

## Over the Alps: the departure of March 1555 and the arrival in Zurich

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The emigration of the Locarnese was a journey of about two months across two jurisdictions and one of the highest passes of the central Alps. It began on 3 March 1555, when, in the words of the historical dictionary, over a hundred Locarnese left the town in the direction of Zurich.<sup>1</sup> The award had fixed the date without regard to the season. In early March the San Bernardino, at 2,066 metres, was deep in snow. A party that included women and children could not cross it at once.<sup>2</sup> Their first destination was therefore the Mesolcina, the Italian-speaking valley of the Moesa that belonged to the Grisons.

### 1 Through the Mesolcina

The choice of route was a legal choice as well as a geographical one. The direct road from Locarno to Zurich ran over the Monte Ceneri or along the Ticino to Bellinzona and then over the Gotthard, through the bailiwicks of Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden and through the territory of Uri itself, all of them Catholic. The road through the Mesolcina left the common lordships at the border below Bellinzona and entered the Grisons, a federation of communes in which, since the second Ilanz articles of 25 June 1526, each commune could appoint and dismiss its own pastor.<sup>3</sup> By 1550 Reformed congregations existed in Poschiavo, in Mesocco, in the Bregaglia and in the Upper Engadin.<sup>4</sup> Giovanni Beccaria had worked in the Mesolcina as a teacher and preacher since 1549.<sup>5</sup> The emigrants could therefore wait out the winter among co-religionists and under a government that did not persecute them, before continuing over the San Bernardino to the Rheinwald, Chur and the road along the Walensee to Zurich.

The historical dictionary's article on Taddeo Duno records the route through the Misox and over the San Bernardino and his arrival in Zurich

in May 1555.<sup>6</sup> Campi confirms that the exiles were received in Zurich in May 1555.<sup>7</sup> The interval of about ten weeks between the departure from Locarno and the arrival in Zurich corresponds to the time needed for the pass to become practicable and for the Zurich authorities to decide how to receive the newcomers. The emigration thus took the form that later Protestant refugee movements would also take: an expulsion under a deadline, a first refuge just across the border, and an onward migration to a city that could offer permanent settlement.

## 2 How many left

The figures for the emigration vary with the sources and with what is counted. The table below collects those used in this chapter.

Figure Reference point Source Nearly 200 Members of the Reformed community, mid-16th Schaff, after century Meyer About 100 Companions of Duno on 3 March 1555 HLS, "Duno" Over 100 Locarnese leaving on 3 March 1555 DSS, "Locarno" 3,725 Inhabitants of the parish of Locarno, 1591 DSS, "Locarno"

The difference between "nearly two hundred" and "over a hundred" has several explanations. Some members of the community recanted and stayed. Others left later, individually, or went to destinations other than Zurich: to the Grisons, to Basel and to Bern.<sup>8</sup> Children may or may not have been counted. Meyer printed a list of the members of the community taken from the Zurich archives and two lists of those who emigrated to Zurich, which would allow a count by household. This chapter relies on the rounded figures of the modern reference works.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of economic history the precise number matters less than the composition of the group. It consisted largely of members of the noble and burgher families, of professionals and of merchants, together with their households. A group of one to two hundred persons of this kind represented a considerable share of the human and financial capital of a town of three to four thousand inhabitants.

## 3 Notes

1. Janke and Huber, "Locarno (comune)" (above). ↩
2. "San Bernardino Pass", Wikipedia (English), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Bernardino\\_Pass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Bernardino_Pass) (2,066 m; links the Hinterrhein valley with the Mesolcina). ↩
3. Institut für Kulturforschung Graubünden, Atlas Graubünden, theme 32, "Konfessionen",

[https://kulturforschung.ch/storage/atlasgr/seiten/32\\_konfessionen.pdf](https://kulturforschung.ch/storage/atlasgr/seiten/32_konfessionen.pdf) (first Ilanz articles of 4 April 1524; second Ilanz articles of 25 June 1526, under which each commune could appoint and dismiss its pastor).

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4. Atlas Graubünden, "Konfessionen" (above). ↩
5. Campi, "Beccaria, Giovanni" (above). ↩
6. Crivelli, "Duno, Taddeo" (above). ↩
7. Campi, "Lutero e la Riforma a Sud delle Alpi" (above) ("Nel maggio 1555 vennero accolti a Zurigo"). ↩
8. Nicoli, "Muralto, Barbara" (above) (Zurich and Bern branches of the Muralt family); Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. VIII, § 40 (above) (emigration "to Graubünden and Zürich"). Schaff dates the departure to 1556, which is an error. ↩
9. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. VIII, § 40 (above) (Meyer's list of members "from the Archives of Zürich" and his "two lists of those who emigrated to Zürich, vol. I. 511-515 and 521-525"); Crivelli, "Duno, Taddeo" (above); Janke and Huber, "Locarno (comune)" (above). ↩

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