51. July 27, 1710. This is a list of twenty-three brothers and seven sisters imprisoned at Bern, followed by three letters or notes, each appended to the preceding. The first is a letter by three ordained men of Kühnheim in Alsace to Tielman Kolb and Hans Jacob Schnebely, minister and elder in the Palatinate. One letter requests that they should be watchful in case the prisoners are taken down the Rhine, reports that they have alerted some at Breisach with the same purpose, and further asks that the Palatines counsel with one another about informing the Dutch Mennonites. There follows a note by an elder (or minister) and then yet another writing of the same tenor by three more ministers in Alsace on July 28.

 The originals of Document 51 were written on at least three different occasions, ostensibly by at least three different persons: two of the occasions on July 27, 1710, perhaps both in Kühnheim in Alsace; and the other on July 28, 1710, simply in Alsace. But the present copy was written in only one hand, in the characteristic German penmanship of Bendicht Brechtbühl, who is not mentioned.

 However, the document does reveal something interesting about Brechtbühl. It has some word substitutions, which might make one think that the native language of the copyist was not German, but Dutch. The remarkable Brechtbühl, a German-speaking Swiss, soon after coming into contact with Dutch-speaking Mennonites in the Netherlands, became preoccupied with learning Dutch. The copyist inserts Dutch words into the German text, writing, for example, “mar” instead of “aber,” “en” instead of “und,” and “susters” instead of “Schwester.” Other manuscripts of Brechtbühl continue to show this preoccupation.

[recto]

List of the fellow believers imprisoned in the city of Bern

and their names[[1]](#footnote-1)

Peter Gerber, a servant of the Word of God, lies in chains, from the district of Trachselwald

Peter Blaser From the district of Signau

Hans Wisler Martin Stram

Hans Schneider Christian Gäuman[[2]](#footnote-2) the younger

Niklaus Baumgartner ---------

Ulrich Beer [Bear, Bare][[3]](#footnote-3) Hans Holzer from Lüterswil

Peter Hertig from the judicial district Schnottwil

Peter Lüthi the area of Solothurn,which is Catholic

Ulrich Brechtbühl ---------

Hans Gasser Hans Kneubühl[[4]](#footnote-4) from the district

Joseph Probst Diessbach.

Daniel Rothenbühler ---------

Hans Saam[[5]](#footnote-5) Hans Frutiger[[6]](#footnote-6) from the district Thun

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-------- NiclausHäberli from [München]buchsee

The sisters who are prisoners:

From the district Sumiswald Verena Aeschiman

Ulrich Trüssel [Trissel, Drissel][[7]](#footnote-7) Katarina Bieri

Ulrich Schürch [Sherk, Shirk][[8]](#footnote-8) Christina Trüssel

--------- Margreth Schär

Margret Oberli

From the district Brandis Anna Brenzikofer

Hans Flückiger Anna Moseri(n)

Total 23 brothers 7 sisters[[9]](#footnote-9)

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Kühnheim in Alsace, July 27, 1710

We received a writing from Switzerland and understand from it that twenty-three brothers and seven sisters have been imprisoned at Bern and that it was their intention to put them on a ship to take them away on the Rhine. So we whose names are signed below, minister and elders in Alsace, ask in a quite friendly way, that you, a minister and an elder in the Palatinate, namely Tielman Kolb and Hans Jacob Schnebely, would look out for [them] along the Rhine and we also will look out and take care when a ship arrives at Breisach. But we might not know when they arrive. We however want to arrange for people at Breisach who will let us know as soon as they arrive there. We ask you in a friendly way, if it would be your advice, that you would write to the friends in Holland. We are apprehensive that if they have a further pass from the king, we will [need to] work out something with difficulty.

Written in haste

Martin Egli

Hans Blum

Christian Rupp

I, Jacob Kleiner, am quite satisfied with this[[10]](#footnote-10) and also ask all ministers and elders in a quite friendly way to put forth all possible effort in this matter, and let us all by common consent pray the Lord for His grace.

[verso]

Dated the 28th of July 1710, Alsace

This writing has come to us whose signatures are below, which is the advice of the ministers reported above, with which we are well satisfied. We ask you in a quite friendly way that you would put forth all possible effort. With this we greet you in a friendly way. Pray the dear God for us and we are also minded to do such for you. May the Lord come to our aid.

Hans Bachman

Hans Schneider

Philipp Hägi

1. 51 For further details of the names in the list see Jecker, “Der Grosse Berner Täufer-Exodus von 1711,” pp. 156-170. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Gäumann family (called Gehman in Pennsylvania) is mentioned as being from Röthenbach. Delbert L. Gratz, Bernese Anabaptists and Their American Descendants (Goshen, Ind.: The Mennonite Historical Society,1953), p. 89. The beginnings of the Anabaptist Gäumann (Göüman) family are in Schwendlen in the parish of Grosshöchstetten. Jecker, “Der Grosse Berner Täufer-Exodus von 1711,”   
   p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gratz, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Johannes Saam of Lützelflüe is mentioned as an Anabaptist ca. 1745. Gratz, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hanspeter Jecker gives this respelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. North American spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A similar, shorter list of names, is in a copybook, “Notes by Hendrik Toren...concerning the persecution of Mennonites in Switzerland in the Canton of Bern...” From the De Hoop Scheffer Inventaris, A 1009, pages 91-92. Hendrik Toren was a member of the Committee for Foreign Needs from Rotterdam. It says in English translation, “August 1 there was sent to me by Jacob Vorsterman, the list below of Mennonites, who now are imprisoned in Switzerland...List of prisoners in Switzerland from Langnau Peter Gerber and his wife, he is a minister and is chained; from Lauperswil, Peter Hertig, Hans Gasser, Peter Lüthi, Joseph Probst; from Trub, Hans Schneider, Ulrich Beer. Niklaus Baumgartner; from Lützelflüh, Hans Flückiger, Hans Saam; from Sumiswald Ulrich Trüssel and his daughter, Ulrich Schürch; from [Gross-]Höchsteten, Martin Strahm; from Solothurn, from Buchenberg Hans Holtzer; from [München]buchsee Hans Niklaus Häberli; from Eriswil Casper Bieri, his wife from the Upper church from Ziegerosweil Hans Treutigrij; from Diessbach Hans Kneubühler July 1, 17I0.” An attempt has been made in this note, where possible with the help of Hanspeter Jecker, to bring the Swiss German names into more familiar spellings. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See reference to this in Document 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)