

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT164: 10 – 14 July 1916 (3 July)

General Situation

In London, the Committee of the Friends of Serbia were always the first to broadcast any news from the Balkans. On 14 July, Bastille Day, they announced that a Socialist Republic had been declared in Montenegro. This was the so called Klina Declaration. It was not long before the truth was revealed to be a little more prosaic for the actual Klina Declaration was nothing more than a letter written by a doctor serving in the Italian 14th Division who wrote to his brother in London as follows:

“The whole country is celebrating their liberation and the news of this is spreading west over the Balkan Mountains. There are no Austrians anywhere and the enemy seems to have kept the country occupied with an extremely light garrison that has now disappeared.

Bands of Montenegrin partisans have been leading the way north, guiding the Serbians who came later. Every village they pass through is a scene of festival as you might expect to enjoy in a republic of shepherds and bandits. The lamb is skewered on swords and the dancing goes on late into the night.”

The Western Front

The fighting north of the Somme continued its bloody course. The British were now finding it harder than ever to effectively use their artillery as the combats moved deeper into the German trenches. The French also withdrew their railway guns as their shells were in short supply. The battle depended on the infantry now.

For five days, the German 42nd Division held on in what was left of the SPW Redoubt and there was little left of this formation on 14 July when the British claimed full possession. This however betokened an advance of barely 1500 metres since the start of the offensive and there remained strong German positions on Hill 101.0 just outside Combles (5-3.1010). Meanwhile the French continued to provide support on the southern flank of the Allied advance. The French liked to nibble away at exposed German positions but they were forced into a set piece attack on Aizecourt (5-3.1010) on 13 July and they were repulsed there.

The Italian Front

The reports obtained by Cadorna of the Austrian Front behind the Isonzo suggested that the defences were as strong as ever. Whatever defeats the Austrians had endured on the Eastern Front did not seem to have much visible impact on the posture they were adopting against the Italians. Cadorna was convinced however that he was facing the last hard shell of the Hapsburg egg which must crack if hit hard enough.

The Eastern Front

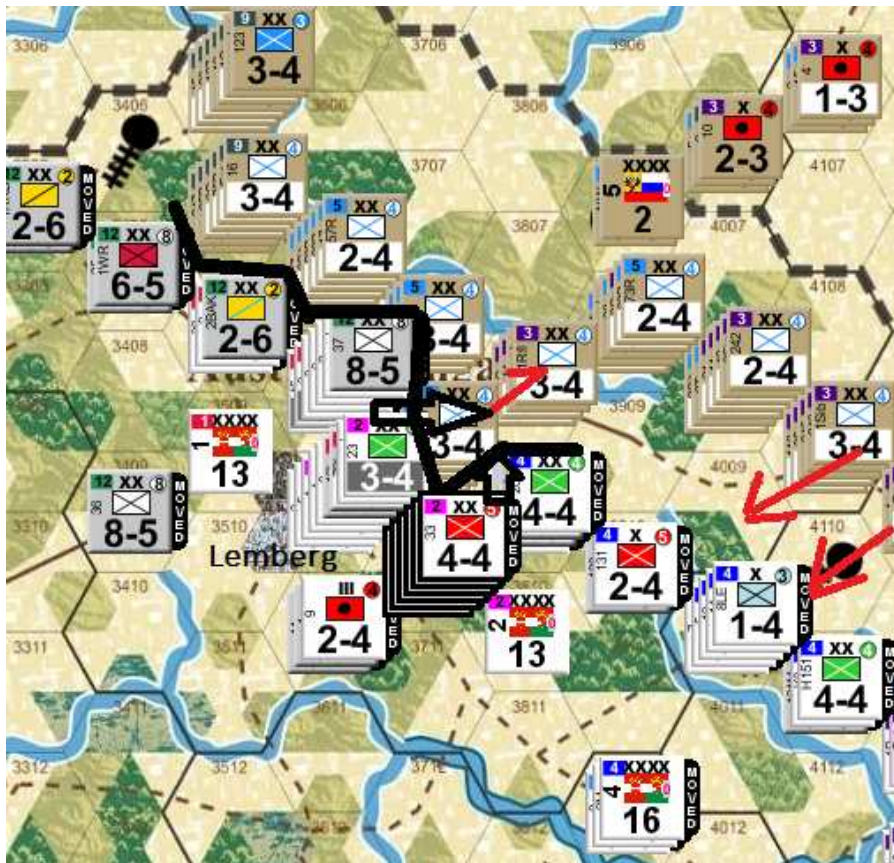


Figure 1: The Russians fall back when confronted with the Ring of Fire at Lemberg, 10 - 12 July 1916.

While the citizens of Lemberg panicked, there were cooler heads in command of the Austrian 1st, 2nd and 4th Armies which combined on 10 July to defend the city. The leading role of the German 37th Division in the counterattack has often led to the assertion that it was the Germans who saved Lemberg. In fact the foundation of this operation was laid by General Von Brlog who had spent the previous days gathering together every big gun near Lemberg and deploying it around the Russian spearheads that were still probing towards the city.

On 11 July, the Austrian artillery opened up in a bombardment christened the Ring of Fire and within a few hours the guns were joined by infantry attacking the Russian penetrations from both the west and the south. The Russians quickly recognised the scale of this challenge and did not hold their ground. Instead they fell back towards the Bug River in the following days though they did not retire to the other side.

Elsewhere on the Eastern Front, the Russian 4th Army was closing in on Brest-Litovsk. The Russian 7th Army also recovered Grodno on 13 July. The Germans did not try to stop them.

The Balkans

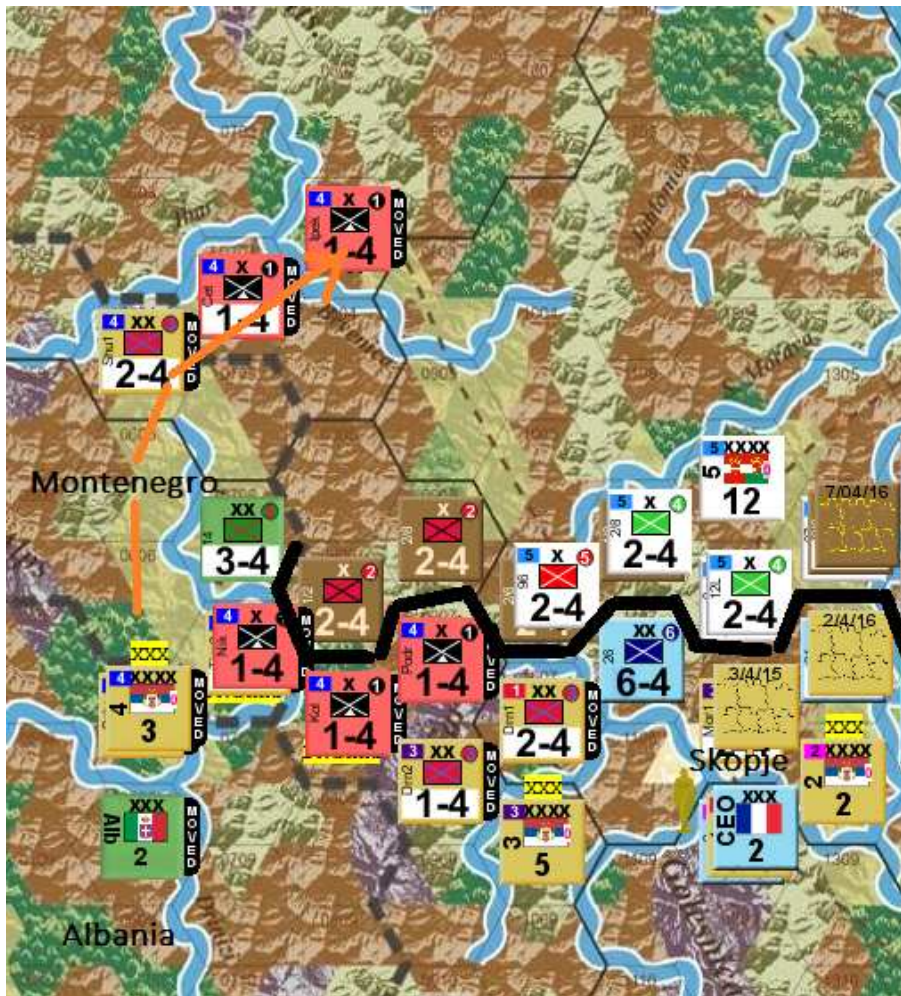


Figure 2: The Long March of the Montenegrin Partisans, 10 - 14 July 1916.

The recovery of eastern Montenegro energised the whole Allied cause in the south west Balkans. As the country rose up declaring the occupation over, the Austrian governor fled to Sarajevo. Since, he only had a personal guard with him this flight was inevitable once Austrian authority was challenged.

Aside from these political developments, the Beli Drin valley became a well-travelled trail by which the Allies sought to reintroduce forces into Western Serbia and Northern Kosovo, a region which was also ungarrisoned by the Central Powers. By 14 July, there were Montenegrin bands infiltrated across the Mokra Gora to the hills around Mitrovia (7-6.0803).

The Near East

By mid-July, the Egyptian Expeditionary force had advanced far enough that their patrols had started to encounter scouts from the Turkish line covering Jaffa and Jerusalem. They were, however, reaching the limits of what their supplies then allowed and there were anxious conferences in Murray's Headquarters as the logistical arrangements of the Army were kept under scrutiny.

Maude's Mesopotamian force was also inching closer to Baghdad and by 14 July it was only 60 kilometres short of the city limits. However, there was little conviction in the advance and Maude kept his intentions to himself.

The fighting in the Caucasus had also died down as Yudenitch counted the cost of his last efforts.



Figure 3: The Hot March through southern Palestine, 10 - 14 July 1916.¹

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: Russian pressure is unrelenting with more severe losses suffered by AH forces. I am reaching the point at which I can defend along the Danube² at reduced strength with a major river for protection whilst shifting forces to defend around Lemberg and also start skirting the Romanian border to the south. I need to take some form of offensive action and, given the knowledge that Russia has exhausted her forward supplies, I launch a combined German-AH attack eastwards out of Lemberg. Along the rest of the front I continue to fall back towards the German border to pull the Russians away from the rail supply lines and draw them into open terrain. Time to start the fight back from the Brusilov Offensive.*

¹ The British HQ positions are not right here they should be one hex back as the railhead is located with the artillery regiment. The Line of Communication can only chain through one HQ. The British units will however still be in supply in that situation as the LOC is not prevented by the hills terrain and only one desert hexside needs to be crossed to reach the Corps HQ if it was pulled back one hex. It does mean the British will have to wait until next month to attack.

² Means the Dniester I presume (RL).

- *Balkans: I risk being outflanked on my right so am forced to start peeling back on that flank.*
- *West: There was a tremendous assault launched by both Britain and France last turn SW of Cambrai which was effectively defended by the German 13th Army. The Anglo-French losses were appalling at 18:8. I still cannot afford losses of entire divisions at this stage and most of his losses were borne by the stoic British with their overwhelmingly comfortable DM margin. He can afford this attrition, even if comparative losses are significant.*
- *Caucasus: I managed to hold his last offensive again and have now strongly reinforced my CAU front with a new Army HQ moving to establish itself on the Black Sea coast. He has spent his offensive capability on this front for the foreseeable future.*
- *Mesopotamia: British forces are now just over 40km from Baghdad and are looking threatening.*
- *Palestine: The threat to Baghdad is not as great as the significant threat developing south of Jerusalem where a strong Commonwealth army is steadily advancing across the desert.*
- *Italy: Quiet.*

DM Summary – July 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	1	8	10					13	32	1328	Good
Austria-Hungary	5	4	-					2	11	566	Shaken
Ottoman	-	2	-					-	2	80	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-					-	-	23	Good
Central Powers	6	14	10					15	45	2000	
France	-	6	4					-	10	778	Good
Great Britain	-	12	15					-	27	353	Good
Russia	6	*5	**3					NA	14	806	Shaken – *Kovno and Leipaja recaptured **Grodno recaptured
Italy	-	-						-	-	99	Good
Belgium	-	-						NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-						NA	-	(39)	NA
Entente	6	23	22					-	52	2022	

AP: This turn suggested I am reaching the limits of my ability to make effective attacks on the Western Front as I suffered another 19:8 loss ratio. At least my ability to do so while shielding the French is now limited.

I face a choice perhaps of pressing ahead to trigger early US entry or keeping French morale good.

I pulled back a little in Galicia. I need to save something for when Romania joins.

I am a little proud of my Montenegrin manoeuvre. It made good use of terrain and a column march beyond the flank of the CP line. The timing of this is not good from the CP point of view. I am actually threatening some kind of insurgency in the western Balkans because Serbian and Montenegrin units can be sustained here though without supply they will not be able to do much. However, at the moment I can make a run towards Nish and the railway to Istanbul. This could have a big impact on the situation in the Balkans.

The dependence of the Lemberg attack on artillery was interesting. In DWK effective use of artillery is strictly controlled by situation. In this one, the Austrians had eight artillery units with also one German regiment. These units have struggled to find a role in the fluid conditions of the eastern front and arguably would have been better positioned on the Western and Italian fronts where they could contribute to defence without much risk of retreat. However, here the CP committed them to a crucial attack in which otherwise there was a shortage of infantry. That might have been a dangerous deployment but for the fact that the offensive strength of the Russians is almost exhausted so there is little risk of me striking back.