

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

Game Turn 171: 10 – 14 August 1916 (6 August)

General Situation

The war seemed in the balance again. The two sides issued communiques of increasing frequency congratulating their forces and broadcasting every small success. A village in Palestine nobody had heard of could be on the front page of *The Times*. Russian schoolboys were expected to understand the hydrology of all the major Caucasian mountain ranges and the best valleys by which to approach Armenia. German matrons taking increasingly tasteless ersatz coffee of a morning might draw a small map from their bag and fall to wondering how wide the Danube really was by the time it reached the sea.

The Near East

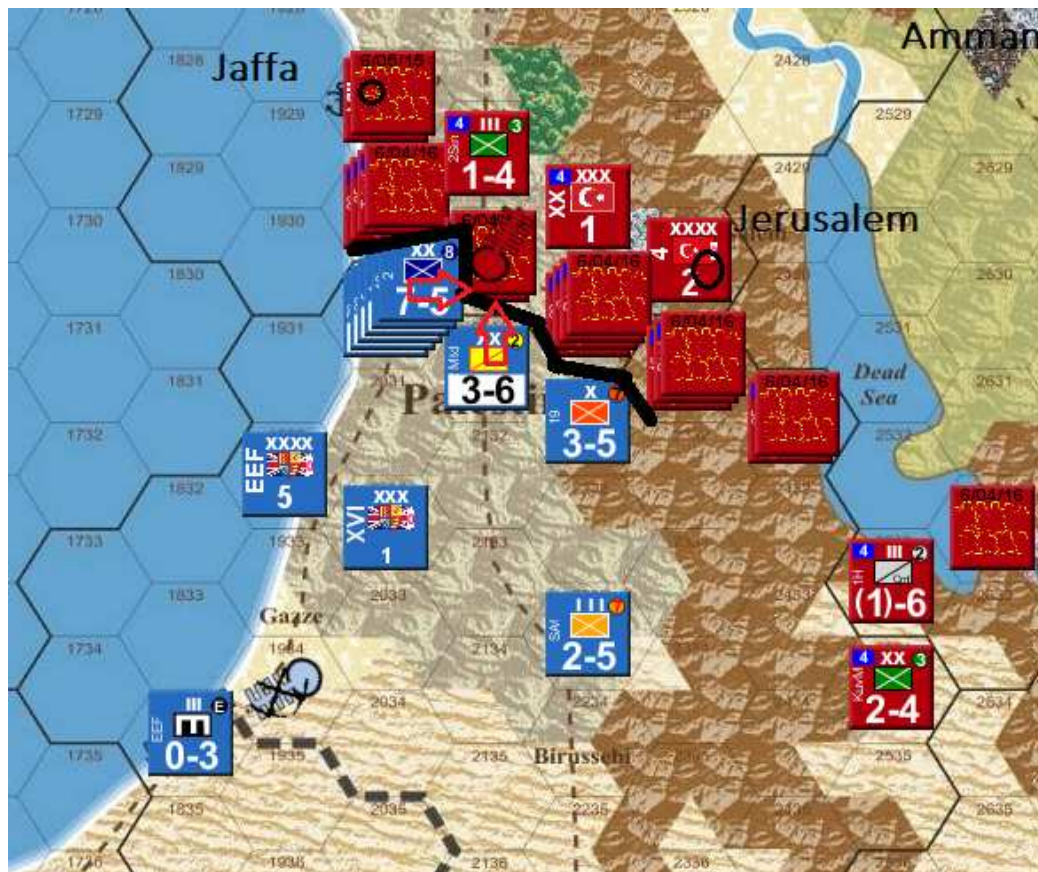


Figure 1: Murray's First Attack, 12 - 14 August 1916.

Murray decided that he could not wait until the cooler weather returned. In that time, the Turks might have improved their defences still further on the Jerusalem – Jaffa line. The Turks were also known to be patrolling more aggressively around the southern shores of the Dead Sea and Murray considered that they would desist from raiding if they thought their main line was in danger.

Murray kept his forces concentrated close to the sea but avoided the main road to Jaffa and instead struck inland toward the village of Batya (8-8.2130) which was ringed by Turkish trenches and defended by two enemy Divisions. The fighting which ensued between 12 and 14 August was as

costly as anything the Gallipoli campaign had seen. The Turkish 5th Division was battered for three days by British, Indian and Australian infantry, heavy guns from the 18th Artillery Regiment and the cavalry of the 2nd Mounted Division. The Turkish defences were certainly knocked in and Batya was taken after a 36 hour battle that left it a heap of rubble. However, the Palestinian terrain offered another ridge not far back and by the time Murray's men were in position to attack that they had used up too much of their ammunition and the offensive was suspended.

The Turks were also trying to advance and having a little more success in Armenia. The Turkish 3rd Army had concentrated several Divisions to push through the Russian line in the remote mountains between the Murat and Aras Rivers. On 10 August, the Turkish 15th and 24th Divisions, despite stinging losses, managed to dislodge the Russian 1st Turkestan Brigade from its high positions and this forced a general retirement of the Russian front of at least 20 kilometres. The Turks were slow in following this up and four days later many Turkish units had barely moved forward from their start lines. The Turkish 3rd Army commander complained that the rigid sequencing of his subordinates' actions prevented swifter pursuit.



Figure 2: Turkish advances in Armenia, 10 - 14 August 1914.

The Western Front

To try and keep French public morale high, the French and British air forces detached pilots and machines to perform air displays at many locations across northern France away from the front line. These were extremely popular, more so than some of the displays of artillery barrages which were found to be rather more alarming than the civilian population could stomach given that many of their sons might be expected to endure the real thing.

GQG gave out a number of optimistic communiques during mid-August enumerating the claimed successes of the Allied summer offensive. Both Joffre and Haig claimed that the Germans were on the ropes and that the next push might see them toppled. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were then nicely settled in to the General Staff Headquarters in Belgium and although they recognised the Allied attacks had been powerful they were not disquieted. German front line strength had held up despite the battering and further Allied efforts would certainly be met with firm resistance.

The Italian Front

By early August, Cadorna had decided that the Army Commanders were delaying too much and he demanded a resumption of the Isonzo offensive on 12 August. This would be the 5th Isonzo attack. This time it would be led by the Duke of Aosta's 3rd Army which planned a drive down the Adriatic coast. The chief problem was the Austrian line was very strong covering Sistiana (6-4.3319) and to widen the attack the Italians needed to penetrate the infamous Carso plateau which provided very broken country through which to advance. The first Italian attacks in this direction were met with withering fire from Austrian positions and the Italian 13th Division suffered a terrible fate reputedly losing 100% of its infantry strength in three days.

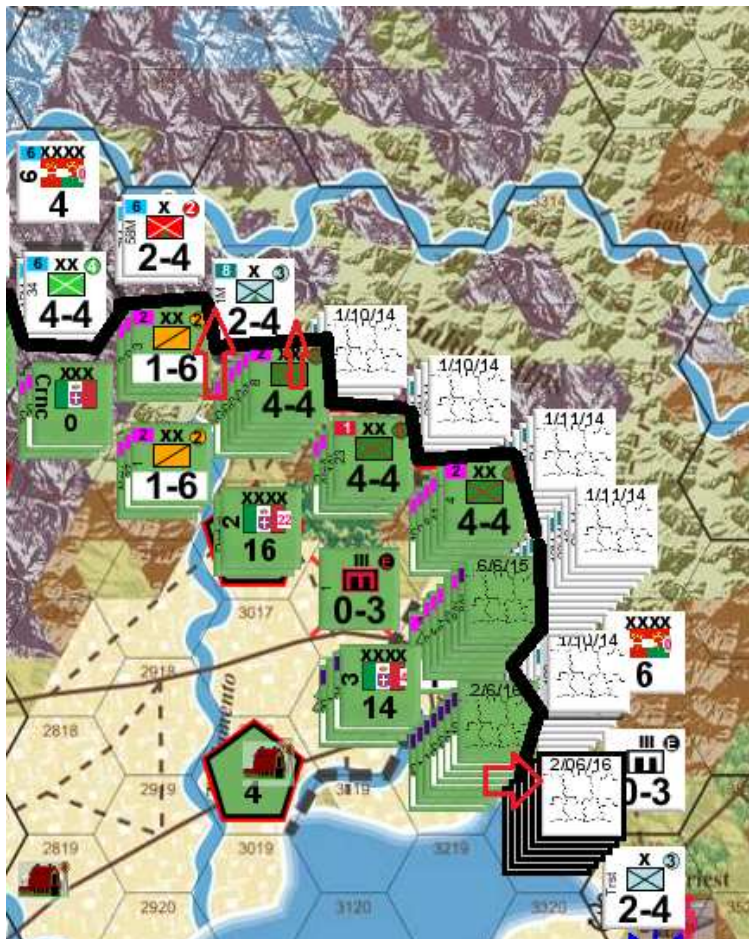


Figure 3: The 5th Isonzo Offensive supported by Italian attacks in the Julian Alps, 12 - 14 August 1916.

The Italian 2nd Army had been ordered to support the operations of the 3rd Army but they managed to satisfy this with a highly divergent line of attack up towards the Plöcken Pass (6-4.3014). On 12 August this was defended by the Croat 1st and 10th Mountain Brigades who had been enjoying a local

beer festival when the Italians were spotted advancing in strength. The Croat sharpshooters were somewhat disgusted when they realised the barrels of beer which had been brought at great effort to their mountain eyries had displaced to some degree the ample stocks of ammunition which they didn't have. Therefore although the Italians came forward slowly they nevertheless managed to overcome many of the advanced positions of the 10th Brigade and by 14 August the Italian 22nd Division was within sight of the top of the pass. Then, strangely, the Italians stopped for two days and allowed the Austro-Hungarians the chance to reinforce.

The Eastern Front

The Central Powers were enjoying a period of advances in several parts of the Eastern Front.

In Lithuania, the German 10th Army was steadily pushing the Russian 2nd Army back from the Prussian borderlands just as they had already done with the Russian 1st Army. On 11 August a very exhausted and understrength Russian 29th Division was torn apart attempting to escape from the Bavarian 39th Reserve and the German 2nd Cavalry Division at Skaudvilė (4-5N.1212).

The Germans and Austrians also completely destroyed another Russian Division (12th) at the other end of the long Eastern Front on 12 August after crossing the Prut River at Vanchyktivitsi (5-5.4815). This forced the Russians to give up their remaining positions on the Bukovina border and set them to preparing somewhat desperately plans for evacuation of large forces to the northern bank of the Dniestr River. The Russian infantry was in a sour mood. They sensed the gains of the summer offensive being reversed and the commissariat were blamed for multiple deficiencies in equipment. It was said the 12th Division had been issued with blank bullets. Once this rumour started every other unit in the Russian Army was reporting real and imagined problems with their supply.

This defeatism spread rapidly even to the Romanians and the "blank bullet" legend was repeated again after a Romanian Brigade was left to face the advancing Austro-Germans in the Homosu Forest (6-6.0313) on 12 August after the Russian 14th Army ordered withdrawals which deprived the Romanians of Russian support. The Russian retreat forced the Romanian 4th Army to conform and the whole Allied front moved back as far as Jassy in the space of a few days. At relatively little cost, the Central Powers' operations on the Siret and Prut had secured the whole of northern Moldavia.

The Romanians had also conceded the Battle of Brasov and were making local withdrawals in Transylvania which added up to a significant retreat. The main reason for this was the growing threat of a German and Austrian advance across the Transylvanian Alps to the west. By mid-August, two German mountain divisions were leading the way up to the frontier followed by a number of Austro-Hungarian Brigades and a Cavalry Division. All the Romanian forces which had dared cross the frontier in July were now back on Romanian soil and having achieved nothing beyond some vandalism.

The war was not going well for the Romanians anywhere. The Bulgarians were only 35 kilometres from Constanta on 12 August according to a report of their 3rd Army.

The Balkans

The Serbians were much more battle hardened than the Romanians. They did suffer a reverse when the Austro-Hungarian 5th Army and the Bulgarian 1st Army finally counter-attacked on 10 – 11

August. The 2nd Timok Division had advanced close to Nish but was driven off the Jastrebac uplands (6-5.2213). However, they sold their positions for a heavy price as the Bulgarians struggled up the rough wooded slopes and the Serbians only completely withdrew in their own good time a few days later.



Figure 4: The Serbians are driven back from the vicinity of Nish, 10 - 14 August 1916.

DM Summary – August 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	1	1	-					9	11	1354	Good
Austria-Hungary	3	1	4					-	8	578	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	6					-	6	86	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	2					-	2	25	Good
Central Powers	4	2	12					-	27	2046	
France	-	-	-					-	-	790	Good
Great Britain	-	-	9					-	9	362	Good
Russia	3	1	5					-	9	829	Shaken
Italy	-	-	10					-	10	109	Good
Romania	-	3	1					-	4	5	
Belgium	-	-	-					NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	(1)					NA	(1)	(40)	NA
Entente	3	4	25					-	32	2082	

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: My small scale attack in the Baltics forced the Russians back there and I make another wearing attack in the same area. If I keep chipping away, he will either take regular small hits and possibly use supply or be forced to withdraw again, which will allow me to shift some of my forces in the north to the Romanian front. I am not expecting a Russian threat to materialise anywhere along the vast central front but want to ensure I keep him thin along here by making opportunistic attacks. His limited strength and supply means I will be able to attack with reasonable odds of suffering no casualties myself. Along the Romanian border is where the real fighting has intensified. I have crossed the Siret into Romania and am now trying to get a bridgehead across the Prut. If he loses both river lines, then his Russian forces in this area will all be left in very poorly defensible terrain and I have built up two strong German and one AH army in the region ready to exploit. I also attack an exposed Romanian brigade along the Siret. In the Carpathians, I have now managed to concentrate enough strength to neutralise the threat there to the AH cities along that border.*
- *Balkans: I am finally in a position to take the fight back to the TE in Serbia and do so just to the west of Nish. Nothing too dramatic, but the TE in Serbia is now well strung out and therefore has lost the concentrated effect he had when his forces were sitting on the Greek border. My withdrawal into Serbia sought to do this and it has succeeded in its diluting effect. I can now attack myself on the northern end whilst also re-occupying Belgrade. Along the Black Sea, I continue to advance slowly towards Constanta.*
- *West: I start to reinforce the likely points of French attack along the front.*
- *Caucasus: I now have sufficient combat power and supply accumulated and make an attack on the centre of the line in the mountains. With the threat to Russian forces in Romania and the paucity of Russian supply, he is now purely on the defensive in the Caucasus and I intend to take advantage of this.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Italy: Quiet. I extract Engrs from this front to head for the Romanian battle grounds and extend my rail LoCs.*

AP: *This was a very busy turn with a total of 8 attacks which is probably a recent record.*

My offensive efforts were not insignificant. I considered myself compelled to attack on the Italian front. Rule 22 was looming there but regardless of that I considered I should make attacks against the Austrians while the opportunity was there. The attack I did on the coast was the price I had to pay for the more advantageous 2nd Army attack in the mountains. A loss ratio of 10:4 against the Italians is worth paying at the moment as I am trying to inch the Austrians towards economic collapse and even a little DM helps.

I could not resist the attack in Palestine when I realised that the British had enough strength to guarantee 4 hits against the Turks as I doubt there has been a combat so far when they could suffer such losses in one go. If I am to make something of the war in the Near East I have to increase the

rate of Turkish losses and the Palestinian front is where I can do this most easily. British losses are still secondary considerations but that will not always be the case.