and send money to promote the emigration. Further to accompany some Mennonite confessions of faith, translated into German, they would send an added copy of the testimony of Brechtbühl and his associates to distribute in Switzerland. They ask for Runckel’s intercession that the deadline for conversion of Mennonite possessions into cash might be extended.

[recto]

Right[[1]](#footnote-1) honorable sir:

We have received your letter of July 12, 1710, from Bern in good order, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the great effort and support you have been so kind as to give on your own initiative for the good of our distressed fellow believers there. It also gives us much pleasure [to learn] that there are still gentlemen in the Council of Bern who despise and reject the cruel approach, but it hurts us most deeply that the hard sentiments override the moderate ones to such an extent. We are of the same mind as you, that it is best for those unfortunate people to rise up and seek their dwelling and more freedom of conscience elsewhere.

Accordingly with our advice, our brotherhood at Hamburg has addressed the Resident of the King of Prussia there. The gentleman has kindly sent the various letters and recommendations concerning this to the King, with the result, which you will see from the enclosed copies, and especially in the one issued at Charlottenburg[[2]](#footnote-2) the 5th of July. All of which we have sent on to our friends now at Mannheim with our earnest admonitions. And since it appears to us from an extract from the letter of Mr. Resident at Hamburg to his King, dated July 18 last, (sent to us by our brothers at Hamburg) that he advised that the quickest way was to communicate the matters to Baron Schmettau, Resident in The Hague on behalf of the King of Prussia, the same being approved by his Majesty.

So some of us have spoken with that gentleman personally and, among other matters, have demonstrated, on the basis of various sources of advice reaching us, that our friends in Bern are woefully scattered due to the exacting persecution. Hence, there is little possibility of presenting their number and condition quickly and precisely. For this reason we planned

to request humbly of their High and Mighty Lords of the States General whether they, through their delegates, might persuade Lord St.-Saphorin to apply his most powerful offices for persuading the regents of Bern to suspend persecution and to publicly announce in their territory that our fellow believers might safely register themselves and get adequate time to prepare themselves for their departure to another place. Their High and Mighty Sirs know of the plan of this Lord St.-Saphorin to leave for Bern himself, and have approved the enclosed resolution favoring us, and the same Lord St.-Saphorin has promised seriously by spoken word, that he will do his utmost to this end. We hope that the Lord our God will bless your work and yours in such a way that those unfortunate ones will receive (and desire) at least that comfort in their great need.

Honored sir, you would much oblige us particularly to visit and comfort those poor prisoners in their chains. We do not doubt in the least that on the great day of judgment you will really receive and enjoy the reward for this from your and our great Redeemer according to His promises in Matthew 25. In order that you might be in the position to provide some actual support to them and ours, we hereby remit to you a bill of exchange to the amount of [ ], requesting that you please dispose of this money for the matter at hand, as you consider acceptable and advisable.

Following your wise counsel, we would also be glad to distribute some of our confessions [of faith] where you are, which we have already published in High German, and to have the declaration of three Bernese friends, made before our most respected mayors (and of which you have a copy), bound with them. This is in case you yourself, or some other appropriate approach, could provide us with the opportunity to distribute these in the city and countryside without endangering your position and the justified esteem for your person and high character. For we do not doubt in the least that when a dispassionate mind investigates [the booklet] with some attention, he will be wholly convinced that not only did our brotherhood never have any relationship with the rabble of the Münster Anabaptists, but that the basis of our religion is as far removed from the way of those errant people as the east is from the west. For this reason we once again request most sincerely that you make use of your tried and true alertness for the good of these nonresistant Christians as much as possible.

Accordingly [we ask] that you please observe, as the resolution of their

High and Mighty Sirs mentions in the last part, how very necessary it is that the people, who must depart be given, by public edict, the liberty and the opportunity to register themselves. Without it no one will dare to reveal himself, nor will it be possible to get those scattered persons together again. It is similarly essential that they are allowed a few years (Lord St.-Saphorin here has proposed six or seven years to us) to be able to sell their property for the highest possible price and to claim the money for it. [verso] They should be permitted at least three or four years for this after their registration. We look forward to seeing your response and success in this at a convenient time.

And in the meantime we pray to the Almighty that He will take you and your dear and honored family into His holy care and protection and grant you as much blessing in all your important affairs, and well-being of soul and body, as we wish to achieve for ourselves and ours, remaining, after very warm greetings,

P.S. The release of the present prisoners will likely be your first concern.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Letter from the Committee to Mr. Runckel

dated August 15, 1710.

1. 56 This document is also copied in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 53-54 with many minor spelling variations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A royal palace in Berlin. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The end of Vorsterman’s copy includes the following signatures in the order given: Wilhem van Maurik, Hermannus Schijn, Jan Willink Janz, Abraham Jacobs Fries, Jacob Vorsterman, Frans van Aken, Cornelis Beets. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)