

Grand Campaign – Der Weltkrieg – Centenary Game

GT198: 6 – 9 December 1916 (2 December)

General Situation

In Budapest, the Hungarian National Parliament was the setting for a political conference of the Central Powers in the first week of December. Unlike the Austrian Parliament, the Hungarian one had not been closed down for the duration. Neither had the recently announced death of Emperor Franz Josef been deemed sufficient reason for the cancellation of the conference. Hungarian Nationalists were in an optimistic mood in contrast to the Austrian delegates. For the Hungarians, they had achieved a vital war aim in defeating the Romanian invasion of Transylvania. Apart from the recent short-lived Serbian occupation of Dubrovnik, no other Hungarian territories had been invaded. Hungarian agricultural produce was commanding high prices in both Austria and Germany. As a largely agrarian society, Hungary was not suffering the direct impacts of the Allied blockade in the same measure as the industrial regions of the Central Powers.

The Budapest Declaration of 7 December was a call to unity of the Central Powers. There was a confirmation that there would be no separate peace negotiations. Germany had to pay for this unity by promising to maintain subsidies and transfers of arms to their allies. The Ottomans were particularly demanding in this regard pointing to the battles now raging on the outskirts of Jerusalem and Baghdad. The German delegates had little choice but to make these commitments. The economic news was increasingly difficult as manpower shortages were starting to affect decisions about the use of resources. The crunch was perhaps still some months off but to those making forecasts it was an unavoidable concern.

Western

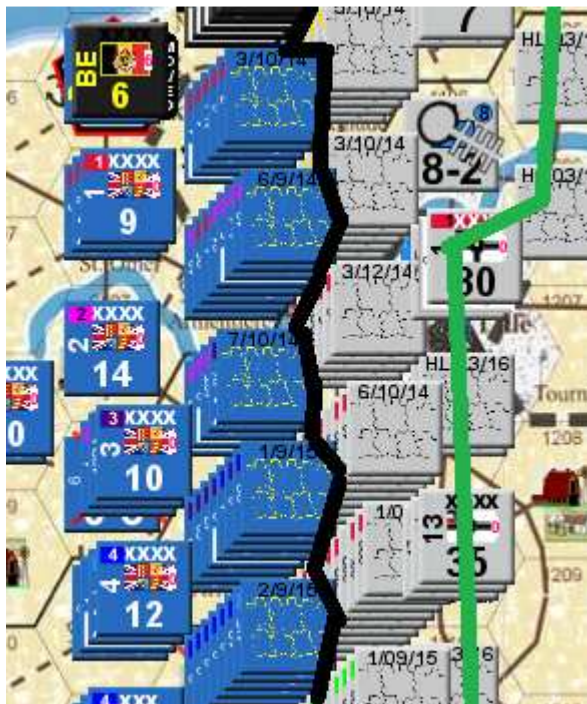


Figure 1: Detail of the Western Front showing the newly completed Hindenburg Line (Green), 6 - 9 December 1916.

Ludendorff took Field Marshal Hindenburg on a tour of the newly completed Hindenburg Line on 6 – 7 December. The engineers were proud of their work and many sections of the new Works received “The Crown-Prince’s Certificate of Trench Quality”. Hindenburg was particularly impressed with a

subterranean Divisional Headquarters which had been constructed at Douai (5-3.1109). It was so comfortable that the German 13th Army Headquarters had moved in for the winter bringing with them easy to assemble pine furniture and office equipment. This seemed very well arranged in theory though the British spotted the activity by aerial photography which revealed large piles of packaging discarded after delivery of the furnishings. The only critical thing anyone might have said about the construction itself was that it was in places 50 kilometres from the front. Such trenches would be a lot less comfortable if the French and British were knocking at the door.

Italian

The first widespread doubts about the rightness and effectiveness of the war were starting to surface in Italy. As the front lapsed into inactivity, it was impossible to conceal how little had been gained at the cost of repeated Italian attacks. Those who argued it would be different in 1917 had very little in the way of solid reasons upon which to pin their argument.

Eastern

The Tsar's Winter Offensive was considered a folly in Russian headquarters at the time and the troops liked it even less. However, some historians have given it grudging and belated respect. This has been because of research which showed that in December 1916 the Germans began sending reinforcement to the Eastern Front again. Therefore, if the Russian's aim had been to draw enemy forces onto their front and prevent them concentrating in the West, then the objective had been attained to some degree. It was not actually the Tsar's aim but nobody minds that now, at least not in academia.

Balkans

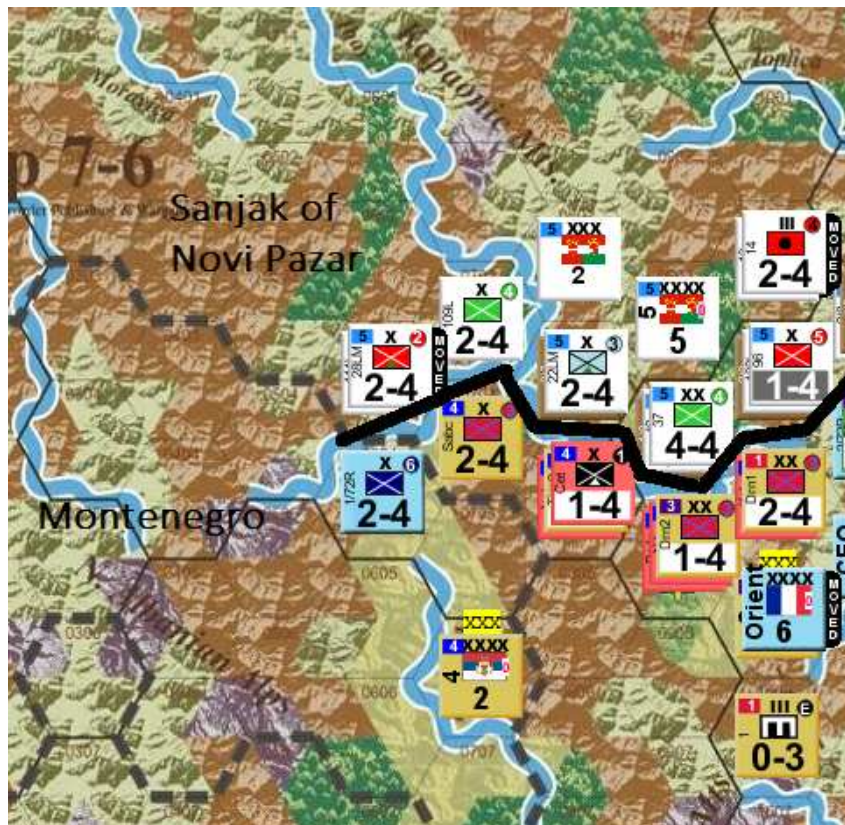


Figure 2: With the Sanjak of Novi Pazar secure, Hungarian diplomats wrongly considered they had a first-rate bargaining chip.

The Balkan Wars were now starting their fifth year. The contesting minor powers were grateful for another period of rest. For the more assiduous students of those conflicts, the fact that the Austro-Hungarian 5th Army had its grip firmly on the Sanjak of Novi Pazar was a confirmation that the war had delivered to Hungary all the bargaining chips that they had squabbled over in former years. At the Budapest Conference, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Tiza, secured the agreement of his colleagues from Vienna that he or his successors in office would have the final say over the disposal of this diplomatic jewel during any peace conference. These were empty hopes. 1916 was not 1913 and the Sanjak didn't have quite the same trade value as it had recently carried. In London and Paris they had forgotten it was in the diplomatic deck. From their perspective there were better cards to play for.

Near East

In front of the J-J line the British attacks had ground to a halt. The Turkish defences along the coastal flank seemed as strong as ever. The gains that had been made at Bethlehem and on the Dead Sea flank seemed less important.

Around Baghdad, Maude was still trying to slide past the Turkish defences. The Turkish cavalry was not able to keep up and the leading Indian 24th Brigade pushed through as far as the Diyala River at Adhaim (7-9.2918).



Figure 3: Maude continues to extend his right flank, 6 - 9 December 1916¹.

¹ The Allied LOC is shown in green. The first leg is from the advanced units to I Indian Corps HQ (you can chain through one HQ). The second leg is to the river which counts as a railroad in this theatre. The LOC shown crosses two or less desert hex sides in each leg. This particular LOC would not work during the flood season because the marsh hex sides would then be prohibited.

Player Notes:

CP

- *East: I continued to reinforce the central front in the east to be able to react quickly to any threats which may develop on the flanks. I don't think Robert is actually building up to try and take Warsaw at this stage as it would force him to drive into a deep and vulnerable salient. I am not too concerned about affairs on the EF and would almost welcome some Russian muscle flexing.*
- *Balkans: Quiet.*
- *Caucasus: I shipped two regiments and an artillery regt across the Black Sea. Most of these will work their way down south towards Palestine or Iraq.*
- *Mesopotamia: There is nothing much I can do here but hold on to my positions.*
- *Palestine: A further redistribution of troops across the trenches to try and maximise defensive concentrations as best as possible for the next round of attacks. It looks like Robert is going to try and break through on the coast to outflank Jerusalem. If he succeeds in this, then holding the city becomes untenable.*
- *Italy: A continued slow and steady build-up of Germans, supply and artillery. I have also moved some Engrs to the front to start work on upgrading single track rail lines to double.*
- *West. There is very little I can add with reference to this front. I have pretty strongly defended trenches and also some depth of reserves. I lack sufficient artillery but am slowly building this up. I shall never have artillery parity with the western TE nations and intelligence suggests I may soon be facing new monster weapons in the west, currently seen in the region of Arras. I am told they look like oversized water tanks but with guns and tracks capable of crossing the trenches; even in muddy conditions.*

DM Summary – December 1916

Nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Food Deficit #	Month	Total [% SM]	Morale
Germany	-	-						11	11	1512	Good
Austria-Hungary	-	-						-	-	619	Economic Collapse
Ottoman	2	-						2	4	117	Good
Bulgaria	-	-						-	-	30	Good
Central Powers	2	-						13	15	2288	
France	-	-						-	-	826	Good
Great Britain	4	-						16	20	471	Good
Russia	-	-						1	1	864	Shaken
Italy	-	-						-	-	139 [46.33]	Good
Romania	-	-						-	-	233	Good
Belgium	-	-						-	-	(105)	NA
Serbia	-	-						-	-	(41)	NA
Entente	4	-						17	21	2533	

AP: I will continue my review of the fronts. Now I am looking at the non-military fronts. This time I will consider supply production. To begin it is worth recalling what supply (meaning in reality combat supply) does in the game:

- i) It permits the effective use of heavy artillery;
- ii) It represents the use of small/medium ordnance in support of infantry;
- iii) It is a requirement for attacks by Infantry with Shaken Morale.

More generally, supply may be regarded as an element of combat effectiveness in DWK. Supply points make it easier to risk combat and ensure that relative to the enemy more hits are scored than would otherwise be the case.

In the first half of the game, the CP out produced the AP in respect of supply. This is one of the reasons why the Germans can defeat the Russians and hold off the French and the British comfortably enough in the first half of the game. The situation is now tipping against the CP, as a consequence of Austrian Economic Collapse. Once Germany reaches Shaken Morale, the CP will suffer another loss of supply production which will confirm their inferiority. This will still take several months to show because the CP currently has considerably greater supply stockpiles as compared with the Allies. I expect the CP will feel this in late 1917, assuming German Shaken Morale occurs in early 1917. This means that the existing CP stockpiles of supply are important and cannot be wasted if a large supply reserve is needed for a major offensive.

This table shows the monthly rate of supply point production during different phases of the game.

	Ger	AH	CP	AP	Fr	GB	Rus	It	US
1914	77	18	95	58	20	18	10	-	10
1915	77	25	104	78 - 88	30	18 – 24	20 – 14	10	10
Jul 1916	77	18	98	97	30	28	14	10	15
Nov 1916	77	6	86	97	30	28	14	10	15
1917 US Entry; German and French Shaken Morale	55	6	64	98	23	28	14	10	21
1918 German Economic Collapse Russian Economic Collapse (French Economic Collapse)	33	6	42	108 (90)	23 (5)	36	4	10	35

At the beginning of December, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey had 485 supply points on the map. Britain, France, Russia and Italy only had 345 so the difference is not massive until you

recognise that attacks typically use up much more supply than defence particularly Artillery supported attacks.

On the Allied side, supply production will rise as shown in the table. A large amount of supply is needed to sustain Western Front offensives particularly if use of Heavy Artillery is wanted (in order to reduce attacker losses). The French especially will continue to attack with a lot of Artillery support.

A question is how much supply the Allies will divert from the Western Front to Italy, Russia and the Near East. Recently I have been diverting as much as possible in order to get the maximum capability out of the Russians and Italians (only the US is allowed to send supply to the Italians until they are Shaken) and in order to keep up some kind of attrition rate against the Turks. As the Italians will not want to attack mountains in winter, I am giving the Russians a last supply boost but this will likely not last as I cannot expect the Russians to endure combat for extended periods in 1917.