

Reception in Zurich

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Zurich had reasons to welcome the Locarnese and reasons to hesitate. The city had championed their cause at the Diet, its church regarded them as brethren, and Heinrich Bullinger had corresponded with their leaders for years. Admitting them was a matter of honour for the Reformed city that had lost the argument in Baden. On the other hand, Zurich was a city of guilds that protected their members against competition, where a group of foreign merchants and artisans with capital could threaten established trades. The historical dictionary's article on Protestant refugees notes that the guilds of Zurich and Basel opposed the refugee policy of their governments because they feared commercial competition in the textile trades.¹

The solution adopted by the Zurich council was admission as residents (*Hintersassen*) with permission to exercise certain trades, combined with a cautious policy on citizenship. Full citizenship came only later and selectively. Giovanni Muralto and his two sons received the citizenship of Zurich in 1566, eleven years after their arrival, which the historical dictionary treats as a sign of the family's successful integration.² Barbara Muralto and her family first lived with the Engelhard family, whose members were close to Bullinger, which illustrates how the refugees relied on personal networks within the Reformed elite for their first accommodation. Beccaria followed the exiles to Zurich as catechist and deacon of their congregation.³

1 Basel, Bern and the Grisons

Not all the exiles stayed in Zurich. Some families or branches moved on to Basel, where a community of Italian scholars and printers had formed around Celio Secondo Curione, and to Bern, where Lodovico Muralto, the son of Martino, settled and became the founder of the von Muralt family of Bern under the name Hans Ludwig.⁴ Others remained in the Italian-

speaking valleys of the Grisons, which offered a familiar language and climate and the possibility of keeping in touch with Lombard trading partners. Beccaria himself returned to preach in the Mesolcina in 1559, was banished from there in 1561 in the course of a Catholic reaction, moved to Chiavenna and became pastor of Bondo in the Bregaglia in 1571.⁵

The dispersion of the community among several Reformed jurisdictions was characteristic of Protestant refugee movements and had economic advantages. A family with members in Zurich, Basel, Bern and Chiavenna possessed a network that reached across the main trading routes between Lombardy and the German-speaking world. The Locarnese merchants in Zurich were able to use this network for the silk and textile trade that Chapter B.II examines. The same pattern, a diaspora of related families in several jurisdictions with complementary legal and commercial advantages, is visible in the later history of Swiss private banking and of Ticinese emigrant families (Chapter A.III).

In figures. The Reformed community of Locarno is said to have numbered nearly two hundred members in the mid-sixteenth century.⁶ On 3 March 1555 over a hundred Locarnese left the town for Zurich.⁷ They arrived in Zurich in May 1555 after crossing the San Bernardino.⁸ In 1591 the parish of Locarno counted 3,725 inhabitants.⁹ Before 1559 some 800 Italian religious refugees had passed through or settled in the Grisons, according to Schaff, a quarter or a fifth of them educated men.¹⁰ Geneva admitted about 8,000 Protestant refugees between 1549 and 1587, of whom about 3,000 settled permanently.¹¹

2 Notes

1. Tosato-Rigo, "Protestantische Glaubensflüchtlinge" (above). ↩
2. Nicoli, "Muralto, Barbara" (above). Status of Hintersassen for individual families. ↩
3. Campi, "Beccaria, Giovanni" (above). ↩
4. Pauli Falconi, "Muralto, Martino" (above). ↩
5. Campi, "Beccaria, Giovanni" (above). ↩
6. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. VIII, § 40 (above). ↩
7. Janke and Huber, "Locarno (comune)" (above). ↩
8. Crivelli, "Duno, Taddeo" (above). ↩
9. Janke and Huber, "Locarno (comune)" (above). ↩
10. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. VIII, § 38, "The Reformation in the Italian Valleys of the Grisons. Vergerio",

<https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc8/hcc8.iv.iv.ix.html> ("One fourth or fifth of them were educated men"). ↩

11. Tosato-Rigo, "Protestantische Glaubensflüchtlinge" (above). ↩

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