102. December 17, 1710. Letter from Runckel to the Committee for Foreign Needs: Contrary to his expectation, the Small Council of the Bernese government has the same concerns as he, and so he presses for an immediate letter which must contain an outright authorization for him. About the other concern, he has spoken with the Prussian representative, Bondeli, who, however, is waiting for a letter from his King. With indignation he reports at length how the authorities, noticing that the planned departure of the Mennonites is in earnest, are attending carefully to their extortions, fines, and penalties in order to make good the fees of the magistrates and wages of the pursuers.

[page 1]

Bern[[1]](#footnote-1) the 17th of December 1710

Worthy, etc.

My especially highly honored Sirs!

My last communication was from the 13th of the present month, which served to indicate what kind of difficulties the present Anabaptist Commission multiplies in order to keep the settlement of the affairs of these poor people from transpiring as soon as hoped. I confirm the same with this letter, because I have ascertained, since then, with certainty (contrary to my conjecture) that the Small or (Daily) Council considers bypassing the said Commission so that it might bring the matter to the Great or Sovereign Council immediately (if my urgent request should please the Small Council in spite of the said difficulties).

I thus, my highly honored Sirs, again very urgently request that you would please set to work at once on my most recently made suggestions, in order that both the final decision of his royal Majesty of Prussia concerning these people may come so much earlier, and also that without delay I might be authorized by the High and Mighty Lords to a further [page 2] pursuit of this matter. I have spoken with the Prussian resident minister here, Lord Bondeli himself, recommending the matter to him in all propriety. He indeed assured me that he is expecting an answer from his King in the next few days. But at the same time he gave me to understand that he does not

know how it may turn out, since the said Majesty has replied to him that he wishes you, my highly honored Sirs, to express your opinion about the settlement of these people in the land and how best that might be organized. He, then, Lord Bondeli, conjectures that previous to and before this happens, no final statement would follow.

The letter of the High and Mighty Lords to the Illustrious Canton of Bern could be composed, according to my own neither important nor decisive opinion, so that the High and Mighty Lords would consent to the propositions which I made in the name of the Mennonite congregations living under their jurisdiction (a copy of which was sent most obediently to the High and Mighty Lords eight days ago). Accordingly, they would approve such and authorize my insignificant self to proceed in this matter and, as well as I can, bring this to a mutually satisfactory conclusion, etc. This alone would be the chief import of the letter from their High and Mighty Lords; the remaining details will certainly become evident [page 3] of themselves.

The local Anabaptist Commission here is meeting at present very frequently, contrary to their previous habit, certainly not to settle, to assist, or to deal with matters at hand definitely, but mainly to demand the still outstanding penalties or fines from the poor Anabaptists and from those who perhaps have sheltered them contrary to official command. They want to oversee the expenses for capture and imprisonment in order that the Illustrious Canton, they of the Commission, and also the officials regarding their fees, and the [Anabaptist] hunters regarding their arrests might indeed not lose, omit, or forget anything. How very much this harsh proceeding among my fellow religionists, who want to be called Reformed Christians, cuts me to the heart, my pen is not sufficient to express.

Meanwhile, not to stir up a wasp’s nest, I myself think it necessary,

indeed highly advisable, to let this matter go and take its course, since [I am] on the one hand assured that all favorable representations, which might be made in this case, nevertheless would not produce the slightest effect because of the partisan interest active chiefly beneath the surface, and also because of the clear and distinct government mandates in this case. On the other hand, there is great concern that any such remonstrations might so much the more embitter these self-seeking spirits against these poor people and that accordingly I might make their peaceful departure from the country only so much the more difficult, if [page 4] I would venture to override the robbery of them by the edicts authorized by the government.

I can much sooner resolve to allow these vexations to pass by silently till their own fitting time, because many god-fearing spirits, who see as little help and hope as I do, sigh with me about it. Also, Jesus Christ teaches us out of the mouth of truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive,[[2]](#footnote-2) and moreover to hope that the Highest would restore to these poor, innocent people elsewhere, a hundred fold, what has been unjustly taken from them at this time.[[3]](#footnote-3)

With this, besides a mutual commitment to God’s

gracious protection and my kindest commendation

to your pious prayer, as with a heartiest

greeting I remain constantly,

My especially honored Sirs’

Most devoted servant,

J. Ludwig Runckel.

1. 102 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 107-108. Cf. Müller, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Acts 20:35. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Matt. 19:29. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)