30. April 9, 1710. Letter from Johann Ludwig Runckel[[1]](#footnote-1) to the government at Bern in which he emphasizes the intercession of the States General of the Netherlands on behalf of the persecuted Swiss Anabaptists. Now he adds his own strong plea at their request.

[page 1]

Copy.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Highly honored, mighty, etc., etc., etc.

My most gracious Lords, at the request of the Mennonites or Baptism-minded congregations living under their protective care, the High and Mighty Lords of the States General of the United Netherlands have not wanted to forbear with Your Excellencies (and my own most highly respected Lords) in their intercession in favor of the Anabaptists living in your Illustrious Canton. The goal is that these poor people should not be combatted any longer concerning their faith, but as good, quiet subjects, who do not meddle in outside matters, might yet enjoy the gracious, protective care of your glorious and most highly respected Lords, in great quietness.

And toward this goal, the above-mentioned High and Mighty Lords [of the United Netherlands] have sent me a letter supplemental to the one to you and with their most gracious command [to me]. Besides translating [the letter],[[3]](#footnote-3) I should not neglect or may not fail in strictest fulfillment of my duty to benefit these unfortunate people in whatever else might be done. Now certainly not to be overlooked is the fact that the Anabaptists through

actual banishment and expulsion [or] who have already sat a considerable time in prisons [page 2] [are] no longer in their former condition, and with regard to them from this point forward, this fact is no longer to be changed. Since from external sources, however, I learn that a significant number of these good people are present here and there in the territory of Your Excellencies (and My honored Lords) [in Bern], some [Anabaptists] will actually again be incarcerated. So I have considered it an unavoidable necessity, without further loss of time, to obediently hand over the letter of my above-mentioned Gracious Lords addressed to Your Excellencies (and my highly honored Lords) in order that the letter might prove useful, if not to the first [prisoners] at least to these last.

The congregations of the Mennonites in the Netherlands hope that the Anabaptists who (scattered here and there in the Illustrious Swiss Confederation, and in particular in the Illustrious Canton of Bern) be recognized as their proper and true fellow believers, agreeing in life and teaching with them. They hope that Your Excellencies (and My honored Lords), along with the remaining Illustrious Cantons professing the Protestant religion, will make your concern the release of their brothers in Christ from the French galleys, from the cloisters, from the prisons, and from the stinking holes, not only with [page 3] great care and tenderness but also will prevail upon other sovereign powers to strive for the same by every means and manner.

The Mennonite congregations in the Netherlands hope, I say, that at the coming conclusion of peace[[4]](#footnote-4) you may espouse their brothers’ cause with equal energy. Your Excellencies (and My honored Lords), who espouse the cause of the poor, imprisoned French[[5]](#footnote-5) in such a brotherly way, as God-fearing fathers of the fatherland, will not forbear, but graciously bestow some few sparks of your gentle mercy and compassion on your own native-born, quiet, and faithful subjects.

The [Dutch] hope so much the more because in the opposite case they do not unreasonably fear that the enemies of our religion[[6]](#footnote-6) might prefer this example and afterwards with respect to our imprisoned brothers[[7]](#footnote-7) on the French galleys, as also with others, perhaps spy out just such opportunities to show themselves so much more difficult. This case illustrates the adage that one tears down with the one hand that which one attempts to build up so carefully and lovingly with the other.

This [adage] is highly regarded and significant, as also the highly honored Lords should further dutifully [page 4] imagine what this should mean for them.[[8]](#footnote-8) I do not doubt Your Excellencies (and my own most highly respected Lords) will benevolently reflect on so loving an intercession as this of the High and Mighty [Lords of the States General], and will also further choose to place me in a position that I may truthfully assure the aforementioned High and Mighty [Lords] that their intercession has not been a matter of indifference to the Illustrious Canton of Bern.

With this, Your Excellencies (and my own most highly respected Lords),

I commit myself in the all-powerful, gracious protection of God, the Most High, obediently to your further favor and goodwill and remain always in all appropriate respect.

Delivered to the Illustrious Canton of Bern.

Schaffhausen the 9th of April 1710.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. 30 In March 1710 Runckel was living in Schaffhausen and later he lived in Bern. He is called Secretaris van den Staat aen de Switserse cantons on behalf of the Republic of the United Netherlands. See “Uit de geschiedenis van de overkomst der vervolged Zwitsers in 1710 en 1711,” by A. van Gulik in DB (1909), pp. 136, 145,ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A English version of this letter appeared in British newspaper, The Daily Courant, Monday, May 1, 1710, issue no. 2658, 1; British Library Board, London; and yet another version of the same letter in this newspaper, July 22, 1710, no. 2729. The text of the letters is given in Yelton, pp. 15-16 and 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The letter needed to be translated from Dutch into German. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Looking forward to the end of the widespread European “War of the Spanish Succession” and the negotiations which opened with the Peace Congress on January 12, 1712, at Utrecht. S. H. Steinberg, Historical Tables 58 B.C.-A.D. 1961 (London: Macmillan& Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Calvinist Huguenots mistreated by French authorities. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The enemies of the Reformed religion here are the Catholics. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Runckel apparently was a Calvinist. See Document 102, page 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This sentence is obscure, perhaps implying a threat. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Page 18 of Vorsterman’s translation says “Was signed J. Louis Runckel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)