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LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

MILITARY TRAINING IN SWITZERLAND

Sir,—I refer to your article "What Is Happening To Our Army?" which was published in the May issue of *Helvetia*.

As far as discipline and obedience are concerned, I agree with you entirely. However, as a young Swiss concerned about the future and the efficiency of an Army of which I am proud, I also entirely disagree with you on certain points. I gathered from your article that you could well be my father; therefore I respect you for having defended our country through "sweat, curses and even tears", but I would not like to see our Army, in its present state, faced suddenly and bluntly with the reality of a modern war, for the old Teutonic-like maniacal red-tape armies no longer win battles. All I can see in your article is virtually a certain form of subconscious jealousy towards the young who no longer have to leap up and down, lick the ground and turn their toothbrushes the right way (towards the sun) like stupid idiots, to an extent which depended mainly on the Officer's personal conception of discipline.

In fact, considering all aspects of today's Swiss Army (a rough replica of yesterday's) and coming to a sad conclusion, one could say that we are quietly and conscientiously preparing for 1939-45. That is how up-to-date we are. I also wish to point out, for your information, that the new regulations do not alter the basic principle of training, discipline and punctiliousness, nor do they annihilate the spirit in which your and my ancestors fought for our liberty and our sovereignty.

They are meant to turn the "insistent drill, maniacal cleanliness and punctilious orders" you are talking about into a more intelligent and effective way, thus retaining the initial idea of training as a whole. Saluting your superior and announcing yourself are, I agree, signs of respect and obedience, but you will admit that too much of it, as it was the case in our Army, is also a waste of time which a modern army cannot afford.

I would very much like you to regard this opinion as that of a Swiss citizen who endeavours to prepare his country for the future, though acknowledging the undeniable values of the past, rather than just a matter of "generation conflict".

As to your comment on the fact that "parental control has so much gone by the board", we French-speaking Swiss say that "one has the children one has raised" . . . Since you are, I believe, a German-speaking Swiss, the following might sound more familiar to you:

"Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm" . . .

Thanking you for allowing me to express myself, I remain, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

ALAIN J. FRANCIS, Wellington.