

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT46: 13 – 16 February 1915 (February 4)

General Situation

The opening of the Allied offensive in Picardy was confirmation that the hibernation of the war had been short lived. Activity was also revived in the Balkans and the Allied efforts to build up a base in the Aegean were accelerating.

These moves meant that the commitment of neutrals such as Italy and Bulgaria was ever more desired. The restarting of Austrian operations in Serbia was significant in that the Austrians very well knew the advantage that they would have if the Bulgarians fell on the back of the Serbians while they were engaged with the Austrians to their front. The same naturally applied on a bigger scale should Italy intervene while Austria's wars against Russia and Serbia were unresolved. For the time being negotiations with Italy and Bulgaria dragged on as each of these states was unwilling to show its hand too prematurely.

The Western Front



Figure 1: The climax of the 1st Picardy Offensive, the British attack, 15 - 16 February 1915.

Foch had been disappointed with the results of the initial attacks in the French offensive in Picardy. He was obliged to lessen the pressure on the German line for two days while fresh forces were brought to the front and also as he awaited the British who were preparing a major infantry attack on the section of the German line that trended north east. While the Allies were getting into position, the German 4th Division and Guards Cavalry Division arrived to reinforce the battered units which had survived the initial Allied bombardments and attacks.

On 15 February, the French 5th Army made another strong attack and the French 8th Army also tried once more to wrest Hill 08 10 from the Germans. For two days and nights the battle raged around this chalky hillock and at Vaux-en-Amiénois (5-3.0810), where the two French Armies hoped to meet. Soldiers who came back from that struggle (and there were few survivors) were caked in

white dust that made them unnervingly ghostly in appearance. While this awful hand to hand battle was going on, the British finally appeared in full strength. They made a great thrust led by the British I Corps down the main road between Beauval and La Vigogne (5-3.0810). They gained about 1200 metres at great cost on 15 February before being driven most of the way back by a counterattack by the German 4th Division and the Guards Cavalry the following day. As the German counterattack became more threatening, Smith-Dorrien ordered the Canadian Division to enter the battle for the first time.

On the sixth day of the Allied attacks, the maximum gain in ground was nowhere more than one kilometre.

The Eastern Front

The German 8th Army attacked again on 13 February and managed to move forward steadily over 15 kilometres until it reached the Angerapp River (4-5.2108) opposite Angerburg (which was still in Russian hands) the following day. The Russian Angerburg position was now bent back into a salient but it had cost the Germans to achieve this situation.



Figure 2: Kovess' Army resumes offensive operations, 13 - 14 February 1915.

Conrad had sent a good portion of the Austro-Hungarian reserves south towards Serbia. He realised that the Russians would soon detect some weakening of the pressure on their front. He therefore

encouraged General Kövess at the eastern end of the Austrian line to resume operations and threaten to break out of the mountains. Kövess chose to attack a section of the line defended by the Russian 3rd Rifle Division on 14 February near Deliatyn (5-5.4015). The description of the action in Kövess' memoirs states that the main Russian positions were dug in on the reverse slopes of confusing terrain. He had little expectation that this attack would result in more than the capture of a few positions of local significance and so it proved. Even so, a rare Russian report of the same attack shows that it was still a horrific battle for those involved. The commander of the Russian Rifle Division reported to a disinterested 11th Army that in that one day he had lost a third of his front line manpower. The commander of 11th Army complacently observed that the Tsar had a lot of Divisions and they were "not all bleating like mountain goats".

Serbia

The Austrian 5th Army had been inactive for nearly three months. On 14 February, it conducted an attack testing the Serbian defences between Stublin and Ub (6-5.1509). Although this was not a determined effort, it woke up the Serbian defenders in this sector and Putnik, himself, rapidly concluded that this was merely the beginning of a bigger campaign.

The Near East

A new problem was developing for the build-up of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force on Lemnos. Huge numbers of ships were stuck outside the port waiting to unload. The best efforts of the French engineers had not been able to completely eliminate the limitations of the port at Mudros. Hamilton was forced to completely reorganise his shipping staff in mid-February when their amateurish approach to prioritising vessels was exposed.

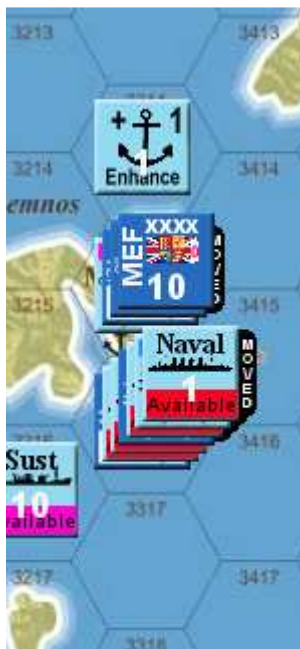


Figure 3: Allied ships queueing to unload at Mudros, mid-February 1915.

There was little notable activity throughout the Near East. The real interest in the war outside Europe at this time was focussed on East Africa and the Cameroons.

February 1915 DM Summary

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	2	5	5	10				15	37	635	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-	-	2				-	2	238	Good
Ottoman	-	-	-	-				NA	-	11	Good
Central Powers	2	5	5	12				15	39	884	
France	-	-	9	5				-	14	566	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	6				-	6	70	Good
Russia	2	2	-	5				-	9	309	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	-				NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	(1)				NA	(1)	(13)	NA
Entente	2	2	9	16				-	29	945	

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: The powerful new 10th Army launches a large scale attack to try and clear the shoulder of Russian 1st Army where the largest of the Masurian lakes feeds into the Pregel. If I can clear him from this position then I will succeed in flanking his northern trench systems and can start the process of clearing him from German soil. For the remainder of the front I continue to conduct small scale manoeuvre and regrouping.*
- *Galicia: Kovess springs back into action with a limited attack on the salient 40km south of Stanislau. It will not clear the trench, but it will start to cause casualties and he does not have much resilience in this area.*
- *Serbia: The 5th Army has finally built up sufficient strength and supply to start a clearance operation against the bridgehead on the west bank of the Kolubaru R.*
- *West: The combined French and British attack last turn eliminated the best part of a division on the north of the Somme and S of Arras. I am forced to start reinforcing the line here. There is no doubt the initiative on this front has shifted to the TE.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet; although I now have a strong force sitting around Kut. It is a stand-off in this theatre for now.*
- *Palestine: Quiet. Turkish intelligence has been made aware of a significant build-up of TE shipping and amphibious craft in the Aegean and the concentrating of Commonwealth troops. It is as well that the defences along the Dardanelles are in good order.*

AP: *The Germans managed to get 21 SP into the hex (5-3.0810) where I am attacking in France. It makes sense to keep attacking the same hex as repositioning would take at least a turn and there is*

no guarantee I could get better odds. In any event, this is the best place for cooperation between the French and the British and I planned a two turn attack in which the second turn would be reinforced. I managed 93 combat strength this turn up from 80 last turn, so the attack is stronger as well as the defence.

I am worried about the Austrian attack near Belgrade. It is not clear how he will conduct this offensive going forwards but low level attrition attacks will finish the Serbians sooner or later as I have no way of replacing my losses. Their chances of holding out until the Italians come in have been reduced if this continues.

It is also notable that the CP has weakened the Austrian front in Galicia for the sake of this effort in Serbia. This means that Russia may have to attack in order to get the Austrian's attention. That will not be easy so long as the Germans keep up their attacks in the East. It is only four more turns until spring. I will assess the situation more then.