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# The Crushing of Roumania

## Campaign of German Invaders Divided Into Three Phases, the Last of Which Is Now In Process of Development.

The most interesting operations of the war for many months have been those for the conquering of Roumania. This is so, largely, because the Rumanian front is the only mobile front in any theatre and because it is the only point in the circle at which Germany is on the offensive. On all other fronts trench warfare is the rule. It is, apart from our sympathies and viewed only as a military problem, more or less uninteresting because nothing ever happens. Gains are made here and there, but they are small and do not seem to lead anywhere. Great losses may be sustained through the defense of these positions and the effort to take them.

To sit down and watch attrition, watch one side being slowly worn down through the constant, unremitting hammering of the other contains not a ray of interest to the onlooker. It is not war as war has been conceived and studied. It contains but few of the elements of military science.

It is a development, rather, of natural resources, of factories, of the machine shop and the lathe, but it bears no resemblance to the science of warfare as this science has been developed through the centuries. Strategy (and war without strategy is a stupid study exists where we find mobility, not where we are confronted with stagnation. And nowhere else on any front is there mobility other than on the Rumanian frontier.

It is the only point on the battle circle where we see the Germanic allies on the offensive. In the west they limit their efforts to resisting the attacks of the Anglo-French armies, and in making such counter attacks as necessity may dictate. But there is no offensive and probably never will be again. Germany gave up all offensive in the west when von Falkenhayn was removed and Field Marshal von Hindenburg made Chief of Staff.

Von Falkenhayn is a westerner, and all westerners belong to the school of the Crown Prince, who, contrary to his father, has held that the west is properly Germany's field, holding as it does Germany's natural enemy, France, and her implacable, unrelenting rival, England.

When the battle of Verdun terminated in such a total failure, and von Hindenburg was made Chief of Staff, the west lost its grip on affairs, and an easterner, a man brought up and bred among the Mazurian Lakes, was in the saddle. Immediately the policy changed. Von Hindenburg looks to the east to bring a solution of the war. He knows that he will always be compelled to keep the greater part of his army on the western front to hold back the highly organized armies of France and Great Britain.

But, with the remains of it, he hopes to crush his enemies in the east, and then, by turning on the west, either win victory or bring about a stalemate. The probabilities are that all hope of victory has gone. But he still hopes for a draw.

In any event, it is extremely probable that we have seen the last German effort on the Franco-Belgian line. Russia is still the great unknown. Russia has never yet reached her maximum. There are still heights toward which she aspires, heights in numbers of men and ammunition. She has shown what may be expected and it is something which Germany when she is well supplied with both, may well guard against and fear.

It is not probable, either, that we shall see Germany attempt an offense here for some time. Rather, in anticipation of the Spring effort of the Russians, the Germans are probably intrenching as they have already intrenched on the western front. At present they have no men for this section of the eastern front. Their first thought is the destruction of Roumania.

A similar situation, so far as the Germans are concerned, is reproduced on the Saloniki front. The defense of this front has been entrusted for the most part to Bulgaria. The Germans assume the position, apparently, that as they have given Bulgaria what they agreed—all of Macedonia, including the capital—Bulgaria must hold it. Germany has nothing to fear by the loss of Monastir or, for that matter, of all of Macedonia. It is a Bulgarian question. If Bulgaria does not hold it, Bulgaria must lose it. And that is all there is to it.

Germany, indeed, does not become interested until Nish is approached, and the Oriental Railroad is threatened. Then, a vital interest is placed in the balance and Germany will defend it. So far as a German offensive is concerned this narrows the

situation down to Roumania, and we see the Germans making a tremendous effort to eliminate that country before the Saloniki movement becomes dangerous.

The campaign against Roumania may be divided into three phases. The first was Mackensen's operation in Dobruja, by which the gateway to Bulgaria, was closed and Roumania almost entirely neutralized by the loss of Constantza and Cernavoda and the destruction of the bridge at the latter place.

It was not to be expected that the Germans would stop here. The mere fact that Mackensen, the greatest driving force in the German Army had been placed in command of the Dobruja forces was sufficient to indicate that something more important was afoot. After the Cernavoda bridge fell Mackensen was neutralized in Dobruja. He was hemmed in by the Danube and the Black Sea with a large force, while Germany was in great need of men.

It was only logical, therefore, to look for a move that would make use of his position. And yet, with this fact before them, the Rumanians wasted precious material and men in attempting to drive him back. There was nothing to be gained. He was out of the picture and a menace to nobody.

It was Roumania's second and most disastrous mistake. Military critics foresaw an attempt to force a crossing of the lower Danube, an invasion of Bessarabia, and a possible drive at Odessa. This was impossible and should have been so recognized from the outset. The difficulties in the way were insurmountable. Instead of wasting time in fighting Mackensen the Rumanians should have turned all their resources against the Germans from the west in an attempt to throw them back into Hungary.

Mackensen's first step, then, may be regarded as the first phase of the German offensive against Roumania which resulted in the neutralization of Roumania to the extent of closing the gateway by which alone an invasion of Bulgaria was possible. The second phase of these operations was the breaking down of the resistance at the passes and the taking of sufficient of them to enable von Falkenhayn to come across the mountains, debouch from the passes, and spread out in the plains to the south.

This part of the operation has also been successfully accomplished. During the last week the Germans have concluded another of their spectacular drives, going as rapidly as if unopposed into the very heart of Roumania, almost completely cutting off the western portion of Little Wallachia. What happened seems to be that after a great battle, which developed south of Vulcan Pass, the Rumanian line was broken and the Germans poured through the breach. This took in flank the Rumanians defending the passes to the east and forced them to fall back. Thus, several of the northern passes were available to the Germans, so that their lines of communication were not in danger.

The situation east of Vulcan Pass is not clear. To what extent the mountain barrier is in German control is not known. It is impossible, however, for a commander to accomplish anything by forcing his way through one pass among several in the vicinity crossing the same crests. To do so would expose his line of communications to vital thrusts from several directions, and a success in any of them would be ruinous.

To achieve his purpose it is necessary that several of the passes be taken. Therefore, in the absence of contrary reports, I have assumed the Germans have accomplished what was necessary in order that they should achieve the present result.

The third phase of the Rumanian conquest will be the advance to the point where the forces of von Falkenhayn can link up with those of Mackensen, and a Teuton line drawn across Roumania which will cut off Moldavia from Greater Wallachia. This is the phase which is now in progress. It will be time enough to discuss that in detail when it is over. It is sufficient for the time to point out that three phases of the Rumanian operations exist so that they may be more easily followed.

The situation in Roumania may be outlined in a few words. When the Germans occupied Craiova the Rumanian army west of the Jiu Valley was doomed. Their lines of communication binding them to the eastern army were broken. It is a case either of starving them into submission or capturing them. But as an effective fighting force they have ceased to exist.

The great advantage of cutting an opponent in two is that he can be defeated in detail. If the point of the break is somewhere near the centre, so that the two separated wings are fairly evenly divided, the blow is apt to be the deathblow. This does not seem to be the case here. The left wing which the Germans have cut off is only a comparatively small fraction of the Rumanian Army, what fraction we do not know because we do not know how the Rumanian forces were distributed.

We do know that the bulk of the Rumanian Army is safe, fighting to prevent an advance further eastward of the Germans who are in possession of the Jiu Valley. The situation in that part of Roumania east of the Jiu Valley is not essentially different. The proposition with which the Germans are faced is one of fighting their way forward against the major portion of the Rumanian Army with the object of defeating it and destroying its fighting efficiency.

Imagine a three-quarter circle, with Germans on the outer circumference and Rumanians on the interior. The advantage of interior lines, with greater ability to reinforce any given point, is, of course, with the Rumanians. The prestige of victory which the Germans have obtained, and the high morale which goes with it, together with the more material advantage of heavy artillery, and plenty of it, is all with the invaders.

As the Germans advance the circles becomes smaller. Mackensen is endeavoring to cross the Danube so that one horn of the arc may be drawn towards the other. The strategic effect of such battle line is also with the Germans. A break on one wing will necessarily affect the entire line. The one hope of the Rumanians seems to be in the assistance which Russia can render and which she is rendering as quickly as the railroad facilities at her command can rush her troops forward.

There is no indication that the German invasion can be halted and thrown back. The corpse of another of the Entente's high hopes is about to be placed in the crypt.

It is time, therefore, to consider briefly what the situation is, with Roumania no longer a factor. It has been proved in the last nine months that Germany acting offensively against any of the larger nations, whether France, England, or Russia, is powerless. She has made no such effort as Verdun in other fields, not even against Roumania, for it has not been necessary.

We have seen what has happened. And yet, at the time of this effort, Roumania was not a factor. The Allies, indeed, will be no weaker from a military standpoint that before Roumania entered the war. Roumania's entrance was intended as a fatal thrust at Germany. It would have been fatal if it had gone home.

This thrust the Germans have turned aside most brilliantly and effectively. The situation has not been changed to Germany's advantage other than in this way. The wheat supply that Germany will acquire through the victory will do much to relieve the situation at home and offset the effect of the British blockade.

At the same time, Roumania will always be a threat. The Rumanian Army will, as fast as we can now judge, always have a good line of retreat open—the gateway to Bessarabia. In numbers the Germans will not be as well off as before Roumania entered the war, because she has undoubtedly suffered heavy losses in her offensive. The political effect will be but little, largely because there is no one left to be affected by political considerations. It is therefore a negative victory that Germany has won, viewing the whole thing from the standpoint of the war at large.

From the standpoint of the Allies it has been another stupid and terrible blunder. It was an act of absolute folly that permitted Roumania to begin her operations by invading Transylvania. Her enemy was Bulgaria; it was only through Bulgaria that the vital point of the German lines could be reached. A stroke in this direction would have had the result of cutting Germany off from her Oriental allies, of cutting the Oriental railroad and interposing a barrier between Germany and Turkey that would have permitted Turkey to have been defeated and possibly forced into a separate peace. The same thing is also true of Bulgaria, except that there is practically no doubt that if Germany could have been cut off from Bulgaria, peace, as far as it relates to Bulgaria, would have followed with almost absolute certainty.

The salvation of the situation would have seemed to have been in the hands of Sarrail. What he has been doing, what the reasons were that have delayed him from making any signs of a general offensive, no one knows. It seems almost inconceivable that he should be resting on the Salonki front with nearly a million troops and doing nothing while such a gold opportunity was slipping from his grasp in plain sight. And yet this is exactly what has happened.

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