

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

**GT172: 15 – 19 August 1916 (4 August)**

### **General Situation**

On 17 August 1916, in a ceremony in Smolensk Cathedral, the Tsar invested General Brusilov with the honours of the Order of St Michael the Archangel recognising the achievements of his command in the summer campaign which had appeared to confirm a recovery of Russian arms.<sup>1</sup> This was perhaps the last glittering occasion of Imperial pomp in which the Tsar exercised his military and religious supremacy. In former times such an event would have solidified the autocracy and bound it close to the various pillars of Russian society including the common people. This time the magic was not working. Too few people were watching. The times required people to look carefully after their own interests in order not to succumb to the spiralling prices and corruption of the war economy. In military circles it was known the shine was coming off Brusilov's campaign as the Central Powers were then making rapid advances in the south and threatening to separate Russia from its new Romanian ally.

Lenin was spending the summer in a mountain chalet in the Bernese Oberland. Some biographers have suggested he did this to get away from the stultifying atmosphere of emigré circles and especially from the very talkative Rosa Luxemburg. He was also suffering from writer's block and had given up on his attempt to write a (never finished) more popular political tract "*Ten Top Reasons to be a Communist and how Togetherness will Overthrow Capitalism*". Instead he spent the summer days collecting insects and pursuing other minor hobbies.

### **Western**

The great chain of German trenches still stretched across the whole of Northern France without interruption. Everyday there was sniping and raids and repairs and digging of new positions and the laying of new paths and roadways. There was no shortage of activity. The Allied commanders searched their reports for any evidence that the German line was weakening or damaged in any way. Most persuaded themselves it had been weakened. No other conclusion would be acceptable given the sacrifices that had been made in the last few months.

### **Italian**

The 5th Isonzo Offensive only lasted three days. The Italian camp was divided as to whether it should be continued. The Italian 2nd Army, which had reached the col below the Plöcken Pass (6-4.3014), was the source of staff opinion that the 3rd Army should keep attacking on the Carso to pin the Austrians to the defence of Trieste. Any examination of the reality of the situation led to recognition this was impossible. The Italian Divisions clinging to the terrain inland of the Adriatic coast were in no state to keep up the attacks. Further effort would be futile slaughter. Once it became clear that the 3rd Army would not continue, the 2nd Army also paused short of its objectives but with less excuse. Such was the strength of the broad front doctrine in the Italian Army at this time that the 2nd Army could not envisage attacking except as part of a larger plan.

### **Eastern Front**

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<sup>1</sup> The editor reluctantly refers to a recent accusation of a (shall not be named historian) who suggested this event never occurred and that the Order of St Michael was not then a Romanov title. Every fact in this tome is double checked and a record kept in the archive of Count Vassal (one of the sponsors of this publication).

The action on the Eastern Front remained focused in the far South. The Central Powers were dominant in Moldavia and the Russians were in flight even abandoning northern Bessarabia. The Russian 11th Army retreated across the Dniestr River during mid-August mostly without significant interference from enemy forces.

The Russian 14th Army, however, determined to fight in support of the Romanian 4th Army which struck at the Austro-Hungarian 28th Division of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army at Ruginoasa (5-6S.0414). The Austro-Hungarians were surprised at dawn on 18 August and ran hardly fighting back at all. It was a notable filip to Romanian confidence that their forces played a leading part in this success. This also contributed to the boldness of the subsequent Jassy-Victoria operations later in the month.

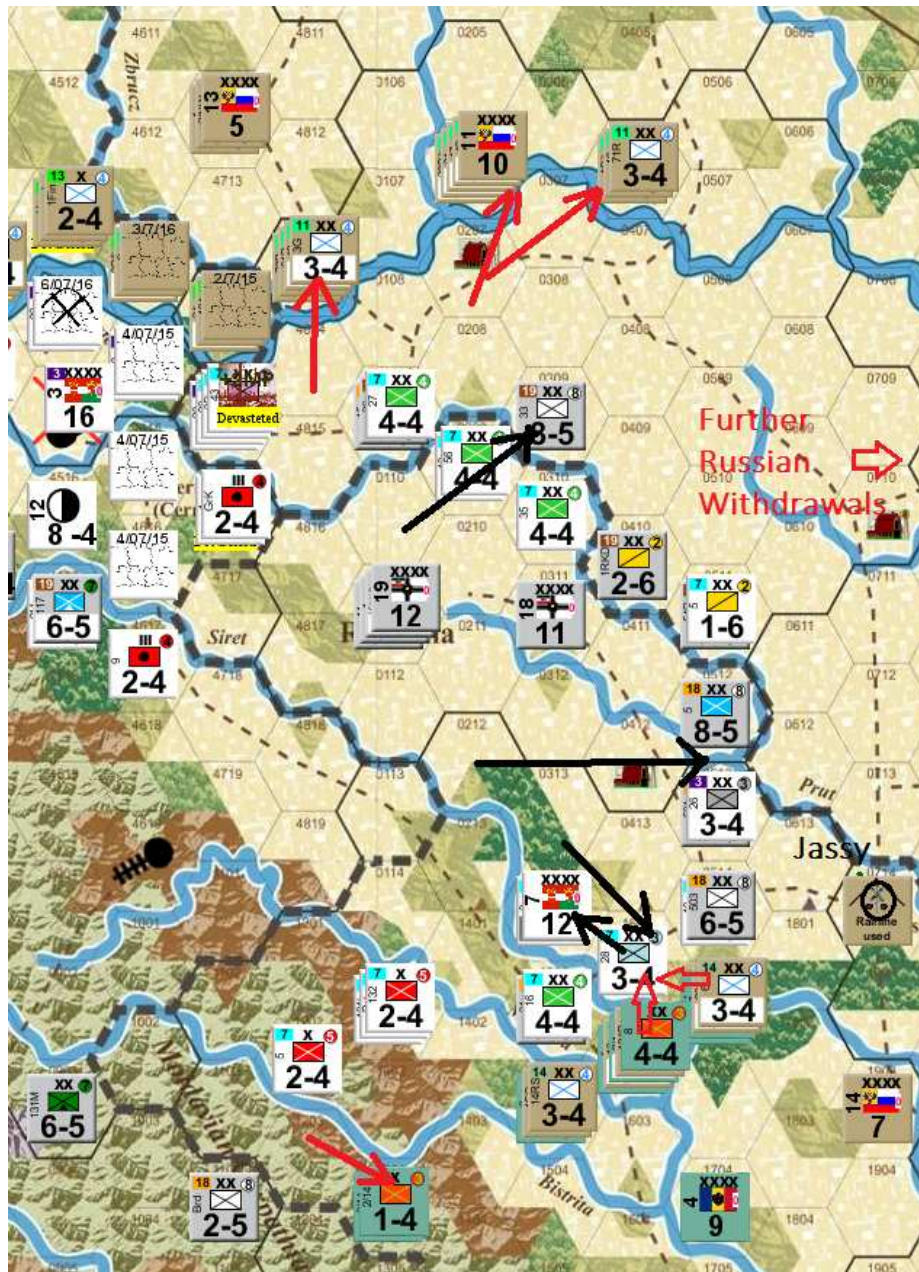


Figure 1: The German 18th and 19th Armies on the Prut and the Allied Counterattack at Ruginoasa, 14 - 18 August 1916.

In the Transylvanian mountains the Central Powers had gathered new forces and we're starting to recover ground from the not very well organised Romanians whose Divisions struggled to coordinate

their actions in the difficult terrain. In mid-August, the Romanian retreats accelerated as it became clear that German and Austro-Hungarian mountain troops might infiltrate their positions. Meanwhile on the Black Sea coast, the city of Constanta had been placed under martial law and soldiers were digging trenches a short distance to the south.

### Balkans

The south Balkan Front was settling down as the Allies retired a little from their high water mark. The Central Powers were able to resume firm control of the Nish - Belgrade railway. Nevertheless the northern termination of the Allied line was located in the Western Morava valley and preserved most of the earlier gains.



Figure 2: The South Balkan Front in Central Serbia, 14 - 18 August 1916.

### Near East

The aftermath of the attack on Batya (8-8.2130) left both sides in a state of shock. It had been in the first significant action of any magnitude on the Palestinian front. As it had occurred during a very hot spell the British force had large numbers of losses due to heat stroke.

The Turks started to make faster gains as the Russians fell back in the mountainous wastes between Van and Erzerum. In mid-August, the Turks were advancing on a broad front more than 60

kilometres wide between the mountain massif above Erence (6-8.2518) and as far south as Aslankaya<sup>2</sup> (6-8.2719) on the Murat River.



Figure 3: Turkish advances in Armenia, 14 - 18 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	2				-	10	580	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	6	-				-	6	86	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	2	-				-	2	25	Good
Central Powers	4	2	12	2				-	29	2048	
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	

<sup>2</sup> The so called Rock of Aslan from whence came the legendary Christian lion who refused to eat the martyrs in the Colliseum.

## Player Notes

- *East: No combat this turn as I need to better manoeuvre myself into position to attack effectively and also I am achieving some of my ends without further need to attack. In the north, the 10<sup>th</sup> Army is now an offensive force again with significant reinforcements and supply. However, there is little point in creating a deep salient. I can rapidly redeploy the stronger divisions within 10<sup>th</sup> Army along the line should opportunity open up elsewhere. Most of the front is a long distance standoff, but along the area of the AH-Russian-Romanian border I have started driving the Russians back and risking his forces with outflanking manoeuvres. In Romania it definitely is now a war of manoeuvre. Combined forces have thrust deeply into Romania with bridgeheads now in place across the Prut River and lassy likely to fall within the next week without a fight. I had forgotten about the special reinforcements that come with the Romanian entry so finally place them in Brasov. I also have a supplied HQ (the 12<sup>th</sup>) en route to the Carpathians for start to enable offensive activity on this front. I will create a 12<sup>th</sup> Mt Army here by taking all of the Mt divs and bdes under 12<sup>th</sup> Army command. AH has similarly despatched the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army HQ to this front to allow the same.*
- *Balkans: The front has firmed up again although I took some unfortunate Bulgarian losses in my last round. It was a necessary expedient, though. In Romania I have a line stretching from the Danube to the Black Sea and the TU XXX HQ has caught up to allow a combined push towards Constanta.*
- *West: Reinforcement of the front from quieter sectors continues.*
- *Caucasus: My last attack successfully drove the Russians back and there is now potential to generate a broader Russian withdrawal.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: A brutal attack from the mixed Commonwealth force finally fell on the defenders of the approaches to Jerusalem. Overall losses were heavy with a 4:9 ratio in my favour. A big hit for the Turks, but such losses take a very long time for the British to build up again.*
- *Italy: Two big attacks here as Robert strives to inflict casualties on AH. Here, too, losses were 4:9 in my favour. However, I feel every hit on AH DM right now and fear I will enter Economic Collapse at this rate.*

*AP: I couldn't continue with the Italian attack without inviting very disproportionate losses. The broad front rules restrict the 3rd Army to only two alternative attacks and the 2nd Army has to attack in the same turn. I cannot make that work for me this turn and need to think of something else.*

*On the Eastern Front, the Romanian offensive has collapsed mainly because of lack of Russian support. The Romanians are not mountain infantry and risk getting cut off if they have to move back through difficult terrain so the mountain barrier will be of little assistance. The Russians are going to be able to help Romania even less because I am losing control of the railway through Jassy which is the only proper rail link between the two countries. The Russian forces that have got through to Romania have no supply and their DM is so high that I will not tolerate them being caught in extensive combat. I did, however, manage a combined attack with the Romanian 4th and the Russian 7th Armies near Jassy against a lone Austrian unit. I will always take that kind of opportunity.*

