SAINT-NAZAIRE POCKET

August 1944 – May 11 1945

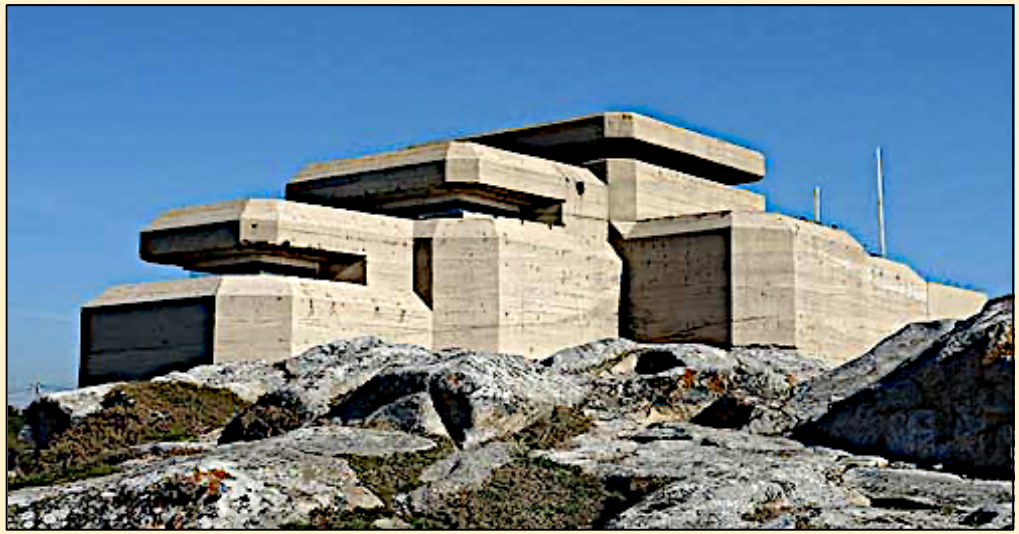


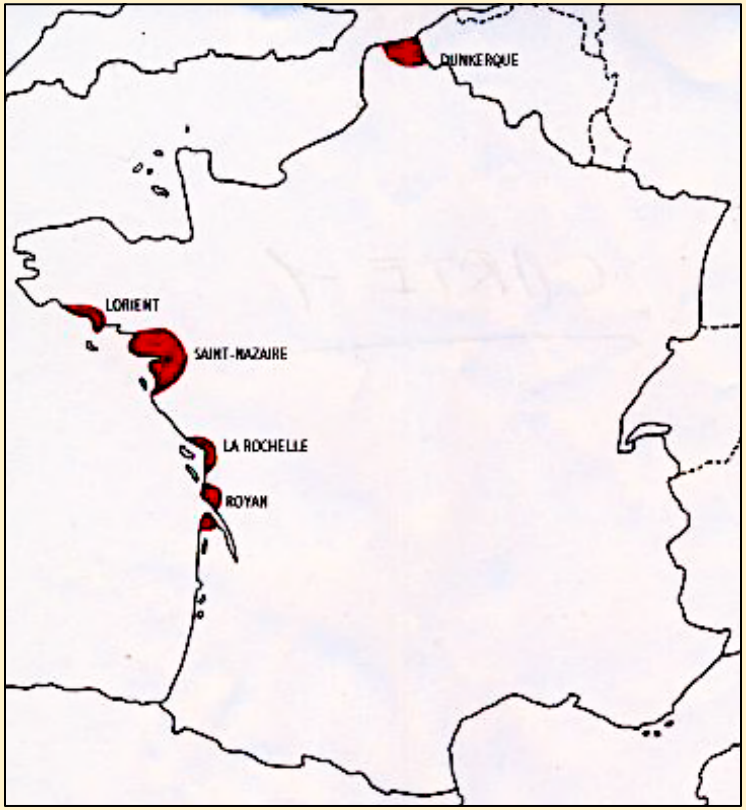
At the start of World War II, Adolf Hitler demanded the construction of what became known as the **Atlantic Wall**.
This consists of a system of fortifications (*blockhaus*) along the Atlantic Coast in order to prevent the Allies from landing. This involves strengthening the defenses of ports and submarine bases.

Despite the work of the TODT organization, the civil and military engineering group of the Third Reich, the defense is very uneven and certain sections are more fragile.

It is therefore in one of these places that the **Normandy landings** took place on June 6, 1944. (**D-Day**)

On July 31, 1944, Hitler sent instructions to his troops: they must retreat to the *blockhaus* and "*defend them to the last man…*".





We will have pockets of German resistance near Brest, La Rochelle, Saint-Nazaire...

Exceptional importance of the Saint-Nazaire Pocket

1. its strategic importance
2. the Post Office which continued to operate and which maintained contact between the French 'pocketed' in the Saint-Nazaire region.

1.1. submarine base which could accommodate 14 submarines; anchorage point for two fleets of *U-boote* whose main task was to intercept Allied supply ships.



1.2. *blockhaus* - equipped with a powerful artillery battery
- surrounded by a garrison of 27,000 German soldiers
- presence of approximately 125,000 French civilians

- Thanks to the Red Cross, in May 1944, many civilians (women and children) locked in the Pocket were able to evacuate by train to Nantes. The Germans observe a truce, because this meant fewer mouths to feed.
- Nazairians tried to leave on their own through mined fields.

The French could not move freely as this postcard shows.

Bicycle pass for a Red Cross worker dated March 30, 1945.

P.C. reprinted on the occasion of the "40th anniversary of the Liberation of the Pocket of St-Nazaire".



Feldkommandantur
beim Festungskdt. St. Nazaire
Abt. Verwaltung u. Wirtschaft

PORNICHET den 30 Mars 1945

AUSWEIS

JOSSE [illegible]-Paul, wohnhaft in GUERANDE

Identitaetskarte Nr. 198 *Serie*

Rot-Kreuz-Ausweis 2 732

ist berechtigt, im Dienste des franz. Roten Kreuzes sein (ihr) Fahrrad Marke Camélia *zu benutzen.*

Dieser Ausweis gilt nur in Verbindung mit der Identitaetskarte und dem Rot-Kreuz-Ausweis.

Das Fahrrad darf nicht beschlagnahmt werden

Gesehen: 1) Der Direktor des franz. Roten Kreuzes, Équipes d'urgence 2) Ortskommandantur : Guérande

Der Ausweis ist gültig bis zum: 30 JUIN 1945 *1945*

Hauptmann

LAISSER-PASSER POUR BICYCLETTE DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

Ed. Écomusée de St-Nazaire. Imp. L.N.G. Nantes.

On March 28, 1942, an Allied raid took place by a commando led by Lord Mountbatten. It was named “Operation Chariot”

- goal: put out of use the port of Saint-Nazaire which housed numerous German ships including the *Tirpitz*, the largest battleship in the German Navy as well as the famous *U-boot* submarines.
- it involved blowing up an old destroyer, the *HMS Campbeltown*, in front of the main lock gate in order to destroy essential equipment
- the raid was a success; the large lock was unusable until the liberation, but at the cost of the death of many belligerents on both the English and German sides.

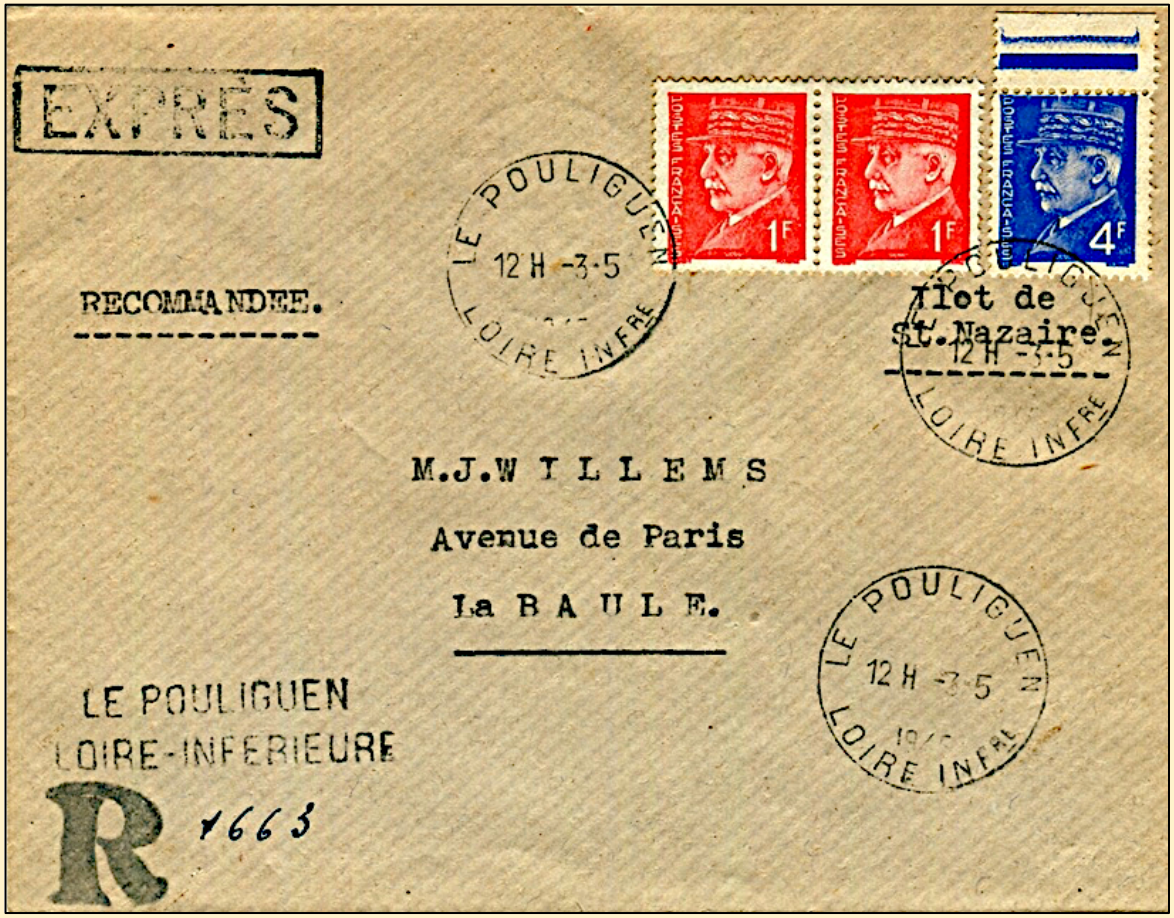


2. Philatelic importance

- following the destruction of the town of Saint-Nazaire (80%)
- relocation of the Regional Post Office to La Baule
- the Postal Service operated normally until the end of 1944



● Le Pouliguen



Registered letter

- ***Le Pouliguen to La Baule***
- ***May 3, 1945***
- ***tax 6f***
- ***EXPRÈS marking***



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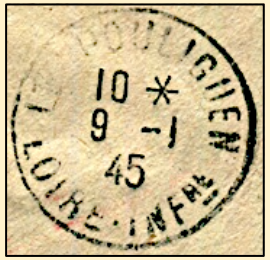
- ***reception mark La Baule***
- ***May 4, 1945***

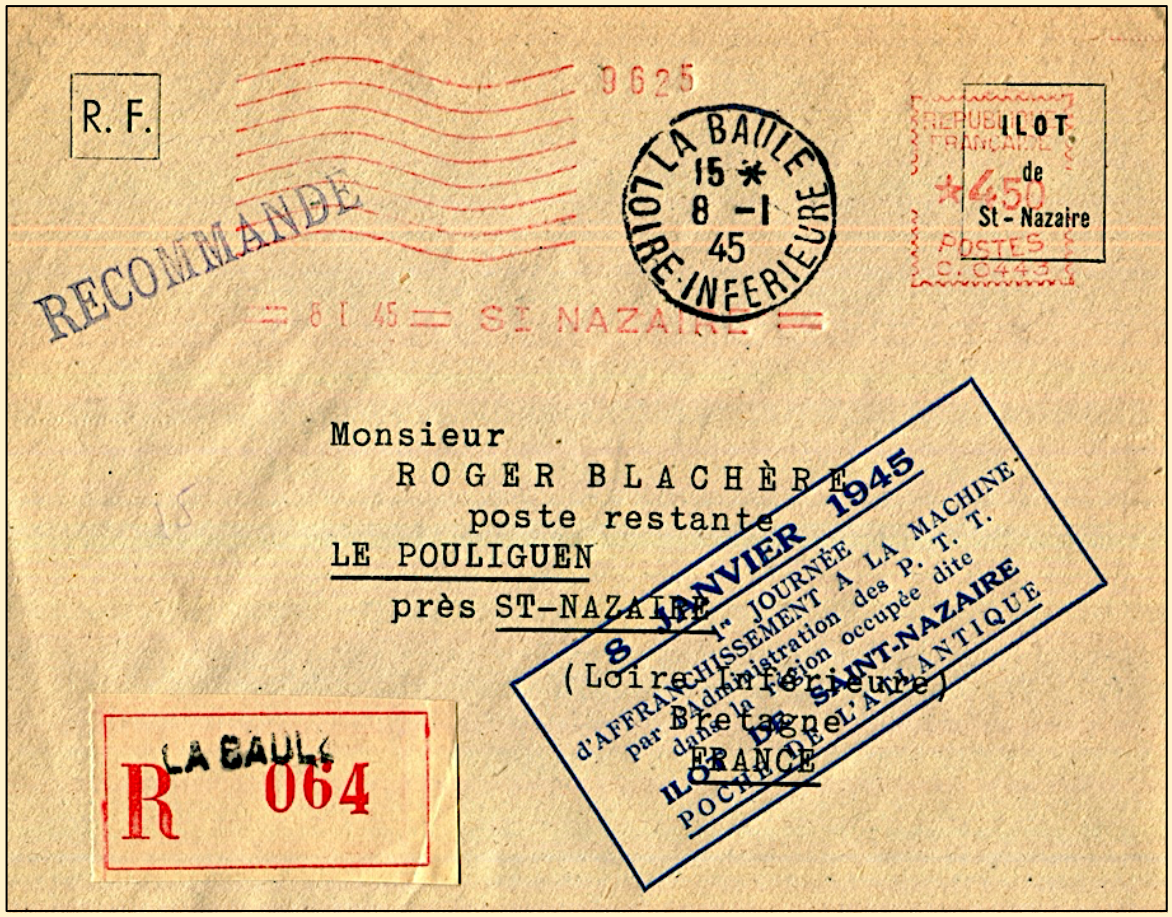
At the beginning of 1945, the La Baule post office ran out of stamps and on the departmental order of the P.T.T., the public had to bring letters to the post office and have them stamped mechanically.

Registered letter

- ***La Baule to Le Pouliguen***
- ***January 8, 1945***
- ***tax 4,50f***

1re JOURNÉE D'AFFRANCHISSEMENT À LA MACHINE





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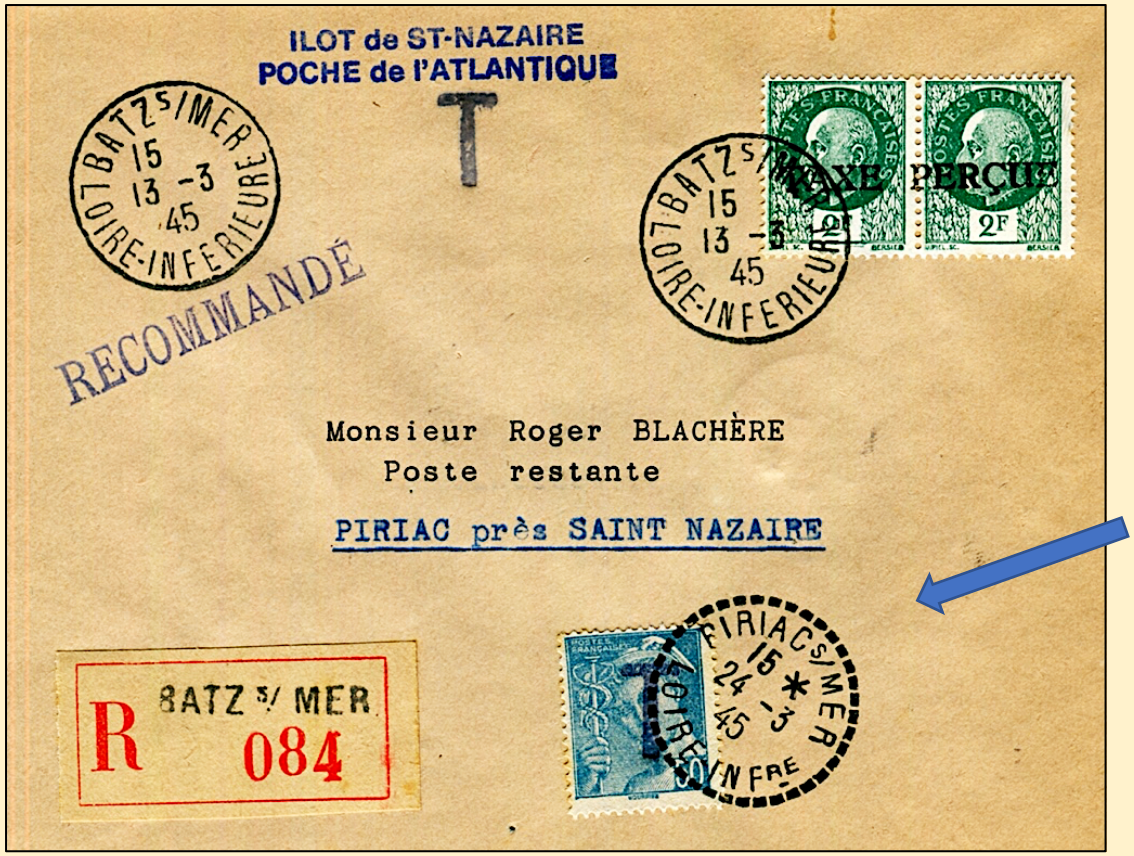
- **reception mark Le Pouliguen**
- **January 9, 1945**

On this occasion « La Centralisation du Livre » franked 2,900 cards, as souvenirs.

Postcard tariff since January : 1,50f



- in February, post offices in other municipalities in the ‘Pocket’ experienced the same problem, i.e. there was a shortage of stamps.
- the La Baule Postal Department then orders that the letters be brought to the post office to be franked.
- the TAXE PERÇUE mark is then stamped



There have been cases where the postage taxes where incomplete; the TAXE PERÇUE was then applied in addition to the postage stamp to complete the tariff.

Special case: the tax collected to supplement the 4.50f rate is not paid by the sender but by the recipient!

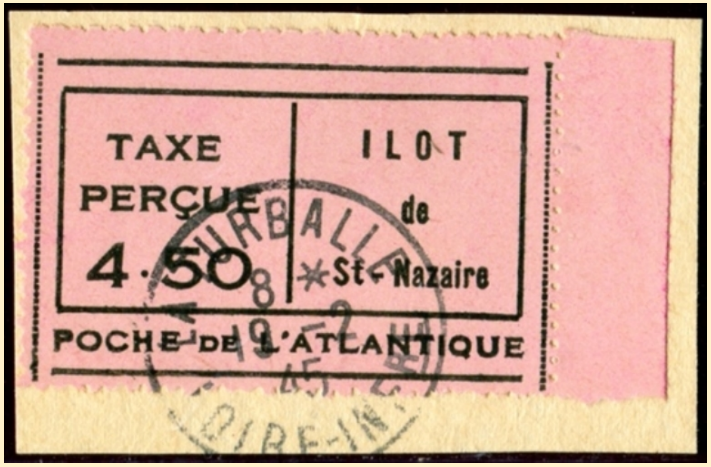
Registered letter

- ***Batz-sur-Mer to Piriac-sur-Mer***
- ***mailed at 15 h on March 13, 1945***
- ***ovpt TAXE PERÇUE***

The letter* T *indicates an excess tax of 50c to be paid; which corresponds to the 50c stamp added by the recipient in Piriac-sur-Mer.

Because of this lack of stamps, a private company issues TAXE PERÇUE labels which are accepted as regular postage by the following 4 post offices:

* La Turballe : February 19,1945
* Batz-sur-Mer : February 28,1945
* Guérande : March 19,1945
* Piriac-sur-Mer : March 24,1945



<u>These stamp labels are only valid when canceled.</u>
Used until May 1945.



2 labels of 50c and 2f
There are a very large number of varieties and forgeries.

In March 1945, the shortage of stamps was growing, the Chamber of Commerce issued 50,000 labels representing the city's arms: the nave deployed sail embroidered with a key.

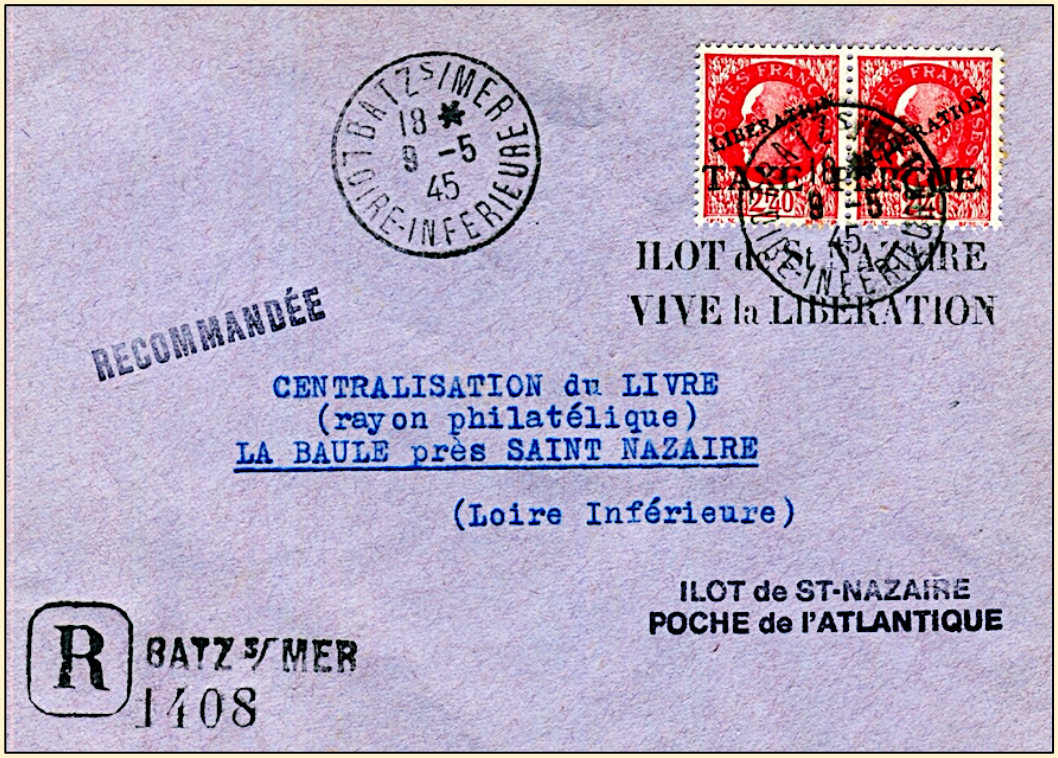
LIBERATION

The surrender of the Saint-Nazaire Pocket took place on May 8, 1945, the same day as the capitulation of Germany.

On May 11, 1945, the surrender ceremony took place in Bouvron in the presence of German General H. Junk and American General H.F. Kramer.

"By handing over my weapon, I am handing over to you the surrender of all the German troops in the fortress of Saint-Nazaire."

Subsequently, General Kramer hands over civil powers to the *Préfet*.



Inscription: ILOT de St NAZAIRE
VIVE la LIBÉRATION

<u>The territory is finally liberated.</u>

Following the surrender on May 8, the post offices will affix the LIBERATION mark on all the stamps deposited at the post office on May 9 and 11, 1945.

Registered letter

- ***Batz-sur-Mer to La Baule***
- ***May 9, 1945***
- ***Ovpt.* LIBÉRATION**
- ***New tariff 6f***
- **TAXE PERÇUE mark**

On July 23, 1945, General de Gaulle went to Saint-Nazaire where he gave a speech and walked the streets of the destroyed city.



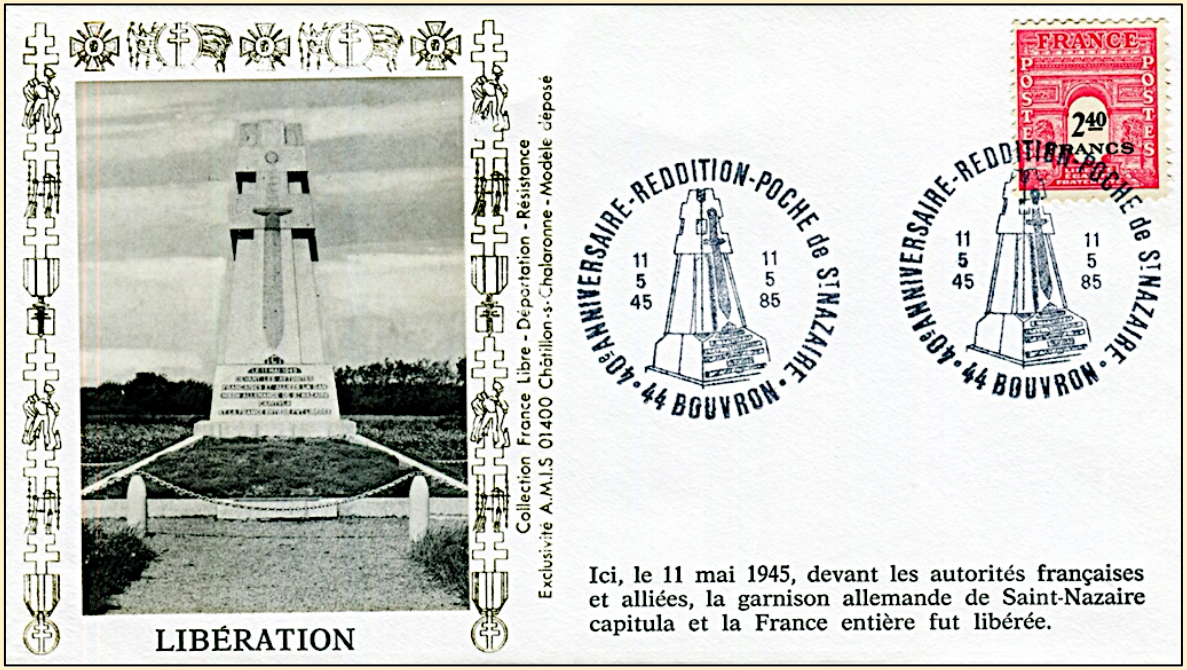
Commemorative Postcard
Ed. Écomusée de St-Nazaire
Imp. L.N.G. Nantes
1945 - 1985

COMMEMORATION

On October 9, 1949, a monument in the shape of the Lorraine cross was erected in Bouvron on the very site of the surrender ceremony.

40th anniversary

A First Day Cover was issued on May 11, 1985.
A special cancellation and a stamp illustrate the monument of the surrender in Bouvron.



ICI
LE 11 MAI 1945
DEVANT LES AUTORITÉS FRANÇAISES ET ALLIÉES LA GARNISON ALLEMANDE
DE ST-NAZAIRE
CAPITULA
ET LA FRANCE ENTIÈRE FUT LIBÉRÉE

* text on the monument *

HERE
MAY 11, 1945
IN FRONT OF THE FRENCH AND ALLIED
AUTHORITIES THE GERMAN GARRISON
OF ST-NAZAIRE
CAPITULATED
AND THE ENTIRE FRANCE WAS LIBERATED

70th anniversary COMMEMORATION - 2015



* The End *