130. February 9 (?), 1711. Copy of a letter of Runckel to the King of Prussia, without a date,[[1]](#footnote-1) in 13 articles concerning the penurious condition of the Mennonites, the reasons for their aversion to going to Prussia (the contagion and serfdom), the decision of the Great Council that those arrested are stripped of their possessions, and the list of belongings the government has drawn up. From this the King can understand more exactly the situation of the Swiss Mennonites.

[page 1]

Copy.[[2]](#footnote-2)

That the Anabaptists, who are compelled for the present to move away from the illustrious Canton here, possess no great means becomes apparent through different indications, as—

1.) Because if they had means to live elsewhere, they certainly would not have remained in a land where there is so much danger.

2.) Because they no longer do as they like or work openly, much less can earn anything, they must necessarily subsist on their own accumulations, indeed even from the kindness of others, of which different examples are at hand.

3.) Because at their arrest everything is usually confiscated or at the least goes for charges and other matters. As then

4.) their poverty in their protracted imprisonment is so glaring that the Mennonites in Holland rushed a respectable sum of money for their needful clothing and medicines. Such also

5.) becomes evident in that ten persons must still remain imprisoned because they cannot pay the 25 rixdollars administrative expenses demanded, also because all prisoners take a strikingly bitter view of the payment of such expenses. This makes it necessary for charitable persons to do the most and best [of what can be done]. Although

6.) those scattered and hidden persons should still have some means saved, yet they with their families have had to consume and live from that for an

extended time. So also [page 2]

7.) the most affluent are the most pursued, as may easily be supposed, and have been either sent away or exiled, or have made off of their own accord, and have chosen themselves a dwelling place from where they could not be

persuaded to depart by force, but [only] by bestowal of effective privileges and freedoms, especially since

8.) the Anabaptists are afraid of Prussian colonization for two reasons, that is, [first] specifically because of infectious disease and [second] serfdom and the other usual burdens under princes and lords, which are difficult to remove.

9.) There would be no better nor certain means than if his royal Majesty would most graciously conform to the request of the Dutch Mennonites and authorize their government in The Hague to negotiate with them about such settlement on the same basis as that which the Lord Baron von Schmettau, deceased,[[3]](#footnote-3) had proposed around the end of last year. If, then,

10.) to presume that the more advantageous the negotiations [turn out] for the Anabaptists, so much the more they would desire [to go] to Prussian territory and so much more the Mennonite congregations in Holland, Friesland, Emden, Hamburg, etc. would be prevailed upon in any manner to lend a helping hand to their Swiss fellow brethren, especially since

11.) their number will be scarcely over 300 adult souls, [page 3] of whom many might stay yet with their own spouses, parents, and children in the Sundgau,[[4]](#footnote-4) Alsace, and the Palatinate where they have already settled. Otherwise

12.) in order that one might see what amount of wealth these people are taking out of the country, the illustrious Canton has taken the best care of this by deciding to have an orderly list thereof prepared, from which then his royal Majesty also can be best instructed. Also from it will be observed what

13.) sort of Reformed country people go along out of the land and also what means they will take along.

1. 130 However a date, as given above, is written in Dutch on the back of one of the papers. See note 3 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A translation into Dutch is also filed with this document. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Dutch translation has Zal. This is Seelig, (selig), “late, deceased” (German). However, on this same date, February 9, 1711, the King of Prussia addresses a letter to Baron von Schmettau (Document 129). Von Schmettau is also mentioned in Documents 68, 70, 76, 94, 99, and 129. It seems strange that Runckel in Bern would have viewed Schmettau as deceased, but the King in Berlin would not have known it. So the date of the present letter must be a little later than February 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sundgau (Südgau) southern, or upper part of Alsace, especially around Mülhausen. Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon, XIX, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)