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Stiftelsen norsk Okkupasjonshistorie, 2014

20.5.28. THE] DEFENCE SUPPLY

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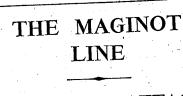
A MEMORANDUM BY MR. CHURCHILL

Winston Churchill announced last that Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for Coordination of Defence, had cond to the publication of a memoum which Mr. Churchill wrote for two years ago. He added that it had earing on the present defence issions.

pply 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 ution ' the existing programmes; and bannii tish industry to spring quickly wartime conditions and creating a high rol effective for both this and the present base.

ose.) The first step therefore is to separate the tions of strategic thought from those of erial supply in peace and war and form the anization to direct this latter process. An monious arrangement would be four urate dr ments—Navy, Army, Air Force, Supp. ith the Coordinating Minister the summut of the four having the final voice n priorities.

f disturbance. The whole design having been presen. (7) To bring this new system into operation pere should first be created a Minister of upply. This Minister would form a Supply ouncit. Each member would be charged with e study of the four or five branches of pro-uction falling into his sphere. Thereafter, as you as may be, the existing service sub-opartments of supply, design, contracts, &c., ould be transferred by instalments to the new uthority, who alone would deal with the reasury upon finance. (By "finance" is neant payments within the scope of the uthorized programmes.) This memorandum is dated June 6, 1936.



18.8.28.

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JII.-SURPRISE ATTACK IMPOSSIBLE

▼ "SHELLFISH "WARRIORS ua 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

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-Sution 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-O 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 p dimensions and of camouflage keeps the visitor so in a state of complete astonishment. Between 'S Metz and Besançon I visited more than 30 casemates 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 h

nothing less than buried barracks with miles of passages lit by electricity and provided with metalled tracks; they have hot water laid on, electric ventilators and cook-houses. Whole 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.

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 he 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-Alsace, and others. These men wear a khaki béret 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

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MAGINOT THE 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. Today the whole French doctrine is expressed in

The lesson has nevertheless bothe full. 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 com-bination 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. Ac-cording to figures which have been given to me by engineer officers who superintended the the greatest civil engineering enterprises. cording 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 Paris to Liége; 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" 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 Liége, Namur, and Antwerp was put down to the