

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT84: 28 – 31 July 1915 (July 7)

General Situation

As the sun went down on the last day of July few people in Europe were so divorced from events that they did not stop to think that this dreadful conflict had been unfolding its purposes across the continent for a full year. There were still many who were religiously inclined and interpreted events as a judgment of a God who was not afraid to use His old titles as a God of Armies and War. In more gentle regions, such ideas were less acceptable and even embarrassing to churches which were now more insistent on the centrality of Christian compassion. Even this message struggled in the face of so much suffering and many asserted that for reasons unknown God must have taken a leave of absence and the whole affair had to be blamed on humankind.

Only rare philosophers, little listened to, dared to publically suggest that the fates were a random occurrence little different from a roll of the dice. If that were true then there might be no justice and the wrong side could still win the war.

Western Front

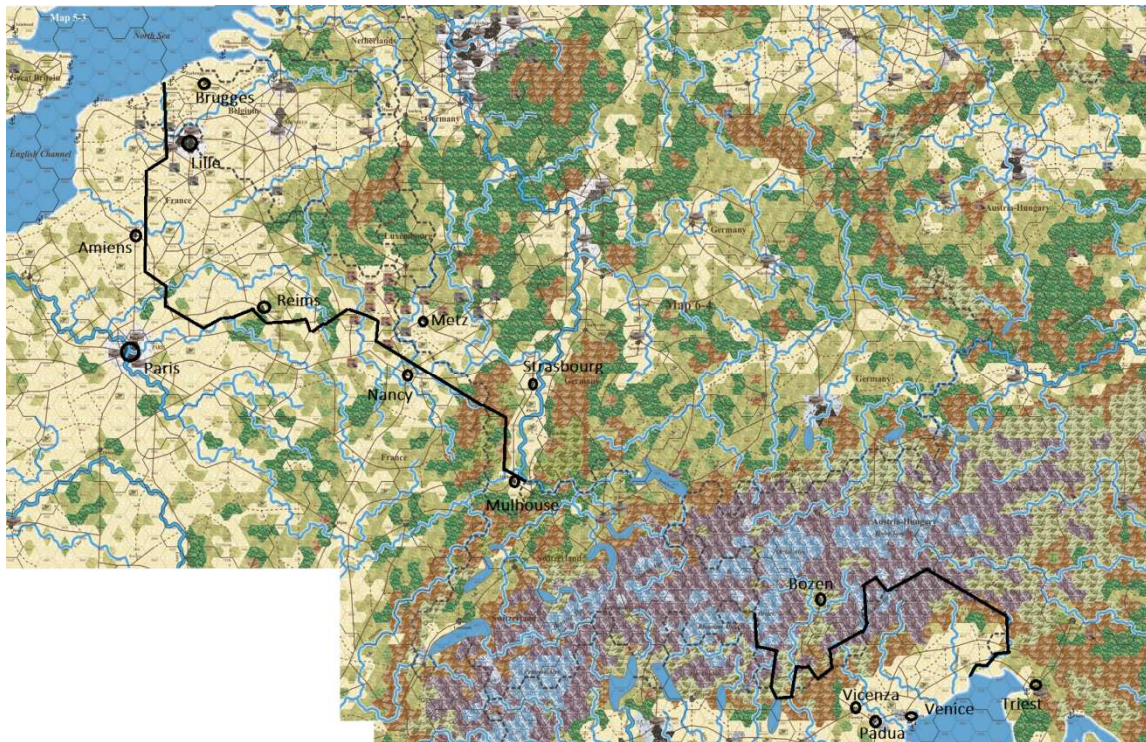


Figure 1: The Western and Italian Fronts shown in relation to each other, end of July 1915.

The suffering on the Western Front never stopped but it could slow down appreciably. The losses of the first year of the war still exercised a real influence on the two sides which could now never wipe the slate clean and return to the illusions of 1914 which had so helped the violence get started at such an apocalyptic rate. Commanders on both sides were now forced to be wise. Certainly they were planning new attacks but they could not afford to begin them without the most careful preparations. Whereas a year ago the mere sight of the enemy was sufficient to provoke an attack,

now it was a cause of utmost caution. Guns and supplies had to be accumulated in vast quantities before any attack could be justified.

The Italian Front

The ardour of the Italians for the war had not yet suffered anything like the checks which had hit the powers that had gone to war in 1914. In Italy it was still a popular war and Cardona was mobbed by admirers whenever he appeared in public. Nevertheless, Cadorna could not avoid temporarily restraining the Italian Armies as replacements were found to fill ranks already thinned by two months of fighting. He also had to face the reality that nothing much could be achieved without more shells. He reported to the King on 30 July, that had it not been for shortages of ammunition for artillery that Riva del Garda would have been liberated already.

The Eastern Front

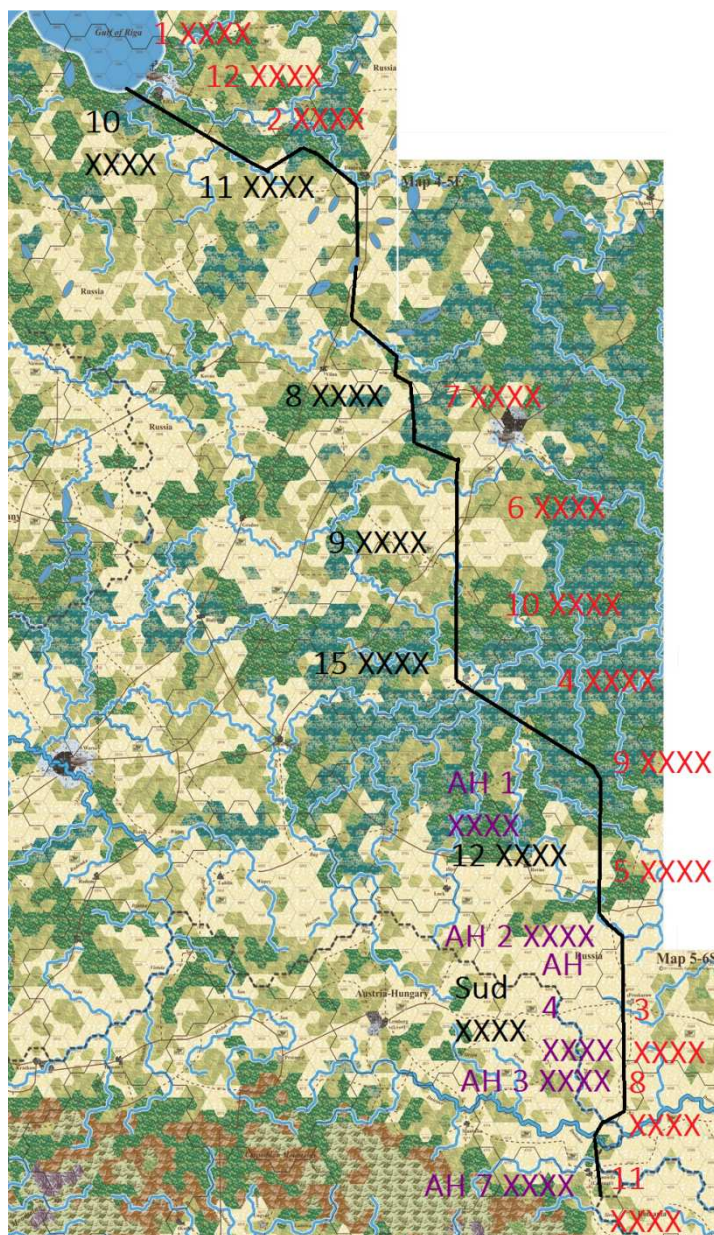


Figure 2: The Eastern Front, end of July 1915.

Neither side attempted anything of note on the Eastern Front. Officers on both sides were lucky if they could cajole their men into doing four hours good physical labour in the cooler part of the day. It was hard to compel urgency when the enemy was equally inactivate and often not nearby. Many Russians fervently hoped that the war was over and digging trenches seemed to be a negation of that hope and so doubly unpopular.

The Balkan Front

The arrival of ANZAC units at Salonika had hardly transformed the situation in the Balkans. An advance party of the headquarters of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force had reconnoitred the port and orders were given to protect it with extensive systems of entrenchments. Some historians have suggested that this is where the Australians first acquired their nickname, "diggers". It did not appear to be part of the Allied plan that the force which they had landed in Greece would immediately march into Serbia and take on the Austrians and Bulgarians.

The Near East

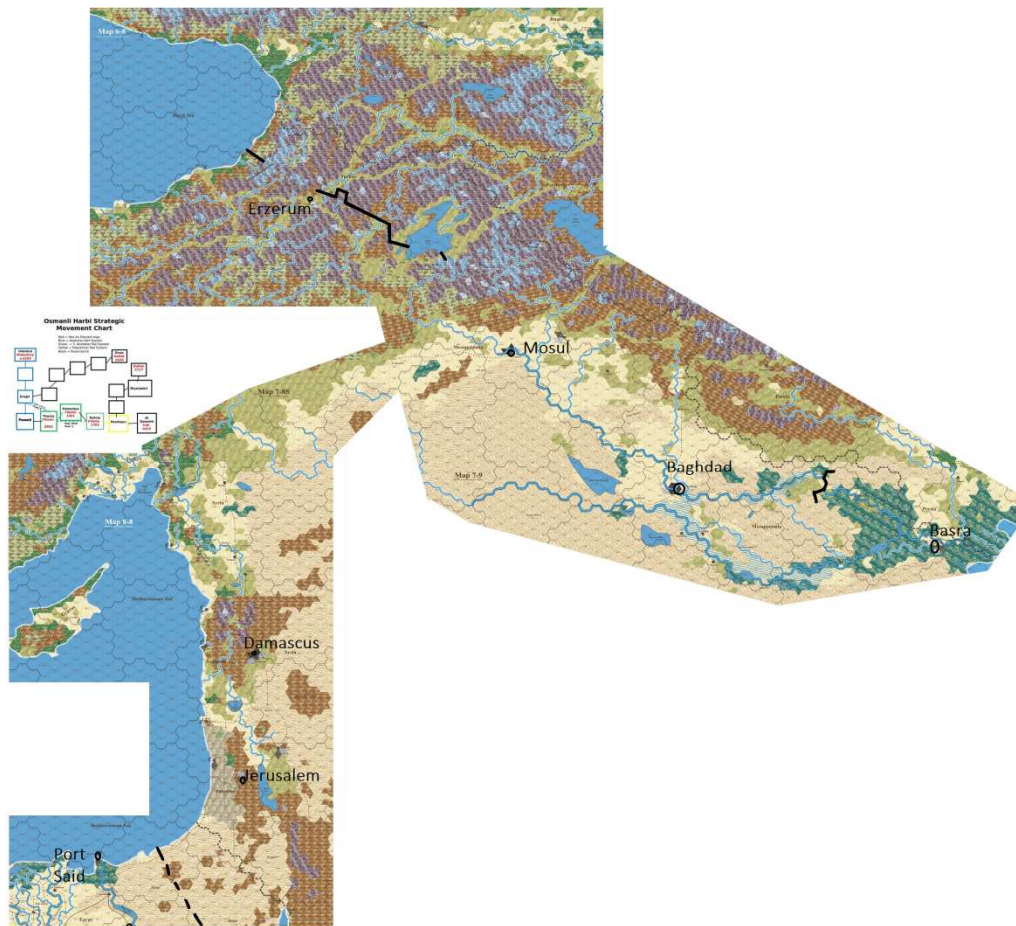


Figure 3: Near Eastern Fronts, late July 1915 (note the Sinai Front was indistinct).

The stasis on the Near Eastern fronts remained undisturbed until the end of July. All the combatants were in the process of providing some reinforcement to their committed forces. For the Turks this meant long marches into Eastern Anatolia from the railheads at Ankara. The Russians had a rail link but two Divisions currently being redeployed to the Caucasus had a journey of more than a month before they could reach the front lines. The Indian Lahore Division had been at sea for several weeks already (from France) and was still five days sailing from Basra on 31 July. Much as the local

commanders may have wished it, it was impossible to create any kind of distinct superiority on these fronts within any short timescale.

DM Summary – July 1915 [with % of Shaken Morale]

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	17	1	2	5	-	-	-	11	36	858 [53.6]	Good
Austria-Hungary	1	-*	2	1	1	-	-	-	5	404 [73.5]	Good *Czernowitz Re-captured
Ottoman	-	4	2	-	(-2)	-	-	NA	4	39 [11.1]	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	12	Good
Central Powers	18	5	6	6	-	-	-	11	46	1293	
France	14	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	637 [70.8]	Good
Great Britain	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	124 [9.7]	Good
Russia	*6	2	5	7	-	-	-	NA	20	602 [100]	Shaken - *Rovno lost
Italy	-	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	5	17	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(96)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	-	(1)	-	-	-	(1)	(28)	NA
Entente	20	12	6	9	2	-	-	-	49	1377	

Player Notes

- CP: *East: Very quiet. The digging in of new lines continues.*
- Serbia: *Similarly quiet. It is not in my interests to attack in the Balkans at this stage.*
- West: *Quiet; although some reinforcements from the east are arriving.*
- Caucasus: *Also a process of reinforcement underway.*
- Mesopotamia: *Quiet.*
- Palestine: *Quiet.*
- Gallipoli: *Quiet.*
- Italy: *I continue strengthening in the north.*

AP: *Quiet periods are not unusual in DWK. There has already been a two month period of inactivity on the Western Front in January – February 1915. It is unusual that such inactivity coincides on every front for several turns. It is now a function of the fact that the easy offensive opportunities implicit in the initial phases of the war have now been largely exhausted. The initiative for offensive action ought to shift more now to the Entente though there will still be pre-emptive or counter offensives by the CP.*

Even so there are several reasons for different nations to slow down the pace of action. The most important of these is to reduce your own DM increase. This requires you maximise attack strength (including using Artillery) and reduce the number of attacks if you cannot instead by manoeuvre find weak points. These conditions will increasingly apply on all fronts as the CP sorts itself out for strategic defence.

In these circumstances it is useful to know when an offensive will become compulsory by virtue of GCR 22. The following table examines this:

Nation	Supply – July 7 1915	Monthly Production	Stockpile allowed (1915)	Latest date of offensive (end of)
Germany	151	77	350	September 1915
Austria-Hungary	57	26	140	October 1915
Ottoman	30	2	30 (1916)	December 1915
France	40	30	130	September 1915
Great Britain	53	18	100	September 1915
Russia	95	14	150	October 1915
Italy	4	10	75	March 1916

The “mandatory” offensives of DWK are not as mandatory as in some games. The French here could delay major action for a month by simply expending 1 supply point for any purpose before the end of September. Delay could also be achieved by sending supply to minor allies or (more cynically) building a railway but these activities are limited and may waste supply which is always a bad thing in DWK. Importantly supply expended in counterattacks also delays the requirement to attack perhaps indefinitely. Despite this the obligation to spend supply never goes away and the quiet periods test who is least able to avoid action.

There are some opportunities in this for the Entente. The Turks do not expend supply in defence so they are going to be forced to undertake several attacks before the end of 1915 regardless of how aggressive I am. The Austrians may also be forced to make an offensive if I stay quiet with the Italians and if the Russians expend their supply against the Turks and the Germans.

These game mechanics do not imply that all powers are seeking to avoid action. Those with good opportunities and relatively low DM may want to attack without delay but the higher DM gets the more likely it is that one or more powers is trying to avoid intensive action. In the current game this does not yet apply to Britain, Italy and Turkey. Germany, I would say is in an intermediate position where its DM could start to be a factor restraining activity but, against this, the CP has little choice but to drive the initiative with the Germans. France; Russia; and Austria are already handicapped by DM in differing degrees and need to be concerned about this rule at the same time as being selective about the battles they fight.

A feature I like about the DM system in this game is how these issues creep up on you. There is no exact line when it becomes necessary to worry about DM and better yet you can ignore the feeling and drive on regardless in individual important actions. However, if you apply the mentality of 1914 to the battles of the stalemate period of the war then it might lead to a quick defeat as the weaker powers start to collapse with frightening speed.

