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Regiments from the Province of Posen in the Final Engagements of the Battle of Verdun in December 1916

ABSTRACT

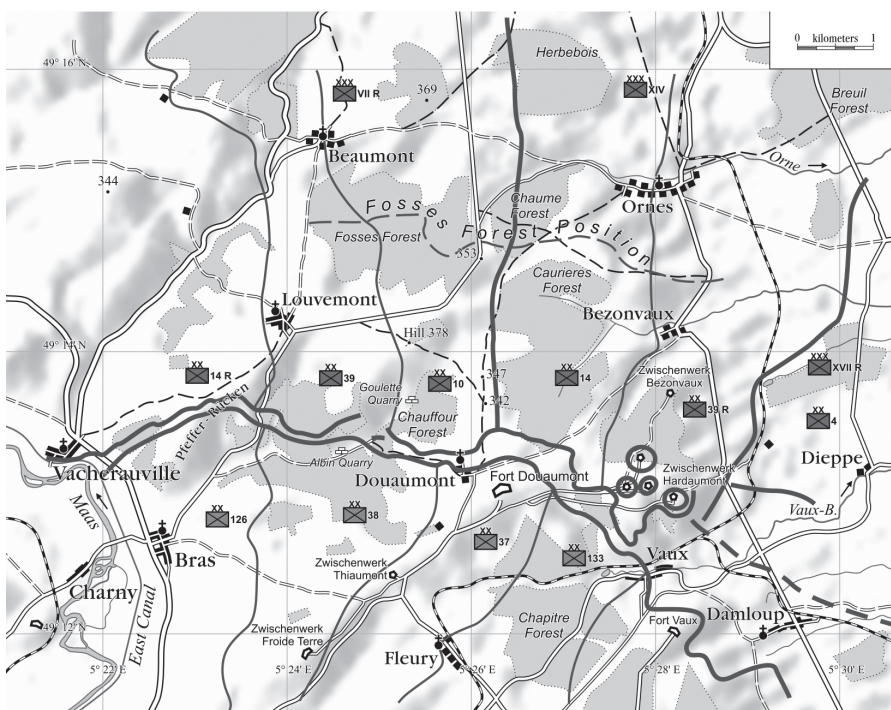
The last episode of the Battle of Verdun took place in December 1916. At that time, the French army, having a considerable advantage in this section of the front, conducted a daring offensive. Four French divisions were opposed by five German divisions, including the 10th Infantry Division from the Province of Posen. The French side threw elite colonial divisions into the fray, who conducted daring strikes and managed to recapture ground that was lost in the previous months. This area included sites that have grown to become symbols and legends of the Battle of Verdun – the Fort de Douaumont and the village of Douaumont.

Introduction

In early October 1916, due to considerable activity on the part of the French troops along the frontline near Verdun, the *Oberste Heeresleitung*¹ decided to gather fresh divisions and send them to the threatened section of the front. They included the 10th Infantry Division (hereafter: ID) attached to the VII Reserve Corps (hereafter: RC). The division consisted at that time of the 6th Grenadier Regiment (hereafter: GrR), the 47th Infantry Regiment (hereafter: IR), the 398th IR, the 20th and 56th Field

¹ *Oberste Heeresleitung* – during the First World War, the highest command organ in the German armed forces, in charge of – among other things – planning operations and commanding on the operations level. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz, eds., *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2004), 754–755.

Artillery Regiments (hereafter: FAR). Except for the 398th IR, formed in 1916 as a result of combining companies from various regiments, the remaining units of the division had their home garrisons in the Province of Posen.² By late October, throughout November and the first half of December 1916, the regiments of the German 10th ID were involved near Verdun in typical trench warfare. The skirmishes with the French infantry were then sporadic. However, the „Posen” division was heavily affected by the harassing fire of the French artillery. Following the successful offensive in October 1916 at Verdun, the French intended to resume fighting in mid-December 1916.³



Map 1. Deployment of German (on north) and French (on south) divisions during the Battle of Verdun, the situation on 15 December 1916.

Map concept: Bartosz Kruszyński, design: Radosław Przebitkowski. Based on source: Franz Doering von Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment Graf Kleist von Nollendorf (1. Westpreußisches) Nr. 6 Im Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Bernard & Graefe, 1935).

² Gerhard Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment König Ludwig III. von Bayern (2. Niederschl.) Nr. 47 im Weltkrieg 1914–1918 und im Grenzschutz 1919* (Zeulenroda: Sporn, 1932), 193; *Die Schlachten und Gefechte des Grossen Krieges 1914–1918. Quellenwerk, nach den amtlichen Bezeichnungen zusammengestellt vom Grossen Generalstab* (Berlin: H. Sack, 1919), 218.

³ A comprehensive analysis of the battle is presented in Jarosław Centek, *Verdun 1916* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2009).

The defence positions of the German 10th ID

On 15 December 1916, the zone of responsibility of the German 10th ID slightly exceeded 1 km. The right flank of the German division was defended by the II battalion from the 398th IR (hereafter: II/398th IR, shortened form will be used consequently in similar situations) consisting of three companies in the first line and one in the reserve. The 38th ID was in charge of a zone to the right of the 10th ID. Hill 259 was located in front of the right flank of the 398th IR. The rear of the first line was adjacent to Goulette Quarry and Goulette Farm. The central section of defence of the 10th ID in the Helly Ravine was occupied by a battalion of fusiliers from the 6th GrR. Three companies of the grenadiers were positioned in the first line and one in reserve. The weakest were the field fortifications of the positions occupied by the left flank of the 10th ID. In the first line, 2 companies of the II/47th IR were positioned with 2 companies of the I/47th IR as reserve. Consequently, the first line of defence consisted of ten infantry companies supported by light and medium mortars from the 10th Mortar Company and the division artillery. As for the topographic conditions, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the positions of the first line of the 10th ID were in Chauffour Forest.⁴ The positions ran from the right flank on the southern edge of Chauffour Forest, along Hill 259, and further to the east through the Helly Ravine. On the left flank of the division's defence, the positions opened up to a bare area and a slope of Hill 342. The summit of the hill was the responsibility of the German 14th Infantry Division. The first line of defence of the 10th ID was approximately 1 km away from the summit of Hill 378. To the north, behind Hill 378, was the des Chambretes Water intake and Fosses Forest; the des Chambretes Farm was located in the east.⁵

The French plan of attack

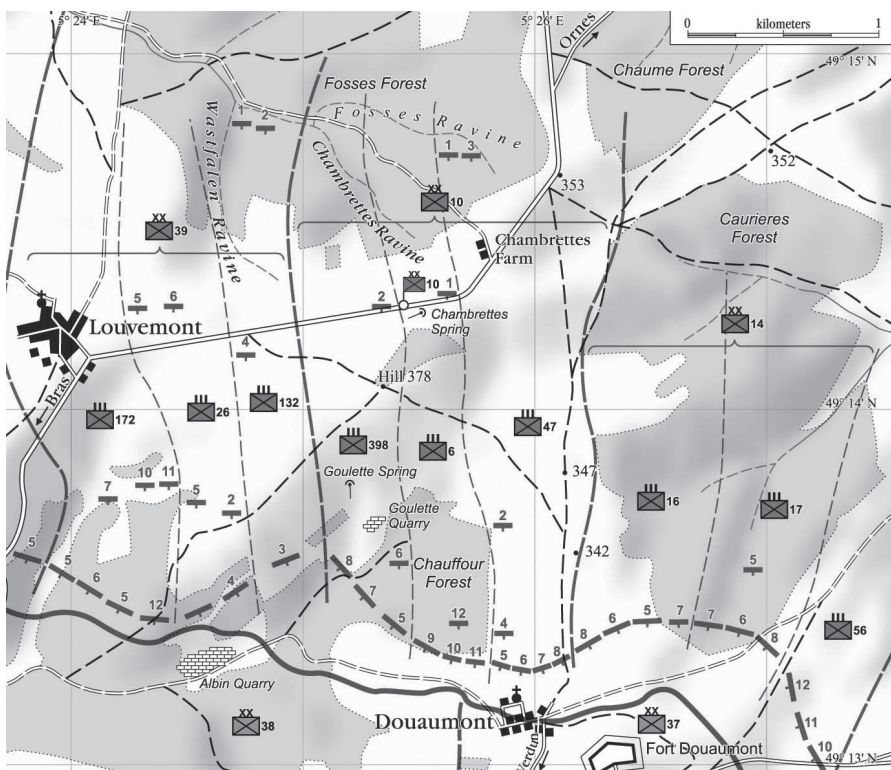
According to the French offensive plans, the 8th Tirailleurs Regiment (hereafter: TR) from the 38th ID was to attack the juncture of the German 39th and 10th ID.⁶ On the German side, the II/398th IR was positioned on the

⁴ The intense, several months' long artillery shelling degraded the landscape. On 15 XII 1916, all that was left of Chauffour Forest were naked tree stubs.

⁵ „20.000e. – Dispositif allemand le 15 décembre 1916,” in *Les Armées Françaises dans la Grande Guerre*, vol. 4, *Verdun et la Somme*, part 3, *Bataille de la Somme (fin). Offensives françaises à Verdun (3 septembre – fin décembre 1916)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1935), s.p. (hereafter: AFGG 4/3).

⁶ Le Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes (hereafter: SHD), Régiments et bataillons. Infanterie d'Afrique. Régiments et régiments de marche de tirailleurs algériens, 26N850/9, *Journaux des Marches et Opérations 8^e Régiments de Marche (1 I – 31 XII 1916)*,

right flank of the „Posen” division. The positions held by the fusilier battalion of the 6th GrR (the centre of the 10th ID) were to be attacked by the IV and V battalions of the 4th Zouave Regiment (4th ZR) from the 38th ID.⁷ On the other hand, the II battalion and the III/47th Infantry Regiment, were to be assaulted by the „A” battalion of the 2nd TR from the 37th ID. Interestingly, the French had more infantrymen, artillerymen and had the advantage in the air.⁸



Map 2. Deployment of the German 10th ID and neighboring 39th ID (its right wing) and 14th ID (its left wing) during the Battle of Verdun, the situation on 15 December 1916.

Map concept: Bartosz Kruszyński, design: Radosław Przebitkowski.

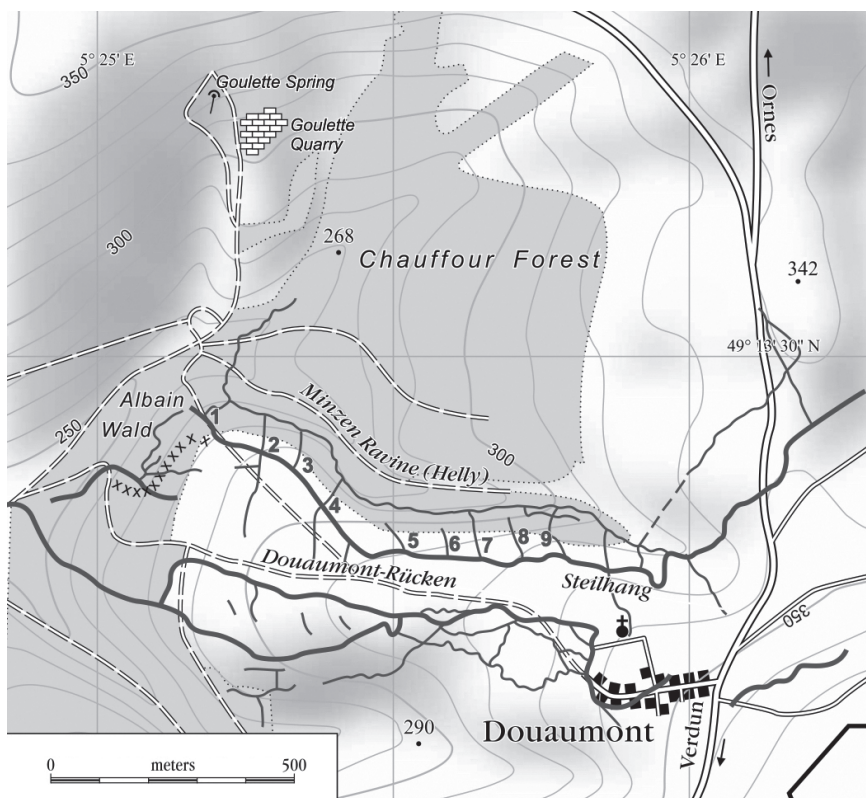
Based on source: AFGG 4/3.

s.l., 1–103; Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

⁷ SHD, Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

⁸ SHD, Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d'Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), s.l., 198–206.

Of key importance to the French plan was the attack of the 4th ZR. The unit was tasked with breaking through the first line of defence on the right flank and in the centre of the German 10th ID in the Helly Ravine. Subsequently, the Zouaves were to cross the Helly Ravine and Chauffour Forest and seize Hill 378 located in the rear of the German division. The 4th ZR was to attack the northern slope of Hill 378, cross the road from Louveumont to des Chambrettes Farm and reach the southern edge of Fosses Forest. After taking the position to the north of Fosses Forest, patrols were to be sent out. On the left flank of the 4th ZR, attack was to be launched on the first line by the 18th and 19th companies from the V battalion with the 17th company in reserve. The fire support unit of the 18th company was to be followed by the „Schilt”, a section of flamethrowers.⁹



Map 3. Deployment of combat positions in the sector of the German 10th Infantry Division in Chauffour Forest and the French 38th Infantry Division and 37th Infantry Division during the Battle of Verdun, the situation on 15 December 1916.

Map concept: Bartosz Kruszyński, design: Radosław Przebitkowski.

Based on source: Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*.

⁹ Ibid., 198–206.

In the sector of the French 37th ID, the main strike was to be launched by the 2nd TR and the 2nd ZR. The 2nd Tirailleurs Regiment was first to break down the resistance of the first line of the German defence, seize the eastern edge of the Helly Ravine, the eastern edge of Chauffour Forest and reach the railway line to the west of Hill 347. Furthermore, the 2nd Tirailleurs Regiment was to attack to the west of Hill 347 towards the north, along the road crossing des Chambrettes Farm, and reach the eastern edge of Fosses Forest to the north of Hill 353.

On the other hand, the 2nd ZR was to commence an attack from the eastern part of the ruined Douaumont village to the north. Its first task was to break out the first line of the German positions to the east of the Helly Ravine, to capture Hill 342, Hill 339 and Hill 347. Subsequently, the units were tasked with seizing the southern edge of Chaume Forest to the west of Hill 353.¹⁰

A section of the German 398th IR – the right flank of defence of the 10th ID

On 15 December at 10:15 a.m., the soldiers from a battalion of the 8th TR seized Albain Quarry and made an attempt to push through a gap between the German 3rd company of the I/132nd IR/39th ID from the 39th ID and the 8th company of the II/398th IR from the 10th ID. At the same time, battalion „B” from the 2nd TR of the 37th ID, attacked the right flank of the 10th ID (the right part of the Helly Position), taken up by the II battalion of the 398th IR. In poor visibility, the French colonial infantry approached the enemy so closely that the German infantry did not manage to come out of the hiding it sought during artillery shelling, in the right section of the Helly position. Consequently, the right flank of the German 10th ID was exposed.¹¹

According to the action diary, by 12:00 p.m. battalion „B” from the 2nd TR (location of the French 37th ID) lost in the attack all its four company commanders fighting against a battalion of fusiliers from the 6th

¹⁰ „Cartes de Situation No. 9. 20.000e. – Dispositif français le 15 décembre 1916,” in *AFGG* 4/3, s.p.; SHD, Divisions d’infanterie et d’infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d’Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p. [Cartes de Situation No. 8. 20.000e. – Front de la Meuse à Damloup, 3 décembre 1916].

¹¹ SHD, Place et région fortifiée de Verdun, 26N70/009, Place de Verdun: Opérations devant Verdun 1916 – Cartes, s.l., s.p.; Divisions d’infanterie et d’infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d’Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d’infanterie. Brigades d’infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d’Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

GrR. Nevertheless, from 12:00 p.m. the battalion continued the attack and reached the trenches in Chaume Forest, another target of attack, at the same time maintaining communication with the 2nd ZR on the right flank, and with the 4th ZR on the left flank, to the north of Hill 303. The soldiers from the 2nd ZR broke through the German positions in the trenches in Cobourg, Caurières and Chaume Forests and, at 01:15 p.m., they captured the fortifications in Chaume Forest.¹²

The position of the German 6th GrR – the centre of defence of the 10th ID

Exactly at 10:00 a.m., the soldiers of the 18th and 19th companies from the V battalion of the 4th ZR from the 38th ID launched an attack. In poor visibility, they managed to approach the trenches of the fusilier battalion from the 6th GrR without a problem.¹³ Despite the adverse circumstances, the fusilier battalion from the 6th GrR was not taken by surprise and the soldiers swiftly took up positions on the first line of the trenches. Despite the fierce defence of the grenadiers, the French infantry broke through the first line positions in several locations. However, a bold counterattack threw the attackers to their defensive lines.¹⁴

At 10:25 a.m., the commander of the French 76th Infantry Brigade (hereafter: IB) from the 38th ID reported that the soldiers from the 4th ZR had reached Goulette Quarry. This meant that the 4th ZR had marched to the rear of the II/398th IR and, consequently, the right flank of defence of the 10th ID was totally exposed. The position of the fusilier battalion from the 6th GrR was enveloped from the right flank. The fusilier battalions in position in the Helly Ravine responded immediately to the change in the situation and proceeded with circular defence.¹⁵

¹² SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N331/1, Journaux des marches et opérations 37^e Division d'Infanterie (19 X 1916 – 16 VI 1917), s.l., 27–45.

¹³ SHD, Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

¹⁴ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 292–293; SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d'Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

¹⁵ SHD, Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d'Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), s.l., 198–206.

Around 12:00 p.m., the French soldiers from the V battalion of the 4th ZR of the 38th ID made another attempt at crushing the resistance of the fusilier battalion, this time by the „Schilt” flamethrowers, but the soldiers were quickly eliminated.¹⁶ Due to the heavy casualties suffered by the fusilier battalion of the 6th GrR, soon the French infantry penetrated its positions while isolated groups of soldiers were involved in defence. They came under machine gun fire from the low-flying French aeroplanes. The runners, sent from the regiment's staff with reports to the division command quarters, were killed or wounded.¹⁷

At 02:00 p.m., only a few points of resistance defended the section of the fusilier battalion, among them Captain Koeppel,¹⁸ the battalion's commander, Second Lieutenant Balan¹⁹ – the regiment's aide-de-camp, three runners and about a dozen soldiers. Close-in-fighting ensued with grenades, machine guns and guns. The fusilier battalion from the 6th GrR, located in the central and left sections of the Helly Position, the last point of resistance, stopped fighting on the evening of 15 December. Most of the survivors were wounded and taken by the French into captivity. Not one of them managed to withdraw from the first line so the command of the 10th ID had very little information about the course of fighting in the central section of the division's defence.

On that day, an entire battalion of fusiliers from the 6th GrR was annihilated; the casualties included 4 killed officers, 150 wounded soldiers (French POWs) and 342 missing NCOs and privates. All the battalion soldiers, listed as missing in action, were in fact killed on the battlefield. The identity of a majority of the killed soldiers was established. Ultimately, the number of the soldiers from the battalion of fusiliers missing on 15 December 1916 was narrowed down to 55 names.²⁰

The position of the German 47th IR – the left flank of the defence of the 10th ID

The extreme position of the left flank of the 10th ID was occupied by the 8th and the 7/II/47th IR. The heavy fire of the French artillery, which

¹⁶ SHD, Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d'Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), s.l., 198–206.

¹⁷ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 292–293; SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d'Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

¹⁸ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

¹⁹ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

²⁰ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 294–295.

started on the early morning of 15 December, almost completely destroyed the unassuming trenches; some of the wounded soldiers were excluded from fighting. The French colonial infantry of the 2nd ZR from the 37th ID penetrated the positions of the 2 companies of the II/47th IR and, at 11:15 a.m., seized the German positions: the „Pirates”, „Mehrl” and „Veauche” trenches plus Hill 347.²¹

The artillery vantage point of the II battalion of the 56th FAR was wiped out; it was in the Pfefferrücken (French name: Côte-du-Poivre), located in the section of the 14th ID (behind the left flank of the 10th ID). Reserve Lieutenant Gottfried Smend²² was taken into French captivity. The French artillery also destroyed the artillery's transmitter on the northern slope of „Pfefferrücken”.²³ Only the right flank of the 47th IR stood a chance of putting up resistance (as it met the 6th GrR) where the 5th company took up strong positions. The trenches were extended and the reserve barracks and the 4th company were located behind them.²⁴

Fierce fighting broke out near the ruins of a church in the former village of Douaumont with the advanced position of the 5th company from 47th IR. Moroccan soldiers from the 2nd TR of the 37th ID pushed through the position when an attack was launched by reserve Second Lieutenant Luitjens,²⁵ the company's commander and his deputy, with Sergeant Förster²⁶ heading the reserve units. With hand grenades, they managed to resist the charging French troops. Soon, they were joined by NCO Jechalik²⁷ heading half of a platoon who had been ordered to retake a trench on the first line. However, he was killed when he carried out an assault.²⁸ The remaining part of the 5th company counterattacked, clearing the way with grenades and firing on the French infantry, positioned higher up. However, the counterattack soon stopped and the company's commander was wounded. Then the positions of the 5th company were heavily shelled

²¹ SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N331/1, Journaux des marches et opérations 37^e Division d'Infanterie (19 X 1916 – 16 VI 1917), s.l., 27–45.

²² „Verlustlisten 1914–1918,” in *Armee-Verordnungsblatt* (Berlin: Kriegsministerium, 1917–1919) (hereafter: AVDV), Ausgabe 1353, 26 I 1917, 17335.

²³ Konrad Angerstein and Paul Schlemm, *Das 2. Posensche Feldartillerie-Regiment Nr. 56 1914 bis 1918* (Oldenburg: Gerh. Stalling, 1927), 69.

²⁴ SHD, Place et région fortifiée de Verdun, 26N70/009, Place de Verdun: Opérations devant Verdun 1916 – Cartes, s.l., s.p.

²⁵ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

²⁶ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

²⁷ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

²⁸ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 490; AVDV, Ausgabe 1361, 3 II 1917, 17430.

by the French artillery. One well-aimed shell killed the soldiers in the advanced position near the ruins of the church in Douaumont.²⁹

The soldiers from the 6th company from 47th IR, supported by a reserve platoon under the command of deputy Sergeant Kreuz,³⁰ withheld the charge of the French infantry. At the same time, they fired flare guns to summon support for their artillery and open barrage in front of its position. However, the artillery never responded to the call from the first line because a large part of its positions had been neutralized by the French artillery. Soon, the 6th company was enveloped from either side while the French infantry followed closely the right flank towards Hill 378, and the left flank towards Hill 345. The company's commander, reserve Second Lieutenant Barthel³¹ ordered an immediate switch to circular defence. The machine guns changed their position and started to shell the French infantry marching towards Hill 345. Units of the French infantry had reached Chauffour Forest where they started firing in the direction of the 6th company. A French airplane circled above their positions, its crew firing machine guns at the trenches, killing and wounding German soldiers. The shell holes did not provide protection and posed an additional danger as the soldiers could drown in them. The company's officers and NCOs were either killed or wounded. Consequently, the company's defence was transferred to the entrance to the barracks' bunker.

In view of the strong resistance of the German troops in this section, the French side intensively shelled the enemy positions with artillery fire before the infantry attacked. The first one was repelled but hand grenades were thrown into the barracks' bunker, forcing the (mostly wounded) soldiers taking shelter to move further in. When another attack started, Captain Max Robitzsch (the highest-ranking officer) decided to surrender the 6/II/47th IR.³²

Meanwhile, on the morning of 15 December, the reserve of the II/47th IR included the 4th company from the I battalion of the regiment in question. It took up positions directly behind the right flank of the first line (the right part of the barracks). When a crisis arose on the right flank of the II battalion, the 4th company was deployed to fight under the command of Second Lieutenant Theodor Göllnitz and captured a ditch leading to the first line. At the same time, by the company commander's order, the soldiers prepared for defending the flanks from the French infantry approaching from the right and left towards the first line. A reporting post

²⁹ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 213.

³⁰ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

³¹ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

³² AVDV, Ausgabe 1374, 16 II 1917, 17588.

soldier was sent to the nearby hill, tasked with watching for the approaching enemy. This was a wise decision which prevented a surprise attack.

In this section the French infantry launched a mass frontal attack but the well-distributed machine guns, the infantry's gun fire and hand grenades repelled the first attack and two subsequent ones. However, the situation was quite dramatic because the French infantry enveloped the positions of the 4th company. To add insult to injury, the German troops were running out of ammunition and hand grenades and could repulse the French attacks for only 30 more minutes. The French infantry aptly interpreted the lower intensity of the shelling on the part of the 4/II/47th IR as a lack of ammunition and launched yet another attack with a large number of hand grenades. One of them exploded and wounded Second Lieutenant Göllnitz, the commander of the 4th company, in the legs.³³ The survivors from the 4th company withdrew to the entrance to the barracks where they prepared for repelling another attack. However, by that time the situation was dramatic and the soldiers suggested surrendering. Second Lieutenant Göllnitz categorically refused and, in a last act of desperation, he dispatched two runners, one after another, to the headquarters of the II battalion but neither of them returned. From time to time, the French soldiers threw hand grenades to the bunker which caused fires while the acrid smoke filled the bunker. At the bottom, the crowded wounded soldiers from the II battalion moaned with pain, among them reserve Second Lieutenant August Rheker with a heavy gunshot wound to the abdomen.³⁴ Realising how nonsensical further resistance would be, Second Lieutenant Göllnitz decided to surrender and notified the French officer about it. At 11:30 a.m., the survivors from the 4/II/47th IR set off for Verdun as prisoners of war. The destruction of the company was equivalent to annihilating the II/47th IR and severing the left flank of the 10th ID.³⁵

Immediately behind the first line of the 6th Grenadier Regiment, a two-story high bunker hosted four teams from the 7/II/47th IR and its commander, reserve Second Lieutenant Erich Strehmel.³⁶ The formation was placed there on the morning of 15 December in special reserve of the II battalion which was to be deployed by the commander's direct order. However, the bunker was located far from the original position of the 7th company. When the French attack began on the morning of 15 December, the bunker crew did not have information about the developments. When French grenades started to explode at the entrance to the bunker, it was

³³ AVDV, Ausgabe 1730, 30 XI 1917, 1386.

³⁴ AVDV, Ausgabe 1490, 8 VI 1917, 18950.

³⁵ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 214.

³⁶ AVDV, Ausgabe 2250, 12 XII 1918, 28220.

clear that the fighting positions of the II/47th IR had been broken by the enemy. Soon after, the bunker was surrounded by the French infantry. The soldiers of the 7th company taking shelter there did not put up a fight and therefore were not discovered by the enemy troops. Under cover of darkness, the German soldiers intended to break through to the division's position but, due to a large number of the French troops in the area, it proved impossible and they had to capitulate.³⁷

Continuing the attack through Chauffour Forest (to the north of the Helly Position), in its central part, the soldiers of the V battalion of the 4th ZR captured a 4 7.7 cm field cannons and 2 15 cm howitzers. Later, the soldiers from the V battalion continued the attack towards the north-eastern part of Chauffour Forest occupied by a platoon of the 2/I/47th IR, under the command of reserve Second Lieutenant Ernst Bambauer.³⁸ The platoon, consisting of 3 NCOs and 16 soldiers, was destroyed following the French infantry's attack and the soldiers were killed or taken into captivity.³⁹

The remaining part of the 2nd company, under the command of reserve Second Lieutenant Marx,⁴⁰ consisting of 8 NCOs and 47 privates, took positions on Hill 347. Soon, the French infantry captured Chambret Farm and was approaching the southern tip of Fosses Forest. Having appraised the position of his unit, the company commander ordered the soldiers to take up positions immediately and sent a report to the headquarters of the I/47th IR in Fosses Forest. The 2nd company, located on Hill 347, was attacked at 11:45 a.m. by a battalion of the 2nd ZR/37th ID. Under effective fire, the French infantry stalled 100 m before the position. However, this triggered off the French machine guns to shell Hill 347.

At 12:30 p.m., the French infantry started marching from the southern slope of Hill 378 to the east and tried to cut off the position of the 2/47th IR on Hill 347. In order to avoid envelopment, reserve Second Lieutenant Marx ordered his soldiers to retreat to the firing positions of the division's artillery located to the north of Fosses Forest. When the soldiers from the 2nd company made an attempt to leave the trenches, they were exposed to mass artillery shelling. A large majority of them were killed or wounded. The casualties were so heavy that reserve Second Lieutenant Marx returned

³⁷ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 215.

³⁸ AVDV, Ausgabe 1396, 12 III 1917, 17851.

³⁹ SHD, Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d'Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), 198–206; Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 216.

⁴⁰ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

to his artillery with a single soldier. Meanwhile, the French troops were on the edge of Fosses Forest and started to clear the local trenches and bunkers with grenades. Consequently, reserve Second Lieutenant Marx returned to Chaume Forest where he joined a platoon from the 1st machine gun company under the command of reserve Second Lieutenant Wanke.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the remaining part of the 1st machine gun company of the 47th IR under the command of reserve Second Lieutenant Henze,⁴² equipped with 4 machine guns, took positions to the east of Chauffour Forest. The company's commander, armed with 2 machine guns, stopped next to the artillery's firing position. When at 12:00 p.m. the fog lifted, Second Lieutenant Wanke's⁴³ soldiers noted that the French infantry had captured Hills 378 and 347. Immediately, they started to fire on Hill 345 with 4 machine guns. While one of them jammed in the mud, the soldiers continued machine gun fire, effectively preventing the French infantry from manoeuvres on Hill 345. Shelling on Hill 378 continued until the remaining three guns jammed and forced Second Lieutenant Wanke to order retreat. Despite the heavy gunfire opened by the French infantry, not a single German soldier was lost during the retreat and the platoon reached Chambrettes Farm and Chaume Forest. When the machine gun nests were retrained on the artillery's firing post, the unit accompanied by the pioneers took up firing positions in the southern part of Chaume Forest. The French infantrymen approached them at 25 m and suffered severe losses from the machine gun fire. At the same time, damage to a French plane forced an emergency landing.⁴⁴

The fall of Hill 378 and the French attacks on Fosses Forest

From 10:00 a.m., the Division's positions on Hill 378 were under the French artillery's drumfire; a large part of the shells gas shells. Consequently, Major von Schütz⁴⁵ ordered a state of alert for the 3rd and the 4/I/6th GrR in the Fosses and Panzer Ravines. At 10:00 a.m., the defensive lines of the positions on Hill 378 were under suppressive fire of its own artillery which did not bode well.⁴⁶

⁴¹ The name of this soldier could not be determined. Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 216.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁴⁴ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 216.

⁴⁵ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁴⁶ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 217.

At 10:40 a.m., the commander of the French 38th ID ordered his soldiers to stop the attack while the 4th ZR and the 8th TR/76th IB were ordered to launch an attack and capture Hill 378.⁴⁷ At 10:45 a.m., the commander of the 4th ZR reported that, in cooperation with the 8th TR, it captured Hill 378. The report was confirmed by the commander of the 76th IB in his report to the staff of the 38th ID at 11:09 a.m.⁴⁸

At 11:00 a.m., the staff of Major von Schütz located in the Fosses Ravine received a report from the staff of the 20th IB that the French infantry had launched a mass attack on Hill 378 which could have been captured.⁴⁹ At 11:30 a.m., in order to verify this information, Major von Schütz ordered Second Lieutenant Weskamp⁵⁰ to conduct reconnaissance around Hill 378. Following reconnaissance from Position „B”, Second Lieutenant Weskamp came under the infantry’s mass fire. Observation confirmed that the French infantry had captured Hill 378 and was heading north to Fosses Forest. White flags fluttered above the entrances to the bunkers on Hill 378, hung out by the German soldiers to indicate surrender. 12 French aeroplanes circled above the captured position. Captain Hoppe⁵¹ immediately informed Major von Schütz about the situation. Then the 3rd company received an order to take up positions along the southern edge of Fosses Forest; the porters from the II battalion took up Position „F” and completed the mission at 12:00 p.m.⁵² Soon, a telephone report was sent from the staff of the 20th IB to the staff of Major von Schütz to confirm that the enemy troops had captured Hill 378. Second Lieutenant Neuenhagen⁵³ from the 398th IR, who commanded the defence of Chambrettes Farm, was witness to the fall of the position. According to his account, when the French

⁴⁷ SHD, Régiments et bataillons. Infanterie d’Afrique. Régiments et régiments de marche de tirailleurs algériens, 26N850/9, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 8^e Régiments de Marche (1 I – 31 XII 1916), s.l., 1–103; Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d’Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), s.l., 198–206.

⁴⁸ SHD, Divisions d’infanterie et d’infanterie territorial, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d’Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d’infanterie. Brigades d’infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d’Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Régiments et bataillons Infanterie d’Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), s.l., 198–206.

⁴⁹ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 295–296.

⁵⁰ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁵¹ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁵² Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 217.

⁵³ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

infantry reached the summit of Hill 378, in an act of desperation, the German 398th IR launched a counterattack but was surrounded and forced to surrender. Captain Hoffmann⁵⁴ from the 6th GrR, the commander of the section, was taken into captivity.⁵⁵

At the same time, the deployed reserve unit of the French 76th IB was repelled by the German 10th ID in Fosses Forest and forced to retreat towards Chauffour Forest.⁵⁶

At 11:30 a.m., the staff of the German 56th FAR received a report in Marville Forest that Hill 378 had been captured; the information was communicated also to the staff of the VII RC. It coincided with an order from the Corps staff for all the units of the artillery located in the zone of the 10th ID to continue suppressive fire. On the other hand, the 10th ID was ordered to retake Hill 378. At 11:30 a.m., reserve Captain Zürn⁵⁷ issued an order from an observation post to the south-west of Beaumont for the 4th battery and the 6th battery (10.5 cm howitzers) from the 56th FAR to open fire on Hill 378. However, this triggered a French aircraft attack on the positions of both batteries; the 6th battery was subjected to heavy French artillery fire (including gas shells) and suffered losses so heavy that the number of soldiers dwindled to 10 NCOs and a squad. Nevertheless, the battery continued shelling and made its contribution to putting a stop to the French infantry along the road from Louvemont to Chambrettes Farm. At the same time, following information from the patrol of the 2nd battery that the French infantry had entered Chaume Forest, where the 10th and the 14th ID met, the batteries of the I/56th FAR opened fire on the area to the south of Chaume Forest. The shelling gave advantage also to the German 14th ID which, supported, could maintain its position. A French infantry unit consisting of 250 soldiers, which entered the Forest, was soon captured.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the left flank of the French infantry was approaching Fosses Forest and, after the fall of Hill 378, the right flank joined (battalions of the 4th ZR and the 8th TR/76th IB/38th ID).⁵⁹ As the enemy had more soldiers and greater fighting efficiency, there was a threat of the position being enveloped. The commander of the section, Major von Schütz, ordered the 1st and 3/I/47th

⁵⁴ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁵⁵ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 295–296; Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 217.

⁵⁶ SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d'Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

⁵⁷ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁵⁸ Angerstein and Schlemm, *Das 2. Posensche Feldartillerie-Regiment*, 70–71.

⁵⁹ SHD, Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

IR to enter the Chambrettes and Fosses Ravines from the direction of the Westfalen Ravine. The Fosses Ravine ran through Fosses Forest from the west to the east, approximately 150 m to the north of Positions „A” and „B”, taken by the I/47th IR. The Chambrettes Ravine, on the other hand, ran diagonally across the regiment’s positions, along the axis from the north-west to the south-east. Both ravines merged approximately 200 m to the north of Position „B”. To the west, on the right flank of the I battalion, the Chambrettes Ravine ran from the north and turned to the south-east at Position „V”. Notably, Position „V” was located about 350 m to the south-west of Position „A”. Across the Chambrettes Ravine, 350 m to the east was Position „B”. Therefore, when the French troops captured the Westfalen Ravine, the 47th IR was enveloped and its rear positions became vulnerable. Meanwhile, the soldiers from the I battalion of the 6th GrR and the 9th and 11/III/398th IR filled Positions „A” and „B”. Consolidated troops, under the command of Captain Hoppe, consisting of the I/47th IR, the 2/29th Pioneer Regiment (hereafter: PR) plus the officers from the battalion staff, marched to the south-west to the Westfalen Ravine. Simultaneously, the porter units from the specific battalions positioned on the first line took up positions „D”, „E” and „F”, while the companies of the III/47th IR took up the main position to the south of the Fosses Ravine. The remaining porter troops were dispatched to the Panzer Ravine.⁶⁰

By order of Captain von Puttkamer,⁶¹ the commander of the I/6th GrR, the soldiers of the 1st and the 2nd companies were dispatched to counterattack through the Chambrettes Ravine. Simultaneously, the soldiers from the 3rd company in the battalion, supported by an MG 08 Maxim heavy machine gun, took up position „C”. Single MG 08 Maxim heavy machine guns were also sent to positions „A” and „B”. By order of the commander of the I battalion, the heavy machine gun sections from the 398th IR took up the northern slope of the Fosses Ravine. It was an optimal shelling position, specifically in the direction of Hill 378. Meanwhile, the soldiers from the 2/I/6th GrR launched a bayonet attack and soon, they were accompanied by soldiers from the 2nd company. Even if the counterattack zone was heavily shelled by the French artillery, the grenadiers’ bayonet attack stopped the French infantry near position „A” and repelled it. At 2:00 p.m., it was pushed out of position „V” to the road between Lovemont and Ornes. Following the defeats of the units of the 10th ID and severing its main defence line, this small tactical success boosted the soldiers’ morale.⁶²

⁶⁰ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 217–218; Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 296.

⁶¹ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁶² Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 297–298; SHD, *Divisions d’infanterie et d’infanterie territoriale*, 26N333/3, *Journaux des marches et opérations* 38^e Division d’Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

Similarly, the soldiers on the „A” and „B” positions from the I/47th IR were busy marching forward approximately 200 m where a new defence line was established. Meanwhile, the French infantry captured Chambrettes Farm and opened machine gun fire. The French aeroplanes started to coordinate artillery fire towards the positions in Fosses Forest. The actions of the soldiers from the 3/47th IR were equally successful as they put a stop to the progress of the French infantry towards Chaume Forest.⁶³

At 12:30 p.m., the commander of the 20th IB ordered the II/6th GrR (which was then in the Brunnen and Peter-August Ravines) to immediately proceed to the Fosses Ravine. Following the arrival of the reserve troops, the units of the 10th ID, defending the Fosses Forest area, could launch a counterattack. The 5th company, under the command of Second Lieutenant Schleese,⁶⁴ supported by the 2nd machine gun platoon under the command of deputy Sergeant Gill⁶⁵ (which took up position „B”), was tasked with retaking Chambrettes Farm. The grenadiers launched an attack with great determination and the French infantry from the 4th battalion of the 4th ZR suffered heavy losses from machine gun fire in an open area.⁶⁶ Many POWs were taken and a machine gun was seized. The farm's crew consisted of two platoons under the command of Second Lieutenant Will and a machine gun platoon under the command of deputy Sergeant Kubatzki.⁶⁷

At 3:00 p.m., when not enough reports were sent from the first line, the staff of the 10th ID ordered air reconnaissance to determine the positions of friendly troops. In the vicinity of Fosses Forest, the soldiers recognised their own aeroplane and tried to mark their positions, putting sheets of newspapers on the ground and flashing torches. However, the French aeroplanes, which had an advantage in the air, chased off the German reconnaissance aeroplane. On the other hand, machine gun shelling from position „A” damaged a French aeroplane and forced it to land.⁶⁸

Quite unexpectedly, on 15 December at 5:00 p.m., the French artillery ceased fire and the infantrymen stopped attacking. Then, the Division's last reserve unit, the I/398th IR, marched from the Fosses Ravine to the Panzer

⁶³ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 217–218.

⁶⁴ The names of this soldiers could not be determined.

⁶⁵ The names of this soldiers could not be determined.

⁶⁶ SHD, Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d'Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, Journaux des marches et opérations 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), s.l., 198–206.

⁶⁷ The names of this soldiers could not be determined. Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 298.

⁶⁸ SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N331/1, Journaux des marches et opérations 37^e Division d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., 27–45.

Ravine. In the light of the fact that all the three battalions in the first line were destroyed and the positions of the 10th ID were broken, its remaining units did not cease fighting or intend to retreat. Despite the casualties, morale was still high. At 06:30 p.m., the commander of the fighting line of the 10th ID ordered the troops to rearrange on the first line positions. The enemy troops were spotted, digging in on Hill 378 and along the road from Louvemont to Chabrettes Farm. It was certain that a subsequent attack would be directed at Chambrettes Farm, so its crew was reinforced by the 6/I/6th GrR. All the units of the 10th ID on the first line were to dig in immediately and extend their positions to meet the adjacent troops. The entire 10th ID was divided into three groups: 1) „Hoppe” – occupying a section running from the north (the Division's supply base) to the south to Position „A”, Hill 320, the Division's first line of defence, to Chambrettes Ravine (inclusive); 2) „von Puttkamer” – occupying a section running from the Chambrettes Ravine (exclusive), through Position „B” to Chambrettes Farm (inclusive); 3) „Major Vogt's group” – the first line section on the Fosses position from Chambrettes Farm to the western edge of Chaume Forest.

The troops, located in these positions, were to subordinate to the commanders of the respective combat groups. The 7th and 8/I/6th GrR, under the command of Captain Firnhaber,⁶⁹ were in reserve of the first line; they were expected to take up positions in Fosses Forest. The combat groups of the right and left flanks of the 10th ID were ordered to communicate with the adjacent divisions. The ammunition and food rations were to be collected from the pioneers' storage in the Fosses Ravine. Owing to the well-considered operations of the first line commander, good planning and decisive actions, the 10th ID maintained and reorganised its positions, contributing to an effective defence in the days to come.⁷⁰

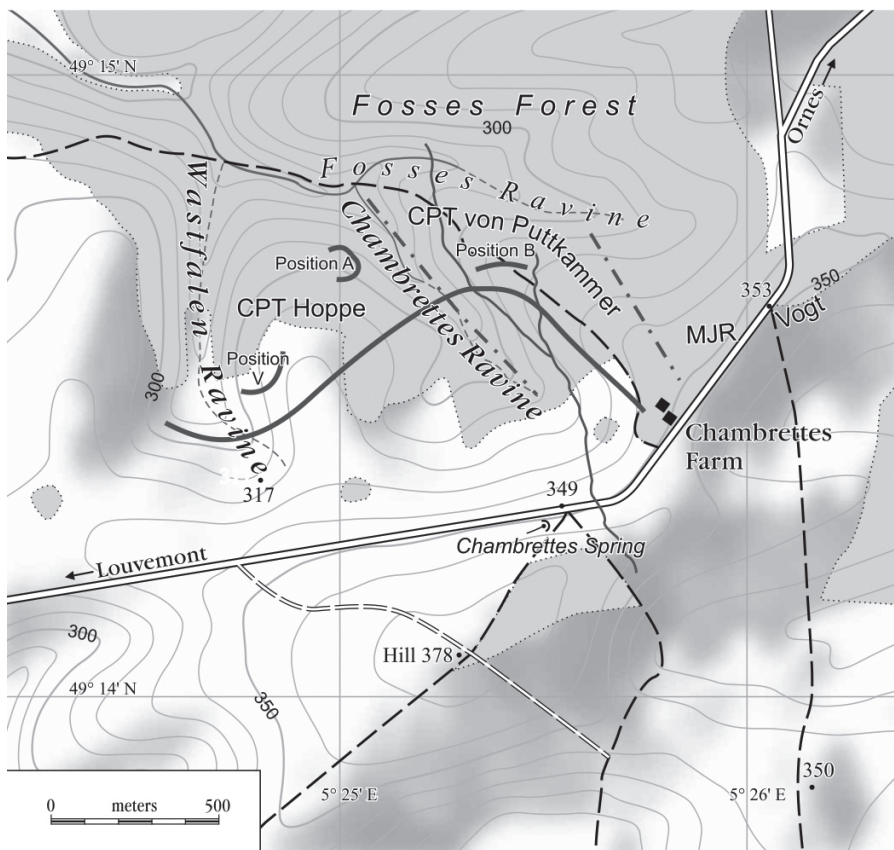
On the evening of 15 December 1916, the units of the French 38th ID reported taking prisoners: 99 officers and 3,444 NCOs and privates. Out of this number, the 4th ZR and the 8th TR took 2,353 prisoners from the 10th ID (including 59 officers), seized 20 machineguns (mostly damaged or destroyed), guns (some of them destroyed), many mortars and a large number of abandoned ammunition in chests.⁷¹ At the same time, the infantry seized

⁶⁹ The name of this soldier could not be determined.

⁷⁰ „Order by the commander of the first line of the 10th Infantry Division of 15 VIII 1916, 18h30,” in Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 299–300.

⁷¹ SHD, Régiments et bataillons. Infanterie d'Afrique. Régiments et régiments de marche de tirailleurs algériens, 26N850/9, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 8^e Régiments de Marche (1 I – 31 XII 1916), s.l., 1–103; Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

or destroyed 24 German cannons including 6 7.7 cm cannons located to the south of Chambrettes Farm at the road from Louvemont to Chabrette Farm, 2 10.5 cm howitzers next to the infantry shelters on the north-east edge of Chauffour Forest, a destroyed large calibre cannon next to Hill 378, 3 10.5 cm howitzers on the northern slope of Hill 378 and a 21 cm mortar – 150 m to the east of Hill 378. The soldiers from the 76th IB also captured the Division's radio communication station with a generator.⁷²



Map 4. Deployment of combat positions in the sector of the German 10th Infantry Division in Fosses Forest during the Battle of Verdun, the situation on 16–19 December 1916.

Map concept: Bartosz Kruszyński, design: Radosław Przebitkowski. Based on source: Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*.

⁷² SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, Journaux des marches et opérations 38^e Division d'Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, Journaux des Marches et Opérations 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.

On the other hand, on the evening of 16 December, the French 37th ID reported taking approximately 2,500 prisoners of war (including 22 officers and 39 NCOs); most of them captured in the Helly Ravine, Rousses and in Caurières Forest. The Division's regiments seized 31 guns (including 14 heavy calibre ones), several light mortars, 27 heavy machine guns (including 9 seized during an attack) and numerous consumables, food store-rooms and ammunition.⁷³

On 15 December, despite the firepower advantage enjoyed by the French artillery, the 56th and the 20th FAR from the German 10th ID effectively supported the Division's units. On that day, each field cannon battery from both regiments used on average 2,000 shells while each howitzer battery used 1,500 shells. A large number of shells were destroyed in fires of the ammunition storerooms hit by the French artillery. The 56th FAR also suffered heavy losses in armament: some guns were destroyed while other were damaged. Under cover of darkness, some batteries of the regiment marched to safer positions to the north of Beaumont.⁷⁴

Late on 15 and early on 16 December, the French artillery opened harassing fire on the positions of the 10th ID in Fosses and Chaume Forests. Nevertheless, the first line soldiers sent out regular patrols tasked with maintaining contact with the enemy and the adjacent troops. The French artillery also tried to engage in a similar activity in the foreground of Chambrettes Farm but was unsuccessful. On the early morning of 16 December, the right flank of the 10th ID was transferred to the north of position „V” where it was much easier to withstand another French assault. On 15 December the fighting exhausted the French regiments of the 37th and 38th IDs so much that on the following day, they reorganized and gathered strength for further operations.⁷⁵

Conclusion

The tactical goals of the French offensive in October 1916 at Verdun were accomplished. However, the situation was much less favourable in the case of the French offensive which started on 15 December 1916 and took several days. The French regiments together with the 38th and 37th IDs managed to break the defence line of the German 10th ID on the Minzen Position and to destroy a collective regiment on the first line. However, the „Posen” division put up effective resistance on the subsequent line of defence in Fosses Forest.

⁷³ SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N331/1, *Journaux des marches et opérations* 37^e Division d'Infanterie (19 X 1916 – 16 VI 1917), s.l., 27–45.

⁷⁴ Angerstein and Schlemm, *Das 2. Posensche Feldartillerie-Regiment*, 73–74.

⁷⁵ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 300–301.

In the fighting that took place between 26 October and 19 December 1916, the units of the German 10th ID suffered severe casualties. According to data provided by General Max von Gallwitz, on 15 December 1916 itself, the losses included three entire battalions and 50% of two battalions.⁷⁶

Between 15 and 20 December 1916, the French colonial regiments from the 37th and 38th IDs, engaged in fighting against the 10th ID, lost 5,512 soldiers. The units of the French 76th IB/38th ID suffered heavy casualties: the 4th ZR lost 1,419 soldiers (59% of their fighting strength). Between 7 and 20 December 1916, the 8th TR lost 1,424 soldiers (59% of their fighting strength). The casualties of the French 76th IB amounted to 2,842 soldiers (58.5% of their fighting strength).⁷⁷ The French 73th IB from the 37th ID, which fought against the left flank of the German 10th ID, lost 1,187 soldiers (49% of their fighting strength) from the 2nd ZR. The 2nd TR lost 1,483 soldiers (61% of their fighting strength).⁷⁸

The total casualties of the „Posen” 10th ID incurred in the Battle of Verdun amounted to 1,859 soldiers. Between 26 October and 19 December, the I and II/6th GrR lost 293 soldiers including 4 officers, 81 NCOs and privates. Moreover, 3 officers, 168 NCOs and privates were wounded while 37 soldiers were reported missing. The fusilier battalion (totally annihilated) lost 4 officers, 304 NCOs and privates and 55 missing soldiers. In total, the casualties at Verdun from the 6th GrR amounted to 457 soldiers. More specifically, 9 officers⁷⁹ and 81 NCOs and privates were killed; 3 officers and 168 NCOs and privates were wounded; 37 soldiers were reported missing. The German POWs included 9 officers, 150 grenadiers and other rank fusiliers (most of them wounded). Between 26 October and 19 December 1916, out of 90 soldiers of the 6th GrR killed in the battle of Verdun, 35 had Polish names.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Max von Gallwitz, *Erleben im Westen 1916–1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1932), 151.

⁷⁷ SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N333/3, *Journaux des marches et opérations*, 38^e Division d'Infanterie (10 X – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Régiments et bataillons. Infanterie d'Afrique. Régiments et régiments de marche de tirailleurs algériens, 26N850/9, *Journaux des Marches et Opérations* 8^e Régiments de Marche (1 I – 31 XII 1916), s.l., 1–103; Brigades et groupes de bataillons. Brigades et groupes de bataillons d'infanterie. Brigades d'infanterie, 26N5/8/3, *Journaux des Marches et Opérations* 76^e Brigade d'Infanterie (1 XII 1915 – 31 XII 1916), s.l., s.p.; Régiments et bataillons, Infanterie d'Afrique, Régiments et bataillons de zouaves, 26N840/6, *Journaux des marches et opérations* 5^e Bataillon 4^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves (23 VIII 1914 – 13 VIII 1919), 198–206.

⁷⁸ SHD, Divisions d'infanterie et d'infanterie territoriale, 26N331/1, *Journaux des marches et opérations* 37^e Division d'Infanterie (19 X 1916 – 16 VI 1917), s.l., 27–45.

⁷⁹ AVDV, Ausgabe 1331, 6 I 1917, 17070; AVDV, Ausgabe 1390, 5 III 1917, 17775; AVDV, Ausgabe 1318, 23 XII 1916, 16935; Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 611–614.

⁸⁰ Gottberg, *Das Grenadier-Regiment*, 304–306, 611–681.

In the 47th IR, the casualties included 753 soldiers: 24 killed (among them 2 officers), 96 wounded (1 officer) and 633 missing (14 officers). After the war, it was estimated that the regiment lost 206 soldiers; some of them died from their wounds suffered in French captivity while others died in German field hospitals. Among the 206 soldiers of the 47th IR killed in the battle of Verdun, 40 had Polish names.⁸¹

As archive sources have not survived, it is impossible to establish the casualties of the II/398th IR which was destroyed in an attack on 15 December 1916. Only approximate estimations of the casualties can be made and the suggested number is 450 soldiers.

Bearing in mind the very difficult tactical conditions and the advantage of the French troops, the German 10th ID did not lose its fighting potential despite losing three battalions. However, the developments dealt a crushing blow to the soldiers' morale and psyche. They put up resistance in extremely difficult conditions. Suffering the cruelty of trench warfare, many of them never recovered from the trauma. The harrowing experiences were shared by both Polish and German soldiers from the Province of Posen, taking part in the last stage of the Battle of Verdun in December 1916.

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⁸¹ Loosch, *Das Königl. preuss. Infanterie-Regiment*, 583–584.

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STRESZCZENIE

Bartosz Kruszyński, Pułki z Prowincji Poznańskiej w końcowej fazie bitwy pod Verdun w grudniu 1916 roku

W artykule autor dokonał szczegółowej analizy działań jednostek niemieckiej 10 Dywizji Piechoty w ostatniej fazie bitwy pod Verdun w grudniu 1916 r. Rozważania te objęły zagadnienia takie, jak: wpływ ukształtowania terenu na przebieg walk, charakterystyka zajmowanych pozycji, taktyka i skuteczność bojowa obu stron, postawa kadry dowódczej oraz poniesione straty. Dla ukazania pełnego obrazu tych wydarzeń autor równolegle przedstawił działania jednostek francuskich, szeroko korzystając z francuskich źródeł archiwalnych z *Le Service Historique de la Défense* w Vincennes. Na podstawie analizy strat niemieckiej 10 Dywizji Piechoty autor określił procent żołnierzy polskiej narodowości w szeregach tej jednostki. Uzupełnienie tekstu stanowią cztery mapy opracowane przez autora na podstawie dostępnych źródeł archiwalnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Front Zachodni I wojny światowej, bitwa pod Verdun w 1916 r., pułki z Prowincji Poznańskiej, niemiecka 10 Dywizja Piechoty, niemiecka taktyka w 1916 r.

SUMMARY

Bartosz Kruszyński, Regiments from the Province of Posen in the Final Engagements of the Battle of Verdun in December 1916

This article provides a detailed analysis of the actions conducted by units of the German 10th Infantry Division in the final phase of the Battle of Verdun in December 1916. The study covers such issues as the influence of the terrain on the course of the battle, the characteristics of the positions held, the tactics and combat effectiveness of both sides, the attitude of the command staff, and the losses incurred. Additionally, in order to paint a complete picture of the events, the article also analyses the operations conducted by the French units based on materials from the archives of the Defence Historical Service (*Le Service Historique de la Défense*) in Vincennes. Based on the analysis of the losses of the German 10th

Infantry Division, the author determined the percentage of soldiers of Polish nationality in the ranks of this unit. The text is supplemented by 4 maps, prepared by the author on the basis of available archival sources.

Keywords: Western front of WWI, Battle of Verdun in 1916, regiments from the Province of Posen, German 10th Infantry Division in 1916, German military tactics in 1916

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bartosz Kruszyński, Regimenter aus der Provinz Posen in den letzten Gefechten der Schlacht um Verdun im Dezember 1916

In diesem Aufsatz hat der Autor die Aktionen der Einheiten der deutschen 10. Infanteriedivision in der Endphase der Schlacht von Verdun im Dezember 1916 eingehend analysiert. Zu den Überlegungen gehören Aspekte, wie der Einfluss des Geländes auf den Verlauf der Kämpfe, die Merkmale der gehaltenen Stellungen, die Taktik und die Kampfkraft beider Seiten, die Haltung der Führungsstäbe und die erlittenen Verluste. Um ein vollständiges Bild der Ereignisse zu vermitteln, hat der Autor parallel dazu die Aktionen der französischen Einheiten dargestellt und dabei ausführlich auf französische Archivquellen des *Le Service Historique de la Défense* in Paris zurückgegriffen. Auf der Grundlage einer Analyse der Verluste der 10. Deutschen Infanteriedivision ermittelte der Autor den Anteil der Soldaten polnischer Nationalität in den Reihen dieser Einheit. Der Text wird durch vier Karten ergänzt, die der Autor auf der Grundlage der verfügbaren Archivquellen zusammengestellt hat.

Schlüsselwörter: Westfront des Ersten Weltkriegs, Schlacht von Verdun 1916, Regimenter aus der Provinz Posen, 10. Deutsche Infanteriedivision, deutsche Taktik 1916