

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT147: 27 – 30 April 1916 (Apr 7)

General Situation

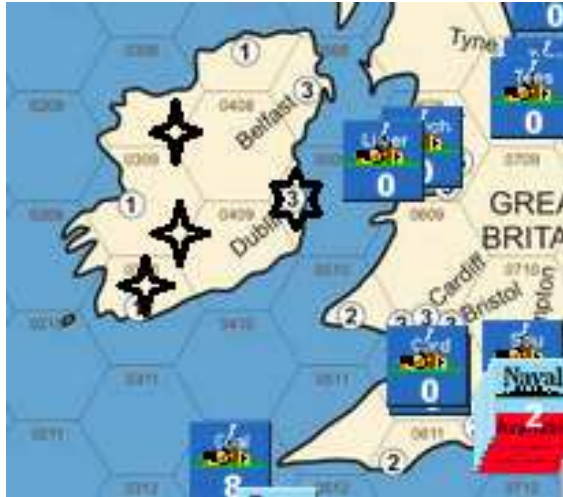


Figure 1: The Easter Rising, Ireland, 24 – 29 April 1916.

The British Government was rocked by the outbreak of the Easter Rising in Ireland. These events came out of the blue and were perhaps due to complacency about the unity of the British Empire. On 30 April, Prime Minister Asquith gave a speech in which he assured the House of Commons that the political issues which concerned Ireland would be a priority notwithstanding the war and notwithstanding the anger of many MPs who regarded the insurrection as treachery fostered by Germany. The Prime Minister tried to calm the critics with assurances that the war effort was not going to be affected at all and the loyalty of all Irish units serving on the Western Front and in the Near East was beyond question.

The Western Front

The German attacks in the Argonne died down at the end of April and for a few days the front line troops remained on nervous alert. The French commanders did not think that the Germans had yet expended their greatest efforts.

Falkenhayn had endorsed an approach to the German offensive in the West which could almost have been characterised as careful or prudent in that always major reserves of strength and supply were preserved for the expected Allied counter-offensive. Opinions in the German Staff varied on when the Allies would strike but many emphasised it could be at any time. One sign that the Allied preparations were fairly well advanced was that there was little movement to be detected behind their front as if everything was already in position. In addition, the German Air Service reported that Allied air activity was growing again and on 30 April they admitted that there was a parity of air power over the Western Front once again.

The Italian Front

The spring thaw was finally taking its hold on the Alps. There seemed to be no thaw in the fossilised thinking of the protagonists of this struggle. They had held back from it, but what options did they have but to make another desperate lunge at some of the most formidable defences nature and humans could devise?

The Eastern Front

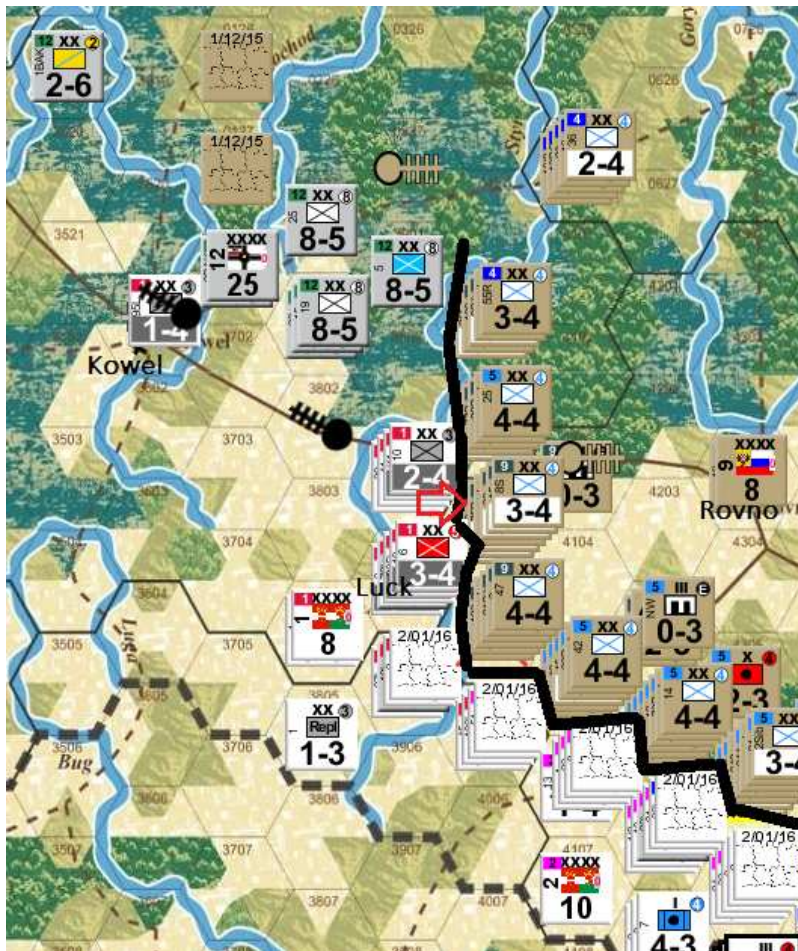


Figure 2: The Disaster of Luck, 26 - 30 April 1916.

The northern part of the Eastern Front was still unsettled but there were limits as to how far forward the Germans were prepared to go. The condition of the railways in the Baltic Provinces and Eastern Poland was by now dire and many sections of the main lines had been ripped up several times during the see-sawing of the front. The Germans were suffering also from a shortage of railway engineers. The disrupted state of the country was bad for the populace too. There were food shortages in Kovno and Brest-Litovsk and the German authorities were accused of failing to do their best for the care of the occupied population.

There were small skirmishes where German and Russian troops brushed up against each other. The most aggressive German force in late April was the German 15th Army which moved up the Neiman. The 18th Bavarian Reserve Division was one of its spearheads and on 28 April it reported it was at Novogrudock (5-5.3607) about 120 kilometres west of Minsk. It further reported strong Russian

forces moving east and parallel to their direction of advance. This was the Russian 6th Army one of the more powerful formations in the Russian Army at that time.

Conrad was still focussed on the struggle in Volhynia where the Russians were holding a strong line extending west and south of Rovno. The Austrians had tried to break the Russian line around Shumsk and Teofipol (5-5.4506 - 4607) over several months, including recently, and they appeared to be having some local successes. Conrad now urged the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army to attack from the west in the hope that the Russians were now approaching exhaustion. This led to the attack which the Hapsburg histories refer to as the Disaster of Luck which took place between 27 – 30 April.

The point of the attack was around Kivertsi (5-5.4003). The Russians had five infantry divisions and a cavalry division in the near vicinity and, unfortunately for the Austrians, three of the infantry divisions were at full strength including the tough Estonian Division. There were, however, few prepared positions and the country was a flat plain with few features. The conditions might have been ideal for the attacks if they had sufficient fire superiority, but they did not. Altogether, the Austrians deployed no more than eight divisions with a mixed bag of nationalities. Often single brigades were sent into action alone often with terrible consequences. The moonlight massacre of the 35th and 110th Polish Landwehr Brigades as they attempted to close with the Estonians south of Kivertsi was a key event in the final extinction of Polish loyalty to the Hapsburg monarchy. By the time this tragic struggle was over, the Austrian 1st Army had lost nearly a third of its infantrymen. The Russians were counterattacking vigorously and drove the attackers back to their start lines so they had nothing to show for their huge losses.

The Balkans

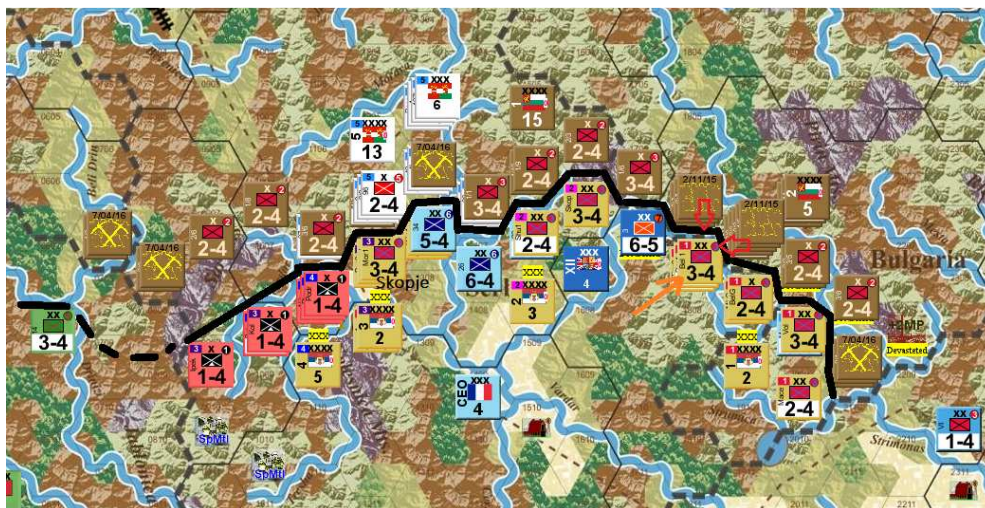


Figure 3: Macedonian Front, 27 - 30 April 1916.

The Bulgarian 2nd Army kept up the pressure on the eastern frontier of Serbia. On 27 April, the Bulgarians made another local attack on the border town of Delcevo (7-6.1807) which was repulsed by the gallant defence of the Serbian 2nd Timok Division. By the end of the month, the Serbians had reorganised their defences on this side of the front and it had been made more secure.

The Near East

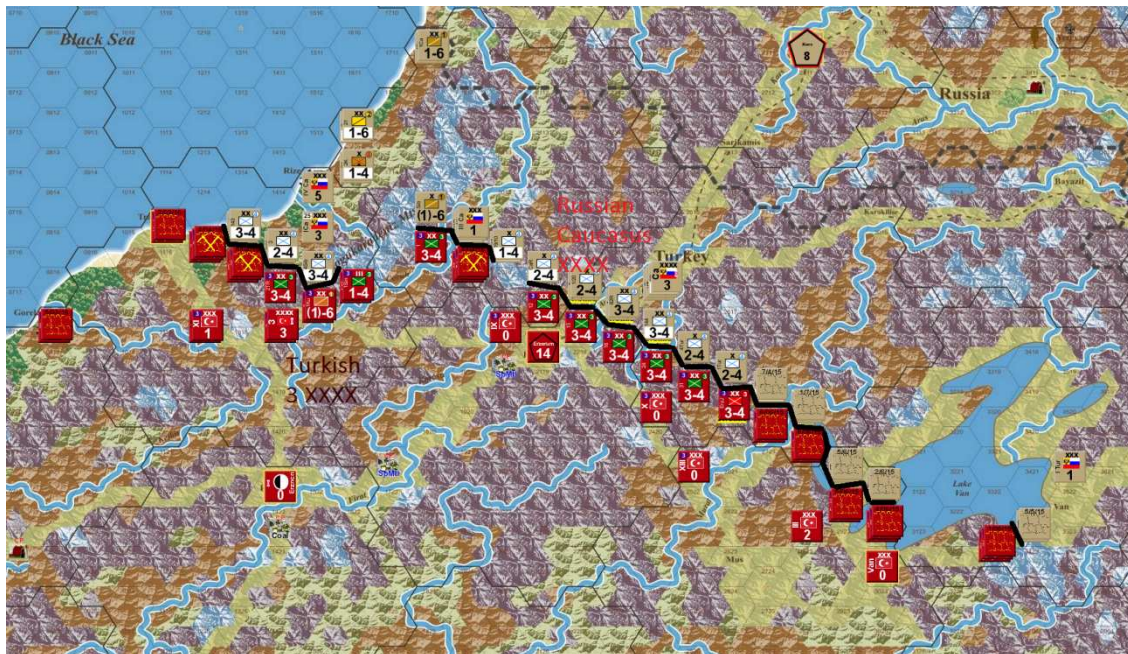


Figure 4: Caucasus Front, general situation, 27 - 30 April 1916.

There were few developments in late April in the Near East. The Ottoman Empire was enduring invasion from three directions but the situation seemed to be under control. The Allies were for the present held back by a combination of distance, logistics and competing priorities.

There were some redeployments taking place on the Caucasian front as the Russians thinned their front line on the coastal flank.

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: A pretty successful round of attacks last turn which forced the Russians to retreat. This turn, they undertake another of their broad withdrawals towards the GTL. It is the biggest problem for me trying to attack the Russians; they just run away each time I get to grips with them; except around the AH positions. He has a difficult choice to make, as the moment AH reaches shaken morale, which I know Robert would love to do, it also allows me to dispatch German troops to support AH – including in Italy and the Balkans. The AH 1st Army conduct an attack this turn along the Styr River.*
- *Balkans: The Bulgarians attack again, this time against a Serbian brigade. There are large Serb RPLs landing in Greece so I deem it acceptable to cause them some attrition.*
- *West: Another good attack last turn. However, I have used up a lot of supply and don't wish to leave myself vulnerable to TE – especially British – counter strikes so have called for a pause in the fighting to maintain stocks and regroup.*
- *Caucasus: The Turks now have more supply to work with and have stabilised the front. I hope to be able to strike in the near future.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Italy: Quiet.*

- DM Summary – April 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [%SM]	Morale
Germany	8	-	-	8	3	9	1	12	42	1174 [73.3]	Good
Austria-Hungary	2	-	-	-	5	4	8	1	20	503 [91.4]	Good
Ottoman	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	72 [20.6]	Good
Bulgaria	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	3	20	Good
Central Powers	10	1	-	9	9	13	10	13	65	1749	
France	10	-	-	7	7	7	-	-	31	712 [79.1]	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	252 [19.8]	Good
Russia	-	-*	-	2	12**	9\$	3	-	26	759 [126.5]	Shaken - *Grodno recaptured and **lost again \$Vilna lost
Italy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62 [20.7]	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	(1)	(1)*	-	-	-	-	(1)	-	(1)	(34)	NA – *Skopje recaptured
Entente	10	-	-	9	19	16	3	-	57	1777	

AP: There is nothing in fact in the game relating to the Easter Rising. That is not very unusual in WWI wargames. I guess this is an event which had bigger long term impacts than short term ones.

The bad outcome of the Austrian attack near Luck may have justified my move forward in Volhynia. I doubt the Austrians will chance something like that again soon. Ivor indicated the attack may have been driven by the need to use up supply. The anatomy of this attack is:

CP SPs	CP Supply	CP Combat Strength	CP die/hits	AP SPs	AP Supply	AP Combat Strength	AP die/hits
28 AH 2 Ger	8	30	2/3	17 Inf 1 Cav	5	43	6/9 (one hit on Ger. Unit)

As defender I have been trying to conserve supply but this was a tempting opportunity and I allowed partial supply. The CP only used 3 supply points more than the Russians and any attack in which the

defenders have the higher die and a higher combat strength is going to end badly. The Austrian attack is better justified as being one of a series of attacks in the last three turns and the overall results are much better for the CP. Altogether, the Austrians have lost 17 SP; the Germans 4 SP and the Russians 22 SP, so it has been about even.

AH losing 8 DM in a single turn is now a bad result. However, it is nothing compared to the really bad turns in this game, almost all of which occurred in 1914. Here are the top 19 (France has 6 of the top 10):

Rank	Date	Nation	DM	Comments
1.	2 May 15	Russia	78	Fall of Warsaw
2.	4 Aug 14	France	75	Plan XVII Offensive
3.	4 Sept 14	France	55	Lille lost
4.	1 Oct 14	Germany	54	Allenstein captured and heavy fighting in the West
5.	7 Aug 14	Austria	50	Battle of Galicia and Czernowitz lost
6.	6 Sept 14	France	45	Lille/Loos captured
7.	1 Oct 14	France	42	Fall of Amiens
8.	7 Aug 14	France	39	Battle of the Frontiers
9.	7 Sept 14	France	35	French artillery destroyed on Hauts de Meuse.
10.	5 Sept 14	Austria	34	Loss of Stanislau and Tarnow
11.	4 Sept 14	Austria	33	Loss of Lemberg
12.	5 Aug 14	Germany	33	Battle of the Frontiers
13.	5 Feb 15	Austria	32	Fall of outer works at Przmysl
14.	7 Aug 14	Russia	32	Battles of Galicia and Prussia
15.	2 Oct 14	France	32	Fall of Reims
16.	7 Aug 14	Germany	32	Battle of the Frontiers and Prussia
17.	7 Feb 15	Austria	31	Capitulation of the citadel of Przmysl
18.	6 Aug 14	Germany	31	Battle of the Frontiers and Prussia
19.	2 Aug 14	Germany	30	First loss of Mulhouse