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Index for MS # B 364.

RHINELAND

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(Gustav Hoehne)

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Wend von WIETERSHEIM
Generalleutnant

R H I N E L A N D

Part I

The Employment of the 11 Panzerdivision in
Lorraine.

RHINELANDPart IEmployment of 11 Panzerdivision
in Lorraine

Time: 20 September until 28 October 1944

Area: Dieuze - Chatéau Salins - Forêt de Parroy

Short Prehistory and Organization of the Division

On 15 September after the Rhone-valley campaign and the battles west of Belfort, the Door to Burgundy starting at that point the Division was relieved and proceeded by railway (chain-sections) and on-foot (wheel-sections) into the area east of Sarrebourg in Lorraine with the utmost speed. The railroad transports were considerably delayed, because of air activity of the enemy, while the marching in the foggy Rhine-valley at daytime went ahead without trouble. In the previous operational area a combat group was left behind - on orders of the Higher Command - which was to cover that front sector to screen the withdrawal of the main body of the 11th Pz Division. The composition of this combat group was as follows: An emergency Staff; a signal unit; ten armored cars IV; armored-personnel-carrier company; an engineers company; I gun motor carriage regiment; Armored Artillery Regiment 119 as well as air force units, which had been attached to the Division during the campaign in the Rhone valley. The commander of the combat group was Lt Col Hammon, commander of the artillery regiment of the Division. Only beginning November this combat group was subordinated to the Division in the

new operational area, after having been successfully employed with other units many other places although suffering heavy losses.

Excepting units of the previously mentioned combat group the Division arrived in the new operational area within seven days (20 to 27 September) with all the subordinated formations in order of battle; the combat-units already by the 24 September.

Their approximate strengths was:

Armored regiment: twenty tanks type V; ten tanks type IV: motorized infantry regiments; armored reconnaissance battalion and armored engineer battalion althogether about 70% of the authorized strengths.

Armored-Artillery-regiment: three light batteries of four barrels each; three heavy batteries of four barrels each.

The Antitank Battalion 61, had not yet received the new material that had been promised. This battalion was located as a unit in the area of Zabern, where it continued general training and received special instructions to handle the new tank destroyer IV.

These facts should be taken into consideration with regard to the carrying out of the Divisions mission. The morale of the troops was good and, the preceeding battles had not discouraged them. Moreover all portions were well trained and possessed the necessary experience in the battles on the western front. Thanks to the replacement training battalion the Division had a reserve of 2000 men available, who were not yet fully trained or had completed a new training course. They consisted to a great extent of young volunteers for flying personnel of the Luftwaffe, who had joined the Division in Southern France, because they could not be employed with the Luftwaffe, on account of lack of material and fuel.

In the course of the employment in the area Dieuze - Château Salins-Forêt de Parroy, the 111 Panzerbrigade was gradually incorporated by order of the OKH/Org Battalion. This increased the equipment of the Division by approximately thirty armored cars V (only 10% were ready for action); A few signal communication apparatus and about hundred motor vehicles of all types. The men belonged for the most part to older military age groups or were partly disabled and their respective units were loosely organized; 80% of these forces were removed to the homeland to join the replacement units.

Initial positions: On the boundary line between the 1st and 19th Army American armored forces succeeded in crossing the Meurthe northwest of Luneville, which had resulted in a deep gap in our own front line as far as to the line Moncourt - Ley - Juvelize - Moyenvic. A further advance of the enemy to Dieuze and Hampont on 20 September had been stopped after heavy fighting by the LVIII Panzer Corps with the subordinated Armored Brigades 111 and 113 by counterattacks in the area of Juvelize. However, this weakened these Brigades considerably as to personnel and equipment; the remnants held a few strong points within the area of penetration. The wings of our own established front were located on the heights north of Moyenvic (to the southeast of Château Salins) and on the western edge of the Forêt de Parroy. The closing of this gap, where, as previously mentioned, there were only the remnants of the two armored brigades, was to become their task-in accordance with information received from the Panzer Army High Command 5- after the assembly of the 11th Panzer Division had been completed. This orientation took place on 20 September

1944 by Panzer A.O.K 5, which took position between the 1st and 19th Army and assumed command in the enemy area of penetration.

Estimate of the situation: The attack of the Division was to contain previously mentioned enemy penetration by gaining of the line Forêt de Benzange la Grande (inclusive) - Arracourt - woodland south of it and Henamenil; our own front gap was to be closed and close contact restored between the wings of our own established defensive front on the heights south of Château Salins and on the western edge of the Forêt de Parroy.

The terrain, which is bounded to the north by the Saille-sector, and to the south by the Canal la Marne au Rhin, whose the natural sectors eliminated a danger to our own flanks during the attack, also limited our own operations. The possibilities of moving into position an armored division under the protection of the remnants of the armored brigades were quite favorable in the foreground of the northern half of the woodlands south of Dieuze and also in the vicinity of the uneven partly wooded area around Bourdonnay. In both cases there was a good chance of observation for our own artillery for the protection of the assembly and the first support of the attack, as well as relatively good natural cover in case of air attacks, which owing to the air supremacy of the enemy was particularly important.) The dominating area within the sector of attack, the forêt de Benzange la Grande - Juvrecourt - Moncourt - Rechicourt la Petite was already at that time (20 September) for the 6 days in the hands of the enemy; weaker enemy units had just occupied Ley and had been stopped near Juvelize by counterattacks. In case of attack

any real resistance would be encountered only on the previously mentioned ridge, due to our own insufficient forces it had to be started at the flanks, in order to have a chance at all, (only two artillery battalions and thirty tanks). Two directions of assault offered themselves favorably in the terrain:

a. From the assembly area Dieuze in a southwest direction by way of Juvelize toward Arracourt.

b. From the assembly area in the vicinity of Bourdonnay in a western direction, remaining north of the canal, as far as the area Coincourt - Moncourt, in order to turn from there to the northwest and to roll up the ridges occupied by the enemy.

In the case a) the sector ~~Flottage des Salines~~ Flottage des Salines had to be overcome owing to the heights occupied by the enemy, which could easily be blocked by three existing bridges. Besides, from here on our own attack came directly upon the ridge of hills. It was the same direction of assault in which the last counterattack of the Panzer Brigade 111 had failed.

In the case b) the sectors and differences in height to be overcome, were not too large and our own attack would be launched at the flanks of the heights occupied by the enemy. This case was consequently the more favorable from the point of view of terrain.

The enemy would avail himself of the bridgehead he had established across the Meurthe, so as to advance against the Saar district, also possibly through the defile of Zabern against Strasbourg. His attack on 20 September was unquestionable aimed at Dieuze; it had been stopped for the time being by the 111th Panzer Brigade after a tenacious tank engage-

ment north of Juvelize. The continuation of the attack could be daily expected. According to available enemy documents, portions of the 4th American Armored Division and the 26th American Infantry Division had been identified, who therefore, were far superior to the remnants of the Panzer Brigades, whose small forces even endangered a complete success of the 11th Pz Div considering its present forces available.

The combat efficiency of our own Division has already been described. The remnants of the Panzer Brigades did not represent any essential reinforcement. They could be regarded as just sufficient to cover the assembly for the attack. Moreover this assembly had to be accelerated as it was hard to foresee, whether the remnants of the Panzer Brigades could once more repulse a renewed attack by the enemy.

These before mentioned considerations led the Division to make up its mind to launch the attack after completion of assembly in the area Bourdonnay in the direction of assault Ommeray - Moncourt - Rechicourt la Petite-Forêt de Bezange la Grande. At the same time portions were envisaged for early interception of a possible enemy breakthrough of the lines of the decimated Panzer Brigades along the line Bois de Morsack - Marimont (two kilometers north of Bourdonnay), because in this dominating elevated terrain an advance of the enemy between the Rhine-Marne-Canal and the Forêt de Bride et de Koecking to the east, either against Strasbourg or against the Saar district, could be prevented without great difficulties.

This intention of the Division was not carried out. The Superior

Command Posts ordered that the direction of the attack was to be the line Dieuze-Juvelize-Lezey - Rechicourt. The Division realized therefore that it had to launch a frontal attack against an enemy ready for defense in an unfavorable terrain, (see estimate of the situation). Our estimate of the situation - taking into consideration the experiences regarding the combat situation gathered by the 113 Pz Brigade and the fact that the canal narrowed down our field of operations - was that any attempt to attack to the North (as envisaged in paragraph b.) would be futile in view of the pressing time element.

The Course of the Battles

Sketch 1

20 - 24 September 1944: The LVIII Armored Corps was subordinated to the tank AOK 5; on the other hand, the 11th Armored Division was subordinated to the LVIII A. C. The expected before mentioned order was given and its importance was certain considering the significance of the Saar district for Germany's capacity to promote its war effort. Beginning with the 20 September the Division assembled in the area of Saarebourg - Phalsbourg - Rauwiller with Division Command post at Lixheim; this fact could not be hidden from the air reconnaissance by the enemy. Each unit used the available limited time for the organization, the overhauling of the weapons and the motor vehicles. On the part of the Division a contact was maintained with LVIII Panzer Corps (Commanding General: General Krueger of the Armored Forces), Corps command post at Languimberg, so as to be constantly informed about latest combat - developments. The reconnoitering of the approach routes into the assembly area was carried out, the following roads came into question: Fenetrange - Mittersheim - Dieuze

and Sarrebourg - Heming - Maizieres les Vic, where the required traffic control forces were drawn up at an early date. After their arrival the commanders of the units drove into the subesequent battle terrain, in order to survey the situation and to take up contact with the armored brigades. The course of the line of resistance in the rear area along the canal des Houillieres de Sarre which was under construction was established to prevent early demolition and for security reasons our own engineers were sent to the still unoccupied bridges.

On 21 and 22 September there occurred attacks by the 111th Pz Bgde and counterattacks by the enemy in the area of Juvelize during, which the commander of the Pz Bgde, Colonel von Bronsart-Schellendorf was killed. This fact subordinated the Brigade at once to the Division. After these battles the strength of our own units had decreased to such an extent, that the Division decided to assign some of its portions to occupy a covering position. This was to prevent a breakthrough by the enemy - because since the 23 September, the remaining forces of the LVIII Panzer Corps were inadequate to hold the enemy in case of a renewed attack, between the Forêt de Bride et de Koecking and the canal la Marne au Rhin and above all our own assembly area to the south of Dieuze which had to remain in our own hands. The following line was most suitable for these requirements: to the west of Dieuze - southwest edges of the Bois de Morsack - Gelucourt - Marimont Chau et Fme. On the night of 22 December this position was occupied by the Panzergrenadier Regiment 111, the two available artillery battalions of the Division (one battalion had remained in the area of Belfort!) were requested to join forces with the Regiment.

On the same night the division command post was transferred to Fri-bourg.

23 September: The Pz Gren Regt 111 remained in its position according to instructions, thereby establishing contact between the remnants of Panzer Brigade 111 in the vicinity of Blanche - Eglise and the likewise much knocked about Panzer Brigade 113 around Ommeray. At dawn the Panzer Artillery Regiment minus one battalion joining with its efforts, started to find its shooting range, due to the excellent chances for observation, the regiment was able to cover a sector as far as the line Mulcey - Juvelize - Ley - Ommeray; beyond that the existing gun battery covered with harassing fire localities at a farther distance. This represented the first artillery action at this combat area, because according to the order of battle the two armored brigades had no artillery at their disposal. This fact in itself indicates why in addition to the difficulties of reorganization their battles proved to be both unsuccessful and costly.

From then on the gradual incorporation of the 111 Panzer Brigade into the Division was being effected. At the same time the taking over, repairs and replacement of the personnel of the tanks in our own workshops was accomplished with the greatest possible speed, as our own tank forces (twenty V and ten IV) were in urgent need of reinforcement by tanks of the Brigade (thirty V). The other vehicles were distributed according to requirements amongst the units of the Division improving their equipment, because they were for the greater part new types possessing crosscountry mobility. The formation of personnel took only place later on after the beginning of the attack, as at that moment the units could not be with-

drawn from employment in front of the assembly area of the Division.

As divisional command post for the attack Alteville close to the south of Etang de Lindre was prepared.

Sketch 2

24 September 1944: The Division received orders to attack on the 25 of September. Owing to the fact, that the attack was launched twenty-four hours earlier than expected and requested the last preparations could not be carried out in all details.

All combat ready tanks were assembled with the main body in the forest to the south of Dieuze, with a weaker group in the woods one kilometer to the northeast of Marimont.

One battalion of the Panzer Artillery Regiment changed positions with another unit by way of Dieuze into the Forêt de Bride et de Koeckling, in order to be able to turn at least part of its gun barrels into the direction of attack Blanche - Eglise - Juvelize of the attacking troops, whereas the other battalion could only support the attack from the flanks of positions held theretofore. With this battalion the Heeresflak Artillery Battalion 277, set up in the vicinity of Gelucourt, was joined for ground artillery employment, thereby increasing the fire power of the artillery by twelve 88 gun barrels.

At nightfall, the Pz Gren Reg 110, to which had been assigned a combat battalion recently reorganized from a field replacement battalion, took up its assembly area in the vicinity of Blanche - Eglise and small forest to the south of it in conjunction with an engineer company.

Due to the assignment of the main body of the tanks and by the

organization of observations, the Division secured the center of gravity in the sector of this regiment.

At this time the assembling of all elements of the Division in the area to the northeast of Sarrebourg was by no means completed. Except for the previously mentioned combat group Hammon, which had to remain in the area of Belfort and the Pz Jg Battalion 61, the armored reconnaissance battalion (Battalion 11) and the main body of the supply troops had not yet arrived. Even parts of the single units of the motorized infantry regiments were still missing, which - because of the breakdown of vehicles during the march - had not yet reached their destination. Once more the Division could not be committed properly as to time and place, because of the necessity to start an early attack due to circumstances and its ensuing fateful consequences.

The Divisional Command post was at Alteville.

25 September 1944: On account of the difficult reorganization of the artillery as well as the necessary finding of the correct range the assembly was finished only about one hour after the envisaged time. However, this time could be used in the sectors of the motorized infantry regiments for the issuing of orders in the terrain and for local displacements. At an early and advanced date the division issued the final date of the attack, which started off without friction in accordance with the issued orders.

The Pz Gren Regt 110 - holding the center of gravity - executing its task launched an attack together with the subordinated main body of Pz Regt 15 and an engineer company from the area Blanche-Englise against

Juvelize and the heights to the west of it (233 and 264); its first immediate objective. As expected the attack met very soon an enemy prepared for defense, because it ran counter against the present direction of attack of the 4th American Tank Division toward Dieuze. The first objective was only reached after a battalion of the regiment in the la Seille valley had penetrated to Marsal, capturing from there on Villers Bettlach Fme, the height 264 and Moyenvic. In the evening of the same day Juvelize was not yet in our own hands; however, the village occupied by the enemy was, seriously threatened from this flank after the capture of the height 264. At the same time the Pz Gren Regt 111 attacked with center of gravity on the right wing, that is close to the Regiment 110, from the vicinity of Gueblange les Dieuze and south of it. The Regiment advanced its line without great difficulties and took the wooded sections to the west of Gueblange, Donnelay and the Height 245 two kilometers to the southeast of it. In the evening the Regiment was occupying the rounded hilltops hard east and northeast of Hill 257.

26 September 1944: During the night portions of the artillery were moved up as the ranges did not reach the region occupied by the enemy due to the additional territory we had gained on the previous day. The attack launched simultaneously by both regimental groups was successful: Juvelize and Hill 257 were captured, thereby our immediate objective had been reached. The formations reorganized still during the day as far as possible under the enemy artillery fire and the increasing employment of fighter bombers.

At that time the terrain confirmed the accuracy of the estimate of
the situation by

the Division. An attack into the same direction was bound to bug down in the wide, unprotected valley of the Cal de Flottage des Salines in front of the chain of hills Xanrey - Bezange - Moncourt, even more so as an offensive employment of tanks could hardly be successful.

Sketch 3

27 September 1944: On the night of 26 September the sector Moyenvic - Juvelize Donnelay was taken over by the Regiment 110, which had only a few tanks and an engineer company at its command. During the night the main body of the Pz Regt as well as Regt 111, which was freed by the employment of Regt 110 in the before mentioned temporary line of resistance were assembled in the area Ommeray - Bourdonnay. These two units were granted a rest period of twenty-four hours; they covered themselves locally on the heights to the west of Ommeray and on the main road to the north of it. Contact was established to the right to Regiment 110 and to the left to the remnants of Pz Bgde 113 in the forest three kilometers to the southwest of Ommeray. This action completely blocked ^{the enemy area} of penetration; on this occasion, our own troops, had suffered so little, that they had sufficient local reserves whose good condition inabled them to repell any renewed assault at the outset. The positions of the Pz Gren Regt 110 were good; the concrete fortified defense systems of World War I within this line offered at the same time valuable effective protection, even against the strongest artillery fire and bombings by the enemy. In front of our positions was a frequently mentioned tank proof sector, which rendered the entire position almost unconquerable.

According to the estimate of the situation made at the beginning and

information now gained on the spot, it seemed the most practical step to the Division, to go over to the defense in this line with the Regt 110 to establish contact, by attacking with the remnants of the Division, to the stationary wing of our own front line on the western edge of the Parroy forest, approximately along the line Juvelize - Lezey - Bezange la Petite - Etange de Parroy. A corresponding request was refused, and orders were issued for the continuation of the attack on the following day at objectives fixed beforehand.

The Division Command post was at the unmarked farm along the road Gelucourt - Maizieres les Vic 2,5 km to the southeast of Gelucourt.

28 September 1944: At dawn the Division launched an attack on a broad front with center of gravity in the sector of the Regiment 111. As expected, the spearheads of the right wing (110) bogged down shortly after crossing the road Moyenvic - Bourdonnay. The villages of Lezey and Ley were captured; Much bigger was the success of the Regiment 111 in the center of gravity, which took Moncourt and Bezange la Petite after a heavy battle and continued to attack Rechicourt la Petite. Due to two reasons the capture of this important place was not successful;

a. Our own artillery was too weak for the widening of our own attack; the area Rechicourt could only be reached by a small portion of our own guns.

b. On the southern wing of the regiment, - mainly due to lack of orders and signal communications, a contemplated big thrust by the Division could not be started. It was planned that combat group consisting of the remnants of the 113 Pz Bgde and our own reconnaissance battalion, with all elements under the command of Pz AR 119, after assembly

at the forest, two kilometers to the northeast of Xures, were to advance against Rechcourt from the south by way of Coincourt. Although this combat group did not have to face any strong enemy opposition, it stopped after the capture of Coincourt, a step which is difficult to understand. This in turn held up the attack launched by Regiment 111 against Rechicourt whose foremost portions of the Regiment suffered heavy losses and had to be withdrawn a few hundred meters. In spite of considerable initial successes of the Division, a real decision namely the capture of Rechicourt and the rolling up of the enemy held ridge to the northeast - did not materialize after the failure of the combat group Hammon. Nevertheless the successes so far against portions of an American armored and American Infantry Division were considerable considering the strength of the personnel and equipment of the Division.

Advanced Division command post: at Ommeray.

29 and 30 September 1944: The enemy had been well prepared for the attack by Division, therefore a renewed assault from captured positions was, ineffective although our own artillery had also been advanced into corresponding positions. For this reason according to orders by the Superior Command. On the same day of 29 September a further attack was stopped, in order to attack Arracourt, hard north of the Rhine-Marne-Canal by way of Bures. The following forces were available for this purpose: Panzer-aufklaerungsabteilung 11, 2 Panzergren Regt 110; (which was freed on the northern wing of the Division) an armored engineer company and about twenty-five tanks, which had been detached from our own Division. the tank brigades and the 15 Pz Gren Division, but were not broken in and

difficult to handle. Therefore the first plan of the Division remained as a last possibility, involving no further element of surprise, and whereby in consideration of the air supremacy of the enemy our closely ranked tank formations could not become effective in the small area. Nevertheless the attack had great initial successes: Bures was captured on 29; the defile at the Etang de Parroy and the chain of hills 283, 318, 296 with the eastern part of the woods two kilometers to the south of Arracourt were taken on the 30 September starting at that point. Just before the penetration into the enemy artillery positions and therefore, a complete success, our own wedge was deprived of its power of attack by enemy fighter bombers called by the latter in the last minute. In a few minutes eighteen of our own tanks and several armored personnel carriers were burning! Our own infantry retreated, strangely enough not pursued by the enemy, and was immediately reorganized and employed by the Divisional commander in the area of Coincourt. Hereby any chance of gaining our final objective had been frustrated. We had suffered losses that could have been prevented, if we would have been satisfied with the line already gained which was favorable for the defense.

1 and 2 October 1944: The Division went over to the defense. A main line of battle from Moyenvic - Hill 228 - Bezange la Petite - western edge of the small forest Moncourt - Etang de Parroy (villages inclusive) had been occupied and fortified. Bures was occupied as an outpost by an engineer company in front of the left divisional wing. The most essential strongpoints in this line were reinforced from an engineering point of view.

The boundaries of the sectors were as follows:

To the right: Moyenvic - Dieuze (villages inclusive)

To the left: Canal la Marne au Rhin.

The Divisional command post was withdrawn to the farm 2.5 kilometers to the southeast of Gelucourt.

In order to cover up the change of tactics by the Division to the defense from the enemy, reconnaissance and combat patrols were continuously carried out. The main points of departure were Moyenvic, Bezange and Bures. The battle of the armored infantry engineer company of the 111th regiment on Hill 265 on the western edge of Bezange was particularly successful. There during a night assault this company captured about twenty half-armored American track-laying vehicles, which were used by the company until the armistice. From Bures the armored engineer-battalion carried out an assault by combat patrols toward the road Arracourt - Rechicourt, which did damage to the supply traffic of the enemy by mining.

The enemy inflicted losses on the Division by artillery fire at strange terrain points. His infantry activities were generally comparatively quiet.

During these days the tank reconnaissance battalion and one battalion of the Pz Gren regiments each was withdrawn from the front and held in readiness as reserves near the front. In the main line of battle there were employed at this moment:

To the right: Regiment 110 with two battalions as far as Bezange exclusively.

In the center: Regiment 111 with one battalion and the Division escort company as far as Coincourt (exclus.).

To the left: Tank Engineer Battalion 209 as far as the left perimeter of the Division.

The remnants of the Panzer Brigade 113 started to march off in order to be incorporated into the 15 Pz Gren Division.

3 October 1944: The Division received advance orientation, that a regimental group was to be moved to St. Die to clean up a local penetration to the left neighbor, the XXXVII Panzer Corps. From there the organization and the moving up schedules were to be carried out by the 16 VGD. This detachment necessitated the taking over by the Regiment 110 of the battalion sector on both sides of Bezange la Petite, which so far been held by the Regiment 111. Due to a new order by the Division the entire width of the sector was divided into the following two subsectors:

To the right: Pz Gren Regt 110 with three battalions in the forward line (one battalion assembled from the replacement training battalion named III/110). From the right Divisional boundary as far as Moncourt exclusively.

To the left: Panzer Pioneer Battalion 209 with subordinated Divisional, escort company from Moncourt inclusive as far as the left Divisional boundary.

By nightfall the consequently necessary relief by the 110 Regiment of portions of Regiment 111 still in action took place and thereupon Regiment 111 rolled off to the south. The before mentioned organization of command took effect. The Panzer reconnaissance battalion became the only available reserve of the Division. Due to this considerable weakening of the combat strength of the Division, reconnaissance and assault patrols could not any longer be as active as heretofore.

The reduced combat activity made possible, the bringing up to full strength of the Panzer reconnaissance battalion with regard to personnel

and equipment. After the arrival of spare parts the repair of the tanks made good progress; the tanks of the 111 Pz Brigade were incorporated into our armored regiment, whereas the crews were returned to the homeland. Therefore the incorporation of the 111 Panzer Brigade into the 11 Pz Division had been completed.

4 - 6 October 1944: During these days the enemy situation and our Division did not show any marked changes. In consideration of the reduced strength caused by the transfer of Regiment 111, orders were issued to go over to the defense. A more proper of the H.K.L. command corresponding to the new task of "defense" in the terrain was not granted to the Division. Without considering the terrain the defense was to be carried on from the line gained by attack; No ground was to be given up without a fight. As could be expected, this brought unnecessary losses especially to the Panzer Gren Regiment 110 in the right Divisional sector. The Regiment was not allowed to withdraw to the reinforced positions of World War I on the northeastern bank of the sector Cal de Flottage des Salines, but it had to stop in front of this sector on the coverless slope in view of the heights Forêt de Bezange la Grande-Juvrecourt, which were occupied by strong enemy forces. During the day any movements or bringing up of supplies within the positions were impossible.

The Division reorganized its units for the defense. The infantry portions took up a corresponding deep echelon. In the main battle ground thus gained the best suitable dominating points in the area were improved according to engineering tactics. After the arrival of the combat group Hammon from the area of Belfort which again increased the artillery to

three battalions, occupied positions from which it could fire at attacking forces anywhere on the divisional front with at least two battalions. A plan for an artillery barrage was laid down and target rangers found into which the heavy infantry weapons were also incorporated.

The defensive power of the artillery was once more increased by coupling the Heeresflak artillery battalion of the Division with the armored artillery regiment for ground shooting activity. This battalion was organized in two groups for the antiaircraft defense of the artillery positions and tank assembly areas to the south of Blanche Eglise and in the area Ommeray against low-level enemy attacks. In addition, from these positions it could also fight against enemy tanks, that had broken through. According to the experiences gained in the West, the Panzer regiment was not employed in a close order formation. Two - three tanks at a time were concentrated at suitable points close behind the front line of each battalion sector. These armored cars gave the infantry protection against enemy tanks, before it was overrolled. The individual cars stood in radio contact with the two assembled tank reserve groups of Pz Regt 15, the quick counterthrust of which was guaranteed in case of strong enemy attacks or an enemy penetration.

Such a group was located behind each wing of the Divisional sector for instance in the forests, two kilometers south of Blanche Eglise, and in the forest three kilometers southwest of Ommeray. From here the possibilities of commitments for all eventualities were explored.

In the communication net within the Division all possibilities of communications were employed, in order to secure the existence of contact

by the installation of both radio and telephone lines in the event of the strongest fire preparation for an enemy attack.

The defense preparations described heretofore had to withstand even major enemy attacks in spite of the loss of an armored - infantry regt. and insufficient force in proportion to the width of the defense sector.

The Divisional command post was transferred to Alteville (six kilometers to the southeast of Dieuze).

7 October 1944: Facing our own frontal sector lively enemy movements were observed from which could be concluded, that relief was taking place. In at least locally this connection it was to be assumed, that the enemy would attack again. This was particularly true as in the sector of the left neighbor (15 Pz Gren Division) the enemy had penetrated into the Parroy forest. At this spot furious engagements in the woodlands developed, which were not without influence on our own sector. During these days the Division had transferred its only reserve, the Panzeraufklaerungs Battalion 11, with some tanks to the 15 Pz Gren Division. This battalion suffered heavy losses during the next few days when employed in the Parroy forest.

Due to the transfer of the last divisional reserve, the Division was forced to form new reserve units from the two sectors, Regiment 110 and engineer battalion, by putting up with a reduced occupation force.

8 - 10 October 1944: On the front of the Division no particular events took place. There was patrol and combat patrol activity on both sides, contact to the neighbor (to the right the 559 VGD, left the 15 Pz Gren Division) was strengthened. In the sector of the left neighbor, the battles in the Parroy forest increased constantly in violence, our own

divisional artillery started firing from the flanks as far as its ammunition supply permitted.

A fortress machine gun battalion was sent up and subordinated to the Division. These battalions representing troops of the Army, were originally organized for the employment on the eastern front. Their armament with 20mm antiaircraft guns (altogether 48 guns) and their crews consisting of older age classes were not favorable for action on the western front as the heavy commitment of equipment by the enemy would hit them very severely.

For this reason the Division employed the Battalion in the second front line behind the sector of the engineer battalion 209, from the southern edge of the small Moncourt forest as far as to the southwestern edge of the woods, three kilometers to the southwest of Ommeray. Not only our thinly occupied positions and the more favorable terrain for an enemy attack, but also the observed reinforcement of the enemy in the area of Recicourt-Bures suggested coming combat activity at this section.

On 10 October the Pz Gren Regt 111 returned to the Division from the XXXXVII Pz Corps. In the area Bourdonnay - Maizieres les Vic the Regiment, which had suffered heavy losses, was brought up to strength near the front with men and material, as far as the own means of the Division made it possible.

11 October 1944: Early morning the enemy attacked on the southern wing of the Division, apparently to gain contact with his right neighboring forces, which were echeloned out in the middle of the Parroy Forest. The area of Coincourt threatened the flanks of his forces fighting to the south of the canal. The Pz P1 Battalion 209 was pushed out of the

advanced strong point Bures; Coincourt remained in our own hands. The Division stressed more than ever before the improvement of the positions of the fortress MG battalion and employed engineers for this purpose, who especially reinforced the woods of Moncourt. This forest had to be the pivot in the further course of the battles.

Sketch 4

12 October 1944: Contrary to expectations the enemy did not continue his attacks in the sector of the Division, whereas our own forces in the Parroy forest had to withdraw more and more. The Division received advance information, that the left neighboring unit would be withdrawn and that on the next day the sector to the south of the canal was also to be taken over by forces of the Division. Consequently on the night of the 12 October, the Regiment 111, which had just been barely reinforced, was brought up into the area Moussey, to take over that sector on the following night and to carry out the necessary reconnaissance during the day. The Division commander set out together with the Commander of Regiment 111, in order to discuss there the details of the relief on the night of 13 October.

13 October 1944: After its employment in the Parroy forest. With the exception of small remnants, the Pz Aufkl. Battalion 11 was completely smashed up. As soon as possible the battalion was again reinforced to full strength by the field replacement battalion as it was doubtful whether Regiment 111 would be able to hold its new sector for an extended time.

The movement of the Regiment 111 on the preceding night and the reconnaissance during that day took place according to plan.

14 October 1944: Even the relief of the Regiment 111 on the preceding night had not been carried out according to plan. Whereas the right battalion of the Regiment had reached the main line of battle without disturbances, it remained obscure in the sector of the left battalion. The entire main line of battle running immediate in front, that is hard to the east of the Parroy forest was unfavorably arranged. According to orders from Hitler, however, no ground was to be given without fighting; for this reason a requested arrangement of the front line making use of the brook running from the south to the north through Vaucourt was refused.

Whereas the enemy in the area Rechicourt obviously reinforced his positions in front of the hitherto established southern wing, the situation cleared up on the new southern wing of the Division in the sector of the left battalion of Regiment 111. The battalion did not reach his ordered position, during the night because the enemy, who had closely followed the relieving troops, had already infiltrated. The utmost southeastern corner of the Parroy forest two kilometers north of Embermenil were now occupied by the enemy; likewise the boot-shaped forest 1.5 kilometers to the southeast of Xousse. This fact forced us to take countermeasures for which at the moment only the armored reconnaissance battalion was available. Therefore the Division prepared a suitable counterthrust.

15 October 1944: The enemy continued to reinforce in the vicinity of Rechicourt. From the Parroy forest the last rear guards, including a detachment of the reconnaissance battalion, were withdrawn bypassing

Regiment 111. The village of Embermenil on the left wing had also been lost again (in the sector of the left neighbor), because contact within our own front had been disrupted by the infiltration of the enemy on the previous day. On this day the artillery support was secured by regrouping, for the counterthrust by the Panzeraufkaerungs battalion 11. The artillery cooperation with the left neighbor was difficult owing to insufficient means of communications.

16 - 19 October 1944: The right wing of the Divisional sector..... The main body of the engineer battalion was withdrawn, because on the left Division wing further troops were needed for the counterattack. The fortress MG battalion took over the command in its sector, to which the division escort company continued to be subordinated. On higher orders the Division took up at first together with the Pz Gren Regt 110 a so-called "main battle position". In practice an echelonment in depth was frequently taken up, that is the former main line of battle was occupied by about only one third of the existing troops, while the other two thirds were withdrawn about one to two kilometers to main strong points behind the Flottage des Salines sector. Therefore the main body of the troops was in the favorable line of defense described heretofore, from where also the relief of the forward elements could be continuously carried out. The "main battle position" offers certain advantages with a normal complement of men and material in a sector, especially in view of the material effects of modern warfare, it lessens the effects of artillery fire of the enemy and prevents a complete destruction of advanced front-line positions in a preparatory barrage, as one can withdraw

the forces to the next line in the rear, after attack preparations have been duly recognized. Then the fire of the enemy, if this withdrawal takes place in time and unobserved, will hit unoccupied positions without effect.

This is the real purpose: When a large-scale battle is imminent, everything will be withdrawn into the depth of the "main battle position" so as to avoid losses by the fire preparation of the enemy. In this case was the carrying out that is the taking up of positions and organization of the "main battle position" with regard to the strength of the division and width of its sector difficult. The foremost line was now weakened to such an extent, that the enemy, especially at night, could easily infiltrate and install his own pockets of resistance. Naturally this greatly affected the moral burden of the soldier in the forward line, who fought without support. In the sector of Regiment 110 the width of the sector amounted to about nine to ten kilometers, having a combat strength of about 600 men, one third of the Regiment namely about 200 men, were stationed in the foremost line; in other words twenty men per kilometer!

Left wing of the division combat sector: In the area of Embermenil on the left wing of the Division battles resulting in frequent changes took place. The enemy who, at the moment of the relief, had achieved the described success, continued to press again and again against this position. From the Remoncourt area the reconnaissance and the engineer battalion launched counterattacks with tanks, which, however, were not entirely successful. Although Hill 287, which had been taken by American troops, was recaptured by to this attack, it did not generally change the situation. The battle extended further to the North and Hill 286, hard

to the east of the Parroy forest, changed hands several times. In the battles around Embermenil the crews of Pz Regt 15 distinguished themselves particularly, by staying day and night in contact with the enemy with their combat cars and taking over completely the part of infantry riflemen. The losses of the infantry forces had been increased by the enemy artillery fire to such an extent, that in some cases the company strength was reduced as low as to ten men.

20 October 1944: Hard to the north of the canal the enemy attacked in the sector of the fortress MG battalion. According to the opinion of the Division, it was only a local operation, by which the enemy intended to extend his front also to the north of the channel as far as to the level of his line to the south of the canal. The flanking activity of the enemy forces on the northeastern corner of the Parroy woods was bound to have a serious effect. The enemy attack, launched by the 26th American Division with the 2nd American Cavalry Section, forced our own combat outposts to withdraw to the main line of battle on the southwestern edge of the woods to the northeast of Xures. Then the enemy attack bugged down by our own fire from the favorable main line of battle, which in view of the terrain was to be expected. Furthermore our own flanking action from the small Moncourt forest did not permit a continuation of the enemy attack, without elimination of this strong point. The Division had to expect that the enemy would shortly consolidate and secure his success of this day by capturing the small Moncourt forest.

In the Embermenil sector the tenacious battle continued without

leading to any success with mentioning to neither side. To the north of it Hill 286 passed decisively into our hands.

The Division was informed in advance, that a further fortress MG battalion was being brought up. With the aid of this battalion the Regiment 111 south of the canal starting from the right wing, was to be relieved, because an commitment of the Division elsewhere was imminent. By stressing the inexperience of these battalions, the Division obtained the consent, to commit this battalion, in accordance to the commitment of a similar detachment north of the canal, at first in the second line behind the Regiment 111. Therefore the battalion got used to the battle only gradually and after the transfer of Regiment 111, took up positions in the favorable main line of battle behind the Vaucourt sector, which gave it ample time for the installations of the 20 mm antiaircraft guns. In this manner several advantages were realized.

21 October 1944: The day passed generally quietly on the whole sector of the Division. The small Moncourt forest was further reinforced by engineers of the Division with every possible means, as, it soon had to play an important part in the local battles.

On the extreme left wing the defense was reorganized and as far reinforced as possible along the line, boot-shaped woods (1.5 kilometers to the southwest of Xousse), western edge of the woods, one kilometer to the northwest of Leintrey. Contact to the left neighbor was not as satisfactory as desirable, due to the lack of forces on both sides.

On the previous day, the 2nd Pz Gren Regt 110 was withdrawn from the quiet front line of its regiment and ordered to march to the left neighboring

Division. The battalion launched a counterattack south of the railroad line against the infiltrated enemy and recaptured sections of the woods one kilometer to the west of Leintrey in furious battles. This restored contact with the left neighboring Division, which had been endangered by this enemy success. On this occasion the battalion had suffered considerable losses.

22 October 1944: As expected the 26 American Infantry Division started with a local attack, in order to capture the Moncourt woods. Probably the attack was launched by forces, which had been observed for days in the Rechicourt - La Petite area. Heavy artillery preparation preceded the attack, while our own artillery fire became ineffective due to the observation and the combatting of the Divisional artillery by fighter bombers and enemy fire directed by planes. Therefore our own armored infantry riflemen, as usual, had to carry on defensive fighting by themselves and only supported by a few tanks. The thrust by the enemy between Bezange la Petite and the little Moncourt woods was launched against the left wing of Regiment 110 and the division escort company, being especially efficient units of the Division. The enemy succeeded in gaining only a minor penetration, because he soon bogged down owing to the flanking activity from the village of Bezange and the Moncourt woods, both places had been converted into strong points. The before mentioned tanks by direct flanking fire from these strong points forced the enemy spearhead to take cover. Although the enemy had only gained by this action a minor success, it should not be overlooked, that the little Moncourt woods extended far beyond our own front line and were therefore

endangered. The division had to expect further attacks against this strong point, which was disturbing the enemy in the same degree as it was essential for our own troops. Therefore, on the following night we started with further reinforcement and bringing up of available men and the forming of increased artillery observation posts in this sector.

23 and 24 October 1944: There were no essential developments. The enemy reinforced a new in the Rechicourt la Petite area; this fact had to be considered as a local preparation for an attack against the Moncourt woods proper.

South of the Rhine-Marne-canal the newly brought up fortress MG battalion was committed behind Regiment 111 in the second line with the right wing on the canal. The main line of battle was running along the brook passing through Vaucourt from the North to the South, the left wing - somewhat bent back extended to the southern edge of Xousse. The battalion was subordinated to Regiment 111 and had orders, to organize for the defense as soon as possible. Organizations capable to give advice, were placed at disposal of the inexperienced battalion, whose sensitive 20 mm antiaircraft guns could only be used in combat if placed perfectly fortified positions.

The fact that two fortress MG battalions were brought up and committed in the division sector indicated early relief. Apart from local operations, the situation at this sector which only short time ago had been the center of combat activities had become quiet. The sector could together with those elements not belonging to the Division, be taken over by a VGD without difficulties, which would give the Higher Command a tank unit.

25 October 1944: On this day the Division escort company defended the Moncourt woods against the expected local enemy attack. The Company which was almost up to battalion's strength, was shelled out from its positions even before the beginning infantry attack of the enemy, lost about one-half of the woods and suffered losses, before it reorganized in previously prepared a position, compare "Main Battle position". The course of this line was unknown to the enemy, his artillery fire did not hit objectives, that could be immediately observed and was consequently not as effective, as at the beginning of the attack. During the infantry fighting, developing about noon, the new line was held.

Although the Division had lost, on this day, about half of the strong point, the protruding eastern part of the woods, however, remained in our own hands; by the withdrawal of the projecting front line a saving of men was effected. The artillery opened immediately a carefully laid barrage in front of the sector of the division escort company in the Moncourt woods. In this way this **vulnerable** point of the front was supported as much possible.

26 - 28 October 1944: The Division received orders to speed up its relief by the 361 VGD north of the canal, whereas to the south of it, the former sector of the regiment 111 was to be taken over by the left neighbor, the 553 VGD. The fortress MG Battalion, was put under the command of the Division units respective new sectors.

The infantry relief was carried out during three nights, starting from the left wing, it was effected without any major interference on the part of the enemy. Only on the left wing did the enemy with a local task

force penetrate into elements of the Division, which were withdrawn by way of the new main line of battle, the second position, held so far by the fortress MG battalion, and the extension from the western edge of Xousse, via Hill 287, Hill 296. Elements of the armored and artillery regiments still remained for a few days to support the new divisions; official guidance officers instructed the successors during the day as to the local conditions. After completion of their relief, the troops were moved to an area about twenty kilometers to the east of Metz for a short term rehabilitation period. The supply center was also gradually transferred to that section.

On 29 October at 0000 hours the Divisional Staff handed over its command of the hitherto field sector to the two Volkgrenadier divisions and moved to Eltwingen to the east of Metz.

Signed, Wend von WIETERSHEIM

Translated by, W. Stoffel

Sketch 1 Assembly and position of readiness 20 - 23 Sept 44

The 11 Pz Division in the area
of Dieuze-Foret de Parroy-Sarre-
bourg 20 Sept-30 Oct 44

to Sarre-

Union 10 km

from Morhange

Fenetrangle

88 Flak

Remnants Pz Brgde 111

Fribourg

Langeuimberg

Sarrebourg

Foret de Rechicourt

Rechicourt

Foret de Parroy

MS # B-364

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Sketch 2

The Attack

The 11 Pz Division in the area
of Dieuze - Foret de Parroy -
Sarrebouurg

20 Sept - 30 Oct 44

Blanche Eglise

Gueblange

Juvelize

Gelucourt

Lezey

Bezange

Canal la Marne au Rhin

MS # 364

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Sketch 3

Continuation of the attack 28 Sep

The 11 Pz Division in the
area Dieuze - Foret de
Parroy - Sarrebourg

Moyenvic

Gelucourt

Donnelay

from 27 Sept

Bezange

Arracourt

advanced on 28 Sept

Rechicourt

Bures

one engineer company
Coincourt

Hammon

Maizieres

A A

28 Sept

29 "

30 "

1 Oct (Final situation)

Sketch 4

The 11 Pz Division in the area of Dieuze, Foret de Parroy-

Sarrebourg 20 Sept - 30 Oct 44.

Final situation from 12 Oct 44

559 VGD

Dieuze

Moyenvic

Alteville

Bezange
la Petite

to Sarrebourg

Fe M G Battl.

Rechicourt

Xures

111

Foret de Parroy

Engineer battalion
A A

MAP 837 8-

MS # B-364

N

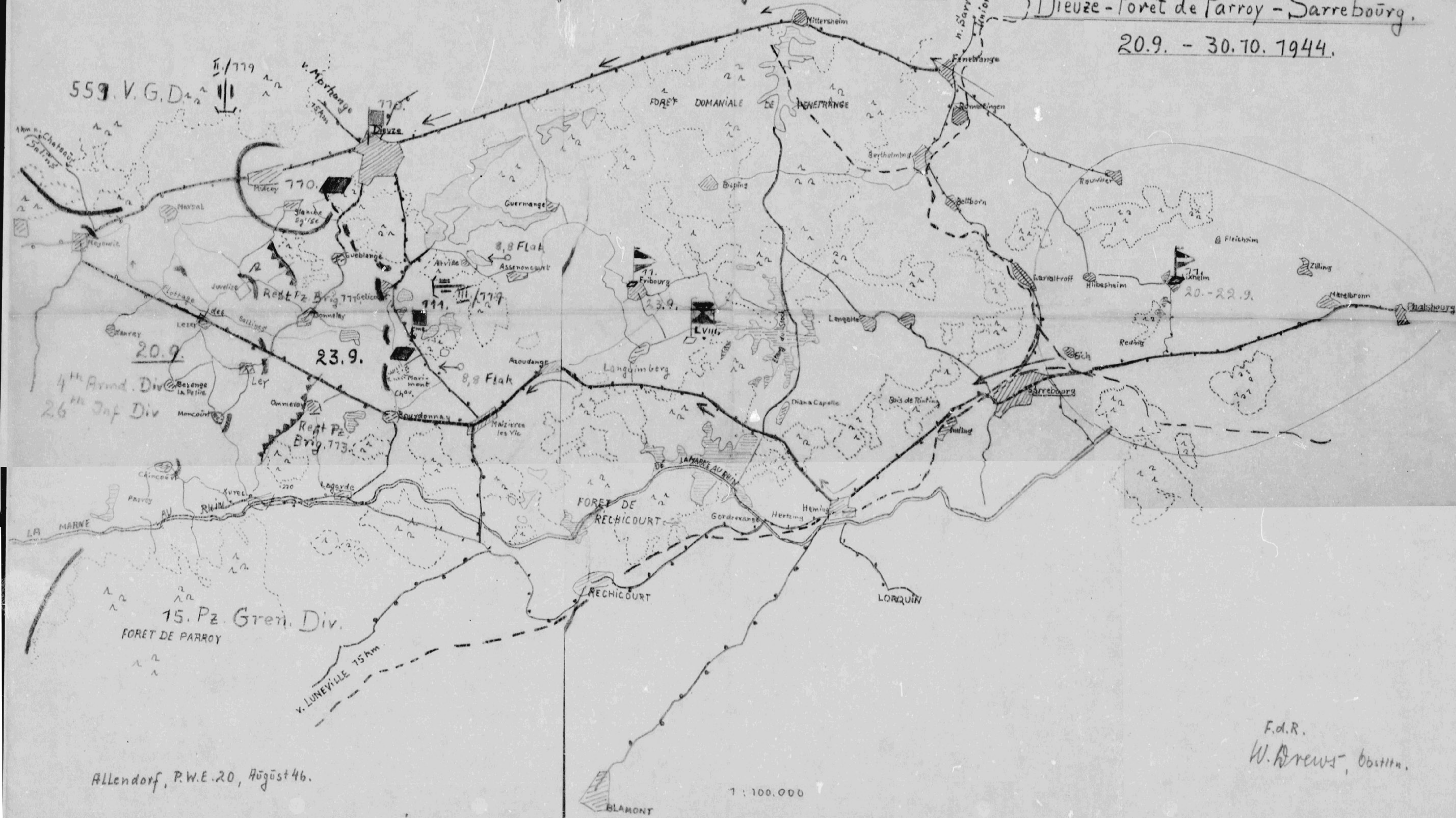
Skizze 1.

Versammlung und Bereitstellung 20.-23.9.44.

Die 77. Panzer-Division im Raum

Dieuze-Forêt de Parroy-Sarrebourg.

20.9. - 30.10.1944.



Skizze 2.

B-364

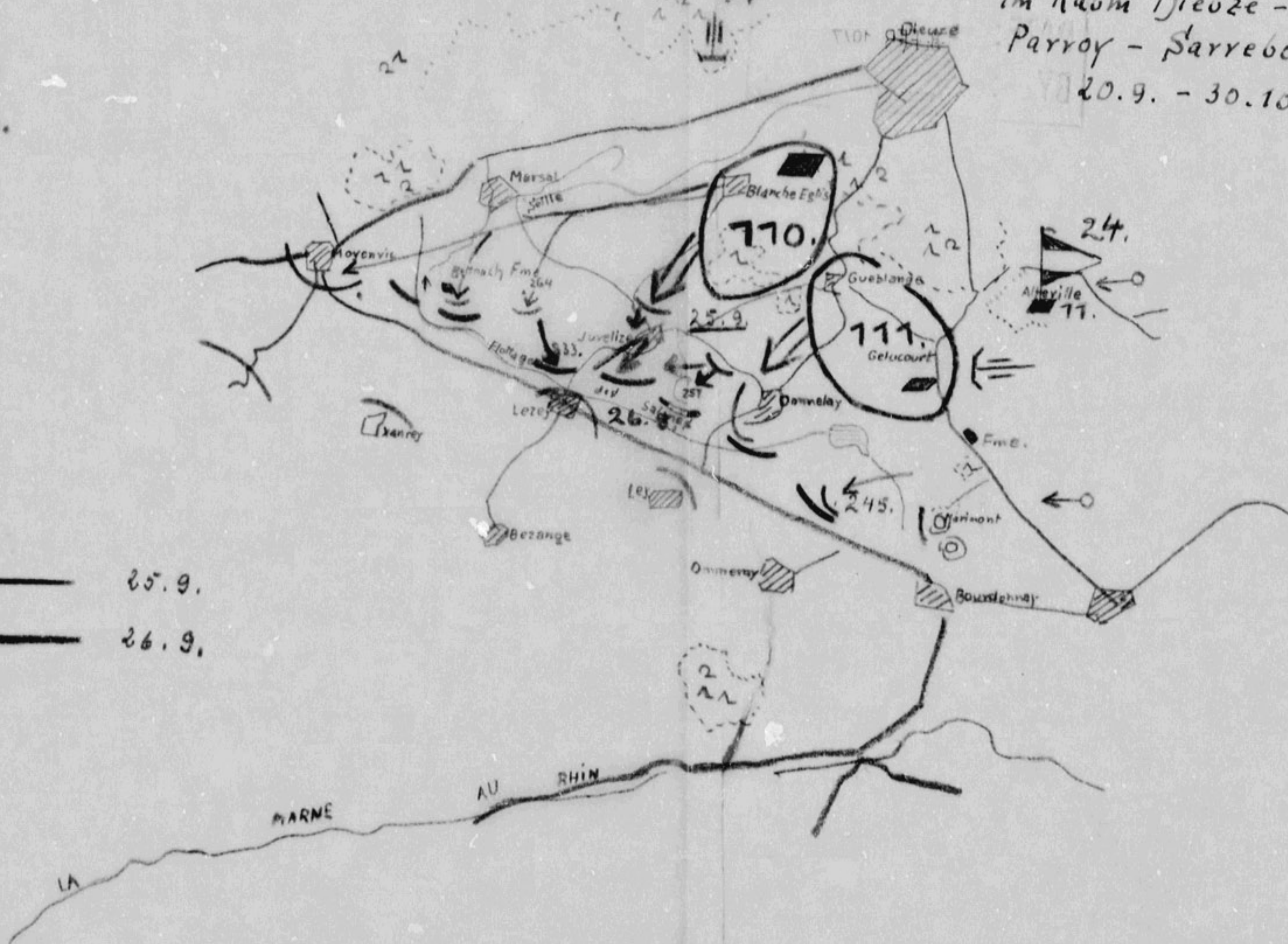
Der Angriff.

Die 11. Panzer Division
im Raum Dieuze - Forêt de
Parroy - Sarreboörg.

20.9. - 30.10.44.

N.

— 25.9.
— 26.9.



7: 700.000.

F.d.R.
H. Drews
Hofst.

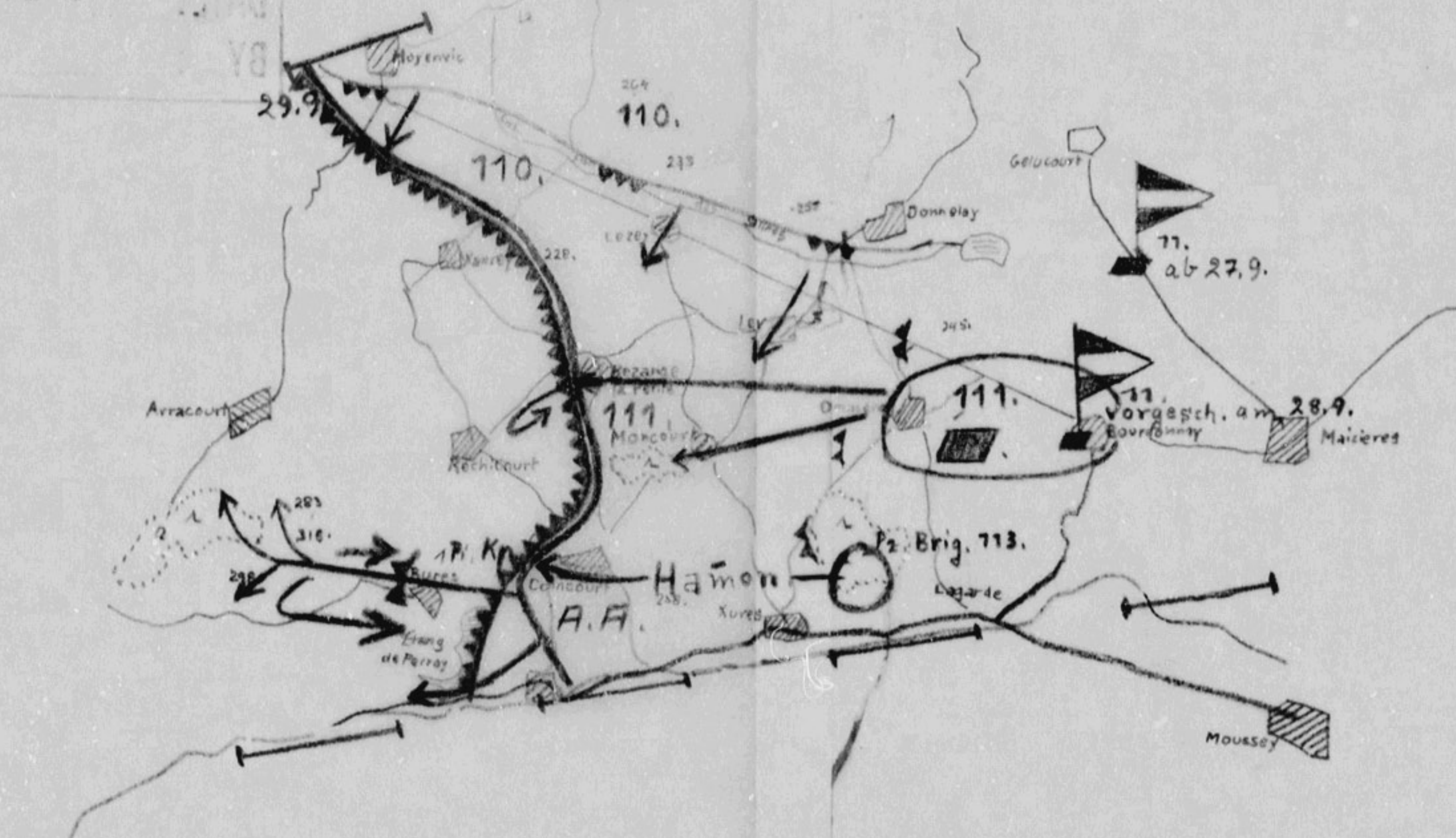
Skizze 3.

8 FEB 1947

Fortsetzung des Angriffes, 28.9.

B-364
Die 11. Panzer Division
im Raum Dieuze - Forêt de
Parroy - Sarrebourg.

20.9. - 30.10.44.



— = 28.9.
— = 29.9.
— = 30.9.
▲▲▲▲ = 1.10. (Abschlusstage)

1:100,000

F.d.R.
H. Arews
Möskeln.

B-364

Abschlusslage, ab 12.10.44.

559. V. G. D.



Edw. W. Brewster.

1:100,000.