

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT112: 27 – 30 November 1915 (November 7)

### General Situation

As November 1915 approached its dark end so were thousands of soldiers on the Eastern Front who were being thrown into the appalling slaughter taking place around Riga.

The mood in Allied capitals was everywhere downcast. The year, which had begun hopefully, was now ending in a mire of mud and blood in which it was hard to see any cause for optimism. The month of November had started well with the capture of Riva del Garda and the successful French offensive in Lorraine. Since then, the British had been humiliated on the Western Front; the Dardanelles campaign was openly regarded as a profligate waste of lives; the Italians had broken their heads against the rock of Lavarone; and Russia was throwing away the best of the Imperial Army at Riga.

### The Eastern Front

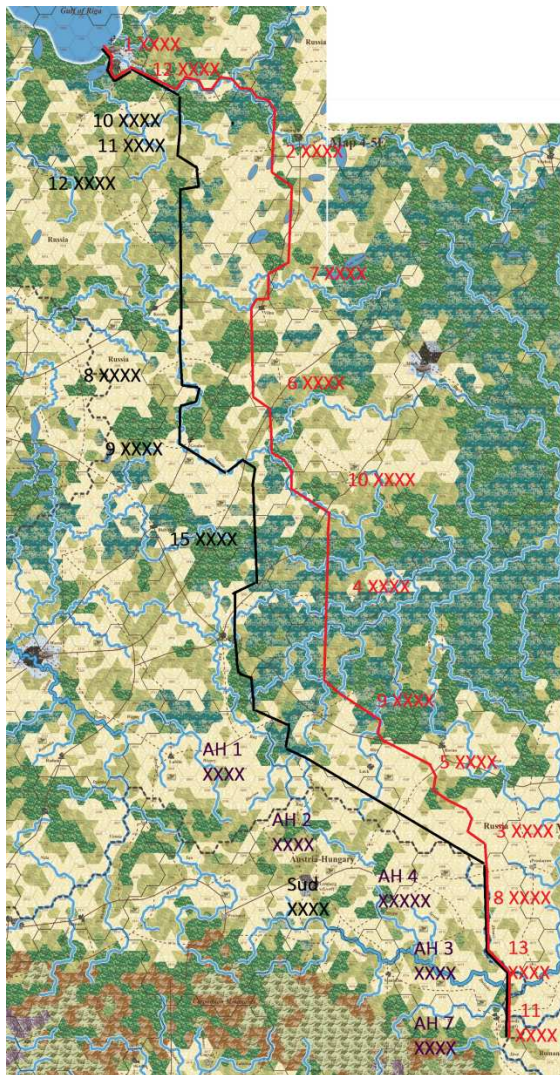


Figure 1: General Situation on the Eastern Front, end of November 1915.

The Battle for Riga raged for another four days and the German assaults reached a new peak of intensity on 27 – 28 November. The Russians were steadily outfought as the Germans attained a moral and numerical superiority over the whole battle area. Another five Russian Divisions were completely gutted in desperate efforts to prevent the Germans advancing to the city centre through the outlying settlements. The Germans were increasingly confident that they could take the city but they were frustrated by the willingness of the Russians to feed more and more units into the battle. In the Second World War, the Russian reinforcement of Stalingrad across the Volga was often compared to what the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Armies did in keeping units moving across the Dvina in the First World War.

By the end of November, the defenders of Riga were running very short of artillery ammunition. The heavy howitzers which had contributed much to the defence in previous days had to be withdrawn on 30 November and the infantry was now expected to fight it out on its own. Fortunately, the Germans were also experiencing similar difficulties at the same time and the power of their attacks was sustained by a willingness to use up every last shell they had.

The Russians had some compensation for these blows. As the Germans retreated on other parts of the front they finally gave up Vilna which fell to the Russian 7th Army on 30 November.

## The Balkans



Figure 2: The Balkan Fronts, Allied positions in red, Central Powers in black, end of November 1915.

The new advance of the Central Powers in Albania and Western Serbia was not rapid but the Allied forces were incapable of anything more than delay and could be relied on to withdraw whenever superior forces approached.

By 28 November, the Central Powers had re-secured control over the northern third of Albania. Across the border in Serbia, the Bulgarian 8<sup>th</sup> Division was ordered to take back the mercury mines around Dolno (7-6.0910). There was no resistance to this move.



## The Near East

With the exception of Iraq all the Near Eastern Fronts remained quiet. Townsend's force on the Tigris now accelerated forwards reaching the ruins of Ctesiphon (7-9.3122) on 30 November. At this location they were less than 40 kilometres from Baghdad and it was expected that Townsend would order an immediate attack on the Turkish line. He did not do so and instead ordered a thorough reconnaissance. Considerations of supply dominated this decision. Townsend might get one chance to take Baghdad and if any attack misfired he might be very exposed at the end of a very long and vulnerable line of communication.

## The Western Front

The lull on the Western Front endured. It would not be incorrect to say that the common soldiers on both sides were united by a hope that the campaign was over for this year. Even on defence there was a certain laxity. Nobody was expecting further major operations in the near future by either side.



Figure 3: General Situation on Western Front showing the recent gains made in Lorraine, end of November 1915.

## The Italian Front

The Italian 4<sup>th</sup> Army's operations in the Dolomites were suspended on 26 November as heavy snowfalls were forecast. As with the Western Front, there was an expectation that there would be a significant pause in the action as winter set in. The Italians were very low on ammunition and their equipment was worn out so there did not seem much possibility of driving the troops into further efforts before the end of the year. Cadorna was reluctant to concede this fact and insisted on the 4<sup>th</sup> Army making a study of further plans for action in the Trentino and the Dolomites regardless of the season.

## DM Summary – November 1915

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [SM%]	Morale
<b>Germany</b>	6	15	7	5	7	13	7	11	71	1030 [64.4]	Good
<b>Austria-Hungary</b>	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	6	439 [79.8]	Good
<b>Ottoman</b>	1	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	5	57 [16.3]	Good
<b>Bulgaria</b>	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	15	Good
<b>Central Powers</b>	8	15	8	10	9	14	7	12	83	1521	
<b>France</b>	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	671 [74.6]	Good
<b>Great Britain</b>	-	14	15	13	16	-	-	-	58	227 [17.8]	Good
<b>Russia</b>	3	1	2	-*	-	11	14**	-	31	674 [112.3]	Shaken *Pinsk, Rovno liberated **Vilna liberated
<b>Italy</b>	2	-	1	5	-	2	-	-	10	48 [16.0]	Good
<b>Belgium</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(96)	NA
<b>Serbia</b>	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	(32)	NA
<b>Entente</b>	9	17	18	19	16	13	14	-	106	1618	

[ % ] Shows percentage of Shaken Morale for individual powers.

### Player Notes

- CP: *East: My last attack against Riga was a bloodbath but I cannot give up at this stage; so I attack again with the three armies massed there. Across the rest of the EF I withdraw and relinquish control of Kovno, Vilna, Grodno and Brest-Litovsk. I hope this will gain me some food this month. Also, it may force the Russians out onto the open steppes.*

- *Balkans: I make some minor advances in Montenegro which gain no advantage but force him to consider his own vulnerabilities.*
- *West: Fairly quiet with nothing more interesting than digging in at Metz.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: My HQs are now in Baghdad.*
- *Palestine: The raiding force regains the Palestinian frontier.*
- *Gallipoli: Quiet.*
- *Italy: Quiet.*

*AP: The big flaw in my defence of Riga is that I have just lost 25 DM in two turns refusing to give up the town which would have cost me 25 DM to give up. One day I am likely to give it up anyway so have I not just doubled the consequences of losing Riga? That is true but I also took down 20 German DM and nearly 50 German supply points (I spent 22 Russian supply which is a big investment). I have some compensation therefore and it is the most costly month for Germany since November 1914. Ivor may continue the attack and he may fear me entrenching here.*

*This month has really drained me. It started well with the French attack in Lorraine and the Italian victory at Riva but just about everything else has been a costly mess. Although I can insist that the Germans have paid a very high price for it, they have dished out a lot of hurt and I am going to be tending those bruises for a bit. I also take no comfort from the CP retreats in the East. The Russians are in no state to launch any kind of offensive and even occupying empty ground is a risky operation for them.*