

Tannenberg - A Russian Plan

5

by Bruce Harper

That's right - a Russian plan. Without one, you don't have a chance as the superior ability of the Central powers to attack on a narrow front (due to the 3-2 stacking advantage) will assure the second player of a victory. In other words, in a straight fight, the Russians are lost as they cannot get Reserves to the front fast enough to defend and will lose a slugging match since the Austrians can stack three high and thus achieve 6-1 attacks on a line, whereas the Russians can, at best, get 4-1.

The conclusion is then reached that if the Russians put five or six corps on each of the three main invasion routes into Poland and spread the remainder throughout, they will lose by force, given a competent enemy, of course. The seemingly logical plan to use is to sit and wait for the rest of your army to mobilize. But this invites defeat in detail and so defeats the purpose.

This means that the Russians must attempt to seize the initiative early in the game. This means, in turn, that either the Germans or the Austrians must receive this dubious honor. First, the merits of an attack on Germany will be examined.

EAST PRUSSIA?

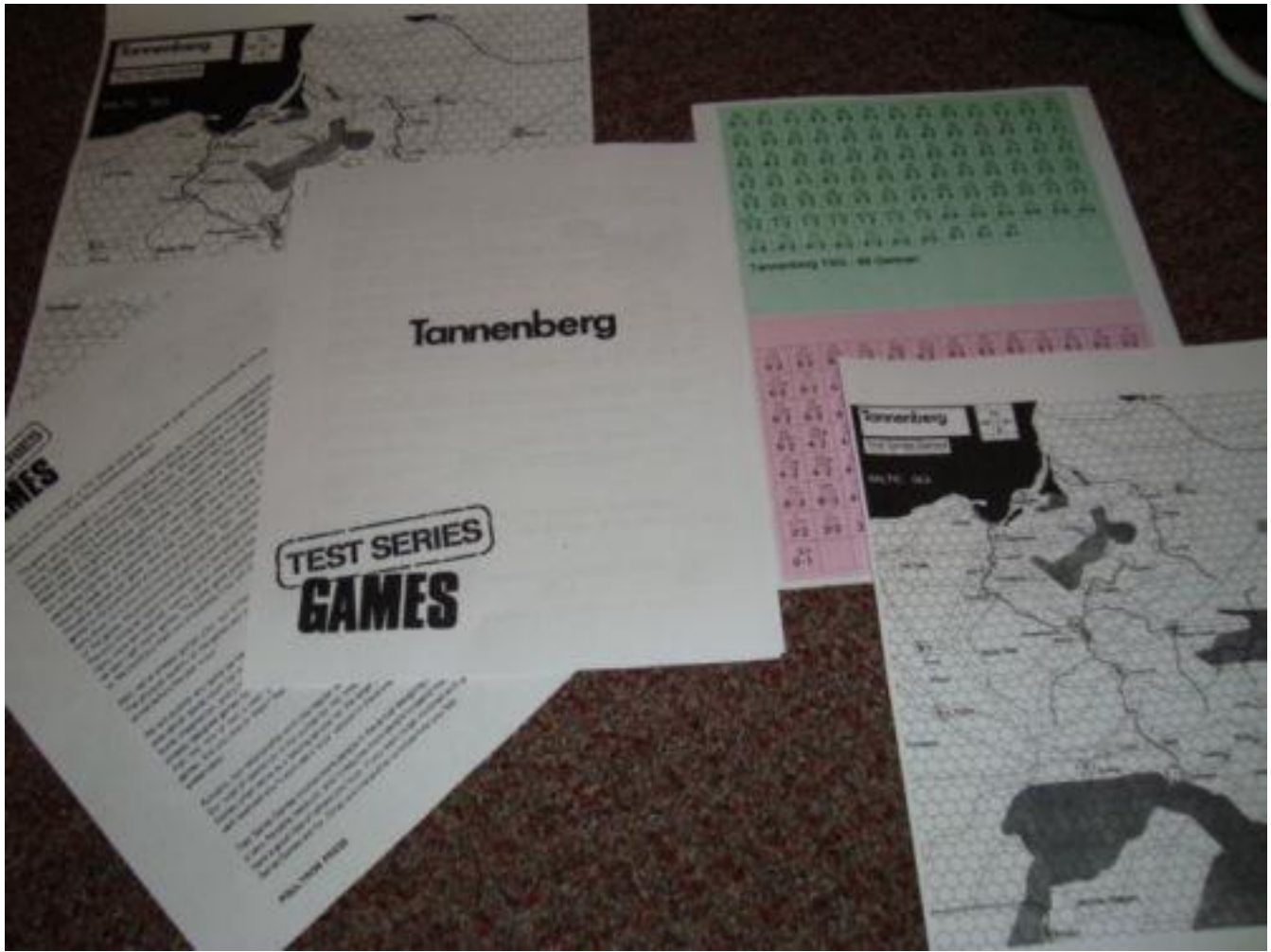
The advantages of this invasion are clear: occupying everything east of the Vistula will net you 30 points, and points are the object. Theoretically, then, East Prussia is worth six corps. Grab a few cities on the Vistula and the game is yours. But it's not that simple.

There is no doubt that it is possible to occupy East Prussia with ten or twelve corps very quickly. But the game lasts 25 turns and you have to be there at the end of the game. The German units can, with their mobility, striking power and replacement capacities, destroy a Russian force many times their size. Therefore, an advance into Germany will bog down 10 corps for a disproportionate gain and will leave the rest of the front sparsely defended. Even worse, the limited rail capacity of Poland means that once the Russians are in, they will not be sustained by reinforcements. The Germans, on the other hand, will always be at full strength and so will slowly gain the upper hand. An early invasion of Prussia, at least, will fail. A later invasion is different.

GALACIA?

The object of war is to destroy the enemy. In the particular case of Tannenberg, if the Austrian army is destroyed or crippled, all else will come. Prussia may be invaded with overwhelming force, the Galacian cities may be taken or invested. Therefore, the main object for the Russians must be to utterly destroy the Austrian army. The

(Below – Tannenberg TSG)





Above: Close up of Tannenberg TSG original map. Mounted counters sold later once SPI began that process.

Austrian replacement rate does not begin until turn five. You have five turns to cripple the enemy's main weapon.

How can this be accomplished? When you mobilize, you must put yourself in the Central Power's place. The key to taking Warsaw and destroying the Polish rail system is Ivangorod. Therefore, the Austrian player usually places most of his army in the salient south of that fortress. The rest is usually put near Brody and Tarnopol, to defend these cities or attack their Russian counterparts.

The Austrian army is usually divided into two parts, one opposite Ivangorod and the other opposite Dubno. The first task of the Russians is to destroy these concentrations. No effort must be spared. Out of the 26 Russian corps available, 16 should be put near Ivangorod and the rest near Dubno. No attack from the Germans should be expected or feared.

Due to the general ineptitude of the Russian troops and of their supply situation, the surrounding of Austrian formations is not to be expected. The Carpathian mountains provide a convenient place to fall back on and prevent the destruction of the Austrian army. So you can't hope for a total victory in the south. The best that could be hoped for would be perhaps a 50% kill rate. This would leave the Austrians with 10 active corps after five turns, when their replacements begin. But they would also be in the Carpathian mountains, around Pschemsyl. Since the railroads would be wiped out, the Austrians would be counted out as a threat to southern Poland for another five turns, after which they would really become a danger again. But by then most of the Russian army would have been mobilized and quality replacements would start to come in.

The attack also has added benefits. The chances of gaining points on casualty figures is remote as 4-1 attacks would be the rule. 6-1 are really nice but do not reduce the Austrians enough. You outnumber them and have a 2:0 advantage in replacements so trading men is to your advantage. If the Austrians are reduced to a weak level, an invasion into Hungary is a possibility, as once they start to crumble it progresses in like manner. An Austrian force of 8 corps faced by a Russian force of twice that number would probably be insufficient even in rough terrain. If there is a possibility of success, invade by all means. It doesn't matter where you bleed him. Don't get cut off. Another advantage that can be gained is the southern cities can be occupied. If the battle goes against you, they can go very quickly. But if you keep the initiative, you can force the enemy to fight on your terms. Budapest is worth seven corps. Always have the supply counters ready to roll and try to keep the Austrians weak.

SUMMARY

Do not invade East Prussia until you are sure you can hold it at the end. Do invade Galacia immediately. Do not attack at 6-1 to avoid casualties. Do attack at 3-1 to try to trade men. Do not try to reduce fortresses. Do try to destroy anyone who might lift a siege of a fortress (which is just as good as taking it). Do not try for short term gains of transitory territorial nature. Do try to destroy as many of the enemy as possible to allow you to "walk in" around move 20.

Fall upon the Austrians immediately, heavily and with great vigor and determination.