



Three Weeks in November: A Military History of the Swiss Civil War of 1847

Ralph Weaver

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The political phenomenon known as the 'Springtime of the Nations' swept through Europe in 1848, toppling thrones, forcing old autocratic regimes to grant constitutions to the people and bringing street fighting and large scale campaigns to cities and states across the continent. What is not generally known is that a precursor to these events had already taken place in the center of Europe in the Alpine valleys of the collection of independent states known collectively as Switzerland. In November 1847, twelve of the Swiss cantons went to war with seven other cantons over the future of the country. The campaign lasted just three weeks, with only a few hundred casualties and ended with the establishment of the modern Swiss state we have today. If it had not ended so quickly it is likely that France, Austria and Prussia would have become involved, which would have led to a European-wide war.

This book is unique in that it concentrates on the military aspects of this episode in history. As well as an outline of the campaign itself, it covers the strengths and organization of each canton; in 1847 each was a separate state with its own army. Included are chapters on the uniforms of the canton's armies, their battle flags, weapons and distinguishing badges. The major battle of the war, at Gislikon (modern Gisikon), a small village with a strategic river crossing, just north of the city of Luzern, is treated in detail. As well as the general picture, individual soldiers' stories illustrate the combat techniques of the period.

Biographies are given of some of the leading figures from both sides of the conflict, which demonstrate the European dimension. Many served in French, Dutch and Neapolitan armies before taking appointments in the Swiss canton armies.

To compliment the text the book is well illustrated with a mixture of contemporary pictures, in color and black and white, and also specially produced color plates of Swiss canton uniforms and flags. So that the reader can follow the campaign, maps from official Swiss sources are included. Orders of battle for all the cantons and detailed orders of battle for the main action at Gislikon are also provided. This is the latest title in Helion's groundbreaking series of 19th Century studies, and will again appear in hardback as a strictly limited edition printing of 500 copies, each individually numbered and signed by the author on a decorative title page.

Ralph Weaver has made a life-long study of military history, particularly of Europe in the 19th Century. He began his military career with the Sealed Knot before giving up the sword for the pen. He has been the editor of the journal of the Continental Wars Society for the past twenty-five years and has written and illustrated books and magazine articles on military history. He trained as a land surveyor in the Civil Service and has used his map-making skills in battlefield walking and table top wargaming. He has been collecting books, pictures, photographs and reference material on uniforms with a view to writing a definitive history on the subject. As well as conducting research on military topics, his latest interests include cooking and looking after grandchildren.

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