170. June 24, 1711. A letter from Runckel about the passports and about the stubbornness of the Reistian church. To oblige some persons he has tried to install a certain Bernhard Wagner in place of Ritter as their leader, but now they are seeking new pretexts. Details are given about the arrangements for the trip. Hans Bürki has been examined, but not yet sentenced. Twelve departing families have deposited 7939 rixdollars so that new remittances are superfluous. He asks advice as to how the Anabaptists’ money can be returned to them on their arrival in Holland. In closing, he tells about the conditions under which some others who wish to make use of the travel opportunity of the Mennonites will travel along; from them five rixdollars a head will be received. Such others would provide some protection for the nonresistant passengers.

[page 1]

Bern,[[1]](#footnote-1) June 24, 1711

Very worthy, etc.

My especially highly honored Sirs,

My letters to you dispatched on the 13th and the 17th of the current month I hope will have safely arrived.

Last Sunday I received your welcome communication from the 12th of the present month with the permit from his royal Majesty of Prussia and the passport from his sovereign serene Highness, Prince Eugene. For this I render my best thanks. I also wait with the next post for the rest, in particular, that for the Electoral Palatinate, the Archbishopric Cologne, and those of the Landgrave of Hesse. With the last post I have written for a passport to his sovereign serene Highness at Württemberg, as at present the General commander-in-chief on the Rhine. The Count of Trautmansdorf will also send me his, and beyond this, if it is possible, a permit from the Austrian government at Innsbruck [page 2] concerning managing the customs in Waldstetten. The French minister Comte du Luc has also assured the present illustrious Canton that he has written his King concerning the desired passports and hopes they will be sent in the near future. Consequently, things will be settled very soon and the departure of the poor local Mennonites may proceed shortly, if[[2]](#footnote-2) repeated difficulties do not intervene, as it seems they may, so that I am really busy with all serious effort to work against that possibility.

As to other concerns that my highly honored Sirs may have with regard to the main points of the resolution[[3]](#footnote-3) transmitted last, it is certainly only too true that it is more than well established that I have set myself with might and main, as much as humanly possible, against such open evasion of bright and clear permissions in the published resolution.[[4]](#footnote-4) But I could not obtain more than was reported in the last resolution, although it cost me enough trouble and work to bring it finally to this point, as my highly honored Sirs have learned in detail from my previous communication.

It is not in the least to be supposed that persons from the Leistian[[5]](#footnote-5) or Lower Land congregation [page 3] would report[[6]](#footnote-6) to me for departure, and have their possessions declared because of fear that the previous [threats] could, might, or would materialize. But if such should be [the case], those from the Oberland or Amish congregation (of whom just a few are in the Emmental) and yet they have reported, should have had the same to fear, and should have had made the same difficulties as the first [that is, the Leistians]. In fact, if such were the case, some of the Leistians would have spied out such troubles either prior to and before they had revealed themselves. On the other hand, since such threatening [troubles] have been removed as much as possible, no single one of these [troubles] has occurred, and by all appearances would occur only with great difficulty, as my highly honored Sirs will have doubtless seen from the reading of my letter of the 13th of the current month.[[7]](#footnote-7)

I should add as a further indication of the incomprehensible stubbornness of these wretched people that I became aware from some of the prisoners that these people have some kind of unknown scruples about traveling under the supervision of Mr. Ritter, and that they would

gladly see it happen under the oversight of the previously mentioned Mr. Bernhard Wagner.[[8]](#footnote-8) So I [page 4] made them an offer, both through the said Mr. Wagner himself and through other men and Anabaptists, that if all or only some of them wanted to separate and depart with others, regardless of all the arrangements I had already made with Mr. Ritter, I would send Mr. Wagner along. I would entrust to him the special supervision of the Emmentalers so that Mr. Ritter would not have [even the] least duties with them. All of this effort produced as little result as the previous.

I am waiting shortly to see what the letter of admonition from Bendicht Brechtbühl written to them just on the 29th of May and the one from me ten days ago will accomplish with them. I doubt greatly whether they will have any greater effect than the previous. Finally, I fear it will be and remain effort thrown away on them until God grants otherwise. Meanwhile, with those who of the lower land or Reistian congregation who are imprisoned, I have not yet been able to bring it to the point that they would send me lists or a roster of their accompanying families so that Mr. Ritter as well as I can act accordingly to provide space on the ships and provisions and supplies.

Otherwise it has always been Mr. Ritter’s and my intention, [page 5] as I have reported to my highly honored Sirs already in previous correspondence, that on every ship two of the most prudent Anabaptists would share the oversight; also that each and everything that comes up should be considered with them, taken up by and carried out in consultation with them. We have actually involved Daniel Rychen in most of the deliberations concerning the trip, whenever his own business permitted, and will continue to do so further.

My last letter[[9]](#footnote-9) will have informed my highly honored Sirs in what sort

of position Hans Bürki is at present. Only yesterday he was given a hearing in front of the Anabaptist Commission for the first time, and so I do not know yet what sort of sentence he will receive. However, they always give me hope that they would release him for me again at the departure of the others. In which case they could allow him an approach to the rulers and discussion [with them], although I seriously doubt that he would want to be burdened with that.

As my highly honored Sirs will have learned from my last letter, the Commission has already delivered some sums from the Anabaptist resources to me and continues with that to the present so that from only twelve families already 7939 rixdollars have been called in and more sums [page 6] will follow. So I think it is unnecessary to receive more money from Daniel Rychen, who has delivered not more than 800 of the allocated 1000 dollars. Accordingly, I am sending back the allocation of the 600 dollars designated for him, especially since matters so stand and since such nice sums have come in.

On the other hand, after the required travel money has been given to Mr. Ritter, it will be necessary to think out how the remaining surplus can be turned over to the unfortunate people after their arrival in Holland with as little loss as possible. About this, my highly honored Sirs, please collect your thoughts without delay and inform me. After my bills have been submitted, I myself will be able to supply around 1200 dollars for them, and more down there which I have deposited with the government on behalf of this Commission. In the meantime I will search here or in the neighborhood for a good bill of exchange, which may make my presence in Basel also so much more urgent, so that it would be quite convenient for me if I would be honored with credentials to this canton.

Because I get no hint from the Amish of any special enthusiasm for

Prussia, I consider it openly questionable that they should be given plans

from my highly honored Sirs or much of a report at present. But I allow the matter for [page 7] various very important reasons to pass gladly.

I remind my highly honored Sirs yet again of the absent passports and permissions. I commit the same into the gracious,

all-powerful protection of God the most High,

myself and my family to your devoted prayer,

and remain, in addition with warmest

greetings always

my highly honored Sirs’

Most devoted servant,

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

(turn the page)

[page 8]

P. S.

Various passengers show up, wanting to avail themselves of the opportunity of our ships, and we will indeed have room on them for that, beyond what would be required space. Further, the ships ought to be provided with some men capable of defense against vagrant, wandering robber bands,[[10]](#footnote-10) who respect no passports. So Mr. Ritter and I decided to take along those who possessed good passports with a charge of five rixdollars per person. This money Mr. Ritter will include in the income. To maintain a true equality among the departing Anabaptists both in food and drink and other matters, Mr. Ritter and I with the assistance of Daniel Rychen decided to treat them all alike, both the poor and the rich. However, the well-to-do and those with means among them should contribute and assist proportionately from those means to the general maintenance, and Mr. Ritter will keep a fair account of this. This is done primarily to hinder and avoid all jealousy between the rich and the poor and between members of the congregation. Finally, we will allow and desire that nothing be lacking in us, so that everything proceeds orderly and with the very best arrangements, and also that my highly honored Sirs may have sufficient satisfaction from everything.

1. 170 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 199-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From here to the end of the sentence, Vorsterman translates into Dutch as: “zoo niet wederom (gelyk het zig wel laet aansien) swarigheden dartussen komen , warom ik reets met allen ernst beesig ben, om deselve voor te komen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Document 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. He may mean that he could not get all the desired permissions from the government, or he might refer to the uncooperative Reistians. The meaning is unclear. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Here again is Runckel’s mysterious spelling of the Reistisch party, which also occurs in Documents 162 and 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Literally this part of the sentence includes negatives: “not report to me for departure, and not have their possessions declared…” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This obscure paragraph Vorsterman (p. 200) translates as follows: “Het in jn ’t minste niet te vermoeden, dat die van de Leÿstische of ondergemeentens, uyt vreese dat het bovengemelde mogte ofte souden geschieden zig bÿ mÿ ter aftogt niet aangemeld nogte hunne goederen niet souden op gegeeven hebben also jndien sulx soo mogt sÿn, die van de Ammansche of bovengemeenten (van welke sig eenige jn het Emmendal bevinden en hun evenwel hebben aangemeld, het selfde soudenten vreesen gehad en deselfe swarigheden als de eerst gemaakt hebben, Ja jndien sulx al soo was, soo souden sig wel eenige van die Leÿstische aangemeld hebben, eer en alvorens die swarigheÿde sig hebben geopenbart, of nu zedert dat deselve soo wel doenelyk sÿn weg genomen ’t geen egter tot deeser ure nog van niemand is gedaen, en na allen aansien Ligtelyk nu ook niet sal geschieden, gelyk uwE buÿten twÿfel uyt mÿ een brief van den 13 deeser zullen gesien hebben.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Mr. Wagner was mentioned in Document 82, (Nov. 8, 1710) and 86 (Nov. 19, 1710); Bernhardt Wagner in Document 213 with dates ranging from October 1710 through June 1711. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Document 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Maus-Parteÿen: A German proverb says, “Wenn die Katze aus dem Haus ist, tanzen die Mäuse.” This probably means that if no men who bear arms were on the ships, then others might take advantage of the passengers. Vorsterman translates the expression as “roof-partÿen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)