



THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN FORTRESS LINE

A well restored bunker in Slovakia



If you happen to be in eastern Austria or the Bratislava area in the republic of Slovakia you might go to visit **B-S4** a well restored bunker built by the Czechoslovakia army between the world wars. It is part of a line of bunkers with interlocking fields of fire which were to screen the city of Bratislava which is located just a few kilometers from the Austrian border. The coordinates are 48.127573, 17.071950

You can reach the bunker by cycling the "Donau cycling path" on the south bank of the Danube. Just before the Austrian border you can see it on your right hand side at the foot of the dyke against flooding by the Danube. It's just 3 km cycling from the famous

UFO-bridge in the center of Bratislava. (You can rent a bike easily)

By car you can take the road from Bratislava to the Austrian border town of Wolfsthal and park on the abandoned border checkpoint. It's then a 300m walk back over the dyke to the bunker.



The image from Google-earth shows you exactly the spot as well as one of the other bunkers. (There are also yellow-black signs directing you to B-S 4)

The fortified line south and west of Bratislava on the right bank of the Danube consisted of 21 similar fighting

bunkers as well as some command bunkers and a barracks for the garrison. It was built in 1937 and shows some influence from the Maginot line fortifications, France being an ally of Czechoslovakia at the time.

The bunkers of this type were erected in about three months. The casting of the concrete taking just one week (14-21.1.1937 for B-S4). Test Samples of the concrete proved it to have more than the required resistance of 450 Kg/cm².

The thickness of the walls varied between 100 and 225 cm.



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The side exposed to the enemy is completely covered by earth, the weapons being installed to cover the intervals between the bunkers. The main armament was in this case *one* Czechoslovakian built 47mm antitank ŠKODA gun that was state of the art at the time. It could penetrate 5 cm of armor and therefore knock out the panzers of the period at a range of more than 1000m.

any of these guns were removed (from Czechoslovak bunkers) and put into service by the Germans for instance on the Atlantic wall. This gun was supplemented by two sets of twin heavy machine guns and four light machine guns covering the entrance. Yes, these look very similar to the British Bren gun that was developed after the Czech inventor had immigrated to the UK. The firing embrasures were



protected from storm attacks by a diamond ditch that could also take up any rubble from the shelling of the bunkers so it would not block the view or field of fire. There were grenade throwing tubes that had a self-locking lid that prevented the blast from reaching the crew inside. Observation was done from two armored cupolas from which light machine guns could also be fired. The cupolas had a floor with adjustable height and a small lift for ammo boxes. Several periscopes were available throughout the bunker.



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At first these obstacles were made from concrete but these were thought to offer too much cover to potential attackers. Also they might be easily damaged by firing on them. Later on vertical rails and the famous hedgehog with three steel beams joined in their center replaced them. The hedgehogs were also reused by the Germans.

Even though the army of Czechoslovakia was very well equipped and numerically superior to the post-Versailles German army the Czech were more or less abandoned by their allies at the 1938 Munich conference where their independence was sold for promises of "peace from now on" by Nazi Germany.

Furthermore the bunkers had a diesel generator, radio equipment, a ventilation and filtering system, storage for ammunition, petrol, water and food to keep a team of 27 Operational for at least two weeks. Beds had to be shared by the two watches. Only the officer in charge had his private small bedroom/office.

Most of the non-fighting accommodation was in the basement level.

The bunkers were supplemented by barbed wire and antitank obstacles.



Germany had by then already annexed Austria and the Czech Sudetenland - an area with a large community of German speakers that the Nazi propaganda claimed to be badly oppressed.

This means the bunkers were never attacked in a wholesale manner. (At some of the bunkers we can record attacks, mostly in west-Czech, but officially Hitler never attacked CS)

The Germans then used the Czech fortifications to train their troops. This gave them an extra edge when attacking the French Maginot line and Eben-Emael in Belgium.



The small museum at B-S 4 shows a picture of German top brass (including Adolf Hitler) inspecting this very bunker as the first object on a study tour of the Czechoslovakian fortifications. The organization that is restoring them plans to restore each bunker with a specific period in mind from the prewar days to German occupation and the communist time.

Near B-S 4 they've also recreated a border checkpoint and some field fortifications.

Last year they suffered a setback when the area next to the Danube was flooded almost as high as the roof of the bunker.

The bunker is open for visitors on Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday afternoons but do check the website.

http://mpo.sk/?page_id=1151&lang=en

The news page is mainly in Slovakian but a lot of the other content is available in English and German as well.

You can contact the organization and see lots of pictures of the bunkers in the line.

Filip Marichal

ARTILLERY

Piece of heritage found in a Belgian barracks

When I was exploring a well hidden area of the Atlantikwall in Belgium on the barracks ground of Lombardsijde I found two vintage guns. One of them was a classic British 25 pounder but the other one was **very rare**.

It's a 155 mm howitzer prototype.

The Schneider company produced a lot of 155 mm howitzer designs. Some became only prototypes, others were sold abroad and some were given foreign license production.

The howitzer in Lombardsijde has the Schneider factory code : **O.C.6" Haut**.

Meaning.

O means 'obusier' = howitzer

C means 'campagne' = field

6 means the 6th 155 mm howitzer design from Schneider

'Haut' means a high siege carriage firing over a parapet.



It started with the 'Obusier Schneider de 6" (152,4 mm) de siege type O.C.6" Haut'. This is the howitzer prototype made for the Russian army in their 152.4 caliber. Schneider made also one O.C.6" Bas in 150 mm caliber. The differences lay in a lower trunnion height and design for field use.

A lot of odd Schneider guns and howitzers were sent to Belgium from the firing range at Le Havre. The Belgian army converted these



howitzers into the more common 155 mm caliber. The two Schneider howitzers are known in the Belgian army as : 'Les Obusiers de 155 Schneider Haut et Bas'.

It's really a pity that such a rare gun stands in open air next to building while it deserves a place in the Army Museum in Brussels!

Thanks to Dag Sundkuist (Norway) for the identification and the description of the gun.

Sources :

L'artillerie Lourde de Campagne Belge 1914-1940, pages 158-159. Roger Lothaire.

Les canons de la victoire 1914-1918, tome 1 L'artillerie de campagne, page 43. François Vauvillier and Pierre Touzin.

MODEL BUILDING

Bunker in Fecamp

For sure you've seen this masterpiece of camouflage in various Atlantikwall books.

The bunker stood in Fecamp at the Route de Rouen. Unfortunately it has been demolished for a long time.



It belonged to the strongpoint **Stp Fe027** and Fecamp was defended by troops of the 2nd Battalion of the 34th Infantry Regiment of the 17th "Luftwaffe Feld-Division" and by two companies Fortress Infantry, the 5 and 6 Fest LXXXI.



The bunker is a Vf construction and a Sonderkonstruktion (special construction). It has a crew room that connects to a corridor with two entrances and there's another entrance on the street side. The roof of the bunker is a combat position for individual weapons and machine guns.

In the pavement in front of the bunker there's a Tobruk with a French H35 tank turret with a 37 mm gun. The entrance of the Tobruk was next to the bunker.

The particularity of the bunker was of course it's typical construction, but also it's camouflage. It was painted like a typical

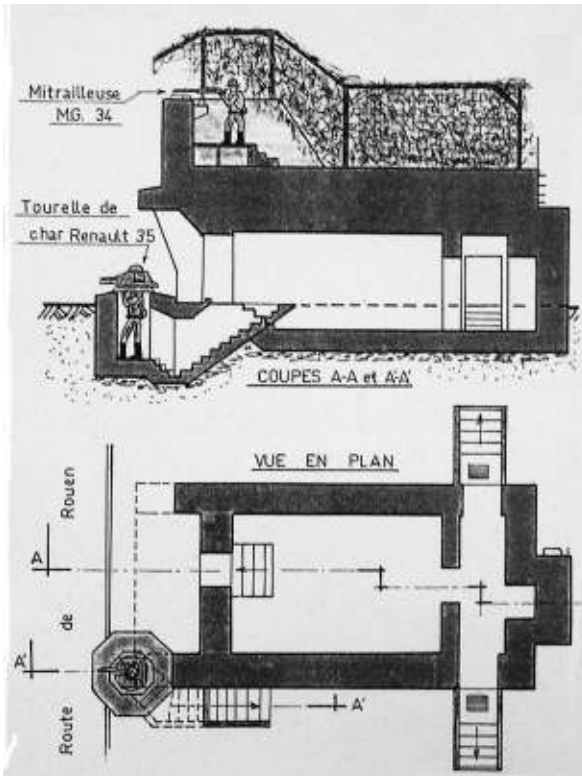


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Normandy house. The combat area on the roof was camouflaged with a net that was attached on a frame.



While building the bunker on a scale of 1/35



The same bunker after the war.

I noticed that there's a drawing error in the plan, namely the door on the street side is too low!

I've made the walls of plaster and connected them afterwards together. The turret is from Drakkar Models www.drakkar-models.com and the Bren carrier is from Tamiya.





ATLANTIKWALL

Burglary in Atlantikwall bunker (BE)



Burglars have broken into the command bunker of Stene (Ostend) last year in July. It's the Regelbau 117 of Stp Iltis. They removed all the remaining equipment from the bunker, being filters and some other parts. They've done very sloppy work because they forgot a metal saw. The police has made a report and on the saw they found finger prints. Until now there's no result of the investigation.

BOOKS

Atlantikwall, Gold – Juno - Sword

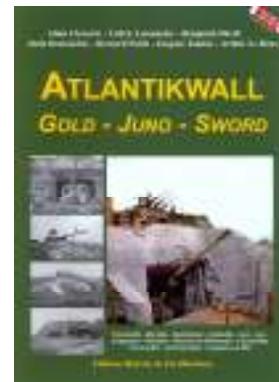
This book of editor Editions Histoire & Fortification describes every strongpoint along these invasion beaches from Franceville to Longues sur Mer.

The book is largely illustrated with photos from during the war and schema's of the strongpoints. It's a soft cover book with 112 pages.

Many authors have contributed to this book where under several well known writers like Alain Chazette, Bernard Paich and Alain Destouches.

It's a must have for everyone who wants to discover that part of the landing beaches.

ISBN number : 978-2-915767-17-9



Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the spell check.

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