

Memorials (monuments, fortifications) and museums in remembrance of the First World War in Switzerland

In contrast to large parts of Europe, Switzerland hardly had to bemoan war victims during the First World War. Battlefields such as in France or Belgium did not exist in Switzerland at all. Despite the lack of warlike conflicts, a great number of memorials and monuments emerged in the whole country of Switzerland. In the absence of „true“ casualties, even people having died of sickness (especially soldiers who died of Spanish influenza between July 1918 and June 1919) were added to the number of dead soldiers. According to Georg Kreis (2008), a reason for this could be the necessity to maintain the cult of war deaths in compliance with the example of foreign countries. There was also a need for continuity: The worship of old confederate warriors originating in the 19th century was due to be continued. The third reason, says Kreis, is an anthropological basic need: The ideals of readiness to combat and to make sacrifices were supposed to be made visible. Kreis' conclusion is that the expectations of acquittal and obedience were eventually targeted on propagating civil obedience to governmental authorities.

A list of such memorials is attached to the German version of this text.

A list of World War I fortifications is also attached. Their aim was to deter German, French and Italian troops from invasion and thus to contribute to the assurance of Swiss neutrality. Fortifications built in the 19th century were enlarged or recreated particularly with regard to the defense of the frontiers (Gotthard area, Valais, Ticino, Murten area, Olten area). Some of these fortifications, which were built before or during the First World War, are partly accessible to the public or can be inspected from outside.

Just as the First World War is of small interest to Switzerland, museums hardly broach the issue. Primarily, objects from this time are exposed. Please see the list attached to the German text.

