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Kevin D. Stringer. Swiss-Made Heroes: Profiles in Military Leadership

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Kevin D. Stringer. *Swiss-Made Heroes: Profiles in Military Leadership* (Ashland, Ore.: Hellgate Press, 2012. 292 pp. Paperback \$17.95.

Dr. Kevin Stringer has brought a much needed look at some lesser-known aspects of history that helped shape the modern world. The Swiss have an influence on world history that far exceeds their numbers in population or their geopolitical status would indicate, but Dr. Stringer has shed some light on nine individuals from the fifteenth to the twentieth century that helps explain the role of Switzerland in history.

Each reader will find favorites among the leaders profiled in *Swiss-Made Heroes* and there is enough detail to interest even seasoned historians. For example, the chapter on Captain Kaspar Roist explains the existence of the Swiss Papal Guards who have served the Holy See for over 500 years. Although Switzerland is associated with armed neutrality, the Geneva Conventions, and high-finance today, it is interesting to note it had a long and successful history as a provider of mercenaries for multiple centuries in European affairs. The long and famous mercenary history accounts for the Swiss Papal Guards today, and Kaspar Roist's willingness to fight to the death for the Vatican helps explain the trust in the Swiss Guard's current and real-world security mission. Dr. Stringer presents the stories of the main players of that time with enough detail to engage any historian and encourage further interest in Switzerland's amazing history.

North American history was significantly affected by Colonel Henry Bouquet who served the British during the French and Indian War from 1756 to 1763. His battlefield victories were decisive and timely and his road-building successes led to a further opening of the frontier areas of the British colonies following the war. An example of Swiss influence in Twentieth Century United States history, and the rest of the globe by extension, is the story of Admiral Edward W. Eberle who was instrumental in making it possible for the United States Navy to develop aircraft carrier technology and naval aviation in the 1920s inter-war years. Without the decades of experimentation that Admiral Eberle facilitated and by the time World War II began, the United States would have been at a serious disadvantage in the War in the Pacific against Japanese naval forces.

Perhaps the best and most academic treatment in the entire book is
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Dr. Stringer's chapter on Captain Henry Wirz who was Commandant of the infamous Prisoner of War camp at Andersonville, Georgia, during the American Civil War. During the Civil War, the prisoner exchange cartel broke down and both the North and the South were forced to deal with tens of thousands of prisoners of war. The South was suffering from an increasingly effective Northern blockade, and the care and feeding of POWs suffered as a result. Captain Wirz was the only person executed for war crimes after the Civil War. His history was largely written from a Northern perspective since the victors almost always write the historical accounts after a war, as the author puts it, *Vae victis*, or woe to the vanquished. To Dr. Stringer's credit, he presents a balanced account of a dark period in American history and discusses the implications for modern cases of POW treatment that are in the news in places like Iraq.

His accounts of General Hans Herzog and the humanitarian internment of the French Army during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 fill a void in European history that needed filling. Later in the book, his account of Major Max Waibel and the intermediary role the Swiss played in the surrender of the German forces in northern Italy in the latter part of World War II bring to light another example of the Swiss role in humanitarian actions during the height of the world's most destructive war so far. Finally, the explanation of how the Swiss avoided being occupied during the entire length of World War II while surrounded by belligerents is told very clearly and dramatically in the Chapter on General Henri Guisan.

Dr. Stringer has researched the *Swiss-Made Heroes* to quite an impressive extent and brought forth some of the best historical reading I have done in years. *Swiss-Made Heroes* is a well-written, readable, and well-researched historical book that is a great addition to any scholar's library. If there was one improvement to be made, it would be to have some maps available in the various chapters to help put the events so well described in the geopolitical context of their times and places.

~ R. Edward Shelor
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