

Hospitality and its limits

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Hospitality had economic limits from the start. The guilds feared competition from the newcomers, who brought commercial experience and links with the markets of Lombardy. The council therefore restricted the exiles' activities to trades that did not compete directly with established crafts. It encouraged branches that were new to the city, such as the processing of silk, the production of velvet and the trade in Italian goods, which created work for Zurich's citizens and its rural subjects without displacing existing masters.¹ This policy of channelling refugees into new trades recurs throughout the history of religious migration in early modern Europe. It is the economic logic that later governed the reception of the Huguenots in Zurich, Bern, Geneva and Brandenburg, discussed in the comparative section below.

The economic policy was also a policy of public order. The council tried to prevent the refugees from forming a closed commercial colony with its own rules. Italian merchants had to keep their accounts, pay customs duties and submit to the city's courts like other residents. When the Locarnese later sought access to political offices, the council required them to belong to a guild, which drew them into the civic structure. Several Locarnese merchants joined the *Zunft zur Safran*, the guild of merchants, shopkeepers and dealers in spices and textiles. The silk entrepreneur Evangelista Zanino, a citizen from 1567, was a member in the sixteenth century, and Daniel Orelli represented the guild in the Grand Council from 1709.²

Essentials. Zurich received the Locarnese exiles of 1555 as protected residents. Asylum was granted at once, citizenship only individually and over time. Because the guild constitution of 1336 limited the trades that newcomers could practise, the council steered the refugees towards activities that were new to the city, above all silk processing and the trade with Lombardy. The distinction between protection and citizenship

remained the legal framework of the Locarnese families for more than a century.

1 The Italian congregation

The most visible privilege of the exiles was their own church. The Zurich council allowed the Locarnese to hold Reformed services in Italian, and the community secured as its minister Bernardino Ochino of Siena, the former vicar general of the Capuchins, who had fled Italy in August 1542 and had lived in England at the invitation of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer until the Catholic restoration of 1553. In the middle of 1555 a delegation led by Lelio Sozzini, which according to some accounts included the jurist Martino Muralto, went to Basel to engage Ochino as pastor of the Italian church at Zurich.³ Ochino preached to the Locarnese from 1555, published sermons and polemical writings in Italian and gave the congregation an intellectual standing that extended well beyond its small size. His appointment also linked the Locarnese with the wider network of Italian religious exiles in Switzerland, which included Celio Secondo Curione in Basel, Pietro Martire Vermigli, who came to Zurich in 1556 to succeed Conrad Pellican at the city's academy, and the Sozzini family of Siena.⁴

The connection with Ochino became a liability in 1563. In that year his *Dialogi XXX* appeared in Basel. His opponents read some of the dialogues as a defence of polygamy and as doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity. The Zurich council banished him without giving him the opportunity to defend himself. Ochino left the city at the end of 1563, was driven out of Basel as well and spent the winter in Nuremberg. In the spring of 1564 he moved with his young children to Kraków. He was expelled again that summer, when King Sigismund II Augustus banished all non-Catholic foreigners at the urging of the papal nuncio, and he died in obscurity at Austerlitz (Slavkov) in Moravia at the end of 1564 or the beginning of 1565.⁵ For the Locarnese the episode showed how precarious the position of a foreign congregation remained, even under the protection of a Reformed government. Their orthodoxy was watched, and any suspicion of anti-Trinitarian ideas could be used against them.

2 Notes

1. Paul Keller, "Der Einfluss der Hugenotten auf die Industrie der Stadt Zürich", *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Statistik und Volkswirtschaft* (1925), <https://www.sses.swiss/journal/archive/pdf/1925/1925-I-26.pdf> (consulted 4 October 2026). Keller describes the city's strict monopoly policy, which forbade rural workshops and reserved silk

manufacture to the city, and treats the Locarnese as the group that reintroduced silk processing after the medieval industry had disappeared. ↩

2. Wikipedia, "Daniel Orelli", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Orelli (consulted 4 October 2026): Daniel Orelli represented the Saffron guild in the Grand Council from 1709. Martin Lassner, "Zanino, Evangelista", in DHS, version of 21 May 2012, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/fr/articles/028581/> (consulted 5 October 2026): citizen of Zurich from 1567, "Membre de la corporation du Safran", satin weaving from 1558 and production of Milanese fustian from 1565. See also Hans Schulthess, *Die von Orelli von Locarno und Zürich* (Zürich 1941). ↩
3. Wikipedia, "Bernardino Ochino", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardino_Ochino (consulted 4 October 2026): "Lelio Sozzini and the lawyer Martino Muralto were sent to secure Ochino as pastor of the Italian church at Zurich." Miguel Gotor, "Ochino, Bernardino", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 79 (2013), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardino-ochino_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardino-ochino_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (consulted 5 October 2026): vicar general of the Capuchins from June 1538; letter of 22 August 1542 to Vittoria Colonna announcing his decision to go into exile; move to England with Vermigli at the invitation of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer; return to Switzerland "dopo la restaurazione cattolica nel 1553"; "Alla metà del 1555 una delegazione guidata dal senese Lelio Sozzini lo raggiunse a Basilea per proporgli di trasferirsi a Zurigo". Gotor does not name Martino Muralto. ↩
4. Chris Castaldo, essay on Peter Martyr Vermigli, The Davenant Institute, 19 August 2019, <https://davenantinstitute.org/vermigli-forgotten-reformer/> (consulted 5 October 2026): in 1556 Vermigli "accepted Heinrich Bullinger's offer [...] to succeed Conrad Pellican at the Academy of Zurich". Albano Biondi, "Curione, Celio Secondo", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 31 (1985), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/celio-secondo-curione_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/celio-secondo-curione_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (consulted 5 October 2026): settlement in Basel in 1547 and the chair of rhetoric at the university, which he held for twenty-three years until his death. Gotor, "Ochino" (above), on the Siense Lelio Sozzini. See also Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento* (Firenze 1939; new ed. Torino 1992). Chapter B.I treats the Italian Reformation network in more detail. ↩

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5. Wikipedia, "Bernardino Ochino" (above): publication of the Dialogi XXX in 1563, banishment "without opportunity to defend himself". Gotor, "Ochino" (above): printing of the Dialogi XXX without the prior authorization of the Zurich council; refuge at Basel, from which he was also driven out; "trascorse l'inverno del 1563 a Norimberga"; move "con i figli ancora bambini" to Kraków in the following spring; expulsion of all non-Catholic foreigners by King Sigismund II in the summer of 1564 under pressure from the nuncio Giovanni Francesco Commendone; death at Austerlitz "in un giorno imprecisato tra la fine del 1564 e l'inizio del 1565". ↩

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