82. November 8, 1710. From Runckel to the Committee for Foreign Needs: With the uncertainty as to whether Bern will hand over the intended tract of land near Burgundy and with the hesitation of the King of Prussia, he is glad that some Dutch Mennonites think about settling the Swiss in the Netherlands (under the High and Mighty Lords of the States General). He hopes that the meeting of the Committee will decide in favor of it, and highly recommends such a decision as having several advantages. He notes that the printed confessions of faith have arrived.

[page 1]

Bern,[[1]](#footnote-1) November 8, 1710

Worthy, etc., etc.

My especially, highly honored Sirs!

I received your very valued communication with the date of 21 of the past month in a timely manner, and to my gratification have learned from

it that my letters of September 30 and the first and fourth of the former month with their enclosures have been delivered to my highly honored Sirs and that they in turn have produced satisfaction. I hope that the letter to you of October 25 will also arrive just as well and be received in a similar manner and that my highly honored Sirs will have noted from it what is the actual condition of the originally proposed swamps and morasses; and under the circumstances, what other part of the land instead of the above might or could be suggested for keeping the good Mennonites here. [page 2]

Because it is still very uncertain whether the Illustrious Canton of Bern would be moved to tolerate these unfortunate people in the country and consent to providing them with the parcel of land under discussion, and further it is very uncertain whether and when his royal Majesty in Prussia will finally explain himself concerning their reception; then whether such an explanation [would be] pleasing to the Illustrious Canton here; finally since in this matter each factor would have its importance: whether to arrange for these people [locally] or to demand of them, without injury to the conscience, that they commit themselves to a land infested with a foul pestilence and emptied of inhabitants.

Nevertheless I have learned from my highly honored Sirs’ last, very worthy letter how that some among them have brought up the suggestion as to whether the good people banished from here could not be assigned a place and accommodated perhaps in the territory of your High and Mighty Lords, and that they [the Swiss Mennonites] might agree, according to my insignificant opinion.

As soon as I have offered this to them, without further delay, that [it would be] easily the best, the surest, and also for the local well-wishers for these people (with whom I have conferred in the greatest confidence)

indeed even for their harshest [page 3] persecutors themselves, as they have given me to understand already before. [It would be] the most pleasant and agreeable if they could be accommodated and settled under the never sufficiently praised, very gentle government of your High and Mighty Lords—and indeed the sooner the better. Especially since these good people themselves will doubtless much prefer to travel to Holland rather than to Prussia and prefer to have their cottages near, around, or with their brethren and fellow believers rather than to establish themselves among completely strange and unknown people.

The number of them will no longer be quite so great. Meanwhile I have asked Mr. Knopf and Mr. Wagner (who again send their most pleasant greetings) to inform themselves again very exactly with those actually imprisoned as to how many they think there still are of their brothers and sisters more or less and generally in this Canton and its neighborhood. Then they could make a rough estimation and accordingly take proper measures.

Such placement of the poor Mennonites from here into the lands under your High and Mighty Lords would powerfully advance the release of the poor prisoners and also the publicizing of the previously announced freedom [page 4] proclamation. Since here they are resolved in this matter not to undertake anything more before and sooner than they know the final decision of his royal Majesty in Prussia and have seen whether it is suitable or not. Such slowness would stop entirely if they should understand that your High and Mighty Lords were minded to accept them and to permit them to settle in their lands. Because if in the case here [the offer] were completely withdrawn by Prussia, consequently they would strive earnestly

to advance the matter in the best possible way and to bring everything to a desired conclusion.

My highly honored Sirs, please be so good as to inform me in your next letter what was concluded and decided finally about this in the meeting for this matter. Then if you found it good and practical to locate them near, among, or with you, I would put my hand immediately to the work and with the help of the Most High and support of the good friends might advance the matter to its desired outcome in the best possible way.

Meanwhile I should further report to my highly honored Sirs that the dispatched confessions of faith have finally arrived and that they are actually in [page 5] the process of distribution, and also that matters are taken in hand if it sometime should come to printing[[2]](#footnote-2) them, that that might the better and quicker take place—as also with the objective of removing the local Mennonites to the Netherlands whenever such otherwise might be practical and possible.

My highly honored Sirs, I want to commend you to the best and for this reason want to and have requested prayers, moreover a mutual commitment to God’s mighty gracious protection and my kindest commendation to your devoted prayer, as always I am and remain,

My highly honored Sirs’

Most devoted servant,

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

1. 82 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 88-89, where it notes that this was read to the meeting (“op de kammer”) on November 26. A translation into Dutch is included with A 1285(but not given here since the German is the original). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Dutch translation accompanying document A 1285 translates the German “abtrucken” as “vertrekken,” referring to the possible departure of the Anabaptists from Bern. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)