

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT174: 23 – 27 August 1916 (6 August)

General

The news from the East was mixed in the late summer. The Western Allies were becoming a bit suspicious of the continual publications of communiqués announcing Russian victories in places which did not even show up on their maps. The situation in Romania was nevertheless evidently deteriorating fast.

The British ambassador in Bucharest unexpectedly announced to his French and Belgium colleagues that he was leaving on the next train. While they implored him to remain there was no persuading the British diplomat. Bucharest was full of rumours about the retreat of the Romanian Armies in Transylvania and it was expected the Germans would be at the gates of the city any day soon. It spooked the British delegation that the exit routes might be blocked if the Central Powers took Constanta and advanced down the Prut to the confluence with the Danube at Galatz.

West



Figure 1: The Somme, 25 - 27 August 1916.

The campaign on the Somme, restarted in earnest on 25 August as the British 4th Army began a new series of attacks on the line between Corcelette and Bazentin (5-3.1010) having finally passed the

SPW Redoubt. The French 5th Army also supported these operations with a large attack on Ginchy and Combles (5-3.1010). Five German infantry Divisions (of 13th Army) were involved in the defence including the I Corps.

The combats now were of a familiar pattern. The British could not replicate the artillery barrages of the opening phases of the campaign but these were still powerful attacks on a German defence which was tiring under the continuous pressure. The Allied casualties were still very considerable but slowly, very slowly, they could perceive forward progress.

Italian

The Italian front remained quiet. Cadorna was determined that there should be another offensive before the end of the year to ensure the final collapse of Austria-Hungary but it was difficult to see where such an operation could be undertaken with good chances of success.

East

The action on the Eastern Front did not let up for long. The German 10th Army continued to probe against the Russian forces west of Kovno. Near, the Nieman River they forced a mixed force of Russian infantry and cavalry to withdraw after making an attack at Raudondvaris (4-5.2602) on 24 August. This battle was notorious for the aftermath in which the ancient castle of the legendary 11th century Lithuanian popular hero, Lord Varis¹, was looted by soldiers of the German 17th Reserve Division. This was disputed by the Germans who denied their forces had even entered the town but it did not stop the post-war Lithuanian government continually demanding the return of the famous "spiders-web" tapestry which went missing at this moment in the war and has never resurfaced.

The Allied success at Jassy-Victoria was against the run of play and the German and Austrian prisoners had to be hurried away from the area because the Central Powers were soon massing again north of Jassy. Within the space of a few days two Brigades of the Romanian 14th Division were consumed in unequal fights on the weakening Allied front between the Prut and the Bistrita Rivers.

The Romanian High Command was not operating without a plan. They were fearful of the growing Central Powers forces in Transylvania which had now been organised into the transferred German 12th and Austro-Hungarian 2nd Armies that had come down from Galicia and Poland. To meet this threat the Romanians were trying to pull their scattered forces closer together. This meant above all that the Romanian 1st and 2nd Armies on the Transylvanian front had to withdraw and bring themselves into closer contact with the 3rd Army defending Constanta and the 4th Army fighting the Central Powers in Moldavia.

The implication of this plan, however, was that western Romania had to be abandoned and the fate of the capital, Bucharest was placed in the balance. There was very much a danger that the Romanian government would soon be asked whether they wished to preserve their army or their capital. The same question had already been faced by the Belgians and Serbians and in both cases the safety of the army had prevailed. There was every reason to believe this would also be the case in Romania.

¹ The legend is vague as to the reason for his popularity. It is generally assumed that he helped the resistance against the Catholic Church and protected the poor against the depravation of the arrogance of noble warlords. His own origins are obscure and it is sometimes suggested he was not even Lithuanian but had come from overseas.

In any event, in late August, the Romanians were already giving up ground in the west. By 25 August, the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army had reports of its spearheads at least 40 kilometres within Romanian territory and they were threatening to advance rapidly down the several river valleys which flowed across Wallachia to the Danube.

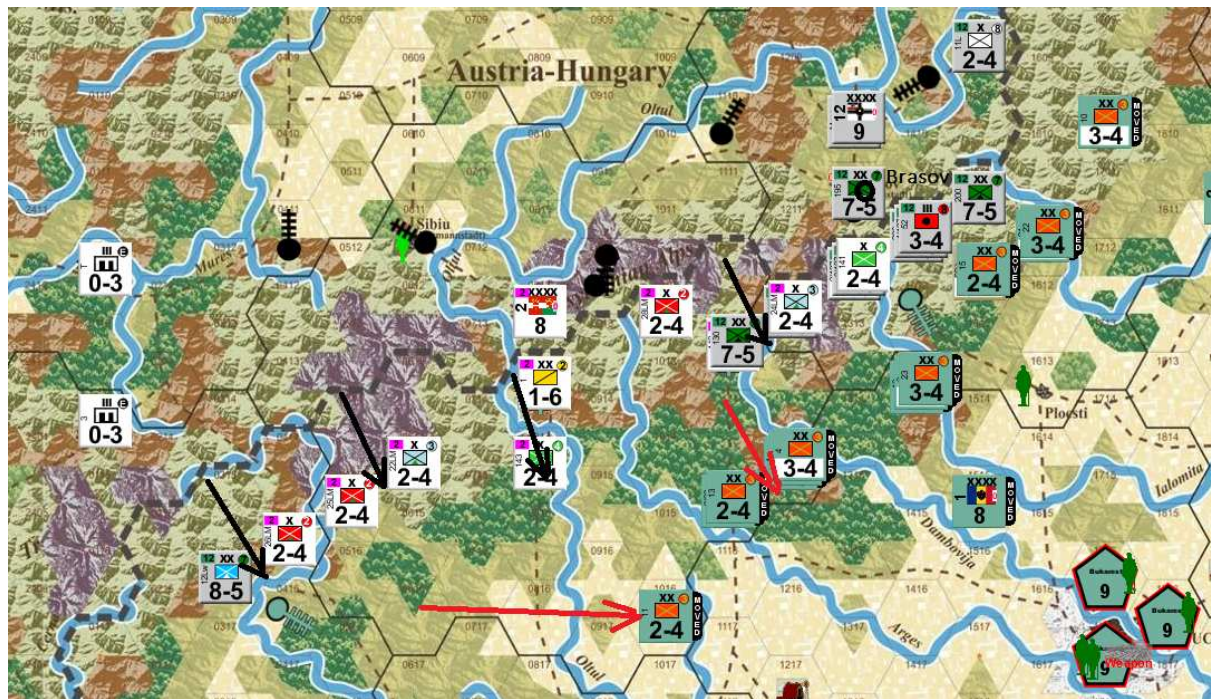


Figure 2: The Invasion of Western Romania, 23 - 27 August 1916.

Balkans

The British 3rd Division had pulled out of the front in late August and had orders to proceed to Salonika where it would receive further orders.

Near East

In the Caucasus, the Turkish 3rd Army was following up the success of its operation in the mountains between the Aras and Murat Valley's. The Russians had there pulled back over 40 kilometres but there were still plenty of high mountains and steep slopes upon which they could fix their defences.

On 26 August, General Maude was ready to make a probing attack on the Baghdad defences. The Turks had built a network of trenches and other defensive positions in a great arc stretching 120 kilometres around the southern and western approaches to the city. Maude thought that such a long line could not be defended in strength everywhere.

Maude's attack was made against a stretch of almost featureless countryside (7-9.3020) north of Nahrawan (7-9.3021). The Turkish trenches were held by their 17th Division and Maude pushed the Irish 10th Division and the Indian 1st Division forward. The day was very hot and there was slight cover. To say the British operation was cautious would be fair but a number of Turkish outposts were overrun and the Turks pinned to their positions suffered notable losses also. Maude ordered the attacking forces to withdraw next day and had always emphasised to those involved that this was a trial attack and not the main event which would come later. About half the casualties in the

Allied camp were attributable to heat exhaustion to which even the Indian soldiers were not immune.



Figure 3: Maude's first attack, 26 - 27 August 1916.

DM Summary – August 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	1	1	-	-	19	12		9	42	1385	Good
Austria-Hungary	3	1	4	2	4	-		-	14	584	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	6	-	1	1		-	8	88	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	2	-	2	-		-	4	27	Good
Central Powers	4	2	12	2	28	13		-	68	2087	
France	-	-	-	-	8	4		-	12	802	Good
Great Britain	-	-	9	-	-	16		-	25	378	Good
Russia	3	1	5	-	5	3		-	17	837	Shaken
Italy	-	-	10	-	-	-		-	10	109	Good
Romania	-	3	1	-	6	2		-	12	13	
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-		NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	(1)	-	-	-		NA	(1)	(40)	NA
Entente	3	4	25	-	19	25		-	76	2126	

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: My current lack of clear focus revealed itself last turn when I allowed a GE div and AH cav div to be isolated and forced into surrender. I can't afford such silly mistakes at this stage and fear my AH cannot be spared economic collapse this year. If that happens as early as 1916, I think the war is all but over for the CP. Food shortages alone will probably tip the balance. Nonetheless, I continue trying to apply pressure where I can; primarily in Romania but even there most places he has Russians they are stacked with Romanians to soak up the losses. I make several small attacks again. Until my Engrs can get railheads extended, I am about at the limit of my advance in the area south of the Dniester. Further south I have yet to break out of the mountains.*
- *Balkans: Quiet.*
- *Caucasus: The line exhibits an uncomfortable bulge now into the mountains. I lack the strength to fully exploit it and he has re-supplied quite effectively.*
- *Mesopotamia: Commonwealth forces have now made contact with my easternmost trenches covering Baghdad. Fighting is imminent.*
- *Palestine: This front has settled into a bit of a stalemate.*
- *Italy: I am about as ready for another Italian offensive as I can hope to be.*

AP: My attack in the West is compelled by rule 22-13 as the French have an artillery supply expenditure surplus to negate. However they cannot do it completely as 36 infantry committed only used 9 supply and the artillery used 12 last turn. That means that the attack will have to be continued next turn. The British are providing most of the punch to this attack but they will be running short of supply next turn. This kind of thing means that is best to assess a sequence of connected attacks as a whole rather than as individual attacks. Generally the randomness of the dice will even up a bit too.

I make the first attack in Iraq for several months. This is despite the hot weather. I need to shake up the defence a little. I have reinforcements arriving. There was a bit of a risk in this. The Turkish cavalry might get to Ali Gharbi before me and cut supply if it thrust forward but I calculated I could shift my operations to the Euphrates at the beginning of September if necessary.

I should mention the Euphrates because nothing has happened on that river since the campaign started. From my Allied point of view that is because it is better to concentrate on one river and I have not been forced to fight up the Euphrates. From the CP point of view they have been withdrawn to Baghdad and concentrated their defence there. This has clearly worked so far though with gradually improving Allied logistics there must come a point when the defence becomes too costly.

The potential advantage for the Turks of an active campaign on both rivers is that the Allies face disaster if the Turks can get close to Qurna and block lines of communication down one or both rivers. It is not necessary for the Turks to capture Qurna, they just need to hold a riverbank sufficiently far down the river. This is perhaps most dangerous when the rivers are furthest apart because the Allied force on one river cannot help the Allied force on the other nor can they get back to Qurna sufficiently fast in an emergency. When the front reaches Baghdad, the shoe is on the other foot because now it is easy for the Allies to cut off any Turkish force that tries to go further south - but note the Turks are more resilient to loss of supply and only suffer attrition once a month.

