

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

**GT200: 15 – 18 December 1916 (4 December)**

### **General Situation**

The Château at Chantilly hosted the second Inter-Allied Conference on 17 and 18 December. In contrast to the previous year, the attendees included a number of senior political figures led by the new British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, who was determined that war policy would follow the directions he preferred.

In relation to military strategy the policy was once again to attack with the largest forces each power could muster and use attrition to overcome what was left of the enemy's resistance. Although none of the major powers could escape these commitments derived from the coalition's need to avoid free riders, there were undercurrents of opposition to this policy.

Lloyd George, himself, wanted to redirect British efforts away from the Western Front to the Near East and also to encourage Russia and Italy to do more. He was nevertheless frustrated by the need to be seen to closely support French plans for offensives in France and by the faltering strength of Russia and Italy.

The French wanted most effort to be on the Western Front and opposed major diversions to the Balkans and Near East. However, they were acutely aware of their own exposure to the cost of offensives and insisted that the British had to show greater commitment.

The Italians would have asked for more help on their front, but their pride prevented it.

The Tsar's representatives were somewhat deluded. After the performance of the Russian Army in Romania, nobody had high expectations. The Russian delegation still promised offensive activity in 1917 and spoke of possible operations to capture Lemberg and Warsaw.

### **The Near East**

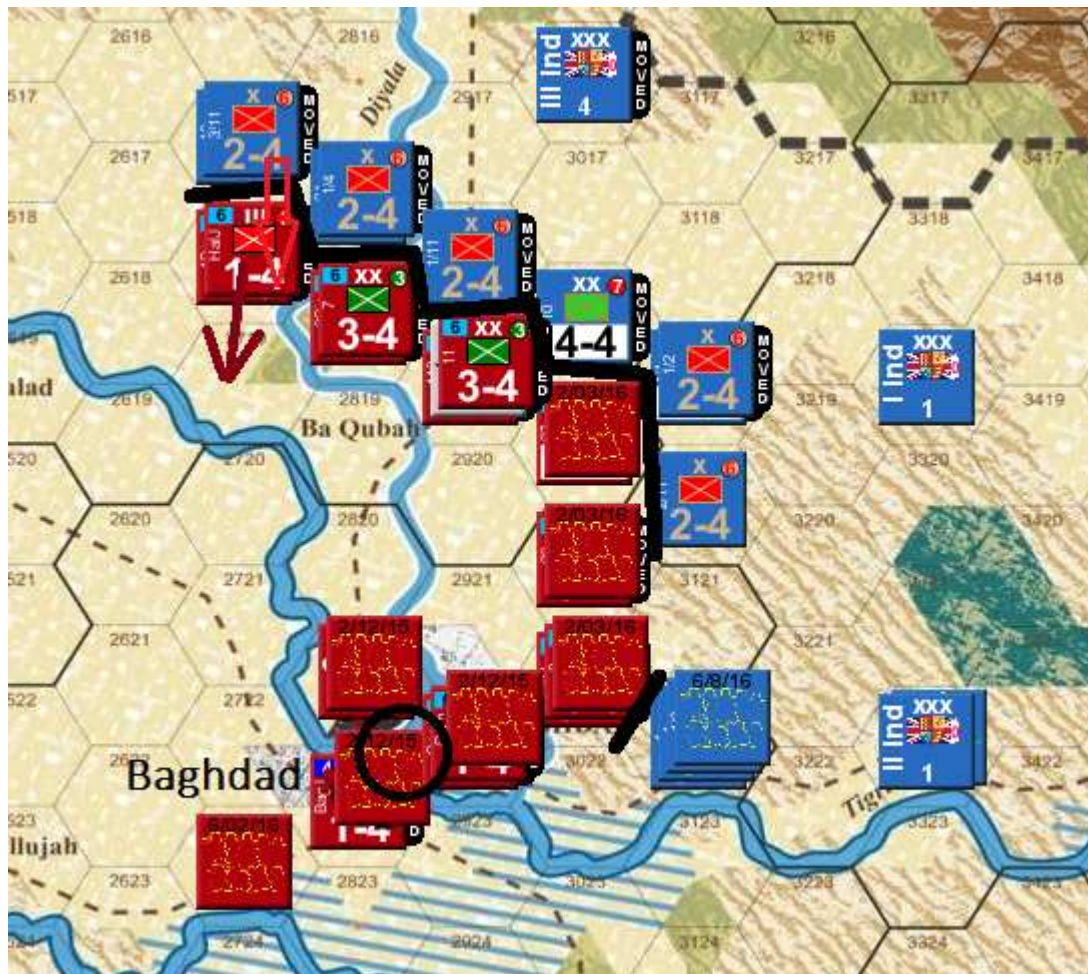
If Murray was to score a sensational pre-Christmas victory, time was running out. He had intelligence showing that the Turkish lines were weakest between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. On 17 December, he ordered the New Zealand Division (North Island) to attack along the dirt road parallel to the inland sea at the pass of Kalya (8-8.2429). Three additional British and Australian Divisions were a short distance behind the New Zealander's and ready to exploit any break through. Murray had therefore once again shifted his strength from one side of the front to the other. Nevertheless, as the commander of the New Zealand Division observed, there wasn't any quantity of shells and this job would have to be done by the bayonet. The New Zealanders were certainly up to this gruesome work and they struggled, often hand to hand, with equally determined Samarian Jandarms. The pass, however, could not be gained by these efforts as the Turks kept feeding in camel mounted reserves which were able to move quickly between threatened positions in the rough arid terrain.



Figure 1: The attack at Kalya, 17 - 18 December 1916.

In Iraq, Maude grew impatient with the cat and mouse game being played on his extended front as he attempted to get around Baghdad. Both sides were poorly supplied and on 15 and 16 December Maude had waited for a predicted Turkish attack which he feared might cut his thin lines. Aerial observation had seen considerable Turkish movements towards their threatened left wing. When the feared attacks did not materialise, Maude ordered the resumption of the advance down the Diyala, this time concentrated on the furthest side of the river around Delli Abbas (7-9.2816). From there the Indian infantry spread out on the wider flank towards an old Turkish Army camp (Camp Ashraf (7-9.2717) and the Turkish defence was increasingly stretched. On 17 and 18 December there was heavy fighting in the farmlands along the right bank of the river but the Jandarms were outfought here and the Arab cavalry, which had previously denied passage to Allied forces, was forced to give up ground. By the evening of 18 December, two Indian Brigades (16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>) were across the Kirkuk road (7-9.2718) and were less than 20 kilometres from the Tigris River at Dolama (7-9.2618).

These Allied moves could only cause consternation at the headquarters of the Turkish 6<sup>th</sup> Army in Baghdad. The focus of the enemy efforts was moving to the north and the line of communication down the Tigris River was under immediate threat. There was also the Euphrates which could serve as the 6<sup>th</sup> Army's logistical support but it was not so convenient and Baghdad's outer defences at least could not be regularly supplied except from the Tigris.



### Western Front

There was no change in the situation. While the Chiefs debated the future at Chantilly, everyone else concentrated on surviving what would be for some a third winter in the field.

### Italian Front

Both sides continued to reinforce their fronts in the Julian Alps. The chances of an Austrian attack should have diminished each day as the winter took hold. Still, the staff of the Italian 2nd Army remained on high alert.

### Eastern Front

There was no major development on this front either. There were still movements of reserves on both sides which if analysed might have revealed future intentions but these mostly occurred beyond the range of most military intelligence. One fact which did interest the Russians was the signs that the Germans had maintained strong bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the Vistula River south of Warsaw. These would surely play a significant role in attempting to frustrate any further Russian moves in Central Poland.

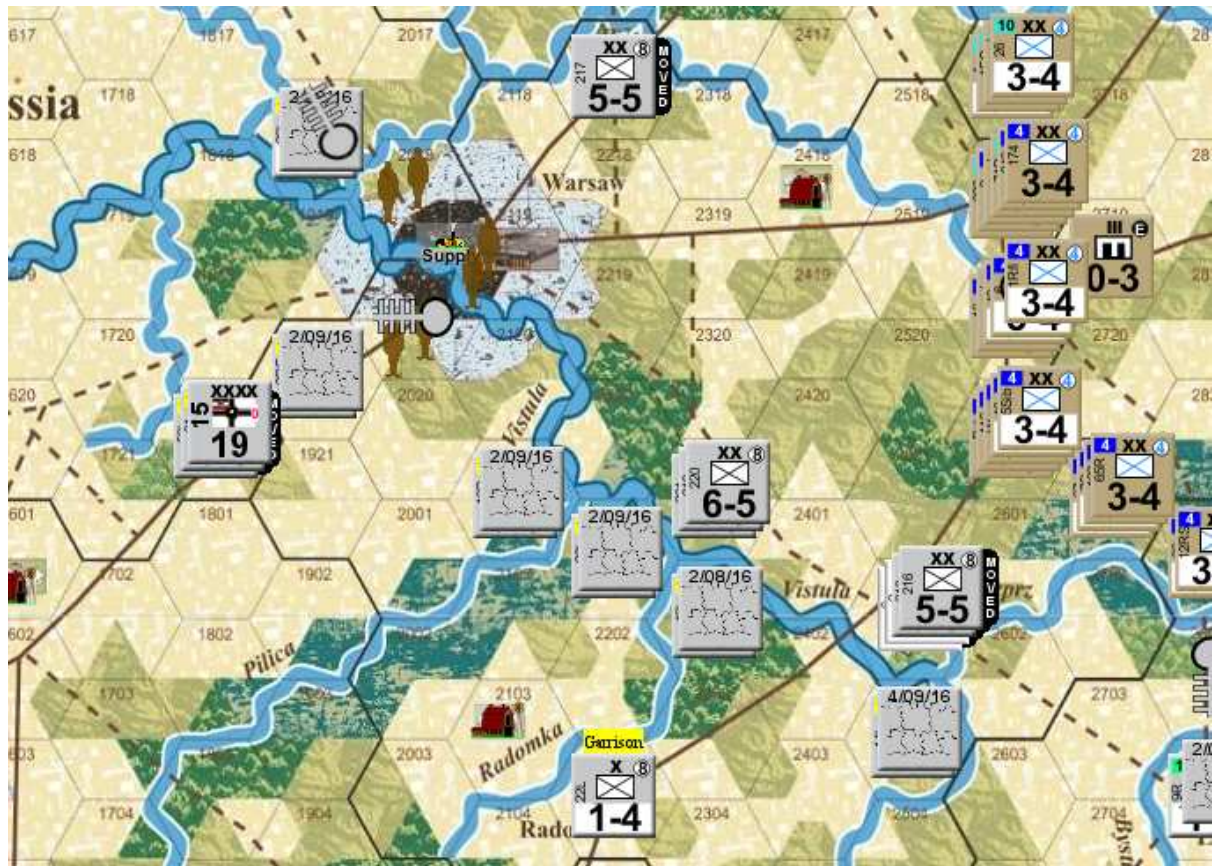


Figure 2: Strong German Bridgeheads maintained on the Vistula River, 15 - 18 December 1916.

### Balkan Front

This front was also inactive.

## DM Summary – December 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit #	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-	-	-	-				11	11	1512	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-	-	-				-	-	619	Economic Collapse
Ottoman	2	-	2	2				2	8	121	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-				-	-	30	Good
Central Powers	2	-	2	2				13	19	2292	
France	-	-	-	-				-	-	826	Good
Great Britain	4	-	1	2				16	23	474	Good
Russia	-	-	-	-				1	1	864	Shaken
Italy	-	-	-	-				-	-	139 [46.33]	Good
Romania	-	-	-	-				-	-	233	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	-				-	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	-				-	-	(41)	NA
Entente	4	-	1	2				17	24	2536	

Player Notes:

CP: *Not this time, laptop malfunction.*

AP: *Completion of 200 turns is worthy of a minor celebration for war gaming fortitude. I must say that participating in something which is practically a real time experience is unlike almost anything else I have done in this hobby. It demands not a little patience. In most games there is usually a great urgency to do everything at once. That does not apply in DWK and excessive action is punished. It is also unusual in that although Clausewitz called attention to the fact that in war periods of inactivity were common and can be explained by reference to the asymmetry of attack and defence, this rarely comes through in war games. In contrast, I find in DWK a lot depends on the ability of a side to choose the right moment to initiate something.*

*The winter rules are a case in point now. When I first read the penalties relating to winter combat in DWK (SR34) I thought that they were practically no disincentive at all and you would see winter campaigns all the time. They amounted to a minor drm advantage for some counterattacks (SR34-4), shorter combat supply ranges (SR 34 -2 and 34-3), and some cavalry attrition effects (SR 30-4).*

*The interesting thing is these rules have different impacts depending on the scale at which they are considered both in time and space.*

*Up close and in detail there is little impact on a single attack in winter though the shorter supply lines require better preparation. This reflects the fact that modern Armies had overcome traditional constraints on campaigning in winter and the game basically allows it. Historically a number of important campaigns started in winter (Carpathians, Sarikamis, 1<sup>st</sup> Champagne; Verdun) which you would not get if the penalties were too great.*

*There is a subtle effect though. In a small attack against light opposition the impact of winter might be a small chance (one in six) of the attacker suffering an additional loss. However, once the counterattack strength reaches 50, then that extra loss is certain and above that you are risking a second extra loss. That is still pretty modest but real offensives need multiple attacks and with ten modest attacks or five big ones the difference starts to get noticeable.*

*These extra losses are avoidable if the attacker is prepared to wait until March before attacking (May on the Italian Front). That is a realistic proposition because there are other good reasons not to make premature attacks in DWK and attackers can generally get a greater benefit from more preparation (stocking supply and SPs) than the defender.*

*The other factor is morale which gets more critical as the game goes on. That means in 1914-15 it is more tempting to keep up the fight during the winter because those extra DM losses do not seem so bad. In subsequent winters this may not be so tolerable. Each power will be closer in absolute terms to critical DM thresholds. At the end of 1916 you do not want to attack in December when, at the start of the 1917, the CRT is going to deliver a bigger punch for each SP committed.*

*Finally, there is exhaustion. Each January, DM limits increase so this is an incentive to reach DM thresholds before the end of the preceding year. This should encourage extending campaigning in the autumn but as the end of the year approaches all resources will be used up and the winter will be needed as a period of recovery.*

*As stated, the power to make exceptions is in the hands of the players because the incentives against action in winter can be ignored within limits. However, at the biggest scales of the game consistently ignoring the reality on the ground would be poor play and might tip a side into losing before their time.*