

## **Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game**

**GT170: 6 – 9 August 1916 (2 August)**

### **General Situation**

There were everywhere distinct signs of a recovery by the Central Powers in late summer 1916. This has sometimes been attributed to the new energy brought to the control of the war effort by Hindenberg and Ludendorff. However, it was too early for most of their policies to have had an effect. The ruthless policy of food requisitions had been an exception and several Allied governments had issued protests. However, in this they had been not a little confused and uncertain.

One young French diplomat tasked with preparing a protest on behalf of the Serbian government complained to his superiors. "Who?" he asked, "should the protest be lodged with?" The Hapsburg occupation force was apparently responsible but everyone believed that the policy originated in Germany. Complaining to the enemy was hardly going to be fruitful since they were at the same time counter protesting that Serbian bandits were illegally stirring up resistance to the occupation. The applicable law was also in dispute. The Allies tended to argue that it was part of the natural law that occupied populations had to be taken care of. In that case the only appeal could be to God and common humanity.

The Central Powers instead were focused on the emergent custom of open cities. This had been thought to be a liberal element of the international law of war but it had been an exceptional provision of it and no one had thought it could be applied to whole countries where the fact of occupation had been in doubt or dispute. In fact it was a little prescient as many contributions to the analysis of the Gaza dispute in recent times have referred back to this WWI precedent.

### **The Eastern Front**

The Central Powers recovery was apparent on the Eastern Front as the Germans kept up the pressure on the Russians in the Lithuania. The Germans also began to more effectively contain the Russian forces that had been operating freely on the plains between the Vistula and the Bug.

The largest Central Powers' operations were still in the trans-Siret area of Moldavia. The steady Austro-German advance was spreading across the region forcing the Russians to start reducing their front facing Czernowitz. Neither the Russian 11th nor 14th Army seemed capable of any effective resistance against the three enemy armies engaged. Only the Romanian 4th Army remained steady blocking the road down the river lines to the south east.



Figure 1: Allied position crumbling in Northern Romania, 6 - 9 August 1916.

## The Balkans

The fighting in the mountains and high elevation terrain around Brasov recommenced on 8 August as both the Romanian 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd Armies attacked. The Romanians had been terribly slow to get into position but they finally had eight divisions engaged. There was also a Russian Division present (5<sup>th</sup> Siberian) but this refused to participate in the attack due to the equipment shortages which plagued all Russian troops sent to Romania at this time.

The defenders of Brasov were not in great condition themselves and were short of ammunition especially. Although the Romanian attack developed very slowly there were reports of weakening defences at Codlea (6-6.1210) and Teliu (6-6.1410) as thinly spread Hungarian and German brigades held off superior numbers of enemy trying to get round the city to both the west and the east.

In Serbia the front remained fluid as both sides simultaneously advanced and withdrew where the opportunity allowed. The Montenegrin Ipek Brigade which had been at the spearhead of the recent Allied advances pulled back on 8 August after completing the

destruction of a section of railway west of Nish. Meanwhile, the French 26<sup>th</sup> Division reached the upper Japlonika Valley (7-6.1203) on 9 August.

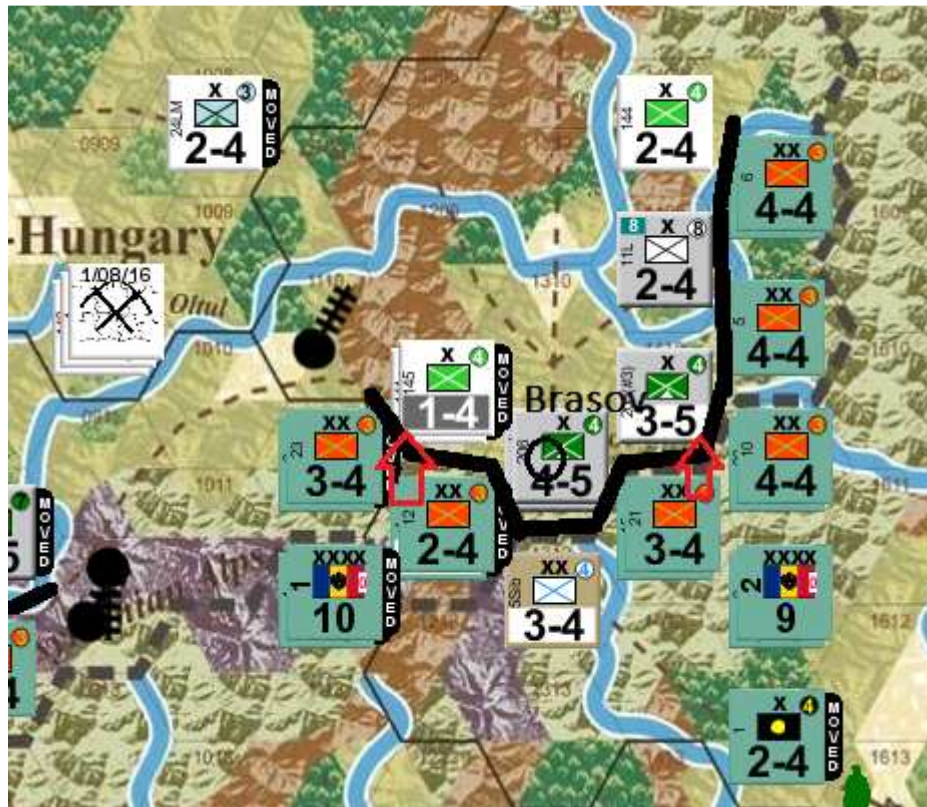


Figure 2: The Battle of Brasov, 8 - 9 August 1916.

### The Near East

The summer stalemate continued without significant action on every Near Eastern Front. The Turks had already proved that they could successfully defend Baghdad and the Russians no longer had any illusions about the natural strength of the Caucasian front.

The Jaffa-Jerusalem line was untested. It could not be outflanked unless, which was doubted, there was a way around the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. The line itself was fully entrenched and positioned along the commanding crests of the Palestine Hills. Veterans of Gallipoli recognised the Turkish ability to choose strong positions but some remarked that the defenders were not as thick on the ground as had been the case at the Dardanelles.

### The Western Front

Western intelligence was dismayed to have to report that the arrival of fresh batches of German replacements on the Western Front meant that the German defences there would have to be presumed to be as strong as they had ever been. Haig and Joffre were both showing signs of impatience with their subordinates as frustration mounted at their inability to keep the offensive going against the Germans. There were also some inter-Allied tensions mounting again. British voices declared that the French were deliberately holding back and French voices suggested that the British were overly sensitive to casualties.

## The Italian Front



Figure 3: German Alpine Corps units arrive in the Dolomites, 6 - 7 August 1916.

The Italian staff was also briefing Cadorna on the latest assessments of the Austro-Hungarian defences on the Isonzo. These were somewhat discouraging because in essence they showed that strong positions had been made stronger. Had they been aware of it, the Italian anxieties would have been further heightened by the arrival of German mountain troops in the Dolomites and east of the Isonzo. The German 199th Mountain Division claimed to have gotten through all its shoe leather in a forced march to the front near Gorizia on 6-7 August.

### Player Notes

CP:

- *East: The east is very fluid. I was surprised that the Russians used up 12 supply in such a limited attack last turn. They need supply to maintain any sort of threat and I thought the use of 12 to attack at -4 drm a surprising excess. I have made a small attack in the Balkans just to keep attriting him and to keep him at arms length up there. It is a good front for me as he has to extend significantly to reach the Baltic Sea flank whereas I can keep my own line curved back and therefore much shorter. His maintaining his front in the Baltics requires a far greater manpower stretch. Very little is occurring in the centre although I have probed forward from Warsaw. In the south I continue to push into Romania and threaten to split his Russian forces from their Romanian allies. I make no attack there this turn as I am still concentrating combat power and supply but offensive action is imminent. On the Carpathian front, things are now well stabilised and the threat to AH cities is now negligible. The Romanians lack the strength to attack in the Carpathians as they need everything to hold their westernmost flank and their link with Russia.*

- *Balkans: This front is slowing down and I have even re-occupied Belgrade and moved Engrs to the city to restore rail links. Along the Black Sea coast, the combined AH-Turkish army has penetrated deeper into Romania and stretches from the Danube to the coast, threatening Constanta.*
- *West: Nothing much to report here save the rebuilding of several divs from RPLs. Given the overwhelming TE air superiority, I expect I will need them on the front line.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet, but I am slowly building up troop strength and supplies along this front.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Italy: A German Mt Div arrives to support the Isonzo defences.*

#### DM Summary – August 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total [%SM]	Morale
Germany	1	1						9	11	1354	Good
Austria-Hungary	3	1						-	4	574	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-						-	-	80	Good
Bulgaria	-	-						-	-	23	Good
Central Powers	4	2						-	15	2034	
France	-	-						-	-	790	Good
Great Britain	-	-						-	-	353	Good
Russia	3	1						-	4	824	Shaken
Italy	-	-						-	-	99	Good
Romania	-	3						-	3	5	
Belgium	-	-						NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-						NA	-	(39)	NA
Entente	3	4						-	7	2057	

AP: *I am struggling to find any favourable facts to focus on. I am appalled at how feeble my Russians now are. I cannot defend anything without conceding very soon Economic Collapse and I think it would be much too soon to allow that to occur this year. My Romanian attacks, weak as they are, are designed to balance a little the inability of the Russians to keep fighting.*

*The two good things are that Germany is close to the submarine trigger and although I will not get that for September, I should get there for October. Even that will force disadvantageous attacks to be made in the West. It may also prevent the Germans going after the Russians too aggressively in the next few weeks until they are prepared to accept the submarine trigger. Another positive is that I have noticed the German manpower stock is only 100. I do not have much experience to go on but that seems a bit low.*

*I have noticed one other favourable aspect of the configuration of the fronts at the moment which may help in due course but I will not say anything now.*

*I am currently regretting making a concession on this month's food deficit. There seems to be a disagreement on the ability to abandon cities which are behind friendly lines. It is relevant to note how rapidly fortune is changing. This is not a short term change either. The main transformations in the game now are the near extinction of Russian offensive potential at least until 1917 and the enhanced cooperation of Germany and Austria. This really narrows the Allied options and will make CP defence very potent for a while. Holding the food of Galicia and Romania should have been the reward of my summer offensive and I don't think I can hold it for very long.*