125. February 3, 1711. Abridgment of a letter from the King of Prussia in which he promises considerable rights to the Mennonite refugees from Switzerland, justifies himself concerning some accusations, and stipulates that all, not merely the poor persons, should come to Prussia.

[folio 1 recto]

Extract[[1]](#footnote-1) of an official response

from His Royal Majesty in Prussia

from Cölln[[2]](#footnote-2) on the Spree, February 3, 1711.

Since we already perceived earlier that it is the intention to keep in Holland those Swiss Mennonites still having some possessions but to send us the impoverished ones, and that it seems almost to be the case that the Swiss Mennonites and their fellow brothers in Holland and in Hamburg also have this in mind, [we want to state] that this does not suit us at all, and that it is best that the impoverished also live in those places where the well-to-do are to be established. You shall therefore do your best from now on to ensure that a previous thought is maintained and that these people, the well-to-do among them as well as the others, are both turned over to us. Further, there is no need for any fear that we would settle these people in such places where they could be affected by the contagious disease, assign them their dwelling in infertile places, or burden them with serfdom, which we are, moreover, thinking of abolishing in our lands.

It is also a matter of course that these Mennonites, if they were to come to our lands, would, like the other Swiss who are already here, be regarded as free people, indeed, be blessed with great privileges and liberties beyond what the natives of these lands enjoy. The contagious disease has almost completely ceased in our lands; no one should imagine that we would in the least expose these new inhabitants, should this [re-settlement] proceed in our lands, to contagious disease, considering that we would thereby defeat our purpose of benefitting our lands and making them more populous, besides wasting all the expenses applied for the purpose.

[folio 1 verso]

We also offer the aforesaid Mennonites free choice of all our provinces as to which of them they find most suitable to live in, and to this end we have proposed that they send some people from among them to search out for themselves desired places in our lands to live in, and with whom a definite contract could be made with respect to the conditions, the prerogatives and the privileges that would be allowed them.

[folio 2 recto: blank]

[folio 2 verso]

Copy of a

Letter from His Royal

Majesty of Prussia

February 3, 1711.

1. 125 A copy of this also appears in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392), p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Or Kölln, a part of the city of Berlin where the royal palace was. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)