20. March 22, 1710. From the records of the States General, responding to a petition from François St.-Saphorin, ambassador of the Canton of Bern, for a passport for Georg Ritter with fifty Anabaptists, who are being transported to America. They have decided to answer that the States General refuses the petition and wishes to do nothing that in any way could be interpreted as approving the methods of the government of Bern. They also share their earlier letter of March 15.

[recto]

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

Extract from the Register of the Resolutions

of the High and Mighty Lords of the States General

of the United Netherlands.

Saturday, March 22, 1710.

Read at the assembly: the memo from Lord St.-Saphorin,[[2]](#footnote-2) sent from the

Canton of Bern, requesting a passport for Mr. Ritter[[3]](#footnote-3), with fifty Anabaptists, which the Canton of Bern has agreed to send to America, allowing transit through this country, and that the Board of the Admiralty of the Maas[[4]](#footnote-4) is to be written to assist the transport of the same, according to the aforesaid memo here inserted.

High and Mighty Sirs,

The Illustrious Canton of Bern, having agreed to transport from its territory some fifty Anabaptist subjects, whose teaching and disobedience to its ordinances create such a dangerous example, that it can no longer tolerate them and must transport them to America under the guidance of Mr. Ritter. To this end the undersigned, by order of his superior, requests your High and Mighty Lords to provide him with a passport that he can send to Mr. Ritter, which will instruct your governors and civil servants not only to allow transit of the aforesaid Mr. Ritter with the Anabaptists whom he is accompanying, but also to provide him with all necessary help and assistance, so that none of them may escape.

He is also honored to request your High and Mighty Lords on behalf of the Illustrious Canton of Bern that all necessary help may be provided by the Lords of the Admiralty of Rotterdam in the embarkation and transport of the aforesaid Mr. Ritter.

The Illustrious Canton of Bern hopes that your High and Mighty Lords may allow this request and may honor it with fresh proof of your goodwill, which you have displayed on all occasions, and in turn it will zealously attempt to acquire all means to demonstrate to your High and Mighty Lords, its obligation and respect for you. The undersigned prays (on his own behalf) most fervently for your High and Mighty Lords’ safekeeping and prosperity.

The Hague, March 22, 1710.[[5]](#footnote-5)

was signed St.-Saphorin

This having been deliberated, it is agreed and understood that the following shall be added as response to the mentioned Lord St.-Saphorin: the High and Mighty Lords are of the opinion that, with respect to religion, every man must be allowed freedom to believe and to confess that which

he [verso] considers will lead to his salvation, and that no one may be persecuted or punished on account of such a faith and confession, when his teaching and his life do not harm the state or the country of which he is a subject or an inhabitant, and that the present Mennonites or so-called Anabaptists must be included in this category. The High and Mighty Lords, having experienced at first hand that, apart from the particularities of their faith and persuasion, these people have always conducted themselves as good residents and subjects. Therefore, they can in no way whatsoever lend a hand to the transportation of the aforesaid Anabaptists to America, or do anything of which it might be said that they approve of such procedures against the Mennonites in the Canton of Bern, but rather, that the High and Mighty Lords, having been informed a few days ago concerning those procedures, could not refuse to intercede for them. A copy of the letter concerning this, written to the Canton of Bern on the 15th of this month,

along with the extract of this resolution of the High and Mighty Lords, shall be given to Lord St.-Saphorin, with the request to apply his good offices to support the content of these as best he can.

In agreement with the aforesaid register

signed by

J. Fagel

Memo of the ambassador of Bern, St.-Saphorin,

To the High and Mighty Lords, March 22, 1710, and the resolution concerning it.

1. 20 A modified English translation, mistakenly giving Ruyter for Ritter and exaggerating the number of exiles to 150, is given in Yelton, p. 18. Although it is not completely clear, it appears to be taken from The Daily Courant of July 22, 1710. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Françoís Louís Pesme, Seígneur de Saint-Saphorin, nobleman of the Canton of Vaud (1668-1738) was a representative of the Protestant Cantons of Switzerland to the Netherlands. ME IV, 403; ML IV, 9; Bokhorst, pp. XVI, XX, XXIII, 106, 144; Ludwig Bittner and Lothar Groß, Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder seit dem Westfälischen Frieden (1648) (Berlin: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1936), I , pp. 167, 501, 503. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Georg Ritter (1667-1723), wealthy spice merchant of Bern, Switzerland, speculator of land in the New World. ME IV, 344. Yelton, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Admiralty of the Maas River, an arm of the Rhine, (in existence 1586-1796) was responsible for the military and civil interests of the Maas River ports and traffic, with its main seat in Rotterdam. Information from Piet Visser. Cf. De Kleine Oosthoek I, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The ship with the Anabaptist exiles had already left Bern on March 18. Lavater, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)