

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary

GT 1: 1 – 5 August 1914 (August 1).

General Situation

The July Crisis had ended with Europe sliding into conflict. Already declarations of war had been made. Allies had confirmed to each other their support or given their excuses. By 1 August, general war could not be avoided. However, it would not only be a conflict between Great Powers, for Germany demanded passage of Luxembourg and Belgium in order to carry out its war plans against France. Luxembourg would not make much of this, but Belgium would not roll over. That in turn would bring Great Britain into the conflict within a few days.

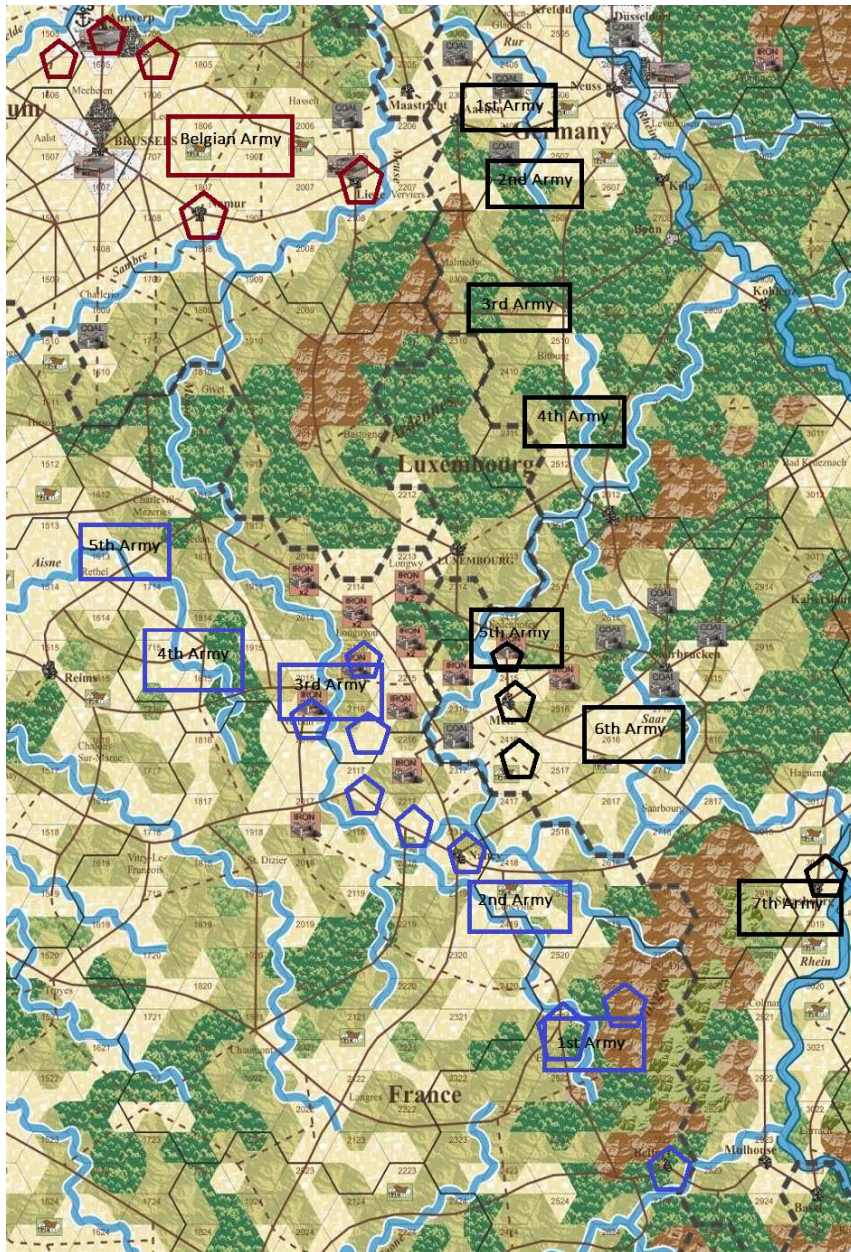


Figure 1: Approximate Mobilisation Zones in the West and Major Fortifications.

It would take several days or weeks for the belligerent powers to fully mobilise their forces, but there were aspects of the German plans which would not admit to delay. The Belgian fortress of Liege commanded the crossing of the River Meuse and the road and rail routes through Belgium which the German Army needed for the march of its right wing armies.

Belgium

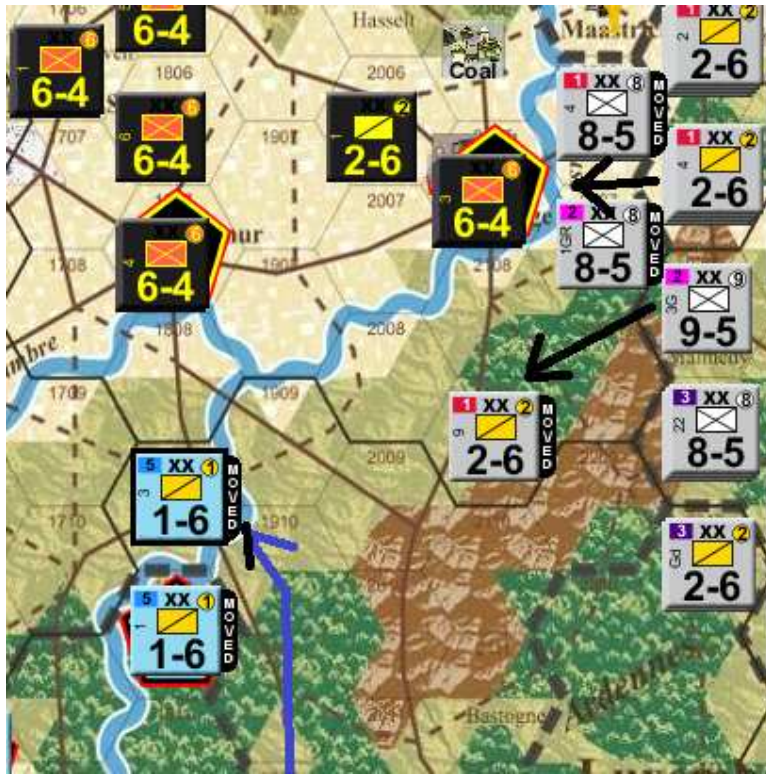


Figure 2: Violations of the Belgian Frontier, 1 - 5 August 1914.

The Germans had prepared a small force which was ready to act as soon as hostilities were under way. By 2 August, German infantry had crossed into Belgian territory and ran up against the fortifications surrounding Liege. The Belgians were still mobilising but, nevertheless, the Germans were unwilling to launch a premature assault and limited themselves to reconnaissance.

Further south, German cavalry entered the northern Ardennes. The 9th Cavalry Division pushed forward more boldly and reached the vicinity of Werbemont (5-3.2109) 40 kilometres inside Belgian territory on 3 August. Two other German cavalry divisions scheduled to advance suffered delays in the confusion of mobilisation and did not leave their staging areas on time. The German General Staff might have been infuriated by such oversights but the scale of the upcoming conflict and the pace of events meant that this would soon be forgotten as an inconsequential detail of the war.

As news of these actions filtered back to London, the British Government delivered its final ultimatum to Berlin and then declared war on 4 August.

The French were also concerned about the rumours of German movements. On 4 August, Joffre sent two French Cavalry Divisions into Belgium. These slowly moved to Dinant (5-3.1809) after passing around Givet. They secured some crossing points of the Meuse but were in little danger of finding any Germans so far west.

DM Situation – August 1914

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-							-	-	Good
Austria-Hungary	-							-	-	Good
Central Powers	-							-	-	
France	-							-	-	Good
Great Britain	-							-	-	Good
Russia	-							-	-	Good
Belgium	-							-	-	N/A
Serbia	-							-	-	N/A
Entente	-							-	-	

Player Comments

CP: The opening moves are very simple for the CP. Only elements of the German 1st and 2nd Armies are able to mobilize this early and they must move towards Liege; less a division of cavalry which probes along the fringes of the western Ardennes. The siege artillery begins the very slow process of moving towards Belgium to reduce the fortress of Liege as the main effort. I have to declare that this is the 2nd attempt at the full CG, having reached T7 of Aug 14 before. I made several errors as we progressed, all of which could have been heavily punished by my opponent who has been very magnanimous in his advice as I still get to grips with the nuances of this very impressive game system. What I have learnt is the importance of understanding capabilities, identifying key objectives and concentrating force to achieve effect, managing supply so as to avoid wastefulness, engage fortresses early with artillery and - crucially in Aug 14 - understand your own and the enemy mobilization schedules and general war plans. If the CP get this wrong they will fail to inflict the necessary casualties on the French to make their WF effort sustainable, will fail to achieve the necessary depth of penetration to force the TE back and will risk a significant hiding for AH in Galicia. Ultimately, it could lead to an untenable early start to the war for the CP and remove any possibility of a victory. Such errors on my part have led to the re-cock. My opponent deserves the freedom to punish my errors rather than magnanimously suggesting better options for my manoeuvres.

AP: My only decision is what to do with my French cavalry of which three divisions are mobilised. They are sent north towards Namur. They will slow any early German moves across the Meuse.