

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT180: 19 – 22 September 1916 (5 September)

General Situation

The warring parties were showing increasing signs of weariness. The casualty lists were constantly increasing. Innumerable families had not seen their menfolk for months if not years. The hospitals were full of those who were wounded or sick and these overflowed into facilities created for rehabilitation. It was a great time for the flowering of medical science, but progress was bought at immense cost.

The Eastern Front



Figure 1: The German 12th Army captures Braila, 19 - 20 September 1916.

As the Central Powers closed in on the Romanian Briladu – Siret defence lines they bumped up against a Romanian rear-guard at Braila made up of remnants of the Romanian 17th Division. The

German 12th Army made short work of those who tried to defend the city. The Germans were assisted by the guns of the Austro-Hungarian flotilla and there was no possibility for ragged and demoralised Romanians to escape destruction. By the morning of 20 September, Braila was firmly under their control. Through the midday haze the infantry of the German 195th Mountain Division could make out the shape of the city of Galatz on the opposite side of the wide river.



Figure 2: The Russian 3rd Army attacks across the Strya River, 21 - 22 September 1916.

The Russians had not yet exhausted all their offensive plans. Brusilov had been forced to allow a considerable diversion of Russian strength to the Southern Front to support Romania but had retained large forces in Galicia. Ammunition was still in short supply but Brusilov had accumulated enough to support one further effort along the Strya River between Kinashiv and Podilya (5-5.4011). The Russian 3rd Army had identified here a sector 20 kilometres long defended by a single enemy Division, which according to prisoners was the Hungarian 151st Division. Brusilov concentrated twelve Infantry Divisions and two Artillery Brigades to make a sudden attack there at

noon on 21 September. The Hungarians holding the river line manage to inflict some significant losses on the Russians during their bridging operations. However, the thin screen deployed by the defenders was just a crust which once broken allowed the Russians to stream into the soft centre of the rest of the Hungarian decision. Ultimately the whole organisation disintegrated by a mixture of flight and futile counterattacks. The Russians collected quite a bit of booty but they had run very low on ammunition and, barely six hours after disaster had overtaken their opponents, they withdrew back across the river.

The Balkans



Figure 3: The Italian Siege of Cattaro, 19 - 22 September 1916.

The siege at Cattaro was becoming more critical. As yet, the Central Powers had made few visible attempts to provide relief for the naval base though undoubtedly there had been a few submarine movements through the so called “fiord of the Balkans”.

On 19 September, the Austrian 185th Brigade disembarked at Dubrovnik and marched off without delay until it came into contact next day with the outer cordon of the Italian alpinists at Kruševica (6-5.1019) in southern Herzegovina. The situation of the Italians was hardly secure. They had hardly enough men to secure the perimeter of the siege and the western side was the most insecure. By 22 September, the Italian 14th Division was arriving but they still faced long marches through difficult terrain to reach the points where the enemy might stage an attempt to breakthrough to the town.

The Near East

Djemal Pasha was well aware of the possibility of a British attack in Palestine in the near future. As the autumnal equinox passed the daily temperatures could be expected to fall and the lethargy which prevailed in the summer would be replaced by greater energy. Djemal studied his defensive

positions obsessively and moved units around as he perceived weak points. On his side of the line, Murray had discouraged the construction of substantial entrenchments which he considered would only impair the mobility of his forces.

The Western Front

Differences were starting to emerge between the French and the British on the future course of the Somme campaign. Haig wanted to renew the attacks towards Bapaume (5-3.1010). The French did not oppose this but they did not offer to help. They pointed out that this was now entirely a British sector now and they dismissed as absurd Haig's proposal that the French 5th Army resume its front near Peronne.

Joffre had had enough of the Somme campaign in any event and was planning operations further east. This would require the transfer of French 5th Army units away from the western extension of the French line. Direct assistance to the British could not be provided in these circumstances. By 22 September, preliminary movements to reinforce the French 3rd Army at Verdun were underway and they had been sufficiently obvious for German pilots to make note of them.

The Italian Front

The two sides were recovering after the Carnic Offensive. This had not been among the more bloody episodes of the Italian Campaign. Cadorna was, however, still mad at the waste of supply and opportunity that the recent attack represented and he scoured the whole front for a sector in which he might still profitably attack before winter. After the Carnic Offensive the advantages of attacking on the Isonzo Front made themselves manifest once more. Attack in the high mountains always lost a lot of momentum as half the strength of the attack was expended just getting into position. Fearful though the Austrian defences were in the east, at least the altitude was a bit more moderate.

Player Notes

CP:

- *East: Limited options in the east. I continue closing the noose around the Romanians with my forces converging on Galata. I am able to launch just one attack against the lightly defended city of Braile on the outskirts of the Danube Delta. It is a truly multinational operation involving German and Bulgarian infantry and Austrian gunboats shelling from the river. I have also started to pull AH mountain troops to go to Italy and Bulgarian and the Turkish XX back to head towards the Balkan front.*
- *Balkans: The move towards Cattaro continues with a German XX also en route. I suspect it will be too late to stop the fort from surrendering.*
- *Caucasus: Quiet.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*
- *Palestine: Quiet.*
- *Italy: I have managed to spread the Germans I have here amongst the most likely points of attack, but this won't stop the Italians making poor odds attacks as all they need to do is keeping chipping away at AH numbers.*

- *West. The WF remains a bit of standoff. The rhythm doesn't change. The British and French absorb RPLs, distribute supply, concentrate forces in the areas they see opportunities to attack, shift artillery by rail, then strike. I'm waiting for the next strike.*

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	4			1	12	596	Shaken
Ottoman	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	88	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	27	Good
Central Powers	-	8	3	2	4			14	31	2137	
France	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	808	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	391	Good
Russia	-	7	-	3	3			NA	13	852	Shaken
Italy	-	3	4	-	-			-	7	116	Good
Romania	30*	16	131**	-	16***			-	177	209	*Craiova and Constanta lost **Jassy, Ploesti, and Bucharest lost ***Braila lost
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-			NA	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	-	-			NA	-	(40)	NA
Entente	30	26	135	3	19			-	213	2363	

AP: *Relative to historical timelines this game is about half done. We do appear to be progressing through certain events a little quicker but not by much.*

I am growing a bit more convinced that the game presents historical challenges and does not easily allow them to be evaded. For instance, I feel I had to do a Gallipoli invasion because there isn't another way in which the British can inflict much damage on Turkey in the first 20 months of the conflict. Isonzo Offensives have to be done because there are no better places the attack the Austrians with the Italians if the front is otherwise in the mountains. The DM system is also one which brings powerful feedbacks into coalition strategies ensuring that each nation should strive to maintain the right proportion of effort relative to its allies.

I have written elsewhere about the strategic freedom which is in DWK. It may be greater for the CP than the AP as they can chose the fronts on which they place most effort with less restriction as they

can move supplies and units east to west and vice versa and elsewhere. The Allies mainly can move supplies between fronts – but not completely freely. Nevertheless this strategic freedom is big scale stuff and turn by turn there is a strong feeling that the game is really measuring your capabilities in stringing operations together. That is indeed what the Standard Rulebook says on page 1 “...an Operational Level simulation of the Campaigns...” This is a true statement.

I was very relieved to get a good result with my Russian attack. It was a lot of supply to risk for a result that might have been average. Overall this has to be one of the most one sided periods of the game since the start. Romania's DM is nearly twice Italy's.