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THE TERRITORIAL ARMY

CAMPS IN THE SUN

I.—TRADITION AND THE NEW SOLDIER

From Our Military Correspondent

This has been a bumper year of recruiting for the Territorial Army. On August 1 its strength was 8,867 officers and 146,647 other ranks, compared with 7,692 and 132,535 last year: a net increase of 10 per cent. But its intake of 42,809 recruits in the year represented over 30 per cent. of its total strength a year ago. That growth of strength can be traced partly to the nation's awakening to present dangers and the needs of defence; partly to the increased attractions which were provided by Mr. Duff Cooper's measures in raising the scale of allowances.

Their effect has been supplemented by other factors: the increasing help and encouragement given by the Regular Army; the advent of mechanization, even though still of an improvised nature; the increased interest of training due to the first trickle of modern equipment. The rising tide of recruits faces us with the question whether we are doing all that could be done to maintain and improve the flow. And, above all, whether we are making the best use of it for the purposes of national defence under modern conditions.

A GENERAL'S HERESY

Actually as well as metaphorically the sun has smiled on the Territorial Army this year. For the bulk of its summer camps have taken place in a spell of fine weather such as they have not been favoured with for years. Sunshine and dryness so largely affect the pleasure of being under canvas that the good fortune just enjoyed should help to increase the harvest of recruits this winter. By contrast, the damping memory of last year's camps may have been a reason why, so far as my own observation extended, the rise in the numbers attending camp did not seem to be so big as the anticipations aroused by the published figures of recruiting gains. That reflection applies in the main to the infantry, who still form the greater numerical part of the Territorial Army. It occurred to me that more light on this question might be provided by comparing the figures of the recent increase of strength in the infantry with that in the other branches. For it had been my impression that, in the South and Midlands at any rate, the latter would show a much larger rise proportionately. The necessary data were provided with a promptitude to which I should like to pay tribute. They show that on August 1, 1936, the infantry strength was 77,699 men, while the strength of the other arms was 54,836, an infantry preponderance of about 40 per cent. But in the past 12 months the other arms have provided 24,240 recruits compared with 18,569 for the infantry. To put it in a simplified way, the other arms have obtained four men for every three gained by the infantry, despite the higher standard which they demand.

While an improvement of quality is noticeable in the ranks of the infantry, it is still more marked in the other branches, so that there is

a growing difference of quality. If it goes much farther it will produce a Territorial Army of two levels, so distinct that it would be possible to speak of two armies in one. The Territorial infantry still depend largely on the unemployed for filling their ranks; and the increasing employment in the country, which makes it easier for men of this grade to obtain work, often tends to subtract from the numbers on the unit rolls who are able to attend camp. The rest of the Territorial Army, its more technical arms and services, recruit from a superior level; they are tending more and more to tap the sources from which the pre-War Territorial Force was raised. The change is especially noticeable in the new anti-aircraft units—or units newly converted to this role—whose rapidly matured performance has been the outstanding feature of the Territorial Army training in 1937.

The ability to attract a superior type of man, while weeding out many who passed muster in a unit's infantry days, is naturally a help in raising the level of training. With a higher standard of intelligence a higher standard of performance can be reached in the very limited time the citizen soldier can devote to his spare-time job. But the nature of the work is a still bigger aid to this comparative efficiency. Only recently a distinguished general from the artillery was telling how before the War he had been denounced as a heretic by his fellow-gunners for suggesting, sacrilegiously as it seemed, that while three years were needed to train an infantryman, three months would suffice to train a gunner. His youthful audacity covered a profound truth which we have been slowly, too slowly, discovering.

ART OR TECHNIQUE

Whatever dispute there may be as to the exact length of time required, it is only too sure that to produce a skilled infantryman, a real field-craftsman, is more difficult than to produce an adequate member of the more technical arms, because material elements play a lesser part in the former's success. Infantry tactics are an art, whereas the operation of the other arms is predominantly a technique. Their respective teaching is similarly different. The more intelligent the man the more quickly he can acquire fair proficiency in the technique, while in a technical arm it will often happen that his civilian training has a helpful relationship to his military. Within a much shorter time of training he may be able to vie with a Regular who is recruited from a lower grade, less technically apt. The present difference between Regular anti-aircraft, artillery, or searchlight units and Territorial units only this year converted is less remarkable than the comparative smallness of the difference; that some of them are as good as they are already is a fact which compels a revision of all past ideas on the subject of technical military training. On the other hand, it requires a trainer of genius, or a unit recruited from men such as poachers, to make Territorial infantry comparable with Regulars, even though the bulk of these fall far short of the skill needed to survive and move on a modern battlefield.

There are other factors working in favour of the anti-aircraft troops, the branch which shows the most striking rise in quantity and quality of recruitment. One is the clearer sense of purpose; they know what their task in war will be, and the whole country knows how important it is. Another is the realism of their training, in which they operate their weapons or instruments against targets which really look and act like the enemy with whom they will have to deal in war. Beyond this are the more "job-like" conditions of their work: to hear their emphatic appreciation of these helps to make one realize that infantry soldiering still preserves too many traces of a soldierly fashion which seems an anachronism to the youth of to-day. Habit