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The General

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WHY SWITZERLAND EMERGED UNSCATHED FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR and why it was spared by Hitler's army is still being discussed 65 years after the end of the conflict. Was this simply chance or was trade with Switzerland – weapons, financial services and gold – simply too important to the Germans? Or does alpine transit explain why Switzerland never came under attack from Greater Germany? Was it the military victories of the Allied forces or was fate simply kind to us? Did General Guisan and the Swiss army perhaps make the price of entering Switzerland too high for Adolf Hitler?

The question as to why Switzerland was not swallowed up by the German Reich will never be answered definitively. Still, it would appear that the general and the army had a considerable influence on the decisions of the Nazi leadership: "The réduit in the Alps and control of the north-south axis significantly increased the importance of the military factor", wrote Fred Luchsinger, former editor-in-chief, in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". He continued: "Without military defences and the will to resist, Switzerland would simply have become a pawn in Germany's quest for domination of Europe."

Various factors undoubtedly came into play, probably least of all fate. At any rate, General Henri Guisan deserves recognition for ensuring the Swiss army was up to the task and that Switzerland held its own against its sizeable northern neighbour tactically and politically. This is illustrated by Rolf Ribí's portrait of an extraordinary figure in Swiss history who is still of great interest to historians and biographers. The Swiss abroad also voted General Guisan as the fourth most important Swiss citizen of all time in the survey conducted by "Swiss Review" (page 5).



Heinz Eckert

www.swisscommunity.org is the name of the Internet platform launched by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. Swiss people abroad now have their own platform for searching for and finding information as well as for chatting. This electronic network aims to promote worldwide contact among the Swiss abroad and with Switzerland. www.swisscommunity.org offers the ideal platform for anyone specifically looking for contact with other Swiss nationals abroad who requires particular information about Switzerland or other Swiss abroad groups, wants to buy or sell things or simply wants to get in touch with like-minded people. Swiss abroad who would like to visit their old homeland will find tourist information and offers, and Swiss associations and institutions abroad can use the new electronic Swiss club to advertise for members. People can find out about their canton of origin and Switzerland and also discover where the best fondues and the crispiest rye bread can be found abroad. www.swisscommunity.org is a bit like Facebook, Xing or Linked-In, yet different at the same time. This electronic community for the Swiss abroad is an exclusive communication platform specifically tailored to the needs of Swiss citizens abroad.

We hope that the 700,000 Swiss abroad on all continents enjoy using our new site.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Cover photo:

General Henri Guisan: His popularity remains high.
Photo: Keystone

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