

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT64: 1 – 5 May (May 1)

General Situation

Lenin and a few of his more earnest companions took a walk around their Swiss Lake maybe for the hundredth time. They ignored the preparations which the Swiss villagers had made for May Day and read their own pamphlets while they ate their picnic lunch in silence. Exile was becoming an endurance test. The workers had not united to stop the war. Some of Lenin's own group had slipped away in recent weeks and one or two had even volunteered to fight for their own countries or allowed themselves to be called up. Nevertheless, on the walk back Lenin became more animated when Rosa Luxemburg started complaining that the world had gone mad. That was not what Lenin thought and he discoursed for over an hour on Imperialism as the last stage of Capitalism and the war as its final crisis. Above all he was enthusiastic for the news of Russia's recent defeats in Poland. The anticipated news of the fall of Warsaw meant that the whole rotten 19th century world had been broken. What better symbol of the sundering of the old order could there be than the splitting of the triple bonds which had kept Poland in chains for more than a century? While Rosa Luxemburg protested that the Tsar's defeat was the Kaisers' victory, Lenin maintained it wouldn't matter. Once one fell, the others would be sucked down with the first victim. Germany, he said, could not demoralise Russia without demoralising itself.

The Eastern Front

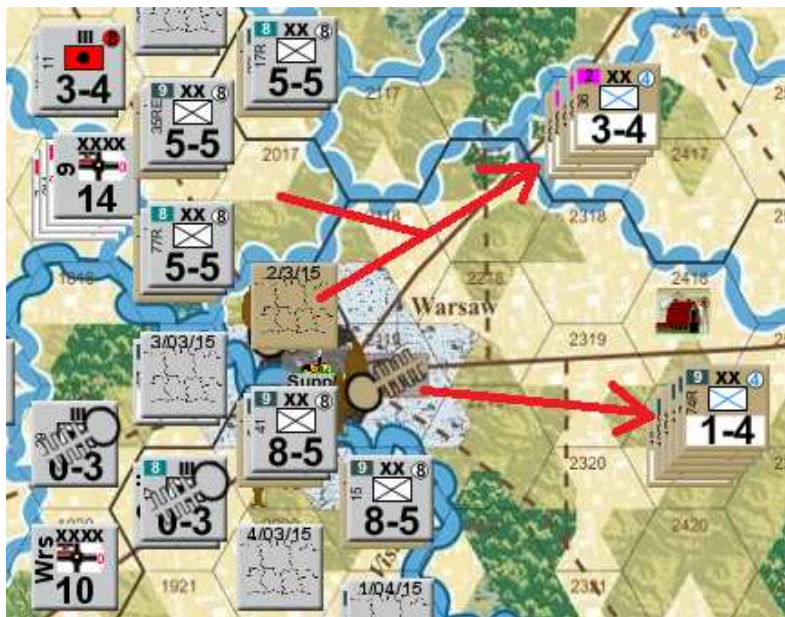


Figure 1: The Germans move into Warsaw, 1 - 5 May 1915.

General Woyrsch was satisfied that the Russians had evacuated the city centre of Warsaw and on 2 May the German 41st and Bavarian 5th Division marched in singing at the top of their voices after advanced groups had secured the whole city as far as the Vistula bridges. While the Germans were settling in, the Russians were preparing to pull back from the eastern side of the river. In fact, the Russians were soon retreating from the whole length of the river down to Ivangorod where they dynamited their own fortress on 4 May.

The Russian retreat was accelerating and spreading. The Sud Army and the Austrian 1st and 2nd Armies were moving forward. The Sud Army had advanced nearly 40 kilometres beyond the Vistula by 3 May and the German 44th Reserve Division rested next day no more than two marches west of Lublin.

The fastest movement forward was by the German 10th Army which reached the line of the Lower Niemen on 3 May. The Russians were observed on the north side of the river for 24 hours but by 5 May they had mostly disappeared save for some scattered cavalry patrols.

The Balkans

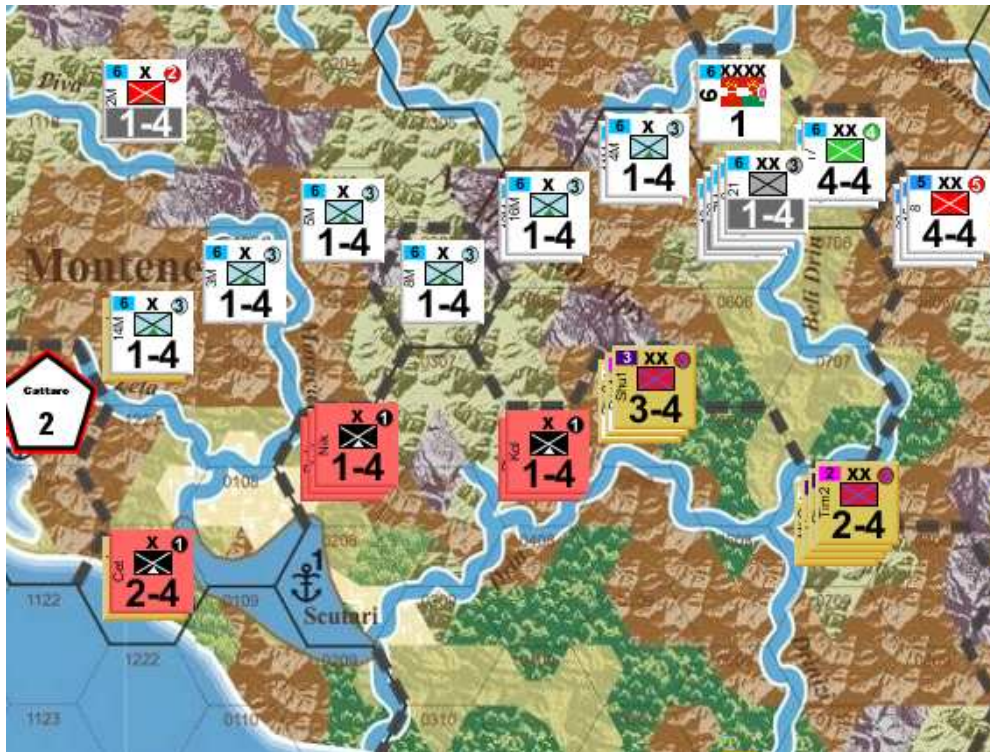


Figure 2: Montenegro abandoned, early May 1915.

The Bulgarians flooded in to Skopje on 1 May encountering no resistance. Part of the Bulgarian forces settled into the dubious pleasures of occupation in rather greater numbers than mere security might have demanded. However, a city that was part Serb, part Macedonian, part Greek and part Albanian was deemed to need a brigade to watch each community at least until it was certain that everyone would live quietly together under Bulgarian supervision.

As this difficult mission presented itself behind the front, the Bulgarian 2nd Army crossed the Vardar in pursuit of the Serbian Army which was falling back into the Goleznica Mountains.

At the western end of the Balkan Front, the Serbian and Montenegrin forces were forced back by the approaching mass of the Austrian 5th and 6th Armies advancing from the north and northeast. Practically the entirety of Montenegrin territory had been abandoned by 5 May except for a small coastal strip defended by the Cetinje Brigade. One of the curiosities of the Great War was the ability of certain countries to keep up resistance despite the loss of almost all their home territory. Where Belgium had shown the way Montenegro and Serbia were following.

The Near East



Figure 3: The Caucasus Front, 5 May 1915.

The ground war in the Near East saw little action at the beginning of May. The Russian 1st Turkestan Corps moved forward from Van as the Turkish 32nd Division fell back seeking a stronger defence line between the mountains and the lake.

On the Black Sea, the Central Powers had a rare naval success. The German battlecruisers based at Istanbul sortied on 2 May and two days later intercepted and sank Russian transports operating out of Odessa. They also drove away an obsolete Russian battleship which had attempted to intervene and she was lucky to get back to Sevastopol in one piece. After these actions the Russian would not dare attempt anything at sea for a long time.¹

At the Dardanelles, the Allied attacks were intensifying as more men and supplies were landed in their bridgehead. The Allied priority was to try and unite the French and British sectors. The attacks towards Krithia (7-6.3812) were renewed between 3 and 5 May. The French Marine Brigade led the new attacks and forced the Turkish 9th Division into a bitter hand to hand fight for their trenches. The British and French fleets pushed as far through the Straights as they dared to keep up a devastating fire on Turkish rear areas. When, on 5 May, the British 3rd Division joined the attack from the northeast a terrible bloody episode unfolded across the hills of the interior of the peninsula. All the larger formations involved in these attacks tended to disintegrate as the fighting broke up into small isolated fights for a gully or a wooded ridge invisible to divisional commanders and impossible to control at that level. By nightfall, the Turkish 9th Division hardly existed any more. The integrity of the Turkish defences rested for a few hours on an Arab Regiment recruited in Baghdad.

¹ This episode reflects a confirmation (late acceptance) of the rule GCR 38-10 which prevents the Entente having shipping resources in the Black Sea.

The Western Front

The Germans were digging in on their new shorter front in Picardy. The commanders of the French 10th and 5th Armies now advocated an early attack on this front where the fieldworks were not of the same strength as elsewhere. The French 5th Army moved through the chalk lands north of Amiens (5-3.0810) between 3 and 5 May and mostly encountered only empty German trenches.

Joffre was somewhat discomfited by the German retreat in Picardy because it had disrupted the plans for the next major French offensive. The new German front appeared strong and it would take some time before it was properly mapped and assessed so he vetoed the proposal of an immediate attack. However, much delay was not really an option because the news from Russia was speaking for more urgency.

The French command was encouraged in respect of the air force. New French aircraft were then superior to their German opponents as now it was standard for the French machines to be defended by a machine gun and their endurance was growing. This meant that they could maintain their positions over German lines without fear of being driven off and the possibilities for closer air and artillery coordination were expanding.

The Italian Front

On 3 May, the Italian Chief-of-Staff, General Cadorna, took leave of his wife and was driven to Rome where he gave a brief report on the preliminary mobilisation of the Italian Army to the King. He left Rome on 5 May for Padua on 5 May without troubling to speak to any Ministers. Half of them were unaware that it had been agreed Italy would declare war on Austria-Hungary on 29 May.

May 1915 DM Summary

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-							11	11	741	Good
Austria-Hungary	-							-	-	347	Good
Ottoman	2							NA	2	20	Good
Bulgaria	-							-	-	4	Good
Central Powers	2							11	13	1102	
France	1							-	1	584	Good
Great Britain	2							-	2	85	Good
Russia	-							NA	-	416	Good
Italy	-							-	-	-	Good
Belgium	-							NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	-*							NA	-	(22)	NA - *Skopje lost
Entente	3							-	3	1082	

Players Notes

CP: Germany's food position has improved slightly. Numerous reinforcements arrive over the next two months with 8 new army divisions appearing; which means reducing 8 full strength divisions on the front line. The situation in the east permits me to do this without any great risk. Both AH and Germany produce numerous RPLs and churn out full supply. Food DM may reduce slightly this month for the CP. There is still no gas development but the TE get air superiority on the WF.

- *East: The Russians are in full retreat now, although with well-prepared rearguard positions to prevent the withdrawal becoming a rout. All I do is probe further eastwards with a single unsupplied attack against a Russian cavalry outpost which will compel him to fall back here. The move is about cautious advances while I await further supplies and force elements. I suspect the pressure will force him to abandon Warsaw or risk encirclement. I have not wanted to attack the fortifications protecting Warsaw and have been implementing the indirect approach. It has been at times slow and frustrating, but appears to finally be having effect.*
- *Galicia: AH commences reclaiming national territory on a hinge running west from Przemysl. From Przemysl eastwards it is about consolidation as forces mass further west and north and begin pushing eastwards.*
- *Serbia: More slow advances without combat.*
- *West: I take the opportunity to deploy new divisions to the WF to bolster what I am certain will be a major offensive somewhere along the Somme or the Aisne.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Gallipoli: Having repulsed his first attacks I continue to build up in my defences and hunker down for the naval bombardment to come.*
- *Italy: Quiet.*

AP: David Schroeder circulated draft errata for the GCR before this turn got played. I was pleased that it did not contain anything which would have dramatically changed the play of the game to date. The most significant going forward will be aspects of sustainment and the Near East game. However, I have been playing conservatively in this regard and if anything I might have a little more freedom. There are some minor changes to the way garrisons requirements are determined and I have finally accepted the rules say no Russian naval movement in the Black Sea.

My main impression of this turn, which took place after a couple of weeks break was that the Central Powers forces in the East seemed too powerful to allow any further prolonged fighting with the Russians until this enemy concentration is dispersed either by movement East following the Russians or deployment to other fronts.

So far the CP production strategy seems to have been to build to maximise fresh strength in the short term – that means as much replacements as possible (no more than what replaces what is lost). The result of this could be a shortage of CP builds in the second half of 1915 and until the increased

German production of 1916 kicks in. It is hard to know in advance what the requirements will be but the CP will have a smaller manpower reserve later on and if the CP needs more Artillery it will take a long time to produce (the Germans do get some reinforcements). I have been giving Artillery a priority for the French and British but that is because I know I will have a mission for it and I start from behind in terms of available guns.

The Turks have reinforcements heading to Gallipoli which is why I have continued my attack on that front without delay. I was surprised to be offered a 1 in 6 chance to capture a hex on the peninsula but it didn't come off this time.

Production Totals

Supply

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	77	18	-	-	95	20	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	58
Nov 14	77	18	-	-	95	20	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	58
Dec 14	77	18	2	-	97	20	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	58
Jan 15	77	26	2	-	105	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	78
Feb 15	77	26	2	-	105	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	78
Mar 15	77	26	2	-	105	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	78
Apr 15	77	26	2	-	105	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	78
May 15	77	26	2	1	106	30	18	20	-	-	-	-	-	10	78

Weapon Production (+drawdown on pre-war stockpiles)

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	42 +43	23	-	-	108	27 +70	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	217
Nov 14	42 +26	23	-	-	91	27 +70	50 +20	50	-	1	-	-	-	-	218
Dec 14	42 +7	23	2	-	74	28 +30	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	178
Jan 15	42	23	2	-	67	27	50 +20	50	-	1	-	-	-	-	148
Feb 15	42	23	2	-	67	27	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	147
Mar 15	42	23	2	-	67	27	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	147
Apr 15	42	23	2	-	67	27	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	147
May 15	42	23	2	1	68	27	50 +20	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	147

Manpower (Colonial)

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	69	36	NA	-	105	41 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	2	6	-	-	-	-	209
Nov 14	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Dec 14	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Jan 15	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Feb 15	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	6	-	-	-	-	206
Mar 15	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	2	-	-	-	-	202
Apr 15	70	37	NA	-	107	39 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	2	-	-	-	-	202
May 15	69	37	NA	-	106	40 (+8)	59 (+13)	80	1	1	-	-	-	-	202