

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT65: 6 – 9 May 1915 (May 2)

General Situation

The first week of May 1915 was heralded as a new spring time for the Kaiser and a new beginning for the Reich. The favourable war situation recalled the era of the Wars of Unification. As the news of the Russian retreats spread through Germany everywhere there was hope that the war could soon be brought to a swift end. The Allies' everyone reasoned would see that they were defeated on all fronts and that Britain and France (and certainly the general population of those countries) would not tolerate any longer being connected to the backward Tsarist Empire which had proved such a paper tiger.

The prestige of the German Army was sky high. Several German commanders who had led Army Detachments including Woysch, Falkenhausen, Gaede, Gallwitz and Stranz were now promoted to be full Army Commanders. General Mackensen, who had been stewing in a desk job in Berlin, managed to secure the command of the German 11th Army thanks to the favour of the Kaiser. He hated to be reminded he was not at the front when Warsaw fell and his moustache would curl alarmingly if anyone referred to this even if inadvertently and indirectly.

The mood in Austria was also optimistic for the possibilities of peace. However, for the government in Vienna and Budapest there was urgency about it which was not shared in Berlin. Some German leaders thought it would be necessary to rub the Russians noses in their humiliation a little longer. Vienna was of course in a mild panic about Italy. Some statesmen opined that with Russia overcome Italy would not dare to strike. Military intelligence did not agree with this assessment. Secret diplomatic despatches from Rome were not reassuring.

The Eastern Front

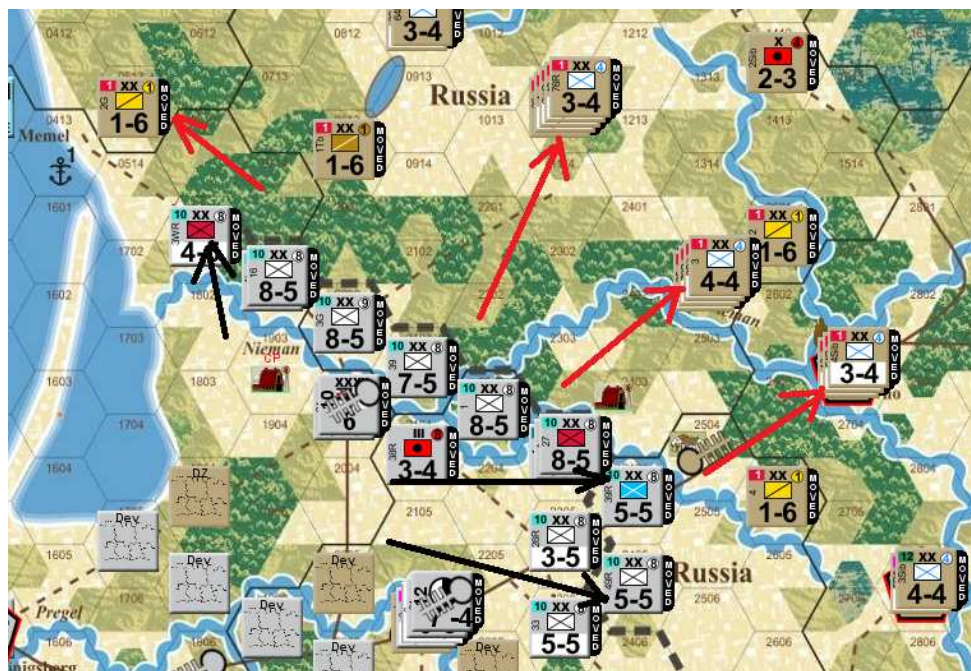


Figure 1: The German 10th Army crosses the Nieman and the Prussian Frontier, 6 - 9 May 1915.

The period of trench warfare on the Eastern Front was abruptly terminated in the first week of May. Wherever the Germans and Austro-Hungarians pushed forward with determination the Russians gave way. From the Baltic coast to Przemysl the Russians were retreating often by forced march.

Cavalry were once again extremely important and the Central Powers had some reason to regret the relative neglect of this arm which had not flourished during the winter of 1914-5. The Russians used their more abundant cavalry to cover their retreat and attempted to use their horsemen to delay the pursuit.

There was a notable cavalry encounter at Junkerskai (4-5.1801) on 6 May. Here the Russian 5th Cavalry Division squared off against an under strength German 8th (Saxon) Cavalry Division as the Russians tried to delay the Germans from advancing towards Memel. The German cavalry made good progress for several hours until the evening when an effective Russian counterattack resulted in heavy casualties. Later, the 3rd Württemberg Reserve Division came up and drove away the surviving Russians.

This action was just one detail in the successful advance of the German 10th Army which controlled the whole length of the Nieman River 100 kilometres inland by 7 May. The 10th Army also pushed aggressively east and crossed the Russian border between Wladyslawow (4-5.2404) and Wierzbolowo (4-5.2405) late in the evening of 7 May. The 10th Army was supported to the south by the German 8th Army which was aggressive but still engaged in clearing the Russian trench lines at the south end of the Benkenheimsee (4-5.2309). By 9 May almost the whole of East Prussia had been reached by the German Army. Only at Memel were there still significant numbers of Russians visible to the populace. The Russian Guards Cavalry had not lost their customary swagger and staged a full dress parade along the waterfront on 9 May. There were few spectators who did not fervently hope that they too would be liberated in a day or two.



Figure 2: The Germans and Austrians occupy Lublin and advance to the Wieprz River, 6 – 9 May 1915.

The most advanced German spearheads were those of the 12th Army and independent forces working in conjunction with the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army. These captured Lublin on 6 May and had advanced as far as the Wieprz River. This thrust was also steadily uprooting the Russian front in the Carpathians which would have to be given up as the Central Powers threatened to move behind it. By 7 May, the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army had been activated and was moving toward Przemysl. They crossed ground which had, in recent months, been defended such that any attack would have been deemed suicidal. Now the same ground was undefended.

In the centre, on 8 May, the Russians blew up the fortresses of Lomsha and Ostrolenka as they abandoned their defences on the Narew River. The Russian 6th, 10th and 9th Armies pulled back rapidly eastwards along the Bug River and towards Brest-Litovsk. The Germans had reorganised their forces into two new Armies (the 15th and the 12th) which were still passing the Vistula and the Russians were able to get some distance ahead of them while the Germans celebrated their successes in Warsaw.

The Balkans

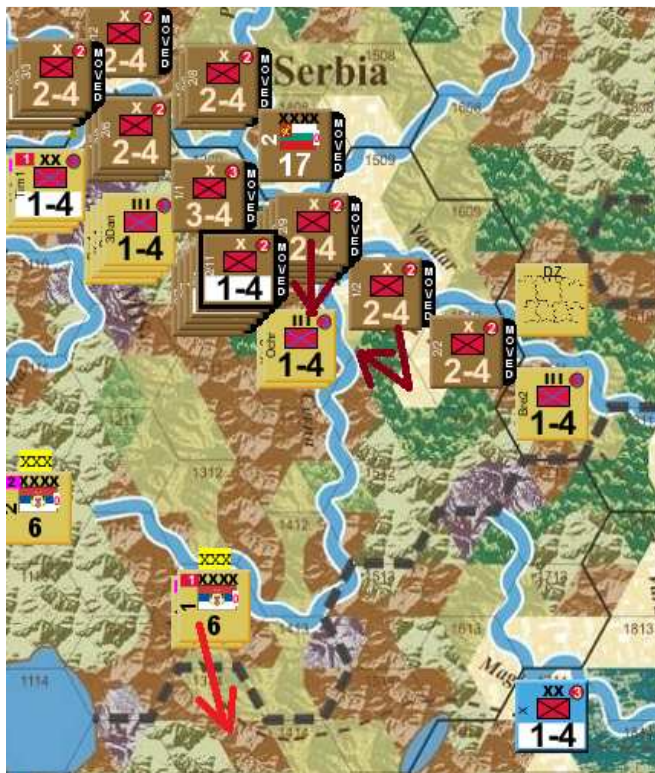


Figure 3: The Battle of Dren Monastery, 6 - 7 May 1915.

The Bulgarians were intent on gaining a tight grip on southern Serbia. To complete the conquest of the country they had to overrun the sizeable region between the Vardar River and Lake Ohrid. This would be no small task give the difficult terrain. On 6 – 7 May, the Bulgarian 2nd Army aimed to surround a Serbian force defending the hilltop monastery at Dren and at Mount Orle (7-6.1410). Although the Bulgarians thought they had found a back route into the rear of the Serbian position by way of the Cvnra Valley they were misled by their guides and found Serbian detachments blocking their flanking movement. Even so, the Serbian Ohrid Regiment was cornered at Dren and then refused to withdraw. For twenty four hours Bulgarian and Serbian struggled together at short range

as superior Bulgarian forces steadily eliminated pockets of resistance in the village and at the famous Orthodox monastery which sadly caught fire in confused circumstances.

While Dren burned in the aftermath of the Bulgarian victory, officers of the Serbian 1st Army (which was now in fact little more than a Corps) prepared to cross the Greek frontier south of Monastir. The Serbians had an engineer regiment at hand in case there was trouble. The Greeks had only obtained territory in Macedonia during the recent wars and, with the government in Athens divided on what to do about the war raging in Serbia, they had not resolved to defend their frontier. The Serbians were welcomed by two sentries and a donkey and allowed to make their way into Greece without being disarmed. This was not the proper conduct of a neutral country.

The Near East

The Allied attacks on the Dardanelles Peninsula died down and ceased on 6 May giving the Turks an opportunity to reinforce positions they had been in danger of losing a few days previously. Kemal's 19th Division was moved south into the most exposed positions around Krithia (7-6.3812).

The other Near Eastern fronts were largely inactive. The Turkish government was engaged in a famous debate as to the priorities of internal versus external security. They were preparing to weaken their garrisons in Syria; Palestine and the Hejaz in order to strengthen the Armies facing the British in Sinai and Iraq.

The Western Front

The busiest place on the Western Front at this time was the port of Dunkirk which served as the landing place for most British forces arriving in France. On 8 May it was the turn of the British 12th Division to disembark. Some of the men were disappointed with the reception of the French local population. Dunkirk only managed a small demonstration of flag waving by a party of schoolchildren who had unfortunately had to do this rather too often at the expense of their initial zeal and book learning. Many plainly would have preferred to be in class.

The Italian Front

The Austrians were fully aware that the Italians were just in the last stages of their preparations to join the conflict. For the present, Conrad only required the Hapsburg forces on the Italian frontier to make defensive preparations. On 6 May, a new Austrian Army headquarters (8th) was established at Schönberg (6-5.3318) north of Trieste to command all forces on the Isonzo front.

Player Notes

CP. I spend some time changing all German HQs named after personalities to numerically designated armies. Kovess does likewise. I have done this for ease of attaching formations to an army HQ and numbering it accordingly as, particularly in the east, I intend to give clear orders to specific HQs and designate them specific sectors.

- *East: The Russians continue to retreat in good order and making effective use of cavalry screens and blocking forces which are impossible for me to get around the flanks of. They are too strong to attack and impossible to envelop – thus far. I shift a depleted cavalry div of my own by rail to enable the destruction of one of his cavalry*

screens along the Nieman River. One other German attack is made by 8th Army on the shoulder of the Masurian Lakes. This is not an advantageous attack for me, but he will take an enormous slump in morale after my occupation of Warsaw and every loss will hurt him now.

- *Galicia: AH has now built up a very strong force with 1st, 2nd and 4th armies running north from Przemysl. The pressure on the Russians now should likely see the liberation of Przemysl imminently. Lublin is also back in AH hands.*
- *Serbia: More slow advances but this time Bulgaria seizes another opportunity to attack a weak Serb force along the banks of the Vardar River.*
- *West: More bolstering of some of the more vulnerable German positions as I rapidly dig in new trenches. Retrospectively, I think it was a mistake of mine to withdraw from Amiens. I was concerned by the length of my line in the west and his ability to concentrate against me.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet; although I send further reinforcements across the Black Sea.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Using David's errata, I start to move garrisons out of Maan, Amman and Iskanerdum; leaving regimental strength units to remain as garrisons.*
- *Gallipoli: I continue to build up strength on the peninsula. Further attacks will hurt him.*
- *Italy: Quiet; but I am building up strength for impending conflict.*

May 1915 DM Summary

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-	3						11	14	744	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-						-	-	347	Good
Ottoman	2	-						-	2	20	Good
Bulgaria	-	1						-	1	5	Good
Central Powers	2	4							17	1106	
France	1	-						-	1	584	Good
Great Britain	2	-						-	2	85	Good
Russia	-	78*						NA	78	494	Good - *Warsaw and Lublin lost
Italy	-	-						-	-	-	Good
Belgium	-	-						NA	-	(95)	NA
Serbia	-*	(1)						-	(1)	(23)	NA - *Skopje lost
Entente	3	78						-	81	1163	

AP: I just have to endure the Russian defeat. I am risking cavalry and I may lose one or two units in order to delay the German advance. I took the 75 DM medicine for the loss of Warsaw. I have discounted that in my Russian plans as it was bound to happen sooner or later. Less predictable was that it takes Russian DM to nearly 500, so I only have another 100 to play with before Russian Morale is Shaken. I will try not to worry about that too much. It only makes a difference in prohibiting unsupplied attacks. [Not true, it effects production too]. It is a long time since I dared to make an unsupplied attack with the Russians so I may not miss this ability.

The French will have to attack this month as they will exceed their stockpile limits next month if I do not do so. I have selected my intended objectives on the German front but am using rail movement capability to mask these intentions (rail capacity is directly related to the ability to keep the enemy from having advanced knowledge of attack plans). I will reveal the target when I commit the reserves which I have pulled out of the front – next turn I think.

Food Deficits

Date	Ge	AH	Ot	Bul	CP	Fr	Br	Rus	Be	Se	It	Rom	Gr	US	Ent
Oct 14	12	1	NA	-	13	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Nov 14	9	5	NA	-	14	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Dec 14	10	6	NA	-	16	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Jan 15	9	5	NA	-	14	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Feb 15	15	-	NA	-	15	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Mar 15	15	-	NA	-	15	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
Apr 15	15	-	NA	-	15	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-
May 15	11	-	NA	-	11	-	-	NA	NA	NA	-	-	-	NA	-

Calculation of Food Deficit – May 1915

Germany			Austria		
Needs	83	PCs	Needs	29	PCs
Less	-1 = 82	Mulhouse	Less	-4 = 25	Galician PCs
Food	68 (this is different from the count in the rulebook [67])	Germany	Food	24	Austria
Less	-3 = 65	Prussia/Alsace	Less	-6 = 18	Galicia
Plus	4	Romania	Plus	2	Hungary
Plus	1	France (6 – 5)	Plus	1	Germany
Plus	3	Hungary			
Plus	3	Poland (8 - 5)			
Less	1	Austria			
	75	Total Food		21	Total Food
Deficit	7			4	
Or if Romania shifts column	11			0	