

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT85: 1 – 5 August 1915 (August 1)

### General Situation



Figure 1: Main Allied shipping routes in the Mediterranean, August 1915

Across Europe farmers were getting in the harvest as best they could. In the territories controlled by the Central Powers there were shortages of labour which translated directly into shortages of food. The consequences of this were still in their infancy and it could not be said to have yet had any impact on the fitness of the troops on the active fronts but it was a nagging concern for the Interior and Economic Ministries in Berlin and Vienna. It was difficult to respond to the food crisis because nothing could displace the greater priority given to providing manpower for the Armies and providing the labour for the factories which turned out the weapons and munitions needed for the war. The German economic genius, Walter Rathenau, mused in a paper written on 3 August 1915 that perhaps Germany could still prevail with fewer shells or more efficient production. He was confident that German industry was still out producing the Entente gun for gun and some of the labour might be saved for the sake of more sufficient supplies of butter. Whatever logic allowed, Rathenau did not dare submit such a plan to the Kaiser. Any spare capacity would have to go to armaments according to the Ministry of War which would have the final say.

The Entente countries faced the same dilemma but they had different solutions. French and British factories were still far inferior to those in Germany in turning out shells and ammunition. Increasing production was exceptionally difficult given the huge losses of industrial manpower to the military. Utilisation of female labour was only just getting into its proper stride and the conservatism of both labour and management in existing industrial centres was slow to respond to the demands of the war. The British and French were also putting a lot of capital into manufacturing new heavy guns but the products of this effort were only slowly reaching the front line.

The agricultural sector in France and Britain was as severely disrupted as in Germany but there was a difference because the Allied Powers could substitute lost home produce with imports from the rest of the world especially America. This it was not always easy. The demand for shipping was huge. The operations in the Dardanelles drew in hundreds of Allied ships. Although there were fewer British Divisions at Gallipoli and Salonika, they required more than four times the tonnage of the vessels used to supply the larger British forces in France.



Figure 2: The Atlantic Coast of the USA. Many ports had reached the limits of their capacity, August 1915.

The Allies had much better access to the resources of all neutrals. Most dramatically the ports of the Eastern Seaboard of North America had never been busier. Several major American ports including Boston; New York; Philadelphia; and Wilmington had no more capacity to give though they were always investing in new docks and quays in an effort to keep up with demand. Even more minor ports such as Halifax in Nova Scotia and St Augustine in Florida were growing fat on the wartime trade.<sup>1</sup>

### The Eastern Front

On 1 August the Germans and the Austrians performed a series of coordinated retreats on the Eastern Front which were greatest in the Baltic States and Belorussia and were progressively shorter the further south one travelled. Whereas at the beginning of July, the Germans were almost within sight of Riga, now the German 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Armies voluntarily fell back 60 – 120 kilometres much closer to their railheads.

This movement was christened the Ludendorff-Hoffmann Trick after its progenitors. It certainly caught the Russian Army by surprise and had not been predicted by anyone in the enemy camp. It took several days before any Russian units were ready to move forward and attempt to follow the Germans. Even when the first movements began on 4 – 5 August they were tentative actions and the jumpy Russian infantry imagined that a German machine gun nest lay in every piece of cover.

Part of the Russian difficulty was that they still had considerable work to do to repair the damage done to their forces during the Central Powers' campaign to drive them back to the East. So many

<sup>1</sup> In DWK where an economic variable does not change during the war, for instance US port capacity or German supply production, it is necessary to assume that actual increases in demand are matched by changes in capacity that are not tracked or that the variable is only considered relative to a change in other variables. Thus German supply production remains constant but relatively the Allies may be catching up or not depending on their situation.

units were understrength that to rush forward into what might be a trap could be courting disaster. The Germans had also ripped up Russian railroads and these would need to be repaired by Russian engineers if the Armies were to advance any great distances.

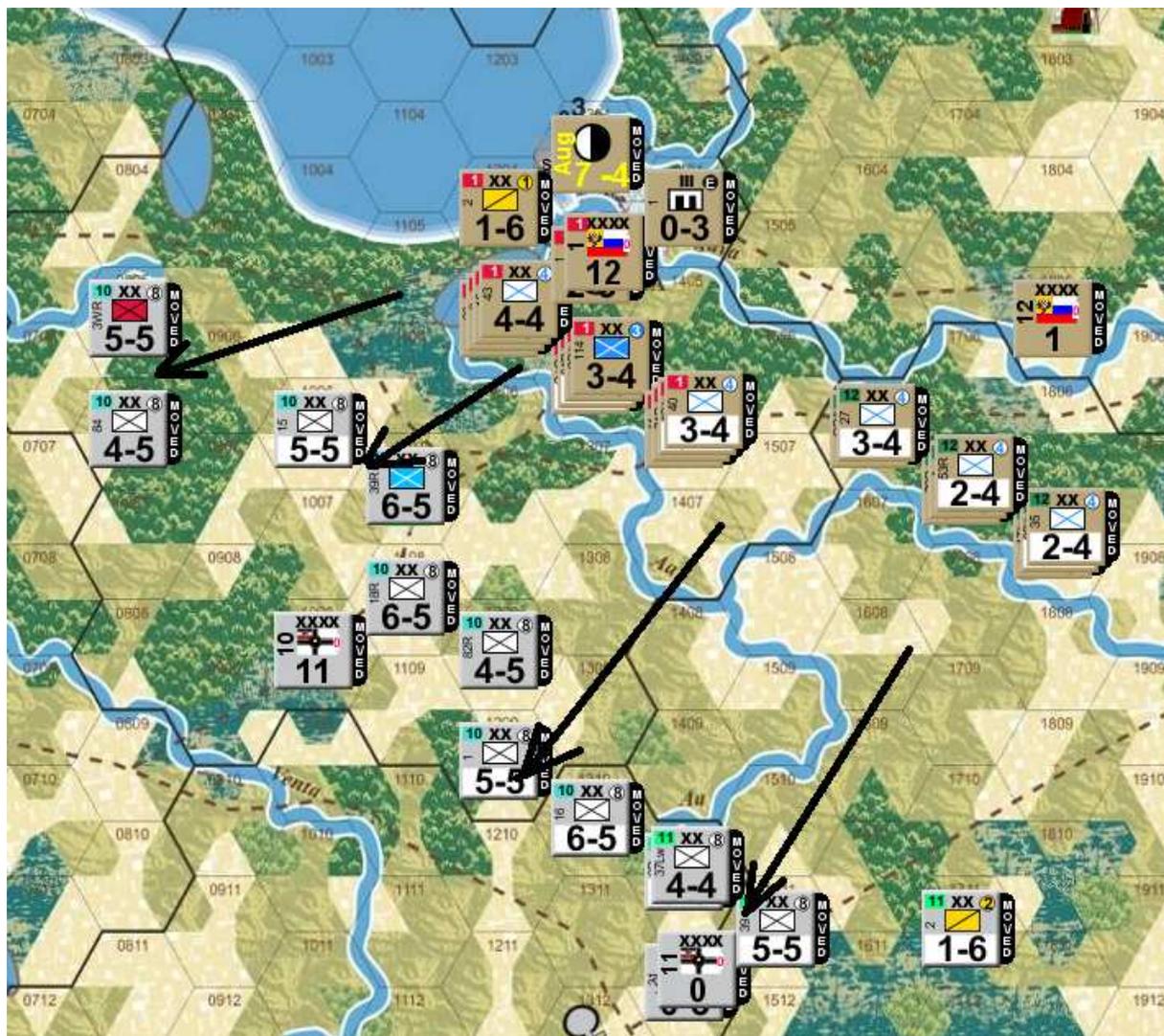


Figure 3: The German 10th and 11th Armies execute the Ludendorff-Hoffmann trick, 1 - 5 August 1915.

### The Balkans

There was no reported fighting of any significance on the South Balkan Front in early August. The British hosted a conference in Salonika on 4 August inviting Serbian, Italian, and Greek representatives under the auspices of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force Headquarters which had been settling into the Hotel Grand Alexander opposite the main quay in the centre of the town. This conference was premature and not a great success. The Italian group did not show up stating they were not authorised to leave Valona where at least they could claim to be in charge. The Greeks concentrated on arguing with each other debating whether or not their neutrality prevented them from participating. For the moment, the “Oxi” (No) faction still had the upper hand but many thought this would not be for much longer. The British then had to deny there was any conference at all when a note arrived from the French plenipotentiary demanding an explanation of why he had not been invited.

## The Near East

In Iraq, the Turkish 6<sup>th</sup> Army pulled back from Ali Gharbi on 2 August in another example of an unexpected retreat by the Central Powers. The British-Indian force on the Tigris was not ready to move and simply let the Turks withdraw without any harassment or pursuit.

There was very little activity on the other Near Eastern fronts that could not be classed as routine.

## The Western Front

Both sides on the Western Front were active building up for further efforts which would certainly come within at most a month or two.

In the British Army, senior officers were often visiting the 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery (Heavy) Regiment which was deployed around Cuhom (5-3.0807) in early August. There its shiny new 6 inch guns were well out of range of the German lines but they made a good display for commanders to get used to the new weapon systems becoming available. Although this was only a regiment and, compared with the German and French arsenal the British heavy artillery was still negligible, it was understood that larger numbers of guns were now being prepared for transfer to France and that some 12 inch guns had been exhibited in Hyde Park during the bank holiday weekend.<sup>2</sup>

The British also needed more infantry and three new Divisions were preparing to embark for France from English ports. These included the Guards Division.

## The Italian Front

The Austrians had undoubtedly recovered from the initial onslaught of the Italians and this front had stabilised by the beginning of August 1915. In contrast, the Italians were somewhat disorganised by their efforts in June and July in that they had been committed to lines of advance which were unlikely to be productive of much more success. As well as re-supplying, the Italians would need to redeploy and recover their offensive potential by creating fresh concentrations able to batter their way through the Austrian defences. Reflection would suggest that the improving Austrian defences would make the Italian goals much harder to attain now. This, however, was just a local example of a factor which was now common to all the Allied fronts.

### Player Notes

*CP: Not much to report generally. The food deficit has marginally improved by a DM or two and I have started producing more artillery – especially for the AH forces facing Italy.*

- East: I have reached a Decision Point (DP) in the east. The AH forces in the south need to dig in and be strong in numbers. The Germans have far too much force density on the front here and are covering far too large an area when my real threat is now the WF. Having achieved my eastern goal of placing Russia into Shaken Morale, I now opt to shorten my lines by falling back on established railheads. This may cause Robert some*

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<sup>2</sup> The August bank holiday used to be at the beginning of August as historians of the outbreak of the war in 1914 have noted.

surprise, but I doubt it. It seems the logical action to take given the constraints placed upon the CP player by the Grave Threat Line rules. I would have to spread myself thinly along it to effectively contain him and this at the end of extended supply lines far from friendly railheads. He would be able to leave large gaps along the GTL and, operating on interior lines, could quickly mass for an offensive of his choosing. Staying along the GVL plays to his strengths whilst weakening me. So, I trade the space.

- *Serbia: No change, although the TE are building forces in Greece and the Serbs are broadening their front which is stretching me wider.*
- *West: Most of my supplies and RPLs go to the WF this time. I am expecting – roughly – at least one or two major offensives per remaining summer and autumn month from now on.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet. I am gradually stockpiling supply in this theatre – a slow process for the Turks. It would be a lot slower had I not fallen back to Erzerum.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet & hot.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Gallipoli: Quiet.*
- *Italy: More reinforcement and supply and I generate a new corps HQ to better cover the frontage with C2 and logistics.*

#### DM Summary – August 1915

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-							11	-	869	Good
Austria-Hungary	-							1	-	405	Good
Ottoman	-							-	-	39	Good
Bulgaria	-							-	-	12	Good
Central Powers	-							12	12	1305	
France	-							-	-	637	Good
Great Britain	-							-	-	124	Good
Russia	-							-	-	602	Shaken
Italy	-							-	-	17	Good
Belgium	-							-	-	(96)	NA
Serbia	-							-	-	(28)	NA
Entente	-							-	-	1377	

AP: This is the third turn in a row with no attacks. I am very conscious that in the places where I will want to attack in the near future the CP are strengthening their fronts fairly quickly. It is increasingly

clear that I had enjoyed a window of opportunity in the West and Italy in the first half of the year which is rapidly closing.

I was surprised by the CP's retreats in the East and in Iraq this turn but they look like good moves. In both cases they will make it harder for me to get to grips with them. The retreat on the Eastern Front also significantly shortens the German front. I will now be drawn out of my safe positions and it will take a time to create a solid line further forward from which I can start to hurt him again. The trouble with WWI Armies is that they get a bit ponderous once you acquire the caution which comes with higher DM.

The following are summaries of the Allied shipping pipelines presently operating:

From	To	Shipping	Carrying capacity
Southern UK	Northern France	24 Sustainment	48 Divisions
West France	Morocco	4 Sustainment	2 Divisions
South France	Algiers	2 Sustainment	2 Divisions
UK	Alexandria	40 Sustainment	8 Divisions
UK and South France	Dardanelles and Mudros	105 Sustainment (double requirement for landing)	8.5 British and 5 French Divisions
UK	Salonika	20 Sustainment	4 Divisions
Bari	Valona	1 Sustainment	2 Divisions
India	Basra	32 Sustainment	8 Divisions
Total		228 Sustainment (out of 250 available)	

From	To	Shipping Requirement	Carrying
USA	West Coast UK	120 Resource Shipping	29 Food and 1 Iron
USA	East Coast UK	66 Resource Shipping	10 Iron and 6.5 Metals
Southampton	Le Havre	4 Resource Shipping	8 Coal
USA	French Western Ports	20 Resource Shipping	1 Coal 2 Iron and 2 Metals
USA	French English Channel Ports	66 Resource Shipping	9 Food 4 Iron and 4.5 Metal
Spain	France	Overland	2 Iron
USA	Genoa	57 Resource Shipping	2 Food 5 Coal 2 Iron and 1 Metal
Total		333 Resource Shipping out of 350 available.	