171. July 1, 1711. A letter from Runckel to the Committee in Amsterdam: He is thankful for the passports received and regrets that still not all have come in, and yet because of the passing of the deadline and because of the contract with the ship people, the Mennonites must soon depart. The Reistian party is very alarmed by the capture of Hans Bürki, but they appear nevertheless to prefer to steal out of the land than to depart openly with the others. A new trouble has emerged with the government demanding previously cancelled departure taxes; but Runckel has managed to clear up matters by sharp threats.

[page 1]

Bern[[1]](#footnote-1) July 1, 1711

Very worthy, etc.

My especially highly honored Sirs,

My last letters with the dates 13th, 17th, and 24th of the past month, in which I make a report, I hope have arrived safely.

This serves only to inform my highly honored Sirs that the royal French passports for the conveyance of the poor local Mennonites arrived here in excellent form and accordingly we have decided, if it pleases God, to allow their journey to begin in His most holy name and under His all ruling protection and care on the 13th of this month.

We had indeed wished that the still missing passports for the Electoral Palatinate, the Archbishopric of Cologne, and the Gentlemen Landgraves of Hesse were on hand. However, the lack of those might not hinder our hastening as much as possible the departure of these poor people, because on the one hand by this time the determined free period is past and the cooperative persons themselves greatly desire their departure; and on the other hand, if we had wished to further postpone the departure, all the ship people, who [page 2] want to be and must be back here again for the coming Zurzach Fair,[[2]](#footnote-2) would have repudiated our contract. We want to hope that both the said passports, and also those which we await from Innsbruck and from his serene Lord, the Duke of Würtemberg, will arrive at this time, or that Mr. Ritter could receive them on the way.

The Emmentalers from the Reistian congregation so far hold out and remain [watchful] with seven eyes,[[3]](#footnote-3) since they [would] clear out of the land

secretly and move and creep in and out of the neighborhood rather than publicly depart from the country for Holland. Whether some of them now want to report at Basel and go onto the ships remains to be seen.

The capture of Hans Bürki has frightened these unfortunate people powerfully and, more than all writings, speeches, messages, and running after them, has caused them to understand that the illustrious Government no longer intends to allow itself to be teased, but, as is actually the case, has decided to go after them more sharply than ever and not to rest until they have fully rooted them out.

In my last letter I had reported that once more some difficulties occupy me, which were appearing and consequently were aimed at making the departure of the Anabaptists much harder to arrange. These difficulties were that the [Anabaptist] Commission, at the instigation of some self-interested officials, has directed the matter and decided already in May behind my back, and certainly unknown to me, that the Great Council [page 3] should apply the remission of emigration tax further to no one except actual Anabaptists and their Reformed spouses, parents, and children who in fact are under the power of their parents. All others should pay the emigration tax. Also they actually have sent off instructions to that effect and ordered officials to so proceed. On this [limitation, that is, limiting the remission of tax] actually not much emphasis had been laid. Because very few adult children are departing with their parents, I have wanted to accept no other Reformed persons, of whom very many have reported [a desire to join the departing group]. Some government officials had actually wanted to extend this limitation to Reformed spouses, parents, and children[[4]](#footnote-4) still under the authority of their parents and already have compelled some to pay the emigration tax and have caused them to protest.

So I have had to begin again to contend and to battle because they

wanted to continue the Sovereign Council’s [new] declaration, which was surreptitiously, furtively, and dishonestly obtained in May. I had to protest everywhere and plainly to state, that if they did not wish to annul this [new declaration] and remain by the declaration in the resolution and open letters of amnesty with respect to the meaning and the letter, I would rather break everything off and leave all the Anabaptists here rather than to consent to this violation of the previous agreement. Then, by the grace of God, it so fruitfully developed that eight days ago today, specifically the 24th of last month, in the presence of the Two Hundred the last declaration [page 4] was revoked and the first again confirmed. This, as I hope, will have been the last battle in the support of these people.

Since my last letter, the Commission has further released to me a few thousand dollars of Anabaptist money.

With this, in spite of greatest haste, I remain,

My highly honored Sirs’ Most devoted servant,

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

1. 171 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 203-204. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Zurzach, a few kilometers south of Waldshut at the Rhine river. Two important fairs took place in that little city, one at Pentecost and one on September 1 “Verenentag.” Cf. “Zurzach” in Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Document 155 has a similar expression. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Any child baptized as an infant would be considered a member of the Reformed Church. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)