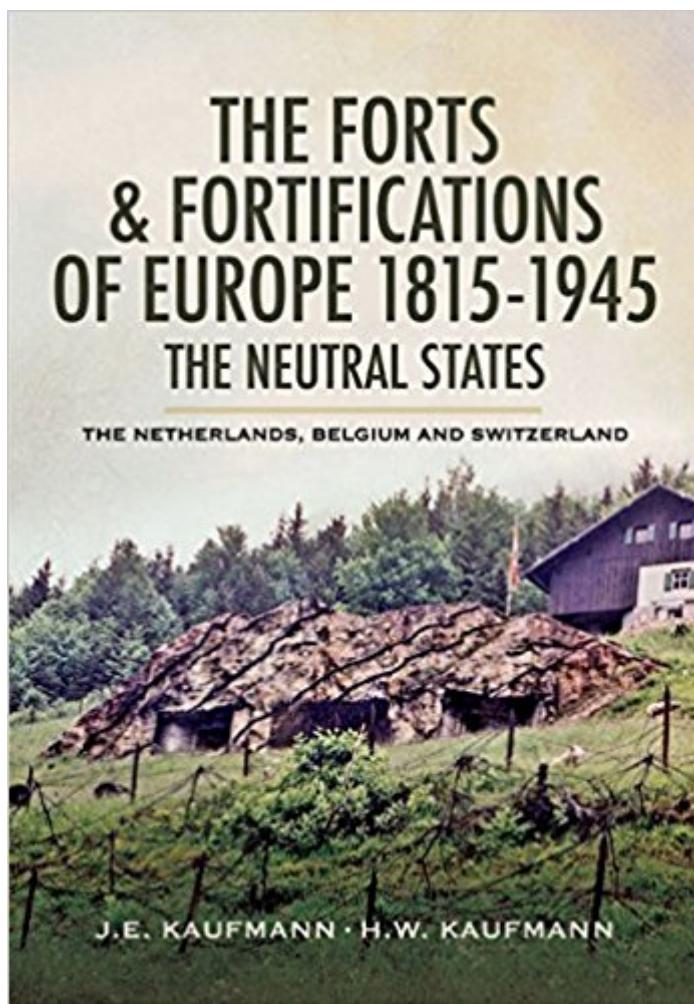


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# The Forts And Fortifications Of Europe 1815-1945: The Neutral States



## Synopsis

After the Napoleonic Wars the borders of Europe were redrawn and relative peace endured across the region, but the volatile politics of the late nineteenth century generated an atmosphere of fear and distrust, and it gave rise to a new era of fortress building. In the neutral states situated between France and Germany - The Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland - the need for extensive fixed defenses was particularly urgent, and this is the subject of this highly illustrated new study. The strategic thinking that gave rise to these defensive schemes is described in detail, as is the planning, design and construction of the lines themselves. Their operational history in wartime, in particular during the Second World War, is a key element of this expert account.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

J.E. Kaufmann is a retired teacher and presently an adjunct professor at Palo Alto Jr. College and H.W. Kaufmann, PhD, is a retired professor, and they live in the United States. Their most recent books on fortifications are The Maginot Line, The Atlantic Wall and The Forts and Fortifications of Europe 1815-1945: The Central States.

Good reference book for the people interested in this subject; comprehensive descriptions and it provides also a good presentation of general context and background. However, the description of actions during wars is scarce and the analysis of how the fortifications behave during those events is thin, still a very good read and it makes a good starting point for further reading.

The Kaufmanns can always be counted upon to produce well written and well researched works. They also show improvements in every successive publication they put out. This book is excellent! It is profusely illustrated. The maps are great. The drawings of the details of the fortifications add immeasurably to the concise and descriptive text. They have done an excellent job setting the strategic and technological background. From there they delve into tactics and operational history. I highly recommend this, as well as any other books from these writers. Terry Sofian

a little much text, small pictures, no color, but interesting book with a lot of infomation

This is a well-written and thoroughly researched book on fortifications in the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. I can't give it a 5, because the many photos tend to be blurry and some of the drawings are not particularly clear. The book is likely to be primarily of interest to modelers, but the text also covers some aspects of historical context, the impacts of weapons development, debates within the countries about policy and military campaigns. I would quibble a bit with the title--two of the three countries were not exactly neutral, although they likely would have stayed out of the war had German invasions not occurred. The fortifications in Belgium and the Netherlands seem mostly built to deter German invasions. Chapters 1 and 2 cover the Dutch, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discuss the Belgians and 6 examines "Fortress Switzerland." The Dutch fortifications involved the use of flooding to set up defenses. Actual Dutch military action was brief if rather fierce in World War 2--the Germans had about 10,000 casualties, probably more if airborne operations had been less effective. The Dutch were neutral in World War 1, but it was not the strength of their fortifications that deterred German invasion. I was interested in finding out that the Germans set up an electrified fence along the Belgian/ Dutch border to deter desertion and smuggling--it killed perhaps 3,000 people. The chapters on Belgium cover things very well, a change in focus from the usual histories I've read which focus on the major players and usually treat the minor combatants as sideshows. The Germans took the Belgian forts seriously and devised tactics to deal with them, most notably very large and well-targeted artillery. In the interwar years, apparently there was some effort to save money and in the coming war the forts were inadequate to withstand the heaviest artillery. The book does not describe the German invasions in great detail, mostly and most completely the attack on the fortresses. Readers interested in the campaign rather than fort details can simply skim some sections that focus on technical detail. The chapter on Switzerland could stand alone as an essay. I found it the best in the book. Obviously the Swiss terrain is itself formidable. The strategy was to set up a sort of national redoubt with the intent of making an invasion as costly as possible. The Swiss

also could have destroyed tunnels in the Alps and very seriously damage, for a very long time, transportation links between Germany and Italy--that's likely the main reason the Germans did not invade. The book also describes several aspects I had not read before. In World War 1 a Swiss general wanted the country to join the Germans, and the French prepared an invasion plan. In World War 2, the Germans apparently came close to invading more than once and had detailed invasion plans.

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