

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 12 (1947)  
**Heft:** 9

**Artikel:** The Swiss Army in the world of today  
**Autor:** Beguin, Pierre  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942996>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 03.07.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# HELVETIA



Monthly Publication of the

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY  
in New Zealand

Group New Zealand of the N.H.G.

WELLINGTON N.Z.  
NOVEMBER, 1947.

Volume 9.  
12th year.

## ELECTION RESULTS.

The following are the final results of the election for the National Council held on the 25th - 26th of October, 1947, as well as the comparative figures for 1943.

	<u>1947.</u>	<u>1943.</u>
Radical Democrats ( <u>Liberals</u> )	52	47
Social Democrats	48	55
Catholic Conservative	44	43
Farmers & Citizens	21	22
Independent Party	8	7
Liberal Conservative	7	8
Party of Work (Communists)	7	Prohibited
Democrats	5	6
With affiliation	2	6
Total	<u>194</u>	<u>194</u>

## THE SWISS ARMY IN THE WORLD OF TODAY.

(By: - Pierre Beguin ... Service suisse des ondes courtes).

Swiss military traditions are very old. You will probably remember that between the 13th and the 16th centuries, our country was a military power with which even the biggest nations of the time had to reckon. The Confederates of those days were not only in a position which enabled them to defend their territory against any aggressions but they were also able to carry on a policy of territorial expansion and conquests. They did this until the battle of Marignano - in other words, till the beginning of the sixteenth century. As a matter of fact, the very strong position which Switzerland then held could have been maintained for a long time if our ancestors had not then weakened each other in the course of both religious

and other internal struggles.

From that time on, a very strong military tradition has survived in Switzerland. Of course, saying that we have taken many initiatives in that particular domain or that we have introduced striking innovations in the science of strategy would definitely be saying too much. We did not have a chance of doing so, because, for a long time, war left our country aside. Nevertheless, there has been no lack, in Switzerland, of military leaders who were able to take up the military innovations developed by other countries with all the necessary faculty of discrimination, and to adapt them intelligently and efficiently to our particular conditions both from the political and the military point of view. One may even say that in this sense, generation after generation, they have accomplished a task which was anything but negligible. There is some reason to suppose that this is still the case to-day. A proof of that supposition might be found in the fact that the French General de Lattre de Tassigny has just made a comparatively lengthy visit to our army. Of course, as far as our armament and equipment is concerned, he has obviously not been able to make any very striking discoveries. They have not got to be out of date yet; on the contrary, they have been modernised at an accelerated rate during the last world conflict. However, on the whole, one may say that our present armament and equipment have been introduced during the first years of the war and that from the material point of view we have not yet taken into consideration the experiments made on the battlefields during its last and final months. And yet one knows that these experiences have been decisive and that they have brought with them a revolution of military art - or, as one should say to-day, of military science. For instance, we have no Radar apparatus at our disposal and it is only in a few months that we shall have jet planes at our disposal. All this brings us to the conclusion that the Swiss army is interesting from quite another point of view, which partly at least, accounts for General de Lattre de Tassigny's visit. For one thing, paradoxical as it may sound, as far as its military power is concerned, our army is the second most powerful military force in present-day Europe. This is due to the fact that the nations which have lost the war have not got any army left at all, while the liberated countries have not yet had a chance of reconstituting theirs, so that there is only one proper army left in Western Europe - and that is ours! One may say that, for a short length of time at least, we are again in a situation similar to that which we had reached in 1515, just before the battle of Marignano. It is hardly necessary to add that nevertheless, the situation is very different from what it was then, as the Swiss of today have not the slightest intention of making the same use of their army as their ancestors had done at that time.

However, our situation remains strong, as it was throughout the war, because we are in a position to inflict serious and costly losses to anyone who would try to attack us. There is no doubt about it that we were able to retain our independence during the last war only owing to the fact that the German high command knew quite well that an attempt at conquering Switzerland would necessarily be successful in the end, but would at the same time, mean a considerable loss of time and sacrifices of all proportion with the advantages which would have been derived from the occupation of our completely devastated territory. If a new conflict were to arise for the same reasons a victorious army might, in spite of its successes elsewhere, prefer going around our territory and encircling it so as to strangle us from the economic and alimentary point of view.

It is possible - we cannot say for certain - that General de Lattre de Tassigny wished to see for himself if this was in fact the case. Anyway, whatever the reasons of his visit may be, we know that he has seen both our mobilised troops and our recruit schools with the greatest interest. The most original aspects of our military system are on the one hand the fact that the initial period of instruction for the man is very short, only lasting four months, and, on the other, the speed of mobilisation which we can achieve owing to the fact that our men keep their arms, their personal equipment and their ammunition at home. They say that it is to this aspect of our army that the General devoted the most of his attention. He has, in fact, expressed his admiration for our system - and that is a certificate of which we are proud.