99. December 15, 1710. A letter from Jan Willink and Cornelis Beets visiting in The Hague to the Committee for Foreign Needs at Amsterdam with a report of their experiences with Clerk Fagel and Lord Schmettau, envoy of the Prussian King, in which they share the decision of the meeting on December 5 to bring the Swiss to the Netherlands at the Committee’s expense and inform the Swiss after their arrival about the proposal of the King.

[folio 1 recto]

The Hague, December 15, 1710

Very worthy, beloved friends,

As a result of [the work of] the Committee, we made our affairs explicit and spoke with Mr. Goslinga as well as the Grand Pensionary[[1]](#footnote-1) and Clerk Fagel, with whom we can readily consult, and we parted with nearly all promising to meet again, the latter [assigned] first to speak to Mr. Schmettau and then to bring a report of it. We therefore first spoke to His Excellency, but since he had yet to dine and wanted to deal with us at length, we agreed to consult with him this evening at 5 p.m. The Clerk, Mr. Fagel, advised that we should subject all our negotiations with His Majesty of Prussia to the approval of their High and Mighty Sirs. The same was our view as well.

Friend Kalff is not with us on account of a sudden illness of his wife. We greet you in a very friendly manner,

Your obedient servants and friends,

Jan Willink Janszoon

Cornelis Beets

[folio 1 verso]

We spoke to Lord Schmettau for about one and a half hours and expressed what a great thing it is that freedom is being practiced, adding that the brothers from Switzerland can migrate more cheaply by way of

these lands [the Netherlands] and go on by boat to Prussia and Berlin with no expenditure.

However, His Excellency insisted that, if the Canton [of Bern] should take responsibility for the expenses down to Frankfort, and the King from there, this would be best. We replied that the expenses covered by the Canton were paid for from the possessions [of the exiles] and that the King’s expenses would likely be 600 rixdollars as opposed to 100 rixdollars going by way of this country, which would be the best route to go, as we here will pay ahead of time at Aix-la-Chapelle as much as the boats cost,[[2]](#footnote-2) and they will likely take their provisions along, leaving only tolls to pay, etc.

And we further expressed how useful and necessary this is, since the King’s statement that our religion, as is the case here, would be proclaimed there to be a free religion worthy of the King’s protection. To this His Excellency replied that you, at your own request, will be given permission to build a proper church and that His Majesty will provide lands from his own estates, as a free possession for your people.[[3]](#footnote-3)

[folio 2 recto]

Nothing remains, therefore, than to guide deputies to Berlin, as he strongly insists. We said that when we have the people here and see what choice they make, we would then send deputies ahead, but His Excellency was of the opinion that this should occur before that time.

The King had already apprehended that we were looking for land in Friesland, and the King also desired to know what had been resolved by the meeting held here on November 5. We said that the meeting of November 5 had made a resolution to have the brothers and sisters travel at their [our]

cost and then to propose the offer of His Majesty, [and] that they would be looking around for land lying under the authority of their High and Mighty Sirs, but that the land found until now was poor, etc.

We parted from His Excellency for a recess until Wednesday morning, and we will report on this privately to their High and Mighty Sirs tomorrow and expect the comments of the friends on Wednesday morning if you have something further, hoping to return on the afternoon post coach, then again to report to you verbally.

[folio 2 verso]

To the honored, discreet

Mr. Jacob Vorsterman

in Amsterdam

The first eight lines of a letter from members of the Committee for Foreign Needs transcribed on page 558. They report from The Hague on negotiations there to others at Amsterdam. The place, date, and greeting are in the newer Dutch hand, but the rest of the letter reverts back to seventeenth-century script, which the writer learned in his youth.

1. 99 Anthonie Heinsius was Grand Pensionary at the time. For a list of the Grand Pensionaries see Jonathan I. Israel, The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 1998), p. 455. For Anthonie Heinsius (1641-1720) see ME II, 693-694 and WP Encyclopedie II, 917. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The meaning of the clause between this comma and that preceding is a little uncertain. The writing here was done in great haste, and this entire document is difficult to decipher. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This may imply that they would not be serfs as was feared earlier. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)