70. October 4, 1710.*Letter from Runckel in answer to Document 63: he thanks the Committee for the money and the confessions of faith being sent, will consult an engineer about draining the swamps by the persecuted Mennonites, but wishes that first the negotiations with the King of Prussia might be completed in order that the government of Bern, when it sees how much value is placed on the coming of their Mennonite subjects to Prussia, would be inclined to keep them in their own land; and when the plan for draining swamps is presented, he will quite gladly consent to it, which he considers preferable to colonization to Prussia. He appeals also for further diplomatic help.*

[page 1]

Bern[[1]](#footnote-1) October 4, 1710

Worthy, etc.

My especially honored Sirs,

My last letter from the first of this month was indeed rather extensive about the present circumstances of the good Mennonites in these lands, about which I report merely briefly, and accordingly this alone should serve. The day before yesterday I received your very valuable communication

dated the 23rd of last month in good order and, among other matters, I noticed to my greatest pleasure that one hundred copies of the confession of faith are on the way and that my highly honored Sirs are willing and ready to do as much as possible to help their poor fellow believers here with some sums of money and to assist otherwise.

In case it could be resolved to keep them here in the country and, as [reported] in my letter dispatched on August 30 last to my highly honored Sirs, [page 2] that they devote themselves to draining and cultivation of swamps or morasses, also that my highly honored Sirs do not doubt that the rest of the Mennonite congregations will gladly contribute, etc., as much as would be possible for them. This loving offer is now already sufficient for me and shall be for the present.

Since most of the government officials and members of the Council are away [on vacation], and among the others also those who are favorably disposed toward the poor Mennonites, meanwhile I shall attempt to succeed with the best measures and I shall apply myself in regard to those difficulties and disadvantages mentioned to me by my highly honored Sirs with the best measures as far as can be done without special expenses. [I want] to inform my highly honored Sirs about everything and especially about the charges, more or less, that might be required to execute such plans, to make an adequate report, and to do such nevertheless as soon as it will be possible.

The shortest and surest would be, if I were to visit and ride around the swamps and morasses under consideration with an engineer experienced

in these matters, and from that have the plans as to both how and in what manner the excavation and draining could perhaps [page 3] be best accomplished, and could send [the plans] to my highly honored Sirs for their further consideration and examination. However, this could not occur without the permission of their High and Mighty [Lords] and without special expenses. Accordingly, such an affair might be entrusted to my highly honored Sirs to calculate further what perhaps in this case to do or to leave undone, especially since for the present certainly this is only yet an undefined and unsure project, the execution of which is hardly to be hoped for without a special leading of God, since it is not to be achieved except indirectly and against opposition.

Now the main concern is to seek a safe and good shelter under the care and protection of his royal Majesty in Prussia for the good local Mennonites, and that the said royal Majesty who in my last letter I reported [to have said], among other points, that these poor people might best be advised to demand vehemently from the present Illustrious Canton that these matters might be settled completely fairly and the poor Mennonites here might have, at all events, a safe shelter.

When this goes properly [page 4] and persons here will see that several people wish to remove out of the land or that such people will take along more means out of the land than one supposes or can imagine; or, on the

other hand, that such people will be in such insignificant numbers that on their account there is not so much to fear or to be anxious about as [some] persons want to make them believe. In this manner, the eyes [of officials] may first be completely opened and their true interest recognized and afterwards they will retain the people in the country and grant them the said morasses to cultivate. That being the case, my highly honored Sirs will yourselves easily recognize that it is very necessary that this quite uncertain project not be executed openly, but kept so much as possible in readiness in order that from the Prussian side one does not notice anything definite and accordingly have a change of heart.

Under these circumstances I consider it highly useful that Lord Stanian,[[2]](#footnote-2) (her royal Majesty[[3]](#footnote-3) of Great Britain’s minister living here), also at the same time with the royal Prussian minister,[[4]](#footnote-4) with the Lord de St.-Saphorin, and with me intervene to urge in concert the points reported in my letter so that everything might be promoted with so much greater force.

[page 5]

Closing with that, besides a mutual commitment to God’s mighty power and grace and my kindest commendation to your fervent prayer, I am always and remain,

My most highly honored Sirs’

Most devoted servant,

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

1. 70 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 80-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Smith, Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania, on p. 64 mentions “the ambassador of her majesty the Queen of Great Britain, Mr. [de] Stanian.” See also Müller, p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Queen Anne ruled from 1702 to 1714. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Possibly referring to Baron von Schmettau mentioned in Document 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)