

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg

GT21: 28 – 31 October 1914 (October 7)

General Situation

A turning point in the 1914 campaign arrived when for four days, between 28 and 31 October, there were no significant attacks on the whole Western Front. It also occurred that, the French pickets watching the German camps to the east of Paris realised that, during the night of 29-30 October, the Germans had pulled out of their most advanced positions. Indeed, visitors taken up the Eiffel Tower, who had previously been horrified to be told that they could see as far as the German lines, were now persuaded that, with the right telescopic sights, they might see the backs of the enemy falling back.



Figure 1: The Front Line in the West, 31 October 1914, showing (in red) maximum advances abandoned.

The German ammunition shortage had certainly played a part in this decision, but it was a sign also that the Germans were considering their longer term plans and looking for positions they would hold

during the winter. This was not an indication that anybody had won, more it showed the struggle would be more protracted. If there was a lull in the murderous combats, there was no telling when it would fire up again or where this might be. Indeed, as the Western Front fell quiet, the action in the East and the Balkans was increasing.

The diplomatic situation remained in flux with fresh speculation mounting again as Ottoman intentions came under renewed scrutiny. Other neutrals were also doing their calculations. Italy, especially, had used its neutrality to put itself in a middle position between the two alliances and was beginning to appreciate that a long war could be productive of concessions to Italian ambitions. The Austro-Hungarians were already sufficiently sensitive to the possibilities of this situation to have ordered the digging of trenches along the Italian frontier.

The Western Front



Figure 2: German Retreats near Paris, 29-30 October 1914.

Falkenhayn had ordered von Bulow to “rationalise” the 2nd Army front on 27 October, having previously endorsed the withdrawal from Beauvais. The new German front ran from Criel to Chateau Thierry (5-3.1216) and still remained only 30 kilometres from the outskirts of Paris at the closest point near Senlis (5-3.0915). The pursuit of the French began on 30 October and could not be described as vigorous. By the end of the month, the French 4th Army had moved forwards up to 35 kilometres and reoccupied Meaux and Jouarre (5-3.1117). They cautiously reconnoitred the new German line.

This was not the only German withdrawal. The fighting around Valmy (5-3.1816) had ended with the Germans withdrawing from exposed positions near St Amand-sur-Fion in eastern Champagne (5-3.1817), which the French reoccupied on 30 October. Here, also, the French were happy to let the Germans go in peace. Follow up attacks needed more preparation in the view of the French commanders.

The Eastern Front

In late October, the Central Powers were attacking simultaneously in three sectors.

The heaviest fighting was still taking place around Sochonin on the Wkra (4-5.1717) where the German 8th Army made a powerful assault on the left wing of the Russian 2nd Army defended by four Russian Infantry Divisions. The Russian 16th Division was severely handled and completely broken up. After two days of fighting between 28-29 October, the Russians were retreating again and the 2nd Army was trying to get back to their fortification line once more. The German 8th Army therefore had done well in October. Having temporarily lost Allenstein at the beginning of the month, it had by the end of it driven the Russians back to Warsaw's outer defences.

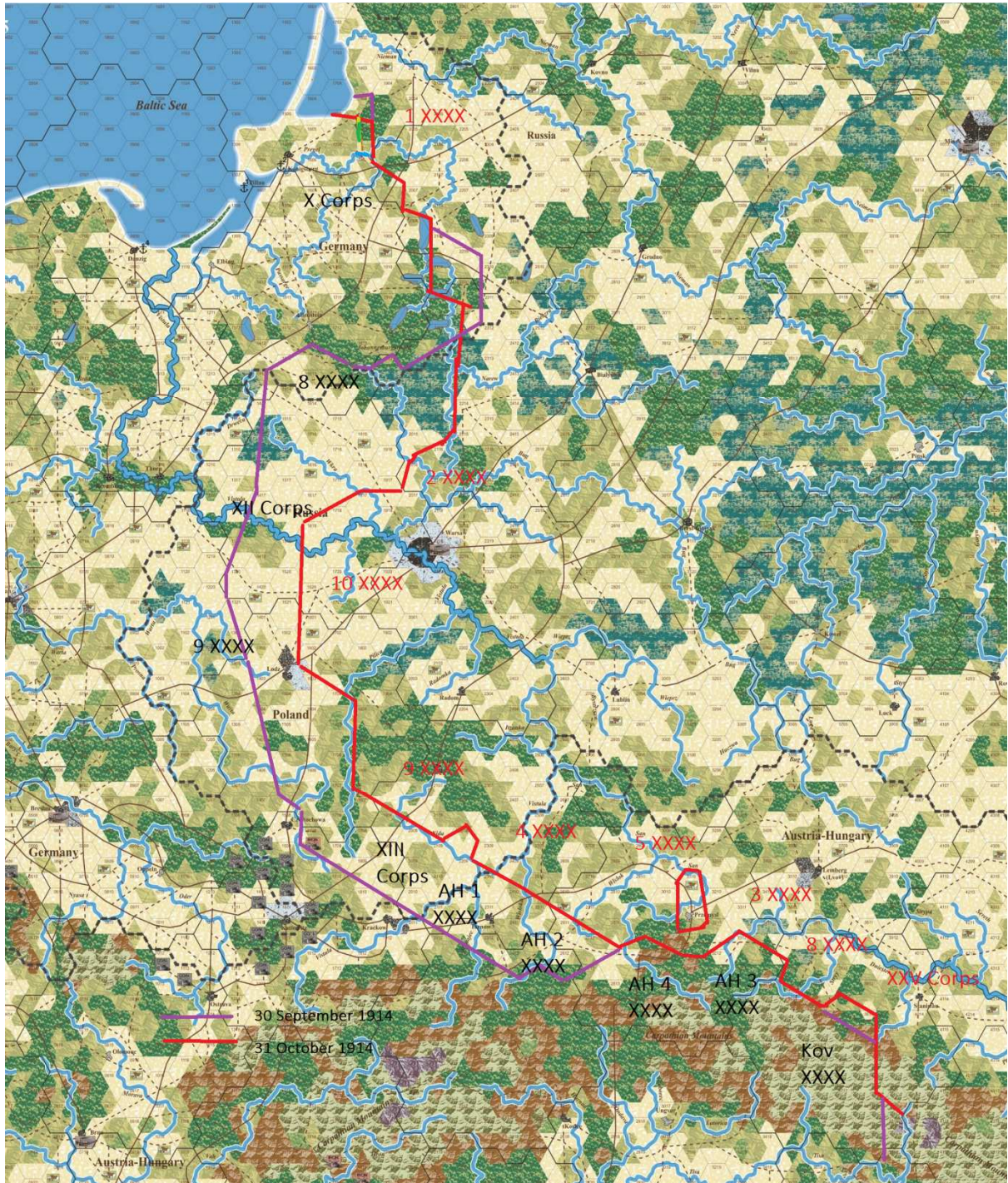


Figure 3: Central Powers' Gains on the Eastern Front during October 1914.

The Russians suffered another defeat on 28 October when the Austrian 1st Army made a well prepared attack on the Russian line on the Nida River at Wislica (5-5.2208). The Austrians boldly crossed the shallow river under fire and pushed forwards several kilometres disrupting the whole defensive system of the Russian 9th Army.

The campaign of the Kovess Army in the Carpathians was still delivering successes. The latest Austrian advance through the foothills above Bohorodchny (5-5.3814) brought the Hapsburg forces into terrain at lower elevation and a return to the Dniester Valley did not seem beyond their capabilities. The Russian XXV Corps was pleading for more aid from Brusilov's 8th Army headquarters which was more concerned to help the Russian 3rd Army around Przemysl. The assistance which Brusilov was prepared to release was rather limited, but included new Cossack formations which were directed towards this theatre as fast as their steppe ponies could carry them.

The Russians were slowly strengthening their grip around Przemysl with replacements being fed into the front here and entrenchments appearing especially to the south west of the beleaguered fortress. The South West Front remained uncomfortable at the small distance which separated the besieged garrison from the Austrian lines and the 3rd Army was ordered to drive the Austrians back into hills above the source tributaries of the Dniester (5-5.3212) to give more room in which the siege might be conducted. The Russians made an attack on 31 October against the front held by the Hungarian 27th and 41st Divisions in thickly wooded country. The Hungarians were not easily shifted as they saw themselves defending the roads into their own country. The Russians had not captured any of their objectives by nightfall. Several Russian divisional commanders complained that they had not been properly supplied before this attack as it was increasingly difficult to get necessities to the front where the terrain was difficult. Only those Russian units at lower elevation had been able to use their field guns.

Serbia

Having left the Serbians at peace for a month during which time they had been digging trenches, Potiorek decided now to test the new defences. On 29 October the Austrian 5th Army made an attack on the so-called Great Wall of Serbia in difficult terrain in the uplands between Donja Kamenica and Počuta just east of the Drina River (6-5.1311). In truth, the terrain was a bigger problem than the trenches, but the defenders were a tough Uzice Brigade which was extremely reluctant to give up the glorified ditches which they had cut out of the hard limestone with such labour. When relief for the Serbian mountain men arrived on 30 October the danger of the Austrian attack passed but the deadly attrition, that was never absent for long in this terrible conflict, began once more to exact its remorseless toll.

Player Notes

CP.

- *East: I have generated sufficient mass NW of Warsaw now to launch a large scale offensive. For the rest of this front, it is about the German forces consolidating to avoid another attack such as that which they experienced in Lodz. The GE 21L brigade participates in a large scale AH attack by the 1st Army to try and seize a bridgehead near the confluence of the Nida with the Vistula.*
- *Galicia: More attacking by the highly motivated Kovess Group as it steadily advances towards Stanislau. The rest of this front continues to dig in. It is a Mexican standoff in most of Galicia.*

- *Serbia: I have built sufficient strength on the 5th Army's western flank to launch an attack in the mountains near the source of the Kolubaru River.*
- *West: The time has come to acknowledge that I am trying to hold too much ground. I am in no position to attack the Paris fortifications and by sitting on their outskirts he can hold ground just relying on the strength of those fortifications. So my only action is to make tactical withdrawals to shorten my line round Meaux and SE of Chalons-sur-Marne.*

October 1914 DM Situation

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [SM %]	Morale
Germany	54*	20**	9	14	12#	13	4 (-2)	12	132	413 [25.8]	Good – *Lost Allenstein and **recovered. #Mulhouse recaptured
Austria-Hungary	1	-	-*	2	1	1	5	1	11	179 [32.5]	Good - *Tarnow recaptured.
Central Powers	-	20	9	16	13	14	7	13	143	592	
France	42*	32**	2	10	5	3	-	-	94	477 [53.0]	Good – *Amiens captured, **Reims captured
Great Britain	-	5	-	4	-	1	-	-	10	45 [3.5]	Good
Russia	9*	3	4**	5	5	4#	8	NA	38	185 [30.8]	Good – *Czestochowa recaptured and **finally lost. #Lodz lost.
Belgium	(1)*	(6)	(5)	-**	(4)	-		NA	(16)	(90)	N/A - *Brugge recaptured.** Antwerp and Brugge lost.
Serbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)	NA	-	(9)	N/A
Entente	49	40	6	19	10	8	8		142	707	

Note the percentage of Shaken Morale reached this month. France now exceeds 50% of the total required. German DM adjusted (-2) to address discrepancy in cumulative total.

AP: I was not expecting the Germans to withdraw to shorter lines in France just yet. However, it did seem a sensible move to me and I am only moving forward where I am prepared to fight to hold the ground. I still have a lot of respect for the German Army and do not assume that their offensive

operations in the West are yet over for this year. I still have some rebuilding to do and this will temper my willingness to assault the German lines prematurely. The Germans have not given up anything important, like resources, and they are likely to replenish their ranks and supplies shortly so I must remain conservative in what I attempt for a bit longer.

The Eastern Front is causing me more concern. Russian losses have not been as high as this for some time. The close approach of the Germans to Warsaw and the loss of the Nida line are signs that I have not got this front under control yet.

I was also nervous as I awaited the result of my (only) attack near Przemysl. I failed to gain the hex which, had I succeeded, would have complicated the Austrian position in this area, and elevating Austrian losses is always a good thing from my point of view. However, I also risked destabilising the front near Przemysl and if I had suffered a bad result in the counterattack (I didn't) the Austrians might have been able to mount a relief effort to break the siege.

There is now a 50:50 chance the Ottoman Empire will pile in. I honestly do not know in whose advantage this is. In the short term it will make little difference.