86. November 19, 1710. A letter again from Runckel: He repeats his wish that the Swiss Mennonites should be settled not in Prussia, but in the Netherlands. Finally and with much difficulty, through a personal visit with the prisoners, he has come to know the number of the Mennonites who keep themselves hidden in the Bernese countryside, of whom he encloses a list with place names.

[page 1]

Bern[[1]](#footnote-1) the 19th of November 1710.

Worthy, etc.

My especially highly honored Sirs,

My last communication was from the 15th of this month, in which the following was presented: 1.) what was recently transmitted to the Illustrious Canton of Bern by his royal Majesty of Prussia concerning the reception and admission of the poor local Mennonites; 2.) also what has been resolved in response by the Illustrious Canton of Bern; 3.) further with this is reported, what arrangements one here would rather see when, instead of leading these good people off into Prussia, they could be received and admitted under the protection and care of the High and Mighty Lords of the States General, since these good people themselves testify to a far greater longing and desire for Holland than for Brandenburg[[2]](#footnote-2) territory; 4.) also, according to my humble opinion, the former would be far more advantageous and [page 2] beneficial to them in every manner and respect than the latter, etc. Concerning this, I want to refer to my last letter as well as to my foregoing presentation, which is short for the sake of brevity.

Hereafter, to facilitate this work, and in order that my highly honored Sirs may so much better and positively take measures for the settlement of these unfortunate people under the care and protection of your High and Mighty Lords, the Anabaptists imprisoned here already for some time are requesting and asking through Mr. Knopf[[3]](#footnote-3) and Mr. Wagner that they in confidence could reveal to me how many of their fellow-believing brothers and sisters they suppose are still sojourning in the present lands, or might be scattered around the vicinity. They, however, through fear, mistrust, and

tenderness of conscience have all kinds of misgivings and do not wish to fully express themselves in conversation in the presence of the two above-mentioned gentlemen. When I visited them again the day before yesterday in their bonds, and indeed in the company of Mr. Knopf, both in the Island as well as in the Upper Hospital,[[4]](#footnote-4) I presented to them the need for this elucidation and how little danger there was to worry about in this situation for them and their [page 3] brothers and sisters who were still free. I also protested to them at length, in Christian love, as to why this actually ought to be done. This produced results.

After some consultation among themselves, they finally gave the information, as can be seen from the enclosure, and implored me to communicate this with no one other than my highly honored Sirs in order that you may know the approximate number of the poor Anabaptists, some imprisoned here, some scattered around. Consequently, if it is at all possible, you might endeavor to find a refuge for them under the care and protection of your High and Mighty Lords, or, in case that is absolutely impossible, under his royal Majesty in Prussia, or if my highly honored Sirs might find something else advisable, and this of course the sooner the better. Then hereafter they might be released from their imprisonment and other troubles, in honorable fashion earn their living, and serve God in peace and quiet rest, and full freedom of conscience, in the place which He has finally provided as a dwelling place.

Now the accompanying statement makes clear that these poor people [will] not be much [page 4] longer in the land and on the other hand it is easy to observe that many are weak, sickly, and aged persons among these

people, who according to the course of nature cannot live much longer. Now I would like to hope that my highly honored Sirs would so much easier succeed in finding a good, sure refuge, if it is possible, under the care and protection of your High and Mighty Lords, or at least bring them somewhere that they might finally have peace.

Should one, contrary to hope, need to seek a place of settlement under the protection of his royal Majesty of Prussia, it would be a grief of heart to me because it would protract the matter much too long. Then I wish, and might very urgently request, that you reflect on my thoughts which were given to my highly honored Sirs in my letter, repeated rather briefly here.

Moreover, the poor imprisoned Mennonites together (whose number has not increased more than a single man from the so-called Lower Congregation since the last transmitted listing) have very urgently asked and [page 5] requested me most humbly to thank my highly honored Sirs in their name for all the benefits received and true fatherly care, also help, comfort, and advice, and also to request urgently your steady continuation of the same. This [thanks I am] to render in the best form, and at the same time to most kindly commend my highly honored Sirs, myself, and my family to the supreme, mighty, gracious protection [of God] in your devoted prayer, as I in true love and righteousness continually am and remain,

My highly honored Sirs’

most devoted servant.

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

[page 6]

According to the declaration signed at the end by me in the presence of

Mr. Knopf, received in profoundest confidence from the poor

Anabaptists sitting as prisoners here in Bern on the 17th of November 1710:

There are besides these prisoners[[5]](#footnote-5) approximately 300 men and women

of their faith in and around the countryside of the Illustrious

Canton of Bern, as namely:

In the district of Signau approximately 17 persons

In the district of Sumiswald approximately 20 persons

In the Oberland, or the so-called

Upper Congregations of Steffisburg

Thun, Hilterfingen, Sigriswil

Schwartzenegg, Diessbach, Röthenbach

Frutigen etc. etc. Together approximately 40 mostly women

In the so-called Lower Congregation, as

Langnau, Trub, Süderen,[[6]](#footnote-6) Laupertswil,

Eggiwil, Trachselwald, Lützelflüh, etc. etc.

together approximately 188 men and

women

Around the city approximately 10 mostly

men

And otherwise here and there scattered around the land

with whom the witnesses are not actually

acquainted approximately 20 persons

Accordingly making altogether

more or less

295 Persons of both

genders

See next page.

[page 7]

Among them are the Reformed husbands with Mennonite

wives, and Reformed wives with Mennonite husbands,

as also of this kind are the children, not yet rebaptized,

which run proportionately to a rather large number

not included. Dated Bern, the 17th

of November 1710.

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

1. 86 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 93-95. A translation into Dutch of the list only is included with A 1287 (but not given here since the German is the original). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The King of Prussia was the Elector of Brandenburg. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A citizen favorable to the Mennonites mentioned in Documents 68 and 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For the Island and the Upper Hospital prisons, see Document 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Dutch translation says “behalven deese gevangene,” (“besides these prisoners”) and then in the margin in a different hand “48 perso.” evidently someone’s estimate of the number of prisoners. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Süderen is not a political entity, but an area east of Wachseldorn on the Buchholterberg, belonging to the parish of Ober-Diessbach. Geographisches Lexikon der Schweiz (Neuenburg: Verlag von Gebrüder Attinger,1908), V, 722 , VI, 492. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)