

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT30: 6 – 9 December 1914 (2 December)

### General Situation

While there was an appreciable slowdown of activity on several fronts as winter set in, there was no retreat to winter quarters for most of the combatants. The trench lines which covered large stretches of the fronts could not be abandoned and the armies had to stay in the field. This was not least because the war remained very much in the balance.

In Paris, the muffled sounds of battle carried to the outskirts of the city when the wind was in the right direction giving the inhabitants a double reason to shiver. It was not very different for the citizens of Warsaw who debated secretly who they hoped might win. Belgrade was still on the front line though every person there loudly declared their complete partisanship. Amiens; Nancy; Mulhouse; Kielce; and Przemysl were only the largest other places which literally had a front line within a day's walk at most.

### The Western Front



Figure 1: The Germans push south, 2nd Battle of the Marne, 6 - 9 December 1914.

Falkenhayn had now definitively cancelled Von Kluck's 1<sup>st</sup> Army Offensive, but the Marne Battle started up again as the Germans kept the French under pressure close to Paris. This made it impossible for the French to do any long term planning for the war. Nerves continued to be frayed at Joffre's headquarters and military-civilian relations remained very poor in France at least in respect to strategic direction. A new French 7<sup>th</sup> Army was being formed in the west of Paris. At least the French had learned the lessons of 1870 and were creating new Armies before rather than after the loss of Paris.

None of this helped on 7 December when the Germans, led once again by the excellent Saxon Divisions, pushed aside the left wing of Foch's 9<sup>th</sup> Army and advanced across the eastern margins of the Ile-de-France (5-3.1118) threatening to reach Provins. Once again, the French infantry had performed poorly in combats fought in the open countryside.

Joffre and Foch had a stand up row over this episode which threatened the communications between the French Armies in the East and those around Paris. Joffre wanted to know why Foch's forces were not entrenched and even questioned the decision of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army to remove its Headquarters west of the Seine. Foch instantly resigned in a white hot fury. Before he left, Foch demanded to know why the Armies around Paris were not counterattacking. It was very unedifying, it was becoming very obvious that a completely fresh approach was needed in the higher ranks of the French Army. Murmurs against Joffre were becoming more widespread and asking, had he failed?

### The Eastern Front



Figure 2: The Kovess Army in the Carpathians, 6 - 9 December 1914.

The German 8<sup>th</sup> Army remained locked in combats in the marshes between the Narew and the Prussian border. Between 6 – 7 December, the German 2<sup>nd</sup> and Russian 28<sup>th</sup> Divisions sparred around Demby (4-5.2113) but the Russians were able to hold their ground, soft though it was.

Elsewhere the whole Eastern Front was notably quiet, though in the Carpathians General Kovess continued his long search for the ultimate extension of the Russian line.

## Serbia

This front remained static as both sides recovered from the recent struggles on the Zlatibor ridges. The Serbian lines covering the Upper Western Morava region were quite thin but the Austrians had no easy way of bringing fresh forces forwards through the treacherous terrain unless they had been trained for mountain warfare.

## The Near East

The 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division was moved by rail from Suez to Port Siad.

In Mesopotamia, the Indian Imperial Brigade reached Ali Gharbi on 9 December. Interrogation of travellers yielded the intelligence that there was a Turkish Regiment at Kut digging in.

The Caucasian front was becoming snowbound. The two sides kept apart in the Kars and Aras Valleys where most of the recent fighting had taken place. Further east, the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Frontier Guards Regiment had crossed the mountains from Bayezit to the shores of Lake Van and was undertaking a reconnaissance in force. They found the whole region undefended and the Armenian population thought the arrival of the Russians meant that they would be liberated from Turkish rule. Alas, a single Russian regiment meant no such thing.

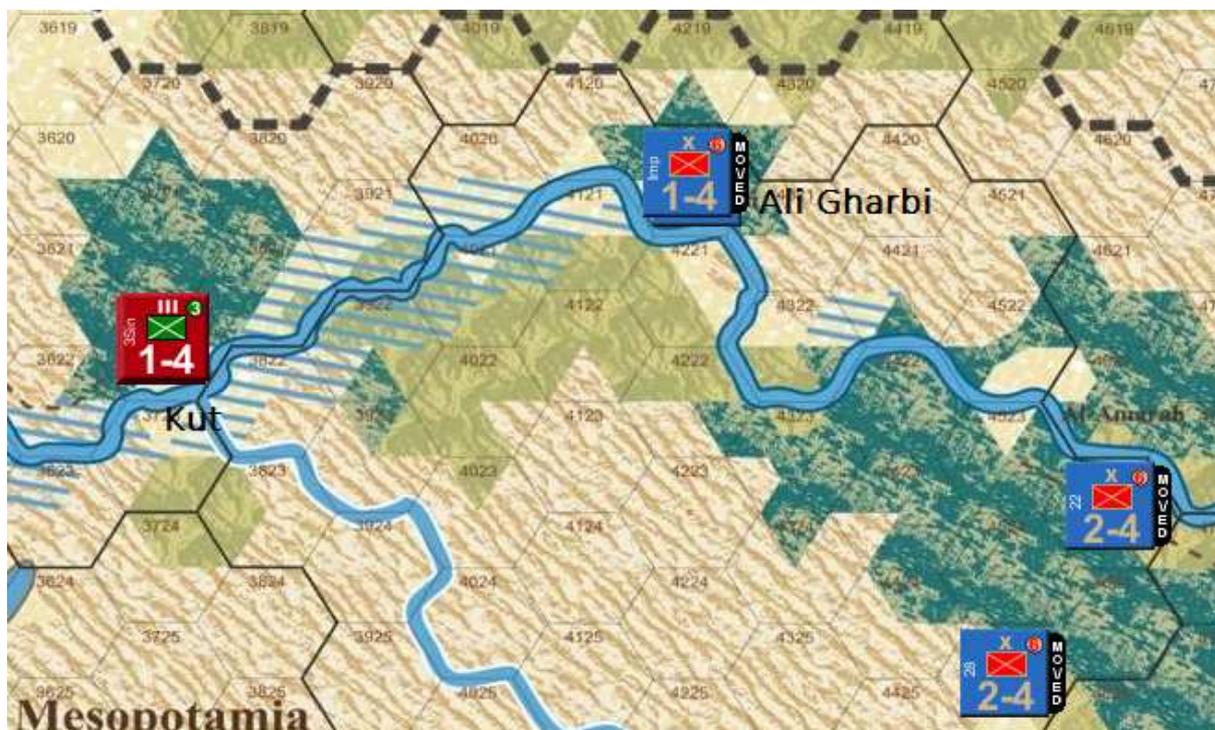


Figure 3: The Indian Imperial Brigade occupies Ali Gharbi, 9 December 1914.

## December 1914 DM Situation

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	5	4						10	19	524	Good
Austria-Hungary	4	-						6	10	220	Good
Ottoman	1	-						NA	1	10	Good – *An-Nasariyah lost.
Central Powers	10	4						16	30	754	
France	-	7						-	7	527	Good
Great Britain	-	-						-	-	48	Good
Russia	8	1						NA	9	245	Good
Belgium	-	-						NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	(1)	-						NA	(1)	(12)	NA
Entente	8	8						-	16	820	

### Player Notes

CP: *East: I take a very moderate approach to operations I the east as the weather turns. I make a single attack in the marshes in the full knowledge that I cannot force a retreat but to maintain some attrition against the Russians. This turn was more about strengthening the line.*

*Galiccia: No attacks on this front. I am using the winter to reorganise the AH armies and manoeuvre. It is also taking time for my supplies to reach the front.*

- *Serbia: The difficulty with penetrating into Serbia is that it starts to thin the line and pulls me in deeper but in insufficient strength to continue to attack. This is my current situation – penetration but with no strength in depth.*
- *West: I am still able to concentrate forces in locations where I am able to achieve an effect, and this turn is no different. I concentrate six strong divisions SE of Meaux and attack the French where they have not yet dug in. He is massing in the un-entrenched locations but cannot defend everywhere, so I pick a weak point in his line and strike to very satisfactory effect. My intelligence informs that his artillery that was in the Verdun region has withdrawn beyond an ability to rapidly re-deploy into Verdun, so I use up some precious supply in enabling an artillery “raid” on Verdun to further dent its defences. This once proud fortification now stands largely in ruin.*
- *Palestine: No change.*
- *Caucasus: I consolidate in and around Sarikamis. Attacking in the mountains, in winter, without supply – would be pure folly. It will take some time to return supply to Turkey.*
- *Mesopotamia: No change.*

**AP:** *It is never a good turn when the main enemy attack delivers a 6/1 die split. It is still very difficult for me to handle a stack of German 8-5s.*

*I consider my difficulties on the Western Front are due to the very long front which makes it much harder to defend than would be the case with a more historical front. I comfort myself by thinking that this will work in my favour should I ever get the initiative there. Secondly, with the supply stockpile rule looming at the beginning of 1915, I at least am not likely to be forced to initiate a premature offensive.*

*I would like to make more attacks with the Russians but the burden of defending a long front also is very acute there. I am slowly advancing to the point where I have some strongpoints which it is unlikely the Central Powers could take easily. The difficulty is I cannot avoid having several locations where I have to retreat if I take one or two losses.*

*Possibly I will be accused of not sufficiently trying to wrest the initiative back, but it is hard when your supplies will run out after one decent attack.*

*Through most of the game you cannot build trenches behind the front lines. It is allowed until April 1915. I am starting to wonder if I am missing a trick and I should start doing this sort of thing both in the west and the east.*