

agenda that became the Holocaust are best served by the publication of material, no matter how distinguished the publisher and eminent the author, that does not meet the standards for factual accuracy absolutely essential to work in this field.

Notes

1 See the review of Professor Burleigh's *Death and Deliverance "Euthanasia" in Germany, 1900–1945* (Cambridge, 1994) in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 10 2, Fall 1996, pp 182–185, by Roy Schwartzman of the University of South Carolina

2 In addition to *Death and Deliverance*, Burleigh is the author of *Prussian Society and the German Order An Aristocratic Corporation in Crisis c 1410–1466* (Cambridge, 1984); *Germany Turns Eastwards A Study of "Ostforschung" in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1988), and, with Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, 1991)

3 Though Burleigh is aware of the publications sponsored by the Institut für Sozialforschung in Hamburg, and cites the traveling exhibit the Institut sponsored on the crimes of the Wehrmacht in Russia, any discovery of signs of "enlightened" policies in German-occupied Russia needs to be weighed against a close reading of the mass of evidence in Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (eds), *Vernichtungskrieg Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944* (Hamburg, 1995)

4 See especially Hans Marsalek, *Die Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Mauthausen* (Vienna, 1980), pp 17–33

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Frontières et camps: Le refuge en Suisse de 1933 à 1945, André Lasserre (Lausanne: Editions Payot Lausanne, 1995), 397 pp., 185,05FF.

The consequences of the Second World War are being felt more strongly today than ever before in Switzerland. The current domestic and international debate centers on dormant Jewish accounts in Swiss banks, looted gold that found its way to Switzerland, and Switzerland's refugee policy. Was Switzerland—a neighbor of Nazi Germany—a safe haven for money and gold, but not for people in need?¹ During the past few decades there have been a number of critical publications in the historical field concerning Switzerland's refugee policy during World War II. Among these early studies, one must mention the so-called Ludwig-report from 1957,² a governmental commission-report following the scandal surrounding the J-stamp passport and Alfred Häsler's book.³ The former examines the subject from the administrative point of view and pays no attention to individual experiences, whereas the latter depicts the story of several individual refugees but examines the administrative-political level rather poorly.

André Lasserre, author of an earlier work on public opinion in Switzerland between 1939 and 1945,⁴ situates his work between these two approaches. The guiding spirit of Lasserre's *Frontières et camps* is expressed in the following words.

The historian is not striving for a mere intellectual knowledge; rather his generalizations express themselves by the power of things formulated in a global and abstract manner. Paradoxically it is statistics most accurately which define the situations experienced; they avoid the example cited most frequently, because it seems the most striking one, but which is in reality often an exception, whereas statistics allow one to distinguish more clearly between the general and the particular (p 8)

Yet by basing his research heavily on records from the Federal Archives in Berne, which contain information on several administrative and organizational aspects of refugee policy, he stands closer to Ludwig's approach. Besides taking many new sources into consideration, Lasserre makes an important contribution by integrating the often dispersed material and specialized studies in this field (published since Ludwig and Häsler) and bringing to light the manifold political and administrative processes and structures concerning Swiss refugee politics during World War II

Lasserre approaches his subject chronologically. The opening chapter outlines the discourse on the so-called *Überfremdung* ("foreign infiltration"), which evolved during the twenties. It strongly influenced the narrow definition of immigration as well as legislation towards foreigners during the thirties and came to form an integral part of the restrictive refugee politics in Switzerland. Subsequent chapters analyze the evolution of Swiss refugee politics between 1933 and 1939 that led to a restrictionist attitude, particularly towards Jewish refugees during the years 1942–1943. That Jewish refugees were one of the main "targets" in the public and administrative discourse and policy was clearly expressed in the police directive of August 13, 1942, which stated that refugees "merely on grounds of race, for example Jews, do not count as political refugees" (p 162). Therefore, their right to enter the country was void, and consequently many refugees were deported. Throughout the book the author thoroughly intersperses the question of public opinion and attitudes among the population and in the media

One of Lasserre's main achievements is to reveal Switzerland's refugee politics as a three-phased model consisting of admission, sojourn, and departure of refugees. Switzerland never defined itself as a country of immigration but as a transit country (*coulour de passage*) for refugees. Whereas previous studies focused mainly on the first phase, Lasserre illuminates hitherto unknown information on the isolated life of refugees once through the Swiss border. In this third part, titled "une société enkystée," he presents several important factors concerning the life and organization of the refugees, from the assignment to and organization of the labor and internment camps up to the function and financing of the relief organizations involved in refugee politics. He also systematically examines the situation of child refugees, as well as the political activities and psychological situation of refugees from arrival to departure.

The self-image of the *Zentraleitung der Heime und Lager* (the main institution responsible for the labor and internment camps from 1940 on), as expressed by its director Otto Zaugg, reveals the specific "character" of the Swiss camp system dur-

ing the war. Zaugg understood the *Zentralleitung* as “a small State within the State” with its own schools, professional training centers and other facilities for refugees. According to this understanding, Zaugg’s aim was not merely to exercise police constraints towards the refugees but additionally to influence them in “other ways” (*“d’autres manières,”* p. 264). These “other ways” included preparation for an independent future abroad through labor, and strict economizing. Zaugg’s institution also created an organization for leisure time and cultural activities, which restricted refugees’ contact with the outside world. Yet the camp system remained incomplete and therefore dependent on outside resources, thus showing that the aims and laws of the administration often did not match reality and therefore—involuntarily—saved a certain scope of freedom of action for individual refugees.

The author points out very clearly that the conscious segregation of refugees from Swiss society was driven by two objectives of the administration. On the one hand, it sought to repress political agitation and communist propaganda, and on the other it feared “cultural destabilization” caused by the so-called *Überfremdung*. All in all, Lasserre demonstrates that the irrational concept of *Überfremdung*—an exaggerated fear of foreigners—drove the structure of refugee politics during all three above mentioned phases. In that sense, xenophobic and antisemitic thinking served as one of the main determinants of restrictive wartime refugee policy in Switzerland. Thus, psychological factors played a more important role than material concerns.

A further achievement of Lasserre’s book lies in the deconstruction of oversimplifications by correcting the long-standing misconception that Rothmund, chief of the Swiss Federal Foreign Police, and his police administration were solely responsible for the failures of Swiss refugee policy. Here, for example, he reminds the reader of the involvement of Swiss diplomats in the implementation of the *J*-stamp (p. 64).

Lasserre attempts to provide a well-balanced picture of Switzerland’s situation during the war. Yet, at the same time certain questions remain unanswered, including that of the responsibility of the political leadership. Also the regional differences among the cantons regarding acceptance and treatment of refugees, especially Jews, are not outlined clearly enough. Studies such as Jean-Claude Wacker’s⁵ have shown that the policy of certain cantons (e.g., Basel, St. Gallen, Tessin) expressed more sympathy towards refugees than others and thus heightened the chances of admission of the refugees in those cantons.

Furthermore, Lasserre risks losing intellectual detachment from his sources respective to the administrative perspective reflected therein. Why else could he uncritically assume that there was an “overpopulation” of foreigners (*“surpopulation étrangers”*) in Switzerland between the two wars? (p. 67). The authorities used this position to justify their rejection of permanent residency for refugees (with certain exceptions); however, the quota of foreigners had not been so low in decades. It is precisely his above-mentioned claim to take a “statistical” approach that seems rather inadequate for a subject with the title “Frontiers and Camps: Refuge in Switzerland

from 1933 to 1945” The title of Lasserre’s book suggests that it includes the perspective of the affected refugees Since Lasserre’s publication in 1995 many important studies have filled this gap. Among these are Stefan Mächler’s case-study of two Jewish refugee families, Fabienne Régard’s oral history, Claudia Hoerschelmann’s study of Austrian refugees, Renata Broggnini’s monograph on Italian refugees, as well as the increasing corpus of memoirs and accounts written by former refugees, such as Edith Dietz⁶

Overall, Lasserre has written a handbook with a good overview of administrative and political processes, including a helpful glossary. But because it excluded the individual experiences of refugees, we still await a work on Swiss refugee policy and its consequences that considers the different perceptions, experiences, and actions of the various protagonists. Of course, one might conclude that the perspectives of administration, refugees, and population could never be reconciled into one “general history”

Notes

1 Georg Kreis, “Die schweizerische Flüchtlingspolitik der Jahre 1933–45,” *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 47 4 (1997), p 552

2 Carl Ludwig, *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz seit 1933 bis zur Gegenwart* Beilage zum Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz seit 1933 bis zur Gegenwart (Bern: 1957).

3. Alfred Hasler, *Das Boot ist voll Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge 1933–1945* (Zürich Fretz und Wasmuth Verlag, 1967).

4 André Lasserre, *La Suisse des années sombres Courants d’opinion pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, 1939–1945* (Lausanne Editions Payot 1989).

5 Jean-Claude Wacker, *Humaner als Bern! Schweizer und Basler Asylpraxis gegenüber den jüdischen Flüchtlingen von 1933 bis 1943 im Vergleich* (Basel: Kommissionsverlag Friedrich Reinhardt AG, 1992)

6 Stefan Machler, “Ein Abgrund zwischen zwei Welten Zwei Rückweisungen jüdischer Flüchtlinge im Jahre 1942,” *Zeitschrift des Schweizerischen Bundesarchivs Studien und Quellen* 22 *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge 1933–1945* (Bern, u a 1996), pp 137–232, Fabienne Régard, “Histoire orale d’un réfugié juif en Suisse (Henri Silbermann) ou comment l’Histoire peut utiliser le témoignage,” *Zeitschrift des Schweizerischen Bundesarchivs Studien und Quellen* 22 *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge 1933–1945* (Bern, u a 1996), p 233–69; Claudia Hoerschelmann, *Exilland Schweiz Lebensbedingungen und Schicksale österreichischer Flüchtlinge 1938–1945* (Innsbruck StudienVerlag Innsbruck, 1997), Renata Broggnini, *Terra d’asilo i rifugiati italiani in Svizzera 1943–1945* (Bologna Società editrice il Mulino, 1993), Edith Dietz, *Den Nazis entronnen Die Flucht eines jüdischen Mädchens in die Schweiz Autobiographischer Bericht 1933–1942* (Frankfurt/Main Dīpa-Verlag, 1990)

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