

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT16: 6 - 9 October 1914 (October 2).

General Situation

On the Eastern Fronts, and in the Balkans, it seemed as if the violent storm has subsided a bit. The Austro-Hungarians had not been able to overthrow Serbia in their first attempts and they were now in a period of reassessment. Similarly the Russian offensives had seemingly reached their high water mark and in places their tide was receding a little. In any event, no major operations were underway in the East. The Western Front was different. As the Germans steadily approached ever closer to Paris, the whole of Europe fixed its attention on this supreme crisis.

The Western Front

Reims fell to the advancing German 3rd Army during the evening of 6 October. By the following day, the Germans were approaching the River Marne on a long front and the French 9th Army was content to pull back to the south bank.



Figure 1: Paris in Peril, 6 - 9 October 1914.

The most critical German advances were those of the 2nd Army which fought hard to capture Criel on 7 October. The German 39th Division moving south of the Oise found itself making an unopposed advance to Dammartin (5-3.0916). The Germans were no more than 30 kilometres from the Arc de Triomphe on 8 October and remained resting there unmolested the following day.

The Germans did not expect to take Paris by frontal assault and the 2nd Army had pushed most of its strength to the north of Paris where its leading front was on the line Beauvais – Crevecoeur (5-3.0713). Apart from the direct threat to Paris, the Germans were now seriously disrupting the railway communications between the North of France and the rest. The French had to contest this German movement and the French 5th Army was reinforced by the XXXI Corps to counterattack at Crevecoeur on 8 October. The German 3rd Guards Division faced this attack alone and was forced to retire with heavy losses. Despite this reverse, two other German Divisions (5th and 42nd) remained in Beauvais within striking distance of the Seine.

While Paris had the enemy at its gates, there were other actions continuing in distant Alsace at Thann (5-3.2822). There the German 7th Army was still trying to break a thinly held French trench line which was being defended with some spirit. The Germans hoped that the seizure of Thann would force the French to abandon Mulhouse, but for the time being they could not make headway and they gave up their efforts on 8 October.

The German artillery bombardments also still continued against Verdun and against the fortifications on the eastern side of the Meuse (5-3.2116) until 8 October when the siege gun batteries reported that they had run out of shells.



Figure 2: The Battle of the Scheldt, 6 - 9 October 1914.

There was another major battle in progress along the Scheldt. The Germans crossed the river at Courtrai on 6 October and the 1st Guards Division helped recapture Ypres on the 7 October. On 8

October, an Allied counteroffensive began which occurred along the whole front between Ypres and Dendermonde (5-3.1405). At Dendermonde, the Belgian Cavalry Division made a famous attack that helped force the retreat of the German 22nd Reserve Division opening the way for the last escape from Antwerp. The Belgian Army fought on the left of the French 6th Army which also had the BEF attacking on its right. The Germans nevertheless held all their bridgeheads across the Scheldt and the Allied attacks could not be considered a success.

The Eastern Front

As the siege of Przemysl entered into its second week, both the Austrians and Russians were digging in, resupplying and reinforcing. They were too busy, therefore, to contemplate attacks on the enemy.

The Russian Stavka had determined that the Russian fronts in western Poland were overextended. A series of withdrawals were ordered. The Russian 4th Army pulled out of Tarnow and the 9th Army gave up Czestochowa again and fell back to the Nida and Pilica Rivers. The Russian 10th Army had advanced almost to the German border but on 8 October they began to fall back.

The German 8th Army concentrated against the Russian 2nd Army and without huge difficulty or loss managed to recover Allenstein on 7 October after a brief occupation by the Russian 8th Division. The German 17th Reserve Division advanced south from the Johannesburgerwald with no regard for its own communications and threatened those of the Russians. In the face of these dangers, the Russians pulled back their flanks and retreated back towards Poland.

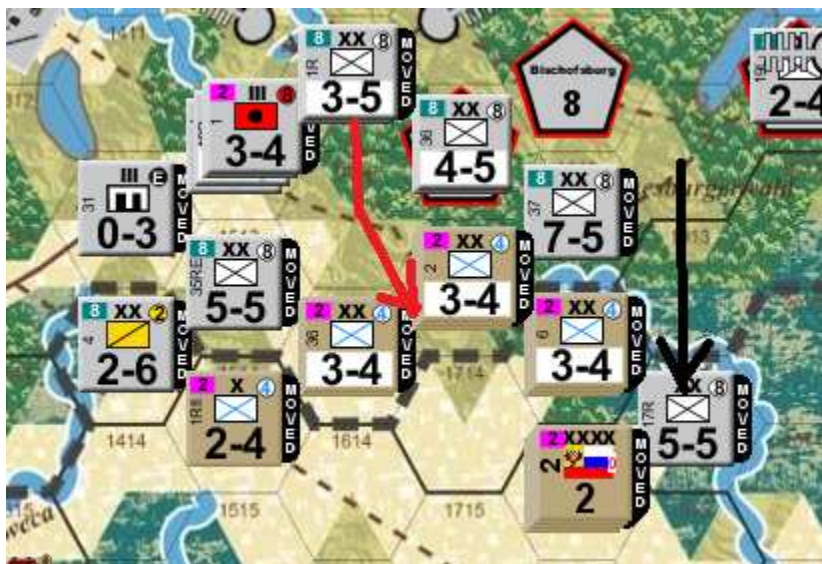


Figure 3: The Russian 2nd Army driven back from Allenstein, 7 - 9 October 1914.

While they focused on the Russian 2nd Army, the Germans had little to fear from the Russian 1st Army as most of their front in the north east was either entrenched or had fallen back to the Masurian fortifications. Only on the coast did the German Landwehr have to continue to cope with minor Russian attacks.

Serbia

On 6 October, the Austrians re-crossed the Sava. The bulk of the Austrian 5th Army was now concentrated opposite Belgrade. The Serbians nevertheless suspected that the Austrians might attempt a crossing of the Danube East of Belgrade. Reinforcements were therefore sent to increase the strength of the Serbian defences in that sector.

October 1914 DM Situation

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	54*	20						12	86	363	Good – *Lost Allenstein
Austria-Hungary	1	-						1	2	172	Good
Central Powers	-	20						13	88	535	
France	42*	32**						-	75	457	Good – *Amiens captured, **Reims captured
Great Britain	-	5						-	5	40	Good
Russia	9*	3						NA	12	159	Good – *Czestochowa recaptured
Belgium	(1)	(6)						NA	(7)	(81)	N/A - Brugge recaptured.
Serbia	-							NA	-	(8)	N/A
Entente	49	40							92	654	

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: I made a dreadful mistake in E Prussia by garrisoning Allenstain with only a single brigade's worth of troops; allowing Samsonov to eliminate this paltry garrison and occupy the city – costing me 30 DM in the process. I make re-taking the city my key objective whilst moving to create a risk to the Russian 2nd Army of becoming isolated in NW Poland. My defence line blocking access into Silesia is also looking a little fragile, so I reposition units to make it less porous. Of a new draft of 6 x Res divs mobilised to the west I rail two eastwards. I also launch another attack NE of Kattowitz to keep him on the back foot.*
- *Galicia: Przemysl is surrounded but he has withdrawn in some areas along the front and AH feels some easing of pressure. There is no real opportunity for any counter thrusts though, although my supply situation is somewhat better than Russia's.*

- *Serbia: More repositioning; otherwise pretty static.*
- *West: Supply is still quite a limiting factor. There is a lot of weakness to attack but I cannot sufficiently provision all of it, so I have to be very selective in my objectives. I use up the last of my siege ammunition wearing down the Verdun fort line. The fort to the SE is now largely destroyed and Verdun is at risk of becoming isolated. The Belgians have effected a strong breakout – isolating and destroying a weak Res Div of mine – and linked up with the French along the Scheldt. They are too strong so I opt to attack Ypres to retake it and risk still cutting off their extraction. There is a strong British force starting to build up in the NW and I am fully expecting an attack to develop in this area. I also attack at Criel to drive the French out and further drive a wedge between the French 5th and 6th armies and BEF (and now Belgians) to the N and Paris. My 2nd Army has now advanced to the very outskirts of Paris; the French will have to stretch their line and pull reserves westwards and southwards. Currently, along the Marne, they risk becoming fragmented and isolated into pockets. I make another attack in the Vosges to further isolate Mulhouse.*

AP: The Western Front remains by far the most important front of all. I am still in a critical condition but the situation is not quite as bad as I feared it would become a few turns ago. The Germans are putting me under pressure in several directions but the German effort is becoming less concentrated and is advancing chiefly because I am having difficulty creating a continuous line. Further German success will hopefully stretch their line and create more weakness to counterattack. If the front stabilised now it would be very long and that should be to my advantage.

I have also been aware for some time that my forces in the North and in Flanders were being isolated from the developing threat to Paris. There is something of a gamble in this but it is necessary also if I am to keep a substantial German force busy in the north and for me to extract the Belgians at a time when I have few other fresh well supplied units.

I think it is going to be a few turns before I can get the Russians taking the initiative again. The German front in the East is being slowly reinforced and I may be thrown into a defensive stance on much of this front.