

## Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT194: 19 – 22 November 1916 (5 November)

### General Situation

Amid the Chancelleries and Palaces of Europe, it was completely accepted that the conflict was doomed to pass into a new year. Looking back on 1916, it was clear that no great victories had been won. The Russian attack on Galicia had been negated, it seemed, by the overrunning of Romania. The Western Front had shifted forward at most a few kilometres in certain sectors. The Italian Front was also advanced across the Lower Isonzo but the real objectives were as distant as ever.

The appearance of deadlock was hard to see through. In the bar-room brawl image of the war, Romania was on the floor comatose; Belgium and Serbia had been thrown out of the saloon, though the latter had come back in with fists still flying; Bulgaria was striking a pose while giving Romania a little kick every now and then; Turkey was in a side room into which Australia and India were trying to force entry while the Brit was telling them what to do; Austria-Hungary was defending the stairs holding a height advantage on Italy while Russia slammed into her back so that Austria collapsed and everyone involved suffered from internal bleeding; Germany came over and rescued Austria from her assailants while fending off Britain and France; these two played tag as they smashed Germany's dinner plates and tried to force him to the ground, but they simply bounced off the Teutonic giant's massive frame; and America was counting the takings and was eyeing the rifle kept over the bar wondering if it was time to take it down.

### The Near East

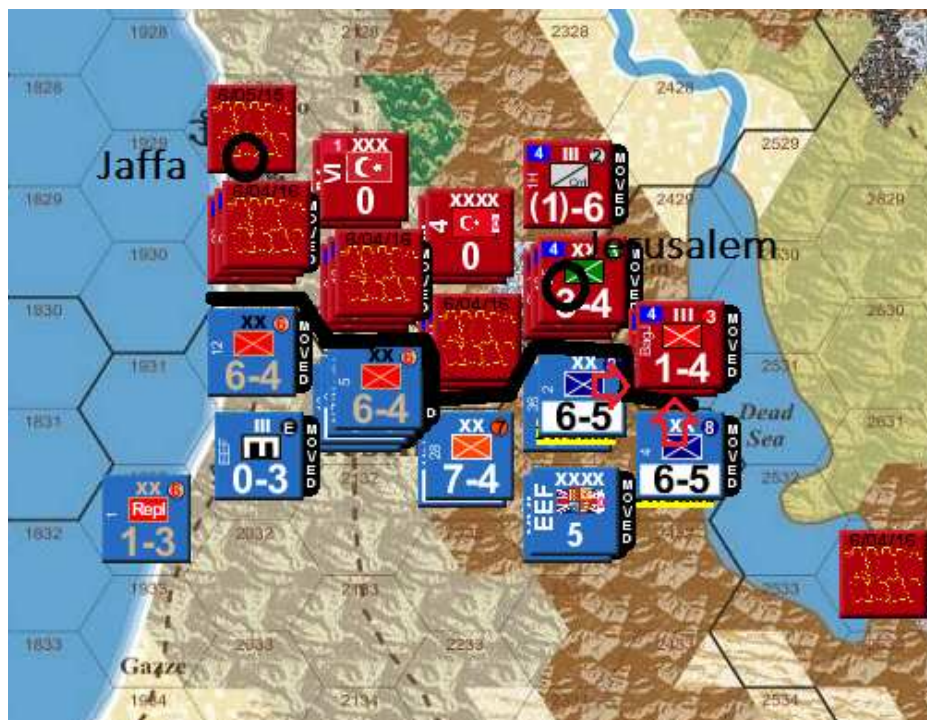


Figure 1: Murray probes into the Wilderness, 19 - 22 November 1916.

There did seem some prospect of a decision in Palestine. On 19 November, Jerusalem had been practically undefended. Nevertheless, Djemal Pasha reacted quickly and within hours had the Holy City sufficiently covered by fresh Turkish infantry so that Murray did not feel capable of launching a direct attack that might easily lead to the destruction of immense cultural treasures. Instead Murray believed that the Wilderness (8-8.2430) between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea might provide an easy path by which he could increase the pressure on the Turks to withdraw. However, the Wilderness proved to be defended by Turkish Jandarma, including the Baghdad Regiment. These held the unmapped defiles of the deserted region with some skill and stopped all the efforts of the British and Australian infantry which had been sent in to clear them out. Murray wasted four days trying to get round the Turkish flank on the Dead Sea side and, at the end of that period, the way was still blocked.

In comparison, Maude in Iraq would have welcomed Murray's problems. Maude had been waiting more than three weeks for reinforcements to arrive from Qurna. On 22 November, the Indian 11<sup>th</sup> Army was still over 75 miles from the front.

### **The Western Front**

On 20 November, Ludendorff came back from an inspection of the Green Line which had been in construction for nearly a year. The work was almost completed and he proposed to honour his commander by re-naming it the Hindenburg Line.

### **The Italian Front**

The Italian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army on the Isonzo was taking some reinforcements transferred from the Trentino. The evidence that the Austrians were planning on moving big guns into this sector had given some grounds for concern as this front had been stripped of much of its reserves in order to support the attacks on Lavarone (6-4.2218) and Kamauz (6-4.2317).

### **The Eastern Front**

If the Central Powers were increasing their forces against Italy, the opposite applied against Russia. In particular, elements of the Alpenkorps were placed in reserve and some Alpine Divisions were already entrained and heading to other fronts in the second half of November.

The Russian Army therefore had, despite all its disasters, numerical superiority on the Eastern Front which had, if anything, grown as Russia still had large reserves of manpower and was still capable of arming them at least with small arms. Despite this many parts of the Eastern Front were thinly held and the men were in a fairly mutinous state as winter approached. On 21 November, STAVKA advised the Tsar not to think of any major winter campaigns as morale was far too unpredictable for any extensive periods of combat. STAVKA instead favoured small movements to recover territory where they could do so without provoking the Germans or Austrians into any major counter-moves.

### **The Balkans**

For several days there were unmistakable signs of preparations for an attack by the Morgen Corps on the Croatian coast. It seemed that there would be an attempt to recover Dubrovnik by the Central Powers. The Allied defenders were placed in a quandary. They were at a maximum extension

of their supply lines originating in Albania. The Austro-Hungarian Navy actually controlled the coastal waters so that Dubrovnik could not be supplied or reinforced from the sea. On 22 November, the decision was taken to withdraw from the city and the Morava 1<sup>st</sup> Division began to pull out that afternoon. Yugoslavia would have to wait a while longer before its birth.



Figure 2: Dubrovnik threatened and the Serbians withdraw 19 - 22 November 1916.

### DM Summary – November 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit #	Month	Total	Morale
Germany	-	-	-	-	-			11	11	1501	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	619	Economic Collapse
Ottoman	-	-	-	2	1			1	4	107	Good
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	28	Good
Central Powers	-	-	-	2	1			12	15	2243	
France	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	826	Good
Great Britain	-	-	-	2	2			18	22	446	Good
Russia	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	862	Shaken
Italy	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	139	Good
Romania	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	233	Good
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	(40)	NA
Entente	-	-	-	2	2			18	22	2483	



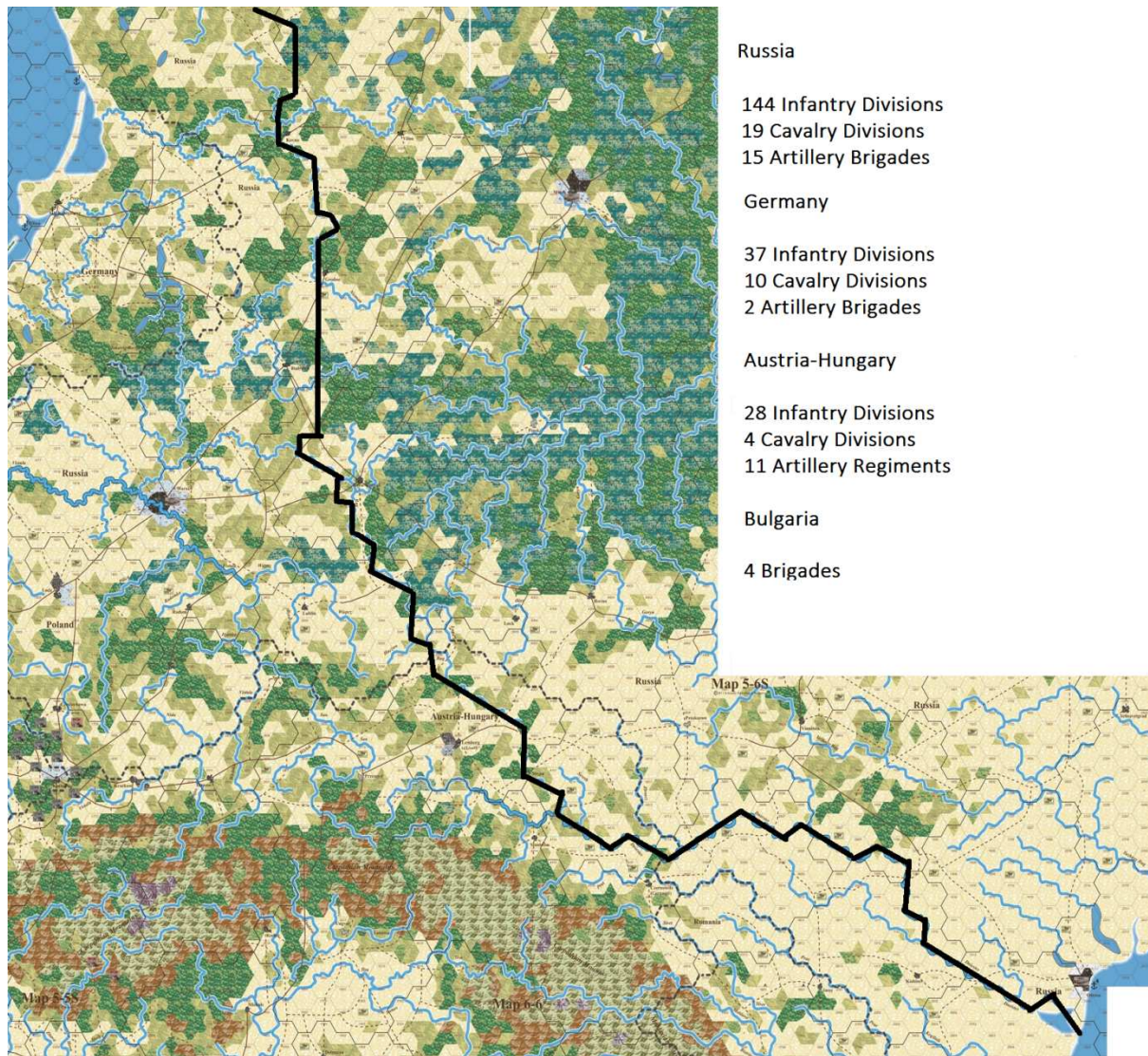


Figure 3: The Balance of Forces on the Eastern Front (Russian lines shown), mid-November 1916.

Player Notes:

CP:

- *East: I have started to reconfigure my line on the Dniester to make it more efficient and less manpower intensive. Aside from that, very little. The entire central front remains static from both sides with mostly marshland in between; along with the bulge that is the vacated city of Warsaw. In response to some probes by the Russian and evidence of reinforcing in the region of Brest-Litovsk, I have dispatched my mobile reserve (on rails) of 4 x divs from the northern front to the central area. I doubt he will try anything this side of winter though. The lull in fighting has suited the Russians as it has settled down any revolutionary fervour that may have been simmering amongst the troops due to losses in combat.*
- *Balkans: Nothing much has happened here save a little consolidation of the lines.*
- *Caucasus: I have launched the new Kalfas divs into a limited attack against the 2K Mt Bde. I may be strong enough in this last pre-winter bite to force him to retreat.*
- *Mesopotamia: Quiet.*

- *Palestine: He continues to smash away at my perimeter defences but I think he will now have to pause to re-stock with supplies.*
- *Italy: In a surprise move, he has vacated Dubrovnik, which I then reoccupy without the need to fight; which I had thought I would have to.*
- *West. Again, very little movement. I moved an artillery brigade to reinforce one vulnerable location. Nothing else. I wait with baited breath to see whether there will be an end of year, pre-winter assault.*

*AP: Ivor has noted that this front has now been reduced to a Sitzkrieg. Here is my late year review of the Eastern Front.*

*From the Allied point of view the prospects of action are very limited. The only combat I should be thinking of is defensive and I doubt any determined defence is practical. The Russians first priority is to avoid Economic Collapse in 1916. I have 38 DM spare and there are just 10 turns left this year. That means I should be safe but, if the CP makes a surprise move, I will not be ashamed to retreat again. Territory is nothing to the Russians except I would not like to lose the part of Austria I am holding because it is adding to food deficit. The Russians could also be tempted forward further by the possibility of them putting greater pressure on CP food in Poland and Prussia but caution has to prevail given Russia's parlous morale situation.*

*The winter is a bad time for the Russians to think of attacking and even if the weather were not an issue I would not want to attack until the 1917 CRT comes into play. When 1917 starts the Russians get a morale boost of 50 DM which I interpret as the short lived improvement in Russian purpose as the February Revolution removed the Tsar from his position. That is a small morale gain compared to Austria (100 DM) and Germany (300 DM) but it does allow the possibility of Russian offensive action in 1917 (Kerensky style) if it is left to later in the year. I want to keep the Russians in the game until 1918 but not at the expense of complete inactivity as that would mean Austria is not kept under sufficient pressure. These factors point to the Russians having little they want to do until well into mid-1917. The sooner they attempt something the more risk they take with an early exit.*

*My view is the CP has practically nothing to gain on the Eastern Front now and the disincentives for action in the winter of 1916-17 are as strong for the CP as for the Russians. In fact they might be more powerful because Germany must delay Shaken Morale as long as possible. The Western Front and even the Middle East have a much stronger call on the CP's resources as the end game starts to move a little closer.*

*There are some objectives still for the CP in the East. The territory Austria has lost counts for something and that may be a place where the Russians could be tempted to stand and fight. The CP will also need, at some point, to help the Russians over the Economic Collapse threshold because they will not do it all for themselves. It might perhaps seem unfortunate that Riga was taken in 1916 because that was another one of the places the Russians would fight for. However, it makes little difference. The DM for Riga is already in the bag. The Russians will grade their resistance to their morale situation whether or not there is a valuable city at stake. The 1917 CRT will accelerate their final decline whenever it occurs.*