

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

### GT99: 1 – 5 October 1915 (1 October)

#### General Situation

The war was stretching the Allied economies at various apparently unconnected points but in fact these were simply the most vulnerable elements of an international system which could not be untouched by the great events taking place. The French harvest had recovered slightly compared to the disruption suffered in 1914. However, the Italians also now reported a downturn as the fields of Friuli in north eastern Italy were badly damaged by the infrastructure supporting the Italian Armies on the Isonzo Front.

British munitions production was accelerating, as Lloyd George had promised, but the initial flood of volunteers to join the armed services had now abated.

Across the Eastern Seaboard of the United States a wave of strikes in the first week of October interfered with the shipment of American produce to Europe. Labour was taking advantage of high demand to claim increased wages but there were loud claims that this industrial unrest was being fomented by the German community, German spies, and agent provocateurs.

#### The Western Front



Figure 1: The French defend Albert in Picardy and capture Fère-en-Tardenois, 1 – 5 October 1915.

With the British exhausted by their efforts at Loos (5-3.1007) in September, the French continued their snail-like advance across the plains of Picardy and the Champagne.

At the beginning of October, the Germans still held a salient on the south side of the Somme around Villiers-Bretonneaux (5-3.0912) which the French could have pinched off at any time. To relieve the situation there, the German 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Armies struck in great strength towards Albert (5-3.0911) on 1 October. The French XV and XXVI Corps were heavily engaged in the defence of Albert over the following seventy-two hours and the losses in the XXVI Corps were sufficient to cause it to be disbanded and merged into the XV Corps on 4 October. The French defence benefitted from valiant efforts by French aviators to spot the assembling German attackers and, though the trenches they defended were often no more than lines of shell holes, the enemy attacks were repelled before the French line of resistance could be unhinged.

Falkenhayn should have been displeased at the outcome of this attack for the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Armies had within them some of the elite of the German Army and were supported by two strong brigades of heavy howitzers. The commanders of the German Armies pointed to their own orders which required a methodical advance. They had been specifically enjoined not to rush forward into Albert if the French appeared to fall back rapidly in case this was a ruse. The reality was that Falkenhayn was testing new ideas in which it seemed sufficiently advantageous for the French to hold their positions if in doing so they patiently waited under the shell storm which the Germans had prepared. It is hard therefore to know whether the outcome of these attacks on Albert were what the German High Command wanted or not.

The French wanted to hear about the liberation of their country. This was partly satisfied by the news of the recapture of Fère-en-Tardenois (5-3.1215) on 4 October in the sector of the French 9<sup>th</sup> Army.

### **The Italian Front**

The peaks of the Alps were receiving fresh snow and some of the lower slopes had a dusting in early October. The approach of winter would put Cadorna under some pressure to make a further major offensive within the next few weeks. However, nothing was yet in readiness and Cadorna refused to share his plans with his staff. He only asked, on 4 October, that reserves should be concentrated behind the Isonzo front. These moves were rapidly put in train and the Italian 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies were required to submit plans for a new attack, to which they answered nothing would be achieved if they were not resupplied. All this was highly suggestive of a fresh Italian effort on the Isonzo but close to the front there was no visible change in routine.

### **The Eastern Front**

Although the Eastern Front now seemed more stable, there continued to be isolated attacks launched by both sides in sectors where they perceived some local advantage. In early October, it was the turn of the Russians to try again.

The South West Front was committed to the idea that the Austrians were the point of vulnerability in the enemy coalition and the Russians had a local superiority of strength in southern Volhynia. South of Shumsk stretched an almost featureless steppe (5-5.4406) extending toward the Galician border about 40 kilometres away. The Russian 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies had enjoyed some recent successes

against the Austrians in this area and they attacked again in force on 3 October. The Austrian line was poorly served with fieldworks and both the 54<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Divisions, responsible for guarding it, were understrength. The Austro-Hungarian 4<sup>th</sup> Army had three other brigades in the vicinity as close reserves but two of these were weak Croat units which were of doubtful value.

The Russians supposedly had thirteen infantry divisions available for their offensive along with two cavalry divisions which, as usual, contributed little. The Russian field guns were well supplied and did some damage to the opposing force. The Russian infantry soon found themselves exposed to machine gun fire sprayed at long range across the open countryside. During the first day the Russian officers managed to get their men forward but only slowly and at considerable loss. By the second day, units which had lost officers, even a few of them, were hardly able to function and, by noon on 4 October, the Russian effort had expired.



Figure 2: The Russians attack on the Shumsk Steppe, 3 – 5 October 1915.

### The Balkans

There were no offensive operations of either side. Both were trying to gather reinforcement from the replacements which had arrived in the theatre.

Despite the fact that he had already had one brigade more or less wiped out under his command, the Hungarian Brigadier Count Papp was given a new unit made up of raw recruits who stumbled into his doubtful care after a long march from the railway at Skopje over the hills to Lake Ohrid (7-6.0912) where they were put into intensive training.

At Salonika, the Serbian 1<sup>st</sup> Corps divided the new arrivals into those who claimed to have been in Belgrade (1<sup>st</sup> Belgrade) and the rest (Volunteers) and announced that these would henceforth would be formed into two new Divisions.

### The Near East



Figure 3: The Turks advance across Sinai, 1 - 5 October 1915.

By 3 October, the new advance of the Turks towards the Suez Canal had been confirmed as the Turkish XX Corps reached the landward side of the Elbardawil Lagoon (8-8.1437). This invading force was constituted of five infantry Divisions supported by a camel mounted regiment.

The British government quickly went into a state of heightened anxiety as this threat got closer. Help was wanted from London and London had no help to give. However, London had the power to order General Munro at the Dardanelles to release a Division to send to Egypt. On 5 October, the British 10<sup>th</sup> Division was ordered to embark from Beach 3712 (7-6.3712) *en route* to Port Said. This was a significant reduction in Allied strength on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

The last of the summer in Mesopotamia produced a last burst of high temperatures and nobody moved if they could avoid it. Turkish and Indian sentries watched each other on the front around Ali Gharbi in the Tigris Valley but there was little to report. An exception to the immobility of the two Armies on this front was the march of the Indian 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade which was rapidly moving up from Qurna as Townsend had asked Nixon for a cavalry force to match the Turkish mounted forces.

The Caucasus front also remained quiet at the beginning of October. Both sides continued to solidify their positions in the Coruh Valley but the Turks had undoubtedly blocked the Russian movement there.

## DM Summary – October 1915

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [%SM]	Morale
<b>Germany</b>	11							11	22	942	Good
<b>Austria-Hungary</b>	3							-	3	423	Good
<b>Ottoman</b>	-							-	-	49	Good
<b>Bulgaria</b>	-							-	-	12	Good
<b>Central Powers</b>	14							11	25	1406	
<b>France</b>	12							-	12	656	Good
<b>Great Britain</b>	-							-	-	165	Good
<b>Russia</b>	6							-	6	622	Shaken
<b>Italy</b>	-							-	-	22	Good
<b>Belgium</b>	-							-	-	(96)	NA
<b>Serbia</b>	-							-	-	(29)	NA
<b>Entente</b>	18							-	18	1462	

### Player Notes

CP: Due to German losses on the WF in September, I have opted to build maximum RPLs this production round. I have a steady trickle of artillery in production and will produce more yet, but right now I need more infantry. AH continues to produce artillery regiments as the army has reached its capacity in divisions and I have RPLs sitting around training in the rear areas [RL – this puzzled me as there are no such capacity limits]. Food losses remain fairly consistent with Germany taking the brunt.

- East: More time sitting in the trenches with no real opportunity to attack. I send more supply to the front to re-energize GE offensive capability.
- Serbia: Quiet.
- West: I need to maintain pressure on the French and the best way to achieve this is to bleed them; so I launch another large scale attack, supported heavily by artillery, against his exposed 5<sup>th</sup> Army in Albert. The last time I did this hurt me more than him. This attack is purely against French divisions and will hopefully go in my favour this time.
- Caucasus: Quiet. The front is now quite broad which makes attacking in the mountains difficult, as concentrating sufficient force for effect means denuding somewhere else and offering the Russian's opportunity.
- Mesopotamia: Quiet.
- Palestine: I have now advanced into the Sinai as much as the desert will allow.
- Gallipoli: Quiet.
- Italy: A period of build-up and re-supply.

AP: Another German attack in France gets a disappointing result though the die split was 2/1 in favour of the Germans and the loss ratio is 12:11 against the French. It could easily have been worse. If the Germans had rolled a 4 or higher they would have forced a retreat in which I would have had to eliminate a Division due to over stacking.

*I expended supply for my defenders in this attack because defending these attacks is a substitute for my next French offensive. My advances are designed to provoke German attacks in which I hope the result is more even than having to attack the Germans in their trenches.*

*The Russians could not be held back from an advantageous attack on the Austrians who have not completed their trenches in the Volhynian sector. While the Italians have very few good opportunities at the moment, the length of the Austrian front in the East dilutes their strength. I would say this is the weakest point in the whole CP defensive system at the moment. At this stage of the game, the Austrians need to have the shortest possible fronts, entrenched and where possible in good terrain as the assistance they can get from the Germans is limited.*

*However, the result is as disappointing to me as the attack in the west would be to Ivor. The die split was 1/6 against and the Russian loss was double the Austrian. I cannot complain at all, I have had the favour of that die split twice in the last two months including in my last attack in this very region.*