



PRELUDE TO THE MARNE

A NEW SCENARIO FOR 'SOLDIERS' BY ROB GIBSON

Some time ago, I acquired a largish volume entitled "Infantry at War", which in essence is a series of short articles on First World War infantry actions, detailed (with maps) and analysed. Recently I looked through it once again to see if it offered some alternative scenarios for the simulation "Soldiers". Most of them, sad to say, were unacceptable for terrain reasons — their terrain didn't fit the map supplied with the simulation.

There are a few which did fit, however, and I include the first of these at the end of these notes.

The situation is the very tense one which existed in the first week of September 1914. The German Armies, attempting their modified version of the Schlieffen plan, start to lose contact with one another — "the biggest left-wheel in military history" is losing cohesion.

Near Vareddes, a French infantry force with its supporting artillery prepared to drive into one of the gaps in the line, unaware of the proximity of another German force to the right of their line of advance. The Germans, mainly Cavalry and Artillery, prepare to hold off the French until reinforcements arrive.

Scenario: VAREDDDES, September 5th, 1914
Germans deploy first, move first.

Initial Set-up

Germans:
2 squadrons Mounted Cavalry, 3 Field Gun Batteries, 1 Howitzer Battery, 1 infantry company, 1 machine-gun platoon. (Enter on Road 1 on Game Turn 1)

French:
(Enter between Hills 60-75 in brigade column i.e. 3 columns of infantry company with artillery and cavalry in flank and rear).
24 infantry companies (8 x 3), 3 Field Gun batteries, 2 squadrons cavalry, 6 machine-gun platoons.

Reinforcements:

GERMANS receive 16 infantry companies, 2 machine-gun companies, 3 Field Gun batteries and 2 squadrons cavalry on Game Turn 12, entering at Road 2.

Game Length: 18 Game Turns.

Special Conditions:

1. Ignore all woods and Towns B and C
2. French must not go within 2 hexes of South edge of map at any time. To do so equals automatic elimination.

Victory Conditions:

FRENCH Exit at least 8 infantry companies off the map on Road 7 by end of game.

GERMAN Prevent French victory conditions.

Notes: In the real action, the German artillery, taking advantage of the time factor, deployed on small hills flanking the French line of advance and held the French force within a few hundred yards of their start line until the relieving infantry column arrived. By that time, the opportunity to drive a wedge into the German advance was lost and the French were in danger of envelopment in front and both flanks.

The French player must seek to dislodge and destroy the German force even at some cost to himself. Time is of the essence.

The German player must position himself to hold off the French advance as long as possible at all costs.