

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

### **GT43: 1 – 4 February 1915 (February 1)**

#### **General Situation**

By a coincidence discovered by later historians, both Joffre and Falkenhayn received a report from their staff on the identical subject of the future of fortification during the first week of February.

The French report had been commissioned to justify the final abandonment of the Verdun fortifications and it rightly indicated that the fortress would have little further impact on the war in the West. Despite this, Joffre still saw some utility in the fortresses remaining in the eastern sectors of the front which were close to the front line between St Mihiel and Nancy and at Épinal. The British also had asked the French to keep in commission the minor forts defending the Channel Ports which they saw guaranteeing the security of places of debarkment and for storage of supply. Joffre thought this was unnecessary, but did not want to have an argument with an ally on this issue. The French report also noted that the Russians still seemed to regard their fortresses with favour even though the only one which had been attacked at Roshan had collapsed quickly due to structural defects. The great fortress of Novogeorgevsk protecting Warsaw was seen as a lynchpin of the Russian defence and Lomsha and Ostrolenka had helped stop the German advance across the Narew in December.

The German report reached similar conclusions. There was some satisfaction in the fortified positions in Masuria which had helped frustrate the early Russian attacks in East Prussia and had been the launching place of the German counter offensive more recently. However, since it was expected that future campaigns would be on enemy soil, there was little prospect that the Germans would be much concerned with defending any of their established fortresses. In response to the report, Falkenhayn asked for further details of those remaining German fortresses in the East which might be decommissioned, he suggested, after the fall of Warsaw.

Although, there was little discussion in the German study of fortresses in Austro-Hungary and Turkey, there was passing reference to the fact that parts of the Italian frontier had been fortified by Austria and it was expected these would help if Italy finally broke neutrality. The situation at Przemyśl was also noted, but it was apparent that the German General Staff had deemed it a lost cause. The Turks were expected to make a good showing in defending Erzerum, even though it was recognised that the fortifications there only faced in one direction and might be outflanked if the Russians could gain any ascendancy in the mountains to the north and south of the city.

#### **The Eastern Front**

A Polish news agency announced the surrender of Przemyśl on 1 February 1915. The report was in error, but before this was corrected Conrad had written to the Emperor Franz-Josef and Archduke Ferdinand explaining that he had long since written off the great Galician fortress and its loss would not prejudice the campaigns planned for 1915.

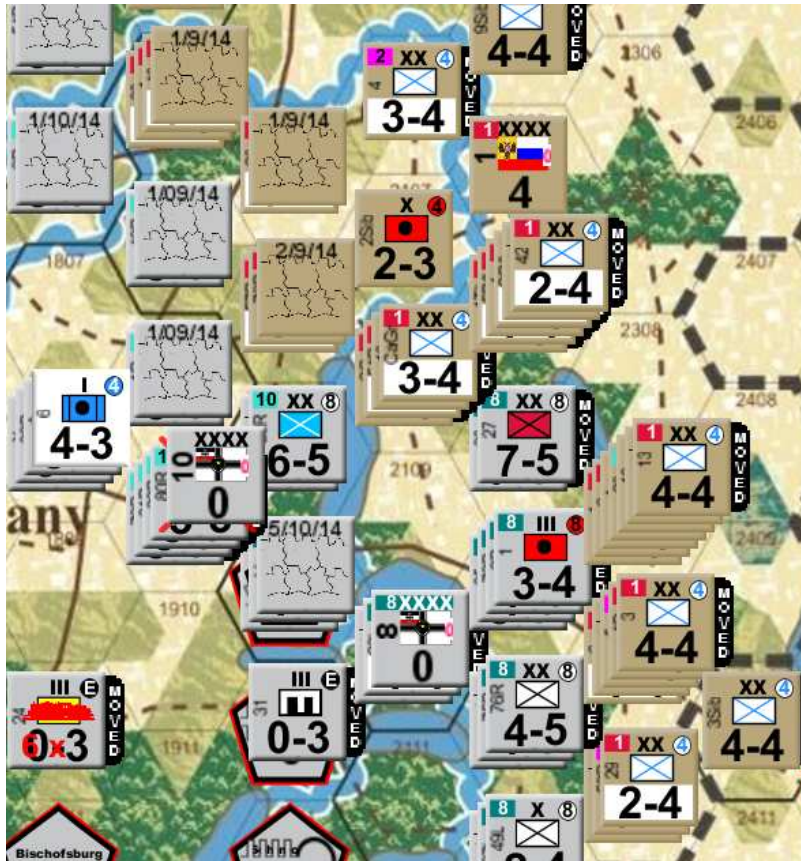


Figure 1: The German 8th Army moves forward to the Benkenheimsee, 1 - 2 February 1915.

On the Eastern Front, Conrad's plans depended more and more on the Germans throwing their full weight against the Russians. That this was the now the likely intention of Falkenhayn was demonstrated by the further reinforcement of the German 10<sup>th</sup> Army in East Prussia. This formation had not yet been committed to action but it had a considerable artillery allocation and it was well placed to support the operations of the German 8<sup>th</sup> Army which continued east of Lötzen when the 27<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Divisions cooperated to secure the whole area up to the Benkenheimsee (4-5.2208).

### The Near East

General Hamilton and his staff arrived at Lemnos on 4 February and spent their first afternoon on the island watching the first ships unload military supplies.

Townsend in Iraq did not have such a leisurely schedule. In fact, he had ordered his force to retreat to Ali Gharbi and broke contact with the Turks around Kut on 3 February.

There was little action in the Caucasus. The Russians considered they had little choice but to await the spring and the arrival of fresh reinforcements. Only a major effort had any chance of breaching the Turkish defences in front of Rize, Erzerum, Mus and Bitlis.

### Serbia

At the beginning of February there was a quickening of activity on the Balkan front. The first place this was noticed was on the railways for extra trains were scheduled to carry replacement troops for the Austro-Hungarian 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Armies. This seemed to presage a new Austrian offensive in the

near future. To the ordinary soldiers it was not clear where the main effort might be. The 6<sup>th</sup> Army had units training in the Drina Valley for operations in rough terrain but the more experienced Croat Mountain infantry was not so impressed with the ability of the Hungarians to cope with exercises in the hills.



Figure 2: Austro-Hungarian troops training behind the Drina and Kolubara fronts, early February 1915.

### The Western Front

On 2 February, the German 2<sup>nd</sup> Army pulled back from Meaux and Jouarre (5-3.1117) on the south bank of the Marne and withdrew into trenches on the north side of the river. The new positions had been prepared with good lines of sight across the river crossings. Thus the Germans, in their own time, were choosing the best of the ground to defend in the West.

Joffre was made aware of these developments immediately. However, as at Montmiral (5-3.1317) the previous month, the French did not rush to occupy the ground the Germans had abandoned. While patrols probed forwards to assess the situation, careful preparations were made for a deliberate advance by the French 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Armies which for the time being remained static. The Germans still had a significant bridgehead on the south side of the river between Chateau Thierry (5-3.1216) and Dormans (5-3.1316) from where they might easily catch the flanks of any unwary Frenchmen moving forward.



Figure 3: The Germans pull back behind the Marne from Meaux, 2 February 1915.

### February 1915 DM Summary

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	2							15	17	615	Good
Austria-Hungary	-							-	-	236	Good
Ottoman	-							NA	-	11	Good
Central Powers	2							15	17	861	
France	-							-		552	Good
Great Britain	-							-		64	Good
Russia	2							-		302	Good
Belgium	-							NA		(95)	NA
Serbia	-							NA		(12)	NA
Entente	2							-		916	

### Player Notes

CP: The greatest impact at the start of Feb will be the looming surrender of Przemysl; impacting AH DM by 60 when it happens. Capturing Radom has also increased the feeding requirement of captured cities, so the German food deficit increases by one. Germany also exports food to Austria to offset its own deficit, which means food deficit will be 15 DM for Germany. I have to now protect AH's more fragile national will. German resources are otherwise still healthy and Feb production comprises 1 x 7-5 Inf, 1 x 6-5 Mtn, 3 x 6-5 Inf, 3 x 5-5 Inf (based on agreed house rule of 1/3 of the reorg unit types can be Mtn with only 1 x

Mtn unit from this reorg may go into production each month). AH produces another 20 RPLs and sends off 6 weapon points to TU, which will arrive in March. TU produces its now standard 2 RPL.

- *East: I attack north out of Masuria to try and isolate his trenches hinged on the lakes and turn his flank. I am pouring reserves and supply eastwards.*
- *Galicia: There is no opportunity for any effective attack for AH along this front and not the supply to do it. I spend the freezing weather of Feb moving troops into depth and out of the trenches and moving supply and replacements to the various fronts.*
- *Serbia: Quiet.*
- *West: Quiet. I continue to reorganise the divisions to re-bolster front lines whilst leaving stay-behind brigades to continue developing fallback trenches. I lack the strength for any decisive attack in the west at this stage, so need to focus some effort on where I can.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: I start to build up around Kut after the successful repulse of his attack in that area at the end of Jan.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*

*AP: I maintain my patience on the Western Front. My preparations for an offensive are disguised in the sense I have tried to give little clue of the hex I most want to attack. This will mean that when I do attack the initial assault will not be at my maximum strength. I have also shown caution again in occupying the two hexes abandoned by the Germans. I am not going to go in until I can deal with his possible counterattacks. I would be happy if he returned to the abandoned hexes, which is not likely.*

*I have little comment on the action elsewhere. I am impressed by the growing strength of the Germans on the Eastern Front. I am pleased that they have been dragged away from France but worried at how quickly they might make the current Russian positions untenable. I am worried about the Baltic flank for the first time in a long while.*

*I cannot hold my positions in Iraq as they will be exposed to strong attacks in a turn or two.*

## **Production Totals**

### **Supply**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Ge</b>	<b>AH</b>	<b>Ot</b>	<b>Bul</b>	<b>CP</b>	<b>Fr</b>	<b>Br</b>	<b>Rus</b>	<b>Be</b>	<b>Se</b>	<b>It</b>	<b>Rom</b>	<b>Gr</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>Ent</b>
Oct 14	77	18	-	-	<b>95</b>	20	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	<b>58</b>
Nov 14	77	18	-	-	<b>95</b>	20	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	<b>58</b>
Dec 14	77	18	2	-	<b>97</b>	20	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	<b>58</b>
Jan 15	77	26	2	-	<b>105</b>	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	<b>78</b>
Feb 15	77	26	2	-	<b>105</b>	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	<b>78</b>

### Weapon Production (+drawdown on pre-war stockpiles)

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	42 +43	23	-	-	108	27 +70	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	217
Nov 14	42 +26	23	-	-	91	27 +70	50 +20	50	-	1	-	-	-	-	218
Dec 14	42 +7	23	2	-	74	28 +30	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	178
Jan 15	42	23	2	-	67	27	50 +20	50	-	1	-	-	-	-	148
Feb 15	42	23	2	-	67	27	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	147

### Manpower (Colonial)

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	69	36	NA	-	105	41 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	2	6	-	-	-	-	209
Nov 14	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Dec 14	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Jan 15	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Feb 15	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206

### 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	-
Feb 15	15	-	NA	-	<b>15</b>	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-

**Calculation of Food Deficit – December 1914**

<b>Germany</b>			<b>Austria</b>		
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	2	Hungary
			Plus	1	Serbia
Plus	3	Hungary	Plus	4	Romania
			Plus	1	France
	68	Total Food		25	Total Food
Deficit	<b>15</b>			-	