

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT49: 25 – 28 February 1915 (February 7)

General Situation

The winter was coming to an end and across Europe spring flowers were emerging into a world in which the soil was being turned over by shells and gravediggers as frequently as by the plough.

The Great Powers had shown little inclination to moderate their activity according to the cycles of nature. They were constrained only by human limits. Where there had been a pause of operations during the winter this was primarily due to the need to await reinforcement and supply.

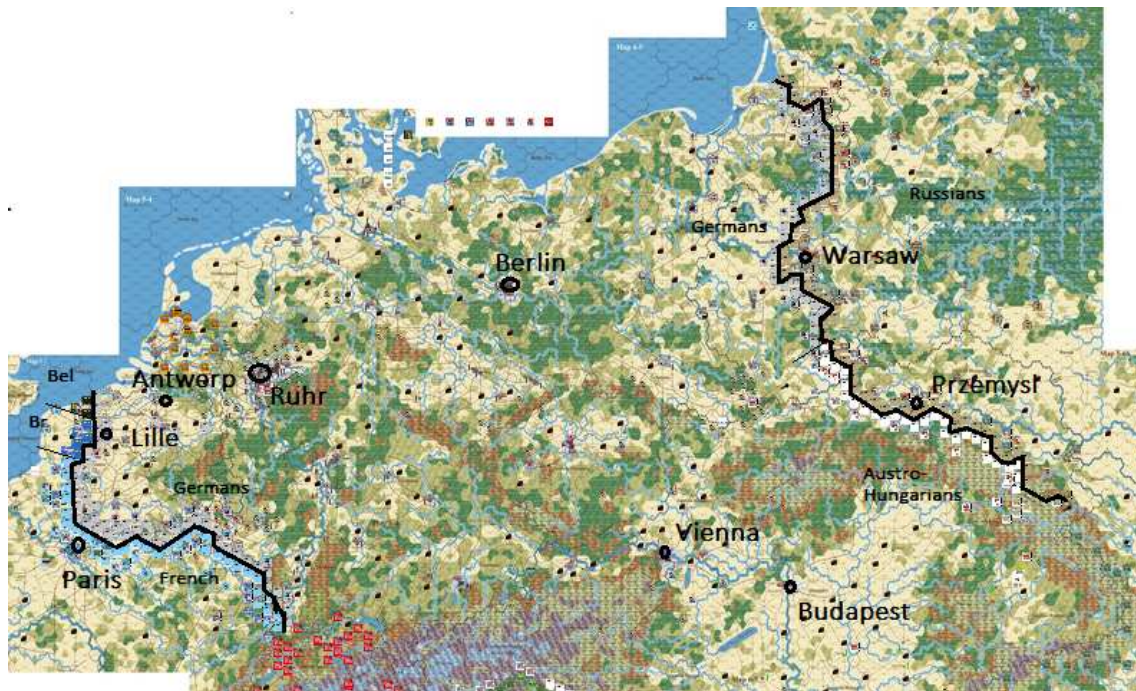


Figure 1: Relationship between the Western and Eastern Fronts, 28 February 1915.

The Eastern Front

The operations of the German 8th and 10th Armies continued in East Prussia in close cooperation. Between 25 – 26 February, they fought their way along the River Anger as far as Darkhemen (4-5.2107). Although the Germans were always going forward, the Russian 1st Army deployed strong forces to try and stop them. Darkhemen was only won back by the sacrifice of many German infantrymen. By the end of February, the Russian hold on Insterberg (4-5.2006) was looking in danger, but they would not be giving it up without a fight.

The Austrians were active in their sector. The tenacious Kovess kept up regular attacks on the Russians covering Deliatyn (5-5.4015). The front was also being extended further east towards the Romanian border during this period.

A joint Austro-German attack was made at the junction of their Armies near Raków (5-5.2307) on 26 February. The operation was planned by a notionally multi-national headquarters, the Sud Armee which was nevertheless run by the Germans with token Austrian officers. This was an attack made

for political as much as military reasons. It was a well-publicised raid that was highlighted to show the unity of the Central Powers.

The continuous activity of the Germans and Austrians on the Eastern Front could not conceal the drama of the progressive surrender of Przemyśl. By the end of February, the Austrian garrison had abandoned all their outer works and the city was its last bastion. Negotiations for a final capitulation were far advanced. On 28 February, the Austrian commandant agreed he would surrender the citadel on 3 March if not relieved before then. As there was no likelihood at all of any such rescue, everyone close to this scene knew the resistance of Przemyśl had reached its last days.

Serbia

The Serbian Army fell back in front of the Austrian 5th Army heading towards Nish. The organisation of the Serbian Armies had become confused. Many of the senior officers had found reason to head to the far south of the country on the pretext of reconnoitring a new line of defence around Skopje.

The Austrians followed at a rate of about 10 kilometres a day. However, the Serbians were not retreating everywhere. Along the Western Morava, the Serbians, who had fallen back from the Kolubara, were preparing to make a stand. Further west, the Montenegrins still held the positions they had occupied since the beginning of the war. The Austrian 6th Army had occupied the undefended town of Uzice (6-5.1412) on 25 February, but was afterwards blocked by the Serbians in the hills to the south.

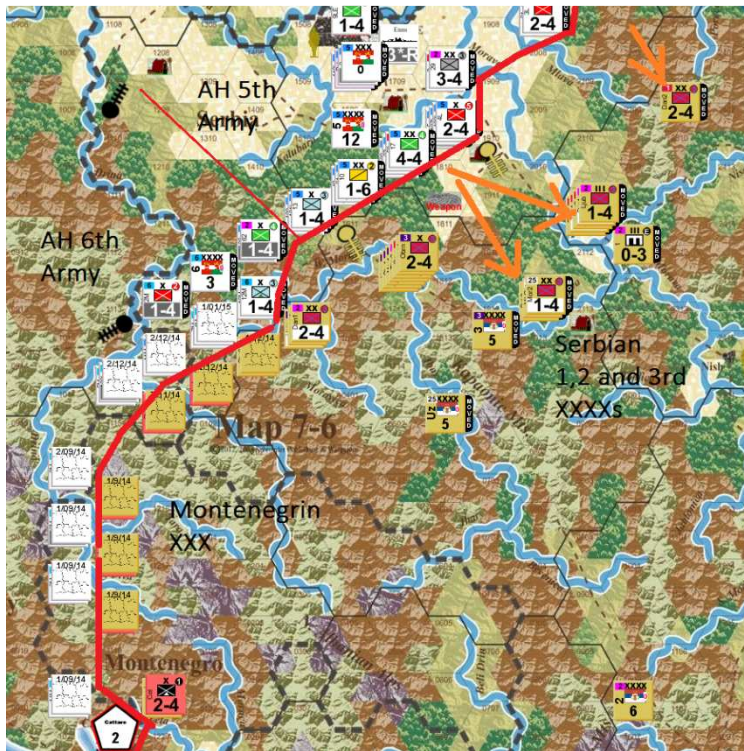


Figure 2: The Austrian advance in Serbia, 25 - 28 February 1915.

The Near East

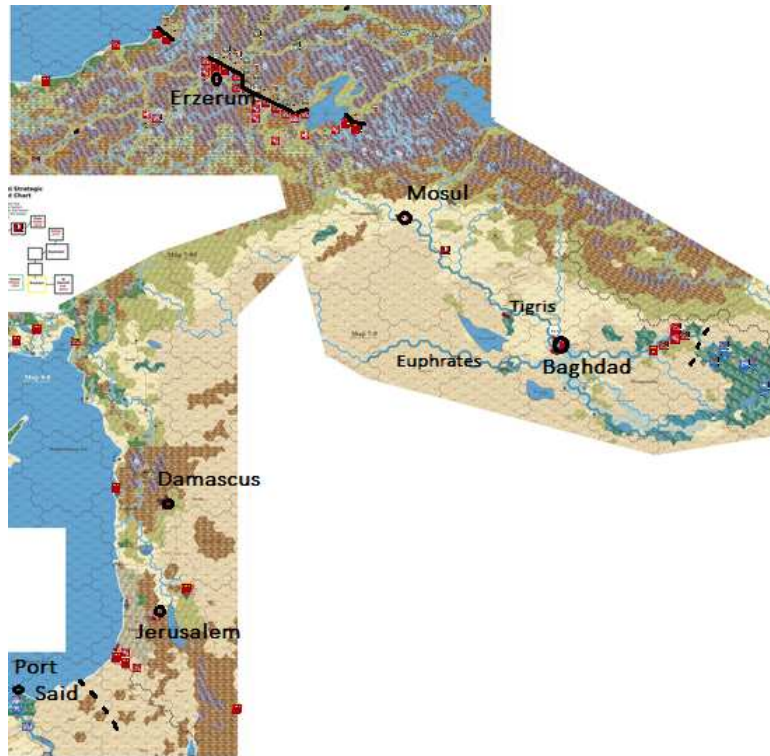


Figure 3: The fronts in the Near East at the end of February 1915. Neither the front in Palestine, nor the front in Iraq, was well defined.

The Turkish Iraq Corps moved forward with more determination. The Turks had heard the British had abandoned Ali Gharbi and were falling back towards Al Amarah. The British were, however, about 100 kilometres ahead of their pursuers so there was no likelihood of an immediate encounter.

The snow had started to clear at the lower elevations in the Caucasus. The meltwater would soon build up in the mountain streams. Within a couple of weeks, the same water would begin flooding across Mesopotamia.

The Western Front

During the offensive in Picardy, Dubail, the commander of the French 1st Army, had reported to Joffre that the Germans had thinned their lines in Alsace. Above Colmar there appeared to be no more than three German Divisions and two of them were Landwehr. Dubail proposed an attack across the Vosges, but indicated that this would be impossible without reinforcement.

Joffre had considered this plan and decided it was a good one. In fact, he decided that the French 2nd Army should join it. The railway concentration for this operation had begun on 23 February and the French would be ready to attack on 3 March. By 27 – 28 February, trains were reaching Belfort and Fort Rupt hourly with the troops designated for the attack. A key reinforcement was two strong

Divisions of Alpine Chasseurs (47th and 66th Mountain) who unloaded at Fort Rupt and then disappeared into the forest to their deployment zones.

Much of this railway movement took place at night and, fortunately, under leaden skies. It mattered little. The Germans had aerial reconnaissance, but only at the end of February did they have a strong suspicion that the French were about to do something.

February 1915 DM Summary

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [%SM]#	Morale
Germany	2	5	5	10	-	3	6	15	46	644 [40.3]	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-	-	2	32	1	31	-	66	302 [54.9]	Good
Ottoman	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	11 [3.1]	Good
Central Powers	2	5	5	12	32	4	37	15	112	957	
France	-	-	9	5	-	-	-	-	14	566 [62.9]	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	6	70 [5.4]	Good
Russia	2	2	-	5	1	12	6	-	28	328 [54.5]	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	(1)	(2)	-*	-	NA	(1)	(15)	NA *Belgrade lost
Entente	2	2	9	16	1	12	6	-	48	964	

Three powers are now over 50% of the way to Shaken Morale. The progressive capitulation of Przemyśl is responsible for 60 DM of Austria this month.

Player Notes

- *CP: East: I achieved greater success last turn than I could have hoped for and broke through the Russian trenches in both German attacks; inflicting painful losses on his cavalry in one of them. I keep the pressure up around the Masurian Lakes attacking with low supply but sufficient strength to still do so at 40 SP. I have also started to conduct some probing attack with Sud HQ German forces in support of the AH 1st Army.*
- *Galicia: Kovess attacks the Russian salient again and supply is dispatched in his direction. There is also a large cavalry corps starting to form up to operate at his disposal. 1st Army launches an attack at the other end of this long front. I expect no breakthroughs, but wish to keep chipping away at his flanks while his centre is fixed by the remnants of Przemyśl.*
- *Serbia: The 5th and 3rd armies begin to exploit deeper into Serbia. There is a large AH force gathered and fairly substantial supply on hand – situation positive.*
- *West: No offensive action.*

- *Caucasus: Quiet; less some further lateral manoeuvre.*
- *Mesopotamia: I continue to probe along the Tigris having belatedly realised my Turkish forces have developed riverine logistic capability.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*

AP: I said I would make a French attack sooner than expected. Last turn I made precise plans for a French concentration to attack the German front in the Vosges. This is to take advantage of an excessively weak German line. There is perhaps a solution which would allow the Germans to have a chance to save the two front line hexes I propose to attack, but they will at least lose the entrenchments (which are doing more harm than good in this terrain because they are interfering with the defenders' mobility).

My objective will be the food resources in Alsace which will be unable to produce if I cross the border.

The fact that the Germans are weak in Alsace-Lorraine is an opportunity I could not afford to miss. The whole CP front east of Nancy is weakly held and, up to now, the AP has been fairly thinly spread also. The CP is ahead of schedule in the East and Balkans and this is perhaps because the Germans have put a lot more into the Eastern front, sooner than they did historically. This Alsace operation will be my compensation. It may force a reappraisal of the balance of German forces in the East and West and perhaps give the Russians some respite as I expect to draw some of the German reinforcements and replacements back to the West.