

## **Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game**

**GT75: 19 – 22 June 1915 (June 5).**

### **General Situation**

As mid-summer approached there were some signs of a change in the war situation. The great Central Powers' offensives were approaching their limits. Berlin was not willing to add Greece to its list of enemies and the Austrian and Bulgarian Armies were under strict instructions not to violate Greek territory except in circumstances where enemy forces were in close proximity to the border. Even southern Albania was problematic from this point of view as it was an area in which the Greeks had territorial claims.

German commanders were also wary about pursuing the Russian Army too far. Already their front in Belorussia and Latvia had become stretched and there were recent examples of German and Austrian forces cut off because of unwary advances. The campaign against Russia was not over but there was an increase in military traffic on the German railways and this was in an East-West direction. The first units to receive such reassignments were generally the artillery regiments.

### **The Western Front**

Haig had not expected his (1<sup>st</sup> Army) attack in Flanders to experience the delays it encountered due to rainfall in the first two days. The ground then dried out and there were favourable intelligence reports suggesting that the German defences in front of Dixmunde were still thin and defended by reservists. Many of Haig's men were new recruits and he was not satisfied that the III Corps had done its utmost. Further attacks were ordered on 21 June, with the Belgian Army providing some support on the left flank. The German Marines had been relieved by the 51<sup>st</sup> Reserve Division which fought hard on 21 – 22 June to drive back small British bridgeheads across the Yser. It was not a very splendid outcome for the British.

### **The Italian Front**

The Italian attacks in the Dolomites were kept up as the campaign in the mountains entered its second week. Although it was difficult to execute effective operations across the mountainous terrain, the Italian alpine troops were full of enthusiasm and were persistently preying on a weakening Austrian defence.

The Tyrolian Jaegers of the Austrian mountain brigades were equally expert at fighting on the high alpine slopes but they were lacking reserves. The 52<sup>nd</sup> Mountain Brigade at Castel Tesino (6-4.2417) was told, on 20 June, it would have to wait another week before it could be relieved. The Brigade Commander was incredulous that the Tyrolean Army Headquarters was so complacent of his plight. He claimed to have information that eleven Italian Divisions were trying to break through in his sector. Although this was perfectly true, it was not believed by anyone at Army Headquarters even though they were comparatively close at Cavalese (6-4.2317). If the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade defence broke, then there was nothing to stop the Italians crossing the Cima D'Asta and they would be at Cavalese in no time.

## The Eastern Front

The German 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Armies followed the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Armies at a respectful distance as they withdrew towards Riga. Elsewhere there was little action in Belorussia and the Baltic Region as the German forces were spread out over large distances and were not prepared to close again with the Russians.

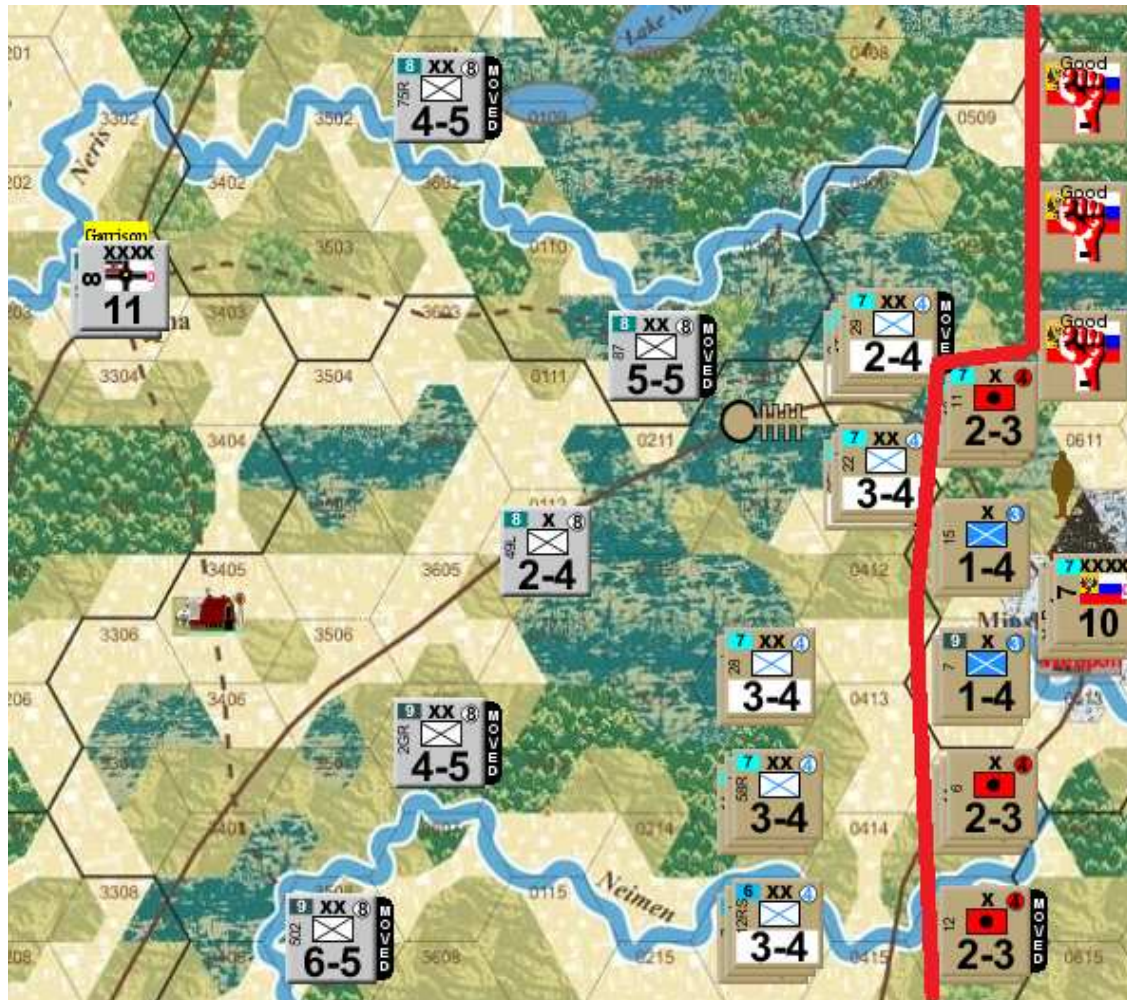


Figure 1: German 8th Army Advance approaching Minsk and the Mother Russia Line, 19 - 22 June 1915

The fighting on the South West Front was not over. The Austrians had another attempt to drive the Russian 5<sup>th</sup> Army back from Wyszgorodok (5-5.4307) on 19 – 20 June but the outcome was indecisive.

In this comparative lull, debates took place at OberOst and at Conrad's Headquarters at Teschen. The subject was always the same. How far need the German and Austrian Armies go to secure the defeat of the Russian Army. Was it necessary to take Riga? Was it even possible to advance to Minsk? No said Hoffman emphatically in a riposte to the overenthusiastic commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army (von Scholtz) on 19 June. Surely, Austrian officers could not be expected to leave Stanislau and Czernowitz in Russian hands? Conrad fully agreed but what if Vienna or the Court tied his hands?

## The Balkans



Figure 2: The Serbian Lakes Redoubt, 19 - 22 June 1915

The Austro-Hungarian advance came to a halt about 20 kilometres south of the Shkumbin River. There would be no moves on the Serbian base at Valona in southern Albania. There were no major battles in the third week of June. The Serbians had concentrated their remaining troops (less the Montenegrin Corps) in the Lakes Redoubt, sometimes referred to as the National Redoubt. So far the Central Powers had not dared to attack these strong positions.

## The Near East

The Allied attack on Achi Bacha (7-6.3812) had ended with horrible casualties on both sides. For several days, both Armies were devoted to recovery of the wounded and dead. Despite this both sides were feeding replacements and reinforcements into the crowded battlefront. The newcomers soon learned that there was no romance in the warfare on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The veterans would explain that their most important objectives lay barely 50 metres from the front line trench. The stalemate was so solid that more distant goals were deemed impossibly ambitious.

Despite leaving in his wake nearly half the I Indian Corps in a string of medical stations awaiting evacuation to Basra, Townsend pressed on towards Ali Garbi. The speed of the march increased as those still in the ranks had proved themselves fitter and the country was starting to dry out.

The Turks kept up the pressure on the Russians in the Caucasus but the focus of their offensive shifted away from the Murat Valley. The Turkish plan was to try and turn the Russian front near Erzerum by threatening to break into their rear by an advance to the Aras Valley. The Turks believed there was a weak point in the Russian defence at Hacı Ömer (6-8.2512) where a lonely Kuban

Mountain Brigade and some Cossacks guarded a crossroads. The Turks committed four Divisions to attack on 20 June. The operation was ambitious. The Turkish 31<sup>st</sup> Division had such a long march through the mountains that its impact on the fighting was slight. The main assault was delivered by the Turkish 24<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Divisions and they could not do anything other than blunder forwards into killing zones which the Russian defenders had prepared with the aid of favourable terrain. The Turks stopped their attacks when they were proved to be futile and considered whether there were other options.



Figure 3: The Turkish 3rd Army Offensive, 19 - 20 June 1915.

#### Player Notes

#### CP:

- *East: German forces thin themselves out in the centre relying upon the Pripyet Marshes to slow, channel or deter any Russian offensives in this area and to enable a distribution of forces to the flanks to try and concentrate effort. I also come to the late realisation that I have been wasting German effort in this area instead of sending off German divisions to assist the AH. So, 12<sup>th</sup> Army of two corps heads SE to join the AH efforts. There is only one attack on the EF this turn, conducted again by the AH 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> armies in mutual support.*
- *Serbia: Quiet. I start to thin out somewhat to allow more units to head to the Italian front.*
- *West: Quiet after the Anglo-Belgian attack at Dixmude last turn with just a little bit of reorganisation in the trenches along this part of the front.*
- *Caucasus: The Turkish 3<sup>d</sup> Army launches another attack in the mountains in the centre where an irregular cavalry division and understrength mountain brigade hold the Russian line.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*

- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Gallipoli: Both sides took severe casualties I his last attack. I suspect another period of licking wounds will follow.*
- *Italy: Another unsatisfactory trade-off with the Italians. AH cannot afford these 1:1 ratio losses but I am at a loss for what else I can do. He has been fortunate in how weak my counterattacks have been.*

#### DM Summary – June 1915

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [%SM]	Morale
Germany	-	2	3	6	2			8	21	804	Good
Austria-Hungary	1	26	2	6	2			5	42	395	Good
Ottoman	1	1	1	4	2			NA	9	35	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	11	Good
Central Powers	2	29	6	16	6			13	72	1224	
France	-	-	-	3	-			-	3	609	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	8	2			-	10	116	Good
Russia	4	16*	6**	9#	3			NA	38	564	Good - *Kowel lost **Leipaja and Vilna lost # Luck lost
Italy	-	5	1	1	2			-	9	9	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	(1)	-			-	(1)	(96)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-*	-	-			-	-	(27)	NA*Tirane lost
Entente	4	21	7	21	7			-	60	1295	

*AP: I am very displeased with the situation on the Eastern Front which may be surprising given the high I was on three turns ago. The Russian Army is in a bad state and I do not think the Central Powers offensive is declining as much as I thought it would. The Central Powers look particularly strong at the moment in Volhynia and may advance now to Rovno.*

*The best thing for me at the moment is that my attack on Trentino should succeed in capturing a hex next turn if not this. I can keep up the attacks (strength 40 halved and then halved for mountains) indefinitely. So long as the defence remains only one or two brigades I will get a good exchange rate.*

*I was surprised my first attack in Flanders didn't cause more of a reaction. Few reserves have been sent there and as a result I repeated my attack and may do again if I still fail to make him move to respond.*