

DEFENCE SUPPLY

A MEMORANDUM BY MR. CHURCHILL

Winston Churchill announced last that Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for Coordination of Defence, had con- d to the publication of a memo- um which Mr. Churchill wrote for two years ago. He added that it had bearing on the present defence

missions. The memorandum, which is headed "Supply Organization," reads:—

The existing office of the Minister for Coordination of Defence comprises un- ed and wrongly grouped functions. The of the Minister charged with strategic dination is different, though not in the er ranges disconnected, from the work of Minister charged with: (a) securing the tion of the existing programmes; and (b) planning the industry to spring quickly wartime conditions and creating a high- ly effective for both this and the present

pose. The first step therefore is to separate the tions of strategic thought from those of erial supply in peace and war and form the nization to direct this latter process. An monious arrangement would be four arate de- ments—Navy, Army, Air Force, and Supply. With the Coordinating Minister the summit of the four having the final voice on priorities.

(3) No multiplication of committees, how- er expert or elaborate, can achieve this pur- se. Supply cannot be achieved without mmand. A definite chain of responsible thory must descend through the whole of (ish industry affected. (This must not be ough to imply State interference in the actual ctions of industry.) At the present time the ee Service authorities exercise separate mmand over their particular supply, and the irth, or planning, authority is purely con- lative, and that only upon the war need forced from present supply. What is needed to unify the supply command of the three rvice Departments into an organism which o exercises command over the war expan- sion. (The Admiralty would retain control er the construction of warships and certain eial Naval stores.)

(4) This unification should comprise not only e function of supply but that of design. The rvice Departments prescribe in general hical terms their need in type, quality, and antity, and the supply organization executes ese in a manner best calculated to serve its stomers. In other words, the Supply De- artment engages itself to deliver the approved pes of war stores of all kinds to the Services hen and ere the latter require them.

(5) No this, nor the punctual execution any of the approved programmes, can be heived in the present atmosphere of ordinary acetime preparation. It is neither necessary r possible at this moment to take war- ne powers and apply wartime methods. An rmediate state should be declared called ay the period of emergency preparation.

(6) Legislation should be drafted in two arts—F that appropriate to the emergency reparat- stage, and second, that appro- riate to a state of war. Part I should be rried out now. Part II should be envisaged, aborated, the principles defined, the clauses rafted and left to be brought into operation y a fresh appeal to Parliament should war ceur. The emergency stage should be capable f sliding into the war stage with the minimum f disturbance. The whole design having been oreseen.

(7) To bring this new system into operation ere should first be created a Minister of upply. This Minister would form a Supply ouncil. Each member would be charged with e study of the four or five branches of pro- duction falling into his sphere. Thereafter, as on as may be, the existing service sub- epartments of supply, design, contracts, &c., ould be transferred by instalments to the new uthority, who alone would deal with the easury upon finance. (By "finance" is meant payments within the scope of the uthorized programmes.)

This memorandum is dated June 6, 1936.

THE MAGINOT LINE

II.—SURPRISE ATTACK IMPOSSIBLE

V "SHELLFISH" WARRIORS

uā

By Robert Leurquin

The Maginot Line can be thought of as a fleet moored in the chains of hills that lie parallel to the frontier. This fleet has flotilla craft to scout for it; they are blockhouses garrisoned by a dozen men whose duty it is to delay the assailant for three days so as to enable the higher command to gauge the principal point of attack; as cruisers it has a line of artillery in revolving gun-turrets; its capital ships are underground fortresses. As in a naval battle, all the units cooperate in action so as to make their contribu- tion to the decision. When the scouting forces have played their part they fall back, as on the sea, to the main body, by a system of under- ground labyrinths which has made the frontier region, to a depth of 30 miles, look as though it were covered with mole-hills.

The strength of the "crust of the East" lies in the diversity of its works; the variety of dimensions and of camouflage keeps the visitor in a state of complete astonishment. Between Metz and Besançon I visited more than 30 case- mates and did not find two of them the same. Some were sunk in the earth, others crouched under railway embankments, others hung on the sides of precipices. One of them, which rises 11ft. above the level of the water, has had to be protected against the danger of inundation. I even found a casemate emerging from a swamp.

BURIED BARRACKS

So much for the small links in the chain. But there are still the big forts, whose power of resistance is thrillingly impressive. They are nothing less than buried barracks with miles of passages lit by electricity and provided with metal tracks; they have hot water laid on, electric ventilators and cook-houses. Whole hills have been hollowed out and concreted. Every measure has been taken, including victualling, to make them habitable for months on end. Civilians have been considered as well. In several parts of the line, especially at Bitche, underground quarters have been made for them where they could live under the protecting concrete.

The Line is permanently occupied by what French soldiers ironically call "écrevisses de rempart." These "shellfish of the forts" are the men of fortress regiments recruited exclu- sively from the Paris region and the department of Aude. The French army has revived in their honour the old tradition of geographical names. Just as there formerly were the Royal Lorraine or the Sambre-et-Meuse Regiment, there are to-day in the French army regiments called the Lautère, the Basses-Vosges, the Haute- Aisance, and others. These men wear a khaki bérêt whose badge is a shield of gules with a concrete casemate on a field of barbed wire. For inscription the shield bears the device of the defenders of Verdun: "On ne passe pas." The "shellfish" are distributed in squads of 12 men each over the first line of armoured case- mates, charged with the duty of holding them for the three days necessary to get the whole of

THE MAGINOT LINE

A HAUNTED LAND REVISITED

I—ZONES OF DEATH

The following is the first of two articles by a Belgian military expert describing a visit to the Maginot Line which defends France's Eastern frontier.

By Robert Leurquin

In 1914 French military circles were inspired with a passion for the offensive à outrance, which caused them to disdain the means of defence by fortification. The famous Plan XVII did not lay down any other use for the fortresses in the east than as a pivot for offensives in the grand manner. The tragic results of that mistake are known: the frightful blood-bath at the beginning of the War; the defeats in Alsace and the loss of the Briey basin. The French soldiers paid the price for metaphysical doctrine, for building on an abstract foundation to the neglect of the great primary truth that in war fire kills.

The lesson has nevertheless borne fruit. To- day the whole French doctrine is expressed in terms of fire-power, and for the defence of their frontiers the French no longer put their trust in human bodies but in concrete and fire. It is a reasonable conception, arising out of the lesson of the Great War, which has shown the defensive value of fire so long as it is well organized and well protected.

The Maginot Line is the pre-eminent combination of passive obstacle and active defence. The name "Maginot Wall" which has been given to it by the public is really incorrect. It conjures up a picture of a great wall, like China's, towering against the horizon, whereas the French fortification hardly rises above the ground. The soldiers who christened it "the crust of the East" found the fitting expressive image. The building of the "crust of the East" will one day come to be regarded as one of the great labours of this century, comparable with the greatest civil engineering enterprises. According to figures which have been given to me by engineer officers who superintended the work, 12,000,000 cubic metres of earth were dug out on the Maginot Line between 1929 and 1936; 1,500,000 cubic metres of concrete were cast; 50,000 tons of steel plates were set in position; galleries were hollowed out which in a straight line would cover the distance from Paris to Liège; 15,000 workmen were engaged on the construction, commanded by 200 engi- neer officers and military engineers; seven mil- liards of francs were spent. To-day new works have been begun to extend the "crust" facing the Jura and to fortify the north. On the "crust" itself, as I was able to see, work never ceases; its defence is incessantly reinforced.

LESSONS FROM VERDUN

Great precautions are taken by the builders to assure the maximum of resistance for this "crust." The brief resistance of the forts at Liège, Namur, and Antwerp was put down to the