



Journal Article

Book Review: Rush to the Alps: The Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland

Rush to the Alps: The Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland. By Bernard Paul P.. East European Monographs, No. XXXVII. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. ix, 228. \$15.00.

Author(s):

Bergier, J.-F.

Publication Date:

1979

Permanent Link:

<https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000423095> →

Originally published in:

The Journal of Economic History 39(3), <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700093256> →

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problems of the manufacturing process itself. The challenges included the introduction of copper-plate printing (1780), the transition to factory production through roller printing (1810), as well as the difficulties experienced because of the vicissitudes of war, political changes abroad, and foreign protectionism. By the middle of the nineteenth century European trade restrictions became enough of an obstacle for the marketing agents to seek outlets for the *indiennes* in ever more distant parts of the world. The profits of the Fabrique-Neuve sank below the returns the firm had become accustomed to (15–20 percent on the fabrics produced; 25–50 percent return on capital). Subject to domination by commercial capital, and unable to expand machine production *à l'anglaise*, the enterprise folded. Caspard focusses upon all these topics appropriately, discussing local circumstances as well as comparative European settings.

Sophistication in the manufacture of a specific line of products and strong commercial control are, of course, characteristic of a substantial part of Switzerland's early industrialization. Caspard's study is an excellent account of this process. Since the example of Neuchâtel also offers much for the analysis of the later stages of nineteenth-century capitalist development in Switzerland, one hopes the author will envisage an extension of his present work. Swiss economic history needs more of precisely this kind of high-quality research.

JÜRIG K. SIEGENTHALER, *The American University*

Rush to the Alps: The Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland. By Paul P. Bernard. East European Monographs, No. XXXVII. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. ix, 228. \$15.00.

Tourism in Switzerland in 1970 brought the country 21 billion francs (2.27 percent of the GNP). Considering the high degree of industrialization in present-day Switzerland, this is a remarkable fact, decisive for the balance of payments of an economy whose visible exports are generally in deficit. It is the result of a development which began two centuries ago and which has taken place in two stages. The first stage commenced in the eighteenth century, and by the eve of the First World War had attained a peak not surpassed until the 1960s: 320 million gold francs in annual receipts, 1912–13; 210,569 hotel beds in 1912 as against 208,265 in 1961. The second stage is that of mass tourism, particularly striking during the last 15 years.

Paul Bernard has concerned himself with the first stage. He has concentrated on the birth and often very rapid development of mountain resorts, to the almost entire neglect of tourism in the city and on the lakeshore, which was certainly quite as important and whose growth was strikingly parallel. This bias leads to an ambiguity in the book: general considerations and most quantitative data are concerned with the evolution of vacationing in Switzerland as a whole, as suggested by the subtitle; but the detailed analysis is restricted to Alpine regions, particularly to the famous resort of St. Moritz, which the author seems to know well.

Anxious to place the tourist conquest of the Alps in the context of economic, social, and cultural history, Bernard opens his book with a series of rather incoherent and uneven chapters. The first sets out the perception of the Alps by the inhabitants of the plain, from antiquity to the beginning of the nineteenth century, as recorded in the works of writers, artists, and savants. The second offers an overview of the history of alpinism from Petrarch on Mont Ventoux to the conquest of Mont Cervin by Whymper. The third sketches the economic history of the Swiss Alps, and attempts to show how tourism arrived just in time to save the mountain region from its state of underdevelopment and poverty at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The thesis is interesting, but the proof is hardly convincing; it is lacking in subtlety and depends on largely outdated ideas. A fourth chapter evokes successively the history of the idea of vacationing (is it really necessary to go back to antiquity?), the development of the theory and practice of bathing, and the practical

conditions of travel before the railway age—a series of excursions whose relation to the book's subject is not always clear.

The study of the “rush to the Alps” constitutes the body of the book. It is replete with details and anecdotes collected in old guide books, travellers' accounts, and the works of local scholars. It teems with information, which, while second-hand, is usefully put together. One only regrets that it has not been submitted to a more scrupulous and precise criticism: certain facts are questionable and reflect more the picturesque or sensational than the true conditions of tourist life. Of more lasting worth is the precisely traced chronological evolution of tourist activities and the clearly exposed process of the Alpine population's adaptation to the desires, both quantitative and qualitative, of a foreign clientele. This clientele consisted of the English, the real inventors of alpinism and vacationing in Switzerland, overtaken by the Germans at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the French around 1860, and the Americans after 1870.

Banal and badly reproduced illustrations, and a useful if hardly up-to-date bibliography complete this rather disconcerting book, filled with information and perspectives of broad interest, but too haphazardly and uncritically presented.

J.-F. BERGIER, *The Swiss Institute of Technology, Zurich*

Industriële Naamloze Vennoetschappen in België, 1819–1857. By Julienne Laureyssens. Interuniversitair Centrum voor Hedendaagse Geschiedenis, Bijdragen No. 78. Leuven: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1975. Pp. 771, v. BF 1,300.

Modesty and candid self-criticism are such rare events in the academic world that whenever one encounters them, it is one's duty to report the discovery immediately to the rest of the profession. The author's preface to this burly volume summarizes it as “the unripe, not very sophisticated product of years of digging in dusty archives, largely intended to save other scholars this drudgery.” An unusual lack of pretense, to say the least. An apparently unrevised version of the author's dissertation completed in 1970 at an unnamed university, the book raises the question why anybody would advise a graduate student to carry out an encyclopedic and thankless task “in partial fulfillment” of the requirements toward a Ph.D.

The work consists of two main parts. The first is a partly annotated list of Belgian joint-stock companies. The second part is a comprehensive “who was who” of Belgian economic life in the first half of the nineteenth century. Both are vast compilations of facts, dates, numbers, and many, many names. No overall theme or original analysis is supplied.

A total of 182 (my count) companies are surveyed in the first part. Of these 53 were coal mines, 48 belonged to the metallurgical industry, 48 were in the transportation sector, 27 in miscellaneous industries, and 6 were subsidiaries of the two large investment banks. The word “industrial” in the title is thus somewhat misleading. For each of these corporations the author provides a little table containing data filed, presumably, at the time of chartering. The date of ratification of the charter, total book capital, price per share, and a list of trustees and directors are all given in these tables. Most of the tables in the first three categories are supplemented by a few pages of comments and notes, which in a number of cases are sufficiently extensive to constitute a little essay on the history of the firm in question. Often, these notes provide interesting insights into the operation of the most highly developed economy in Continental Europe. There are many nice examples showing how firms were “really run,” and a wealth of anecdotes—of the “who owned whom” and the “who bought what” variety—on the financial and technological background of the Belgian industrial revolution. For anybody interested in studying entrepreneurial practices and the nitty-gritty of *hautes finances*, this book provides a treasure of information.

The “who's who” part of the book contains 1325 (my estimate) names of industrialists, politicians, merchants, bankers, and so on. Those who find themselves using biographical