137. February 18, 1711. A letter from Runckel to Fagel tells that in a meeting of the Anabaptist Commission on February 14th after the head of the Commission harangued the prisoners and forced them to promise to hold no worship services, eighteen men and three women were released. Their security had been found sufficient. The release of thirty others has been promised. Concerning the amnesty, the Great Council must still decide.

[folio 1 recto]

Bern[[1]](#footnote-1)

February 18, 1711

Copy. Confidential.

Sir,

Pursuant to my very humble [letter] of the 14th of this month, after the departure of the courier for Germany, I went back to the chamber where the Anabaptist Commission (established to deal with them) was to be assembled. Immediately those Anabaptists, for whom the guarantors have been found sufficient and valid by the magistrates, in the number of eighteen men and three women, were brought in to appear. After these unfortunate people were quickly arranged in some sort of order, Mr. Von Diesbach,[[2]](#footnote-2) the senator, President of the Commission, made a long speech to them, for the purpose of reminding them of their stubbornness in transgressing the orders of the Sovereign Council, of the gentleness and patience of the Sovereign Council toward them, and of the continuation of that gentleness again on this occasion.

Following that, he told them of the intentions of the Canton in relation to their departure and the favors which he was once more well inclined to grant them in consideration of the High and Mighty Lords, the States General, and His Majesty, the King of Prussia. He hopes that they would proceed [folio 1 verso] all the more willingly to leave forever a country in which it was no longer possible or desirable for them to be tolerated, and that they would conduct themselves in a manner which would give the Sovereign Council no reason to repent their gentleness, and much less to

come [back] there following the extraordinarily severe measures toward those who would abuse such favors. As for the rest, he would wish them complete contentment in the countries to which Divine Providence was going to lead them, and that, after their pilgrimage through this Vale of Tears, they might be able to enter into joy eternal.

This speech [as reported] having been confirmed by all the other members of the Commission, the President made them promise, one by one, with hand and voice, with a clear and distinct “Yes,” that they would again present themselves there every time that the Sovereign Council would demand that of them, and that, during the liberty which the Canton was going to grant them, they would keep quiet and remain reasonable and would never gather in assembly to pray or to perform any other rites of their religion.

They all promised this with adequate frankness, with the exception of the doctor who had made an objection about [not holding] assemblies and was scrupulous about promising by his hand in addition to his word of “Yes.” But after the Commission [folio 2 recto] had made him understand that he ought to be led back to prison and had ordered the sheriff’s officer two or three times to do this, the doctor changed his mind and, like the others, promised to be willing to follow the will of the Sovereign Council. But that did not prevent his having greatly inflamed the bad temper of those gentlemen who certainly will now be watching for him closely. Nevertheless people calmed down, and each and every one of those assembled was set at liberty to return to his home.

Then the President assured me that the other thirty who are still in prison should also be set at liberty as soon as reports of the other magistrates regarding the guarantors for these people would be received. Since the official edict concerning the amnesty has been prepared, he would

bring it today to the Sovereign Council for them to approve and authorize, and also to learn whether it should be printed or not. That the Commission and the Senate would be firmly of this opinion, but that it will be necessary that the Sovereign Council approve it also.

Since then, nothing more has taken place in this affair, and I doubt that the rest of the prisoners would be released before Saturday. So the situation will remain the same until then because the [folio 2 verso] great mass of snow to be found throughout the whole country would hinder many of the guarantors from presenting themselves before their magistrates. As always, I provide information with profound respect.

1. 137 A Dutch translation of this letter also appears in Hendrik Toren’s Daybook (A 1009), pp. 139-140. The French version, of course, is the original. See also references in Müller, p. 297 and J. Brüsewitz, Van deportatie naar emigratie, p. 65 and p. 88 n. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A certain Wilhelm von Diesbach is mentioned as a member of the Commission in 1659 and 1660. Gratz. p. 33. Cf. Müller, pp. 167, 179, 185; English translation, pp. 186, 198, 204. This man resigned from the Commission in 1664 according to Hanspeter Jecker. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)