

FIRST BATTLE OF PRZASNYSZ

18 February - 26 March 1915

For everyone fighting on the Eastern front, the year 1914 ended in deadlock. Austria-Hungary, which was supported by Germany, managed to stop the Russian Steamroller in Galicia and Bukovina. After an unsuccessful attempt to take Warsaw (in October) and the unresolved battle of Łódź (in November), the front was stabilized on the Rawka River and the Bzura. Despite the Russian defeat in Tannenberg, East Prussia was still at risk of an invasion by the tsarist army.

This is why in 1915, the Central Powers tried to resolve the war in the East. One of the first great offensives was the German attack near the Masurian lakes. To secure the right flank and push the enemy away from the border, the Germans decided to attack in north Mazovia, near Przasnysz. However, the Russians concentrated their forces nearby because they were also planning an attack.

ALBATROS B.II

German multi-purpose biplane
 engine power: 100 horsepower
 speed: 110 km/h
 range: 400 km
 weapons: none
 crew: 2



To plan any offensive, it was necessary to collect data on enemy forces and the location of enemy troops. Such information could be obtained thanks to scouts who observed the movements of the enemy. These tasks were also carried out by air forces and German reconnaissance planes. Observation balloons were also used to direct artillery fire.

The view is better from above!

THE GERMAN EMPIRE
 THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

29 km

PRZASNYSZ



18 FEBRUARY

Max von Gallwitz, a German general, gave the order to start the attack on Przasnysz. Instead of a frontal assault, he decided to surround the town from both sides.

CZERNICE BOROWE

24 FEBRUARY

10 000 PRISONERS OF WAR

The battle for the town took all day. Soldiers fiercely fought for the town cemetery. To break the Russian defence, the Germans bombarded the town using howitzers, which caused great damage. As a result, Colonel Barybin, the defence commander, surrendered. 10,000 Russian soldiers were taken prisoners.

23 FEBRUARY

Having taken Jednorzecz, the 36th Reserve Division circled Przasnysz from the east and from the south and met with the division of General Wernitz, which was attacking from the west. The Russian crew in the town was cut off from its own forces located further away on the south and the east. That very day, the Germans seized the barracks in Przasnysz.

ZIELONA

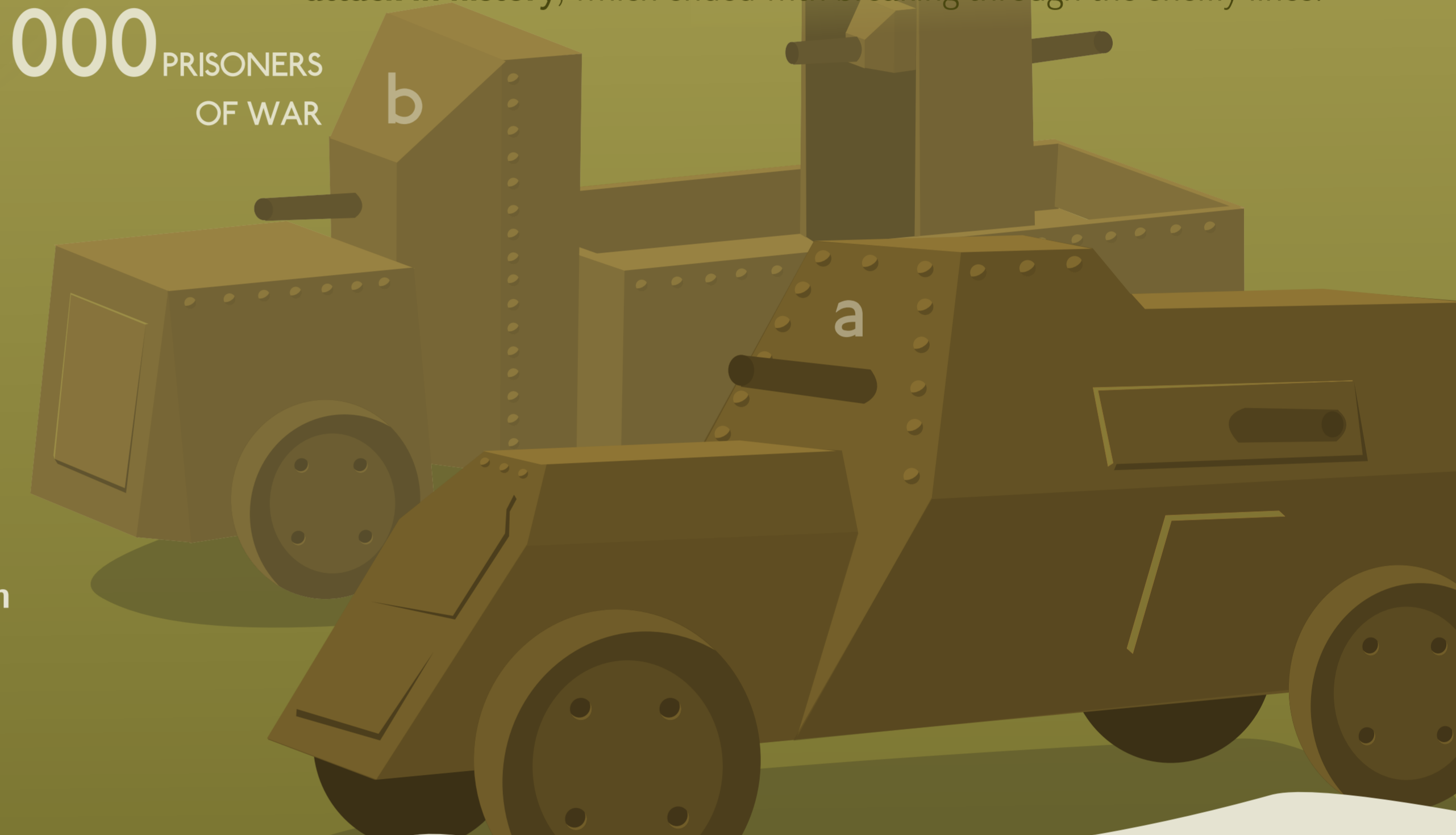
25 FEBRUARY

Before the fall of the town, the Russians started concentrating forces for a counter-attack and called for the 1st and the 2nd Siberian Army Corps. Together with the Turkestan Army Corps, they attacked the town from the west, south and east.

26 FEBRUARY

In the area between Dobrzankowo and Leszno the Russians launched an attack using five armoured vehicles. It was the first successful armour attack in history, which ended with breaking through the enemy lines.

2 000 PRISONERS OF WAR



b) Manneman-Mulag artillery armoured car

weight: 3 t
 weapons:
 2 x Maxim gun, calibre 7.62 mm,
 37 mm cannon

a) Russo Balt armoured car

weight: 4.5 t
 crew: 5 people
 maximum speed: 20 km/h
 weapons:
 3 x Maxim gun
 calibre 7.62 mm

27 FEBRUARY

A concentric attack from several directions prompted General Gallwitz to evacuate Przasnysz. At 7:00 p.m., Russian infantry recaptured the town and 5,000 German soldiers were taken prisoners. German troops were forced to withdraw to positions which they had occupied in the beginning of February.

5 000 PRISONERS OF WAR

27 FEBRUARY

In a well, the Russians found a hidden standard of the 1st battalion of the 34th Guards Fusilier Regiment. This battalion surrendered on 26 February near Józefów and its soldiers hid their standard to avoid the dishonour of losing it. It was the only standard lost by the Germans on the Eastern Front. It is still kept at the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.

7-28 MARCH

KILLED, INJURED AND TAKEN PRISONERS:

38 000

67 000

The Germans resumed their attack on Przasnysz on 7 March. However, on 13 March the Russians launched a counter attack. Fights in this area continued until 28 March and it was uncertain who will win. Even though villages such as Jednorzecz were passed from hand to hand, the battle finally ended in going back to the status quo.

The Germans did not significantly change the front line and the Russians did not destroy the enemy forces.

Józef Dowbor - Muśnicki 1867-1937

From November 1914, he commanded the 14th Siberian Rifle Regiment which was a part of the 2nd Siberian Army Corps. Not only Russians, but also Estonians, Latvians and Poles served in the regiment.

There, when we were forcing the Orzyc river, near the village of Podosie, I got into the fire of machine guns and took five bullets in my left leg, luckily it only passed through the muscles. Injured, I was taken away from the battlefield to Ostrołęka and then to Moscow in a sanitary train. But the attack was successful, the regiment took two batteries and eight hundred prisoners. "Moje wspomnienia" ("My Memoirs")

1914-1915

COLONEL OF THE 14TH SIBERIAN RIFLE REGIMENT

1917-1918

LIEUTENANT GENERAL, COMMANDER OF THE 1ST POLISH CORPS IN RUSSIA

1919

COMMANDER OF THE GREATER POLISH ARMY, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE GREATER POLAND UPRISING

1926

POLITICAL OPPONENT OF JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI DURING THE MAY COUP

FATHER OF JANINA LEWANDOWSKA, SECOND LIEUTENANT PILOT OF THE POLISH ARMY, THE ONLY WOMAN KILLED IN THE KATYN MASSACRE IN 1940