

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

**GT42: 28 – 31 January 1915 (January 7)**

### **General Situation**

The Entente was still far from being a coordinated alliance. No joint plans had been made between the Russians and the French. Diplomatic and irregular military liaison had secured statements of general intention to resume offensive operations against Germany, Austria and Turkey. It was all very vague.

Only the French President had offered anything as concrete as a date, when to the Russian Ambassador in Paris, referring to Joffre, he said, "We gave him an Army, we expect him to use it...by April certainly." Similar enquiries in London had resulted in Kitchener telling a Russian military mission that the British would not be ready to attack in strength until 1916, but they might be properly equipped to attempt some minor operations by May. As would be seen, misleading allies was just as important as duping the enemy.

When these words got back to St Petersburg and Siedlice (where the Grand-Duke was stationed) they caused great disquiet. The Western Powers did not seem to appreciate that the war had not stopped and the Russians had the Germans and Austrians at their throats without regard to the season. The problem for the Russians was that whenever they were asked when they would they begin a major offensive they also had to make empty promises. The Russian Stavka was making great efforts to stockpile munitions, but Russian industry was poorly equipped to keep up with the demand for shells. The Russian Army would never have enough so long as the fighting on their front used up the stocks almost as fast as the shells were produced.

### **The Eastern Front**

Despite the victories which the Germans had won around Radom, the Russians often fought well against the Central Powers during this period of the war. This was especially the case when it is remembered that they often had to fight without adequate artillery support.

Between 28 – 29 January, the Russians had two defensive successes in south west Poland. Conrad had shifted his reserves from his 2<sup>nd</sup> Army which had failed at Fryszak (5-5.2610), two weeks previously, and moved them to support an attack by the Austrian 1<sup>st</sup> Army at Łoniew and Koprznica (5-5.2407) on the north bank of the Vistula. Once again, the Austrian infantry was able to make little impression on the Russian trenches and, once again, Russian disdain for the counterattack and lack of artillery meant the Austrians were not punished for all their mistakes. Conrad just seemed unable to find the offensive spirit, essential in all military success, within the forces he had at his disposal.

However, it was not only the Austrians who found the Russians resolute. The German 9<sup>th</sup> Army tried to exploit their victory at Radom by moving south east, with the Vistula as a distant objective. This would, Ludendorff reasoned, put all the Russians south of the Itzanka River in some danger and might provoke a general withdrawal. The Russian 9th Army blocked this move with a collection of survivors of the retreat from Radom supported by Cossacks. This unlikely and far from numerous group somehow stopped four excellent German Divisions from reaching their initial objectives at Tczów (5-5.2304). Close study of this action would show that the Germans were also exhausting

their supplies and were some 160 kilometres beyond their main railheads and, of course, it was mid-winter. This was how General Hoffmann explained it to Ludendorff afterwards.

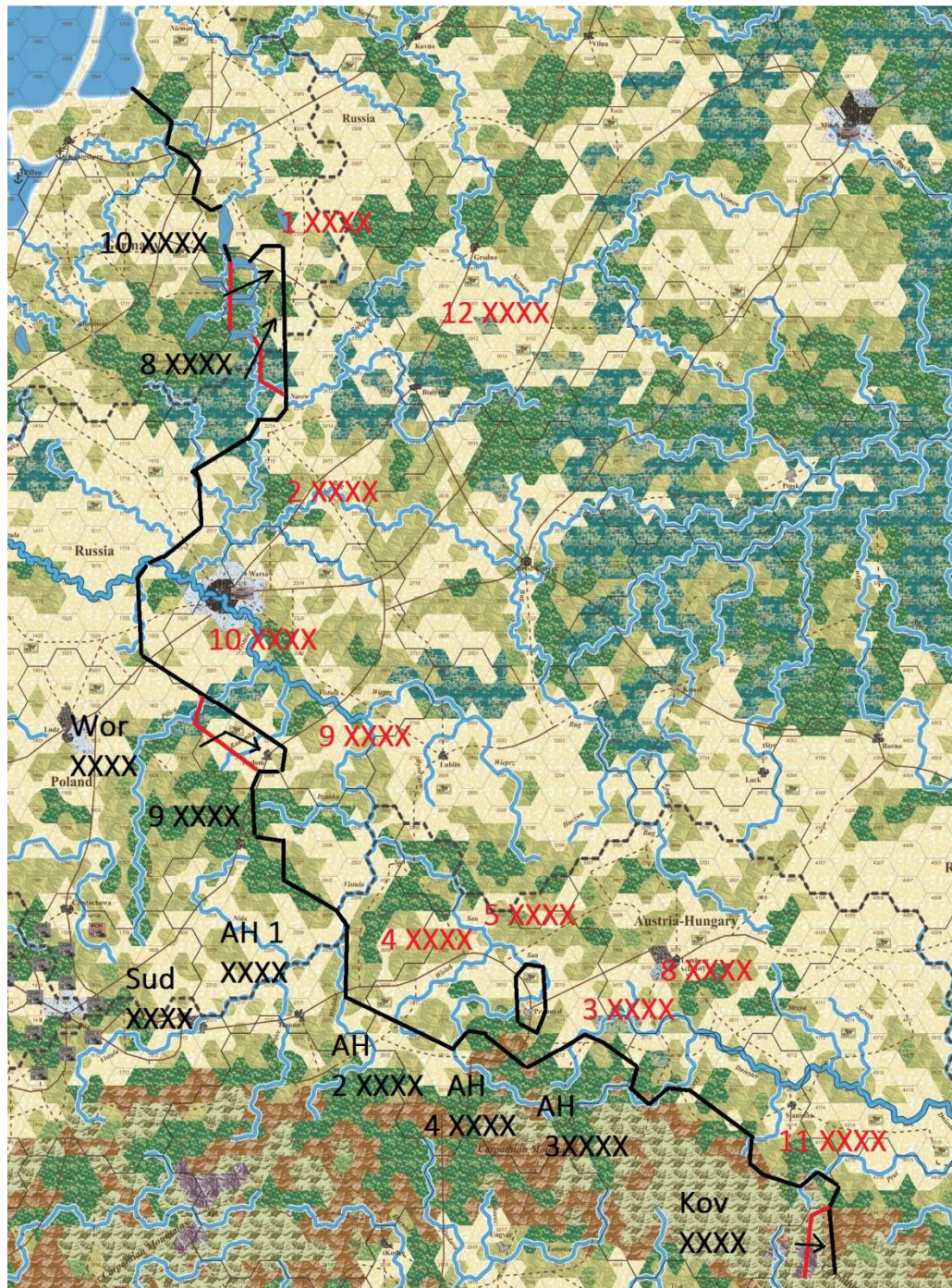


Figure 1: Central Powers Territorial Gains in Masuria and Poland in January 1915.

The Germans had more success in Masuria where their 8<sup>th</sup> Army secured Widminnen (4-5.2209) on 29 January after a battle which had lasted a week. The final attack was led by the Württemberg 27<sup>th</sup> Division. Even so, the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Army had acquitted itself well in this campaign up to the end of January. The Germans had in some places advanced 40 kilometres since the beginning of the year but the Russians had not lost cohesion, frequently thanks to the timely intervention of their cavalry which rushed to every threatened spot.

The Grand-Duke thanked Rennenkampf for his useful defensive operations, by announcing that a new formation, the 12<sup>th</sup> Army, would take over the Masurian front as soon as arrangements could be completed. This would allow the 1<sup>st</sup> Army to concentrate on the sector further north between Angerburg (4-5.2007) and the sea. This area had been quiet since September, but was thought to be a possible zone for future German operations.

## Serbia

The long winter watch continued on the Sava and Kolubara rivers and from many a Balkan hill. The observers had few incidents to report.

## The Near East

On 30 January, General Hamilton embarked an advanced headquarters of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Port Said with orders to establish a base on the island of Lemnos. As Hamilton left Egypt, he was handed cables which confirmed that additional British forces were being sent to the Near East, including the 28<sup>th</sup> Division and the Royal Marine Brigade.

Meanwhile in Iraq, Townsend directed the Mesopotamian Corps in a second attempt to turn the Turkish flank at Kut. This led to another fight on the south bank of the river opposite the town where the British hoped to reach the outlying settlement at Faisaliya (7-9.3723). A reconnaissance on 30 January confirmed that the Turks were not entrenched and the Indian brigades advanced the following day having been told the enemy would run at the first opportunity. Sadly for the infantry involved, the Turks had well concealed machine guns and the 31st Indian Brigade was caught in the cross fire while crossing a watercourse. The British plan had depended on the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade coming in from the desert flank but this force was itself too weak and got delayed by broken ground. When the reports of the action came back, Townsend was forced to stop the attack and order everyone back.



Figure 2: Townsend's second attempt to bypass Kut at Faisaliya, 30 - 31 January 1915.

In the Caucasus, the Turks were now settling in to their new positions and the Russians were struggling to find warm billets in the country that the Ottomans had abandoned. The scenery was

magnificent but hungry, tired, and cold soldiers cared little for that. Settlements were few and far between and this was not a place to camp in the open ground. As for digging trenches, the frozen terrain was as hard as iron and, though commanders on both sides expected to see proper field defences prepared, it was not so certain that anything effective could be built in these conditions.

### The Western Front



**Figure 3: The Western Front in January 1915. The French re-occupied Montmiral and the Germans were building the reserve Falkenhayn Line.**

The month of January concluded having seen no serious fighting on the Western Front. The German reserve line trenches, which had been dubbed the Falkenhayn Line, were attaining greater definition. Falkenhayn himself regarded it as a means to give the German defences in the West greater flexibility when the Entente started to attack.

German intelligence as yet could give little sure information about Allied intentions. French and British newspapers were prevented from giving any hint of the likely timing and place of the next major offensive. It was obvious that the French would have used this lull to recover some strength

and reposition forces. Sometimes extra strength could be detected in the front lines and conjectures could be made about what reserves lay behind the front.

On the front lines, the two sides had grown accustomed to the proximity of each other and were getting more acquainted with the conditions of trench warfare. It was universally asserted that this was just a temporary phase of the war and in the spring there would be a return to the mobile warfare of the summer and autumn of 1914.

### January 1915 DM Situation

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [SM %]	Morale
Germany	-	1	2	5	-	1	6	9	24	598 [37.4]	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	5	7	236 [42.9]	Good
Ottoman	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	NA	1	11 [3.1]	Good
Central Powers	-	1	3	6	-	1	7	14	32	844	
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	552 [61.3]	Good
Great Britain	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	64 [5.0]	Good
Russia	2	1	1	10	-	5*	8	NA	27	300 [50.0]	Good - *Radom lost
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	(12)	NA
Entente	2	1	2	10	-	5	9	-	28	916	

Shaken Morale percentages are shown. Russian morale is deteriorating fastest during this month.

### Player Notes

CP:

- *East: Radom fell last turn. There is no real benefit to capturing Russian cities, but there is little option if I am to try and advance; although I am nearly on the edge of sustainable distance from friendly railheads in Poland. I can push a little further and, if successful, leave his trench line hanging on an open flank south of Radom, which could compel him to withdraw in this sector or risk being rolled up. I also launch a strike out of Masuria. At best, it has a 50% chance of driving him backwards, but I need to start forcing the issue in this area.*
- *Galicia: AH 1<sup>st</sup> Army launches an attack along the Vistula. It will not force him from his trenches, but will cause casualties.*
- *Serbia: Quiet.*
- *West: Quiet. I reorganise the divisions in depth to leave stay-behind brigades to detail trench digging work parties.*

- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*

*AP: I am satisfied to have concluded a month on the Western Front in which the French and British Armies have been given a complete rest. The losses which the major powers suffered in 1914 are completely unsustainable and the monthly average DM of many of them, including France, needs to be moderated. I also need a decent supply stockpile before I make a major effort.*

*That has left the Russians facing a greater task as they have had to endure the full attention of the CP. The outcome of that has not yet been so bad. At the beginning of the month I feared a German breakthrough in Masuria and it has not yet happened though I remain under some pressure there and in Poland. The Austrians made two attacks and (with dire die rolls on both sides) nothing much happened. I may still be forced back in stages but something stronger and more sustained will be needed before I give up in the East. I am very impressed at how the Russian cavalry can swarm to help seal German penetrations so long as there are a few surviving infantry to help out too. They have their limitations but I am putting them in where every strength point matters.*

*My attack in Iraq was an attempt to gain something for the campaign to date. I expect I will have to start withdrawing next turn as the force ratios are turning against me. I cannot have any secrecy about my threat to the Turkish Straights. It is not possible to have a surprise invasion in this game as there are so many necessary preparatory steps and your opponent would have to be blind not to see it coming.*

### **Monthly DM (cumulative)**

[There are some arithmetical errors in this table. They are not large. It is tough not to make small mistakes sometimes].

Date	Germany	AH	Ottoman	CP
Aug 1914	147	69	-	216
Sept 1914	130 (277)	101 (170)	-	231 (457)
Oct 1914	132 (413)	11 (179)	-	143 (590)
Nov 1914	92 (505)	31 (210)	10	132 (724)
Dec 1914	69 (574)	19 (229)	1 (11)	89 (813)
Jan 1915	24(598)	7 (236)	-(11)	31 (844)

Date	France	Britain	Russia	[Belgium]*	[Serbia]*	Entente
Aug 1914	171	7	56	70	3	234
Sept 1914	212 (383)	28 (35)	89 (147)	4 (74)	5 (8)	329 (563)
Oct 1914	94 (477)	10 (45)	38 (185)	16 (90)	1 (9)	142 (707)
Nov 1914	43 (520)	3 (48)	51 (236)	5 (95)	2 (11)	94 (804)
Dec 1914	32 (552)	14 (62)	37 (273)	-(95)	1 (12)	83 (887)
Jan 1914	-(552)	1 (63)	27 (300)	- (95)	- (12)	28 (916)

\*Belgian and Serbia do not suffer DM so these totals are for information, they do not count for anything.