66. September 27, 1710. Runckel wrote this letter in French, probably to Fagel,[[1]](#footnote-1) reporting on the deliberations held in the Great Council of Bern with regard to the proposals of the King of Prussia concerning the Mennonites.

[folio 1 recto]

Bern, September 27, 1710

Sir,

By means of my most humble [yet] privileged communication of the 17th of this month, I have the honor of informing the government very respectfully about what has happened so far on the subject of the unfortunate Mennonites of this country. Several individuals who are well disposed toward these people have formed a plan with Lord de Saint-Saphorin[[2]](#footnote-2) and myself to attempt to allow them to stay in the country, if possible, or at least not to make a hasty departure before their fellow believers in Holland and at Hamburg have found an assured place of refuge for them. And furthermore [I inform you] that, in accordance with this plan, we did everything possible to prevent the request of His Majesty, the King of Prussia, to receive these people in his lands from being brought before the Sovereign Council until after the Council’s recess.

We were not successful in accomplishing this, however, since Mr. Willading, the chief magistrate, saw to it that the measure was introduced into deliberation yesterday in the Great Council, since the Anabaptist Commission did not do a very good job [folio 1 verso] of making its report

on this topic.[[3]](#footnote-3) It was there resolved to have them move on to the territories of His Majesty, the King of Prussia, with permission to sell and to take their goods out of this Canton, provided that it would be possible to come to terms with His Majesty on certain conditions regarding their resettlement and their transport.

After the Council’s recess, there should be deliberation about these

matters to weigh more carefully the pros and cons concerning the timing of the departure of this unfortunate group and the amnesty which will be accorded both to those who are themselves actually in prison and to the others who are scattered hither and yon and who must be brought together at a certain time, which will be determined for them, so as to compile the list which His Majesty, the King of Prussia, requests in order that they be able to dispose of their goods. And [there should also be deliberation] concerning the time which ought to be given to them for the sale of the lands they own, etc.

Furthermore, it was then and there resolved that, while waiting, there should be a response to the proposals made on the part of His Majesty, the King of Prussia, and that at the same time he should be informed about the said resolutions, etc.

Seeing that this affair is taking a course of action more or less conforming to our plan and judging that, in comparable circumstances, it would always be advantageous to gain time, [folio 2 recto] those well-disposed to the Mennonites have not seen fit to introduce any difficulties in this regard, but rather to make known to the Sovereign Council that it would not be any better to wish to purge the country of those heretics with unorthodox beliefs than it would be to have them there, if at the same time no resolution was taken to stem the sources of those unorthodox beliefs.[[4]](#footnote-4) And these objections have been made with all the steadfastness of purpose imaginable. The result is not only the clergy but also the Senate who appointed the clergy and established them in their positions [which] have been so well protected that they will remember this for a long time to come and will assuredly lose a good measure of that enthusiasm for persecution which has motivated them up to this point.[[5]](#footnote-5)

I hope that, at the next regularly scheduled session, I shall be in a position to communicate in a most respectful manner both the proposals of His Majesty, the King of Prussia, to receive the unfortunate Mennonites from this Canton in his lands and the resolution this same Canton took yesterday in this regard.

P.S. At this very moment I have the opportunity to communicate the resolution of the Illustrious Canton of Bern, of which I have the honor to append a copy[[6]](#footnote-6) here.

Johann Friedrich Willading (1641-1718) was a member of the Anabaptist Commission in 1700 and a mayor of Bern from 1708 until his death. Willading, whom Runckel characterizes as an “ungodly man,” was a chief opponent of the Anabaptists in Bern.

1. 66 François Fagel. See note in Document 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. François-Louis de Pesme de Saint-Saphorin (1668-1737), a native of Saint Saphorin at Saint-Saphorin sur Morges, district of Morges, Canton of Vaud, was a Swiss diplomat and officer in the Austrian army and navy. In preparation for the so-called Treaties of Utrecht in 1713, he engaged in diplomatic relations for Emperor Charles VI. See also notes in Documents 20, 60, and 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In the Dutch version, A 1278a in the de Hoop Scheffer Inventaris, this seems to be translated as “wat tussen beide geantwoord heeft.” For an explanation of the parts of A 1278, see note in Document 65. A 1278a is not included in the present volume as merely a translation of the French original, Document 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Here he may be hinting at the moral failures of the Reformed clergy in Bern. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The last two unclear sentences of this paragraph are given in the Dutch translation (A 1278a) as: En deze redenen sijn met alle bedenkelijke kragt doorgeset, sodat se niet alleeniglijk de Leeraaren, maar ook den raad die se verkiest & aansteld, sodanig getroffen heeft dat het haar lang sal heugen, en dat het hen een goed deel van haar vervolgden aard, die sij tot nog bezeten hebben sal doen afstaan. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Document 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)