

# Oregon ConSim Journal

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# Introduction

by S. G. Stewart

WELCOME TO THE PREMIER EDITION of the Oregon ConSim Journal, and thank you for your interest. We've provided this publication to expand upon the World War One historical simulation game *1914, Twilight in the East* (GMT, October 2007), also known as *TitE*. Its topic, the Eastern Front during 1914, was so far ranging that it could not be exhaustively covered in one effort. Michael Resch, the game's designer, had enough useful material left over after production that it cried for a follow-up product. Thus, this Journal was born of his desire to provide the simulation's players with the relevant historical articles, extra scenarios, and expanded players notes that would enhance their enjoyment of the game.

The historical centerpiece of this Journal is comprised of two articles detailing the pre-war culture of the Austro-Hungarian Army. In the first, "The Austro-Hungarian Army and National Identity 1867–1914," author Rian van Meeteren explores the myths and realities of multiculturalism in the Empire's military and political system. In the second, a critical error in Austro-Hungarian pre-war planning and subsequent mobilization is revealed in "Austria-Hungary's Botched Deployment in 1914."

The importance of the First World War's initial military operations can hardly be over emphasized. It has been argued that the mistakes made by the drafters of these pre-war plans, and the mistakes made implementing them, led directly to unfavorable battlefield results. Had these pre-war plans been written with more foresight and applied more deftly, the war could have come to a conclusion much earlier. The game's first hypothetical scenario, "The Austro-Hungarian Deployment Plan as of Winter 1913/14," provides a plausible "what if" setup that nullifies such a crippling mistake made during Austria-Hungary's initial moves, allowing them to deploy their full forces against the Russian adversary.

*1914, Twilight in the East* is really three complete games in one. Both the Tannenberg Campaign and Great Battle for Galicia scenarios cover the same time period: the initial military operations in August and September 1914. The third scenario, the epic Grand Campaign Game, covers those opening campaigns and extends all the way into December. However, the scenario is so massive, with so many possible outcomes, that gamers can rarely expect to play into the November game turns. The historical scenario included in this magazine,

"The Battles of Lodz and Krakau," allows players to simulate those November game turns. The scenario is essentially a complete game by itself, employing almost the entire *TitE* counter mix. Its companion article, "The Lodz Campaign: Defeating the Russian Steamroller," details the extensive front-line movements leading up to the conflict.

On the other side of the scale, the scenario "The Battle of Ivangorod" allows inexperienced or time-limited players the ability to enjoy the game on a more manageable level. By employing a small setup area and essentially removing the supply rules, it allows players to jump right in and exercise the movement and combat systems. The article "Prelude to Ivangorod" serves as an extended introduction to that conflict.

A well known military axiom states: mistakes made in the deployment of troops at the start of operations cannot be righted in the course of the whole campaign. At the outset of the First World War, this was true for all fronts, but nowhere was it more pertinent than on the Eastern Front. Here errors in deployment proved to be so grave that it was practically pre-determined that neither side would be able to achieve a favorable strategic decision in 1914. Gamers who are challenged by the brittle situation on the Galician front in *TitE* will appreciate "Playing Both Sides in Galicia: Players Notes for the Great Battle of Galicia Scenario." Based on extensive playtesting, this article suggests opening moves for both opponents that avoid the most common mistakes, allowing the campaign to get off to a solid start.

Finally, the genesis of "The Polish Legion in 1914" is discussed, shedding light on what was previously a mere historical footnote in the game. These hardy and motivated troops survived not only the war, but also a political conflict within their own army, emerging to become the core of their newly independent nation's armed forces.

Astute readers will note frequent references to *initiative* in this publication's articles. This is the underlying theme of the journal; indeed, of the entire *1914, Twilight in the East* simulation. The German commanders, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, were continually striving to maintain the operational initiative; twice they lost it to the Russians who failed to capitalize on it due to supply and leadership limitations. Developer's notes relating to the rewarding of initiative in *TitE* may be found

in the “Revised Victory Conditions for the Grand Campaign Scenario” article.

Frequently in this journal, place names are accompanied by a numerical sequence in braces; for example, “Krakau [71.81].” These digits represent hexagon coordinates on the 1914, *Twilight in the East* game map and are provided for easy lookup. We anticipate that players will appreciate laying out the award-winning map as a reference while enjoying the magazine.

The articles contained herein assume that the reader has a working knowledge of the geography and history of the Eastern Front during 1914. If needed, further information may be found in Norman Stone’s excellent book, *The Eastern*

*Front 1914–1917* (1975). Other relevant works include *Soldier’s Notebook* by A.A. Brusilov (London 1930) and *The War of Lost Opportunities* by Max Hoffmann (Battery Press 1999).

As the centennial anniversary of the First World War approaches, we expect there will be increased public interest in the history of the conflict. The intention of Oregon ConSim Games is to continue developing simulations and support material that explore the war, in particular the opening campaigns of 1914 which saw rapid movement along the belligerents’ lines. We hope that you’ll keep checking in with our company to keep abreast of new products we’ll have to offer during this unique time.

1914: Dispatches, Oregon Consim Journal *contains two replacement Player Aid Cards for 1914, Twilight in the East printed on high quality cover stock. The charts and tables displayed on the new player aid cards have been organized with the primary intention of speeding combat resolution.*

## New Charts Explanation

My attention was drawn to the problem of slow combat resolution in 1914, *Twilight in the East* when gamers criticized the procedure, stating that it was difficult to learn. That players encountered learning pains comprehending the unique combat process is understandable. Looking deeper into the problem, it was determined that players felt they needed to repeatedly reference the charts and tables during each combat because they were not retaining the information found in them. This lookup was slowing combat resolution to an unsatisfactory speed. I know that players often memorize a great deal of the information affecting combat, so why, in this case, were they not retaining the information? Why weren’t gamers internalizing the procedure as they do when learning other games? A game’s player aid card is usually the best tool to summarize important information. Evidently, 1914, *Twilight in the East’s* Charts and Tables were inefficient, were not conveying information well, and therefore needed updating.

The original charts provided a great deal of information, but their layout was not optimal. Most striking, the layout did not follow procedural order. Nor were priorities within each step of the process highlighted. Some of the information, such as unnecessary rules summarization, often distracted from the main point, directing players towards infrequent exceptions. Cumulatively, this resulted in players’ learning curves being stifled. As a consequence, players referenced the charts repeatedly rather than memorizing the information contained therein. The redesign of the new charts attempts

to avoid these mistakes. They are laid out to both allow a player to move smoothly through each step and to allow the priorities within each step to be identified.

Several assumptions were made developing these new charts. First, it must be stated that the new charts presume the players have read the rules and understand the procedures. Most procedural information has been removed. This allows for more space providing cleaner sight lines, larger font sizes, and such.

It is further assumed that while using the new tables, players will memorize a great deal of the information found therein. This may seem to be a problematical assumption, but I don’t feel it is. Most gamers memorize a considerable amount of information to play a game. For example, I’m positive every gamer memorizes most (if not all) combat odds modifiers. It doesn’t make sense not to. Therefore, the new tables are organized to allow players to easily identify the most common shifts and modifiers. These modifiers are written in a larger font size and are preceded by large bullets. Less common modifiers are written in a smaller font size and are preceded by smaller dots. Special situation modifiers are highlighted by using various colors. The intention is not only to facilitate a player’s ability to absorb and easily memorize information, but to easily differentiate what should be memorized and what can be referenced when required.

In 1914, *Twilight in the East*, as in most wargames, the combat procedure is repeated often, giving gamers an opportunity to learn by experience what is important to each combat. Soon, not only are these important factors and modifiers stored in memory, where to find this information is also stored. The new charts are laid out to facilitate this learning process. They can be easily scanned, allowing a player’s memories to be accessed and confirmed (reinforced) quickly. Transforming much of the information found on the charts into stored knowledge is the ultimate goal. If that is achieved, players will find the process goes quickly and, in many cases, they won’t have to reference parts of the tables and charts at all.

# Austria-Hungary's Botched Deployment in 1914

by *Michael Resch*

AT THE OUTSET of the First World War, each belligerent nation mobilized and deployed its armed forces according to master plans developed prior to the conflict. Germany had its now infamous plan based on Schlieffen's ideas, France had Joffre's own Plan 17, and Russia had its modified Plan 19. These plans covered everything the armed forces required to complete their strategic concentrations. Step by step, the population was called to arms, vast amounts of needed material were appropriated, and the necessary horses were gathered. Meanwhile, behind a screen of cavalry and border guards, troop formations were readied and then transported to the frontier to predetermined deployment locations prepared by advance detachments. Every detail of this vast process had been worked out years in advance and was regularly updated to take infrastructure changes and new circumstances into consideration.

To a great degree, each strategic concentration plan was coupled with an operational plan that ordered the initial maneuvers the troops were to carry out. This plan was based on a nation's strategic situation and was calculated to produce the highest chance for success in war. In 1914, most operational plans called for an offensive to begin when deployment was practically completed. Like most nations, Austria-Hungary had such an offensive plan. However, unlike the others (with the possible exception of Russia) the execution of its plan went amiss to such a degree that failure was almost guaranteed.

The strategic situation that confronted the Austro-Hungarian Armed Forces High Command in the summer of 1914 did not come as a surprise. The high command had been aware of the likelihood of a two-front war against Russia and Serbia; it had been part of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff's operational planning for years. Yet during July and August 1914, the armed forces' strategic concentration

was so badly executed that a significant division of strength resulted. The numerical superiority needed for success could not be achieved on either front and when offensives were launched on both fronts, the results were disastrous.

## Pre-war Planning

Austro-Hungarian pre-war planning had determined that in the case of a two-front war against its allied opponents, Russia and Serbia, there were two operational options. The



*Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf*

primary tenet these options shared was to derive an advantage from the Russian military's slow mobilization and deployment due to the vast distances involved and their relative lack of suitable railroad lines. Since the General Staff was sure its own deployment against Serbia could be completed by the fifteenth day of mobilization and that Russia would not have reached full operational readiness by then, the choice existed to attack Serbia first and attempt to defeat it quickly, or to launch an offensive against the Russian Army in Galicia to take advantage of its unpreparedness.

To exploit Russia's early weakness, both options envisioned immediate offensive action. The General Staff believed that only aggressive action could lead to success and that a war's decisive events would occur in the first six weeks, but that the military strength

needed for concurrent offensives on both the Russian and Serbian fronts was not available. Therefore, the dilemma existed as to which front to launch the desired offensive. Because ultimate victory or defeat would be decided on the larger front, it was determined that the need to deal with the Russian threat was of primary importance. An offensive against Serbia was concluded to be of secondary importance, no matter how enticing it seemed.

# Playing Both Sides in Galicia: Player's Notes for the Great Battle of Galicia Scenario

by Michael Resch

*When a player first looks upon the Galicia portion of 1914, Twilight in the East's campaign game and begins to formulate strategy, he may feel overwhelmed. The magnitude of the campaign is large: between the two belligerents, there are eight armies spread over a wide and diverse front. Making matters more difficult, several important decisions need to be made in the first few game turns that have significant victory point consequences. Since the game system is unique, with units being two dimensional (steps and Combat Effectiveness Levels), having a combat resolution system that makes predicting results uncertain, and a sequence of play that allows both players to move and attack twice per game turn, the outcome of these decisions will be hard to discern. To the inexperienced player, formulating a strategy for the campaign can seem daunting.*

*Where does a gamer begin in order to achieve victory? Without experience playing the game, it is difficult to determine what to do. There are surely many strategies for achieving victory in Galicia. This article is intended to give gamers an understanding of the situation they face so that they can make better informed decisions. Detailed focus will be turned upon the opening game turns, with later game turns covered in broad strokes. The essay will be full of recommendations. It must be kept in mind these are only the author's opinion; other strategies may prove to be more successful.*

AT FIRST GLANCE, the Galician Theater looks like a wide open confrontation with a great deal of space for maneuver. The belligerents' initial deployments are dispersed. Armies' flanks seem to hang in the air, both west of the Vistula River and south of the Dniester River. In general, a feeling of unconstrained possibilities exists.

In reality, the Galicia battle is a massive confrontation with restricted room to maneuver. As the various armies proceed toward their goals, unit density will increase significantly. The geographical constraints imposed by the Vistula and Dniester Rivers will make themselves felt, as will the constraints due to the limited number of railroad lines. The nature of the geography

is such that once the belligerents meet, the battle will rage in several tightly packed hot spots.

Achieving victory in this situation is much more a matter of strength allocation and timing than of maneuver. Players will find that once a unit has been allocated to a specific place in the line, it becomes very difficult to move it to a new place. Therefore, a great deal of thought must go into force allocation. The player who creates and exploits situations of local advantage will be victorious.

## Austro-Hungarian Plans

As the Austro-Hungarian player, on a grand strategic level, you face a disadvantageous situation. Although you are not numerically inferior you are qualitatively inferior. Your Russian enemy's formations have, on average, a higher Combat Effectiveness Level and superior artillery values. These critical shortcomings can never be altered. This makes playing the Austro-Hungarian side a challenging proposition.

Luckily, in game terms, you have a significant advantage: to achieve success, you do not need to decisively defeat your opponent's armies. You merely need to force the Russian player into a difficult situation. Very important from a grand strategic point of view, the Russian must be forced to expend time and Replacement Points to defeat you. Managing this without allowing your own forces' fighting ability to be completely destroyed will allow your German ally, if he is successful in Prussia, to grasp the initiative. The Russian player must be forced to react to events rather than be allowed to gain the initiative. Your advantage is that if stalemate arises you can consider yourself victorious.

Before any detailed analysis can be started, the basic aim of the Austro-Hungarian player must be defined. Your mission is to reach your Strategic Plan objectives as quickly as possible while denying, or significantly delaying, the Russian player his objectives. You must always consider that the campaign is a protracted one so that at no time should one of your armies be sacrificed to achieve these goals. At any point in time, if you feel you can no longer reach your objectives without irreparable harm to your forces, you must reconsider your position, never losing the ability to fight another day.

# The Eastern Front

## Late September 1914

