

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT165: 15 – 18 July 1916 (4 July)

General Situation

The atmosphere in Berlin was stifling as a summer heatwave made all indoor work tedious. The Kaiser was keen to get out of Charlottenburg but he could hardly go off sailing from Kiel as had been his habit in former years. The military aides who surrounded him and visitors from the Ministry of War were no longer the most congenial company as they fussed over Army politics and droned on about problems with the Austrians.

The Kaiser was therefore now very susceptible to the suggestion of a new order in Germany's affairs and it was tempting to give the civilian ministers the change at the top they had been increasingly demanding. It would not necessarily be a change that they would have wanted but they would not be in a position to complain further. The Kaiser therefore assented on 15 July to the taking of discrete soundings on changes in the German General staff. The soundings were not to reach Falkenhayn's ears so they were biased towards OberOst and even towards the Austrian Staff and Imperial Court.

The Eastern Front

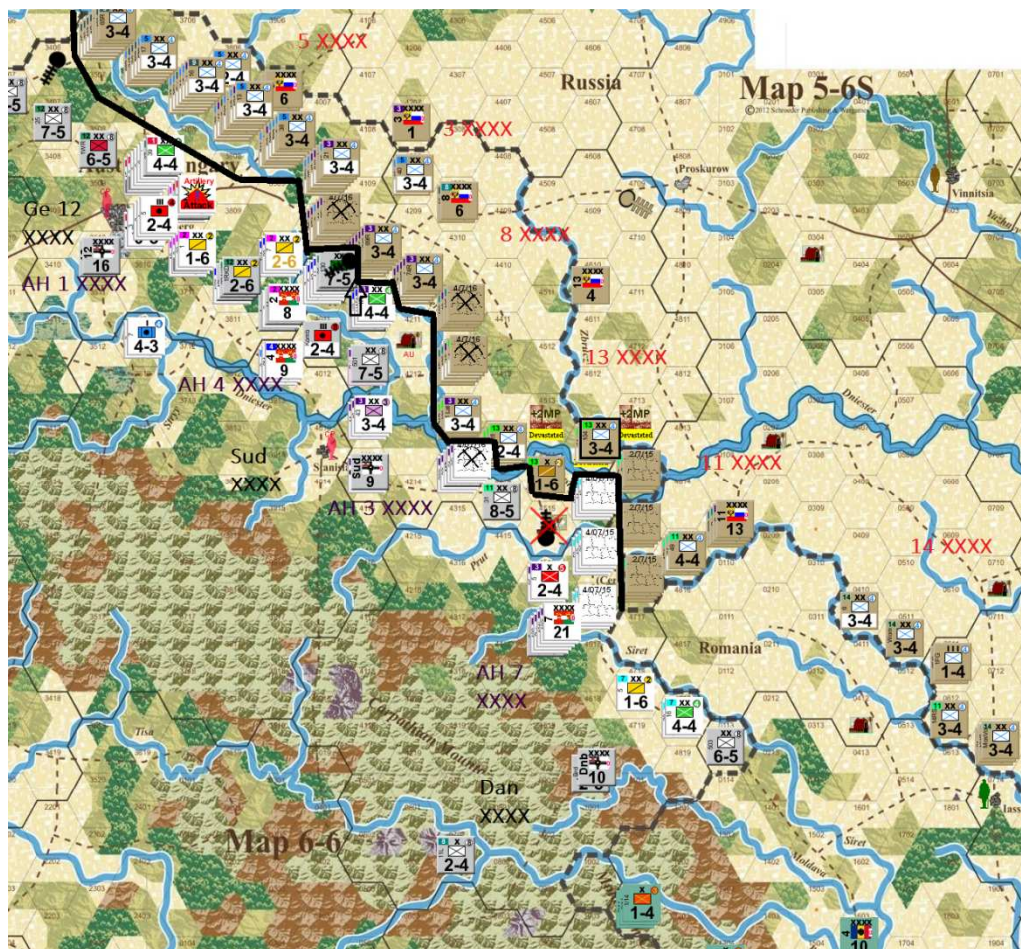


Figure 1: General situation of the Russian South West Front before Romania declared war, 15 - 18 July 1916.

The tide of the Russian advance seemed to have reached its high water-mark in Galicia. There was still some forward movement in Eastern Galicia where the Russian 13th Army advanced to the River Sereth. There was even a crossing of the Dniester at Zalishchiky (5-5.4514) by the Ural Cossack Brigade. This only lasted a couple of days before the Cossacks had to withdraw.

The Central Powers were however fighting back and on 15 and 16 July combined Austrian and German forces under the banner of the Austrian 4th Army and the Sud Army smashed two Russian Infantry Divisions (4th Rifle and 48th) at Mlyntsi (5-5.4110). The Russians had also recoiled from the Ring of Fire the Central Powers had established in front of Lemberg. By 18 July, the Russian 5th Army had retired to the northern side of the River Bug.

The Russians also now held the line of the Bug all the way to Brest-Litovsk which was retaken by the Russian 4th Army on 18 July. The German made no effort to prevent this having fallen back further west.



Figure 2: Eastern Poland as the Russians recover Brest-Litovsk, 10 - 14 July 1916.

The Balkans

The Romanian Army had almost completed its mobilisation and confirmed its readiness to the government in Bucharest on 18 July. As part of their military agreement, the Russians had promised to send the 14th Army into northern Romania as soon as hostilities were announced. During the last

days before the outbreak of this new conflict, there were worrying reports of German and Austrian forces deployed along the Sirit River south of Czernowitz. These were surely being readied for a quick intervention if Romania entered the war.

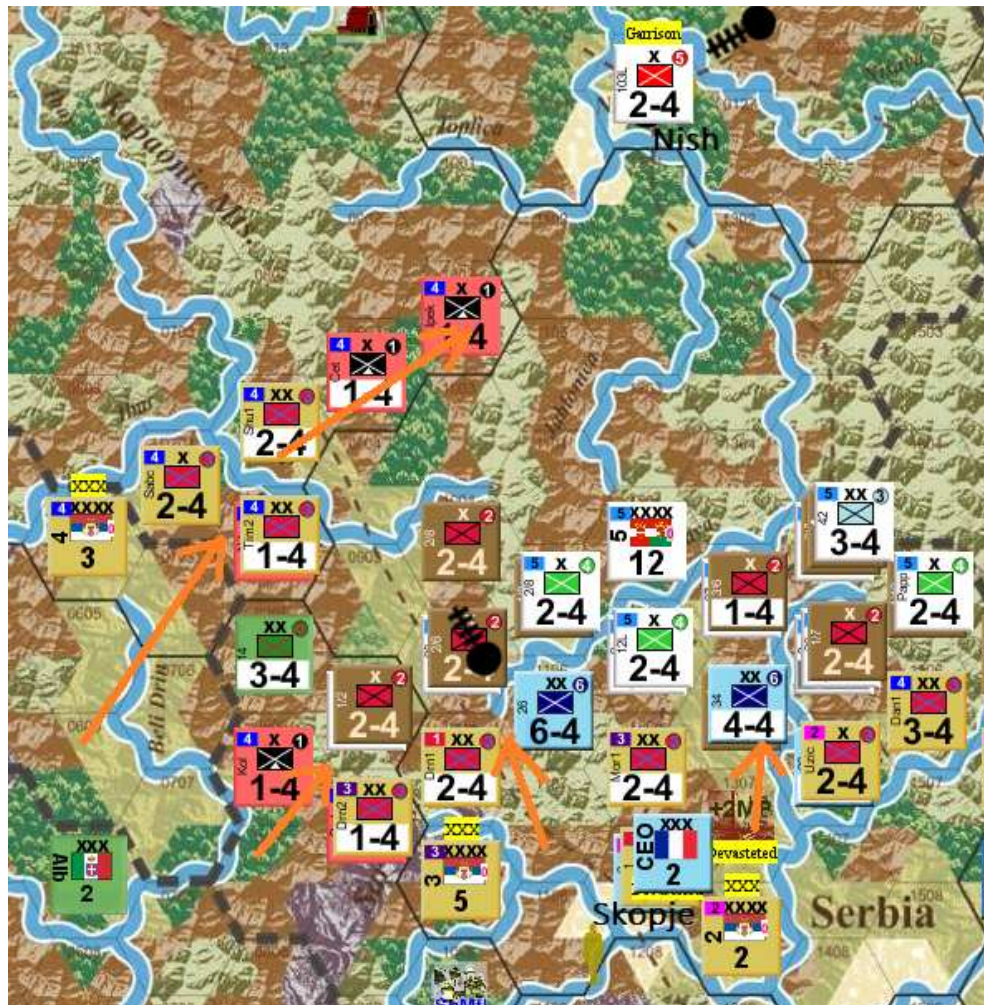


Figure 3: Montenegrin-Serbian infiltration into Central Serbia, 10 - 14 July.

The circumstances of the Central Powers front in Macedonia and Kosovo got serious as July progressed. It was increasingly clear that enemy units in increasing strength were operating in their rear flank. However, breaking contact with the Allied forces to the south was not easy and given the difficult terrain and poor communications there was a real possibility of units being cut off. A general retreat had begun on 10 July but this did nothing to impair the Allied forces freedom of manoeuvre. The most aggressive of the Montenegrin bands moved swiftly through the hills of Central Serbia. By 14 July, some were within 35 kilometres of the Nis – Skopje railway.

The Near East

Both Murray and Maude were within range of a final advance to contact the enemy forces on their front. However, for different reasons on each front but ultimately connected to logistics no such advance was yet made. The Caucasus Front was also quiet.

The Western Front

On 17 July, Haig ordered what he called a temporary suspension of the British offensive in France. The capture of the SPW Redoubt was just sufficient to claim a victory of sorts. The French also stopped their operations on the same day. The Allied efforts had not been able to capture the commanding positions the Germans had on Hill 100.9 (5-3.1009) and the integrity of the German trench system was still essentially intact despite numerous attacks during the previous two months.

The Italian Front

The King of Italy visited the Isonzo front on 17 - 18 July. Italian quartermasters had made a major effort to issue new and smarter uniforms to the units inspected. A consignment of ostrich feathers had been sent on a fast boat from Africa to ensure the Bersagliari were not shamed by battered headgear.

DM Summary – July 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	1	8	10	1				13	33	1329	Good
Austria-Hungary	5	4	-	1				2	12	567	Shaken
Ottoman	-	2	-	-				-	2	80	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-				-	-	23	Good
Central Powers	6	14	10	2				15	47	2002	
France	-	6	4	-				-	10	778	Good
Great Britain	-	12	15	-				-	27	353	Good
Russia	6	*5	**3	\$6				NA	20	812	Shaken – *Kovno and Leipaja recaptured **Grodno recaptured \$ Brest recaptured
Italy	-	-		-				-	-	99	Good
Belgium	-	-		-				NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-		-				NA	-	(39)	NA
Entente	6	23	22	6				-	57	2028	

Player Notes

- CP: *East: Russia has run out of much of her supply and I enjoyed a very low level success in a localised attack against her last turn. This turn I make another such pinprick attack hoping to wear down some of the Russian combat power in AH. At the same time*

I have been gradually filtering divisions through down to the Romanian border ready for that country's entry into the war. The German Danube HQ should now be secure and more forces are en route via rail. I am using the Dniestr as a bolster to my defence as it allows me to thin out the forces along the river. This will allow me to concentrate more heavily in areas where I need greater combat power. I will also distribute my AH gunboats along the Danube to deter crossings on that river.

- *Balkans: I continue the backwards peel of the right flank given TE movements into Montenegro.*
- *West: Another exceptionally bloody Anglo-French offensive along the Somme costs me a whole Div and causes 15 hits on the British and 4 on the French. These losses are pretty appalling but are significantly more affordable for the British than for the Germans. Haig's "wearing down" is well under way.*
- *Caucasus: This region is no longer under any threat of any validity but neither is particularly ripe for any attack from the TU forces.*
- *Mesopotamia: I am now readying myself for British offensive action; although I suspect he will wait until the peak of summer is over.*
- *Palestine: Similar as for Mesopotamia.*
- *Italy: The Italians are rebuilding and re-concentrating and I am expecting another attack along the Isonzo very soon. I am certain Robert will be willing to expend Italian manpower to wear down AH manpower and force up my DMs.*

AP: The CP attack in Galicia shook me out of my complacency this turn. I am wondering whether I have been humbugged with too much force being drawn west into Poland. In any event my strategy is now going to be tested.

The whole situation in the East has suddenly got very critical for both sides. The prizes are Economic Collapse of Russia and Austria but events here will also have a more distant impact on American entry and French morale.

The plus side of things for me is that AH is just 33 points from collapse. In addition, the Russians are sitting now on prime real estate in Galicia that messes with the CP food deficit. Romania will add another 4 to that deficit every month. There are two Austrian cities within range of the Romanian Army and the CP has done little to defend the Transylvania border so I have a good chance of capturing one of them. The readiness of the Italians is also increasing though there are reasons for them to wait a bit. All this suggests AH is doomed to collapse this year and my real goal is to get as close as possible to surrender of AH this year. That will reduce the surrender target in 1917.

The negative in this is that Russia is only 88 points from collapse and this turn's combat showed that the CP is capable of inflicting some pretty healthy loss ratios against the Russians now the latter are short of supply and out of trenches. Russia can easily lose 88 DM faster than AH loses 33 DM. An Army which is close to a critical threshold such as this doesn't fight well in DWK because its owner has to do everything possible to slow their losses. Interestingly Germany is also only 100 DM away from starting submarine warfare (roughly) and the French less than 125 DM from Shaken Morale. Combats are going to have consequences now.

Russia always has the GTL option but if I take that now it would mean giving up all the pressure I have on the food deficit and would leave Romania to its fate. It is contrary to my strategy which is to have the Russians fight as much as possible. I am in this fix because I have willed it to a great degree.

I believe in this game, the Russians sometimes go into Romania to protect the Romanians but with the current DM situation the Romanians are needed to provide protection for the Russians. I am concerned about the CP concentration which is starting in the Sirit area. This makes the whole area around Czernowitz very important and there may be a CP push down to Jassy and into Bessarabia. I have prepared for this by deploying a new Russian 14th Army but this is a weak force with as yet no supply and Russian morale means it is hardly fit to stand against German units.

The CP has let me do significant advances in Poland and the Baltic States. Generally I want to take up such opportunities because they get me closer to threatening the home territory of the CP where I can interfere with their food and threaten cities which might have DM consequences (Konigsberg and Krakow are the nearest that would score DM). Even retaking cities such as Lemberg which have already given up their DM penalty would affect CP manpower which will be more critical in the second half of the game. However, the advances I have made as far as Kovno and Brest-Litovsk are based on forces which are unlikely to be able to take anything which the Germans want to defend. Therefore there is a danger that I have been sucked in to the west when I really need to have more force in the south east.

If I am firm minded I will accept Russian Economic Collapse if the result is higher CP DM which ensures AH collapse and American entry. The importance of the Russians in respect of America is that otherwise I will have to commit the French more and it would not take many full blooded West Front battles to bring France to shaken morale while the British are hors de combat.

This game is brilliant in depicting evolving strategy and coalition politics. What is happening here is that the likelihood and timing of the Russian Revolution is linked to whether the Russians are forced to carry more of the weight of the war than is fair for them. American entry is linked to how aggressive (or desperate) the Germans have to be in their efforts to make events go in their direction. There is nothing so subtle and organic in war gaming.