

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

**GT79: 6 – 9 July 1915 (July 2)**

### **General Situation**

The tentative discussions between the Tsar and the Germans were abruptly terminated though the existence of them could not be convincingly denied. The Entente powers swiftly sought to publically reconfirm their unity despite their private concerns.

The star of the still new British Coalition Government, Lloyd-George, made a well reported speech in Cardiff on 9 July which was widely circulated in Allied capitals. He emphasised the global character of the war and told his audience that the fighting in Iraq (of which there had been very little) was just as important as the campaign on the Western Front. From this time on Lloyd-George was always viewed as a dangerous Easterner by the senior British commanders in France. Lloyd-George also maintained that there was great scope for cooperation with the Russians in the Near East and the Balkans. He referred to the campaign at the Dardanelles and the recent promise of aid to the Serbians. Though the Allied forces on the ground at Gallipoli would now have laughed at it, Lloyd-George sketched out an imaginary campaign in which the Allies would advance out of their Turkish bridgehead taking Constantinople before linking up with Serbians and Greeks advancing into Bulgaria. Finally they would join hands with the Russians, Romanians and Italians somewhere near Budapest at which point the Hapsburg Empire would collapse.

When Joffre heard of this speech he said only a politician, or Cadorna, could have made it. Despite this he wrote warmly to Lloyd-George agreeing that the fall of Budapest would certainly end the war. Joffre had a bit of the politician in him too.

### **The Eastern Front**

The battle which was raging around Riga was one of the greatest yet fought on the Eastern Front. The German 10<sup>th</sup> Army was, however, running short of supplies for it was a long way from its railheads. A direct assault on a city which the Russians were massed to defend was not a realistic prospect. Instead the Germans concentrated on clearing the north side of the Aa River working west from Iocava to Garoza (4-5N.1305) during 6 – 7 July. This forced the Russians to abandon the whole of the region to the south west of the city between the Aa and the Babite Lake.

To the west of Minsk, the German 8<sup>th</sup> Army pulled back its spearheads as it reacted to the danger of encirclement which had been created by the sudden advance of the Russian 7<sup>th</sup> Army. Nevertheless, this crisis was quickly passing because General Nikitin was also intent on bringing his widely flung command back under control. At the end of the first week of July both sides were disengaging.

The Germans were still moving forwards in the Pripet Marshes. The strong Central Powers' forces in Volhynia had crossed the Goryn River on 6 July. However, in Podolia further efforts to pursue the Russians did not continue far beyond the Austro-Hungarian border.



Figure 1: The Austro- Hungarians recapture Czernowitz, 7 July 1915.

Conrad was more interested to secure the recovery of Bukhovina. Czernowitz welcomed the return of Hapsburg rule with less enthusiasm than was proper according to a letter written by a cousin of Count Czernin who was serving with the Austro-Hungarian 11<sup>th</sup> Division which had marched in to the city on 7 July. According to Czernin's correspondent, Ruthene tavern keepers had a tariff in which Poles and Hungarians were charged twice as much for a drink as Germans. Any Italians or Croats could get served at complementary rates and Romanian spies would get free board.

### The Balkans

The first Serbian troops had reached Salonika in early July. Their presence near a major city was a cause of a growing split between factions in the Greek polity. The Venizelist sympathy for the Allies was stretched by the appearance of Serbians who were nothing more than regional rivals. Nevertheless, the sympathy was enough to prevent the internment of the intruders who were set to dig trenches around the city on 8 July. This activity was nicely ambiguous for it could be portrayed either as a punishment or as a contribution to a mutual cause depending on the perspective wanted.

At Cattaro, a major part of the Austrian 6<sup>th</sup> Army had crowded in to the small port. Most had been marching for more than two weeks and they were naturally footsore. For some reason all of the infantry had been told they would entrain at Cattaro and the mood turned ugly when they were informed that to get to the railhead at Castelnuovo (6-5.1020) they would have to spend another week marching around the bay known as the Fiord of the Balkans. Some still thought the navy might save their legs. Captain von Trapp was working in his office near the harbour on 7 July when he was disturbed:

*"I was just putting the finishing touches to the programme for the semi-finals of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Destroyer Flotilla's choral competition when about 30 toughs from the 29<sup>th</sup> Division burst into my room. In thick Czech accents they demanded to be taken to the railway. I told them it was impossible as there wasn't a crew in the fleet that wouldn't be at the gala performance that evening and after that we would all be rehearsing for the finals. Attempting to be helpful, I started pointing to a large wall map (which had been terribly stained brown with coffee by a previous owner) and showed them that the march to Castelnuovo might be a little rough but there were shady woods as well and the road ought to be quite picturesque with lovely views over the bay as you went round.*

*This did not impress my Czech friends. One of the most excited of them pulled out a side arm and I feared a mutiny. This brute declared he wasn't going to climb every mountain and ford every stream when it was perverse not to put a railway station in the town. To make his point a little dramatically he discharged his weapon into the map where he thought the railway should have terminated. He must have been a frustrated engineer. Once I climbed out from under the table, they were all gone and I was left with my stained map in which there was a neat black hole and a small tear. I still have it fifty years later."<sup>1</sup>*



**Figure 2: Von Trapp's map of Cattaro with bullet hole, 7 July 1915 (reproduced thanks to the kind permission of the von Trapp family).**

### **The Near East**

During the evening of 6 July, Hamilton was given a report which confirmed that the Turkish defences on Achi Baba (7-6.3712) had been strengthened in the last two days. That was unfortunate because Hamilton was putting the finishing touches to plans for a fresh attack on the heights to commence on 8 July. It was doubly unfortunate because the Allied attack had been delayed by four days because of difficulties coordinating with the Navy which had been concentrating on supporting a submarine campaign in the Sea of Marmara.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Secret War of Baron von Trapp*, Anna von Trapp, (New York), 1966.





Figure 3: The wider context of the campaign at the Dardanelles, 6 - 9 July 1915.

Hamilton gave some thought to cancelling his attack, but there was no real choice. There simply were not many avenues of attack in which he could combine the efforts of the forces stationed in the two Allied bridgeheads. Also, the Allies were only 400 metres from the military crest so it was not difficult to believe that one more effort would yield success.

So it was that the Allies attacked again at dawn on 8 July. Nobody who knew the reality of the Turkish defences was under any illusion that this would be easy. The hope, as before, was that a naval bombardment would sufficiently smash the Turkish positions so that the infantry could infiltrate forwards before they recovered. The flaw was that the Turks knew they were coming because they had observed a good part of the preparations and many Turkish positions were immune to the shellfire being hidden from the Allies in the folds of the ground.

There were plenty of medals won in the next two days, a large proportion awarded posthumously. As before infantry had to make frontal attacks and one or two machine guns could wipe out a battalion. The French at Cape Hellas providing support from the south thought they got off comparatively lightly with 25% losses in their units. The British threw their marines, regular infantry and the ANZACs into the fight. The losses of the Australians were appalling and the Second Battle of

Achi Baba is really where the Gallipoli legend went sour. It didn't help that the whole action was coordinated by staff officers of the XII Corps and there was no one at headquarters who was conscious that if ANZAC units suffered over 50 % losses then this would not be understood as a regrettable military necessity in Sydney or Wellington. When it became known that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division was on its way to the Aegean from Egypt everyone thought the British commanders in this theatre had simply calculated that the rest of the Corps was expendable. That was nowhere near the truth but nothing could dispel the thought.

By the evening of 9 July, the Turks had been battered and lost some outposts but only in one or two places had the Allies reached the crest and this only revealed a further long slope towards another crest and the summit of Achi Baba was still in the distance indistinct in the shimmering summer heat.

Intense heat was slowing the movements of both sides in Mesopotamia. A clash of some kind seemed to be approaching. By 7 July, the Turkish 6<sup>th</sup> Army was only 19 kilometres above Ali Gharbi and the British were a similar distance below it. The two Indian Divisions which formed the core of the British force were separated by more than 35 kilometres and on opposite sides of the river. They were risking defeat in detail if they did not concentrate soon.

The lull in the action in the Caucasus continued. Neither side could see any way to break the deadlock. Yudenitch was also subject to an order from the Tsar to preserve his command without incurring substantial losses until the situation on the main front had stabilised.

### **The Western Front**

The West Champagne Offensive was definitely over on 6 July as there was complete calm within this sector of the front on that date. Two days later the German 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies reported that the French were withdrawing their bigger guns. This was a sure sign that the attacks would stop for a while.

### **The Italian Front**

Cadorna had declared that the Austrians in the Trentino would panic as a result of the capture of Corvara-in-Badia (6-4.1515) by the Italians. However, there was in fact no evidence at all that the Austrians were loosening their hold on Trent. By 8 July, Cadorna had appeared uninvited at the Italian 4<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters in Belluno (6-4.1517) and was demanding instant updates on the situation. Above all he wanted to know why there had been no move on the Bozen-Innsbruck railway which was the jugular vein to the Austrian Army of Tyrol.

The Chief-of-Staff of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army pointed out that he had no ammunition to distribute and there was a lack of mountain trained troops. The units which had advanced to Corvara could not force their way to Bozen without being more suitably equipped. The Fassatal and the Grödnertal were blocked by light enemy forces deployed by two Croatian Mountain Brigades which were making their presence felt even as they were concentrating after a rapid rail transfer from the Balkans.

Cadorna was in no mood to accept such excuses but there was little he could do about it. He was after all responsible for the distribution of the elite alpine troops. Some staff officers were sacked

and sent to uncongenial postings in Libya. In any event, an opportunity was lost at Corvara and Cadorna's reputation fell by a notch.

### DM Summary – July 1915

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	17	1						11	29	851	Good
Austria-Hungary	1	_*						-	1	400	Good *Czernowitz re-captured
Ottoman	-	4						NA	4	39	Good
Bulgaria	-	-						-	-	11	Good
Central Powers	18	5						11	34	1281	
France	14	2						-	16	637	Good
Great Britain	-	8						-	8	124	Good
Russia	6	2						NA	8	590	Good - *Rovno lost
Italy	-	-						-	-	12	Good
Belgium	-	-						-	-	(96)	NA
Serbia	-	-						-	-	(27)	NA
Entente	20	12						-	32	1360	

### Player Notes

CP:

- *East: I feel somewhat uncomfortable about the situation in the east. I have exploited right up to the Grave Threat Line but feel rather overextended now. Robert has played extremely skilfully. The fact that I have had him on the run in the east yet I'm the one feeling discomfited proves the point. We had some confusion over how to interpret and play the Grave Threat Line. Partly due to this, I ended up with a HQ in a vulnerable position which I was certain could not be isolated – I miscalculated terrain and ZoC costs and placed myself in a position which he could take advantage of. Ever the gracious opponent, Robert offered me a Mulligan and I took it even though I feel rather guilty over this. He is a better player and I make no bones about it. He has been benevolent on more than one occasion. As things stand now, I have fallen back slightly although continue to push around Riga. Czernowitz is back in AH hands.*
- *Serbia: There is a standoff here. He is too strong to attack (which benefits me nothing and only adds to my own DMs) but is not strong enough to attack. He has some Italian help arriving.*
- *West: He amassed terrific force to attack my southern salient last turn and his air superiority is painful. The rolls required to redress air parity and restore it seem to me too unlikely and luck based to shift. I wonder if anybody else finds this to be the*

case? Anyway, he has it and is using it to good effect and my counterattacks have been poor. I cannot afford the virtually even exchange occurring on the WF.

- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Gallipoli: Quiet.*
- *Italy: I am not doing well on this front. He is consistently attacking me in the Alps and I did not even achieve a hit on my last counterattack. I am feeling a little desperate in this region even though his penetrations are limited.*

AP: My attack at Gallipoli resulted in an exchange of losses 4:10 against me [I later realised this was due to illegal use of both naval gunfire units in one attack contrary to GCR 57-2 so the Turkish losses are less and will be corrected later]. Despite this it is still worth doing. The rest of my campaigns in the Near East are completely stalled. I don't have the logistics to cross Sinai yet. The Russians are in no mood to throw away strength points in attacks in mountains when they are so close to the Shaken Morale threshold. I have supply on that front but I need more reinforcement before I can make further progress. In Iraq, I would be happy if I could induce the Turks into attacking my forces and I am for this purpose not adopting the optimum defensive positions.

One comment I have made to Ivor is to consider leaving the Russians on the cusp of Shaken Morale but not to push them over it. I doubt he will follow that suggestion, but it has a couple of things going for it. Essentially it would condemn the Russians to a long period of passivity because they would know if they attacked they would cross the threshold and then Shaken Morale would take effect with a substantial fall in production. It might seem wrong to allow the Russians that extra production but the extra units generated would not necessarily have a big impact in the game. The thing is that once the Russians do pass Shaken Morale their offensive combat capability is strictly limited by supply. Most Russian units will simply sit around useless because they cannot be given a supply point.

Below is the DM totals on a monthly basis since the beginning of the game. A comparison is given for the totals reached in June 1915 for my other campaign game (the Great Aar). It might seem the CP is doing best as they have exceeded the reference game by a greater amount. However, that is mostly due to Russian DM and the French are recovering from their poor start. I would suggest the Germans and Austrians both need to be careful in coming months to keep DM low or else they will be short of strength and resilience when the Allies start to gear up in 1916. The worst months in the game so far were for the French in August and September 1914. The quietest month was January 1915.

### Monthly DM (cumulative)

[There are some arithmetical errors in this table derived from the underlying game. They are not large. It is tough not to make small mistakes sometimes, the errors could be + or – 4 each year].

Date	Ger	(Cum)	AH	(Cum)	Ott	(Cum)	Bul	(Cum)	CP	(Cum)	Notes
Aug 1914	147	147	69	69	N	-	N	-	216	216	
Sept 1914	130	277	101	170	N	-	N	-	231	457	
Oct 1914	132	413	11	179	N	-	N	-	143	590	

Nov 1914	92	505	31	210	10	10	N	-	132	724	
Dec 1914	69	574	19	229	1	11	N	-	89	813	
Jan 1915	24	598	7	236	-	11	N	-	31	844	
Feb 1915	46	644	66	302	-	11	N	-	112	957	Increased German support for AH
Mar 1915	54	698	36	338	4	15	N	-	94	1041	
Apr 1915	32	730	9	347	3	18	4	4	48	1089	
May 1915	53	783	10	357	8	26	7	11	78	1157	
Jun 1915	39	822	44	399	9	35	-	11	94	1246	
		683		343		34		-		1060	Comparison with Great Aar
		+139		+46		+1		+11		+186	Difference

Date	Fra	(Cum)	GB	(Cum)	Rus	(Cum)	Ital	(Cum)	Ent	(Cum)	Note
Aug 1914	171	171	7	7	56	56	N	-	234	234	
Sept 1914	212	383	28	35	89	147	N	-	329	563	
Oct 1914	94	477	10	45	38	185	N	-	142	707	
Nov 1914	43	520	3	48	51	236	N	-	94	804	
Dec 1914	32	552	14	62	37	273	N	-	83	887	
Jan 1915	-	552	1	63	27	300	N	-	28	916	
Feb 1915	14	566	6	70	28	328	N	-	48	964	
Mar 1915	16	582	2	72	48	386	N	-	76	1040	
Apr 1915	1	583	11	83	30	416	N	-	42	1082	
May 1915	19	602*	23	106	110	526	-	-	152	1232*	
Jun 1915	15	621	10	116	56	582	12	12	93	1331	
		567		119		391		18		1195	Comparison with Great Aar
		+54		-3		+191		-6		+236	Difference



Date	Bel*	(Cum m)	Ser*	(Cum)	Notes
Aug 1914	70	70	3	3	
Sep 1914	4	74	5	8	
Oct 1914	16	90	1	9	
Nov 1914	5	95	2	11	
Dec 1914	-	95	1	12	
Jan 1915	-	95	-	12	
Feb 1915	-	95	1	13	
Mar 1915	-	95	4	19	
Apr 1915	-	95	2	22	
May 1915	-	95	5	27	
Jun 1915	1	96	-	27	

\*Belgium and Serbia do not suffer DM so these totals are for information, they do not count for anything.