

Spouses, children and those who stayed

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The award required decisions about households. A married man who left took his wife and minor children with him, unless his wife refused to follow him or the authorities claimed the children for the Catholic faith. The Augsburg formula of emigration "together with their wives and children" reflected the general assumption that the household followed its head. In Locarno the question was contested. The Catholic side sought to retain children for Catholic education. The literature reports cases of family members who stayed behind, of property divided between emigrants and relatives who conformed, and of later disputes over inheritances.¹ The Muralto family split into branches in Zurich and in Bern, while other branches of the old Locarnese families remained Catholic in Locarno.²

Those who stayed were not left in peace. The presence of a papal nuncio in Locarno in the weeks before the departure, the preaching campaign of the Dominicans and the prosecution of the women who disputed with the nuncio show that the authorities sought to reconvert the town and to deter any repetition. For families that remained, conformity was the condition of keeping property, office and membership in the corporations. The structure of the award thus offered a strong incentive to recant to those whose property was immovable and whose livelihood was local. At the same time it allowed those whose wealth was mobile, whose skills were transferable and whose networks reached Zurich to leave.

1 The nuncio and the trial of the women

In January 1555 the papal nuncio to the Confederation, Ottaviano Della Rovere, came to Locarno and invited Dominican friars to preach for the reconversion of the Protestants.³ After a sermon on transubstantiation Lucia Orelli asked for a theological discussion with the nuncio. When Della Rovere summoned her, she appeared with Barbara Muralto, Caterina

Appiani and other women, who reaffirmed their convictions in theological argument. Judicial records show that Barbara Muralto, Lucia Bellò and Caterina Appiani were fined 50 crowns each and that their property was confiscated. After almost two years of negotiations, supported by the community in exile and by the intervention of Heinrich Bullinger, the charge of blasphemy was dropped for lack of witnesses and the penalties were reduced: Barbara Muralto was ordered to pay 30 crowns and Lucia Bellò 20.

The case shows the limits of the award as a legal settlement. The general decision on emigration did not end the exposure of the emigrants to criminal proceedings for acts committed before their departure. Their property in Locarno remained a target for fines and confiscations. Its recovery required diplomatic pressure from Zurich and the continued advocacy of the community's representatives at the Diet. The reduction of the fines and the withdrawal of the charge of blasphemy show, on the other hand, that the procedures of the common lordship could correct excesses when the Reformed cantons insisted. The outcome was a negotiated reduction of penalties, which is what the federal system of joint government tended to produce.

Common misconception. The Locarnese exiles of 1555 are sometimes described as refugees who lost everything and arrived in Zurich as paupers. The sources point the other way. The award of 1554 allowed the Reformed to leave with their households and to sell their property, and leading exiles such as Martino Muralto and Aloisio Orelli invested substantial sums in silk, velvet and textile trading in Zurich within two or three years of their arrival. The losses were real, since forced sales, fines and confiscations reduced their wealth and some families divided. Yet the exile of 1555 was a regulated departure of propertied families under public law, and that is precisely why it could become the starting point of the economic history traced in Chapter B.II.

2 Notes

1. Meyer, *Die evangelische Gemeinde in Locarno* (above); Simona Canevascini and Piero Bianconi, *L'esilio dei protestanti locarnesi* (Locarno: Armando Dadò, 2005). Provisions of the award on children. ↩
2. Nicoli, "Muralto, Barbara" (above) (Zurich and Bern branches of the Muralto family); Pauli Falconi, "Muralto, Martino" (above) (his son Lodovico, called Hans Ludwig, founder of the von Muralto of Bern). ↩

3. Nicoli, "Muralto, Barbara" (above) ("il nunzio papale e vescovo di Terracina Ottaviano Della Rovere (o Raverta)"). The older literature also gives the name as Raverta or Riverta. ↩

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