

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT179: 15 – 18 September 1916 (4 September)

### General Situation

In the United States, the election for President was in full swing. Both candidates, including the incumbent Wilson, had made solemn pledges not to allow America to get further embroiled in the sad struggle for Europe.

In Germany, the Naval Staff were putting the finishing touches to a paper calling for the resumption of unlimited submarine warfare. It was intended that this would be presented at an Imperial conference to be attended by the Kaiser, Hindenburg, and Ludendorff in the first week of October. Admiral Sheer was still doubtful about the proposal and indicated that he was not yet ready to endorse it.

### The Eastern Front



Figure 1: Bessarabian Front, 15 - 18 September 1916.

The situation in Moldavia seemed to be stabilising as the Romanians concentrated to defend the line of the Briladu River and further south along the lower part of the Siret River. The Romanian government had fled Bucharest and had taken refuge in Galatz which it designated the final redoubt of national resistance.

Part of the reason why the Romanians were able to slow their retreat was because the Central Powers were diverted to operations consolidating their position in northern Bessarabia. Between 15 and 16 September the Germans supported by Austrian artillery had engaged three Russian Divisions (one was actually consisted of Serbian Volunteers) in an action which followed a crossing of the Prut at Albita (6-6.2102) and a steady advance through Bujor and Boghicieni (6-6.2201). By 17 September, the Central Powers were forced to pause because it was clear the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army was constructing a strong line in front of Kishinev.

The Central Powers had also been extending their control down the western side of the Dniester. On 18 September, the furthest they had reached was in the vicinity of Japca and Cobilea (5-6S.0909). This position had just been reached by the Austro-Hungarian 56<sup>th</sup> Division but on that day they came under attack by Russian forces which advanced from the East. The Russian 47<sup>th</sup> Division also struck from the direction of the river crossing at Camenca (5-6S.0908). The Russian's however, were only probing and by evening the pressure lessened and the 56<sup>th</sup> Division held its line overnight.

### The Balkans

With the Eastern Front situation looking more favourable, the Central Powers were able to give the Balkans a greater share of their attention. The German 502<sup>nd</sup> Division had been designated for transfer to the south Balkans and a Serb sympathiser in the Austro-Hungarian military railway administration had made sure that Mišić was aware of this fact. As a result he ordered a few tactical withdrawals pulling back his most exposed forces in the Western Morava Valley.

### The Near East



Figure 2: Stalemate enduring at Baghdad, 15 - 18 September 1916.

Although the front lines in the Near East seemed to be subject to the most profound stalemate there was as always in WWI constant activity behind the front lines. Part of this was just the ordinary effort of sustaining armies in distant theatres.

The Allied armies could be distinguished by how successful they were at obtaining the support of their political centres for future operations. Yudenitch had received some measure of resupply and might have renewed his efforts to reach Erzerum but for the firm order of the Tsar to remain on the defensive. Maude, in Iraq, had received the Indian 11<sup>th</sup> Division but further logistical effort was needed on the Tigris River before the forces he had near Baghdad could be substantially increased. Murray, in Palestine, had received two extra Divisions in recent weeks (3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Australian). Murray advised London that if adequately supplied his command might manage a breakthrough before the end of the year.

### The Western Front

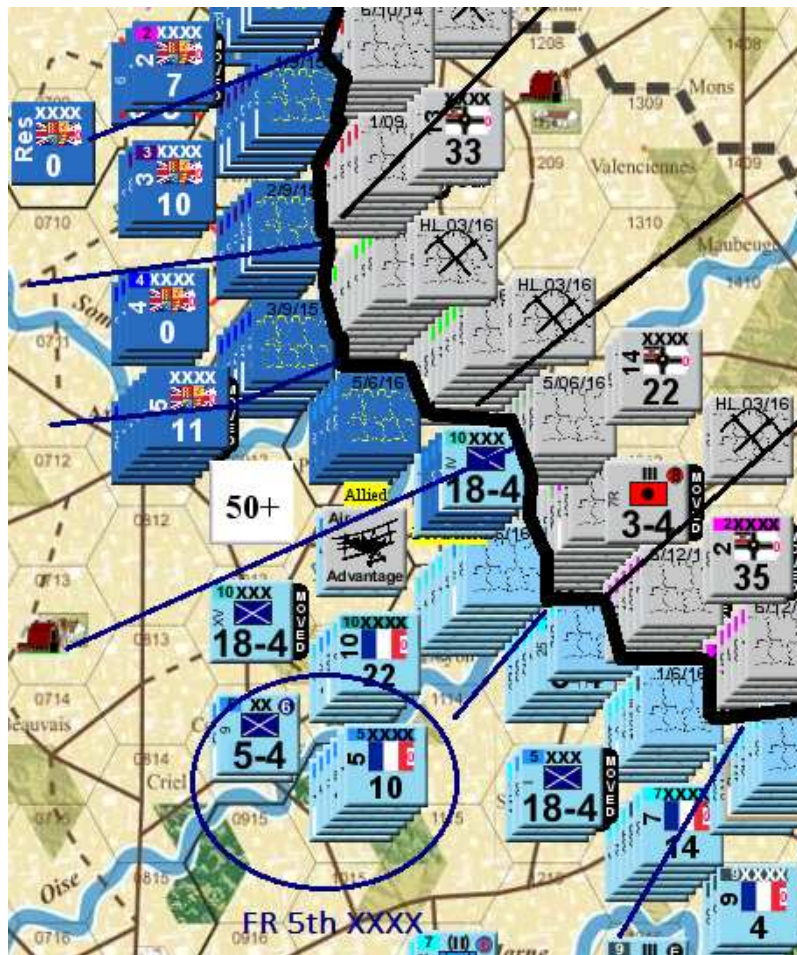


Figure 3: Western Front Army boundaries after the insertion of the British 5th Army between Peronne and La Fere, 15 - 18 September 1916.

The situation on the Western Front remained quite tense. In the British Army, the efforts of the summer had resulted in only the most modest gains and it jarred with British soldiers of all ranks that the French had taken the credit for the capture of Peronne and La Fere though the French had probably committed only a third of the forces involved in the whole offensive. When in the Second

World War, the Americans stole the glory of the breakout from Normandy, General Montgomery, who had been involved in this Somme campaign, immediately thought back on this as a precedent.

For these reasons and others, Haig was urging his subordinates to prepare further plans for attack. He wanted more concrete successes and some real territorial gains before winter closed down the campaign.

### The Italian Front

Cadorna met his erstwhile protégée General Piacentini at Udine (6-4.3017) on 17 September and relieved him from command of the Italian 5<sup>th</sup> Army on the spot and with no ceremony or apology. The failed Carnic Offensive was such an embarrassment to Cadorna that he re-designated the Italian 5<sup>th</sup> Army, hardly bothering to conceal that he was engaged in a cosmetic change. What was the 5<sup>th</sup> Army therefore largely became the new Italian 6<sup>th</sup> Army and General Mambretti took command of it.

Cadorna in his report to the King accused Piacentini of having bad luck and of wasting supplies and opportunities. Of course the Carnic Offensive had been authorised by Cadorna and it was he who put Piacentini in charge.

### DM Summary – September 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-	4	1	1				13	18	1423	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	4	2	1				1	7	592	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	-	-				-	-	88	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-				-	-	27	Good
Central Powers	-	8	3	2				14	27	2133	
France	-	-	-	-				-	-	808	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	-				-	-	391	Good
Russia	-	7	-	3				NA	10	849	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	3				-	194	2344	

## Player Notes

CP:

- *East: Things are quietening down again on the EF as the Russians draw out of reach or fortify themselves into the zone east of Lemberg which is a sort of "I won't attack you if you don't attack me" area with a 40km no man's land in between just to keep both sides honest. I have reconciled myself to the fact it will be beyond me to be able to bring about Russian collapse this year. Preventing the Hapsburg empire from collapse, however, I believe is impossible. Nonetheless, I am trying to stiffen AH vulnerable positions with German manpower where I can. The only place I can continue offensive action is within Romania, but supply is running low. I get one opportunity to assault three Russian divisions. Such opportunities are rare as he tends to form combined defences with Romanian formations so I cannot pass up this opportunity to attack Russians. This is purely attritional in nature although an advance here takes me closer to Kishinev and also places me in a position to threaten the Romanian 1<sup>st</sup> Army with being both flanked and also split from his Russian allies. It is only the swamps of the Danube Delta and the River Prut which provide Romania with any feasible protection.*
- *Balkans: I have both AH troops and German heading for Cattaro along with a German division as the 1<sup>st</sup> troops to head for Serbia.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: I am slowly building up the Jerusalem defences to make any attacks here punishing for the Commonwealth troops.*
- *Italy: More German troops and artillery start arriving to stiffen AH resistance and try and deter Italian aggression. I am hoping that placing Germans were the Italians have the best options for attacking may make it not worthwhile for him. However, it still suits the TE war plan to exchange Italian casualties for German ones.*

*AP: I keep chipping away at the Austrians with every chance I get. One of those chances is the siege of Cattaro which could turn into an interesting situation if the CP manages to stage an attempt at relief. Even if I cannot hold my surrounding lines, I will divert CP units to this isolated spot and as long as it takes to get them there it will take the same time to get them back somewhere more useful.*

*I am conscious of the fragility of my position everywhere in the East. The arrival of some CP reinforcements in the Balkans is making me think about my thin line in Central Serbia.*

*I want to attack in the West, Italy and the Near East but supplies and other factors do not allow it yet.*