

Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard, *Mathematiker auf der Flucht vor Hitler: Quellen und Studien zur Emigration einer Wissenschaft*. (Dokumente zur Geschichte der Mathematik, 10.) xiv + 368 pp., illus., apps., bibl., indexes. Braunschweig/ Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1998.

Reviewed by Leo Corry - *Isis* 2001

The emigration of German-speaking scientists, and in particular of German-speaking mathematicians, following the rise of Hitler to power in 1933, has received considerable attention of historians of science for many years now. We find discussions of this unique process and its far-reaching consequences, for instance, in biographies of twentieth-century scientists; well-known among these is the example of Constance Reid's biography of Richard Courant, very properly entitled *Courant in Göttingen and New York* (Springer: 1976). The emigration process also figures prominently in any discussion of the development of science, and particularly of mathematics, in the USA during and after World War II. Obviously, this emigration process was a driving factor behind the rise of this country as the undisputed leading center of mathematical research after the war.

In spite of this, Reinhard Siegmund-Schultze's book is perhaps the first, and no doubt the most complete, systematic attempt to put together a detailed documentation and analysis of this fascinating historical phenomenon. The occasion for its publication was the International Congress of Mathematicians held at Berlin in 1998, and the author was also involved in the preparation of an exhibition devoted to the same topic.

In writing the book, Siegmund-Schultze had to make many choices and decisions in order to compose the relevant list of émigrés on which we are to be informed. Is the difference between émigré and exiled relevant to this account? And what about the difference between mathematicians that emigrated voluntarily and those that were persecuted? There were also mathematicians who escaped anti-Semitism (some suffered its effects directly, others, more lucky, fled at the stage when they only feared from it), whereas the emigration of others corresponded to political reasons. Moreover: when do we start counting those mathematician émigrés that left their country *because of* Hitler and Nazism?

Since Siegmund-Schultze wanted to be very specific about statistics and documents, he had to reach decisions on all these, and several other, issues. One may of course disagree with some of his own final choices, but certainly, the questions themselves and the detailed analysis he provides in the way to these choices are very illuminating and make clear it to the reader that the process in question was an enormously complex one.

Just to hint at this complexity, we could mention the cases of John von Neumann and Theodor von Kármán, both Hungarian-born Jews, and associated with the Göttingen school, who in 1933 had already moved to the USA, but kept all their contacts for a possible return to Germany at least until 1933. Both of them developed extremely suc-

cessful careers after their arrival in their new country. Very different was the case of Issai Schur, a leading Berlin mathematician who insisted in remaining there and left only in 1939 for Palestine, where he died two years later.

The book comprises ten chapters and several appendixes. The various chapters discuss the “early immigration” phenomenon, the various ways political and racial discrimination affected German-speaking universities, the fate of those who could not escape, the immediate reactions to the new arrivals in the USA and other countries, the re-adaptation of the immigrants in their new countries, and many other, related topics. Each chapter opens with an analysis, which is followed by relevant documents.

The book is well-written and excellently documented, and it intensively appeals to the curiosity of the reader. It will no doubt turn into an essential source of reference for anyone working in this, and related, fields.

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