

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT173: 19 – 22 August 1916 (5 August)

### General Situation

A report circulated by the Austrian Ministry of Mines and Industry on 19 August provided alarming reading for Ministers in Vienna. It seemed that the war economy was not as robust as had been thought. Up until then, it had been assumed the blockade might cause difficulty but, in point of fact, there was no shortage of coal, iron nor of any of the specialised metals which had given so much concern in the first weeks of the war. Instead the problem seemed to be the increasing difficulties that were encountered with labour. The report concluded that the mood in many industrial concerns were little short of mutinous. Social democrat trade unions were losing control to disloyal leftist and nationalist sentiment. Any small event might cause a stoppage or even an illegal strike. The cost of food was a big part of the problem and the price had trebled in Vienna and Prague since the Russian advances during the summer and after Romania defected.

This was not all. The war had used up all its remaining popular support and the intensification of the struggle on the Eastern Front had underlined the fact that the victories of 1915 had not been decisive. The goals of the war were distant and unclear. Seen from the perspective of any skilled machinist in Prague the prolongation of the conflict meant that he would have to sell his labour cheap indefinitely and likely in order only to frustrate his own national aspirations.

### West



Figure 1: Heavy shelling on the Western Front, 21 - 22 August 1916.

General Mazel of the French 5th Army had prepared an artillery operation in anticipation of further attacks developing the advances which the French had made in the upper Somme region. Mazel was looking for artillery superiority and believed the key to this was counter battery operations assisted by airborne spotters. Under General Nivelle, commanding Mazel's artillery, the 5th Army concentrated four brigades of large howitzers and opened fire on German artillery positions on 21

August. Nivelles wanted to target the German's biggest guns located around Driencourt (5-3.1111). For 48 hours the French kept firing and Nivelles claimed to have badly damaged a number of targets. Unfortunately the French did not find them all, and the Germans soon returned fire which more easily located the massed French guns and may have destroyed twice as many pieces as the Germans lost. Nivelles and Mazel were chastened but not criticised. Joffre approved of methods which might save French lives and concluded that next time more guns would be used.

## Italian

At the front, the stalemate had resumed and the two sides eyeballed each other mostly from a safe distance.

Cadorna was animated by an unshakeable belief that the Austrians were closer than ever to collapse. This would have been incomprehensible to the conscripts who could actually see the solid Austrian positions. However, in fairness to the Italian commander he had immediately gained a copy of the recent report of the Austrian Ministry of Mines and Industry which had been posted to a retired Hapsburg Minister whose last address had been in Riva del Garda, which was now held by the Italians. The Hapsburg postal service was still super-efficient but the internal records of the bureaucracy were not being updated properly. Armed with intelligence which seemed to confirm that Austria-Hungary was on the brink, Cadorna maintained a determination to attack again as soon as the damage of the last attack had been prepared.

## Eastern Front

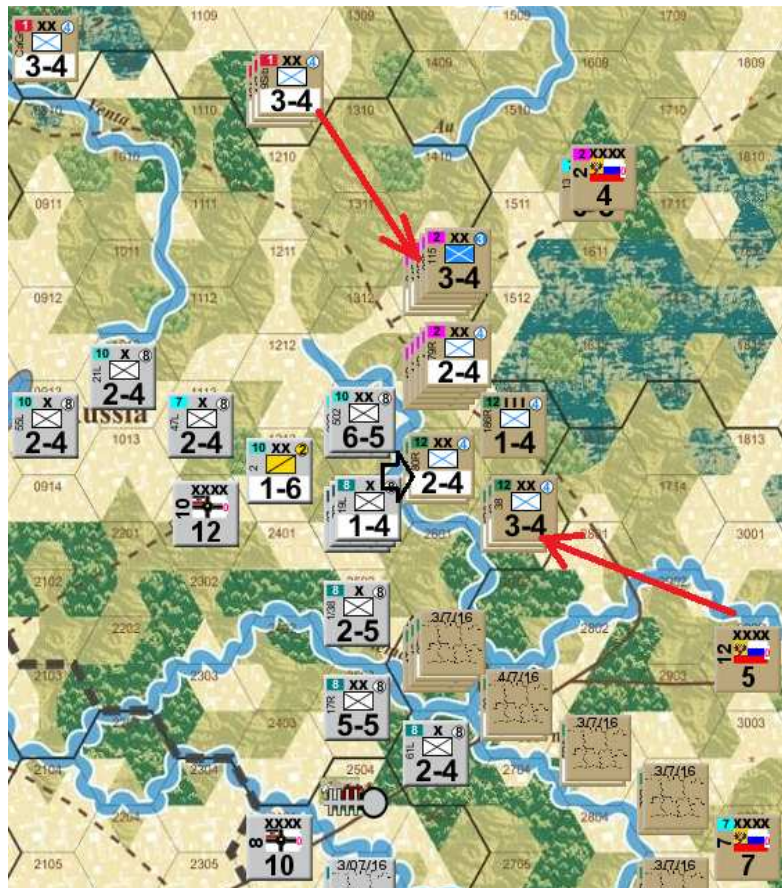


Figure 2: Russia reinforces its 2nd and 12th Army as German attacks in Lithuania continue, 19 - 22 August 1916.



The fighting in Lithuania was kept up by aggressive operations of the German 10<sup>th</sup> Army. On 19 – 20 August, the Germans encountered tough opponents in the Russian 80<sup>th</sup> Reserve Division which held positions overlooking the Nevežis River at Jsovainiai (4-5N.1413). After two days of trying to find a way to establish themselves on the eastern bank of the river the German infantry was forced to give up.

At far southern end of the Eastern Front, a mixed German and Austrian force under command of the Austro-Hungarian 7<sup>th</sup> Army fought a mixed Romanian-Russian force and expelled them from the region north of the confluence of the Siret and Moldava Rivers (6-6.1602) on 20 August.

Perhaps the advance of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army was a little too easy because the Allies were in fact strengthening their forces further east towards Jassy in readiness for a counterstroke. The situation of the Central Powers forces along the Prut River and further east had also seemed easy in the third week of August as it appeared that the Russians were withdrawing to the Dniestr. It had been reported that Jassy had been abandoned and was ripe for the taking. The German 54<sup>th</sup> (Saxon) Reserve Division had been ordered by the German 19<sup>th</sup> Army to press on to Jassy with the 5<sup>th</sup> Austrian Cavalry Division providing support.



Figure 3: Russo-Romanian victory at Jassy-Victoria, 19 - 22 August 1916.

Late on 21 August, when the Saxon infantry was within 10 kilometres of Jassy, near Cotu Morii (5-6S.0613) they were surprised by a sudden attack of mounted Russian cavalry (the Combined Cavalry

Division). Although this attack was beaten off it somewhat shot the Saxons who had been provided with no warning of the enemy presence by the Austrian cavalry which had not patrolled ahead in any significant way and was in fact mixed up in the German column. As night fell, the Saxons became aware of enemy forces moving on their flanks and the Austrian cavalry were sent to investigate. A clear picture of the situation did not emerge until dawn the next day when the Russians and Romanians launched attacks from several directions simultaneously. Realising that he was in an exposed position, the Saxon commander decided to withdraw to the Prut which ought to have afforded a better defensive situation and a line of communication with the rest of the army. This retreat had barely begun when it was discovered that the Russians already had a strong force (83<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Division) astride the river crossing at Sculeni (5-6S.0713). As the news of this spread it became clear that the German and Austrian force was trapped and it was in a hopeless position as the Russians attacked from the direction of the river also. Within a few hours the encircled forces were starting to surrender.

The Romanians played an important part in this Allied success and after the war this was considered one of their most successful actions. The Romanian 7<sup>th</sup> Division had joined the attack near Cotu Morii and a small hamlet to the east was renamed Victoria as a memorial and the action came to be called the Battle of Jassy – Victoria.

This local defeat in Moldavia did not change the overall favourable situation of the Central Powers in Romania. The Bulgarian 3<sup>rd</sup> Army with Turkish support was getting closer to Constanta and there were further actions in Transylvania. In several places the German and Austrian forces were across the Romanian border and there was no doubt that they were exploiting forward momentum.

## **Balkans**

The Central Powers were digging in and it did not appear that further action on the South Balkan front was very imminent.

## **Near East**

Maude's force made a further cautious advance between 21 and 22 August in order to finally bring it into contact with Baghdad's outer defences at Nahrawan (7-9.3021).

While the British were tentatively advancing, the Russians were making larger retreats. This involved abandonment of advanced positions reached on Lake Van where the Russian line had been less than 30 kilometres from Bitlis. On 21 August, Yudenitch gave the 1st Turkestan Corps permission to withdraw more than 60 kilometres resulting in a retreat around the volcanic peak of Mount Süphan (6-8.3119/20).

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: A busy turn with five attacks in all; four of them on the EF/Balkans. The northernmost German army launches a small attack purely to start an attritioning process against the Russian 12<sup>th</sup> Army. In Transylvania, the German 19<sup>th</sup> Army, with some AH support, attacks between the Moldava and Siret rivers to clear the area of the rivers'*

confluence. Further south in Transylvania, the German 12<sup>th</sup> Army, recently established in the region, attacks out of Brasov to start trying to push into Romania from this border. Finally, I am in a position to start something of a recovery process after the Brusilov Offensive.

- *Balkans: I start to dig in within Serbia and launch a small attack SW of Constanta.*
- *Caucasus: Another attack in the Caucasus. Don't foresee any great success but wish to use every means to cause DM to Russia.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet again after the last bruising battle. I continue to rebuild in preparation for the attacks to come.*
- *Italy: I shift mountain brigades westwards to reinforce the weaker positions in the north.*

#### DM Summary – August 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	1	1	-	-	19			9	30	1373	Good
Austria-Hungary	3	1	4	2	4			-	14	584	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	6	-	1			-	7	87	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	2	-	2			-	4	27	Good
Central Powers	4	2	12	2	28			-	55	2074	
France	-	-	-	-	8			-	8	798	Good
Great Britain	-	-	9	-	-			-	9	362	Good
Russia	3	1	5	-	5			-	14	834	Shaken
Italy	-	-	10	-	-			-	10	109	Good
Romania	-	3	1	-	6			-	10	11	
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-			NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	(1)	-	-			NA	(1)	(40)	NA
Entente	3	4	25	-	19			-	51	2101	

AP: *The Romanians are finding it impossible to stand where the Germans threaten to get through their positions. I don't expect to be able to hold western Romania or even Bucharest for very long. The CP approach to Romania was not what I anticipated. The movement from the north behind the line of the mountains is more effective than I expected and is one of the factors accelerating the retreats elsewhere in Romania as I do not want the Romanians completely cut off from Russian help. It does have one weakness which is the railway only extends to Czernowitz and at some point this must be extended or the CP will not be able to sustain its most advance forces. Since Romania is on the same gauge as Austria this does not involve extraordinary difficulty but there will be some delay nevertheless as it is not easy to get engineers to this sector.*

*Although I must give ground I am prepared to turn on the CP if they push too far and the Russians are not going to give up their advanced positions without a fight. The CP lost surrounded a German infantry division and an Austrian cavalry division as a result of lack of caution. They cannot afford this*

*kind of thing now. I only need 16 DM to get Austria Hungary to Economic Collapse. I can be pretty sure I will do this before the end of 1916, but I got an easy 4DM this turn.*