**59. March 24, 1695.** *Letter from the Dutch States General to the Elector Prince of the Palatinate, Johann Wilhelm, pressing for the compensation of Netherlanders in Jülich whose possessions were confiscated by the Elector Prince in the persecution against the Mennonites. This document illustrates the fact that Dutch governmental intercession for Mennonites was not confined to helping those from Switzerland.*

[folio 1 recto]

Most Serene Elector Prince and Lord,

We communicated to Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness in the month of September of last year the injustice that happened to the residents of our nation, who are of the Mennonite persuasion, by the seizure and sale of their goods in the territory of Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness. It has pleased Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness by his own official letters of last September 30 and October 29 to make the promise to us that their goods would be returned to our residents and that a time of grace would be granted to them in order to sell those goods. We have therefore fully expected that our residents would be compensated for costs and damages while regaining possession of their goods which unjustly had been taken from them.

But we cannot hide from Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness that we are greatly distressed to learn from the complaints of the residents of our nation, who are involved, that they thus far have not been able to receive their possessions, notwithstanding their fulfillment of all their duties in the matter. But their goods are still withheld from them—whether [because] the civil servants, who are in charge of carrying out the restitution, do not follow the commands of Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness, or whether there are other reasons which are unknown to us and which we do not want to investigate. Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness may see from the herewith-appended enclosures, [an account of] the goods and their value, which have been taken from some citizens of Maastricht and a citizen of Nijmegen and have not yet been returned.

It was already some time ago that they had complained to us that

their goods were not restored. But we have always been in hope that the intent of Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness’s promises would be complied with for them regarding what legally belonged to them. For that reason we have ventured again from time to time to bother Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness about this. But since our expectation has been in vain, [folio 1 verso] we accordingly cannot refrain from requesting once more, most sincerely and in neighborly friendliness, that Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness finally create the conditions after such a long passage of time which [will] enable our residents to actually obtain their belongings. [We request] further, with that purpose in view, that you compensate their costs and damages by restitution of all the goods, none excepted, which were taken from them, and, in case some furniture or crops might have been sold, [you restore] all the money which has been accrued, as well as the real properties, in the same condition as they were before they were taken from them.

And as far as the time, or deadline, of six months is concerned that was set for the compulsory selling of the goods within that time, Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness is requested to remove such a deadline because in this time of war possessions can only be sold at a great loss; and we notice that in the meantime—although, as we believe, against Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness’s intention— people are being pressured to buy these goods, in order thus to obtain them at a low price. Moreover, it is just as little reasonable that Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness sets a time for our residents to get rid of their real estate in his territory, as it would be reasonable that we would make such a law for the subjects of Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness who possess goods in our nation. And Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness would not likely appreciate such [a law], nor could this result

from the friendship between [our] mutual residents, without causing potential damage to our residents, [simply because] they are of the Mennonite persuasion.[[1]](#footnote-1)

For we do not want to investigate to what extent the proclamations and ordinances of the Empire apply to the Mennonists and to what extent these are operative for this present time, and, in consequence, are being executed. We cannot, however, condone that such proclamations or ordinance[s] are carried out against our residents or that they are punished with regard to their possessions accordingly, nor [folio 2 recto] that Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness, or any other foreign power, might inquire what religion is professed by the residents of this rank[?] in our country, and, as a consequence, put them at a disadvantage. We also trust that Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness will abstain from further pretensions in this matter, and accordingly we ask once again that Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness be willing to make the requested restitution and satisfaction to our residents.

For we neither can nor want to keep Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness ignorant [of the fact] that we otherwise might not refrain from using means, of which we are capable, concerning the request and complaints to bring them to their resolution. This we have so far postponed in the expectation of the result of the promises made by Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness, and [also] because we would like to see that the good friendship and relations between the residents on both sides continue in agreement, and that every cause for a change in this matter should be prevented. However, we shall not be able to refuse any longer the protection to our residents which they deserve. We assure Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness that nothing would please us more than that all occasion for reproach may be prevented and that those who are sincerely sympathetic to Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness continue to maintain the good friendship and relationship[?], which have always existed between us. But we expect that the same will

be answered from Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness’s side with similar affection.

Closing with this, we pray God Almighty, Most Serene Elector and Lord, to keep Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness in His protection.

In The Hague, March 24, 1695.

Your Honorable Electoral Serene Highness’s

obliging good friends and neighbors,

the States General of the United Netherlands

W. Benthem

by order from the same,

F. Fagel. [[2]](#footnote-2)

1. **59** 1 The exact meaning of this sentence is obscure. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. François Fagel, clerk of the States-General, 1690-1744. *ME* II, 287-288. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)