

SCENARIOS AND VARIANTS

GOEBEN AS DREADNOUGHT

Might-Have-Beens in the Mediterranean

by Edward Heinsman

Quite a while ago, SPI did a game called *Flight of the Goeben* which, for its day, was a pleasant little bit of unique design (by Dave Williams, incidentally). A lot of the game, however, depended upon having a luck-lock. Here, Mr. Heinsman presents us with *Dreadnought* situations that have placed most of that luck offstage, as it were.

—RAS

As any devotee of Simulation Publication's *Dreadnought* knows, the inventory of actual encounters between the steel monsters of the battleship era is a bit thin. As George Lyon so aptly put it in his article "A Mediterranean Excursion" (*Moves* #30), the admirals of 1906-1946 failed to take the needs of today's wargamer into account in planning and executing their operations. While very true, this need not limit the *Dreadnought* player to an exceedingly small number of scenarios. European history for the first half of the twentieth century abounds with "near misses" and "might have been" situations which could very easily have resulted in a clash of dreadnoughts on the high seas. Such historical situations, with a little research, can lead to some very interesting *Dreadnought* scenarios.

One "near miss" situation fraught with "might have been" consequences occurred in the Mediterranean Sea during the opening hours of World War I. The German Mediterranean squadron, commanded by Admiral Wilhelm Souchon, captured the imagination and headlines of the world at the outbreak of the war. Souchon's command consisted of two new fast ships, the battlecruiser *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau*. Originally ordered into the Mediterranean to establish a German naval presence there, the German naval command had envisioned the *Goeben*'s task in the event of war as a commerce raiding one. Specifically, the *Goeben* was to use her speed to evade French escorts and make for the troop convoy carrying the French North African Corps from Algeria to the Western Front. Plans being what they were in 1914, the timing of the movement of every corps down to the minute was vital to the French Plan 17. The very thought of the delay or destruction of the oversized North African Corps (80,000 men) struck paralyzing fear into the hearts of Entente military planners. So concerned were British and French military leaders about the *Goeben* being "easily able to avoid the French battle squadrons and brushing aside or outstripping their cruisers, break in upon the transports and sink one after another of these vessels crammed with soldiers" (First Sea

Lord Winston Churchill's words) that even when it was apparent that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were headed east away from the convoy, the British squadron, including the battlecruisers *Inflexible*, *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable*, hung back to intercept the anticipated German turn about, thus missing several opportunities to bring the Germans to battle.

In fact, after shelling the French North African ports of Phillippeville and Bone, the task of the German Mediterranean squadron changed considerably. On the eve of war, Germany and the Ottoman Empire had concluded a treaty which made Turkey a member of the Central Powers. Germany hoped to close the Dardanelles to Russia, cutting off Russia's only year round ice free western connection with her allies. The Turks wanted help against an expected Russian effort to use a European war to satisfy her age-old desire to control the Black Sea's outlet to the Mediterranean. On the declaration of war, August 4, 1914, Souchon was ordered to Constantinople to reinforce the Turks and seal off the Dardanelles.

Souchon chose to ignore this order to carry out the above mentioned bombardments. By the time he had turned eastward for Constantinople, the German High Command found that it had a recalcitrant ally on its hands. When the reality of a war arrived, the Turks had second thoughts and did not declare war. Advised by wireless that entry into Constantinople was temporarily inadvisable due to political considerations, Souchon decided to again disobey orders and, as he put it "force the Turks, even against their will, to spread the war to the Black Sea against their ancient enemy, Russia." The German squadron was well on its way to Constantinople before it dawned upon the British that the enemy was not heading west for the French troop convoy but fleeing eastward instead. Unsure of Souchon's motives, hampered by Italian neutrality which was to be strictly observed; confused by orders from Churchill not to risk battle with a 'superior' enemy force, and fearful of being cut off from their home base by an Austrian descent from the Adriatic, the British commanders, Admirals Milne and Troubridge, gave chase. Although the light cruiser *Gloucester* did exchange shots with the Germans, the *Goeben* and *Breslau* outran the British and entered Constantinople on August 10. Both eventually became part of the Turkish navy, precipitating Turkey's entry into the war on November 5.

Barbara Tuchmann, in *Guns of August*, wrote of the *Goeben* incident that "no other single exploit of the war cast so long a shadow upon the world as the voyage ac-

complished by their (the Germans') commander..." After the war, Winston Churchill acknowledged that the *Goeben*'s adventure resulted in "more misery, more slaughter and more ruin than has ever before been borne within the compass of a ship." Yet, C.S. Forester points out, in his introduction to Richard Hough's *Dreadnought*, that as bitter a disappointment and politically important as the *Goeben*'s arrival in Constantinople was, a battle during those first days of the war might have proven even more significant. A smaller and less powerful sister of the *Goeben*, the *Von der Tann*, demolished the *Indefatigable* in a one-on-one encounter during the battle of Jutland. Had Souchon turned on his British pursuers or broken into the North African Corp's convoy and scored a stunning victory in the Mediterranean, in the first week of the war, the consequences, to quote Forester, "defy calculation."

The following scenarios portray some of the possible situations which might easily have occurred in those early days of August, 1914. Players can leave to their imaginations the consequences of the results from these battles.

SCENARIOS

0930 Hours August 4, 1914

German Player	hex/facing/speed
<i>Goeben</i> (672)	E1105/NE/6
<i>Breslau</i> (L51)	E1005/NE/6
British Player	
<i>Indomitable</i> (193)	B1011/SW/6
<i>Indefatigable</i> (201)	B1111/SW/6

GAME LENGTH: 15 turns

BASE VISIBILITY: 9 hexes

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

German Player must wreck or sink both British ships, or exit both *Goeben* and *Breslau* into the North Safe Zone (Messina).

British Player must wreck or sink both German ships.

Historical Notes:

This is the most likely of all the scenarios to have really occurred. At 0930 hours on August 4, 1914, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, on their way east after bombarding Phillippeville and Bone, passed within 8,000 yards of the *Indomitable* and the *Indefatigable*, who had been dispatched by Milne to find the Germans. Both sides trained their guns, declined the customary salute to each other, but passed silently. Prime Minister Grey's ultimatum to Germany still had twelve and one half hours to run, and the British were under strict orders not to open fire until the full time limit of the ultimatum had lapsed. The British turned to trail the Germans, but

due to boiler problems were unable to keep up. When the time limit of the ultimatum ran out at midnight, they had lost contact.

Actually, Grey had not dispatched his ultimatum to Germany until several hours after he had announced it in Parliament. Had Grey been more prompt or less irresolute, this meeting would have been the war's first naval clash. This scenario assumes that Britain considered herself at war with Germany and attempted to destroy German naval presence in the Mediterranean.

Players Notes:

This is a surprisingly even, if usually short, scenario. The German advantage in speed and armor, not to mention hitting power, is offset by the fact that the Breslau is no match for the British battlecruisers. The Germans must cripple the British quickly and head north. The British must slow the Goeben down and use their two to one advantage.

1300 Hours August 14, 1914

German Player	hex/facing/speed
Goeben (672)	C1111/SE/6
Breslau (L51)	C1210/SE/6

French Player

Coubert (501)	F1108/NW/4
Jean Bart (502)	F1208/NW/4
France (503)	F1309/NW/4
Paris (504)	F1409/NW/4
Provence (511)	F1009/NW/4
Bretagne (512)	F1110/NW/4
Lorraine (513)	F1210/NW/4
D14	F0805/NW/4
D15	F0606/NW/4
D16	F0608/NW/4
L12	F0807/NW/4
C13	F1007/NW/4
C14	F0910/NW/4

GAME LENGTH: 20 turns

BASE VISIBILITY: 11 hexes

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

As per *Dreadnought* rule (11.4) Campaign "C," the Convoy. Germans are the North force, French the South. French convoy is worth 17 points.

Historical Notes

Twice during the entire Goeben episode, Souchon ignored orders. When originally ordered to Constantinople, he chose to bombard Phillippeville and Bone. The British and French assumed that the Germans would remain in the Western Mediterranean and go for the North African troop convoy. Allied actions for the next two days were based on this premise. In fact, Souchon had decided to head for Constantinople, against orders. This scenario assumes that he proceeded as the Allies expected and did try for the troop convoy.

Players Notes:

In August 1914, the French dreadnoughts were in Brest, the French being content to dominate the Mediterranean numerically with 16 old battleships, 6 cruisers, and 24

destroyers. To make this scenario possible, it is assumed that French paranoia about the North African troop convoy had reached the point where both squadrons of dreadnoughts had been transferred to Toulon.

As the scenario stands, the German player will have a tough time "outstripping" the French escort and reaching the convoy as Churchill feared. The French fleet is strong, and German supply problems with coal limited the time and distance they could go to avoid the French. Hence, the 20 turn time limit.

There are several ways this scenario can be balanced to aid either player. One of the French dreadnought squadrons could be left in Brest and deleted from the order of battle. On the Allied side, Churchill pressed Grey for authorization to allow the British battlecruisers to aid the French in the event the Germans opened fire on the transports. Assuming this permission had been given, add the Indomitable (193) and the Indefatigable (201) to the French force, at hexes F1715 and F1815 respectively. Heading and speed for both is NW/6.

0600 Hours August 7, 1914

German Player	hex/facing/speed
Goeben (672)	E1807/NE/6
Breslau (L51)	E1907/NE/6

British Player

D11	B1411/SE/5
D12	B1115/SE/5
C11 (Black Prince, Defence)	B1313/SE/5
C12 (Duke of Edinburgh, Warrior)	B1213/SE/5

GAME LENGTH: 15 turns

BASE VISIBILITY: 12 hexes

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

German Player must wreck or sink the British armored cruisers, or exit into the North Safe Zone.

British Player must prevent the Goeben and the Breslau from exiting into the North Safe Zone.

Historical Notes:

While Milne's battlecruisers were dashing about the Western Mediterranean trying to find the Goeben, the 1st Cruiser Squadron (armored cruisers Defence, Black Prince, Warrior and Duke of Edinburgh), commanded by Admiral Sir Ernest Troubridge, was patrolling the southern Adriatic to block any attempted sortie by the Austrian navy. On the evening of August 6, when the Admiralty realized that Souchon was headed east, Troubridge was ordered to intercept the German squadron and prevent them from entering the Adriatic and linking up with the Austrians.

Realizing that he was badly outclassed, Troubridge decided to seek battle at dawn, from the west, when the first light of sunrise would offset his disadvantage in range. When he failed to locate the Germans by daylight, he decided all hope for gaining an

advantage had been lost. Fearing that the Goeben would simply remain outside of the range of his ships and pick them off one at a time, Troubridge concluded that the Goeben constituted a 'superior force' and he retired to his Adriatic picket post. Troubridge was court-martialled for his action and although acquitted was never again given an active command. This scenario allows players to judge Troubridge's discretion for themselves.

Players Notes:

The British are really up against it in this scenario. In the position of Troubridge, the British player has quite a formidable chore. The British will need either a lucky shot, a suicide destroyer torpedo attack, or a good defense lawyer for the court-martial.

1500 Hours August 7, 1914

German-Austrian Player hex/facing/speed

a. Austrian Battle Fleet

Viribus Unitas (551)	B1107/S/5
Tegetthof (552)	B1106/S/5
Prinz Eugen (553)	B1105/S/5
Szent Istvan (554)	B1104/S/5
L52	B1109/S/5
C51	B1108/S/5

b. German Mediterranean Squadron

Goeben (672)	
Breslau (L51)	

Enters on game turn three at speed 7 on any eastern map hex at German players discretion.

British Player hex/facing/speed

Inflexible (192)	C0412/NE/6
Indomitable (193)	C0301/NE/6
Indefatigable (201)	C0213/NE/6
D11	C0910/NE/6
D12	C0510/NE/6
D13	C0713/NE/6
L11	C0711/NE/6
C11	C0611/NE/6
C12	C0513/NE/6

GAME LENGTH: 20 turns

BASE VISIBILITY: 10 hexes

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

German-Austrian Player must wreck or sink all three British battlecruisers and score more victory points than the British.

British Player must wreck or sink the Goeben, or exit all three battlecruisers into the South Safe Zone.

Historical Notes:

At 1400 hours on August 8, Milne's pursuit of the Goeben was abruptly halted when he received a signal from the Admiralty that Austria had declared war on England. Fearing an Austrian sortie which could cut him off from his base at Malta and pin him between two enemy forces, Milne turned about and took up a position to intercept and forestall the Austrians. Ten hours later, the Admiralty informed Milne that the previous day's signal had been a bureaucratic foul up. Austria was not yet at war with England and he was free to continue his chase of the Goeben. The lost hours, however, doomed any hope of ever catching the Germans.