

## **Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game**

### **GT37: 6 – 9 January 1915 (January 2)**

#### **General Situation**

At a conference held at Pless in Silesia, the military leaders of Germany and Austria-Hungary reviewed the situation. A Turkish delegation was delayed arriving thanks to the difficulties of their travelling by sea or by land. This made little difference as for now the campaigns in the Near East were of no great importance to the European Powers.

Falkenhayn chaired the meeting. He had brought with him senior civil servants who had knowledge of agriculture and food distribution. They enumerated various shortages which were already starting to be noticed and the message they gave was that these problems would get progressively worse if the war could not be brought to an end. Falkenhayn impressed on everyone present that time was against them and they must seek decisive successes over one or more of their enemies as quickly as possible. That was only possible if they took offensive action. He invited submissions on where and when such attacks could be made using the new forces which Germany would have available in the first half of the year.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff jointly argued that the main attack should be in the East. The Russian Army was fragile they claimed and they were already attacking it. If their efforts could be intensified they would drive the Russians completely out of Poland. Conrad too supported this argument and stated that this would also surely help the food crisis before it got too serious. He pointed out that Vienna was being fed with poor quality bread because of the loss of the vast farm lands of Galicia. Unkindly an under-secretary of the German Agriculture Ministry suggested that if the Austrians wanted better bread they ought to ask the government in Hungary to release more of their stocks.

The Pless Conference was not decisive. Falkenhayn was canvassing the views of the commanders on the Eastern Front but his own freedom of action was maintained. His worry expressed in the concluding session was to ask what would really be gained by a victory over Russia. Russia could retreat its forces deep into their country and it might be 1812 all over again. He also questioned whether Russia would provide the food that the Central Powers' needed. Eastern Poland, White Russia and the Baltic States were heavily forested and with extensive marshes. How much agricultural surplus would there be, he asked, in the circumstances of a military occupation?

#### **The Eastern Front**

The German 8<sup>th</sup> Army operations continued in Masuria. On 6 – 7 January, the German 76<sup>th</sup> and 77<sup>th</sup> Reserve Divisions fought across the frozen landscape between Nikolaken and Arys (4-5.2110). They struggled with a Russian Opolchenie Brigade (10<sup>th</sup>) which proved exceedingly firm in defending its positions sheltered by forest and rivers. The outcome was inevitable as the Russians were badly outnumbered but the defence of Arys bought time for the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Armies to start to seal their line in Masuria. Once again the mobility of the Russian cavalry was a capability which the Russians made best advantage of.



**Figure 1: Austro-Hungarian Reserves massing in Southern Poland, 6 - 9 January 1915.**

The rest of the front was quiet. The Austro-Hungarians had concentrated three siege artillery batteries in the Upper Wisloka valley. However, although the Russian South West Front had some intelligence of Austrian preparations in this sector it was hard to gauge where the Central Powers would make their next move. The front was so long that there were inevitably weak points and alarms and alerts frequently preoccupied the Russian front line troops.

### **Serbia**

It had been more than a month since there had been any serious fighting on this front. The Austrian 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Armies were short of ammunition and it did not appear that they were currently a priority of the Austrian High Command.

### **The Near East**

Both the Turks and the British (or mainly the Indians) continued to march additional forces towards Kut. The front lines outside the town were some distance apart and fighting was avoided for the most part. At most there were encounters of patrols where the two sides exerted overlapping zones of control.



Figure 2: Turkish and British forces building up in and around Kut, 6 -9 January 1915.

The retreat of the Turkish 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in the Caucasus had now been progressing for two weeks. By 9 January, the Russians had advanced 60 kilometres beyond the border on the direct road to Erzurum. Further east, in the Murat Valley and east of Lake Van they had gone further, over 100 kilometres.

### The Western Front

The Germans continued to dig in in France. In early January, they began constructing a deep reserve line along the north bank of the Marne. When pilots reported this to Joffre, on 8 January, he was impressed at the labour being expended. It raised a question as to whether the Germans might retire to stronger positions, perhaps before the French were able to launch their “Spring Offensive”.

The Spring Offensive was on everybody’s lips both Germans and French soldiers assumed that the current pause in operations would end with a general offensive that might decide the war. What nobody could agree on was when and where exactly this next great action would occur. It was not even known if the next attack would be French or German. The decisions which would determine how these questions would be answered had hardly been made. There was a certain amount of reorganisation and recombination of depleted units in course. Supplies needed to be stockpiled and new drafts of men trained. All this required some time and the winter lull reflected this.



Figure 3: The Germans increasing the depth of their defences on the Marne, early January 1915.

## January 1915 DM Situation

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-	1						9	10	584	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-						5	5	234	Good
Ottoman	-	-						NA	-	10	Good
Central Powers	-	1						14	15	828	
France	-	-						-	-	552	Good
Great Britain	-	-						-	-	62	Good
Russia	2	1						NA	3	276	Good
Belgium	-	-						NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	-	-						NA	-	(12)	NA
Entente	2	1						-	3	890	

### Player Notes

- CP: East: *I succeeded in forcing his cavalry screen along the river SE of the Schimonken forts to withdraw, affording me a cheaply won bridgehead and the isolation of his entrenched troops SE of Nikolaken. In desperation this brigade attacked the forts and was wiped out, but it saved him from losing the brigade to encirclement. This turn I start to assimilate supply and manoeuvre the freshly arrived reinforcing units, with one pincer attack being launched out of Nikolaken and the fort immediately north to clear the Russian trenches in the wooded territory between the lakes. This is a good position for him, but weakly held.*
- Galicia: *Nothing significant. I continue moving supplies and RPLs to the front, with elements on the borders with Italy starting to shake out.*
- Serbia: *Nothing of note.*
- West: *All quiet again. I start the construction of a depth line of trenches.*
- Caucasus: *Turks continue to converge on Erzerum and Van.*
- Mesopotamia: *No change.*
- Palestine: *Nothing of note.*

AP: *My panic over the situation in Masuria proved to be overblown. The Germans could still make progress here but the chance of making a rapid breakthrough was perhaps never there.*

*It might seem that there is little going on. It is true there are few combats but there are a lot of lateral movements behind the lines and there is a constant requirement to monitor and adjust front line strengths and balance the supply requirements of the different armies.*

*At this stage of the game, the Entente is not going to complain if the pace of events slows. I am of course planning offensive actions but I cannot disclose when and where.*

*It is one of the impressive features about DWK that the tempo of the action is so variable (this is partly because there are so many turns as it makes the variation possible).*

### Food Deficits

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	12	1	NA	-	<b>13</b>	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Nov 14	9	5	NA	-	<b>14</b>	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Dec 14	10	6	NA	-	<b>16</b>	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Jan 15	9	5	NA	-	<b>14</b>	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-

### Calculation of Food Deficit – January 1915

Germany			Austria		
Needs	83	PCs	Needs	29	PCs
Less			Less	-4 = 25	Galician PCs
Food	67	Germany	Food	24	Austria
Less	-2 = 65	Prussia	Less	-7 = 17	Galicia
Plus	4	Romania	Plus	2	Hungary
Plus	1	Poland	Plus	1	Serbia
Plus	3	Hungary			
Plus	1	France			
	74	Total Food		20	Total Food
Deficit	<b>9</b>			<b>5</b>	