

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT178: 10 – 14 September 1916 (3 September)

General Situation

The fall of Bucharest on 10 September was announced with gun salutes in the major cities of the Central Powers. This was certainly their biggest success since the taking of Warsaw. Warsaw itself was now subject to considerable privation as a result of Ludendorff's harsh occupation policies in Poland. For the moment, the Hungarians and Bulgarians who first marched into Bucharest offered a smiling face since they had not been obliged to fight very hard for their prize.

In Allied capitals the news was heard with stunned disbelief that their new ally had so rapidly succumbed. The reaction was nevertheless worst in St Petersburg where the criticism of the Tsar's war policy was now reignited after a summer in which it had been muted by Brusilov's success. Socialists and conservatives were united in wondering, where was the advantage of their alliance with Britain and France.

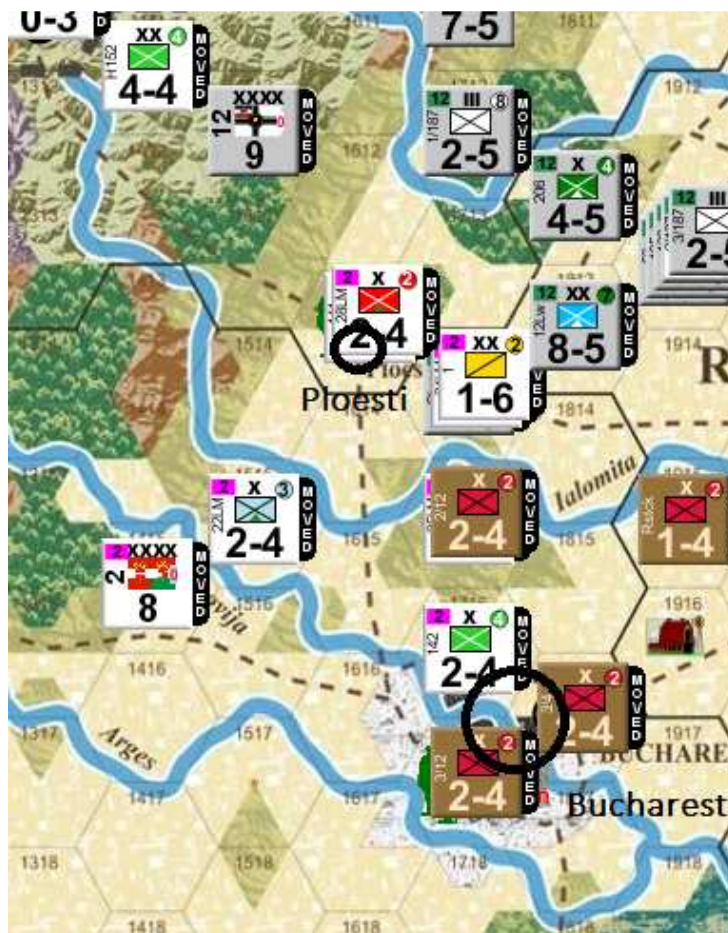


Figure 1: Bucharest and Ploesti occupied by the Central Powers, 10 and 12 September 1916.

A bizarre article was published in the Züricher Neue Zeiten on 14 September written jointly by Lenin and (a frankly naive) Prince Dolgorukov which envisaged an alternative history in which Russia had stayed neutral in 1914. In this fantasy, Russia guaranteed the neutrality of old allies such as Bulgaria and (less likely) Serbia. Germany strengthened by a socialist government kept the capitalist states at bay in a defensive war, while Russia with Turkey as a subordinate ally cleaned the British out of

Persia and India and so liberated the suffering peoples of the East. The idea that war needed to have deeper and more enduring popular support was taking hold but far too late to do any good.

The Eastern Front

The Romanians also finally lost control of Jassy on 11 September as the German 18th Army continued its inexorable advance between the Prut and the Siret. After a few days pause, there was renewed fighting at Berezeni (6-4.2103) which saw the Romanians sacrifice another Infantry Division (7th) in order to facilitate a Russian retreat across the Prut River.

The German and Austrian commanders on this front did have some concerns for their logistics. Their forces were up to 160 kilometres beyond their railhead and in any event the amount of ammunition coming forward was limited by the shortage of rolling stock able to operate from Bukhovina. Since the railway was interdicted by Russian shelling across the Dniester west of Czernowitz there were further delays in moving things forward from there.



Figure 2: The front along the Dniester River, 10 - 14 September 1916.

The difficulties the Central Powers faced were not only logistical. The Russians and Romanians were doing their utmost to strengthen their front barring further enemy movements towards Galatz. Although the forces arriving from southern Russia were not sufficient in themselves, the situation was more under control thanks to the arrival of Allied troops from further south. Several units retreating past Galatz were prevented from withdrawing across the Prut and redirected to join the defence of Moldavia.

The loss of Bucharest was a bad blow to the Romanian Army which found it hard to believe it had not been given a chance to defend the city. This was not an end to the litany of capitulation said because, on 12 September, the oil town of Ploesti was taken by the Central Powers as their armies swept past it on either side.

The Romanian retreats were primarily due to the impossibility of defending against so many different threats at once. Apart from the danger from the north, Galatz was threatened by the Bulgarian 3rd Army operating in the Dobruja region. This danger grew as a result of the Austrian naval victory at Cernovoda (6-6.2615) which caused the Romanian 3rd Army to retreat in order to secure its own path of withdrawal across the Lower Danube. Immediately after Cernovoda, the Turks had ferried a whole division of Laz tribesmen across the Danube at Cernovoda itself. However, on 11 - 12 September, the Bulgarians were unable to replicate this feat further downstream at Tăcău (6-6.2611) owing to small but effective Romanian forces on the western side and due to a lack of engineers on the spot. The Austrian naval force had been prepared to give covering fire but there was a lack of suitable vessels to provide transport across the river for the infantry. The intended operation had to be cancelled.

The Balkans

A new French Division, or rather a reconstituted one (72nd Reserve), was being formed from fresh drafts of troops arriving at Salonika in mid-September.

There was little other activity in the Balkans. There was no visible reaction of the Central Powers to the siege of Cattaro even after the end of the first week.

The Near East

None of the Near Eastern fronts were active at this time but the Turks were slowly strengthening their positions both in Palestine and the Caucasus.

The Western Front

The extension of the British sector of the Western Front continued. Two Canadian Divisions and a British Division replaced French troops as far as La Fere between 12 and 14 September. By this means, the French 5th Army moved into reserve, and the British 5th Army came out of reserve and was inserted into the front line.

The British and Canadians complained about the state of the French trenches around La Fere. They were shallow and incomplete and needed urgent work. Intelligence also indicated that the German forces opposite were very strong. The Allied troops were therefore very nervous about any signs of activity on the German side.

The Italian Front

The Carnic Offensive burst into action again on 12 September as the Italian 5th Army resumed its assault on the mountain line between Hohe Warte and the watershed overlooking the Plöcken Valley (6-4.3014). Piacentini has spent two days reorganising his units to enable them to make the most effective attacks but time and again they were unable to gain commanding positions that might have allowed them to use their firepower to best use. Two regiments of heavy howitzers which Piacentini had firing incessantly into the mountains created a lot of noise which crashed around the peaks, but there was little evidence that they were doing very much to damage the well

concealed enemy positions. The defending Austro-Hungarian 6th Army had been alerted to the Italian plan and two fresh mountain brigades had been installed on the highest crests of the mountains. These were sometimes above the snow line which was, during this season, at the highest altitude of the year.

Cadorna waited impatiently for some real indication that Piacentini was going to break the Austrian line. On 14 September, the 5th Army was again talking of a pause of two days and Cadorna's patience snapped. Piacentini was ordered to meet Cadorna for a conference in Udine (6-4.3019) with other Army Commanders which would take place on 17 September. By that time, Cadorna would have full reports which confirmed the lack of aggressive spirit in the 5th Army which was, in Cadorna's mind, completely the reason for the lack of progress.

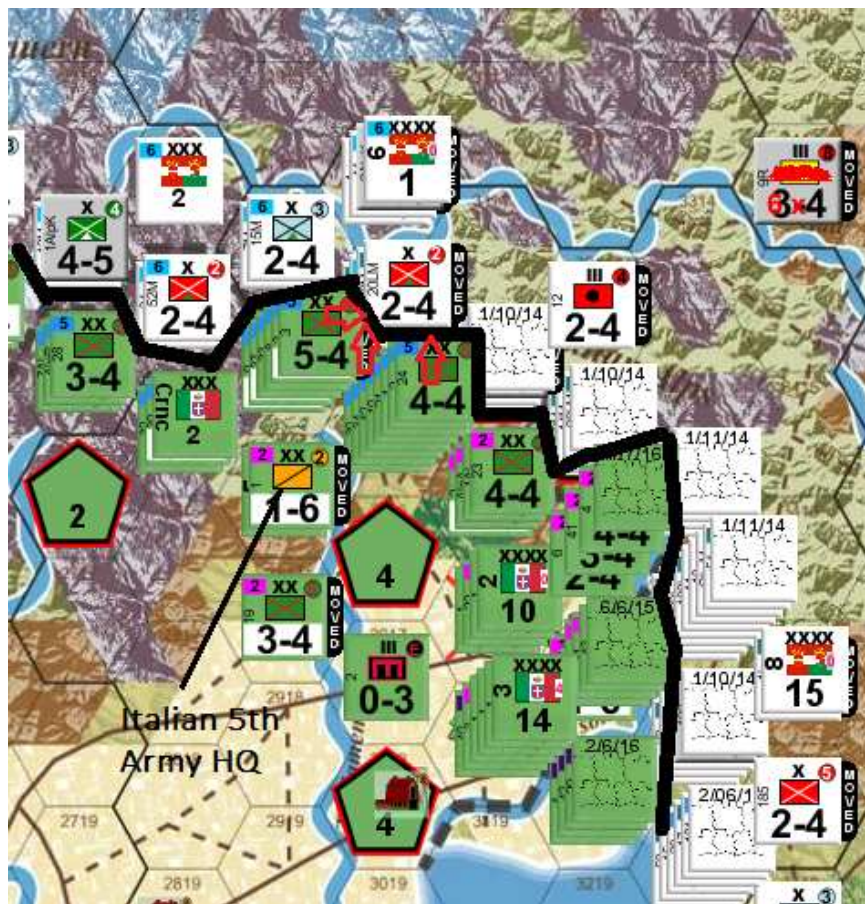


Figure 3: The Carnic Offensive resumed, 12 - 14 September 1916.

Player Notes

- CP: *East: I have started railing German divisions south to support the offensive into Romania. I may even consider sending some to the Balkans to bolster the poor AH troops. The main effort continues to be driving into Romania. As quickly as I take control of Romanian food production areas, however, I also occupy hungry cities. Bucharest was made an open city and I occupy it. I don't think Romania is going to solve my food situation. I now occupy Iassy, Ploesti, Craiva, Constanta and Bucharest. I conduct three attacks this time, including one using the Danube gunboats in support to start driving westwards.*

- *Balkans: Quiet. I am annoyed that I missed his gradual attempts to invest the coastal fort of Cattaro on the Montenegrin border.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Italy: He attacked me with a massive force where the Dolomites meet the Julian Alps last turn with lousy results for both attack and counterattack. I consider myself very lucky to have escaped with such low casualties. I should have defended these locations with greater strength. I have some Germans en route, however.*

DM Summary – September 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-	4	1					13	18	1422	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	4	2					1	7	591	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	-					-	-	88	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-					-	-	27	Good
Central Powers	-	8	3					14	25	2131	
France	-	-	-					-	-	808	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-					-	-	391	Good
Russia	-	7	-					NA	7	846	Shaken
Italy	-	3	4					-	7	116	Good
Romania	30*	16	131**					-	177	193	*Craiova and Constanta lost **Jassy, Ploesti, and Bucharest lost
Belgium	-	-	-					NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-					NA	-	(40)	NA
Entente	30	26	135					-	191	2341	

AP: *I must not let Austria off the hook for economic collapse. Although at the end of this turn, I only need to get 9 DM to achieve this target and there appears to be ample time before the end of the year, I cannot take this for granted. I place most hope for this result on the Italians. Their last offensive is very disappointing as I rolled two successive "1s". The loss ratio not bad 4:7 against the Italians but I do not care about that. I care about how much supply was expended (21 points) to get a measly 4 hits.*

I am also concerned now at my limited success to date against Turkey and Bulgaria. If I do not start accelerating their losses soon there will be no hope of putting them under real pressure in the second half of the game (which is about to start).

The 131 DM suffered by Romania this turn is a new national record for worst turn.