DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
XV TO XVIII CENTURIES
Vol. V
FORTMED 2017

Colección Congresos UA

Los contenidos de esta publicación han sido evaluados por el Comité Científico que en ella se relaciona y según el procedimiento de la `revisión por pares`.

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Imprime:


Depósito legal: A 493-2017
Abstract
Among the most emblematic and most visited heritages of Marseille, there are the four forts which command it (castle of If, fort of Notre-Dame of the Garde, forts Saint-Nicolas and Saint-Jean). However, their introduction into tourism is more a myth than an intrinsic military nature. Apart from these media locomotives, several dozens of contemporary military works punctuate the municipal territory, on the edge or set back from the coastline, waiting for an enemy coming from the sea. The coast and the islands are at this point full of forts and coastal batteries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, made in the expectation of an enemy coming from the sea. Through their relentless refactoring – reduced - model 1846, then coastal batteries updated with shelter under rock after the crisis of the shell-torpedo in 1887, then blockhouse of the organization Todt, set up in the framework of SudWall from 1943), these massive structures covering sublime sites relate to those who want to hear it the arms race, the technical escalation of the armour struggle against an ever more powerful projectile, and in this respect the violence of the blows which were wiped off by the Marseille works in the last days of August 1944, during the fighting of the Liberation.

The delay in the protection of this military heritage, which is now being completed by the Ministry of Defence, has begun in 1970 with the sale of the Frioul archipelago to the city. Beyond their significance for scientific and technical culture, these objects pose the problem of their heritage status, on the one hand because they lost their weaponry which constituted its reason to be, and because they are the result of pre-established patterns, repeated several hundred copies along the coast, and lastly because they bear the wounds of the blows received, an extraordinary conservatory, but an instable one, of an archeology of the seat. Their protection, therefore requires a previous thorough inventory in order to estimate their relative value so as not to blindly protect, to rapidly carry out so many unconscious disappearances are increasing today. But the patrimonial recognition of these objects passes through a memory appropriation that is hard to do, in Marseille perhaps more than elsewhere. Is it due to the mixed identities which constitute the different memorial layers of this balcony on the Mediterranean?

Keywords: fortifications, forts, batteries, coastal defences, city memory.

1. «SUDWALL» History of the Mediterranean wall

11th of November 1942, the German army launches «operation Anton» as an answer to the Allied landing in French North Africa. The unoccupied part of France is invaded by the Germans to ensure proper protection against a possible allied invasion. This is the starting point in building “Sudwall”, the “Mediterranean wall” that is the southern counterpart of the “Atlantic wall” on the west coast.

It will be placed under Marshall Rommel’s responsibility from the 5th of November 1943. The lovely shores in and around Marseilles are disrupted by the construction of anti-tank walls,
barbed wires, anti-landing obstacles, trenches, combat positions, radar stations. The Sudwall comprises also the modernization of existing French batteries (e.g. Fort Napoleon in Les Goudes) and a dozen of new coastal batteries such as Fenouil and Falaise in the small village of l’Estaque that was painted by Cézanne. Marshal Rommel inspects the position the 2nd of May 1944 and stops at the Rove where General Schaefer in charge of the occupying troops presents the defense of Marseille. Rommel is pleased by what he saw: German artillery is able to shell any square inch along the coasts and bays of Provence.

However this was not enough to prevent “operation Dragoon”, the Allied invasion of Southern France on 15 August 1944. This landing was personally ordered by Dwight Eisenhower as the clogged-up ports in Normandy did not have the capacity to adequately supply the Allied force. It was vital to control the deep sea harbors of Marseille and Toulon.

17th of August 1944, two days after the beginning of the invasion, Hitler realizes that the invasion is a definite success and launches the retreat of the 19th German army towards a defensive line in the east of France close to the German border. However, aware of the importance of Marseille and Toulon for the Allied supply, he orders that the garrisons of Marseilles and Toulon have to stay in place and to resist up to the last cartridge and the last breath. The troops that are scattered along the coast between Cassis and Toulon have to sabotage their howitzer guns, casemates, and fire command bunkers and to withdraw towards Marseille.

2 History of «Fenouil» 4-Gun battery

The « Fenouil » gun battery or MAR 020 (20th battery of Marseille according to the German classification) is one of the many coastal batteries embedded in the Mediterranean wall. It is located at the outskirts of Marseille at l’Estaque, in a place called the “Tiles Foutain”.

This name comes from a spring and the many tiles factories implemented here.

TODT organization starts the construction at the end of 1943. The inhabitants are “invited” to move away. Few houses including a brothel are demolished to free the firing range. The battery is operational in March 1944. It is operated by the 3rd company of the 1291th coastal battery regiment gathering 2 officers, 17 NCOs and 81 gunners.

Fig. 1- 28 December 1943: the gun battery is being built. The civil houses are still present.

The 4-gun battery includes a fire command/command post bunker (H636 type), 4 casemates (type H671) for 105mm Schneider 1913 model gun, seized to the French army in 1940. The battery is protected on its east flank by an AA battery gathering six 88mm guns and three 20mm light guns. Each H671 casemate is linked to ammunition storage and a semi-buried troop shelter by a trench and an underground.

A semi-buried bunker with an access ramp protects an antitank 75mm Yugoslavian gun for close protection. Machine gun nests and individual firing position (red squares on the picture) completes the battery defensive system.
Fig. 2- 1944: Gun Battery is operational. One can see trenches and individual combat positions. No more civil houses.

Todt organization civil engineers and architects take the concrete at “La Coloniale” the nearby cement factory. The bricks are also purchased in the local tileeries. However all the technical parts are “made in Germany”: air purification system is provided by Draeger. The other pieces of equipment: radio, range finder, calculator, armored doors are also standardized German models.

The command post and casemates camouflage is well designed with a rockwork like parging. It is also possible to install camouflage nets with the help of hooks partially embedded in the concrete.

The oldest Estaque inhabitants remember the regular gun shooting drills on sea targets. The battery gunners take their marks and determine the settings to shell specific targets within the 12 kilometers range of their guns.

The French Navy audits the 4-gun battery after war in 1946 and decides to keep the command post and three casemates. These three casemates and the command post are now embedded in the urban landscape. The last casemate is buried under a house.

Fig. 3- 1946: Map of Fenouil 4-gun battery (French Navy).
2. The fire command and command post type H636

It is built in the garden of a manor house located in Sacommane street. The fires were commanded and settled by 12 men. It was camouflaged by a rockwork imitating the irregular surface of natural rock. The roof was hidden by camouflage nets whose hooks are still present.

Fig. 5- View of the hooks for the camouflage nets.

Fig. 6- 3D scheme of command post type H636.
It includes two observation rooms at two superimposed levels. The upper level was equipped with a rangefinder to both measure distance and azimuth of a potential target. The lower level room with a rounded shape (1) was equipped with binoculars for the fire control officer.

A calculator room (2) is located in the center of the bunker, at the best protected location. Two radio rooms are positioned at the left ((4 & 5) with the bedroom of the officer in charge (3). A dining room and a dormitory (6) are located on the right, with the air cleaning system and a safety exit. The inlet sas that was able to resist a gas attack is also protected by two loopholes for machine guns (7). An outside water tank provides the water supply.

3. History

Marseille has a long history but is lucky enough for having been the place of only three important battles over 26 centuries:

- A siege by Julius Caesar in 49 BC.
- A looting in 1423 by Alphonse V d’Aragon.
- The battle to free the city from the Nazi yoke, the 23rd to 28th of August 1944. It was the 1st French army commanded by Général de Lattre de Tassigny who fought for the liberation. It included the Morocco gourmiers and the riflemen of the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division of General De Monsabert.

The battle for the liberation of Marseille lasted only five days, but the most intensive fights took place in the surroundings of Fenouil battery at Verduron/moulin du Diable/ Tante Rose and the AA battery of Foresta. The battery played an important role.

From 24th to 27th of August 1944, the 88mm guns of the Fenouil AA battery shelled the Foresta plate and destroy the manor “château des Tours” used as a shelter by the assault squads of the 7th Algerian riflemen regiment. The casualties are heavy.
Fig. 8- Château des Tours” manor at Foresta before and after being shelled.

Fig. 9- Operations map of the 1st Moroco Tabors group around l’Estaque and the Fenouil battery. (Conference given by the General Jacques Schmitt, former 7th RTA Lieutenant in 1944).
The 27th of August 1944, the guns are back into action to repel the Morocco gourmiers who tried to attack l'Estaque by the Marinier valley.

The French resistance tries to harass the position, but with a few successes and a lot of casualties: a French gendarme is killed at Boulevard Fenouil by a hail of machine gun bullets. The famous church of Notre Dame de la Garde, symbol of Marseille, is close to be destroyed by the battery. General Schaefer threatened General de Monsabert in a mail dated the 26th of August.

The Fenouil Battery MAR 20 will surrender with the rest of Marseille, the 29th of August 1944. At this date, the 1291th coastal artillery regiment has ceased to exist. All the soldiers are dead or prisoner. The survivors will help rebuilding France; some of them will work in the cement or chemicals factories around Marseille.

4. Rareté et état exceptionnel du PDT H667 de la batterie Fenouil

We have explained that the fire control bunkers outside Marseille were systematically sabotaged during the withdrawal of the German army to the city.

Fig. 10- Remains of «’ile Verte», la Ciotat Fire command bunker after sabotage by retreating germen.

After the sabotage, the only remaining fire command bunkers left intact were in Marseille. There was three type H636 bunker, two of them are destroyed or in poor condition, the only survivor is the one of the Fenouil 4-gun battery.

This command post is particulary well preserved. Moreover it still contains some original pieces of equipment that have disappeared elsewhere. The original ceiling painting in “Afrika Corps” sand yellow is distinctive.

Le PDT de la batterie Fenouil, outre son état d’ensemble exceptionnel possède toujours des équipements d’époque qui ne sont plus présents sur les bunkers de la région. On note également une peinture intérieure d’origine ton jaune sable «Afrika Korps» qui est totalement singulière et distinctive des bunkers du mur de l’Atlantique peints dans des tons gris.

Fig. 11- Gas proof door type 59P8 with its original “Afrika Corps” sand yellow painting.
Fig. 12- Original gas proofing rubber seal.

Fig. 13- Armoured door type 488P2 with double loophole. The original paint is present: Antirust red primer layer and original “Afrika Corps” sand yellow painting layer. The isolating velvel is still in place on the edges.

Fig. 14- Loop hole with locking system at double tenons joint and velvet.

Fig. 15- Clean air nozzle type Draeger with it original blue painting.

Fig. 16- Ceilling with metallic bars and original “Afrika Corps” sand yellow painting.
4 targets were preselected: «Kathedrale» for the famous church of Notre Dame de la Garde, «M Stp» pour Marinestützpunkt or Marine strong point: Frioul islands, Le Planier lighthouse and «Wracke» for «wreck» that was the cruise liner «Chella» half sunk in front of l’Estaque in June 1940. The Chella wreck became famous because she was explored by Command Cousteau for his first undersea movie “EPAVE”.

The 2nd of June 1940, between 8h53 et 10h33, ten German planes attacked La Mède refinery. Meanwhile 8 other planes attacked Marseille Harbor.

The line cruiser Chella got a bomb and took fire (10 killed or missing, 6 wounded). The fire rapidly went out of control. Moreover the ship who was supposed to take sea the day after, was fully loaded with ammunitions. Tugboats pushed the ship out of the harbor up to shallow water where she is sunk by the guns of the Cyrnos patrol boat.

Fig. 17- Voice communication system Ship type.

Fig. 18- Antenna orifice and support.

Fig. 19- Command post flange with hand made engraving for artillery presetted targets.
Fig. 20- Chella is tugged away in the harbor of Marseille. Please note the war camouflage with a canal boat painted in trompe l’oeil style.

Fig. 21- Chella being sunk in front of l’Estaque by the shells of the Cynos.
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References

Crédit Photos: Bernard Descales, Cédric Lageard, Guy Quéral, IGN, SHM.
3D schemes: Jean Louis Delattre.
Special thanks to Alain Croce for Chella History and Alain Chazette for information and documents.