

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT90: 23 – 27 August 1915 (August 6)

### General Situation

Late summer storms broke the heat that had been building up over several weeks across the North European Plain. Even more dramatic meteorological displays were witnessed among the peaks of the Alps and the Caucasus. Iraq and Sinai could not manage actual rainfall but dust devils scoured the dry lands and everywhere the year was showing sign of fatigue. This translated into the human sphere too. There were few exceptions now to the immobility of the fronts. Where it was possible to go forward great effort was needed. On the wide fields of Eastern Europe and even on the Western Front, the Allies found that advancing against even token opposition was now a complex military operation requiring resources and care that would not have been necessary even a few months previously.

### The Western Front



**Figure 1: The French 7th Army attacks against light opposition east of the Oise, 25 - 27 August 1915.**

The stasis of the Western Front was broken on 25 August when the French 7<sup>th</sup> Army began an attack designed to pinch the German front on the south bank of the Oise River. The V and IX Corps moved forward from the south and broke through the German line within a few hours and in some places within minutes. For the next two days the French advanced steadily and reached Pierrefonds and Vieux-Moulin (5-3.1014) by the morning of 27 August where they stopped.

This French success was owed entirely to the weakness of the German defence and in reality the German 2<sup>nd</sup> Army had no intention of holding this ground. All the French encountered by way of resistance were thin cordons of German skirmishers and machine gun nests that withdrew whenever the French threatened to overrun them. Neither side was ready for a pitched battle. The French advance was as slow as it was cautious. Overhead

French spotter plains searched the landscape for the German concentrations which were known to be situated further in the German rear. Everyone questioned whether they would intervene or leave the French to enjoy their modest gains.

### The Italian Front

The Austrians reacted to the attack on the Plöcken Pass (6-4.3014) by assigning the defence of the Carnic Mountains to the Austro-Hungarian 6<sup>th</sup> Army which had now largely completed its transfer from the Balkans. In addition to this command reorganisation, the Austrians managed to reinforce the Plöcken position with the 58<sup>th</sup> Mountain Brigade on 24 August. By the time the Italians renewed their attack on 26 August the defences there were much more secure and the second Italian attack failed as much as the first.

Cadorna was much displeased with the Italian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army for he feared the whole attack on the Plöcken Pass had been a tremendous waste of time and resources. He pointed out that the Italian people were expecting an advance on Trieste and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army was going in the opposite direction. Thereafter he was less willing to allow individual Army commanders freedom to undertake secondary operations which might detract from the main objectives.

### The Eastern Front

The advance of the Russian 5<sup>th</sup> Army from the Goryn bend to Shumsk (5-5.4405) was not immediately challenged by the Austro-Hungarians who were still busy arguing with their German allies over their precedence in Volhynia. Ludendorff cabled to the commander of the German 12<sup>th</sup> Army that Shumsk proved that Austrians could not stand there on their own. Neutral observers would say that he had a fair point, though neutral observers were a vanishing breed. However, there were no follow up attacks from the Russians and this allowed the Austrians to insist they had the situation under control.

The situation at Shumsk and on the Zbrucz River further to the south was unusual at this time because the Russians were in close contact with their foes. Across most of the Eastern Front there was now normally a very wide no man's zone extending 60 – 80 kilometres. Within this zone the two sides patrolled more or less aggressively but encounters with large bodies of enemy troops simply did not occur.

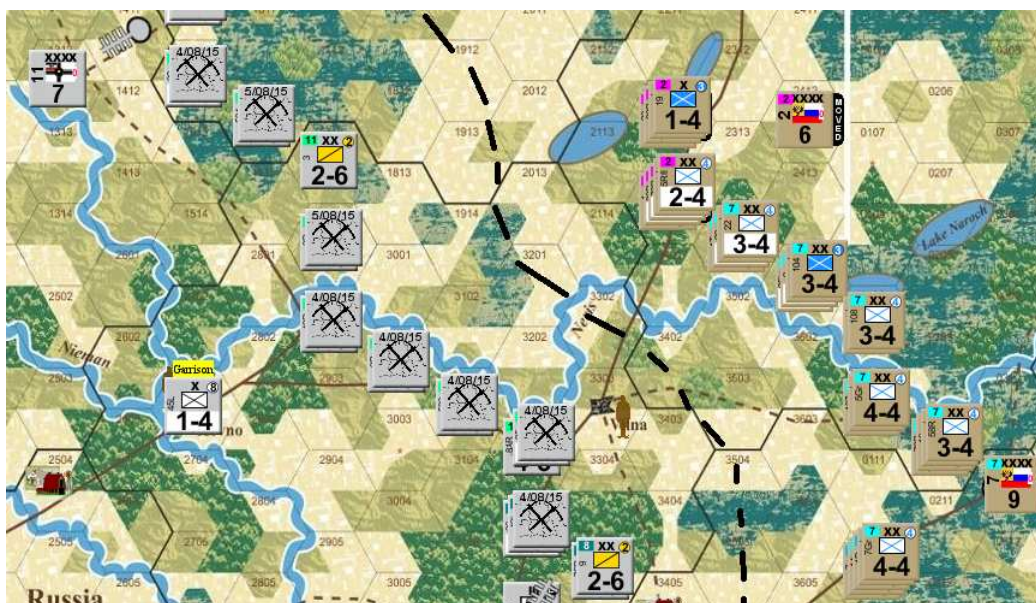


Figure 2: Part of the Eastern Front near Vilna, 23 - 27 August 1915



## The Balkans

Actions occurring in the Balkans during this period of the war are often shrouded in obscurity. At the time there was an obsession with secrecy and national rivalry. If the Montenegrin "Army" shifted its positions slightly in southern Albania, the commander of the Serbian 4<sup>th</sup> Corps, who was nominally responsible, was unlikely to hear about it until several weeks later. The chances of a modern historian being able to track what was going on are very slight.

## The Near East

Lord Kitchener had arrived at the Dardanelles and he did not like what he saw. He found it impossible to conceal his disagreement with all of Hamilton's methods to date prompting this commander's prompt resignation on 25 August. As the process of appointing a successor involved some delay, Kitchener sketched out to senior officers in this theatre his own ideas which involved a different approach to attacking the Turkish lines with less risk. Despite all the authority Kitchener brought to the question, his listeners might have been forgiven for having their doubts. Nobody quite dared say it to his face but Kitchener's proposals offered even less prospect that the Allies could break the enemy lines. Those who understood best would realise that Kitchener was simply helping the Empire save face. He wouldn't order an evacuation, but somehow the troops there were to achieve more by doing less than Hamilton.

In Egypt, the British government in Cairo was trying to divine the purpose of the Turkish move across the frontier. There was as yet no sign that a crossing of Sinai was actually intended. Perhaps the Turks were merely hoping for some prestige by standing on Egyptian territory.

The failure of Townsend's attack on the Es-Simm line made it extremely doubtful that he would fight through to Kut. On 24 August, the Turkish 8th Division made an advance around the southern flank of the Indian 1<sup>st</sup> Division. This caused that unit to pull back and extend the Allied line some distance away from the river. Within a couple of days, Townsend considered his forces were in satisfactory positions but the Turkish advance had relieved the pressure on the Es-Simm line on the western bank of the river.



Figure 3: The Russians lose Yukan Soylemez and retreat nearly 40 kilometres, 23 - 27 August 1915.

In the Caucasus, the Turkish 3<sup>rd</sup> Army resumed its summer offensive in a new direction. The fighting which began on 23 August and lasted three days was in very remote country around the isolated mountain village of Yukan Soylemez (6-8.2518). The remnant of what in former times had been the Russian 39<sup>th</sup> Division was destroyed before they could withdraw. There were lots of Cossacks around including the 4<sup>th</sup> Caucasian Division but the horsemen abandoned the infantry to their fate. This was not a small defeat as the Turks managed to unhinge the Russian front as far as the Murat Valley. Some Russian units moved back more than 40 kilometres and this was one of the largest Russian retreats of the campaign so far.

### DM Summary – August 1915

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
<b>Germany</b>	-	-	-	2	-	-		11	13	871	Good
<b>Austria-Hungary</b>	-	-	-	-	6	1		1	8	412	Good
<b>Ottoman</b>	-	1	-	-	1	2		-	4	43	Good
<b>Bulgaria</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	12	Good
<b>Central Powers</b>	-	1	-	2	7	3		12	25	1318	
<b>France</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	637	Good
<b>Great Britain</b>	-	-	-	-	4	-		-	4	128	Good
<b>Russia</b>	-	1	-	3	1	1		-	6	608	Shaken
<b>Italy</b>	-	-	-	-	1	1		-	2	19	Good
<b>Belgium</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	(96)	NA
<b>Serbia</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	(28)	NA
<b>Entente</b>	-	1	-	3	6	2		-	12	1389	

### Player Notes

CP:

- *East: So much for my spoiling attack of Aug turn 5. Robert launched a fairly brutal attack of his own which decimated two AH divisions. I have to hurry troops there to plug the gap and do not do much else on the EF.*
- *Serbia: No change.*
- *West: Nothing significant, but intelligence points to a build-up of British reserves west of Armentieres. I suspect his objective is Lens, so I reinforce the defenders in this area.*
- *Caucasus: I launch another offensive with the Turkish 3<sup>rd</sup> Army against a weakly held cavalry position deep in the mountains in the hope of further driving the Russians back here. There is no grand strategic plan in the Caucasus at the moment. Taking the Russian towns which would raise his DM is far from even a feasible thought at this point.*
- *Mesopotamia: His attack towards Kut in the heat of the summer surprised me. He suffered fairly grievous casualties, though, so I am content with the outcome of the battle.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Gallipoli: Quiet.*

- *Italy: Robert maintains the initiative along this front. He is able to attack at times and places of his choosing and all I can do is to keep shifting my mountain brigades into lateral locations.*

*AP: I have spent most of this month in a rather pessimistic mood thinking Ivor had narrowed my opportunities to a very narrow scope. I considered that strategically I had to take the foot off the pedal. DWK demands patience sometimes and I was seriously thinking I might have to go a whole month without attacking during which time the CP defences would improve. The outcome of my attacks last turn cheered me up as it showed there were still places where I could still make a meaningful attack without prejudicing the long term position. Even a 4:1 loss ratio against the British in Iraq makes sense so long as I can replace the losses.*

*The advantage of this low intensity effort at the moment can be seen in the DM charts. Since the CP has a food deficit and I do not, low combat losses flatter my statistics. In the long run, this is too slow to win the game but I need to play it this way now to ensure a balance of effort in my coalition [and for other reasons I will not disclose].*

*I captured a hex in France this turn. Even occupying an empty trench is not a trivial move there. I am wondering whether the Germans will counterattack. I have been conservative by moving forward a strong stack and indicated air support. If the Germans do attack I will consider retreating and saving supply as part of my low intensity policy. The hex in question has woods terrain so I should be able to hold it if any German attack proves to be weak. I am not ready to move into the clear hexes nearby.*