211. November 8, 1711. A letter from Johann Ludwig Runckel to the Committee for Foreign Needs: He thanks them for their intercession and he hopes for a more detailed report of the matter and further information so that he can hand in his statement of expenses. Besides Hans Gerber, whose case has not yet been decided, authorities have imprisoned a woman and three men, including a man who, because of the proclaimed amnesty, had allowed himself to be tempted to return from Lorraine, where he had settled six years ago. Accordingly, Runckel considers it would be good if Bendicht Brechtbühl alert and arouse the others, who still keep themselves hidden in Switzerland, to go to Prussia and thus escape the danger, the more so since recently Hans Stauffer secretly came to him, to whom he gave the advice to go to Mannheim for the time being.

[page 1]

Schaffhausen,[[1]](#footnote-1) November 8, 1711.

Noble, etc.

My especially highly honored Sirs,

I have received your very valuable letter of the 23rd of the last month in proper time and gladly learned with great joy that my letters of the 13th of September and of the 11th of October have properly arrived and also how, after the general meeting, my highly honored Sirs sent off some representatives to The Hague. By their help my interests are supported and backed with their best efforts, and they wish to give me soon a report of success and at the same time let me know how to proceed with recording daily expenses.

As I now will be greatly obliged and remain indebted to my highly honored Sirs for the former, so also concerning the latter I will make it my business to conform to your opinion very diligently. Now for a considerable time already I have waited for nothing other than this report, in order to be able to submit my bills, which by the way are quite complete, and to be completely released from this affair in days to come [page 2] with full correctness.

Moreover, I do not doubt in the least that my highly honored Sirs shall feel the impending misfortune of Hans Gerber most painful.[[2]](#footnote-2) His case might probably be one of the first just after St. Martin’s Day[[3]](#footnote-3) to be settled and finished, and then it will be seen whether mercy or, on the other hand, harsh judgment will prevail with the Lords of Bern. For my part I greatly

fear they will want to make an example of this man so that the others can see themselves mirrored in this situation and accordingly strive in time to escape their inexorable misfortune. I fear this so much the more, since on last Thursday I received the report from Mr. Wagner of Bern that, in addition to this Hans Gerber, three Anabaptist men and one Anabaptist woman have been arrested and brought into the regular prison in the Upper Hospital—namely, Niklaus Blum and Michael Gyger from the so-called Leistians or Lower Congregation, and Barbara Gerber and Hans Gilgen from the Amish; of these, the first three are from the parish of Röthenbach in the district of Signau and the fourth a native of Guggisberg in the district of Schwarzenburg.

This last person is so much more to be pitied because he removed from the land already five or six years ago and settled in Lorraine and because of a misunderstanding of the last amnesty [page 3] he again made his appearance in order to retrieve some possessions still in the land. Relying on this amnesty, he allowed himself to enter the country. I hope this will not make his matter worse, but rather much more improve things, especially if he can provide himself, as I do not doubt, with the necessary letters of recommendation from his present Lord. By the way, it is certainly to be wished heartily that it would please God, the Most high, to change the stony hearts of some of the Lords of Bern as well as some of these unfortunate, oppressed people into fleshly ones. Then both sides might recognize what conduces to their true peace; but I fear misfortune, and that the Highest has for the present determined something else. It may be that such a transformation is rather to be wished rather than hoped for.

For this reason, I find myself just at a loss to discover any further means of help, as my highly honored Sirs [find themselves], especially with respect to those who run toward their destruction of their own accord and do not want to be deterred from it in the least. Notwithstanding, in order that the cup might be filled to the brim completely (and this is open to correction), it would be good if Bendicht Brechtbühl would make known to those

Anabaptists still hiding in the country as well as to those scattered around neighboring lands by means of a letter printed, but endorsed with his own signature, how he has [page 4] found matters in Prussia and under what sort of conditions they would be received and accepted there. This may induce several to depart and rescue them from impending danger.

That which brings me to these thoughts is [a recent incident] when a certain Hans Stauffer from Eggiwil, who is still hiding in the Bern area,[[4]](#footnote-4) came to me three days ago and very earnestly asked that a place might be pointed out to him where he with his wife and children could make their retreat because he certainly could not consider himself safe in the neighborhood. I advised him that because now the time [of amnesty]is passed, he could go to Mannheim first and wait there to see if perhaps some would want to travel with him to Prussia. He has gone back again to fetch his wife and children, and so I must await what he will further undertake.

I have neither seen nor heard anything from Daniel Rychen, and so I surmise that his letter must have been lost.

With this, taking leave all around, and again [requesting]

a most earnest recommendation to my modest advantage with

the States [General],[[5]](#footnote-5) also the best commendation of myself

and mine to your devoted prayer I remain constantly,

My highly honored Sirs’

Most devoted servant,

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

1. 211 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 243-244. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A double negative is removed here. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. November 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A Hans Stauffer from Eggiwil is reported to live as a tenant and leaseholder on a larger farm in the Lenzburg district in the Bernese Aargau, ca. 46 ½ miles (75 kilometers) northeast of Bern. Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern A II 632, 426. (Information from Hanspeter Jecker). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This request was alluded to in the first paragraph of this letter. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)