

Diplomacy World

#110



**Friends and Allies:
Relationships On and Off the Board**

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to another issue of Diplomacy World. More than any recent issue, this one was the hardest to put together. It wasn't so much the material, or the lack of submissions...although that had something to do with it. But the fact is, the real world seems to be putting a bigger strain on all of us lately, leaving much less time for relaxation or hobbies. And, as you would expect, those who are interested in Diplomacy would usually rather spend their very limited time playing it than writing about it. So collecting enough material to make this a decent issue (not including the Demo Games) was a struggle.

I'm not immune to this criticism either. I had two or three things I wanted to find time to write about, but time and enthusiasm never came together at the same moment. I did my best, and produced a bit, but not as much as I hoped. Maybe this is the same for much of you? I know that personal and work-related issues kept much of our Staff from doing all they'd planned to. Not to mention, our Club and Tournament editor position remains vacant. Anybody interested?

Every once in a while I get the feeling that either Diplomacy World has passed its time of usefulness, or I'm approaching the point where I'll be looking for someone to turn the Lead Editor position over to. When will either day come? I don't know. I do know I've still got a stack of projects I'd like to work on that I never get around to. What was it Jim Croce said? "There never seems to be enough time to do the things that you wanna do once you find them." Okay, not the most literary of references, but I've been on a music kick lately so it will have to do.

To summarize:



Diplomacy World Wants YOU!

And that isn't restricted to players and fans in the United States, obviously. At times we've had much more input from hobbies all over the globe. I'd enjoy seeing more of that.

As to what YOU might enjoy, at the end of this issue you will find a Diplomacy World Reader's Survey. If you get five minutes, please fill it out. It is very hard to gauge what the readership of this zine is composed of anymore. In the old days, when it was all sent postally, you knew exactly who saw every issue. Now, each issue is generally downloaded over 10,000 times...but who downloads it? Who reads it? What do they want to see? It's a simple survey...and I will select one entry at random for a prize. You can complete the survey and send it to me one of three ways: email me a scanned copy to diplomacyworld@yahoo.com; mail a copy by post to Douglas Kent, 911 Irene Drive, Mesquite, TX, 75149; or simply type your answers in an email manually. I'd really like to hear from you!

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that the Diplomacy hobby has passed a sad milestone. Graustark, the very first Diplomacy zine ever published, had finally folded and ceased publication. John Boardman's health had deteriorated to the point that he moved to an assisted living facility in Maryland to be closer to his daughter and stepdaughter. We're hoping to have some Boardman-related material next issue, but in the meantime the entire Diplomacy World staff wish him well, and will miss Graustark, both for the Diplomacy and John's very strong personal and political opinions. If you've never seen Graustark, you can see many issues in the Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive at:

<http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find the start of a brand new Demo Game – a regular Diplomacy game this time. Filled with hobby old-timers, if nothing else this will be a very interesting game to watch, affected by the board itself and the histories of the players. There are also the long-awaited results of the Diplomacy World Variant Design Contest. Any ideas for the next contest? Send them in, as I'd like to announce a new contest next issue.

Finally, I should mention the information in this issue on the NADF Master's Tournament. This will be a special event, held next year, for which only certain players will be able to qualify. I am looking forward to seeing how this all works out, as well as the results of the event itself.

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is October 1st, 2010.

Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the autumn, and happy stabbing!

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Contributions are welcomed and will earn you accolades and infinite thanks. Persons interested in the vacant staff positions may contact the managing editor for details or to submit their candidacy or both. The same goes for anyone interested in becoming a columnist or senior writer. Diplomacy is a game invented by Allan Calhmer. It is currently manufactured by Hasbro and the name is their trademark with all rights reserved.

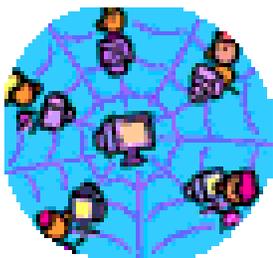
Themes for Upcoming Diplomacy World Issues:



Diplomacy World #111: Internet Diplomacy
Deadline for #111 Submissions – Oct. 1, 2010



Diplomacy World #112: Russia – Surviving War on Multiple Fronts
Deadline for #112 Submissions – Jan. 1, 2011



Diplomacy World #113: Using Social Networks in Diplomacy
Deadline for #113 Submissions – Apr. 1, 2011

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DixieCon 24 Report

by David Hood



Well, everyone knows that Dixiecon really begins the night before, as the early arrivals begin gaming on Thursday as soon as critical mass is achieved. Dixiecon 24 was no exception.

The gaming began in earnest as soon as David Hood and Bruce Allen got to Granville Towers that evening, where David Maletsky and Graham Woodring were set up and ready to play. There was the obligatory Puerto Rico to get the appetite whetted, and then the gamers hit the big time as Bruce brought out one of the most popular titles of all time. Yes, you guessed it: **Leaping Lemmings!**

Actually, it was pretty fun, and was destined to be played again at least once before the weekend was over. Rich O'Brien showed up as the lemmings were jumping off the cliff for points. The fivesome then partook of Republic of Rome and Titan before turning in for the night.

Friday am gaming saw the addition first of Justin Thompson, then many more players as the action proceeded through the afternoon. Games played included Ticket to Ride, Acquire, Hansa Teutonica, Magic the Gathering (if you can believe it), Bang and The Golden City. Several players adjourned to Dixiecon restaurant par excellence, Time Out, for country food and other munchies while a few actually made it to watering holes to, ahem, "prepare" for the Diplomacy event to begin at 6pm.

The traditional Friday afternoon basketball event this year involved several rousing games of Horse played by Hood, Steve Koehler and Brian Ecton. Mainly this involved a lot of missed shots by all concerned, but it was good to get out in the sun for a few minutes at any rate.

When the Diplomacy action began that evening there were four boards announced, including five former Dixiecon champions (Chris Martin, Doug Moore, Ecton,

Jim O'Kelley and Tom Kobrin). By the time the dust cleared that evening all five would be included in the draws on each of their respective boards. Board 1B had none of these former champs, and was the only one with a win opportunity, as Chicago Weasel Peter Yeargin made his Dixie debut by getting to 16 as Austria only to fall short and have to settle for a five-way stalemate.

The Iron Man of Gaming event also got underway on Friday evening, as the non-Dip gamers began to fill up the venue with all sorts of boards and all sorts of players. Ravindra and Mary Prasad made their second Dixiecon, and would make their presences felt throughout the weekend along with perpetual contender Kevin Brown. Seen that evening were Manifest Destiny, Wasabi, Strozzi, more Rico, Ticchu, and Citadels, in addition to a very popular game at the last three Dixiecons, Here I Stand. Since Bruce Duewer did not make Dixiecon for the first time since the Vietnam War ended, Hood had no one to suicide against on the Here I Stand board and thus actually won for the first time.

Saturday morning saw the Diplomacy Team Tournament, which also doubles as the second round of the regular Diplomacy event. Winning the team event hands down was Team Brick, consisting of Ecton, Richardson and Woodring. Other important results included another good round for Yeargin as his France reached 13 centers, and an RT two way draw at 14/14 centers between Woodring and Steve Cooley which would become crucial in the hunt for the Dixiecon title.



The non-Dip gaming was particularly wide-ranging on Saturday as a big game of 18Coast to Coast took up two large tables, with other games including Ra, Here I Stand, Mustang, Outpost, Wasabi, Agricola, Tigris & Euphrates, Leaping Friggin Lemmings, 2nd of Mayo, St Petersburg, Stone Age, Puerto Rico, Macao, Kremlin and Settlers (whew.) Longtime Dixiecon and/or Hickcon people also began to make cameo appearances as the day progressed, including Heath Gardner, Aaron Dixon,

Steve Nicewarner, Michael Lowrey, and the only other 1987 attendee still at Dixiecon after all these years, the multi-talented Bob Odear.

After the traditional 5pm barbeque dinner, this year again featuring Bojangles fried chicken in addition to eastern NC pork BBQ, more Iron Man gaming commenced as the last Dip game was ending. All available space in the lounge area was taken as the 55 Dixiecon attendees competed. There was also a little poker, and a lot of debate about poker...

Sunday morning the Diplomacy tournament began again in earnest as three boards started the only timed round at Dixie. By tournament rule it must end between 4 and 6 pm. As in the past several years, however, all the games were complete well before the time was called. All concluded in three way draws, with highlights including another great game by Yeargin at 13 centers and Ed Prem working his way into the top board at his first Dixiecon. The Iron Man gaming added another of the usual NC gaming crowd, Dave Long, as well as the annual obligatory game of Princes of the Renaissance in addition to Twilight Struggle, Puerto Rico, St Pete, Titan, Carson City, Dominion, Power Grid, Roll Thru the Ages and Acquire. After awards were announced, many headed to a group dinner at the Japanese steakhouse after which some Congoers departed for home and others returned for Sunday night open gaming.

Where the most awesome event of the entire weekend occurred: If you have been to Dixiecon in the last 10 years or so you know that it is traditional for a game of American Megafauna to be played on Sunday night – the game that is not a Game, but more of an

Player Scores

1 Graham Woodring 392
2 Peter Yeargin 364
3 Tom Kobrin 348
3 Doug Moore 348
5 Chris Martin 344
6 Andy Bartalone 340
7 Ed Prem 328
8 Brian Ecton 324
8 Tyler Mollenkopf 324
10 Steve Cooley 280
11 Jeff Ladd 254.8
12 Tim Richardson 246.8
13 Jim O'Kelley 240
14 Chris Barfield 212
15 Jay Heuman 186
16 Seth Vaughn 157
17 Edwin Turnage 147.8
18 Evan Perlman 116.8
19 John Barringer 64
20 Bill Hackenbracht 42
21 Claude Worrell 34
22 Michael Cannon 15
22 Robert Graham 15

Experience. This year we actually had TWO BOARDS of this game going on at the same time, which I suspect has never happened before in the history of the world from the beginning of the evolutionary cycle depicted in, well, the game itself. Since there were probably 4 or 5 copies of this game ever sold period, this was a monumental piece of gaming history...

And that is all, another Dixiecon in the books. Stay tuned for next year as Dixiecon will celebrate its 25th anniversary with some special promotions and attractions. A teaser – the event will host the All Time Greats, a round within the tournament where all the boards will be filled with players from the Dixiecon Hall of Fame (i.e. the top three finishers each year) with the best seven results advancing to the All Time Greats final board on Saturday night where it will be the only Diplomacy game going so that other players can kibbutz and watch the action if they wish. There will be communications about the event that will go to all past Dixiecon attendees that can be found with modern technology – and that's a lot of folk back to 1987.

You will not want to miss this event! Make plans now for Memorial Day 2011. Also, if anyone reading this is interested in our North Carolina housecon called Hickcon, which is now in its 21st year and to be hosted this fall at the Hickory home of Debbie and Ken Gutermuth, please contact David Hood.

David Hood is a former publisher and Lead Editor of Dipomacy World (and a former Dipzine publisher, I might add). He can be contacted at gamerhood "of" charter.net.

24 Mark Cannon 10
(One Round only, alphabetical order)
IN Ryan Arrington 0
IN Dave Maletksy 166
IN Dan Mathias 20
IN Rich O'Brien 20
IN Jon Sink 42
IN Nathan Turnage 0

Best Countries:

Austria Tom Kobrin
England Peter Yeargin
France Peter Yeargin
Germany Brian Ecton
Italy Chris Martin
Russia Graham Woodring
Turkey Steve Cooley

Iron Man of Gaming (non-dip gaming)

1. Kevin Brown 34 points
2. Ravindra Prasad 29.5
3. Mary Prasad 26.5

Other non-Dip Dixiecon participants:

Bruce Allen
Ed Rothenheber
Dave Long
Steve Nicewarner
Bob Odear
Michael Lowrey
Aaron Dixon
Heath Gardner
Rick Desper
Carol Mathias
Mike Brophy
Ken Gutermuth
Debbie Gutermuth
Steve Koehler
Bruce Reiff
Justin Thompson
Ken Mathias
Alison Blake
Craig Good
David Hood

Brick: Doug Moore and Tim Richardson
I got Hammered: Mike and Mark Cannon
Golden Blade: Peter Yeargin
Players' Choice: Tyler Mollenkopf

Game 1A EGT Draw

Austria Steve Cooley
England Chris Martin
France Ryan Arrington
Germany Brian Ecton
Italy Andy Bartalone
Russia Dan Mathias
Turkey Ed Prem

Game 1B AEFIR Draw

Austria Peter Yeargin
England Edwin Turnage
France Evan Perlman
Germany Seth Vaughn
Italy Jeff Ladd
Russia Tim Richardson
Turkey Mark Cannon

Game 1C AFT Draw

Austria Doug Moore
England Chris Barfield
France Graham Woodring
Germany Bill Hackenbracht
Italy John Barringer
Russia Nathan Turnage
Turkey Jay Heumann

Game 1D AFR Draw

Austria Tom Kobrin
England Claude Worrell
France Tyler Mollenkopf

Germany Mike Cannon
Italy Rich O'Brien
Russia Jim O'Kelley
Turkey Rob Graham

Game 2A AEFT Draw

Austria Brian Ecton
England Jeff Ladd
France Andy Bartalone
Germany Evan Perlman
Italy Bill Hackenbracht
Russia Mike Cannon
Turkey Seth Vaughn

Game 2B AFR Draw

Austria Tim Richardson
England Jon Sink
France Peter Yeargin
Germany Ed Prem
Italy Rob Graham
Russia Doug Moore
Turkey Claude Worrell

Game 2C RT Draw

Austria Mark Cannon
England John Barringer
France Chris Barfield
Germany Jay Heumann
Italy Jim O'Kelley
Russia Graham Woodring
Turkey Steve Cooley

Game 3A EGT Draw

Austria Graham Woodring
England Peter Yeargin
France Rob Graham
Germany Tyler Mollenkopf
Italy Edwin Turnage
Russia Seth Vaughn
Turkey Andy Bartalone

Game 3B EFT Draw

Austria John Barringer
England Brian Ecton
France Tom Kobrin
Germany Jim O'Kelley
Italy Mark Cannon
Russia Jeff Ladd
Turkey David Maletsky

Game 3C AFI Draw

Austria Chris Barfield
England Tim Richardson
France Ed Prem
Germany Steve Cooley
Italy Chris Martin
Russia Bill Hackenbracht
Turkey Mike Cannon

The Snooty Frenchman Looks for Friendship

Joshua Danker-Dake

In recent issues, I have discussed at length how in the early stages of the game, Germany is the ideal ally for England, and England is the ideal ally for Germany. So where does that leave France? Is he doomed to piddle along on life support interminably, friendless, alive only because he's easy to subdue but hard to eliminate?



At first glance, it may appear that France can afford to turn up his nose at offers of cooperation from less cultured nations. "After all," says France, "can't I get to five centers on my own almost automatically? Why don't I wait awhile and see how things shake out?" Put down the loaf of crusty bread and look around: things will shake out as they have throughout history, with German boots on French soil and English fleets off the French coast.

France can never afford to be too passive in his relationship building. Let others scheme and plot while you weigh your options (which usually means asking "Who wants to be friends?" and hoping somebody bites), and by the mid-game, you'll be wondering what happened to your "promising" start. No, France needs a friend early, and one he can work with into the mid-game. Let's take a look at the candidates.

Germany

While beggars can't be choosers, the best candidate for a French alliance is obvious: Germany. In *The Game of Diplomacy* (Arthur Barker, 1979), Richard Sharp rightly pointed out that England is the easiest target for France to reach, and often, the easiest to take, especially as many Englands love to immediately ensconce themselves in the quagmire that is Scandinavia. Germany is a considerably tougher nut to crack early.

A German-French pact lends itself reasonably well to the delineation of borders. Assuming lines are equally manned (or unmanned), an equitable distribution of board position and resources is for France to hold all three English centers while Germany holds Holland, Belgium and the North Sea. Germany can then push east through Scandinavia (with armies, like no one else can) while France moves through the Mediterranean. This arrangement, if properly handled, also prevents a debilitating stab by either party. The biggest concern for France here is that Germany can deploy new builds on this front faster and more efficiently.

England

An English-French alliance, while workable, is inherently problematic. There is nowhere for England to expand without surrounding France. And with a strong England, the more France pushes eastward, the more vulnerable he is at home. But controlling the English centers allows France to truly work from the corner, giving him the chance to become something greater than the poor man's Russia.

Russia

A northerly-minded Russia can be a friend to France. In the early game, a strong Russian presence in Scandinavia draws everybody's attention. It's a profoundly anti-German position, and if you're simultaneously handling your business on the continent, England should max out at three builds (four, if he's allied with Germany and gets Belgium). A mid-game alliance with Russia is a tempting way to put the pinch on Germany, but watch out: Russia can roll westward with astonishing quickness, by land and by sea. Remember that while you're looking for a meaningful relationship with long-term arrangements, Russia's often just looking for a one-night stand, a softening up of England and Germany so he can grab whatever he can and pick up the rest of the builds he needs to win in the south.

Italy

An immediate attack on France from Italy is typically feeble and not thought-out. Leaving each other alone early is often profitable, as the Italian's biggest slice of pie is typically found in the east. The smart Italy bears in

mind always that France doesn't get to eighteen centers without plowing into the Mediterranean.

Turkey

Beyond communiqués of little more than, "Hi, how are you? Please attack Country X," that we all send that never do anything, you and Turkey will have little in common.

Austria

Austria will likely be eliminated (or, more infrequently, about to solo) by the time you're in a position to propose anything relevant to his interests.

Nobody

All this is well and good, but the problem is that France isn't anyone's *best* ally. But this is Diplomacy: you don't just find a friend, you *make* a friend. So use your amazing Diplomacy skills and make one. And if you can't, as happens from time to time even to the best of us, then at least play a smart game so that powers aren't lining up to attack you.

Remember that a strong fleet is vital throughout the game. The key to the Western Triangle is the sea, and England will set the pace if he can. In the mid- and end-game, opposing fleets of moderate size can hold France in check in the north and south, irrevocably bogging him down at stalemate lines (as Sharp observes, it's vital to get across them *before* making your final push toward victory). France has to carry some momentum into the mid-game to have a chance.

I don't want to get into openings in great detail – France has a wealth of good openings, depending on what he wants to do and who he wants to do it with, and his biggest problem usually tends to be the mid-game anyway, if for no other reason than that France tends to be hard to eliminate quickly. But let me just say that whether you're allies or not, there's typically no good reason why you should ever let England into the English Channel. While it's true that him being there causes you fewer problems than you being there causes him, allowing England to camp out in the Channel is likely to burn you in the long run. Being tough on defense might not win you any friends outright, but it will make you a less appealing target.

And what about France's worst-case scenario? What if Germany and England are allied against you and Russia demonstrates little interest in western affairs? You don't have a lot of options.

I've never been a fan of gifting a center to an enemy to placate him – it's the ultimate sign of weakness. It's appeasement, and it'll work for you about as well as it worked for Neville Chamberlain. But a calculated gamble of "I'll throw all my centers to your ally if you don't stop attacking me" may prove profitable, particularly in a

game with players you know, assuming that you make good on your threat.



Given this unfortunate (yet common) set of circumstances, the best approach often is to lock things down. Go for full-on defense. Secure your borders as best you can, with your goal to make it take as long as possible for your enemies to capture your centers. Perhaps they'll look for greener pastures anywhere, or be attacked on another front. Perhaps Russia will ride to your rescue. Wish, hope and pray for this, and encourage, instigate and bluster to make it happen.

And So...

No, France isn't anybody's best ally. But that doesn't mean *you* can't be somebody's best ally. A strong working relationship always trumps the theoretical "right" move. Be flexible. Remember that in Diplomacy, when we talk about good and bad strategy, we don't mean that a "good" tactic works while a "bad" one doesn't, but rather that good tactics work most often while bad ones rarely do. This is Diplomacy. Anything can happen. You can be the exception.

So get to building those relationships early. It's fine to weigh your options if you're doing it from an active, forward-moving position. Just remember to cover your *derrière*.

Joshua is the Diplomacy World Strategy & Tactics Editor.

War on Terror – The Boardgame

by Richard Walkerdine

This is not strictly speaking a Diplomacy article, although diplomacy (with a small 'd') is certainly required to play the game. Doug will have to decide it's suitability for his zine.

About two years ago I was indulging in one of my many pastimes and surfing some conspiracy theory websites. I am not a great believer in little green men from Mars or predictions that the world will end in 2012, although the latest theories on what really caused the twin towers to collapse or what the Illuminati are getting up to is sometimes interesting.



On this particular occasion I came across a news item. Apparently there was a camp of environmental protesters (I don't remember what they were protesting about, a new road or airport I expect) somewhere on the south coast of England which had been raided by the police. A couple of arrests had been made and several items had been confiscated.

One of these confiscated items was a game called 'War On Terror – The Boardgame'. When asked why it had been confiscated a police spokesman explained that the game contained a balaclava which 'could be used to disguise someone'.

Hang on, I thought, that's just stupid. You don't need to buy a boardgame just to get a balaclava. So I went onto Google and did some research.

I discovered that the game had been banned by most of the high street retail chains on grounds of bad taste (which of course made me even more curious), and although a couple of specialist shops in London sold it the best way to obtain it was from the manufacturers website (google war on terror to find it). So I did.



No doubt there is now a file with my name on it at MI5 and the CIA but what the hell/...there's probably been one since the days of MAD POLICY. But my copy was delivered in a few days and I have to admit it is an absolute cracker of a game. I've now played it four or five times with friends and family (and even won it twice!) and I thoroughly recommend it to everyone.

I won't describe it here as you can get all the details from the website. I suspect it is probably not available in the USA given the American government's paranoia over terrorism but I'm afraid that just means that your loss is our gain. Oh, and one last thing: the manufacturer is a company called 'Terror Bull Games' (get it?).

I promise you, as an Englishman and a Gentleman, every word of this is true. In fact from where I am sitting at my keyboard I can look across to my games collection and see my copy. Just sitting there, waiting to be played again.

You never know what part of Richard's diatribes to believe. I leave that up to you. But he's been around long enough that even he probably forgets what is fact and what is fiction. Or is that all an act too?

Buckeye Game Fest XI

October 1st – 2nd

Columbus, Ohio



Tournament Details: The Buckeye Game Fest will be held for the eleventh time this October featuring many Ohio Boardgame Championships. The Diplomacy Tournament will be three rounds running on Friday and Saturday. Best Country Awards and a Championship plaque will be awarded on Sunday following the third round. Buckeye Game Fest is part of the Central Shuffle and eligible to be part of the Grand Prix. Every player who registers for the convention will receive at least one FREE boardgame. Registering for the convention is the only fee required to participate in the tournament!

Round One – 6pm Friday, Round Two – 10am Saturday, Round Three – 6pm Saturday
Scoring: Carnage, Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Hotel: Fort Rapids Water Park & Resort. Group Rate is \$79.95 / night



Gaming: Open Gaming will start at Noon on Thursday and run until 5pm Sunday. Scheduled events will begin at 2pm on Thursday (October 2nd) and run the length of the con.

Auction: We will again feature an awesome auction on Saturday. Last's year's auction was a huge success.

Dealers: We've already got a commitment from RC Hobbies and GMT Games to attend and we are looking for many more!

Contact Thomas Haver for details at tjhaver@gmail.com

<http://buckeyeboardgamers.org/buckeyegamefest.htm>

Diplomacy World Demo Game

“Rotary Phones and 8-Track Tapes” – 2010??

The Players:

Austria: Steve Cooley – tmssteve@gmail.com
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Jim Burgess (**BOLD**)
Rick Desper (Normal Font)
Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

The GM:

Douglas Kent

Player and Commentator Biographies

The Players:

Austria: Steve Cooley – I have been playing Diplomacy since 1980. That first game was with a bunch of guys in the Army. We had two turns a week and eventually had to quit because our wives complained it was consuming all our time (it was). I began playing in competitive tournaments in Southern California in the early 1980's. My first tournament win was at Con the Barbarian. It was a house con with maybe 9 players--three games with three wins by three different players. I won on the basis of a two-center survival. I guess my highwater mark was in the mid-80's. I won 9 consecutive tournaments at the Strategicon game conventions. I won the Avaloncon (aka "World Boardgame Championship") tournament in 1997. I've finished 2nd and 3rd at DipCon, but have never won the big one. I played some pbm back in the day. My favorite: I was at 8 centers as England at the end of 1902. A mistake was caught on the other side of the board and we reshuffled countries and started over. I drew Germany and won the game. I've had some success with pbem (my favorite was winning something Doug Scott ran called "Tournament of Scoundrels"), but I am a ftf player at heart. In the real world, I'm married, a retired cop, a Baptist pastor, have 3 grown kids who I like a lot, and a granddaughter on the way.

England: Bill Quinn – Let's see, shall I tell the boring truth or embellish? I'll just write. You be the judge.

I was born the great-great grandson of a poor black (hearted) share-cropper. By his guile and cunning he built a local empire in Grimes County Texas. Land, cattle, cotton and banking were his Units. He left a

legacy that endures to this day.

My father taught me the ways of stealth and misdirection. Be no one's fool and how to bend a situation to advantage were lessons learned. I spent my youth with trusty dog and single shot rifle tramping the Navasota River bottom in search of wayward livestock and checking fishing lines. The Spring and Fall were marvelous. The Summer and Winter were miserable.

At fourteen my academic abilities began to be honed and I left home for my first career as a student. I had a knack for the letters. A's and B's mostly. School work came easy for me and was much preferable to ranch work. After a short stint in the Confederate Army I deserted and retreated to The University where I spent six of the most wonderful years. In addition to the letters I also excelled in Poker, eer and the Underground Trade. It was there that I briefly encountered Diplomacy. However my lifestyle had no room for this game yet.

There came a point in time when the climate at The University became too hot in more than one sense and I had to make a final Decision...What was I to be when I grew up? The pieces were there all along. From my vantage point it all became clear. A Doctor of Dental Surgery degree would fit me perfectly.

The University operated a school of Dentistry just 75 miles south in the lazy town of San AnTone. I was perfectly prepared for the task. For four years I took the hardest courses I ever took five times a day. My

companions and I banded together to pull as many of ourselves through as possible. After the first year a band of us took up the Game. It was well suited to our situation of frequent gatherings of seven or more for study, partying, gambling and just plain breaks. We played long intricate games with 1 week deadlines and intense F-T-F games for a few hours, usually for money. It was at that point I went Postal....Diplomacy that is.

After I was capped and gowned with my Diploma in hand I set out for the U.S.Navy. I had the good fortune to be stationed in sunny Central Florida. The Navy routine gave me plenty of time to expand my role in Diplomacy. It was from there I published "EVERYTHING..."

I was able to meet Doug Beyerlein, Kathy Byrne and other hobby notables and learn at their Knee. When my Navy career ended I returned home to assume a position leadership and assimilate the rich heritage I was heir to. In addition to becoming BNC and postal gaming I established a private practice and acquired all the land I could including my fixer upper house which I bought for \$10. That was like winning as Italy. About seven years later I assumed control of the cow-calf operation at the passing of my father. That marked the end of my Diplomacy career. The grown up game of intrigue, negotiation, and planning consumed my time.

I would hope that The Colonel (my great-great grandfather) is proud of my accomplishments. Time will tell if my legacy will be as enduring as his. He can take comfort in the knowledge that his will last for the foreseeable future. In January I passed the cow-calf operation to my descendant. I will build the Dental interest a bit higher before liquidating it. There are no other dentists in my family.

France: Buz Eddy – Introduced to the game of Diplomacy at a Portland Oregon chess tournament in 1964 on a Brit board with bright colors and unclear boundaries. The locals decided that since it was printed with Spain touching North Africa that it was a point that both land and sea units could cross. Got one of the original Games research boards 1959 copyright that I put in a Dragonflight tournament prize set, and copies can be seen at the DipCon in San Francisco tomorrow (April 16) as it was accepted by Edi Birsan as a prize at one of my Dragonflight tournaments.

My gaming history started with chess. High School 1956-58 organizing a club that went on to win the city championship twice. In my US Army years 1960-1963 I continued to be involved in chess, running a club and studying the development of the rating systems that were being tried and saw some flaky starts evolve into a pretty sound evaluation system developed by Arpad Elo.

Professionally I did data processing in the Army, sold that to Boeing for five years until the technology ran away from me. Figured out that I would have to retrain

every four years to stay abreast and ran back to the U of Washington to get an accounting degree and MBA. Worked as a commercial accountant for a year, passed the CPA exam, and got married to Sharon in 1973. I had been slipping down to the Heritage bookshop in Renton (south Seattle suburb) every other Saturday to play Diplomacy at the game night there. I used those results to play test some ratings ideas and eventually work out what I presented as North American Diplomacy Federation ratings. Sharon eventually communicated that we might do more together if I wasn't committing a weekend night to Dip. That's the sort of "hint" that I recommend attention be paid to.

I published the ratings and a weekly column "This week in North American Diplomacy" for about 25-30 years. And let it slide into oblivion when I retired from my CPA practice. And wasn't terribly surprised when there wasn't any notice that it wasn't being done anymore. When I was a numbers geek I enjoyed doing it. In retirement I'm enjoying trying to see if I can improve my poker results.

Germany: Mark Fassio – You can't tell the players without a scorecard, so: this is FYI material for the new-guy readers' edification. I have played Diplomacy, primarily by mail, since the mid-70s – the Golden Age of Dip. I LOVE this game. I would even phone in orders during my weekly 5-minute "morale call" to my wife when I was in the military, stationed in Russia or Iraq, so she could pass on the moves to my GMs after we talked; how's *that* for fanatically loving a game? I was the Strategy and Tactics editor for DIPLOMACY WORLD magazine in the 90s, and won "Best Player" and "Best Writer" awards in that era, after copiously bribing the judges (or maybe it was primarily for playing Turkey in games; I can't remember). Over the years I went through some brownouts and burnouts, and had some disagreements with friends over moves and outlooks -- completely stupid ones, in retrospect (not the friends; the disagreements). Such actions always are, especially when wooden blocks are involved...why, I can remember when I was 2 ½ ... but I digress. Anyway, those brownouts and disagreements – coupled with the death of my Dad in 2002 and some new job/relocation issues at the same time —pretty much ended my active Dipping. I went through a slight "renaissance" in the PBeM world after 2005 and played occasionally on the DipBounced site (www.Dipbounced.com), as well as the rare "replacement player" positions in the old remaining monthly postal 'zines. I even went to a one-board 'Con in 2007 and survived (sort of) as Austria -- woo hoo! But even with "all" that, I am rusty as all get-out; negotiating and playing this game will be akin to having Mr Olympia be your personal trainer after lying on the couch eating Doritos for the last 8 years. (To quote Mr T, "Can you say, "painful," boys and girls?")

Still, it *is* Diplomacy, and the game is afoot, Watson! We have the seeds for a great match, so I'm enthused as

can be. I hope we can give you, the reader, a good show...if not, then I hope we can all flame out like supernovas when we get a blade in the back...

Italy: Melinda Holley – "I was born a poor sharecropper"...wait, that was a movie.

Leaving a trail of slime...wait, that was a cartoon.

ahem

I got into the Postal Dip Hobby back in the mid 80's. Sorry I can't be more precise but I get a little fuzzy about ancient history. I DO know that I played Russia in my first game. I also remember that I was totally frustrated that Germany kept bouncing me out of Sweden and Turkey bouncing me in the Black Sea. Finally, the Italian player, Kathy (Byrne) Caruso asked me why I wasn't taking Rumania (which was still unoccupied in F'02). Silly me, I thought I had to go to the Black Sea before taking Rumania since my unit in Sevastopol was a fleet. Thankfully, Kathy took me under her wing.

I dove into the Hobby not only with both feet but arms, hands, head, etc. I not only played in a ton of games but GM'd another ton of games plus running two game 'zines (Rebel and Starwood). The inevitable happened and I started burning out big time. I was out of the Hobby for probably 10 years then have slowly come back in within the past 3 years.

Fortunately, I've made a lot of friends within the Hobby and the players in this game are all in that grouping. I certainly hope I can do justice to this Demo game since the quality of players (IMHO) is very high. I'm not sure how my 'reputation' got established since I really don't have that good a winning record and I'm not that much of a cut-throat player. Now I need to go and print up those deeds for the Brooklyn Bridge.'

Russia: Don Williams – First played Diplomacy in 1970 at the age of 13 ... and was hooked. Didn't play again until I got into a PBM game (an ad in the back of the Avalon Hill General) in 1982. One of the players in that game (trolling away from the normal gaming zines) was

Woody Arnawoodian, great friend of Kathy and John Caruso. When Woody got my first 28-page Diplomacy missive (my England to his Russia) he turned it over in disbelief to Kathy for her "thoughts". Woody won that game, and I ended it with a single English army in Sweden. True story, and I still have the letter they returned with Kathy's caustic screed. Horrible mounds of abuse were heaped over the years and the legend was born.

Have been playing Dip steadily since '82, being in at least one game in all that time. Ran a subzine (Fiat Bellum!) to the great zine MAGUS and a small zine (Flick of the Wrist) back in the 80s and served as the BNC for a year or so. (I wasn't very good at it.)

My career goal in Diplomacy is to as successful in this game as Bob Olsen.

Turkey: Vince Lutterbie – Born in 1952, saved the world twice by the time he was 10. Invented gold. Wrote many learned dissertations on a variety of subjects; from butterflies to condoms.

pauses to take medications

(Burp)

Born in 1952, father of 3, married to melody Lutterbie, a beautiful person. Have 3 cats and one dog. Started playing Dip in 1978 but had trouble finding legitimate games. Started PBM in Fellutionist's Forum (which immediately folded). Probably misspelled that zine then, as now. Was active in the hobby in the 80's and early 90s, included a stint as Boardman Numbers and Miller Numbers custodian. Ran my own zine "Down at the Mouth" for a few years.

I have been to several Dip-Cons and hosted over 10 PoolCons at my house. Gary Behnen and I hosted DipCon 25 in Kansas City (won by Marc Peters). I went to Chicago for WeaselMoot in 2009 and had a good time. This is my first PBEM or PBM type game in over a decade. I expect to be thoroughly trounced.

The Commentators:

Jim Burgess: My history with this great game of Diplomacy began when I received my Games Research Inc. (the lighter reddish-purple box with the picture on the front) copy of Diplomacy for Christmas in 1969, when I was 12. My first games were family games with the six of us (three brothers and my parents) with some sort of adjustments that I can't recall that included help for my younger brothers, David (the one who still plays) was only 5 at the time!! I then put Diplomacy down for awhile mostly, like many of that generation I was playing mostly hex games and I was designing my own War in the

Pacific hex game with carrier fog of war rules and stuff like that. I also was a member of my high school Chess Club and I came to really despise Chess for its structure and style of psychological pressure. I and my fellow Chess Club friends gravitated back into playing Diplomacy in the early 1970's. There also was a Schenectady area (where I grew up) growing Wargaming contingent of people that eventually evolved into the still continuing Schenectady Wargamers Association (<http://www.swa-gaming.org/>). But I was starting to see Diplomacy as the game of all games for

some still very difficult to articulate reason. It was something about the total immersion of the personality and the soul, the way you could play the game at different levels, the sort of Zen aspect to it (this was when Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (1974) came out), and other things I could not quite put my finger on. I graduated from high school in 1975 still generally ignorant of the IDA battles and other issues in the larger hobby, but we did hear of John Boardman and Boardman numbers, so we started playing some postal games from college amongst my former Chess Club and wargaming friends that did have assigned BNs. These mostly were quite silly affairs, and most of them didn't even finish before we got busy with school and exams etc.

But I was at the University of Rochester, where organizer that I am, I organized another gaming association that is still going strong, the University of Rochester Simulation Gaming Association, they ran their 32nd SIMCON (<http://www.simcon.org>) in March of 2010 and at the first SIMCON, I ran and won my own Diplomacy Tournament (something I don't recommend, as now they don't play Diplomacy any more....). I also got myself more connected with the wider Diplomacy hobby (thanks to Gregg Dick, who was a friend of one of my high school Diplomacy friends, and was running one of the Dipszines we formed to play with those high school friends). For a period in 1982, when I was living pretty lonely quite frankly in Dallas, I was incredibly engaged in the hobby, spending hours and hours writing letters, commenting, writing press, and being (with Tro Sherwood) one of the US Orphan Service directors helping to place orphaned postal games. This is where I acquired my Jim-Bob moniker, was elected 1982 Toady of the Year and a host of other personality driven sillinesses. This was my hobby Golden Age where I met each of the players in the game below in some manner or three. I started my own postal szine, which still is lurching along today on the web and I helped to bring hobby history to the startings of the electronic hobby in the late 1980's and early 1990's with the formation of the rec.games.diplomacy usenet group and other activities. I also got very involved in forming and reforming the FTF Diplomacy activity in the New England area a couple of times in the last two decades, and now am running TempleCon (<http://www.templecon.org>) in Rhode Island each February (come up and see me some time!!!).

Somewhere in there, I became associated with this Diplomacy World monstrosity and somehow held it vaguely together so it could emerge under Doug Kent's nagging leadership again into the TRUE hobby institution it is today. Why anyone wants me to comment on this game is purely anyone's guess. I suppose I know this troupe of misfits as well or better than anyone else around here, so I'll try to engage and entertain you.

I hope they write REAL press, so you can all see some glimpse of what real postal style press was, and I'll comment on that too as desirable. Well, here we go, first some comments about each of the players....

Rick Desper: Rick Desper first encountered the game of Diplomacy as a freshman at Georgetown University, where the local chapter of APO ran a big-board game in the basement of Copley Hall. Rick started playing email dip a year later, after transferring to Wesleyan University, getting in on the ground floor of email-dip with legends like Eric Klien and Danny Loeb. In the 90s, Rick matriculated at Rutgers University for grad school, and was present for the early days of Ken Lowe's email judge diplomacy, as well as the birth of the Usenet group rec.games.diplomacy. Starting with Avaloncon in 1997, Rick became more active in FTF Diplomacy, and has attended World DipCons in England, Belgium, and Germany (as well as several in the US and Canada). Rick achieved a rare worst-to-first achievement in the 2004-2005 DipCons, but still takes more pride in the victory at the World Boardgamers Championship Diplomacy tournament in 2003.

More recently, Rick's Diplomacy activity has waned as his interest in the large number of excellent games from Germany has grown. Still, Rick is always interested in an exciting FTF game, provided that no muppets are allowed. Rick doesn't understand why people play Diplomacy if they are going to make no effort at trying to win the game. (It's like playing tennis with the goal of hitting the ball as close to the other player as possible.)

Rick's other pet peeve are movie-quiz publishers who ask their readers to guess a category that includes 9 Oscar winners for Best Picture, and only one film that didn't win Best Picture, and then the category is "Pictures that won the Oscar for Best Director". Rick finds that really annoying.

Richard Walkerdine: Mad Policy (MP) launched in 1972, ran for over 160 issues, mostly printed on gold paper and I won the zine poll in 1985. Isn't that a bio? I suppose I could add another sentence or two (winning the Calhamer Award, MP All Stars winning at Manorcon twice, putting up Alan B Calhamer and his wife at our house the night before World Dip Con 1 (and offering them alcohol not realising they didn't drink for religious reasons) etc etc (god the list is endless - as is my ego)). A couple of other thoughts occur. It was Alan and his wife's first ever visit to the UK, which they hugely enjoyed (we paid for his flight as guest of honour at WDC1) and on the first day one of the UK zine editors (I forget who) walked into the games room, saw Alan up on the stage, and spoke the immortal (and well reported) words "Who's the guy with the beard?". Happy memories....

Pre-Spring 1901 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Steve Cooley as Austria: It's really good that Steve Cooley is playing Austria here since his smoothness and inventiveness in negotiations is one of his strong suits. He also can be mercurial and passionate, all good traits to be an excitable Austrian in this game. Interestingly, though I interacted with Steve back in the day, I've really gotten to know him much better more recently since he has moved to New England and I've seen him at various FTF tournaments in the last few years. Steve is a minister and thus a Christian as I am (http://www.diplom.org/~diparch/resources/posta/why_i_am_a_christian.htm) and we connect in a generally unstated way on that level. Steve is a much, much better player than I am, one of the top two or three players in here, again good to be playing Austria. This will be good for the dynamism of the game.

I first became aware of Steve Cooley when he won the first 'real con' I attended, Avaloncon in 1997. Steve is an extremely solid player, especially in the FTF hobby, where he's won a large number of tournaments. How would I characterize his play style? He's an excellent negotiator, plays with the whole course of the game in mind at all times, and seems to be a good ally.

Bill Quinn as England: Bill Quinn was Boardman Number Custodian back in the early 1980's when I was being US Orphan Service Custodian, so we interacted mostly around that. I never really got a very good sense of what Bill was like as a player. What I recall most was interacting with him around the call that he made on what to do with the early burgeoning electronic part of the hobby and what were then called Play By Electronic Mail (or PBEM) games, to distinguish them from Play By Mail (or PBM) games. Steve Knight, as I recall, was running some of the earliest PBEM games and he or others playing with him called the question on how to report PBEM games. Bill declared that they were "irregular" to use the term of the time and allowed them to be reported in Everything!, the PBM BNC house organ, but did not allow them to have official Boardman Numbers. In my opinion, this doomed the Boardman Numbers to their current relative oblivion. Bill did think that PBEM would eventually supplant PBM, but thought it was different. He was right about that. Handwriting in PBM mattered, typewriters mattered, phone calls mattered, everything mattered. Now it is just the text in PBEM, that is a failing we have not yet recovered. Anyway, if we had started thinking of the parity then, I think things might have evolved slightly differently, but

there's the rub and here we are, with Bill back in a PBEM game. I know Bill was a fierce competitor with high standards, so he wouldn't be here if he wasn't here to compete, but other than that my opinions will evolve through the game.

Sorry, I don't know Bill.

Buz Eddy as France: Buz, more like me, is one of the hobby's great organizers. I met Buz through Kathy Byrne Caruso, perhaps the greatest of the great personalities this game has ever seen. Of all of the hobby's deceased players, I miss Kathy the most. Buz and I were among the most regular contributors to her "Kathy's Korner", which meant that we regularly placed our heads on her platter to be soundly ridiculed. No one could ridicule like Kathy. Buz is not a great player though, so we'll see what happens to him here, I would expect Bill and Mark to carve him to pieces. Buz also is earnest, a really nice guy, and well, perhaps too nice to be a brilliant cutthroat Dipper.

Buz has been one of the hobby stewards for at least as long as I've been aware of the hobby. In recent years he's been the lead coordinator for the North American Diplomacy Federation, though he's passed on control to others. Buz has threatened to leave the hobby altogether several times, so I'm glad to see him on the board here.

Mark Fassio as Germany: Mark is a military genius in all senses of the word. Like many of the players in this game, Mark is right about my age (currently as I write this, 52), he spent 23 years in the US Air Force, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel, and spent time at the UN and heading up REAL military intelligence units. I have often said that Mark is one of my top three or four players I've ever seen or heard of, topping the top board. For all that, Mark is proud, opinionated, and ethical to a fault. Mark and I have had our personal fallings out over the years, for each of which I regret any of my own personal failings (and they are many!) dearly. I hope I can still call Mark a friend, but I will step with trepidation over that as I do this commentary, and of course I will not be talking to him during this. My political leanings are best described as Dalai Lama light, with a host of accepting practicality built in, while Mark is an arch-conservative. I like to understand where Mark is coming from, but that strength is his only weakness on a Diplomacy board. He can be riled into taking positions and stances that limit him. He is German in temperament, so this is a good country for him to

draw. I'm a terrible German player, he is a brilliant one. I will be trying to dissect every move he makes and learn from them as best I can. Watch out game, Mark is the odds on favorite to take it.

I do not know Faz as well as Jim does, but I have met him at least once and found him to be very likable. I've watched him play and he's definitely a solid player. I haven't seen him play at any FTF competition in several years, so I am glad to see him involved again.

Melinda Holley as Italy: Melinda's nickname used to be "Hobby Holley" for her ubiquitousness. She WAS everywhere in the 1980s. Melinda and I also interacted mostly through Kathy's Korner in those days, Melinda played so many games that she knew the board like no one else I knew. Italy is my favorite country to play (as you all surely know by now). Melinda also likes to play it, but I don't sense she plays it all that effectively. In a game we're in together with me in Doug Kent's Eternal Sunshine as Turkey (that I usually play badly), she is almost eliminated. But Melinda is dedicated, possibly has played more games postally than any player ever, and she won't quit. But I would watch out for Mr. Cooley, Melinda!!!

I have been aware of Melinda for several years, but didn't really get to know her until she and I were teammates (along with Jim-Bob) for the Wonderful Mansion tournament last year. (Curiously, the TD decided to put all three of us on the same board for the semi-final.) I only have played on other game with Melinda - a FTF game at Weasel Moot last year where our powers did not get along. I don't have a good feel for Melinda's playing style, though she's got a bit of a reputation for being stabby.

Don Williams: Don is one of my dearest friends in the whole universe. I will make sure I do not discuss this game with him, but it will be quite difficult. My in person experiences with Don seared into my memory, when I visited him long, long ago and watched his first wife walk through the room in this way that truly scared me (and I'm happy Don got out

of this early marriage intact), the time Don and I showed up where Harry Andruschak lived and exposed the "Sara Reichert" masquerade, him helping me site the playset I built for my grandchildren in the backyard of my camp in Maine, and countless other indelible experiences. Don is a great patient and careful Russian player. It will be fun to see how he balances the players that surround him here. Don also is one of the few players of this era who still studies the game diligently and is getting better and better. On that basis alone he may overwhelm some of the players here who have creakier games. It will be difficult for me not to root openly for Don, so over-compensating, I'll probably over-criticize him.

Again, I don't know Don as well as Jim, but we've been teammates at least once (WDC in Vancouver) and I always like having Don around. Don's only weakness as a player is that he won't always recognize a situation where he can force a solo. :) [He was famously conned by Andy Bartalone into accepting a draw at Vancouver when Don had a solo for the taking.] Don is a very even-tempered player, but I still haven't played with him enough to have a great feel for his game.

Vince Lutterbie as Turkey: Our resident dentist and e-book publisher. Vince is a great writer and I hope we get some great press out of him in this game. It also is good that he is in the Turkish corner when surrounded by sharks like Don and Steve. Unfortunately, I expect Vince to be the first one to be eliminated from the game, as I peruse the board. But we will see, he may surprise. Vince, like many of the players here (Don and Bill) also spent time as the Boardman Number Custodian. I also didn't see a lot of Vince actually playing. So this is probably why I am not hopeful about his prospects. He may surprise me, but again, just for fun, let me predict that outcome.

I don't know Vince at all.

Let's get started boys and girls!!!

WHAT ON EARTH IS ALL THIS?

by Richard Walkerdine

So there I am, sleeping peacefully in my bunker deep beneath the Cotswold hills with my beloved Ulrika in my arms when I am suddenly awoken by the emergency alarm. Oh goodness, is it World War three already? There are no more than half a dozen people who know the number of that red phone. The President and the Prime Minister, of course, a couple of heads of security, Diana Ross (for reasons we

won't go into here - Ulrika might read this), and surely that's it?

But no, it's not World War three (or, sadly, Diana) - it's Doug Kent! "Richard, I need a favour."

"Go to hell Doug, you know I don't do favours - and especially not for you."

"And Ulrika?"

"Come on Richard, you know you owe me. You launched MAD POLICY in 1972 and I have never told anyone how you got that gold coloured paper you printed it on - how many people did you really have to skin to print over 160 issues?"

My stomach lurched, did he know something? "What about her?"

"That's ancient history now Doug, and you know it. Besides, those bodies are buried so deep they will never be found."

He giggled. "I know all about what she's been doing recently - especially at Area 51. It would make very interesting reading."

"Okay, so what about the Zine Poll? When you invented that new scoring system back in 1985 you knew it was totally biased in your favour so your zine was certain to win - what would the other Secret Masters of Diplomacy have to say about that?"

He had me, and we both knew it. "You are a total skunk Doug, what's the favour?"

I laughed. "Doug, most of them are long gone. And besides, nobody gives a damn any more."

So, here I am, doing a commentary on the new demo game in Doug's silly little zine. But I must admit it's an interesting line-up. Two players who are living together, one former Mafia hit-man, a convicted bank robber, two Wall Street embezzlers and I'm not even going to say what Melinda gets up to (yes Melinda, my spies really are everywhere). The sparks should really fly in this one.

Spring 1901 Results



Fleets move to assert control of English Channel and Black Sea. Germans and Italians lay "legitimate" claim to lands within borders of Austria-Hungary. "Those words were lies when you first wrote them!" retorts the Foreign Minister. Skirmishes in Galicia.

Austria: A Budapest – Serbia, F Trieste – Albania, A Vienna - Galicia (*Bounce*).

England: F Edinburgh - North Sea, A Liverpool – Yorkshire, F London - English Channel.

France: F Brest – Picardy, A Marseilles Supports A Paris – Burgundy, A Paris - Burgundy.

Germany: A Berlin – Kiel, F Kiel – Holland, A Munich - Tyrolia.

Italy: F Naples - Ionian Sea, A Rome – Venice, A Venice - Trieste.

Russia: A Moscow – Ukraine, F Sevastopol – Rumania, F St Petersburg(sc) - Gulf of Bothnia, A Warsaw - Galicia (*Bounce*).

Turkey: F Ankara - Black Sea, A Constantinople – Bulgaria, A Smyrna - Constantinople.

PRESS

(Berlin) Well, well, *was haben wir hier?* After nearly a decade of cobwebs gathering on our typewriters and telegraph lines, the *Kaiserhof* is once again a beehive of activity as our military correspondents fan out to cover the goings-on in turbulent Europe! We give a hale and hearty “hello” to our readership and to our fellow monarchs on their thrones! The game is afoot, Watson!

(Berlin to St Petersburg): You are always the ~~enema~~, err, ~~anathema~~, I mean, enigma. But I’m going to (shudder) believe your words regarding Sweden and your proposed DMZs. As they say, though, “actions speak louder than words,” so don’t expect such a *Konsiderate Kaiser* after this unless you’re where you say you are and not in East Prussia and the Silesian coal fields.

(Berlin to Vienna): Archduke, I heeded the words in your first note regarding contingencies in the south. This is *not* the optimum move for your fellow Teuton. But I’m gambling that it was the necessary one, and it’s certainly one that you know well (*DW Issue #50*, “Germany: My Favorite Country,” by S Cooley.) Hopefully the rumors of hostile alliances forming are just that – rumors – and that my move was moot, allowing my troops to pillage and plunder some real centers instead of empty foothills. Regardless, to cite the James Taylor song, “You’ve Got a Friend.”

(Somewhere on a foggy mountaintop...and no, you can't have too many versions of either Foggy Mountain Breakdown or Freebird): A lone figure stood on the wooden porch of a weather-beaten shack and knocked back one more root beer. A battered Ford pickup truck (minus wheels) sat on cinder blocks in the left side of the front yard, a comfortable home for the four squirrels and alcoholic chipmunk who now called it home. On the right side of the front yard, a huge satellite dish pointed skyward vainly seeking the Hillbilly channel (24 hours of racin', rock-n-roll, and 'rasslin') promised by Ted Turner to 'air any day now'.

Tossing the now empty can of root beer towards the Ford truck, the figure ignored the chipmunk who irritably chattered in her direction. "It's too early to start drinking!" she yelled. Seeing the chipmunk fall on his furry backside while trying to raise at least one digit in her direction, the woman shrugged. "Oh, well, it's Miller time somewhere in the world." She reached down onto the table and grabbed a can of Genuine Miller Draft and opened it. She tossed it towards the pickup truck and watched as the chipmunk stumbled after the can as it began rolling down the side of the mountain.

Opening a bag of peanut M&Ms, she threw the blue ones over the side of the mountain, watching as the four squirrels dove after them. Throwing a couple of the remaining M&Ms into her mouth, she glanced at the satellite dish. "Freakin' Ted Turner." Shaking her head, she munched the M&Ms and ran over her 'to do' list.

"Knives sharpened. Check. Mint Juleps ready. Check. Loads of honey. Check. Band-aids for boo-boos. Check." A smile crossed her face. "Let the games begin."

(Faz to Buz): Any nation whose ruler ends his name with a “z” is ok in my books! I hope you acceded to my request for border DMZs and went to Iberia for your “usual” gains, as requested. If there was any chicanery afoot, hopefully the TYO bounce will keep everyone sitting hunky-dory in place. Germany desires peace in our time!

(Germany to England): King William, the same applies to relations between us! Germany has done what it can this turn to mitigate any Springtime threats to its immediate borders, pending the results of our neighbors' moves. With the hopeful mollifying of the Russian bear and the Iberia-bound(?) BuzSaw, mutual goals can now be discussed and realized.

London: The Admiralty reports that all is not quiet on the continent. Diplomatic banter and Intelligence reports

indicate that hostile moves are afoot. All claim peace but sabers are rattling. Reluctantly the orders are written. Put the Fleets to sea. Call the Army out of it's barracks. Oh yes. Find the Irishman where ever he is. Bring him back. We may have need for him.

London - Paris: The English Channel must be mine or remain unoccupied. After all it is called the ENGLISH Channel. So if you bounced me no bad feelings. If I was successful don't worry about that Cruiseship off your coast.

London - Berlin: I hope you're playing nice with your cousins. They bite if you play rough!

Vienna-Moscow: May I just say Paranoia has a new capitol and it's the Kremlin? Who knew the KGB used to work for the Tsar and fill his head with more disinformation in a week than Rasputin could generate in a year?

Vienna-London, Paris: Hey, thanks for helping me fine-tune my spam filter!

Budapest-Constantinople: So, are we all set for you to convoy me to Ankara in the fall?

Budapest-Berlin: I resent the implication in your communications to me that my messages are contributing to Global Warming. I am not now, nor have I ever been a needless destroyer of electrical power.

Vienna and Budapest-Rome: You are absolutely my favorite player of all time. . . I actually believe that you just want to take Tunis and defend it until the end of the game. Even if that's not what you wind up doing, you convinced me.

London - Constantinople: Did you make up your mind?

London - St. Petersburg: I can't figure out your side of the board.

(Hol): Mein Gott, those Belgiques are loud! We can hear them clamoring all the way across the border....something about, "We want Kaiser FazDorf as the one!" (Or maybe they're saying, "We want Kaiser FazDorf *hung*;" kind of hard to make out those Flemish accents this far away.)

T - E: I don't think Chamberlain is the man for the job.

T - F: Do frogs prefer salt water, ice water or boiling water? Never seems to work out well for them in any of those cases. If you need fleets later, let me know, meanwhile, hopefully yours stay north.

T - G: Glad you got rid of that crazy Kaiser Bill. Let's see how crazy you are!

Paris - Ah it is spring of 01, Zee Worlds Fair es bringing every one to Paree. Zee Churman vant to Come to Paree, Zee English want to come to Paree, A small request if I may, keep paree, green, BRING MONEY.

But do come, please come enjoy. You will be warmly welcomed. As warm as we can make it.

Had a dream the other night about the sweetheart of a Churman Kaiser where he smiled sweetly after he ran me off the face of the earth in short order and allowed as how he was "scared of me". Must be the fact that he's won 20 or 30 of these exercises and I've won **0!** But then we are the romanticist French, lovers not fighters.

Then my new friend the King across the channel says we're friends, but he says he's opening to the channel anyway.

OK Neville, if your going to play peace in our time with that Kaiser, and let, or help, France fall there ain't gonna be no good ol' USA to bail you out.

Our GM has enlisted some delightful uhm experienced folks for this exercise. I'm particularly delighted to find Ms. Holley in the game.) I first met Melinda at the 1992 DipCon in Kansas City. We have been at maybe two or three DipCons since.

Have to slip in a favorite memory of the old postal Dip days. Leading up to that '92 Con. There was a postal zine that I enjoyed probably more than any other, Kathy's Korner. Therein a postal game had Melinda playing in a game with Vince Lutterbie's wife Melody, and a lady that accompanied her husband to the 92 KC con named Melonie Davis. A good portion of the press in that game began Mel to Mel and Mel.

Vince along with Gary Behnen was the organizer of the 92 DipCon and hosted me splendidly.

Steve, cop turned preacher, Cooley has been around the hobby a long time. The last time I saw him was at the Maine Dip Con.

Donald "Duck" Williams and I are going to the San Francisco DipCon this Friday (April 16) where we will consult the oracles over a pint or two on how best to confound the rational Diplomacy players we encounter.

And Mr. GM Doug, thanks for putting this gem together, and if you have an ethics relapse again its worth something to me if you lose the German orders.

T - I: Whoever heard of a Mountaineer in Tunis? Seems as weird as an I/R alliance.

T - A: Just checking out my villa to the west.

T - R: The Black Sea is mine. End of story. Hey, the

Ottoman Empire isn't what it used to be. Enjoy your dominance while you can, cause in the '80s; blue jeans, Coca Cola and McDonalds are gonna bring you down,

(Germany to Turkey): Greetings to the Wicked Witch of the South! Not to be In'Sultan (get it? *In..sultan*, bahahahahaha), but Germany desires closer communications with you. Europe will soon be ablaze, and Turkey is a pivotal hinge in the Balkans. My Government wishes to build that Berlin-to-Constantinople railway... via Ukraine, if necessary...and we need to stay in touch. Best of luck as you "float like a butterfly and sting like a Lutter(bie)." (Man, I got a million of 'em!)

(Kaiser to Empress): Last, but certainly not least, the German Kaiser sends regards to his lovely counterpart to the south. We sincerely hope rumors of an opportunistic alliance are false, and that my troops moved to Tyrolia for no purpose other than to be proved wrong. If you didn't go there, then accept my paranoia (stoked by a certain someone on this board) and please give me the benefit of the doubt as I slink my way back to the Oktoberfest tents in Munich. German monarchs who trod south (Henry V at Canossa, for example) did so at their own peril, and I am a student of history. Of course, if you did try for TYO and I'm still drinking in the beer halls, then you got some 'spalin'in to do. Bottom

Spring 1901 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

General: Ah, we are off to a very rotary start. Did I mention yet that I still have a usable rotary phone sitting next to me right now on the table? But 8-track tapes, those were the days of Abba and Jim Croce in the 1970's! I wonder if ANYONE has a usable 8-track tape player around any more! The players hit the rotation sequence very well, England moved on France, France moved on Germany, Germany moved on Italy, Italy moved on Austria, and well, it was a good idea while it lasted, it was a bit more messy in the Balkans otherwise. But at least there is no Juggernaut and the normal, boring starts to the game were avoided and we have something to talk about!

England: As far as I know, Bill Quinn is the one who has taken the longest break since he has played, and perhaps as a result, he threw some caution to the winds and moved to the Channel. He could try to force his army into Belgium from here (though that can be blocked), he can leave the French fleet behind and safely get into the Mid-Atlantic, he can convoy an army to Norway when Russia opened south, all sorts of interesting options. At least a strong ripple is sent through the ether. The game breaking move is the fleet to the Mid-Atlantic and the

line to it all: Italy jumped ship in 1915 and left its central Powers buddies in the soup. This is 1900...please stay the course.

Russia – All: FYI – Be careful...



FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL
STEVE COOLEY '10

You Are Cordially Invited To Join Co-Hosts

Hunt Braly	John March
Wayne Crawford	Greg McWilliams
Don Fleming	Peggy and Larry Rasmussen
Richard Hilton	Richard Sandnes
Bob Kellar	Arthur Sohikian

AT A RECEPTION IN SUPPORT OF
STEVE COOLEY
Candidate for California Attorney General

With Remarks by Our Special Guest
JOHN MARCH

Date: May 11, 2010
Time: 5:30pm-7:00pm
Location: The Tournament Players Club
26550 Heritage View Lane
Valencia, CA 91381

Please join us for light hors d'oeuvres and no-host bar

Tickets: \$150 per person, please see attached form
(Host Committee, Co-Host, and Sponsor positions also available)

Please RSVP by May 5th to:
Ashley Skinner (661) 259-5606 ashleys@spiritholding.com
Please respond by April 29th to be part of the Host Committee, a Co-Host, or
Sponsor of the event—see attached

army to Norway, so he probably will have to be talked out of that one by discussions (not necessarily alliances, but discussion -- do we all know the difference? -- many players do not understand the importance of talking and perhaps even making an agreement with one unit or set of units with a power and moving against him with the other). This position creates immense opportunities for England to talk to everyone and discuss with everyone, keep his final moves to himself and then decide how to set himself up best for the next season. Kudos, my favorite way to play and to be seen in the game, and we may get it here.

This kind of opening might backfire with Buz playing France. I'll leave that comment for what it's worth.

The good news here is that Russia isn't contesting Norway. He can get the easy build and pick his choice of options for F Eng. Personally, I really like Eng - MAO here. If Buz does Pic - Bre, then he'd be completely unable to resist the English fleets. The other options are to move to Bel or Bre. A very flexible position.

France: Buz is not a great tactician, but he likes to try interesting moves. In conjunction with the move

into the Channel by the English, Buz still has great options (note he still likely gets two builds by supporting himself to Belgium and taking Spain -- not guaranteed, but he should be able to signal the English off -- though at the cost of giving up the Mid-Atlantic), though also great risks. Note that I did not yet mention Brest at all, I don't think England will go there, and I don't think France should cover it, of course, that creates the surprise option that England might actually go there. I think Mid-Atlantic is so much more enticing that France can safely support himself to Belgium. None of this is how the negotiation should go of course, but they are the moves I am expecting from these players.

I like these suggestions. If England takes Bre, then Buz can build in Paris and retake it.

Germany: I think that Mark will play a bit angry this season. He expected to bounce Italy in Tyrolia and instead is thrusting at Italy, and with a French army in Burgundy. The French army is fairly easily dispatched. You say you're moving F Hol-Bel, and say to France, support yourself in, and then don't bother covering Munich (even as you tell people on the other side of the board -- like Turkey -- that you are, to grease the wheels). But now, what does one actually do with Tyrolia? Ohh, this is going to try Mark's diplomacy more than a bit. Is there anything more boring than slinking back to Munich for a depressing Oktoberfest? Despite my lame rotary humor attempt above, Mark may actually have his sights on Vienna working WITH Italy. Could the "missed bounce" all be a fake. Cooley is a darn good player, so a fake has to be sold well, and maybe they did sell it very well. Oh Melinda and Mark, is that what you're up to? I'm not sure, and that is they way Faz likes it.

Yeah, that's a fascinating opening.

Personally, I'd be far too conservative to do anything other than Tyl - Mun.

Let's say he does
Tyl - Vie
Hol - Bel
Kie - Den

If people think he's doing that, we could see
Bur - Mun
Pic S Eng - Bel
Eng - Bel
Yor - Den (via convoy)

Germany would be toast. He'd be at 3 after 1901. Germany cannot get over that kind of opening.

But who knows what Faz is up to?

Italy: Melinda, Melinda, you've gotten aggressive in your dotage ☺. I am presently in another game with Melinda where my Turkey is beating up on her Italy, so perhaps with that most recent experience (played somewhat passively early) she is hitting Cooley hard where she knows she can. This is another lesson for the crowd. If you want to predict Spring 1901 moves by players, you need to know the things vivid in their minds about that country. Note that a pig pile on Cooley is more than possible right now. Italy could pass up Tunis to get Greece in all likelihood with Vince's Turkish aid and maybe Germany is asking for support to Vienna (though that is a bit more unlikely), a jumble of tactics here that could go all sorts of ways.

So did Melinda lie to Germany or not?

Austria: Steve, Steve, where was your head here? Now, remember that Don Williams and Steve Cooley are long pals and know each other's games and tendencies backwards and forwards. So Melinda predicting that they would decide to bounce in Galicia was as obvious as the nose on your face. But still, Steve, you could have called off the bounce if you suspected this. Now, Steve can triple attack back into Trieste, but recall then Italy just retreats into Budapest and you're even. The wild card is the Ionian. You can support yourself into Greece, but A Tri-Ser cuts the support and is somewhat likely. Then if Vince is willing to support Melinda in, you're in large trouble. Austria needs to get everyone involved in a save. But just what are the saving negotiations and moves??

If I were Steve, I'd be a bit less than trusting of Faz. But does he have any choice? He's pretty much required to go for Greece. If he does that, he has to worry about Vienna, Budapest, and even Serbia!

Not to mention Galicia.

Wouldn't it be cool if this were a Key Lepanto opening? But I don't think so - not with A Rom - Ven.

There are plenty of ways to negotiate this position. "Negotiate" is the key word. I'm sure Steve has plenty of ideas. The question is whether he'll have any buyers.

Turkey: Hmmm, did Don offer the bounce and Vince not take it? Did they arrange this (unlikely)? Turkey can then take advantage of the difficulties and try to support himself into Rumania, that might work now too. Many tough questions here for Turkey, but certainly ones he can work with, having leverage. And remember that getting leverage doesn't mean you have to employ it, you can just threaten it.

It's never wrong to be in the Black Sea. A moderately likely possibility here for Turkey is to ask for support from

Austria for a move from Bul - Rum. That leaves Greece open for Austria. The other choice is to try to sneak into Greece, followed by a build of F Smy.

Italy's not set up for a Lepanto opening, so Turkey is in good shape here. Indeed, what could be better?

Russia: With good players it is so important so much of the time just to go to the Black Sea, because if you don't, things like this happen. Don has to decide whether to weigh in on Cooley's side or against him. I would tend to bet on working with him, but of course there really is nothing to be done right now. Russia gets Sweden unopposed, so good Faz negotiations there. I think the key here is to see what happens to the fleets in the fall.

I'd be very tempted to let the Turk sink the fleet, as long as he didn't take Sev. And War - Gal is pretty much obligatory.

Press: The players are making a serious attempt to give us standard Silver Age Postal Style press, at which Don Williams, Mark Fassio, Melinda Holley, and Vince Lutterbie are some of the acknowledged stars and experts. Buz was more famous for letters to Kathy Byrne Caruso's "Kathy's Corner" but he knows the drill. I don't recall Steve Cooley or Bill Quinn as big press writers, but I think they're in the game here too. Yet, before I start, I would call this (in the style of the time in the day) a relatively mediocre first start, with admittedly a few truly inspired head turners. Go look up the history in the great Press szines and subszines like Magus, Fiat Bellum, and Europa Express. The inspired GMs of the time did ingenious "press threading" to mix up the press, sometimes adding their own comments, to push things forward and use the material better. Since Doug is reading this in real time, I'm going to nudge him to do a bit more press threading with this in the future. Also he needs to remind me if this is Black Press, Grey Press or what and probably define the press rules for me and for the readers. The house rules at the beginning suggested White Press and then a vote, of which there is no mention in these Spring 1901 results. Doug can clarify for me and for all of you. I think all this press is as it appears to be (and it all appears.... ;-). Amazingly, I don't think Hobby Holley has contributed anything this first time, unless I missed it, and the others all weigh in with their classic styles. Let me comment here by country as well:

Germany: So the press from Faz tells Cooley he's got a friend, well does he, or is that just smoke being blown? You gentle readers will have to figure out the "Freebird" press all on your own, I ain't interpretin' it for you (that ruins it), but think carefully, might have to do some Internet research to get it. But Faz at least APPEARS to have laid out his

thinking for everyone to see, and it turned out all bassackwards. But remember that appearances are not always what they seem! Note that Holland press down further also is from Faz and he made me smirk more than a bit in many places here, I just adore the triple entendre, at which Faz is a master!

Obviously, Faz is claiming that his move South was intended to bounce Italy.

England: Hmmm, some nice press from Bill, though I did not have a good sense what to expect. Faz and Bill are about to compete for dancing on the head of poor Buz. Bill gets first contact.

...and Bill claims his move to Eng shouldn't threaten Buz. I'm guessing that's not true.

Austria: There is a long tradition in the hobby, at which "Hobby Holley" is the acolyte at the feet of the deceased master, Kathy Byrne Caruso, for using feminine wiles to completely discombobulate people. Gee, from the press alone, Cooley's head seems like it is spinning like a top! I wish Melinda also had weighed in. It sure seems like "favorite player of all time" is translating into knife in the back.

Steve's press is tragic. ☹

Turkey: Vince is a one-liner master, this is only a hint of his best work. Once he has more to work with as the game gets going, I expect more. Vince seems to tell us that he and Don had a deal to keep the Black Sea free, and no, Turkey did not go along. But my favorite of Vince's presses this turn was the Mountaineer one.... again very triple entendre, and could it be signaling whether that fleet already was planning to go to the mountains of Greece instead???? Just askin'.

Melinda's the mountaineer, right? Am I clueless here?

France: From Buz we got more of a stream of consciousness "KK" letter from him, I expect those more than I do traditional press, but we'll see.

Russia: Melinda seemingly was a no show, but then there is Don. Don can be so, so much greater than this. But the Cooley one at the end just floored me for days! And this is where I KNEW Cooley was playing minister in Massachusetts rather than constable in California, but I had to break "radio silence" with Don just to make 100% sure that yes indeed this was.... well, what did I conclude? Don gets my award for "Press Item of the Season". I likely will give these out each season, just for fun. Yes, there is a second Steve Cooley in this world. Even odder, there is a second Rick Desper!

The stardrive hummed softly as the mighty battlecruiser 'Further Glory' slipped almost silently through hyperspace. The journey had been a long one, almost two weeks, because the target star was several hundred light-years from the stars of the Fndili Empire. But now the journey was almost over. General U'til looked at the group of trainee officers in the meeting hall as he prepared his final briefing before the ship dropped back into realspace.

"Hail Fndili," he cried, with two tentacles crossed in the traditional military manner.

"Hail Fndili," came the reply, with the assembled trainees following his example.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "your study of strategy and tactics is about to reach its final phase. You have gained much understanding from following many of the major space battles the Empire has undertaken. You have also learned much from witnessing the fighting of primitive barbarians armed only with swords and lances. Now we will study something in between. A warlike race of creatures, still divided into many separate nation states, who have advanced as far as projectile weapons and ocean going vessels, although they do not yet possess aviation ability. But they are belligerent and distrustful of each other and our probes indicate that on one continent of the planet a very major conflict is about to erupt. We will drop out of hyperspace in two hours and proceed to the planet, which is called 'Earth'. You have a briefing note in your dossiers describing the geography of the continent, the nations involved and much of their recent history and background. We assemble here again tomorrow to begin our studies. Hail Fndili."

Next day the ship was in geostationary orbit above the continent called 'Europe'. The trainee officers were watching the viewscreens as General U'til began his lecture.

"Hail Fndili," he began, and waited for the response before continuing. "Gentlemen, as you see, the conflict has begun and our probes advise it will be a long one. As you will also see the early engagements are mainly the major powers exerting their influence

over the minor countries, as is to be expected. But already we see the signs of some significant developments. I will give you my views on these developments for each of the major powers."

"To begin with England. Norway will most likely fall as Russia is looking at a southern campaign and the move of the fleet into the English Channel appears to be a very aggressive anti-French development. But perhaps this fleet will instead move to Mid Atlantic for more further flung adventures? France will need some careful diplomacy in the coming weeks."

"As for France, is the army in Burgundy an anti-German move? Or is perhaps France looking ahead and ensuring the army can support the fleet into Belgium while also taking Spain? The English fleet creates a major concern of course."

"In the case of Germany, is the army moving to Tyrolia a sign of an alliance with Italy? If it is then the presence of the French army on the outskirts of Munich could mean that Germany may need to change its plans."

"And so on to Italy. The country seems to have started with a very aggressive anti-Austrian campaign, possibly with German support. We might also see Turkish support at a later stage."

"In the case of Austria, the country looks to be in trouble already with potentially Italy, Germany and Turkey in an anti-Austrian alliance. There could be a lot of blood flowing in Austria in the near future."

"As for Turkey, the fleet in the Black Sea gives it a lot of diplomatic advantage with Russia. And if indeed Turkey is in an anti-Austrian alliance it can afford to be generous to the Russians, at least for now. I doubt the Turkish commanders would wish to have more than one enemy at this stage."

"And finally Russia. Sweden will of course fall to it, probably because of an understanding with Germany. But it means Russia has decided on a southern campaign and that is where the Turkish fleet in the Black Sea is key. Is it a surprise or was it agreed in advance? If not agreed in advance (or even if it was

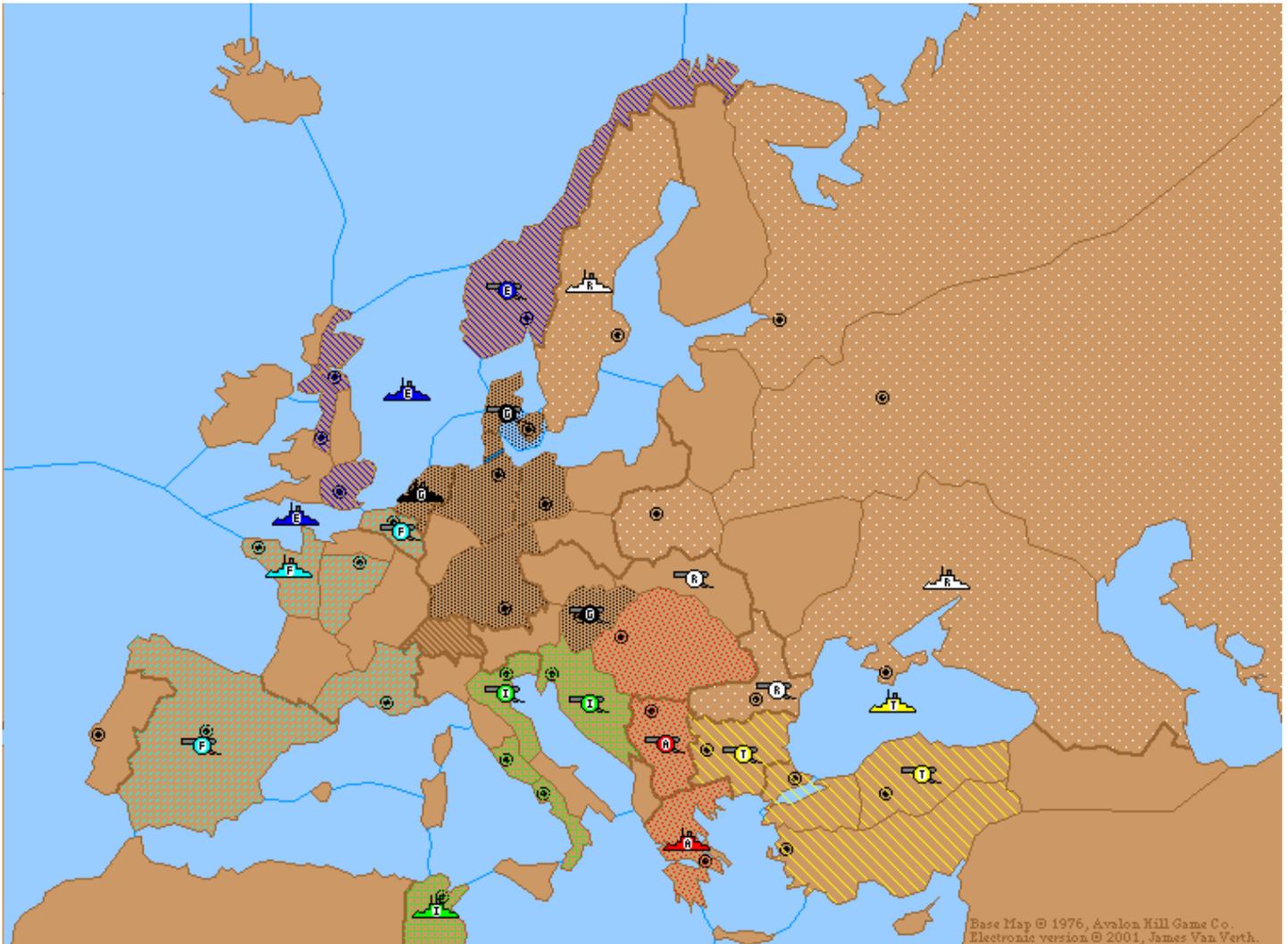
but Turkey is persuaded to change its plans) the prospects for major Russian gains in the coming months look slim."

"In summary then England, Italy and Turkey look to have considerable advantage so far. France and Russia have issues to contend with and Germany and Austria have very major concerns. An interesting beginning gentlemen, as I am sure you will agree, but remember this conflict has a long way to go."

"You will summarise your own views and observations for me by midday, ship's time, tomorrow. The following day we will timewarp forward six Earth months to view and discuss developments. Hail Fndili."

After the General left there was an excited shaking of tentacle tips around the meeting hall as the trainees began considering their assignment. All were relieved to be at the final stage of their training, knowing they would soon be able to begin their full military service for the glory of the Empire.

Fall 1901 Results



Italy and Germany already carving up Austria for dinner, but perhaps the main course can summon some support before all is lost. English Marines land in Norway. Germany appears to have many friends, and even more dots. And, most importantly, some entertaining press has begun to flow. Perhaps this will inspire the quieter among you to join in the fun? Heck, I might even start something for next season!

Austria: F Albania – Greece, A Serbia - Budapest (*Bounce*),
A-Vienna—Budapest (*Dislodged*, retreat to Bohemia or OTB).

England: F English Channel - Belgium (*Fails*), F North Sea Convoys A Yorkshire – Norway, A Yorkshire - Norway.
France: A Burgundy – Belgium, A Marseilles – Spain, F Picardy - Brest.
Germany: F Holland Supports A Burgundy – Belgium, A Kiel – Denmark, A Tyrolia - Vienna.
Italy: F Ionian Sea – Tunis, A Trieste Supports A Tyrolia – Vienna, A Venice Supports A Trieste.
Russia: F Gulf of Bothnia – Sweden, F Rumania – Sevastopol, A Ukraine – Rumania, A Warsaw - Galicia.
Turkey: F Black Sea Supports A Bulgaria, A Bulgaria Hold, A Constantinople - Ankara.

Supply Center Chart:

Austria: Budapest, Greece, Serbia=3, Even or Build 1 (depending on retreat)
 England: Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Norway=4, Build 1
 France: Belgium, Brest, Marseilles, Paris, Spain=5, Build 2
 Germany: Berlin, Denmark, Holland, Kiel, Munich, Vienna=6, Build 3
 Italy: Naples, Rome, Trieste, Tunis, Venice=5, Build 2
 Russia: Moscow, Rumania, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Sweden, Warsaw=6, Build 2
 Turkey: Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Smyrna=4, Build 1
 Unowned: Portugal.

PRESS

(MALICE IN CENTERLAND - PART 1: IMPRACTICAL DEMON KEEPING):

One day when he was six a boy we shall call Malice went with his family to the beach resort of La Ciotat, a quaint town near Malar Beach on Cape Croisette, a tiny protusion of land jutting into the Gulf of Lyon southeast of Marseilles, in France. It was the beginning of a sweltering August when the French take that six-week hiatus they call a vacation but which over-worked Americans and other overly zealous capitalists jealously call degenerate sloth. (And if you are wondering, Gentle Reader, why this story starts in France, it's because I am the writer and you are the Gentle Reader... that's why.)

Under the watchful eye of his mother, Malice explored many things in La Ciotat that summer: the grounds of the farm where his family stayed; the tiny shops that were busy now but would struggle during the off-season when the tourist flow trickled to nothing; the breaks and folds of Malar Beach; and the inconsequential woods near at hand. She was a good mother. Yet, even so, she was not everywhere all the time and so couldn't note the very curious discovery Malice made one afternoon as he explored a not-so-famous cave at the foot of the narrow sea cliffs between the beach and the woods.

Some twenty centuries or so before the founding of La Ciotat, a Carthaginian galley overburdened with cargo for Hannibal's war with Rome was caught by a storm, tragically too far from the safety of the jut of land that would one day be named Cape Croisette. The storm was an unseasonably wicked storm. A horribly powerful storm. Some said a demonically inspired storm.

Her crew, of course, fought desperately to save her, but the Nellie sank beneath the relentless oceanic onslaught with lethal consequence for all hands. For many days after detritus from the wreck was strewn ashore along the coast and was cautiously, methodically, and nearly completely, scavenged by local fishers, hunters, and

tribesmen. Pilgrims, wanderers, and deserters from the army would occasionally find additional remnants of the Nellie for months thereafter. But one item -- a globe of solid crystal -- was not seen by human eyes again until that sweltering August day when Malice tugged it free from the rocks in the cave and placed it in the beach duffle he'd filled with worn shells, smoothed stones, and bits of curiously shaped driftwood.

As legend would have it across the centuries, the galley and her crew had not so much been caught by a freak summer storm as doomed by dark magic. This conjured doom, omened in the dark auguries of a Carthaginian necromancer, was a consequence of the presence aboard the Nellie of the Diplonomicon. It was whispered that the Diplonomicon, an artifact of arcane and catastrophic wild magic, had been crafted in the molten magma of the volcanic heart rock of the Island of Malta. The tortured souls who had swallowed many lives to force powerful magic into the degenerate artifact called it the "Maltese Dipcon."

From earliest history, the artifact had presented itself as a rectangularly-shaped shallow stone box constructed in two parts; a flattened lid with a grooved edge that snugly fit into a slightly deeper bottom piece to create a shallow compartment. The lid's center was inlaid with a rune of black stone. Though polished, the stone neither caught nor reflected light. A modest tablet crafted from a light, fine-grained wood rested snugly in the compartment. The surface of the tablet was inscribed with lines and scripts suggestive of a map, while seven glyphs outlined the tablet's edge at irregular intervals.

Like the lid, the tablet was inlaid with black stones, only these were shaped as small circles, thirty-five by count. *((I really hesitate to interrupt this spellbinding tale, but should not that be thirty-four, rather than thirty-five black stones??? Perhaps we will learn more as the tale develops.))* At each end of the tablet were sectioned

compartments holding cut and polished stones of seven different colors. The stones were all generally rectangular in shape, but while some were short and squat, others were long and thin. One hundred and twelve in all, the stones manifested both the upright and inverted energies of each of the 56 cards of the Minor Arcana of the ensorcelled Tarot from whence they derived their immense latent power.

Forged with horrific, pitiless, and venomous rites, the Maltese Dipcon was a tool of hegemony and war, a magical and hideous relic of bloodshed and mastery over peoples and nations. The star-crossed Nellie's orders had been to transport the artifact to Carthage's great general in a final, extreme act of defiance and conquest. Faced with ruin before the treachery and legions of an empire-bent Rome, Hannibal had been ordered to defy ancient prophecy and invoke the necromancy of the Diplonomicon to alter the fate of Carthage and her empire. The Grand Magus of Malta would arrive with the Dipcon in Hannibal's camp in the hills south of fledgling Roma. It was said he alone knew the baleful, secret Rites of Summoning. To invoke both the supernatural and demonic, he would carefully pick out 22 stones, one for each manifestation of the tarot's Major Arcana. He would carefully select 22 stones to ensure that their correct colors and shapes and placement on the tablet would properly invoke the desired dark magic. He would utter cabalistic mutterings and unleash catastrophic forces of desperation and conquest against the soldiers of Rome. Hannibal's army would march west, destroy that city, enslave her people, and sow her fertile fields with salt.

Or so went the plan. With the sinking of the Nellie and the Maltese Dipcon sank the ultimate fortunes of Hannibal, his army, his beloved Carthage, and a mighty civilization. Years later, the Diplonomicon a bitter curse on his lips, he would take his own life in a tiny unnamed Turkish village before Roman assassins could end his life as entire legions had not.

Young Malice knew none of this of course or he surely would not have let three more summers pass before again opening the discarded beach duffel. Such is the way with boys - without a thought today's found treasures are tomorrow's forgotten junk. The duffel remained for many months forgotten in a dusty corner of the garage behind the house in which Malice and his family lived. After one better than average cleaning of the garage, however, Malice rediscovered the duffel bag of beach treasures from La Ciotat. Quite by accident, he pulled from the bag the curious crystal globe. In the dim light of the unlit garage Malice could see next to nothing so, with the globe, he walked out into the bright daylight. Where the crystal globe quite immediately and mysteriously split in half.

Well, not quite. That is the version of the story Malice would tell years later when asked to repeat the odd

beginning of a much odder story with quite the oddest ending. In fact, in the sunlight Malice saw that encased at the center of the crystal globe was a tiny figure. Squinting closely, he could see that the figure was brownish-green of color and possessed of tiny horns and equally tiny batlike wings. Like any nine year old, he was surprised and excited at such a find, but less surprised than he was a scant moment later when the demon opened its eyes and shook its head. With a startled gasp, Malice dropped the globe to the ground where it split neatly in two, disgorging the tiny occupant. The demon jumped up and scurried for the shadows of the garage.

Now young boys may startle at the sight of fast-moving small things, but they seldom fear them. Without a thought Malice scooped at the demon with his left hand, then his right, and a moment later the demon was wriggling in his closed fist. With insight beyond his years Malice thought glass the most appropriate container for the struggling prisoner. He found a small canning jar in the garage and, without incident, dropped the demon into the jar and capped it.

You or I might find such a thing as capturing a demon perplexing but Malice was quite sanguine and sure of what to do next. First, he spoke to no one of the captive. Keeping a demon was nothing like keeping a lizard or lightning bug. Adults would take a demon away as a dangerous and unduly bad influence and this he did not want. Second, he thought the demon would need air. (He was wrong in this.) He poked a few holes through the jar's lid. The demon would need food, Malice thought. At first he added grass and dead bugs to the jar but, when after several days the demon hadn't eaten, he progressed to small bits of vegetables and live bugs. Over the days and weeks and months and years ahead he found that the demon would eat most normal food but preferred crusty oatmeal and bits of stale croissant.

With steady feeding the demon grew. Over time it outgrew the canning jar and Malice found a larger jar. And then a larger jar. And then a still larger jar still. The years passed this way until the day arrived when there were no larger jars to be had. Malice was seventeen that year and had taken to keeping the demon in the cellar of the dilapidated work shed at the far end of the property he and his parents lived on just outside the town of Provedance. Malice eyed the demon one day, wondering not for the first time if demon-keeping wasn't an unusual, if not outright dangerous, practice. He pondered getting a large aquarium but knew this would ultimately only delay answering the inevitable question of what to do with a fully grown demon of indeterminate — but potentially enormous — cataclysmic power. As Malice watched that day, the demon used the claws of one hand to clean the claws of the other. This was not unusual. Malice had noted over the years that the demon was quite meticulous and conscientious in its grooming. In spite of its ever-increasing size and

possibly unearthly powers of Hell, the demon had been a quite decent companion (he couldn't bring himself to say 'pet') through the years. This penchant for growing, though, had called the question at last and Malice was finally perplexed to the point of uttering aloud the problem troubling his mind.

"Mon Dieu, but what am I to do with you?" This innocent question was quietly answered from a most sinister and odd source.

"Well, you might decide to release me from this bloody jar," said the demon, looking up from its claws to Malice. The source was sinister because it was, well, after all was said and done, a demon. A real one. The source was odd for the simple reason that, up to this point, neither had ever spoken to the other before.

"Damn! I... I didn't know you could talk."

"Likewise, I'm sure," answered the demon.

"You've never said a word until now? Merde, it's been years."

"Eleven, give or take. What's to say? We are captor and captive, you and I. Roles seemed pretty clear to me." Malice considered this and decided the demon was right. Still. And he wasn't sure why the demon was swearing in French at this point, though your writer is, Gentle Reader. Merde is French for shit.

"So," said Malice, "are you a real demon?"

"Hey — you got me there. What's the giveaway? The horns? Wings? Maybe this amulet around my neck — what?"

"You don't have to be a smartass. What's your name? You do have a name?"

"Demon."

"That's your name? Demon? Just Demon? That's dumb. I'm Malice."

"Don," said Demon.

"Huh?"

"I said 'Don.' I was known as 'Monde'. Monde is French for 'world.' In my case it was an anagram for Demon. No one got it though, so now it's just 'Don.' That name is good enough for now. If you drop the E and M from Demon you get Don. The EM stands for 'earthly manifestation,' which is how you see me now. While I'm at it, I should tell you this is only how I look to you and isn't my true form."

"What's your true form?" asked Malice.

"Open this jar and I'll show you," said Don.

"Don't think so, Don. Whatever you look like, you're still a demon. How do I know what you'll do? Impractical as it is, I've been keeping you for a very long time and you might be out for a little revenge."

"That might all be true, Malice... except for one little thing."

"And what's that, Don?"

"It is I who have been keeping you. Now open this jar."

(Somewhere on a foggy mountaintop) A lone figure stepped onto the porch and took a deep breath. "Ah, I love the smell of pork fat sizzlin' on the grill in the morning." Stepping off the porch to the nearby grill, the woman frowned at the sound of an automobile engine. Peering through the fog, she groaned. "Damn! It's the po-po!" She frowning, trying to remember just how well she'd hidden the still behind the shack then shrugged. The cornfield could use more fertilizer if necessary.

She watched as the police car pulled to a stop in the front yard and a man got out. Not recognizing the man, she called out. "Don't remember seein' you around these parts."

"I'm Sheriff Kluk. That's Kluk with a 'K'." The pot-bellied man shifted his gunbelt to a more comfortable location on his belly. He glanced at the growling dog lying next to the huge satellite dish. "You wanna call him off?"

"Dale Darrell Waltrip Richard Petty Rusty Awesome Bill Irvin Gordon Earnhardt Smith Johnson Junior! Knock it off!" the woman yelled.

"That's the dog's name?" Kluk looked more than a little confused.

"No, that's the chipmunk's name. He was about to take a #2 in your front seat. The dog's name is Duke." The woman speared a piece of bacon from the grill and tossed it to the dog. "Breakfast!" Then she sat down on the front steps of the shack. "What can I do for you, Sheriff Tuck?"

"That's Kluk! With a 'K'!" When the woman waved a hand in silent apology, he continued. "I just came from the Cooley place. He says you've been poaching on his property."

"Me? I've got all this. Why would I go poaching on Cooley's property?"

Kluk glanced around at the rusted-out wheelless Ford truck, the non-working satellite dish, and the decrepit old shack. Hearing the chitter of an animal behind him, he

saw a chipmunk squatting on the top of his patrol car.
"Get off that car!"

"Dale Darrell Waltrip Richard Petty Rusty Awesome Bill Irvin Gordon Earnhardt Smith Johnson Junior! I'm not gonna tell you agin! Knock it off!" The woman got to her feet and walked to the grill. She tossed a few more pieces of bacon towards the dog.

"So you're sayin' that Cooley's lyin'?" Kluk suspiciously asked.

"Sheriff, bless Cooley's little pea-pickin' heart." The women sorrowfully shook her head. "Boston Rob got voted off the island. Lost's only got 4 more episodes. American Idol sucks this year. Who knows why he said what he did. But I wouldn't go anywhere that I wasn't invited to go."

Kluk frowned. "I'm gonna keep my eyes open around the Cooley place," he warned.

"Glad to see my taxpayer dollars are being well spent," the woman nodded. "You have a good day, Sheriff Duck."

"That's Kluk...with a "K"!"

"Sure it is."

GM: Makes me glad I don't watch any of those shows. Who knows what mischief I might have been drawn into.
CARSON, CALIFORNIA: The eleven-year-old boy woke suddenly in the middle of the night. What was that noise? It sounded like footsteps! He pulled the sheet up to his face and peered fearfully out into the dimly lit room.

"It's all right Brooklyn, you are quite safe," said a voice. "I mean you no harm."

"Who...who's there?" said the frightened child. "My mom and dad are real famous, they could do terrible things to you if you hurt me."

"I won't hurt you boy, you are quite safe," came the reply as an old man in a long grey robe appeared at his bedside.

The child was still terrified, though the stranger's words had eased his fears just a little. "So...so who exactly are you?" he gasped.

The old man knelt beside the young boy's bed and smiled. "Well, I have had many names over the years. But mostly I have been known as....Merlin."

GM: Merlin? I never liked that game. Stupid hand-held electric piece of junk. Confusing rules, hard to hold. I always preferred Coleco Football, or maybe...oh excuse, Heather is kicking me. What? King Arthur? Oh, THAT

Merlin. Nevermind.

(Berlin) Call us zany, call us wacky, but we Germans have decided to make the game a little less predictable. Leave MUN unguarded with the BuzSaw next door? Sure! Head south into fellow German lands, where Hohenzollerns for centuries have tread with disastrous luck? Why not? Send an army north into the Bight when two major sea powers are right next door? You betcha! To misquote Prince, we're gonna party like it's 1899. Only time will tell if "radical" was the smarter choice that "logical," but if the masses want a wide-open game, then let's show 'em one. It's early victory, or early death. Huzzah!

GM: Is he Prince again? Or the artist? Or that symbol? I can't keep up.

(Berlin to St Petersburg): "Peace in our time," eh? Just make sure you don't change it to, "Piece in our time," bub. Berlin will be very wary of any 1902 builds close to the Reich, especially when it appears the Austro-Turks may have something in store for you down south. Physician, heal thyself.

(Faz to Buz): Well, fool me once, BUR Boy, shame on you. Fool me twice, MUN Man, then shame on me. I'm gambling. But I promised to keep the board balanced (that's my Big Game Plan for this one), so BEL is yours unless Bill bounced you. Hopefully this shows you my peaceful intentions and desire for (ahem) DMZs.

(Germany to England): Bill, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Not only did I agonize over support or non-support for you to BEL, but I also agonized if someone besides (ahem) me were to be in BEL. Dong this hopefully clears my borders and/or keeps BEL empty. Did you grab Buz's Brest? (Ooops, sorry; family 'zine.)

Turkey to Germany: Your position is precarious, but somehow, I think you'll rise above it.

(Germany to Turkey): You're the linchpin this season (and next year), Vince. Work against Austria, and he's pretty much under the waves with waterline hits. Work with him vs Italy and/or Russia, and we've got ourselves a different ball game, sports fans. Heck, this could be our very own Soap Opera: "As the Turk Turns." Turn in tomorrow as we find out: Will Vince whisper sweet nothings to Melinda, while secretly backing Steve? Will Bulgaria discretely tempt Serbia with promises, while RUM waits, oblivious? And just who IS Black eyeing so lustfully?

GM – Germany: Any sexy redheads in lingerie? Otherwise I'm changing channels.

Vienna to Berlin: Not really sure how valuable that move to Tyl was--unless you also knifed me for Vienna.

If so, this is going to be a great Demo game for me . . . to watch!

(Berlin to Vienna): Change that James Taylor song of last press from *You've got a Friend* to *Fire and Rain* instead. Not to "rain" on your parade, but I'm opening "fire" on your border for the time being. Melinda talks sweeter than you, Steve, and even if she doesn't advance further against you, this keeps her busy and away from advancing against, um...me. And if the Turk is really with you vs. her, the whole bloody balance of power changes soon in the Balkans and the sea lanes. Balancing is thus required. Now, if Buz nails me, or if Don becomes, well, Don, then I'll look like one rash fool here. But for 1902, the die is cast. Phone lines are open, though; operators are standing by.

GM – Berlin: If that rash you're worried about breaks out, try some Gold Bond Medicated Powder. Works wonders.

Budapest to Constantinople: I have a feeling that you and I will soon be the best of friends.

Turkey to Austria: If the mail to me is correct, you have no friends. However, I have tried to leave you alone, but more than simple love notes are necessary. I need a big ring with a fabulous stone now.

GM – Turkey: Is Diamonique from QVC okay?

Turkey to France/England: From the lack of letters from you two, I assume you feel that you have nothing to fear from the East and that I will be gone prior to your arrival here. You could be correct.

GM – Turkey: Maybe all the Icelandic ash slowed the mails down?

Turkey to Russia: This turn will show me your true colors, but you'll see you have nothing to fear from me. As you know, I want a lot of ships. A lot!

Turkey to Italy: I appreciate your standing, but, I don't think this is the way to go. I hope your citizens learn French, because I can't believe you won't be getting a visit from them soon.

(Teacher to "A" Student): To badly misquote a *Star Wars* line, "Obi Don has taught you well," Princess Melinda. Your entreaties have fallen on fertile ground and, to keep the piece, err, peace, between us, we will aid you in trying to retain lands stolen from your nation by centuries of Habsburg aggression. All we ask is simple peace between us, and to help us rein in a Revengeful Austria and a Roguish Russia. Congrats on the future niece to be born, and liquor up those chipmunks by your trailer for me, cousin.

Ireland: The Irishman was easy to find. He was at the pub. He was dressed shabbily and sat across the

table from a well dressed Scarecrow.

A half played game of Chess was in progress.

"Your move, Boogeyman!" said the Irishman.

The Scarecrow took no notice.

Four Royal Marines accompanied by a Royal Navy Lieutenant entered. The marines took positions around their prey.

"Irishman, The Admiralty has use of you. Come with us!" the Lieutenant spoke.

"Not now! I'm just beginning my Gambit!" shouted the Irishman.

With a nod from the Lieutenant the marines seized their target and carried him bodily out the door.

"At least I don't hafta walk." the Irishman muttered.

"Not yet. Your gambit is just beginning" said the Lieutenant.

Vienna to Moscow: Well, certainly, I meant the Sultan will be my second-best friend. Let's put it this way: whoever is the first to claim an Italian center of commerce, say Rome, Venice, or Naples, will be my new best friend for life.

Vienna to London, Paris: Really guys, I appreciate the effort. I mean I hardly know what to say about all of your concern.

GM – Vienna: Maybe you shouldn't have skipped Bill's square-dancing shindig. Probably offended him.

Britney Spears to Melinda: Girl, you gotcher game on! Woot! Go girlfriend!

Vienna and Budapest to Rome . . . and Trieste: You are no longer my favorite player of all time. In fact, you've become quite a nuisance. Strange how quickly that changed. I should have gone with my first instinct--never trust a female Pope!

GM – Vienna: Just delete the word Pope (or in some opinions, the word female).

Eric Holder to Western Austria: If anyone asks to see proof of citizenship, just call me. I've got your back and your green card. It can all be yours for the low, low price of a job in your administration.

Evacuation Canoe on the Danube to Encroacher of Trieste: It don't make no difference to me, you believe what you wanna believe, but you don't have to live like a refugee.

Budapest to Rome: I'm feeling particularly Petty.

GM – Budapest: Don't despair, Tom. After all, even the losers get lucky sometimes.

(MALICE IN CENTERLAND - Part Two: A Simple Desultory Poem):

Malice eventually decided that being kept by a demon was not as bad as it sounded.

First, nothing in his life was different due to his new knowledge of his captivity. There were no chains, cages, bars, fetters, locked doors — nothing. He still fed Don daily, and they now talked where they had not done so before, but that was the only change. And as the days went by Malice learned many things.

One fall day they followed the dirt road into the local woods to read. The demon brought a favored strategy article while Malice had the latest issue of *The Abyssinian Prince*. (It had arrived several months late as usual, but Malice didn't mind.) They walked for some time before entering a small clearing where the dappled sunlight and a tiny rippling stream made things pleasant in the waning warmth of the afternoon. Don stopped, noticing where the road split on the other side of the clearing. The demon without thinking began to mutter, as if to himself.

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and, sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler, long I stood and looked down the one as far as I could to where it bent in the undergrowth" His voice trailed off. Malice, restless and distracted at the first whiff of anything literary or uplifting, started thumbing the pages of *TAP*. "I don't like where this is going," said the demon. "It's the wrong poem, Malice, but it surely bears witness. It has meaning... yes, it does. It's about choosing a road or a path or, more correctly, choosing one path over another and considering consequences later. I think this means it's time, Malice."

"Time? Time for what? We just got here," said Malice, not looking up from the szine. But Don did not answer and, instead, stood in uffish thought for a few moments before he started intoning another poem:

 `The time has come, the Demon sighed,
 to speak of many things:
Of Dots — and Blocks — and Powers Great —
 Of Allies — Foes — and Kings —
And whether you should trust at all
 In tales a demon sings.'
 `In ancient years across the sea
 A foolish empire sought
To wield great power, quite arcane,
 Against the foe they fought —
They sent the Maltese Dipcon out
Not knowing what they'd wrought!
 `The galley sailed upon the sea
 And in it in a trunk —

A guardian demon with the bane —
 Unless the legend's bunk —
But tempest tossed the galley was
 And all aboard were sunk.'
`Or so it's told' — the Demon said —
 `And yet I surely know
That there, in fact, was one life spared
 From a watery grave below.
For he arrived upon the shore
 With demon — me! — in tow.'
`And Cabal Harem was his name —
 Magus of Malta old.
But other names he had as well —
 Though none of them are told —
 Except in nasty secret rites,
Where souls are bought and sold.'
`"Remove the amulet you wear"
 The Magus said to me
"Hand over what I'm asking for —
 And then I'll go — you'll see.
I want the tablet and the blocks —
 That bane from you I'll free." '
 `I guard this ancient artifact
 And so I answered "No!"
As quick as lightning did he strike —
 And landed the first blow —
He stomped real hard with both his feet
 And really crushed my toe!
Our battle then was quickly joined —
 With Fists — and Feet — we hit
But Cabal Harem had to win —
 So ass with teeth he bit —
And while I howled in agony
 He snatched the amulet!
`And then these words he spoke aloud —
 Quote — "Idiom clop non! —
 Domino cop nil!" he said and
 The amulet was gone* —
And in it's place — I kid thee not —
 The Diplonomicon!
`He gazed in awe at the stone blocks
 Then grabbed them for to hoard —
 And while he was distracted thus

I likewise grabbed the board!
 Then beating hard my mighty wings --
 Above Cabal I soared.
 `Enraged! -- Insane! He screamed aloft --
 "I'll see you back in Hell!"
 And summoning his fearful gifts
 He cast an evil spell
 Encasing me in walls of glass --
 A crystal prison cell!
 "And held there fast -- in glass entrapped --
 I plunged into the sea
 We grew quite small -- bewitched and all --
 The amulet and me --
 The board remained within my grasp
 A partial victory.'
 `For reasons that the Author knows --
 Yet will not share his heart --
 Cabal Harem grabbed the stones
 And with archaic art
 He disappeared from this true Earth --
 The Blocks and Board -- apart!
 `Thus was the Diplonomicon
 Ripped in twain -- Asunder! --
 Re-gathered only -- says the Myth --
 By fantastic blunder
 Of Hero-Fool in Centerland --
 Who is that, I wonder?'
 `So, Malice, there you have the Tale --
 Save one small fact you'll rue --
 Genetically you fall in line
 To make the Myth come true --
 From Cabal Harem's loins did all
 Your DNA ensue!
 `When first I spoke -- when first I spoke --
 A lie -- a demon's story?
 Or is it not a lie at all,
 But just the truth grown hoary?
 And will you be the Hero-Fool,
 Stumbling into glory?
 `Our metre's run -- this poem's done --
 The Readers I do bore
 (For if you listen carefully
 I think you'll hear them snore)

But please don't go -- now you should know
 It's just three stanzas more.'
 `When while you read beneath a tree --
 Brain-dead from Burgess press
 A Mutant Butler running by --
 In bright red waistcoat dressed --
 Will stop his run and say "I'm late"
 Then run on quite distressed.'
 `That's when you'll know it's time to go --
 Awake or deep in dream --
 In either case you could give chase
 Or just let seeming seem.
 Restore the Diplonomicon --
 Or just read Jim-Boob's szine?'
 `Your journey's start is near at hand --
 And it will take some thought
 To not too deep or fast become
 In paradox caught --
 The way to Centerland is down
 The North Atlantic Dot.'

(It didn't really disappear. It was stuck to the underside of the tablet and Monde the Demon found it later. No, really ...trust us on this one ,eh? The Author.)*

Don ended his lengthy recital and, pleased with himself, looked over to Malice whose eyes -- alas -- had rolled completely back into his head under the epic onslaught. The demon slapped Malice's cheeks a few times, and momentarily, he came around.

"Merde! You ever do that again and -- demon or not -- I'll kick your horned ass."

"Sorry, Malice," said Don, sheepishly, "but you must understand what's at stake. The Maltese Dipcon -- the Diplonomicon -- is a weapon of immense and catastrophic power. It was forged deep in the volcanic fire of ancient Malta by Archbale All-Man, a Grand Magus and Master of the Tarot. The tablet -- the board, that is -- and blocks are manifestations of the dark forces of the Tarot. They don't just augur the fate and doom of humanity but -- in the wrong hands -- they create it. The 22 starting positions of the stones on the tablet represent the 22 cards of the Major Arcana. They portray by mythic symbol the virtues and defects of Humankind. The 112 stones, 56 of each in two shapes divided into seven colors, represent the 56 cards of the Minor Arcana. They play out man's unfolding doom."

"You done yet?" asked Alex, "Because, apart from boring the piss out of me, you're getting more than a little

weird with all this `major' and `minor' Arkansas crap." In response, the demon silently removed from his neck the amulet and, dropping it to the ground, began chanting:

"Imido clop non, lipid mono con
Monic idol plo, nomic nil do po
Domino con lip, omni colon dip!"

Alex felt rather than heard the low, slow thrum as the land beneath his feet began to writhe and change as the demon's chant trailed off. The tiny stream widened to a brook. Inexplicably, he found himself nearly asleep under a nearby tree beside the brook, TAP in his lap, fluttering slightly in the cooling breeze. The landscape

had shape-shifted and warped in all directions at once and, suddenly, nothing was the same.

"The time for the Dipcon to be re-gathered is upon us, Malice," spoke Don lowly, almost to himself. "For better or worse, you are the Hero-Fool foretold in legend and this task falls to you, unbidden. It is your quest, and yours alone. Sort of a major `oopsie' if you ask me, but there it is. Good luck, you're gonna need. We're all gonna need it." The breeze muffled his words, kept Malice from hearing the last of them.

"It's a good thing," said Don as he slowly vanished, his wings disappearing last.

Fall 1901 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

The big news here is the assault on Austria by the combination of Germany and Italy. Steve took the build in Greece and tried to cover dots by self-bouncing in Budapest. His other options would have been to tap Trieste to cut support or to support himself in Greece and leave Italy with a 50-50 on Vie or Bud if Germany were neutral.

I'm not a huge fan of early wars between Germany and Austria - it's a development that seems to beg for the corner powers on each side to ally with each other and squish whoever remains in the center.

Turkey seems to not be part of the multinational alliance carving up Austria, though Russia does look like he's working with them.

In the West, France appears to also be on Team Faz - not happy about the fleet in the Channel, no doubt.

Conclusion? Faz is the leader on the diplomatic front, presuming he keeps the duck in line. If England and Turkey are diplomatically isolated, then the collapse of Austria won't be a disaster of Team Faz. But if Russia or France flips, it could get dicey very quickly.

Austria: I really, really think that abandoning the Anschluss alliance is the ultimate death for both Austria and Germany. This is a big mistake by Faz. We cannot know if Steve made a point of this to Faz or not, but I would have, and then moved as Steve did. The interesting thing with the retreat is whether to retreat to Bohemia and go "behind the line". Faz builds three, of course, but I might do it anyway since Faz may or may not make his actual builds conditional on the retreat (might not matter I suppose), and at this point, Austria should just be trying to hurt Germany any way he can. Retreating

off the board gives you an army in Budapest that has four enemy units surrounding you. In any case, Russia should be your friend at this point, to get back at Germany, so I would make the choice based on what Don is telling you. As Rick says, how Russia reacts is key right now (and to a lesser extent France). Since the two most powerful long term alliances on the board (personal opinion) are RF and AG and AG just left town, if I were Buz and Don I'd be having a deep confab. The outcome of that should be RF hitting Germany and helping Austria to survive.

England: Bill Quinn wasn't listening (by osmosis) to my advice. I do not think trying to move to Belgium increased the value of the F Eng. France still gets two builds and can take and keep Portugal easily next year. England could back off and join an attack on Germany (does Faz build F Kie, can England sneak into Hel?) or he could build F Lvp and keep going. I would do the former, he probably will be doing the latter. Or building an army to try to convoy, I suppose, but then you're begging Germany to support Belgium and keep the peace with France and again you get nothing. Who is England's ally here? I don't see a good one.

France: Buz is doing pretty well here. He can neutralize England, has a choice of what to do with Germany, can build a good relationship with Russia and Italy pretty much has to stay committed in the Mediterranean. Though I would work with Russia against Germany, there are options for France and the only bad one is attacking Germany without making peace with England so he gets hit by both.

Germany: Faz is always attacking, always flailing around. I cannot say how much I dislike the choice

to take Vienna. The board should make him pay for this. We'll see if they do. At least this isn't a boring board that you see every day.

Italy: It is never bad for Italy to be gaining early. You HAVE to build an army and a fleet (if we see two fleets that will be a mistake). Then Italy has options attacking Germany, Austria or Turkey. Talking to the FR and seeing what they have in mind is key. Just as Melinda cannot attack France right now, Buz can't attack her. They both need to build on that. As I said, I would build on it attacking Germany, but Melinda might try to support a fleet to Ion and start moving that way, perhaps setting up a convoy. That also is a viable approach. Keep those options open though, and build armies!!

Russia: Don is seeing the board open up around him in some places and hem him in in others. You do have that Fleet in the Black Sea and cannot build in Sevastopol. This could be a diplomatic ploy to keep Turkey at bay. Now he can say to Turkey, "build F Smy, I cannot build a second fleet". The southern maneuver also put two armies on Budapest if Russia wants to assist in carving up Austria. He really does NOT want to do that. He wants to support Steve, I think, but he needs help for Steve somewhere else, not worth doing if GIT are all against Austria. As I said, I would make peace with Melinda and Buz and attack Germany if I were Russia here. We'll see what Don does, again, options are good and Russia and France are in the best long term positions.

Turkey: The "deep negotiation" way to look at the Turkish position is that this is the deal he had with Don. Don does the round the rosie move to put his fleet back in Sev, Turkey clears Con. And then he builds F Smy, moves Smy out and Bla-Con in the Spring. That could be part of blitzing Steve right out

of the game as well, and then the start of a Juggernaut. I'm not sure that is best for Turkey. Or this could just be that Turkey isn't sure what he is going to do, he thought he was bouncing Don, then he didn't and didn't know how he wanted to follow up (remember that if he really wanted to attack Russia, the move in Fall was to convoy the army to Armenia, not just move it to Ank).

The Press: Everyone's still not participating, but there's some more action, and LOTS more from Don Williams. Malice in Centerland is all Don (google his previous use of it if you like). And if you think I'm going to explain it, you're nuts. I do think Doug is correct that the 35 stones is a typo. This is triply true from some of the other major/minor arcana that he's trying to set up (again, no fuller explanations from me). We hope Don sticks with it and keeps growing it. The Foggy Mountaintop is almost surely Faz, but now at least Doug is mixing up the press so we have to guess! And I have no idea who wrote "CARSON, CALIFORNIA", so we're getting deeper here. Read the press and enjoy it! Then there's too much of Faz without response to mix up too much. Faz won't like that (I know this from experience), he's engaged, he wants everyone to be doing the infield banter. Vince gets into the act with volume, but he seems to be doing lame negotiating by press, c'mon Vince, write to the other players!!! But the Turkey to Russia press suggests what I said above purely from the moves and the unit positions is correct. And thus the early bet would be TRF domination. The central powers have to stop this. Then we end with Malice in Centerland part 2 (probably Part 1 was designed to appear in Spring and was late, Part 2 was designed for Fall). A couple more seasons, and some reactions from others, plus Melinda joining in, and we will have a classic press game!!!

FALL/AUTUMN 1901 - by Richard Walkerdine

A minor computer glitch to one of the deflector shields had allowed some space debris to damage a secondary impulse drive on the 'Further Glory' after it timewarped forward six Earth months. It was an old ship, and prone to small problems, which was why it was now used as a training vessel rather than one of the main battlecruisers of the mighty Fndili fleet, although its history in the Empire's expansion would forever be a source of legend. But General U'til understood this, and indeed took pride in it. He knew he was nearing the end of his career; he would never again lead troops into battle, would never again glory in a Fndili victory as another adversary was blasted into oblivion. But he was satisfied - or at least almost

satisfied. He had served well and had been amply rewarded, and was now seeing out his remaining time in training new recruits to serve the glorious Fndili Empire. He was pleased with his career, although he still remembered that mysterious creature from many years before with a wry smile and a slight shudder, regretting they would likely never meet again before his retirement. But no, this was a simple training mission requiring no military action. The minor damage was now repaired and the mighty battlecruiser was again in orbit, with the trainee officers observing the conflict unfolding on the continent below as the General took his place on the podium.

"Hail Fndili," cried General U'til, with tentacles crossed as he awaited the response.

"Hail Fndili," came the reply from the trainees.

He grasped the podium with all four of his upper tentacles. "Gentlemen, it has become very interesting." He turned and pointed to the huge viewscreens on the wall behind him. "As expected, there has indeed been much blood shed in the Balkans, and Germany in particular seems to have woven a very successful diplomatic web. But let us analyse each power in turn."

"To begin with England, which has clearly had a major diplomatic setback. The initial anti-French campaign has been thwarted by what is, at least for now, a strong Franco-German alliance. Clearly England was looking for German support onto mainland Europe and this was not forthcoming. If the alliance remains firm, at least for the next year or so, it is difficult to see where England can gain any more territory."

"As for France there has obviously been a lot of diplomacy with Germany and, to a lesser extent, with Italy. France and Germany now appear to be in alliance against England while France and Italy seem to have at least agreed to stay out of each others way. But France will raise two new units later in the year. One will of course be an army in Paris but to balance its forces it will also need a fleet in Marseilles, and that will require some very delicate negotiations with Italy."

"Germany has had a huge success. Allied with France against England and with Italy against Austria. Also note the Russian moves. There has clearly been an agreement with Russia that the latter will continue its southern campaign and that does not bode well for Austria or Turkey. But a word of warning. Germany has expanded more rapidly than any other major power, doubling its forces in one year. This could well cause concern to both France and Russia. If Russia raises a new army in Warsaw then Germany could soon be fighting on both the western and eastern fronts."

"Italy has been working very well on the diplomatic front and its alliance with Germany can be expected to continue as it is in both their interests and neither of them are, at present, a particular threat to the other. But where does Italy go next? We can assume it will continue through the Balkans but the next target must then be either Turkey or France. If Italy and Russia are allied then Turkey is the most likely, but the strong alliance with Germany could lead to a fight with France. An interesting dilemma. And what of its new units? An army and a fleet would seem logical but two fleets would almost guarantee total control of the Mediterranean."

"And so to Austria. Alas, poor Austria. It needs an ally, and quickly. It won't get one from Italy or Germany as their campaign is going well and, as I mentioned, neither is a particular threat to the other. So that leaves Russia or Turkey. Russia already occupies Austrian territory whereas Turkey will be worried about both Russia and Italy. It would seem that Turkey is the only hope. Otherwise we could see the demise of Austria as rapidly as that of the Cheldans, when the Fndili Empire allied with both the Gorak Federation and those three-eyed Slavians and wiped them out in just a few months." His eyes glazed over for a moment as he remembered the details. "Now that was a glorious campaign."

Then the General coughed. "Apologies gentlemen, forgive me for remembering some of my past battles. Let us move on to Turkey. Where does it go? It will raise only one new unit, it has a clearly distrustful Russia to the north, a very successful Italy to the west and only a partially dismembered Austria as a source of new territory. Raising a new fleet would seem logical in order to guard against the threat from Italy, but an ally is of even more importance. Austria would seem to have very little to offer which leaves Italy and Russia. Italy is clearly heading south east and Turkey is its next logical target. But the Turkish strategy has so far been quite sound and points to an alliance, at least for a while, with Russia, as I will explain in a moment. But there is still a lot of diplomatic activity needed."

"And so finally to Russia. A reasonably successful start with clearly at least an understanding with Germany and an obviously southern campaign. But will

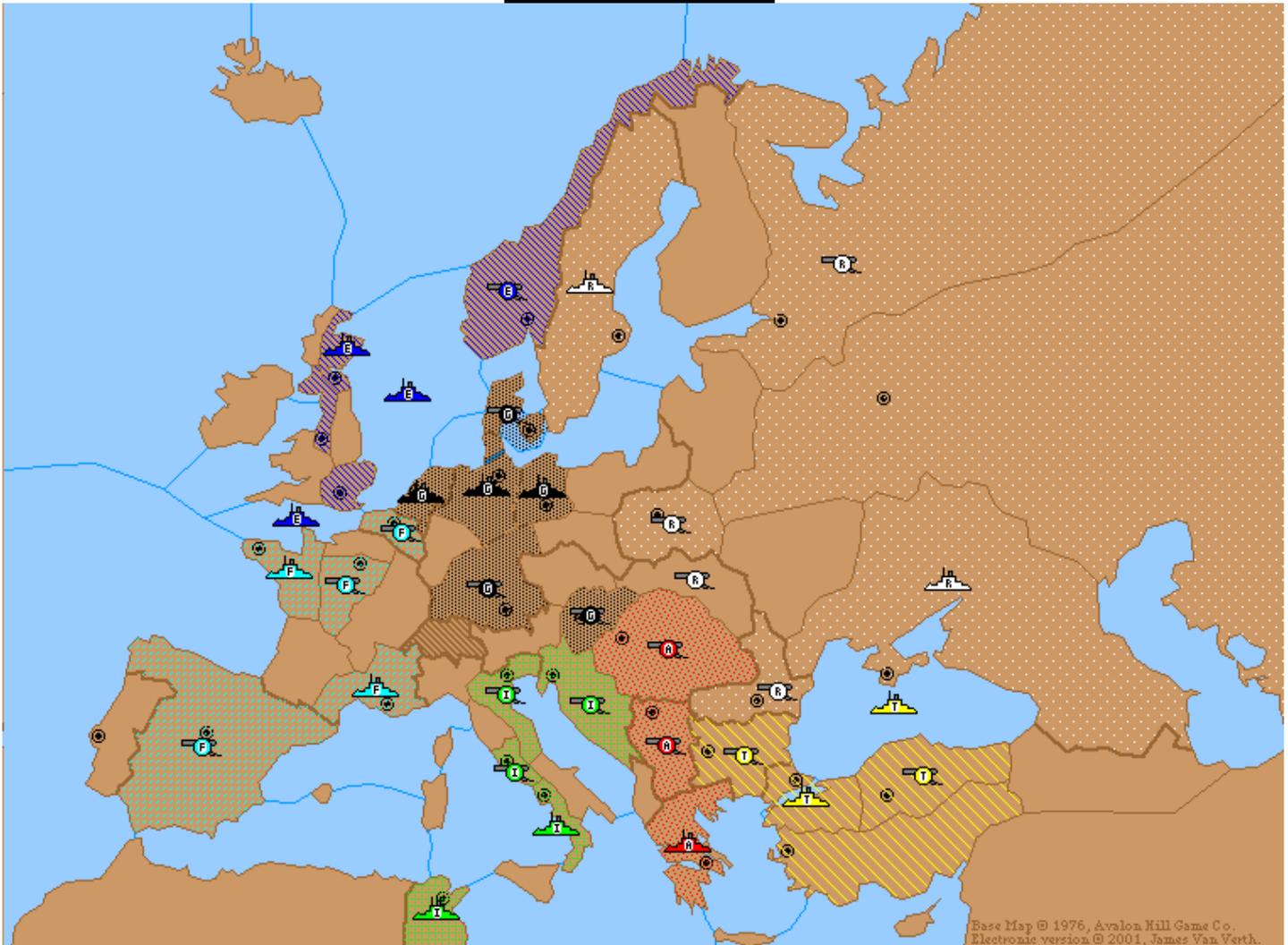
they build in Warsaw? Just how strong is the trust between Russia and Germany, particularly now that Germany has expanded so rapidly? Note also the move of the fleet into Sevastopol. Obviously done because they didn't trust the Turkish fleet in the Black Sea but it also means that Russia cannot build in Sevastopol and therefore cannot eject the Turkish fleet. This leaves Russia with little choice but to open a new front in the north and also gives Turkey a huge opportunity of forming an alliance. This is why I said the Turkish strategy has been quite sound. They have almost forced Russia to look north and given themselves the best possible opportunity of an alliance. But of course if Russia and Italy have already made their plans there is little that Turkey can do."

"So, gentlemen, to summarise my views. Austria is clearly in a terrible position, England is facing a very strong alliance and Turkey needs a friend very quickly. France will be quite satisfied with its progress so far but Russia has a lot of thinking to do. Germany will be delighted with its diplomacy and expansion but needs to be wary of expanding too much, too soon. As for Italy it all seems to be going rather well."

"Please write up your own observations by tomorrow and we will then timewarp forward to see the outcome. Hail Fndili."

The General left the podium and the trainees started talking excitedly amongst themselves, tentacle tips shaking as they discussed the new developments.

Winter 1901 Results



England, France, and Germany expand their navies wherever possible. Any major surprises? You be the Judge. And, I suppose, the Jury and the Executioner, given the chance.

Austria: Retreats A Vie Off the Board, Builds A Budapest. Has A Budapest, F Greece, A Serbia.

England: Builds F Edinburgh. Has F Edinburgh, F English Channel, F North Sea, A Norway.

France: Builds F Marseilles, Build A Paris. Has A Belgium, F Brest, F Marseilles, A Paris, A Spain.

Germany: Builds F Berlin, Build F Kiel, Build A Munich. Has F Berlin, A Denmark, F Holland, F Kiel, A Munich, A Vienna.

Italy: Builds A Rome, Build F Naples. Has F Naples, A Rome, A Trieste, F Tunis, A Venice.

Russia: Builds A Warsaw, Build A St Petersburg. Has A Galicia, A Rumania, F Sevastopol, A St Petersburg, F Sweden, A Warsaw.

Turkey: Builds F Constantinople. Has A Ankara, F Black Sea, A Bulgaria, F Constantinople.

PRESS

CARSON, CALIFORNIA: "Merlin?" gasped the eleven-year-old boy, quickly overcoming his initial fright. "You mean Merlin the magician?"

The old man smiled. "Well Brooklyn, I have been many things. Magician certainly, sometimes necromancer, even kingmaker on occasions."

"But...but what are you doing here?" asked the young boy, now far more curious than fearful.

Merlin looked him in the eye and raised an eyebrow. "Do you understand the word 'destiny' Brooklyn?"

"Er...well....yes, I guess so. I think I've learned it at school. But what do you mean?

Who's destiny? Yours, mine, mom's or dad's? And why are you here?"

The old magician laughed and tousled the boy's hair. "So many questions, as I would expect from someone of your age. Don't worry boy, all will be explained. But first you must come with me."

The young boy looked a bit frightened again. "Wh....where to?" he stammered.

Merlin smiled again. "Don't worry Brooklyn, as I said before you are in no danger. We are going down to the basement below this stadium, and then down even deeper."

(MALICE IN CENTERLAND - PART THREE: DOWN THE NORTH ATLANTIC DOT):

Malice decided that reading TAP was a tedious experience indeed.

"Tediouiser and tediouiser," he muttered, turning yet another page. "What good is a szine without pictures or poems or press or humor or intelligent prose?" He was thinking about returning home with the demon when he realized he was alone, the demon nowhere in sight. Don was gone, as were the woods, save for the tree under which he sat. He found this unusual and, slowly realizing something was amiss, rose to his feet.

As he stood, a bizarre and misshapen mechanical creation ran up, looking for all the world like a mutant

butler. The Mutant Butler which had become a proper noun since the preceding sentence) ran close by, LED eyes blinking brightly and entirely too redly. It whirred and rattled as it came to a stop on the far side of the tree.

"I'm late, so incredibly late. Oh, Hell! Oh, Hell! The deadline's on me! It's come! It's come! I'll be too late! Too, too late! Much, much too late!" There was nothing so incredibly odd about this, thought Malice (though he'd later believe himself to have been hitting a crack pipe to think such a thing), but when the android Mutant Butler pulled a folded-over calendar from its red waistcoat and peered at it, then hurried off at a whirring, rattling run, Malice's interest was piqued; he'd never seen a mechanical Mutant Butler wearing a red waistcoat with a pocket before, or one owning a calendar to take out of it, and so without much thought he ran after the noisy android, for the Mutant Butler was an android indeed.

The Mutant Butler did not run fast, but it did run far. Very far. Malice followed, increasingly and continually perplexed as the green ground beneath his running feet turned blue, and as the blue turned to water, and as the water turned to waves, and as the waves eventually turned frigidly cold. He indeed also found it curious that both he and the Mutant Butler could even run on water. It seemed absurd, of course, that he could run on watery waves - for he had never done so before - but beyond this logical impossibility his brain did not go, and neither should yours. They ran this way across the waves for a very long time, always with the Mutant Butler ahead and so, when the android abruptly disappeared right in front of him into a gaping hole in the gelid water, Alex was startled. He struggled to a stop, and found himself standing alone at the very edge of a large round hole, floating in the middle of the watery expanse of what (I will share with you Gentle Reader, though our Alex has not a clue) is the North Atlantic Ocean. Some aspect of the hole's composition looked strange to him and he noted that it appeared to float on top of the waves rather than extend into them; it seemed rather like a large, solid, black dot. Alex tossed his copy of TAP toward the hole and it vanished instantly into darkness, as if it had fallen not into the hole, but rather through it.

Alex found the hole's qualities - both floating on top of the water yet extending into it as well - confusing and,

well, paradoxical. Perplexed or not, though, he had lost all feeling below his knees in the freezing water. Hypothermia was soon to follow and he somehow dimly realized, his nearly frozen heels and soles screaming for respite, that he must take some action to avoid an unspeakable (and narrative-ending) fate. Dazed and confused, he decided to do as he always had done in the past when faced with paradoxical and contradictory information; he shut off his brain. Not surprisingly, this clarified his thinking and he hesitated not a moment longer before jumping into the North Atlantic Dot, not considering for an instant how he might ever return.

(Somewhere on a foggy mountain top) – The front door to the mountain cabin stood partly open to allow a cool breeze into the small building. In front of a 32" flat top television screen sat a woman in a rocking chair, hound dog lying to her left and a chipmunk perched on the right armrest of the rocker. A wadded tissue sailed through the air and landed in a nearby wastebasket.

"Oh, Bravo! Bravo!" The woman cheered and clapped her hands. "What an ending! What a marvelous use of the spiritual space-time paradox!" She wiped a tear from her cheek then placed both hands over her heart. "And the reunions...so romantic...so tender..."

The chipmunk leaned to his right, raised his hindquarters and broke wind in her direction.

"Philistine," the woman snarled in the animal's direction.

Although half-drunk, the chipmunk leapt to the floor and raced out the door, seconds ahead of the woman who brandished a straw broom. "Get outta here, you motley flea-ridden rodent!"

Throwing the broom to one side, she returned to her rocker and sighed. "Oh, Duke. No more Lost. Survivor's over...can't believe that witch Sandra won either...and they've cancelled Law & Order! Things are just going to hell in a handbasket, aren't they?"

The hound dog lazily licked his chops then closed his eyes.

"Man's best friend, my ass," the woman muttered. With another sigh, she reached for her laptop and powered it up. "Guess the only thing left to do is go shopping." After a few minutes of browsing, she slowly smiled. "Oh yeah, look at those two beauties. See 'em, Duke?" She held the laptop down to the hound dog's face.

Duke didn't even open his eyes.

"Lazy, no-good misbegotten four-legged..." The woman muttered as she sat back up. Coming to a decision, she placed her order. "Oh, yeah, Momma's gonna really be able to use these two."

Turkey to Austria: Steve, the ring still hasn't arrived. When can I expect it?

GM – Turkey: Maybe QVC has it on backorder?

Turkey to Italy or France: I am thinking that people in both countries ought to begin learning the other's language....just in case!

Turkey to Germany: My build was tough enough, even when I knew what I was going to do, I am glad I didn't have to do 3 builds, that would have placed me on medication.

(Berlin) Sorry pal, but vital German interests lie in keeping this "interesting" and accomplishing what I want.

GM – Berlin: While pal are you talking to this time?

(Ger to Board): Remember, I'm gone for the weekend. Send any hate mail and ticking packages to the GM for safekeeping until I return.

GM – Germany: And Godiva chocolate. Lots of that.

(Ger to Board, again): Having way too much fun here. Someone please take me out.

Turkey to France: With a build for you this year as well, I am REALLY interested in what you build down south.

GM – Turkey: Diplomacy World is a family publication. Let's not talk about going south here.

Turkey to Russia: So, are you going nc or sc, that will tell us a lot!

GM – Turkey: How about mc?

Turkey to England: I told you Chamberlain wasn't the man for the job. He always discounted Belgium!

GM – Turkey: I never heard him say anything about one way or another, but scoring 100 points in one game was an amazing feat.

(MALICE IN CENTERLAND - PART FOUR: FALLING DOWN): Straight down the hole Malice fell in the darkness. As his eyes adjusted, however, he realized he could see the sides of the hole as well as the pulsing red lights of the Mutant Butler's eyes below him.

They were falling through space. The concepts of 'sides' and 'below' soon lost meaning though as Malice and the Mutant Butler continued to fall and fall and fall. And fall. (Keep falling. Really.) Either the hole was very deep or he fell very slowly, but he fell for some great time and eventually lost sense of how far he'd dropped and who he might be. After a time, he noted various maps stuck to the sides of the hole and, some time later still, he saw

shelves with stacks of piled papers covered with strange names like *Cheesecake*, *The Boob Report*, *Magus*, *Coat of Arms*, *Hare of the Dog*, *Kathy's Korner*, *Fiat Bellum*, *Whitestonia*, *NorthSealthWestGeorge*, *Off-the-Shelf*, *Ter-Ran*, *Graustark*, *Flick of the Wrist*, *Bersaglieri*, *Perelandra*, *Mos Eisley Spacesport*, *Whiteflame*, *Ishkibibble*, *Europa Express* and many, many more besides. Eventually, Malice's simple-yet-mediocre mind began to wander and he found himself tunelessly mumbling a timeworn ditty of unknown origin:

"Just sit right there and you'll hear a tale
A tale of an endless drop
That started when I jumped into
The North Atlantic Dot.'
`This Butler is a curious guide
His coat and eyes quite red
I sure hope that he knows this hole
Or when he hit we're dead!
(Unless we hit a bed...)"

Abruptly, Malice stopped mumbling as new words flowed into his thoughts from a source within him that he neither recognized nor understood. Moments later, though, he found himself mumbling again another odd verse as tunelessly as before:

"This quest for the Diplonomicon
Is not for me alone
Six other souls will quest with me
To join the board and stones -
Join the board and stones!
`Sure, Centerland will get quite rough -
Through chaos we'll be tossed
If not for the courage of the Hero-Fool
The Dipcon will be lost
And ancient myth exhaust!
`The tale's about to start with this
Unartful story line -
With Hero-Fool, The Red King, too
Kings Yellow, Green, and White,
A King Dark Blue
The Black King and all Centerland -
Here's to ma-li-cious guile!"

Malice finished the tune and, pleased with himself, was about to launch into a second little number, this one from the Nickelodeon cartoon hit *Spongebob Squarepants*, when his fall was abruptly terminated by the sudden arrival of an unyielding floor-like substance. KERSHPLAT!!! went the unyielding floor-like substance as Malice landed on it. "OOOOF!!!" went Malice as he slammed heavily into the huge stack of musty old szines at the bottom of the hole. The fall was over.

Winter 1901 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Jim and I appear to be in disagreement about whether Russia is working with Germany or not. I think they are allied. In any case, this should be obvious pretty quickly.

I agree that the nature of this will be clear soon. The A Warsaw build and the Scandinavian moves will tell the tale. There are, of course, options for either course.

The most unusual builds are the German fleets. You don't often see three German fleets in 1902. When you do, it bodes poorly for England. While one could argue that the fleets could also go after Sweden, a second fleet build can only be viewed as anti-England.

You don't see this too often, when I have seen it recently it mostly has been from Eric Hunter who is a big advocate of this for Germany. I realize I wasn't being 100% clear in my comments on Fall, but this actually is what I thought Faz was going to do. He could have made the final disposition of this conditional on the Austrian retreat off the board (we cannot know for sure).

The usual problem with the double fleet build for Germany is that it leaves Munich in a relatively weak

position. I've done it a couple times, and on those occasions I've made sure one of the other armies is brought back to Kiel in Spring 1902 (or Ruhr, if the army is in Holland instead of Denmark).

Right, so if there was an Austrian A Bohemia, that could have been "interesting".

If Russia props up Austria, there is a good likelihood that he holds his SCs this year. If not, he's pretty much dead.

Right, and this RG relationship also will be crystal clear in the spring.

About the press...I hope you'll forgive me if I don't necessarily try to figure out what it's about. I have no special insight and the readers can make of it what they will.

I'm going to try to attract people into it. Rick is a child of the Internet era of the hobby, I (like all of these players) am a child of the postal era. Maybe I will offer some bits of interpretation to help draw the readers into the approaches taken. First some more specific country commentary.

Austria: Steve may have a commitment from Don to support him, admittedly retreating to Bohemia would have been a "suiciding out on Faz" move. Don seems to be the most likely savior. The Anschluss is hopeless, I think. Italy does have the potential to take advantage of Munich's vulnerability by joining an AR agreement, tossing Faz out of Vienna, moving to Tyrolia and working with Don against Munich. Munich COULD fall this fall.

England: OK, well, see that? I would not be shocked to see France and England going at Faz together. With those fleet builds, England pretty much has to propose that.

France: But, if that is happening, I probably would have expected to see A Marseilles. Is Buz intending to attack Italy? Unlikely. The Marseilles fleet does get to England eventually if he goes that way. This could be a communication lapse with Bill.

Germany: Faz, as always, is the master of the surprising move. Since I didn't EXPLICITLY speak of the two fleet builds with my Fall comments, how many of you read between the lines to see that he was considering it? Would YOU have considered it? Go boldly....

Italy: Melinda built appropriately. Now, as usual, Italy is the linchpin upon which the alliance shifts depend. I think she can go for Munich. Or she can go for Austria. Or she can go for Turkey. And she has to watch that French fleet.

Russia: OK, so what DID Don work out with Vince? I was surprised by the F Constantinople. I suppose the "other way" to interpret A Ankara is that he's going to try A Ank S F Bla-Arm, F Con-Bla (then support it in for the fall). And what is Russia going to do with Austria. Again, here, if Vince is attacking as suggested, maybe Don should work with Austria (since Vince only does that if Austria is NOT threatening Bulgaria). And as we've been saying, what of Faz? Oh, yes. and England may be coming his way as well. There WAS no F Stp. This is the way I like to play Russia as well. Patience in Russia always is rewarded and F Stp in Winter 1901 is always TOO aggressive.

Turkey: Vince alludes in the press to being VERY worried and concerned about what to build. I can

see him considering all four possibilities. Now it is to the Diplomacy, who does he weigh in with?

PRESS: Don Williams is of course berating me, the Abyssinian Prince publisher, who is writing this commentary instead of resurrecting his szine. Guilty as Charged. All of the "story" press writers here are using the usual "tricks of the trade", using the Diplomacy board, szines, and personalities as backdrops, pulling in popular culture figures such as Merlin, references to the underworld, lying, cheating, and black magic, and generally being obtuse. Why do we do this? The game REALLY is all about personality. Whom do you attack, whom do you ally with? This is very seldom just about the tactics, it's about the people. The prose (and poetry and filking) all are ways both to signal and to influence the game. From the very first game in Graustark, this sort of press was a staple of the postal hobby, but has been nearly non-existent in the Internet hobby. Why? I think mainly three reasons, but we may revisit this as we go. One, the ease of blast press (sending E-Mail to all players simultaneously) that was hard to do postally made the GM/szine the best way to get such messages out in a postal game, and once going out, their variety naturally spread. I find blast press in E-Mail games to primarily be about "sticking it to the GM" about inconsistent deadline selection and the like, but very little about the game. Though there are a few brave practitioners of this almost lost art around. In a postal game, it would likely be days or a week before you would hear from any other players about the game after you saw the results, so getting press to them in this way also was a way of jumpstarting that season's communications. Second, the role of personality and szineness seems to be much more inconsistent in the Internet hobby. The szine was a place for one's friends to come together and yes, play a game of Diplomacy, but also to laugh, tell stories and sit around the campfire. This was the social milieu. And third, related to the first, Diplomacy is one of the few fundamentally simultaneous movement games. Once you are negotiating through your moves, you sometimes wanted people to see additional information right at that same time. I'm not 100% sure though why this one doesn't affect E-Mail players more as well. Again, maybe because they can send messages out 5 minutes after seeing the results.,

WINTER 1901 by Richard Walkerdine

Once again General U'til took his place in front of the trainee officers on the battlecruiser 'Further Glory'. He paused for a moment, looking down at the expectant faces and wondering which of them would

have the privilege of taking part in glorious space battles as he had done so often in his past. The Fndili Empire's expansion had slowed in recent years and, although there would surely be battles to be fought,

he wondered if his trainees would ever experience the glories he had witnessed in his long career. But of course he kept these thoughts to himself.

"Hail Fndili," he cried with crossed tentacles and awaited the response.

"Hail Fndili," came the reply from the trainees.

He grasped the podium. "Gentlemen, notice the new military units that have been raised."

"England is clearly looking north, but is in serious trouble from an alliance between France and Germany. It was no doubt looking for a Russian campaign but may now have to defend rather than attack."

"France has raised a fleet in Marseilles and is clearly wary of Italy. But this could have been done with Italy's agreement - you will notice that Italy itself has built only one new fleet. The Mediterranean is not yet claimed by any nation."

"Germany has built two new fleets, and that can only mean trouble for England. Where else can they go? Well, they can of course head east towards Russia, but I would expect Germany to complete its English adventures before taking on another enemy."

"As for Italy, with only one new fleet, the Austrian campaign will obviously continue. The Italians may also be thinking of Turkey as the next target, but will need to keep a very close eye on France."

"Austria has raised another army on its homeland, desperate to defend its own territory. Only help from Russia or Turkey can aid it now and with Russia clearly concentrating on a southern campaign only the relatively weak Turkey seems a possible ally. But Turkey will also be aware of this and will be in desperate negotiations with Italy and Russia."

"And so to Russia. Two new armies, so clearly not a northern campaign as we realised earlier. But the army in Warsaw suggests some distrust of Germany, although the two new German fleets could help improve relations. Russia can now take Norway with

help from Germany and is still well positioned to continue south."

"And finally Turkey. Where to go? Italy is advancing, Austria is so terribly weak and Russia is such an obvious aggressor. Unless Italy has to defend against France I think Turkey faces some very major problems."

General U'til looked down at the faces of the trainees and smiled. "So in summary, gentlemen," he said, "I regard Austria, England and Turkey as in the greatest danger. France, Italy and Russia have yet to decide where they will next attack, and Germany has the whole of the northern seaboard, as well as its Austrian campaign, to decide on its next territorial ambitions."

"As usual, your own views by midday tomorrow. Hail Fndili!"

As he prepared to leave the briefing the ship's alarm sounded. "General to the bridge. General to the bridge. Emergency."

He slapped his communicator. "On my way," and hurried to the nearest transporter booth.

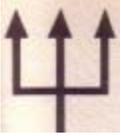
On the bridge he was met by the Science Officer. "Sir, the long range scanners have detected another ship, and it seems to be approaching."

"What?" cried the old General. "Out here near the edge of the galaxy? Impossible!" He quickly moved to the main viewscreen, where the Navigation Officer was rapidly refocusing his scanners in an attempt to view the unknown craft. "Take your time Lieutenant K'mak," he said quietly, feeling some concern that the entire crew, apart from him, was composed of inexperienced young junior officers. "Better to take time to get a clear view than to rush things and get a fuzzy one."

"Yes Sir," replied the young officer, clearly relieved to have an older and wiser senior officer giving advice. His tentacle tips stopped shaking and his movements slowed slightly as his nervousness subsided. "Sir, there! Centre screen!"

General U'til gasped as he looked at the screen. "Well done Lieutenant, good work. But what in the name of the Goddess is that thing?"

On the screen was a ship like none he had ever seen. A long narrow central body, two shorter outrider bodies connected to the main one by a cross body and all three tipped with wider triangular extrusions at the front.



The General turned to his Science Officer. "Lieutenant B'des, record everything about that ship. We will need a full analysis. I've never seen the like before and we are only some hundreds of light-years from the Empire stars. We need to know everything we can."

"Doing it now Sir," replied the young Lieutenant as his main tentacles flew across his keyboard.

The General watched him for a moment. 'He has potential,' he thought, 'in fact they all do. I just hope

they get the chance to use it. Unknown ships of unknown design are always a concern.' But for the second time that day he kept his thoughts to himself.

His reverie was broken by the Navigation Officer. "Sir, they are heading towards us at high speed. They are only minutes away."

General U'til looked again at the viewscreen, where the unknown ship was rapidly growing larger as it approached. A friendly vessel, he knew, would approach slowly and cautiously. An attacking one would not.

The Science Officer spoke again. "Sir, I can't penetrate their shields but I am detecting faint signs of an energy build up. I think they might be powering weapons!"

The old General took the only possible decision. "Timewarp! Timewarp forward as planned! Do it now!"

The Science Officer reacted instantly, his upper tentacles hitting the controls on his keyboard. The viewscreen went blank as the 'Further Glory' slipped forward through the timestreams.

Ask the GM

An Advice Column for Diplomacy World

Dear GM:

I find I am losing my interest in playing Diplomacy, can you suggest anything to get back my Diplomacy mojo?

Just not that into Dip anymore

Dear Just,

Stop whining to me and get a life. Are you one of those Diplomacy geeks still living in your Mom's basement wondering what it feels like to kiss a girl? Get out and live a little and if you don't want to play Diplomacy then don't; it's not the end of the world. Geez, there are people with real problems, get a grip you Diplomacy dork.

Your Pal,
The GM

Dear GM:

What is best way to stab your best friend?

Diplomacy Lifer

Dear Lifer:

Quickly, he'll hate you as person but respect you as a Diplomacy player.

Your Pal,
The GM

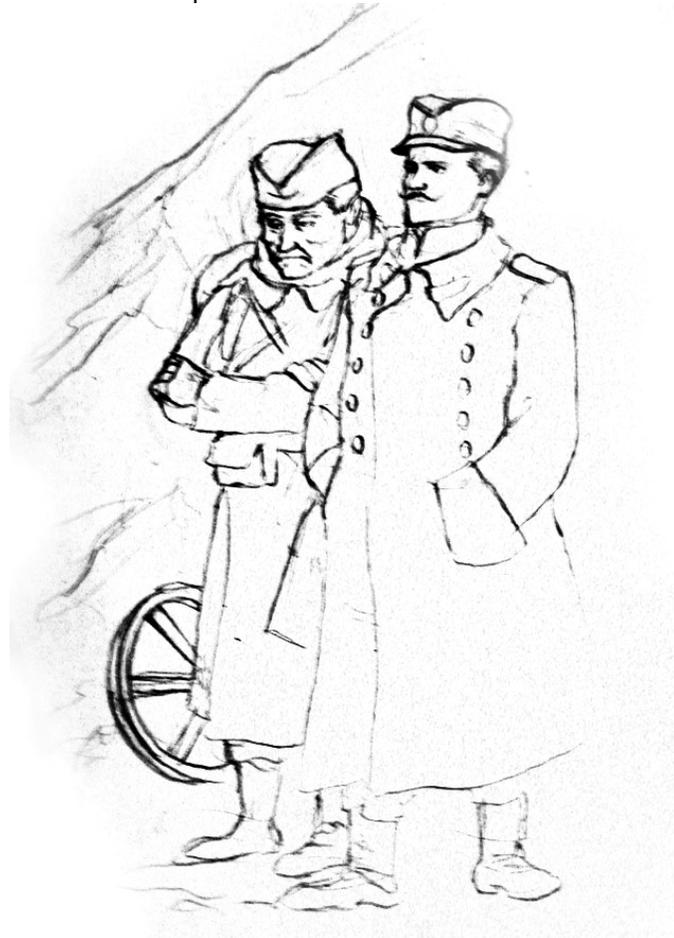
Got a question for Game Master? Send it to gamemaster "of" diplomacyworld.net and maybe it will appear in a future issue of Diplomacy World!

Hold Off

Joshua Danker-Dake

In Diplomacy, one has a limited number of opportunities to put to use a limited number of resources. That is to say, a tactically good player will get the most mileage out of each of his units each turn through the orders he writes.

It has been my experience that novice players tend to order wastefully. One of the ways in which they do this is by holding unnecessarily. In many cases, this is due to an incomplete understanding of the rules. A lot of new players, for whatever reason, believe that if a unit is to receive support to remain in a territory, it *must* hold. This is not the case. A unit can receive support to remain in a territory *as long as it does not attempt to move*. Let's look at an example.



Take this common 1902 scenario: Austria has A VIE, A BUD, and A SER, and Russia has A GAL and A RUM. Novice Austria will typically order something like SER S BUD, VIE-GAL, BUD H to protect his borders. Does it get the job done? Sure. But A BUD has wasted his turn.

A BUD could have ordered any number of supports, including VIE-GAL, SER-RUM, or Turkish BUL-RUM. At the very least, it could have given Serbia a mutually supported hold.

Granted, most of these supports would most likely be cut when Russia moves against BUD. So why bother? Because you never know what's going to happen, what stupid orders your opponent will give, what break could bounce your way. Because it *just might work*. Because this is Diplomacy!

Beyond the fact that it's difficult to excel at a game when you don't grasp the nuances of the rules, there are broader tactical implications. Even if you're well aware of the rule, step back and take a look at the abstract side of Diplomacy strategy. For a minute, forget about "How can I get into Rumania?" and ask, "How can I move my pieces most efficiently and with greatest effect?" Ask yourself that every turn. For maximum effectiveness, you need maximum synergy.

A unit offering support is trying, if unsuccessfully. A unit holding is loafing. Never hold. It's the principle of the thing. The only time you should ever order a unit to hold is when it's in the space you want it to be in and there are no other units adjacent, yours or otherwise, that could be impacted beneficially (or detrimentally, depending) by a support to hold or to move. It should only hold when there's no other thing it could conceivably do. *Think of something for it to do.*

If all this holding-versus-ordering-unsuccessful-support business seems like it's not a big deal, fine. Then just:

- Order support because you can.
- Order support because it's another tool (however small) in your Diplomacy toolbox.
- Order support because one day, it might save your life.

Now you know. And knowing is half the battle.

I really must thank Joshua for coming through with articles consistently since he took over the Strategy and Tactics Editor position. I've been able to count on him time and time again. So don't forget to send Letters to the Editor on his articles – love em or hate em – so he can build a gigantic ego and produce even more!

Diplomacy Comrades...or How to Win Friends and Influence People by Playing Diplomacy

By Jack McHugh

I've formed many friendships playing Diplomacy over the years. A few, like with our illustrious editors, Doug "Sack" Kent and Jim "Boob" Burgess go back many, many years. The best Diplomacy friendships are like a fine wine, they only get better with age.

However, not all of these friendships will endure and I have lost contact with many of the people I have met in Diplomacy...and a few have passed away like Robert Acheson, publisher of *The Canadian Diplomat* or Kathy Caruso, publisher of *Kathy's Corner*. I do miss both Bob and Kathy very much, and for similar reasons: they were both memorable characters who enjoyed the game of Diplomacy but, more importantly, were people whose company I would have sought out even if I had never played Diplomacy.

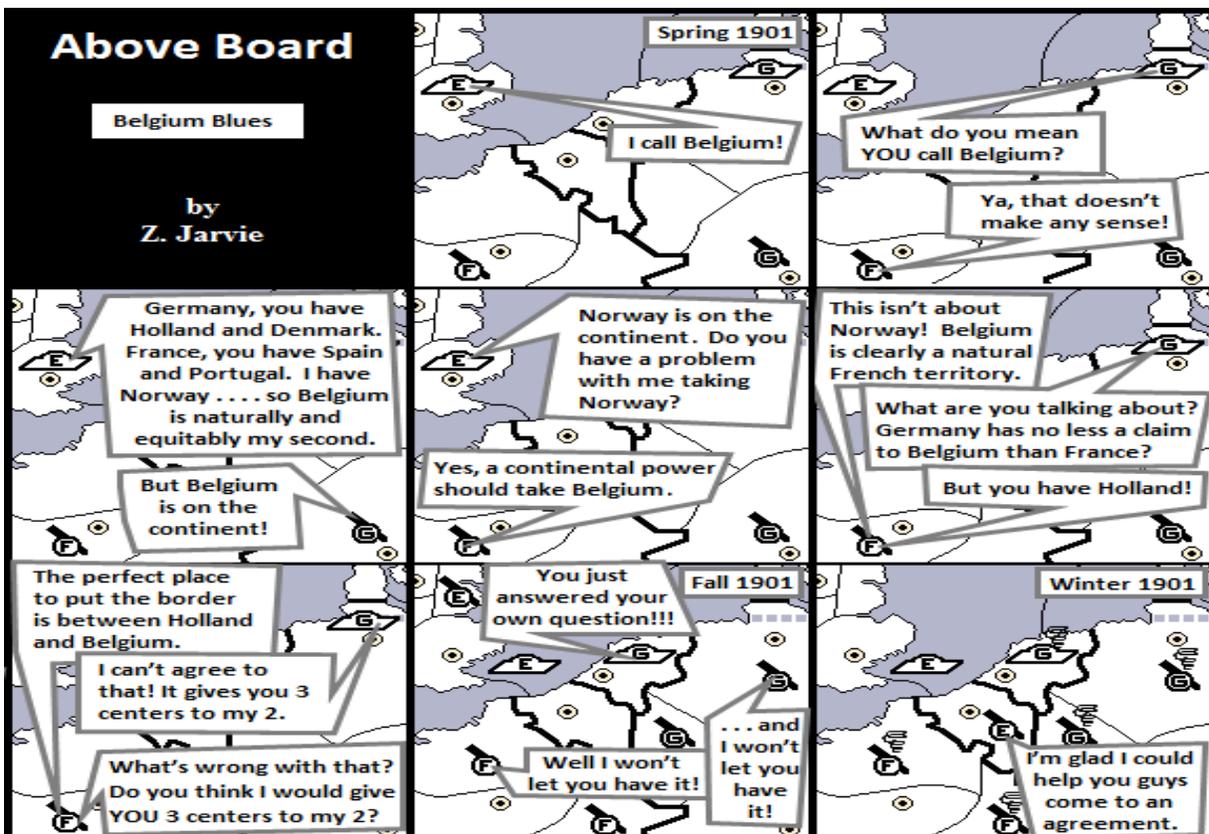
I have found over the years that I enjoy spending time with the people in the hobby who have personalities and opinions that I enjoy reading. Mark Lew is another example, I enjoyed his zine *benzene*. (Mark still publishes irregularly on the web [here](#) - *benzene* 41 believe- if you want to check out his writing.) Mostly what I enjoyed reading in his zine was Mark's unique take on

life and politics. Mark was rational and willing to examine any issue from all sides and I found it (and still find it) attractive and interesting.

While I enjoy much of the camaraderie that goes with having to interact with people during the course of the game, the most fun I have had is interacting with people **outside** of the game. The kibitzing sessions after being eliminated in most tournaments are as much fun as playing in the game itself.

Every Diplomacy player owes it to him or herself to try and get to at least one convention every few years, especially the more informal ones like [HuskyCon VII](#), being held next week in Long Island, New York. This is where you can really bond with fellow Diplomacy players no matter how well (or, in my case, poorly) you do. It's a chance to sit around and tell tall tales of your exploits (or again, as in my case, being exploited) and have a few laughs all around.

Jack McHugh is the illustrious Variants Editor at *Diplomacy World*...and my eternal toady.



The Catholic Shark

By Zachary Jarvie

Back in August of 2009 I was staring at the Diplomacy board trying to devise an original and unexpected opening strategy for Diplomacy. This is not an easy exercise for a game that has received close scrutiny for over 50 years. My effort was likely driven by vanity and the fruits of my time could not be expected to change the game in any way except by adding a new ill-conceived plan with which to dupe an inexperienced player into trying.

Vanity or not, inspiration did strike me and I posted a plan for a Franco-Italian coup on the Strategy forum of www.playdiplomacy.com. To my surprise the idea was well received for actually being original. And while the many (and severe) impracticalities of the plan were constructively pointed out, the idea was not criticized as being entirely devoid of merits.† Though I should say that, to my knowledge, no one has actually been fool hardy enough to actually give it a try.

For inspiration I was looking at other well known opening strategies such as the Lepanto and the Sea Lion in which a coalition of 2 or 3 friendly or allied powers set out to eliminate a specifically targeted country. Of particular interest to me was the Sea Lion in which France, Germany and Russia all use their respective naval power against England from the very start of the game. It seemed to me that for a naval assault against England something was missing. That something was a naval power!

That last statement was an exaggeration, because France is a naval power to be sure. Also, both Russia and Germany have strong naval potential but each often favors a focus on building armies. Turkey is a very strong naval power but England and Turkey's naval interaction is limited to flashy long distance convoys in end game situations. That leaves us with Italy. And why not Italy? There are after all only four sea provinces between Italian and English shores. That's fewer spaces by one than are between the south coast of St. Petersburg and London!

There are of course some very good reasons why Russia is a sea lion conspirator and Italy is not. The five turns it takes Italy to get to England really is a long journey. The fact that Russia starts farther away means nothing in that Russia's part in the Sea Lion is not to invade England but to keep him from gaining a foot hold in Scandinavia. During the two years it would take for an Italian fleet to cruise around Iberia a lot can happen! And even if Italy were to net an English SC he would be so over extended he couldn't possibly expect to hold onto it. Additionally France would never trust an Italian who sailed around Iberia claiming to want to snag

Liverpool. His reply to such lunacy would be "If Italy wants to help us take down England he should agree to a demilitarized zone running from Piedmont to North Africa."

But let's stick with the idea of implementing an anti-English alliance for a moment. Let's also make the very reasonable assumption that France might not want to share the three British centers with Germany and possibly Russia. As a naval power Italy might be very useful in helping France secure the British Islands. Naturally, Italy has to get something out of the deal. So I ask the question, would France be willing to trade Iberia for England?

I name this alliance is *The Catholic Shark* as it involves an attack by two Roman Catholic countries (Italy & France) against Protestant England. Additionally the alliances use of the Spanish peninsula, reminded me of the military and naval conflicts between Catholic Spain and Protestant England in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Although there are several "zoological" variations of the catholic shark they all follow the same basic and simple formula: Italy moves a fleet into the Mid Atlantic Ocean. This Italian Fleet (the actual shark in the plan) is then placed under French control until he acquires all three British home centers. In exchange for letting France use the fleet, Italy is allowed to take possession of Spain and Portugal.

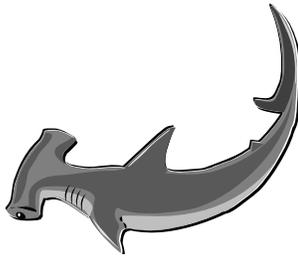
Italy should do its best to established nonaggressive relations with its eastern neighbours or at least support a friendly Austria. France is advised to seek friendly relations with Germany and might even consider an alliance with Germany against England and use the Italian fleet to later deny Germany any share of the British spoils. Russia might even be approached about performing his typical sea lion role in denying England a share of Scandinavia.

The Zoological variations of the Catholic Shark

Variation One: The Tiger shark

The Italian fleet in Naples begins the game in a typical fashion by docking in Tunis. This gives Italy an early build for its home defence, or for any other use he deems appropriate. The following year the Italian Fleet in Tunis should proceed to the Mid Atlantic Ocean. Once in the Mid Atlantic Ocean it is placed under direct French control. Italy is allowed to take the Iberian centres as France takes English centres. Once France has acquired all of Briton the Italian fleet is free to return to the Mediterranean or otherwise engage itself.

Frances opening moves should involve taking (temporarily) one or both Iberian centres to secure early builds. Additionally a negotiated spring bounce or DMZ in the English Channel is advised.



Variation Two: The Hammerhead

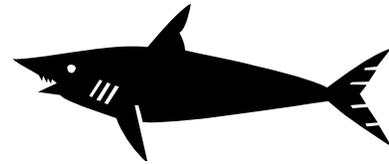
This variation begins exactly as the first, with a staging ground in Tunis, only instead of a second year move to the Mid Atlantic the Italian Fleet in Tunis moves to Spain for a second build. The following year it moves north to take part in the English invasion. This has the advantage of looking like a hostile action against France and thus masking the alliance. It also strengthens Italy's home defence by giving him a second build at the expense of French strength. Additionally it slows down and already slow the attack, allowing England (who may be making gains in Scandinavia) to add to his defences.



Variation Three: The Great White

This variation simply involves the complete Italian annexation of Iberia before taking part in any anti-English operations. Once done the Italian fleet is simply given to France on permanent loan until he has concurred England. Potentially this could provide Italy with sufficient builds to help counter an eastern threat such as a strong Russian-Turkish alliance. That is the only conceivable benefit I see to this very lopsided arraignment. Its risk to France is enormous particularly if the threat changes to an English-German alliance against France. It also results in a much slower attack on England all the while making an Italian stab

increasingly tempting. For France, this is a very dangerous shark.



Variation Four: The Mako

The Mako is my favourite of the Catholic sharks! This variation allows for the fastest attack on England. It involves Italy forgoing any use of his fleet to obtain a build for the first two years!

In 1901 Fleet Naples moves first to the Tyrrhenian Sea and then to the Western Mediterranean. The following spring the Italian fleet moves to the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. At this point France should have a fleet sitting in the Irish Sea, English Channel, or the North Atlantic Ocean as well as an army in place to convoy to England in the Fall. Depending on the location of the French units the Italian fleet can be sued as a link in a convoy chain or it can support a French fleet in the English Channel to Hold. After the convoy (or failing it) the Italian fleet is then placed under French control to aid, as necessary, in the conquest of England.

A short coming of this plan is the lack of a 1901 build for Italy who may for his weakness come under some pressure from one of his eastern neighbours. One possible addition to this variation would be to have Italy (with French consent) use his army in Venice to take Marseilles in Fall of 1901. This could address Italy's military weakness while executing the Mako. Additionally it could be made to appear as Italian hostility towards France. To ensure his own security France should take both Spain and Portugal and if possible Belgium in 1901. France may not be comfortable giving or even lending Marseilles to Italy as it puts him in a dangerous position, so if Italy is able to diplomatically prevent any attacks against his peninsula and is willing to be patient on builds, then an undivided France may be in a better position to counter any potential German aggression.

Variation Five: The "Bull Shark"

"Bull shark" is simply the term applied to the alliance if at any time before, after, during or before the conquest of England, Italy decides to stab France. After all France is offering to give Italy both Iberian centres in exchange for temporary use of an Italian Fleet. Additionally the target, England, is not able to easily retaliate against Italy for his lending France this aid. So from Frances point of view, an Italian who gets greedy is totally "Bull Shark"!

Variation Six: The Oceanic White tip [obviously I'm running out of dangerous shark names!]

This variation is the opposite of the "Bull Shark". Basically France uses Italy to help take out England then

after Italy has moved his fleet(s) east back into the Mediterranean and towards other conquests, France proceeds to coldly take back Iberia leaving Italy feeling used, and possibly wet.

Variation Seven: The Feeding Frenzy

A simultaneous stab by the two allies or a poorly planned stab by either that ultimately results in the destruction of both countries. This could be the most likely fate of any Catholic shark. Any Italy or France serious about winning should consider carefully this possibility before taking a swim together across the English Channel.

One of the Chief weaknesses of any variation of the Catholic Shark is its relative slow movement. The Mako offers the swiftest attack on England possibly netting France a beach head in Brittan as early as Fall 1902, however France must move aggressively to be in position to convoy and Italy's moves will appear to be unorthodox to say the least.

I have intentionally not touched on England's numerous defensive options both tactical as well as diplomatic in fighting this Vatican fish. Nor do I wish to contemplate

the risks to France or Italy that other nations pose to them while they set sail to the soundtrack of JAWS. Why mess with a grandiose idea by introducing harsh realities. France and Italy are often considered to be friends on the board. This is largely because early attacks against each other are considered slow and ineffective. Yet if Italy succeeds in concurring the Mediterranean to the east his next target is often Iberia and then possibly France. This idea, proposes that France, instead of resisting an Italian interest in Spain and Portugal, might try to get something for them.

†I would like to give my thanks to my friends at www.playdiplomacy.com who posted constructive comments on the forum where this idea was first proposed. You were very kind and could have easily and justifiably mocked the plan as insane. But you did not. Since few people use their real names on the site, you know who you are.

Zachary has also been submitting entertaining "Above Board" comics for the past two issues (with more to follow).

How Germany Wins

Joshua Danker-Dake

Last issue, Alfred Nicol wondered how Germany could overcome its central position - and its midgame challenges - and win. I would be remiss in my duties as Strategy and Tactics Editor if I didn't offer my two cents.

Let me start by saying this: I like Germany. I like playing Germany. I like all the options Germany has. I like the way Germany can directly influence the fortunes of every other power.

So let's look briefly at two games where Germany excelled, one where I played Germany and one where I didn't.

Game One

The first game, in which I played Germany, did not start auspiciously. While an alliance with France neutralized England immediately, I lost Munich to a rather short-sighted Austria in 1902, although I was able to recover it in 1903 as both Italy and Russia had waltzed into unprotected Austrian home centers.

France continued to be friendly, and by 1905, the score was Russia 11, France 8, Germany 8, Italy 6, Austria 1, with Turkey and England out. Russia had been and continued to be hostile to me, but he was more concerned with moving south (he had in fact carved out large portions of Austria and Turkey with help from Italy),

and I was able to wrest the whole of Scandinavia from him.

The alliance with France proceeded well in large part because we were growing equally and because I ceded the whole of Britain to him while I retained the North Sea and Belgium. He moved south, through the Mediterranean, while I moved toward Russia. We maintained our demilitarized zones and continued to grow at even rates, keeping within two supply centers of one another at all times.

With the score France 17, Germany 17 in 1910, I had a solo in the bag, but in the spirit of sportsmanship, France and I agreed upon the elusive but quite satisfying two-way draw (France was in no position to stop me, but as he was a player I played with somewhat regularly, it was worth it to me to reap the long-term benefits of honor and trustworthiness). It seemed a fitting coda to a game that featured one of the best alliances I've ever had.

Game Two

In the second game, which featured a different set of players, I was Italy. I opened with a completely successful Bohemian Crusher, and Germany endured attacks from hostile but uncooperating France and England. The game featured no real alliances (the non-aggression pact Germany and I had was the closest

thing), and in 1905, the score was Italy 10, Germany 8, France 7, Turkey 4, Russia 3, England 2, with Austria long gone.

That year, Germany and I were both attacking France; I was also attacking Turkey. Through an astonishing and unpredictable series of events, Germany picked up three builds in one year just as I was spread my most thin. Germany stabbed me in Austria, dividing my empire, and in spite of an emergency alliance I forged with France, Germany (with help from Turkey, who was taking revenge on me for attacking him) overran the board and won in 1908.

Analysis

This is a small sample size, and obviously we can't take an element that was present in both games and craft an immutable law of Diplomacy tactics from it. But there are some fundamental principles here.

The first is clear: you need a friend. Not necessarily an ally (although a good ally who is also a strong player is a rare jewel; he should be treasured after as well as up to the point where you stab him for the solo), but someone who will at least give you a trustworthy non-aggression pact. This is what Diplomacy is all about. Once in a while, you'll see someone transcend the chaos and solo without ever having had a real ally. But much more often, the winner is a power who had a solid alliance in the mid-game, then made the right moves and caught the right breaks. Finding a friend should be a strength for Germany: he's England's best ally and France's best ally; Russia is the only one who *always* wishes him harm, but is often too busy early on to do anything about it.

Another common factor in Germany's success was the strength of its navy, which I ballyhooed in much detail last issue. In game one, I as Germany had as many or more fleets than anyone else in play in the northern half of the board, which allowed me to secure Scandinavia early and commit more heavily to the ground game. Throughout game two, Germany kept as many or more fleets on his front lines as any of his opponents, which allowed him to hold the North Sea, lock down the northern half of the board, and shut down France's attack while he picked up centers in the south. In both cases, Germany first addressed the area he was most vulnerable (the north), and didn't move far afield until that area was secure.

In both games, Germany controlled Belgium from at least the midgame. Last issue I argued that Germany should take a more active role in Belgian affairs. Belgium is key to winning in the north, whether you're fighting France or England, even discounting its value as a

supply center: it's the gateway to France (conversely, it's the gateway to Germany), and it borders both the North Sea and the English Channel. It's a must-have territory for keeping your northern enemies in check.

This should go without saying, but it's important to remember that there is no tactical magic bullet for Diplomacy. Even the best schemes are directly dependent on what the other six players do, and you can't count on finding a strong ally. Diplomacy is about doing the best you can with what you've got: in Diplomacy, you can play your best game against inferior players and lose. That's one of the maddeningly delightful things about Diplomacy: you can't count on *anything*. So when life hands you lemons, sit quietly and eat your lemons.

But while many factors will remain out of your control, you can always work to make yourself an appealing ally, and you can play to protect yourself from stabs. Minimize your vulnerabilities. Address your weaknesses. While the methods and tactics may vary from player to player and power to power, these are fundamental elements of surviving the Diplomacy mid-game.

You can win with Germany. This is Diplomacy. You can win with any power. Play a smart game and hope for the best. If you don't give up, you'll get your day in the sun eventually.

Let me close with a few pertinent words from King Solomon, who would, I think, have made a fine Diplomacy player:

I have seen something else under the sun:
The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all.

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come:

As fish are caught in a cruel net,
or birds are taken in a snare,
so men are trapped by evil times
that fall unexpectedly upon them.

-Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

I'm pretty sure I played against King Solomon in a variant game in Pete Gaughan's Perelandra. He allied with Italy and stabbed me early on. Watch out for him.

GENCON INDIANAPOLIS
25TH ANNUAL DIPLOMACY TOURNAMENT
August 5th-8th



Four qualifying rounds of Diplomacy, running from Thursday afternoon through Saturday morning. The seven best country winners are selected to compete for the championship on Saturday night, which is played until a concession or solo is achieved.

GenCon is held at the Indianapolis Convention Center in downtown Indy. Register for the tournament through the GenCon registration system, which also gives you access to hotel room blocks in the downtown area.



"Gen Con Indy is the original, longest running, best attended, gaming convention in the world. For nearly 40 years, Gen Con Indy has been setting the trend and breaking records. Last year, more than 26,000 unique attendees experienced Gen Con Indy. The biggest complaint we hear is that there is simply too much to do, see, and experience. Get lost in a phantasm of art exhibits. Stare at jaw-dropping costumes, or better yet, wear one of your own. Meet the movers and the shakers in the gaming industry. Check out the newest games and get a sneak peek at the latest editions."

Contact Thomas Haver for details at tjhaver@gmail.com

<http://gencon.com/2010/indy/default.aspx>

The 2011 North American Diplomacy Federation Masters Tournament

Chris Martin here, with some exciting news for the North American diplomacy hobby!



Over Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend in 2011, some of the best diplomats in North America will meet in Austin, Texas to compete in an invitation-only diplomacy event. To date, 67 diplomats have qualified for the 2011 Masters by finishing in the top seven results at a NADF Grand-Prix event in 2009 or 2010.

Currently, I am working with Brian Sheldon, Conrad Woodring, and Jeremiah Peterson to make this a premier Diplomacy event. Part of organizing a great event is assembling fabulous talent to get the behind-the-scenes details right, and with this crew, I feel certain that the 2011 Master's Tournament will be an event to remember.

You may ask why I have am hosting an event that is not open to the general public -- a fair question. Over the years that I have been in the hobby, I have often heard (and occasionally voiced) a desire for an event that guaranteed that every participant understood, at the very minimum, the mechanics of the game, and ideally really knew what they were doing on the board. This discussion usually peaks around the times of Dip-con/World Dip-con, and during a recent online discussion of the relative merits of the title, I announced my intention to host an event where everyone involved would know, going in, that the competition would be among those who had proven themselves able to play the game. The North American Diplomacy Federation Master's Tournament is the result.

There is still time left to qualify! Qualifying events include:

HuskyCon, July 9-11

Long Island, N.Y.

Hosts: The Woodring Family

PacificCon (Conquest), Sept. 3-6

Santa Clara, Calif.

Host: Edi Birsan

Weasel Moot, Sept. 24-26

Chicago, Ill.

Host: Jeremiah Peterson

Buckeye Game Fest, Oct. 1-3

Columbus, Ohio

Host: Thomas Haver

Tempest in a Teapot, Oct. 15-17

Silver Spring, Maryland

Host: Joe Wheeler

Carnage Accords, Nov. 5-7

Fairlee, Vt.

Host: Bob Holt

If you have any questions, please drop me a line at dance.scholar@gmail.com.

In Praise of the Press Saga

by Richard Walkerdine

For as long as there has been a postal (or, these days, electronic) Diplomacy hobby there have been press releases.

In the very earliest days of the hobby players found it useful to add a few words to be printed along with the moves in order to add something to their diplomatic negotiations. This would of course normally be strictly game-related, for example:

LONDON: His Majesty King Edward VII welcomes the visit of the Russian Tsar and is pleased to confirm that the alliance against Germany will continue.

Possibly helpful in English/Russian negotiations but not really very interesting to the general readership. They could of course see from the moves in the game that Germany was getting walloped by the two other powers.

But as the hobby grew, all over the World, it attracted players from many different backgrounds. In particular it attracted players from science fiction fandom, people who were used to arguing with each other and writing all sorts of often vitriolic comments about almost anything. The press release started to change:

PARIS: Get your filthy English hands off France's Brest!

The pun has a very noble position in the history of press releases and the injection of some humour has to add to the enjoyment of the readers of the zine. But the above example is still completely game-related, still part of the diplomatic to and fro and still totally understandable to non-playing readers following the game.

But it didn't stay that way for long. Diplomacy players, indeed games players in general, possess more imagination than most other people – why else would they indulge in an apparently meaningless activity like playing games? Because it's fun, it's enjoyment. But why is this? Because in playing a game you are entering a little world of your own and, with the other players, acting out your fantasies within the confines of the game rules. Here you can blast away opponents, destroy entire cities, stab your former allies and so on and it's all done on an innocent game board and in your own mind. You are indulging your imagination and your creative urges to gain the maximum enjoyment.

And by now there were plenty of very imaginative and creative people in the hobby. Indeed there were even professional writers (I believe sci fi writer Jerry Pournelle played a few games at one time). The effect on the press release was staggering:

AN ESCAPE POD NEAR STARGATE MAGELLAN: I rushed to the control panel, my hands shaking as I cancelled the alarms and searched the displays for the cause of the trouble. In seconds I had the full story. The pod had failed to escape from the massive gravitational field of the black hole – the explosion at the stargate must have damaged the motors. I was being inexorably drawn towards the singularity!

Game related? No. Part of the diplomatic negotiations? No. Understandable to non-player readers following the game? Well, only if they had read previous episodes of this press saga. Because the press saga had been born and the hobby would never be the same again.

Press was suddenly liberated. Sure there would still be game-related press, which would always be an important part of the game. But as well as that there were now long running sagas, sometimes moving from one game to another, even from one zine to another. The creative juices were in full flood and in my opinion Diplomacy zines had taken on a whole new dimension – not only to be read for the games but now also for the stories and sagas.

Indeed it can be argued that on one occasion the press even moved from one hobby to another. I refer of course to crottled greeps.

Crottled greeps first appeared in science fiction fandom. The original inventor is unknown, long lost in the mists of time. But they were supposed to be a mythical food served to fans and were utterly foul and disgusting. John Piggott, a big SF fan and a major force in the early days of the UK Diplomacy hobby, introduced them to our hobby in an early game in MAD POLICY (1973D – yes, it was a long time ago). His intention was to use their horrible taste in future press releases.

But it didn't work that way. Conrad von Metzke was also playing in that game and he more or less took them over, but with a difference. Crottled greeps were suddenly transformed into an exquisite delicacy, very expensive and much sought after by all. They had switched hobbies and, in the process, become totally transformed. They continued to appear in various zines for many, many years.

In my own case possibly the best example of a very long running press saga is Ulrika Meinhof. But before I go on I need to add, at least for the readers less old than me (which is most of you), a bit of real history.

In the early 1970's there was a terrorist group in Germany known as the Red Army Faction. They were very unpleasant people who were responsible for many

bombings and shootings and a lot of deaths before the security forces finally brought them to justice. In the popular press they were referred to as the Baader-Meinhof Gang as they were led by Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof. Before their trials were concluded Ulrike Meinhof was found hanged in her cell in 1976 by a rope made out of jail towels. After being sentenced to life imprisonment Andreas Baader was found shot in his cell in 1977. There are very many conspiracy theories as to whether these were suicides or assassinations by the authorities, but of course we will never know. But that isn't relevant to this article, just a bit of background.

In MAD POLICY Ulrika (with a slight change of name, the 'e' became an 'a') was introduced into one of the press sagas by one of the players and very soon became an established character. I latched onto her very quickly and started to develop the character – hey, there is nothing in the rules that says the GM (or other non players) can't contribute some press. Within a few months Ulrika had developed into my companion, my hitwoman and eventually my lover. We had all sorts of adventures together over a great many years in many different games and in many different zines. In fact at one time she even had to run MAD POLICY for me (much to her annoyance) when I was trapped in a time

warp (I think it was by that wretch Piggott again) and couldn't do it myself. But fortunately that only lasted for an issue or two. But the character remains, I use it still whenever I can, and the saga continues – even though the original game in which she appeared finished many decades ago.

But that is the essence of a press saga. It doesn't actually have to do with the game at all. In some ways the game is just an excuse. A game that is hugely enjoyable in its own right of course, but so much more enjoyable if you can add some imagination and creativity to add another dimension and give everyone even more pleasure.

For me a well written press saga is at least the equal of the game to which it is attached, and sometimes even more so.

And I will always do everything I can to promote creative writing. Whether I am any good at it I don't know, that is for others to decide. But promote it I will, every chance I get.

DOUG, BE AFRAID, BE VERY AFRAID!!

Selected Upcoming Conventions

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://diplom.org/Face/cons/index.php>

ManorCon XXVIII - Friday July 16th – Monday July 19th - Leicester University, United Kingdom - <http://www.manorcon.org.uk>

WACcon hosts The European Diplomacy Championships - Thursday August 26th - Sunday August 29th - Paris, France - <http://diplom.org/~seattle>

Pacificon – Saturday September 4th – Sunday September 5th - Santa Clara Marriott Hotel, Santa Clara, California - <http://www.pacificongameexpo.com>

Weasel Moot IV – Friday September 24th – Sunday September 26th, Burr Ridge, Illinois (Chicago suburb), <http://windycityweasels.org>

Buckeye Game Fest XI - Thursday September 30th – Sunday October 3rd – Columbus, Ohio - <http://buckeyegamefest.org/buckeyegamefest.htm>

Italian EGP Step, Milan 2010 - Saturday October 30th - 2010 - Sunday October 31st - Milano, Italy - http://diplomacy.cleosolutions.com/component/option,com_attend_events/Itemid,29/

Carnage Accords IX - Friday November 5th - Sunday November 7th - Fairlee, Vermont - <http://www.nedip.org/tournaments/carnage-accords/>

HessenCon 2010 / German National Diplomacy Championship - Friday November 19th - Sunday November 21st - Waldkappel, Germany - <http://www.diplomacy-bund.de>

MidCon 2010 - Friday November 19th - Sunday November 21st - Thistle Hotel, Birmingham City, United Kingdom, <http://www.fbgames.co.uk/Midcon/default.htm>

Presentation of the Diplomacy World Cup (2010 – 2nd Edition)

by Jeremie Lefrancois

1. The event

1.1 Idea

In most sports, the highest form of competitive play is the International, (e.g. the Test Match or the World Cup), in which national teams compete to see which nation is the best in the world at their chosen sport. These events are often epic encounters which stir the best, and sometimes the worst emotions.

In Diplomacy there are tournaments, both face to face, and via the Internet in which players from many nations compete. There have been tournaments in which players are geographically chosen. However, there is no truly national team competition akin to a World Cup. There is no tournament in which, for example, France, England, America, Brazil, Sweden, Australia and Italy compete against each other for the honor of being called the best nation in the world.

The World Cup of soccer, rugby or cricket is played in the real world, but at great expense. The chief advantage of the Internet is that events can be staged at little or no expense, and can potentially involve large numbers of competitors from across the globe. Since Diplomacy is a game, some would argue a sport, which can easily be played over the Internet, it seems strange that no World Cup of Diplomacy has ever been attempted before.

1.2 A bit of history

At the end of 2005 a discussion started on DipWorld as to whether such a tournament was a good idea. Opinion was somewhat divided and the idea failed to catch on. This discussion was staged on a few other forums as well, with the general opinion seeming to be that such an idea was worthy but difficult, even foolhardy to achieve. Consequently the discussion was taken to a separate forum This forum met to discuss and amend the World Cup Charter For the better half of 2006 there was a heated debate on the many issues raised by this Charter such as how on earth to select a Team America, or how nationality might be determined, what scoring system would be best, and what interface would best suit a competition of this nature.

A call for bids was made in the end of 2007 and the bid from site www.stabbeurfou.org was selected, to host the first event (site was translated from French to English for the event) after several more discussions on how to set the event.

Edition one took place for September 2007 to May 2009. Round one had teams (finally ranked in this order) from France (3), Argentina, Russia, Australia (2), Italy, China, Germany (2), Romania, USA (6), Sweden, Canada, Turkey, Brazil, Austria, UK, Ireland, South Africa. Round two had the seven finalist ranked in this order : France, Italy, Argentina, Germany, Australia, China and Russia. Team France was led by Captain Gwenn Maggi.

2. How to join

If you would like to join in the fun and sign up for the Diplomacy World Cup Tournament, do the following:

1) Go on the site :

<http://www.stabbeurfou.org/>

2) Create an account (if not done already) :
MENU Personal space / Create my account

3) Identify yourself (e.g. log in) :
Link "Identification" on upper left hand side corner

4) Register yourself to the event "Diplomacy World Cup"
MENU "Personal space" / "Handle my registration" / "My affiliation to play in tournament"
then CLICK ON BUTTON "Put me in tournament" in Diplomacy World Cup line => please enter some text (like the country you intend to play for – your nationality, not the Diplomatic power)

5) To *read* the latest news from the DNWC preparation :

<http://www.stabbeurfou.org/Tournoi.php?nom=Diplomacy World Cup> (pink window, upper right hand side)

6) To see the list of people registered on the site for the DNWC event :

<http://www.stabbeurfou.org/AffiliesTournoi.php?nom=Diplomacy World Cup>

7) You are also encouraged to join the Yahoo group which was created specifically for the Diplomacy World Cup, which can be done at:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/DiplomacyWorldCup/>

3. More about the tournament

3.1 Main regulations (Changes from previous competition are **highlighted in red.**)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
OFFICIAL MAP	Hasbro international
CONDITIONS ON PARTICIPANTS	To be able to negotiate in English
PREREQUISITE NUMBER OF TEAMS OR INDIVIDUALS	14 teams
ROUNDS	2
LAST DIPLOMATIC YEAR PLAYED	No game will go beyond the diplomatic year 1911 .
SCORING SYSTEM	The scoring obeys the system "Detour" see below
ADVANCEMENT	The 7 best nations (not exactly teams) from round one will advance to round two
MEDIAN AND END SYNCHRONIZATION	End only.
RESTRICTIONS ON CROSS GAMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restriction on negotiations between players of different games • No restriction on negotiations between team captains. • No restriction on public subjective statements
RIGHT TO BE IN MORE THAN ONE GAME	No right
IDENTITIES OF PLAYERS IN GAMES	Known
TIE BREAKERS FOR TEAM TITLE	<p>In the event of equality between teams, the following criteria is used:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater number of victories (excluding shared victories), 2. Greater number of survivals, 3. Smallest sum of centers on all game (the team wins which has the less in order to award points of position and survival) 4. If there are still several ties, the victory is shared between the teams.
ROUND START	Third Sunday of September 2010

3.2 Litigations

Any disputes are handled by a council, sitting as a mailing list with members from all continents. Chairman of the council is Honorable Thorin Munro (Australia).

3.3 Team creation

Each player will have to communicate his/her real identity (names and first names) in addition to one possible pseudonym. Volunteers for participation to the Diplomacy World Cup tournament will first register individually. The organizer will group the participants into lists according to nationality. When the deadline for registration approaches, lists may be disjoined by organizer or may be merged by organizer. When the deadline is reached, players within a same list will elect their captain. Lastly, the captain will organize the diplomacy countries allocation and register the whole team.

3.4 The site hosting the event

The "stabbeurfou" expression means "Mad Stabber", the "stabbeur" word being a French (neologism) transcription of the English word. This site is bilingual English/French. Adjudicator is 100% bug free, documentation on the adjudication choices is described on site (referring to the DATC). All tournaments may be supervised by a single or couple of individuals (Director and Assistant Director). Anonymous messages are possible on the site. Agreements for earlier adjudications, ending games and players' awards are processed by interface (by votes). The negotiations are done using the interface on the site, allowing the sender to know if sent messages have been read by recipient. Negotiations before retreats and adjustments are allowed. All events on site are subject to email notification to player.

3.5 Rounds :

- First round will have all games and teams in same set of games (no sub rounds as in edition one). Players will be scattered as much as possible to avoid cross gaming. Big nations may come in with several teams, separated by region or whatever.
- Second round will gather the seven best nations. If a nation had several teams on round one, only the best team will pass (and may take limited amount of players from other teams of the nation). As in previous edition, a lot of cross gaming is to expect !
- All rounds are played from September to May following year

3.6 Running of games

- Deadline for moves : less than a week. Deadline for retreats/adjustments : about two days.
- Grace period is 24 hours (orders missing are turned into "all hold" orders 24 hours after adjudication.
- Players late too often are expelled from the game (red flag at start, then yellow, then orange, then red, then black !)

3.7 Team aspects

- Captains may enter orders for players (meant to be exceptional, especially when player is late).
- Penalty for being late is shared within the team (the penalty has higher chances of issuing "all hold" orders)
- Teams are encouraged to share tactical and strategic analysis of the games.



4. Links for more detailed information :

4.1 The Diplomacy World Cup charter :

<http://www.embassysa.co.za/worldcup/worldcup.php>

4.2 Complete rules of the event :

http://www.stabbeurfou.org/docs/regles/en/DiplomacyNationalWorldCup2_en.html

4.3 Complete rules of games on stabbeurfou site :

Available on www.stabbeurfou.org site, MENU "Rules & regulations" / "The rules" and "Rules & regulations" / "The regulations"

4.4 Detailed report of Edition one

Round one :

http://www.stabbeurfou.org/docs/articles/en/dnwc_round_1_report.html

Round two (final)

http://www.stabbeurfou.org/docs/articles/en/dnwc_final_report.html

Detour system presentation

- For an outright victory (i.e. 18 centers or more):
 - 110 points for the winner,
 - 0 point for the others,
- For a different ending:
 - 2 points each surviving player,
 - 1 point for each owned centre,
 - 4 points for the first player; 3 for the second; 2 for the third; 1 for the fourth (in case of tie points are allocated as the lowest position (2nd and 3rd tied both get 2 points but a twice tied fourth place or a three time tied third place yield no point))
 - the leader gets as a bonus the difference of his number of centers with the second (only if alone),
 - all points are standardized so that the total of all scores is 100 (all divided by total and multiplied by 100)
 - after this, eliminated players get 0.25 points per year survived but no more than 2 points (elimination at the end of diplomatic year 1902 yields 0.25 points and so on).

Why the Death of my Laptop is the Death of a Diplomacy Epoch

By Alex Maslow

In 2010, a tragedy happened in the world of Diplomacy. Mr. Sharp rolled over in his grave and Mr. Calhamer rolled over in his bed. Michael Sims personally sent me a letter of sympathy. My unborn children sent me a letter of reprieve. My own personal sentiments cannot be accurately described in words, but I felt as though part of my childhood was lost. You see, on June 1st, my laptop died. And with it, I believe, the last surviving copy of Diplo.

I downloaded Diplo sometime in the 90s when I was in middle school. I used it as a judge for FtF games among friends (so we wouldn't argue about adjudications). I used it to look at tactical possibilities and stalemate lines, opening moves and end-game scenarios. As I became a GM for various online communities, I used it more and more, and became attached to its hokey images and playful colors. Even its occasional errors were dear to me – it kept me on my toes, making me an active GM instead of just an accountant of pretend wars.

"But why, Maslow, is this the end of Diplo? Can't you just redownload it?" Not really. It is true that Diplo was a freeware download, but it required a password to activate. In its heyday (I assume), as it was improved and refined, a password was distributed to activate the new version. By the time I got to it, however, it was perfected (or, more probably, abandoned), and had a permanent password – something along the lines of DiploForever. Whenever the program was first used on

any computer, this password would be required. After that, no more password was needed. One would have to redownload if one bought a new computer, but the password would remain the same. "Right..... so..... Redownload it."

Unfortunately, sometime between 2007 and now the Geocities site that hosted the Diplo download went down. After some searching, I couldn't find it anywhere else. I almost despaired, but then had an inspiration. I had saved most of my files when my computer started to fritz onto a thumb drive. I plugged that drive into my new computer – Diplo was there! Hands trembling, I double clicked it. Password prompt. Diploforever. Didn't work. ForeverDiplo. Didn't work. I even tried replacing for with "4." Nothing. This leads me to believe there was something in the code of the website crucial to activating the software. And so, you see, Diplo is dead.

Diplo was a fine judge, a fair judge, even if it didn't get everything right. Even if it left vague coasts to a coin flip, there were many who loved it dearly. And today we are all gathered here to say good bye.

[[Editor's note – As I was able to learn and forward on to Alex, the password he was looking for was "Diplo_Forever"; so likely the software lives on after all. Maybe that makes the article slightly irrelevant, but I wanted everybody else to enjoy Alex's panic and despair as much as I had.]]

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Robert Lesco – In Northern Flame V2 #53, there is an article by Allan Calhamer, which I think might be the one referred to concerning the build of F MOS. His initial response to the concept, as related to me by Cal White (also quoted in the 'zine) was, "The odd idea of raising F MOS does appear to fall within a literal wording of the rules, so far as I can see. A surprising result."

Where Cal and I parted company, and the topic is raised every few years in the 'zine, is just how far said F MOS may progress.

[[The F Mos article, as I remember, actually appeared first in an old issue of Diplomacy World. But I haven't gone back to check which one.]]

When I spread the word that John Boardman had officially folded Graustark – the first Diplomacy zine ever – and moved to an assisted living facility in Maryland, a number of people replied with some

comments on John and Graustark. Some of those appear below.



Dick Martin - 'Tis a sad day indeed to see the end of Graustark. I played my first (and possibly best) full game in Graustark (1978ID), and a couple other games there around that era. John was an excellent GM and an entertaining writer. When i would toy with the notion of making a comeback, that was always the zeen of choice. John was the Walter Johnson of dip zeens; there will never be another like him.



Richard Walkerdine – I know Conrad has always claimed to have run the first postal Dip game, but of course nobody ever believed him. John made it all happen and will be remembered forever. Postal Dip, Boardman Numbers, Graustark: a legacy that will never be approached by anyone else. If you get the opportunity please send him my warmest regards and a huge thank you for all that he has done over so very many years.

Towards a Theory of Tournament Diplomacy

By Chris Martin

In this issue of Diplomacy World, you will find an announcement of the 2011 NADF Master's Tournament. To my knowledge this is a unique event in North American Diplomacy, in that players must qualify to participate. The standards for qualification are clear and simple: to qualify, a player must have placed in the top seven at a NADF Grand Prix event in 2009 or 2010. To date, 66 individuals have met this standard.

The basics of the event are this: January 14,15,16,17 is Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend, and over those days (specifics yet to be determined) we will meet in Austin, Texas for three rounds of Diplomacy. Scoring will be based on supply center count, with a bonus for topping the board; players will count their best two scores.

I have volunteered to organize this event for several reasons. Foremost among them is my conviction that a national tournament with qualifying standards would be good for the hobby. Such an event would not be able to draw on a local hobby for players, and thus would stand apart from regional tournaments such as Dixiecon, WAC, and Tempest in a Teapot. It would also provide a very different experience from World Dip Con and Dip Con, which piggyback on other tournaments. By requiring qualification at regional tournaments, a Master's tournament could build excitement and drive attendance at Grand Prix events. Additionally, as long as the standards for qualification are clear and consistent and the bar for entry set neither too high nor too low, I believe that a Master's tournament will confer a measure of prestige to the winner that other premier events lack.

Without any base standard of skill as a requirement for play, a tournament is vulnerable to the behavior of participants who have not yet learned the rules of the game. I do not mean to suggest that a tournament is not a reasonable place to introduce Diplomacy to those who have not played the game. Indeed many tournaments, due to their proximity to larger gaming events, provide an excellent opportunity for exposing Diplomacy to new players. This is well and good, and no one supports the efforts of the hobby's ambassadors more than I. However, I contend that a tournament that aspires to "crown a champion" should have a higher standard of entry.

I can offer an example of the kind of effect the brand-new player can have on the game from a recent

tournament in which I participated. The new player, who was playing because a friend of his was at the event, drew France. By the end of 1901, he had decided that he didn't want to play Diplomacy – ever again. He asked for help moving out of his centers, which (through the course of play) ended up apportioned between England, Germany, and Italy by the end of 1903.

Of course, this kind of outcome does happen, even with skilled and experienced players – though it is perhaps uncommon to see France out by 1903, it does happen. The difference here was that the French player lacked the ability to play the position responsibly. Not knowing what to do, what his goals should be, or even how to correctly order his units, the board was unbalanced in the favor of those powers that were lucky enough to be assigned positions near him. The result that followed was, in my opinion, a *less legitimate* result than one that came to the same conclusion against capable opposition.

By restricting entry to those players who have proven that they are capable of achieving a top-board result in high-level tournament play, there should be no opportunity for players to feel that the result at the end of the weekend was due to anything other than the skill of the players involved, and the decisions that they made on the board. Of course there will still be a wide range of skills on display at the event. On the one hand Cyrille Sevin, who has played in 86 tournaments, winning 16(!), including two World Diplomacy Championships, qualified for the 2011 Master's with a 7th place finish at the 2009 HuskyCon. On the other hand Peter Yeargin, a Chicago player who has played in six tournaments, beginning in 2009, qualified with a 3rd place finish at WeaselMoot 3 (2009). Would the smart money be on Cyrille in a head-to-head competition? Possibly. But as someone who has some experience with Diplomacy once said, being the little guy isn't necessarily the worst thing.

In any case, I expect a weekend full of excellent Diplomacy, played by people who know and love the game. I hope that this will become a standard event, part of a two-year rotation that helps to build and expand the North American hobby. I would love to hear what you think about it, and you're welcome to come and tell me in person – there are still plenty of opportunities to qualify.

You can find the advertisement for the NADF Masters Tournament on page 50 of this issue.

How to Lose in a Diplomacy Tournament

By Matt Shields

It seems like whenever anyone writes an article on Diplomacy strategy, they are always trying to come up with great new ways to win. There's a lot to be said for winning – I may even try it myself some time – but for the moment I'd like to focus on another area where we can probably all improve our play: How to lose.

We've all had those games (though some of us more than others) when through tactical incompetence, strategic foolishness, or karmic justice, we find ourselves with about 3 centers left after 1907 trying to decide if we're better off continuing to sit here in the frying pan, or trying out our luck with the fire. It seems like a lose-lose proposition, and it's tough to not feel like it really doesn't matter what you do.

I'd be lying if I didn't acknowledge that occasionally it really doesn't matter what you do – the other players are set in their ways, or at least aren't going to be persuaded today, and it's only a matter of time. More often, however, you really do have a lot you can do. Often more options than you'd think. Where most of us fail, is that we react emotionally to the fact that we aren't doing well, and don't really stop to think about our situation. What can you feasibly accomplish (on and off the board) and what are you interested enough in getting that you're willing to try?

There are many options, but they tend to break down into two basic (and very different) categories – maximizing your score in the game you're in, and maximizing your standing in the event.

Maximizing your own score

The most obvious thing you may want to do when you find yourself in this situation, is to simply get the most points you can from your position and call it a day. As this is by far the less interesting topic, and one that's difficult to generalize anyway, so I'll just make a couple of quick comments about it before moving on.

Don't be a turtle

The only things I know about turtles are that they live a long time and don't otherwise do much. In the context of Diplomacy, I can scarcely think of anything worse. If you're going to die, it's far better to die actually trying to accomplish something. You need to consider the scoring system of course, but most of the time your score won't change depending on whether you're eliminated in 1906 or 1909. So, turtle-ing up doesn't actually help you if all it does is slow your opponent down. It just means that – like our friend the turtle – you get to spend a long life sitting there not doing anything – and then you die anyway. Worse still, you've missed last call. So if you

want to get any points out of your game, you have to find a way to still have pieces on the board when the game ends.

Your goal is to end the game as fast as possible, with you still alive. You want the other players thinking to themselves "If A and B attack me, I'm in real trouble." You want the other players to see the risks in dragging the game out, but not see the benefits. You should be doing whatever you can to encourage paranoia, and should probably be subtly discouraging anyone from attacking anyone else. You want the other players to feel that the game is stuck. Even in games where you're playing a fixed year limit, and where an early draw is unlikely, you can still use the same tactic to encourage players to make moves that are overly defensive, and which mainly just waste time.

In the short term, you have to get your units into the position where they have maximum tactical benefit for the opponent who's killing you – ideally where they can do things that hers can't. However, that is just a temporary plan to keep her from overrunning you. It's fine (and probably necessary) to help players to attack each other, but only do it when it gets them into positions where it makes you even more important. Help your most dangerous opponent move past your position, and become overextended. If at all possible, don't let your opponent talk you into just being the advance force, because that makes you much easier for them to contain. Being surrounded is fine. If they are surrounding you, it means you're already behind their lines – and that means that it's far more dangerous for them to try to eliminate you.

If you can succeed in getting your opponents into these kinds of bad positions, they will become more amenable to any suggestion to end the game early.

Maximizing event standing.

The far more interesting topic, and one that I don't think receives enough attention, is how to use a bad position to maximize your standing in a tournament. Here again, the details are going to come down to how the event is scored, and you have to understand that to make the best decision. It also depends hugely on how you've done earlier in the event, and you'll have to take that into account. The easiest situations to analyze are the first and last rounds of an event.

If you're in the first round of an event, you don't want any big winners. You want the game to end with as flat a point distribution as possible, so that in round two you have the best chance to catch up to the leaders. (This is especially the case in scoring systems that factor in how

much you top a board by, but still holds true in more mundane center based or draw based systems.) You'd prefer that some of those points be yours of course, but there are exceptions. If the only way you're going to survive is to ally with the board leader and help him get a very strong result, with you getting only some trivial number of points, it may not be worth it. You may actually be better off using your dying gasp to hurt the board leader and force the game into a less extraordinary ending – even if that ending doesn't include you.

For example if your choices are between the game ending 16-8-7-3 (with you on 3) or the game ending 11-10-7-4-2-0 *with you on zero*, you will likely end up fewer points behind the leader after the first round, if you go the second route. Why? Because you (probably) weren't going to get many points for that 3 anyway, but the board-topper likely lost a bucket of points by getting a very mundane top rather than a very good one. In any system where we care about center counts or margin of victory, that 16 is huge. Don't permit it just for some survival points.

In a *purely* draw based system, where the only thing that matters is the size of the draw and whether you are in it, this might not be true. Here too though, you have to be realistic about your chances of actually staying in the draw. The difference between being eliminated from a 5-way and eliminated from a 3-way is enormous, even though you may score zero both times. This is because with the 5-way, basically everyone got a bad result, so catching them in later rounds is much easier. Also remember that in that under a primarily draw based system your opponents have maximum incentive to kick you out of the draw at the end. So be honest with yourself about your chances. If you think your chances of actually getting into the draw as the 3-center power a marginal, you're better off forcing the big draw early than receiving a handful of "thank-you-for-playing" points. (Remember here, I'm only talking about Round 1. In later rounds you might roll the dice and try to weasel your way into a draw you don't really deserve to be in, even knowing it probably won't work.)

In the middle rounds of a tournament, it's trickier. If you're doing at least average in the early rounds, your goal should probably be to make sure that you're not pushing the game in a direction that helps the players that are already beating you. Giving good results, even very good results, to players who had goose-eggs going into the game may not hurt you at all. Those players might still be behind you after this game, or at least shouldn't be much ahead of you. If you let players that are already doing well beat you again, they may well become impossible to catch.

On the other hand, if you did poorly in the opening round(s), you may be better off not worrying about everyone else's score and simply trying to get *some*

points to differentiate you from the players still at zero. This is the one case where the survival points might actually be worth something, but even here all they are doing is breaking the tie with other players doing badly. Huzzah.

In the last round of a tournament, your incentives should usually flip. If you aren't getting many points in the last round, you want to make sure that nobody who is currently losing to you is able to pass you in the standings. If someone is already beating you, they are your ally. You don't care if they get points, because you're going to lose to them anyway. In the last round, **whether or not you survive the game should be a secondary consideration to whether you are scoring at least as many points as anyone who is in danger of passing you.** (The real issue, of course, isn't actually if someone is behind you or ahead of you, it's whether they can pass you. The guy beating you can't pass you because he's already ahead. But if someone is sufficiently behind you that they can't catch you either, then they are also your ally – and perhaps one you need not feel as guilty about helping.) So don't worry (much) about getting killed in these situations. Just make sure you kill off your real enemies in the process.

As an aside, I've always thought that if not for outside factors like time limits intruding, the last round of a tournament really should be the round where we see the most 18-center victories. Why? Because in the last round, small scores and sometimes mediocre scores become irrelevant to a player's final standing. If I don't care whether I come in 3rd, just barely behind the guy in 2nd, or come in 3rd well behind the guy in second, then I may not care about gaining the points to do it. Likewise, if I don't care whether I come in 19th or 34th, it makes strategic sense to take high-risk/high-reward gambles on solos or other very strong results, even if those gambles will probably get me killed. If I don't care about the difference between 19th and 34th, then I have nothing to lose. And if I have nothing to lose, it's not really a gamble.

This talk of going out with a bang, leads us to another useful topic.

How (and how not) to throw a solo

This is perhaps the best example of a situation where many players react emotionally to the game not going their way, rather than thinking tactically about their goals, and about how best to achieve them. And despite what it may seem, depending on what your goals are, there is actually a right way and a wrong way to do this.

So what is your goal? Occasionally (very, very occasionally) you might be in a situation where you've reasoned that another player getting 18 really does put you in the best position in the tournament. Maybe you know that player is only playing one round, or maybe he's so ridiculously far behind you that 18 doesn't catch

you. Or maybe you're going all Brandon Clarke on someone, and have a well reasoned tactical basis for throwing the event.

The vast majority of the time though, that's really not your goal (or at least shouldn't be). You may – on a certain level – be fine with a particular player winning, and you may even be kind of happy if it happens. Heck, we've all been in games where we think "This guy is playing great, this other guy is playing awful – no way am I letting *him* win!" And you probably do prefer the solo to wherever it looked like the game was going before – especially if it looked like you were being due to be steamrolled by a couple of Care Bears. But all that is not the same thing as saying that you **want** another player to solo.

Like all other tactics, threatening to throw a game is a means to an end. Your goal should simply be to make it clear that you are willing and able to do it, and to use that to get one of your adversaries to back off. Most of us know that the best way to put strain on an alliance is to create a situation where one of the allies has substantially more room for growth than the other. We try to create those situations all the time to set our opponents against each other, even when the end game is not imminent. What is sometimes less clear when facing an alliance that's marching across the board, is how to go about it.



Bet on the correct horse.

When you're being attacked by a couple of allies, you may not intrinsically care which of them stabs which, so long as they start fighting. Your goal is just to get them to fight. But you actually should care – or at least you should pause to consider it.

Often if you're being attacked by an alliance, there is

actually only one of the allies that is directly attacking you. It is easy to get upset with the guy attacking us, and spend all our diplomatic efforts trying to convince his ally to switch sides and come to the rescue. This is normal, because the guy attacking is the one we want to see killed. He's also the one we probably think is playing worse, because obviously if he were playing better he wouldn't be attacking *me*, right?!? Although this may be normal, it's usually also wrong. Usually, we should seek to persuade the guy who is attacking us to back off and switch side instead. The reason comes down to the normal incentive all players have to get the other players to do their work for them.

If I am on the opposite side of the board from you, and my ally is attacking you, I am usually disinclined to stab simply because – as a general rule – I want my neighbors fighting people who aren't me. I'd rather he attack you, while I have free reign to go grab easy dots elsewhere, rather than our positions be reversed. I'll stab him eventually, but I'm not in any hurry to do it.

I'll certainly *tell you* I'm going to stab him, because I want you to keep fighting him as long as possible. I might make perfectly good suggestions of how to slow him down, just to drag out the fight. But I probably won't really stab him, because I want him tied up fighting you as long as possible.

On the other hand, the guy you're directly fighting is already fighting someone. You. For him, it's just a question of which fight he'd rather be in. That comes down to a cost/benefit question, and that you can work with.

The balancing act.

In order to get your neighbor to stop attacking you and stab his ally, you need to do put your pieces in a position where they are a major impediment (or at least a large speed bump) to the player you're trying to get to switch sides, BUT from where they can also quickly and easily switch over to attacking the real target – the guy who you want him to stab. (Or, if that's not possible, where they can switch over to some other useful objective that you both agree to.)

What you do NOT want to do is to either uselessly jam all of your units into the corner of the board, or to too aggressively attack the player you're trying to convince to stab.

It does no good to make a move that says "If you keep attacking me I'm going to let him win!" if that move also takes you so completely out of position that now you can't do anything about it. If you want someone to stab, they have to have reason to believe that you'll actually be there to help them after they do it. That means both the willingness and the tactical position to help them. If you take your units totally out of position your opponent

may reasonably determine that they are better off sticking with their old alliance not because they don't want to stab, but because they think you will be useless as an ally.

The flip side of this is that you can't attack the guy you want to flip too hard. You need to pressure him enough that he recognizes there's little profit in attacking you, but not so hard that he has no choice but to keep doing it! If you use all of your remaining power to actually threaten his centers, the guy you're trying to flip may feel like the safest plan is to finish you off before worrying about an ally who's getting a little too big.

It's not always easy (and sometimes not possible), but you need to try to find a middle ground.

Don't create camaraderie among your opponents.

Equally important to the tactical aspects of threatening to throw a solo, is the psychological component. Too often you see players who are being attacked by a solid alliance become angry and belligerent with the guy killing them – loudly accusing him of playing terribly and is simply letting his ally win. Don't do that. It's bad play. The only thing worse is rallying all the other small powers on the board to join in.

When you do that, you inadvertently create a situation where the allies – despite their probable superior board position – can feel besieged and victimized. This makes them less likely to want to fight each other, and more likely to feel good about a shared win. Now, even when the guy you want to flip gets his chance, he may not want to do it, because his ally is the only player he's not mad at. This is a catastrophe, because although you succeeded in encouraging your opponent to play badly, you are encouraging only that bad play that hurts you!

If your opponent is actively angry at you (whether its warranted or not), he's going to want to keep attacking you. Once you cross that bridge, it's very hard to go back.

The better tactic is to try hard to remain dispassionate and even friendly. If you appear to be in a position where you have no options, it is harder for your opponent to pretend you're causing the problem. Get yourself into a position where you can slow down the guy you're trying to flip, and ignore the other ally who's romping across the board. Then you can say – truthfully – "Look, I can't stop you both, so I'm just going to defend against you as best I can." Don't give him an excuse – however flimsy it may be – to keep coming after you.

If he likes you, he's more likely to join you. If he's pissed off, he's more likely to keep on attacking. If you don't give him a reason to be angry with you, it is much harder for him to rationalize his own questionable play to himself. I've also lost track of the number of times I've seen a player end up in a draw they didn't deserve to be in, simply by being a good sport. I've never seen someone kept alive because they were being a bad sport.

Don't wait too long!

This is self-evident, easier said than done, and could apply to just about anything anyone could say about Diplomacy. But it's also critical.

To really be able to credibly threaten to throw a game you have to have enough pieces on the board to matter. Unless the allies you're facing are 15+ center range, you can't do much with 2 units. When you see an alliance starting to roll your way, think about overloading your units to one side of the board. Do this when you still have 5 or 6 dots if possible. Start to work on unbalancing things by propping up one other player, while letting another player flounder.

Don't start yammering that so-and-so is going to solo, and don't start making threats. Someone else will probably do that for you. Just start planning for when you do have to do those things.

Concluding thoughts

Remember, most of what I've said is meant to apply to situations where you are already losing or at least where your prospects look dim. You don't need to start off the second round by attacking the tournament leader, and you should never be thinking in terms of who else you want to give points to until it's clear that you aren't going to get them.

The point is simply that even when your whole game has gone sideways, and your strategy has started to shift to finding the nearest pub, you still have options. The decisions you make when you're losing can have a profound effect on how you finish the event, and are an opportunity to impress the other players with your patience, your insight, and your ability to play under duress. They will remember it the next game.

And sometimes, by staying engaged with the game, you realized that things aren't quite as bleak as they appear.

Matt Shields is a lawyer in Oregon, and has been busy losing Diplomacy tournaments since 1999.

“Patriot Games”: Legacy of a Community Tournament

By: Bobby Hinkle

Redscape, a website proudly dedicated to the “neighborly warfare” that is Diplomacy, recently marked the end of an era as it concluded the tenth and final chapter of its enormously popular “Patriot Games” Diplomacy team tournament. For a decade, “Patriot Games” served as the site’s marquee event – a battleground hallowed year after year by the site’s old guard, and an opportunity for fresh meat...er, that is, new players, to test the waters alongside a team of more experienced negotiators and tacticians.

Some of the games played in past tournaments have become famous (or infamous as it were), within the community. The images of these boards, and some of the unexpected or outrageous events that took place within, can often be called to mind simply with the mention of the game’s name (which reflected overarching themes of airports, graveyards, stadiums, and in one instance - beer!). Now, as the final tournament champions finish their victory lap around Europe, I look back and recognize how important this annual tournament has been to my life, my participation in the hobby, and my development as a player.

I was first introduced to PBEM Diplomacy on websites where casual gamers played. Diplomacy was not really the focus of these sites, and as such, competition was weak, and games were marred by delays, abandonment, and NMRs. I joined the Redscape community in 2002, intrigued by its focus on Diplomacy, but I did not play in my first Patriot Games tournament until its fourth incarnation.

Patriot Games was unlike anything I had ever experienced – its participants were organized into teams based on geographic location. Over time, and with community feedback, this concept evolved into groups of regional pools from which players were drafted by ‘recruitment officers’. This became one of the most anticipated and exciting aspects of the tournament, as each year new teams emerged, and new players climbed the ranks to become eagerly sought after choices. As a recruitment officer, I would later have the opportunity to ‘interview’ players in my pool, some of whom I knew well at the time, and others that I had met.

One of my fondest memories of the tournament was my first game – “Råsunda”. This was a wild board, where several home supply centers changed hands in the opening year alone! Somehow, after losing Brest in ’01, I was able to eek out 2nd place in a six way draw, and I became hooked on the website and the tournament. Reflecting on this game, six years later, I realize just how

significant that first game was for me. Of its participants, five (myself included) are still active on the site today. The Italian player, who had been the saving grace to my France, just stabbed me in a current game, and, several years ago I met both the Austrian player and the game’s GM in person for my first of several Face to Face Diplomacy experiences. Another memory, which highlights the community experience that Patriot Games has been, is that of the debates on the forum about various aspects of the tournament. Forum members discussed elements ranging from the scoring models and rule sets utilized, to the best way to tally orders and adjudicate multiple games within the same day to avoid giving some boards a metagaming advantage. Discussing all of this allowed us to continue improving and reinventing Patriot Games so that it became better and more fun each year. But, aside from this, the real benefit of these discussions was to bring us all closer in our appreciation for the game of Diplomacy, and the website that so perfectly met our gaming needs.

What is perhaps most interesting to me about all of this is the fact that most of the people that I would consider my friends, family, and coworkers know little or nothing about the game of Diplomacy, or the many hours of my life spent committed to it. Yet the common link of Redscape and the Patriot Games has led me, along with many others, into friendships reaching across the globe, with people that I would never otherwise know. I have learned about the lives and personalities of my fellow diplomats through in game correspondence, but I’ve learned even more outside the games, and in some cases in person.

It is somewhat strange to be linked to a group of others by a shared love for an obscure board game, where the highest admiration is reserved for those in the group most skilled at deceiving and betraying their onetime allies. But, perhaps this is a condition that we are especially equipped to understand and appreciate. Maybe this is because the ‘real’ friendships that we forge with one another are much more important and sincere than their in-game counterparts, and possibly more so than some of the so-called ‘real’ relationships in our own lives.

For the many years of quality gaming that I have enjoyed, I sincerely thank the creators and organizers of Patriot Games, and the community of players at www.redscape.net with whom I took part. I continue to look forward to the relationships that will develop, on and off the board.

The Diplomacy World Variant Design Contest Results

Considering the low response my prior contest attempts have caused, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that we received five entries to the Variant Design Contest. You can't say the prizes had a lot to do with it, since I'd offered similar prizes in the past. But for whatever reason, we actually received more entries than available prizes! That's a very nice problem to have: deciding who wins. With three judges assembled - myself, Rick Desper, and variant legend Lewis Pulsipher - we set about making our own choices. Before I share some of the comments from the judges, and divulge the winners, let me remind you of the rules for the contest: Design and submit an original variant, using one of the following topics: The Napoleonic Era; Post-Soviet USSR; Ancient Greek States; Current-Day Global Dominance; Ancient Israel Region; or the Yugoslavian Breakup. This must be a new variant - one which has not been openly play-tested yet (if you and a buddy or two want to try it out to see how it works, to help you make revisions along the way, that's fine). The variant should include the map (if it uses anything other than the standard Diplomacy map), rules, and designer's notes giving some insight into why you chose to produce the variant in the form it ultimately is submitted in. Variants may be for 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9 players.

The biggest stumbling block with those rules was the prohibition on open playtesting. Without the ability to have people test it, a variant is likely to be unbalanced in some ways, and in need of many revisions. But that was part of the purpose behind the contest in the first place. My hope is that the Diplomacy World readership will send in letters and articles full of ideas for improvement, disagreements with the results, and general comments. Maybe one of you will even design your own variant and submit it for publication here now that the contest is over, thanks to the inspiration these attempts gave you. Who knows?

Lewis Pulsipher was kind enough to provide his criteria for judging variants, which I will happily share with you. Rick Desper's criteria is explained throughout his more-detailed reviews of each variant.

The most important is, "how does it play?"--and there's no way for a judge to be able to play the game enough to know. This is why a commercial game design is playtested many, many times, to find out how good it

really is. (The curious thing is that publishers often decide whether to publish based on just one play.)

Almost as important is the question, "are the rules clear?" This is something the judge can try to gauge. If the rules aren't clear, then we can't play the game correctly, can we, so what good is it?

"Is it balanced?" That is, does each player have a fairly equal chance of winning? This is learned through playing experience. Not having that available, the judge will have to try to play through various possibilities in his mind and see what he thinks.

The judge can also try to see the interactions on the board. Are there clear corner positions, and are there compensating circumstances for those not in the corners? Is someone "stuck in the middle", and are there compensations? It's not enough for the designer to say "each player can negotiate from his strengths and weaknesses". Sure, that's true, but if I've got more strengths and you've got more weaknesses to start with, I'm likely to succeed more often than you.

We could also ask, "is it likely to produce stalemates?" But even about this there will be disagreements, with some people hating stalemates, some welcoming the possibility.

Some people would prefer a criterion such as "does it reflect the story/history", and consider this more important than play balance. Insofar as Diplomacy is virtually an abstract game, I think play balance is more important, just as it was in the original game. Further, if you want to design a game that reflects history substantially, Diplomacy is not a good system to use, though it is a simple one. So I will take play balance over the quality of representation.

The setting has little to do with the quality of the variant. A judge cannot let his preference for one situation or another come into play, as this is purely a personal preference and does not affect the quality of the variant.

So, in alphabetical order of the entries, here are some comments from judges Lewis Pulsipher (in *italics*) and Rick Desper (in **bold**). See if you agree or disagree with their findings!

Collapse (by John Kyker)

The rules are unclear (e.g. what makes one sea box adjacent to another?); inequitable positions are evident.

Well, it's another map variant. This one set in 1990s Russia.

There are loads of map variants, and quite a few set in Asia. The general problem with Asian variants is that it tends to be easy to set up stalemates in the central Asian plains, since most map designers simply slap down a handful of large provinces.

This map isn't that different in that respect.

So we've got an East Russia consisting of Vladivostok and a couple neighboring provinces, a West Russia ("Homeland") consisting of Moscow, St. Pete, and a few other places, and a central power consisting of the -stans that broke away near the Caspian Sea. In addition we have China, the EU, the Ukraine (??) and the US, in the form of Japan + Baghdad.

The map is very displeasing aesthetically – there are a few large central provinces and a ton of tiny peripheral provinces. The powers are crowded together, with home provinces facing attack in the first year all over the map (except US/Japan). North Korea borders home SCs of _three_ powers. Well that could be fun, even if it's not to my taste.

The map also uses Off-board boxes, which we have also seen in Judge Youngstown. These OBBs are a bit better than the Youngstown ones, which have so few adjacencies that they are easily clogged up. On this map, all of the Western OBBs are adjacent to each other, and likewise with those in the East. So it might work.

Going around the map...

The EU looks like a relatively safe position. It's a true corner position, and has access to a bunch of neutral SCs. Ukraine is a problem, and West Russia might be, but both of them have other things to worry about, while the EU doesn't.

Ukraine could ally effectively with either West Russia or EU against the other. But unlike the regular map, any alliance action would quickly turn into a rout. Ukraine has the best position on the Black Sea and has the advantage over the expeditionary force in Baghdad, which looks like it would be hard to support.

West Russia starts with four home SCs, and even that doesn't look like it'd be enough. One problem is that West Russia blocks both of Ukraine and EU

from the bulk of the SCs. Germany and Austria have that problem on the regular map, but West Russia also has the Central Asian power here coming up from the South. Very ugly.

I like the -stan position. They can move south relatively easily and it's unlikely that West Russia should want a war right away. Has the best position on the Middle East and can probably squish the American force in Baghdad (with help from Ukraine?) The down side is that getting to any useful sea spaces would probably be near impossible.

I'm not fond of the Chinese position. He's between the -stan position, which is much stronger on land, and the US/Japan position, which is stronger at sea. And they're both very close. In most Asian variants, the advantage China has is that it has a buffer of provinces that make actual invasion difficult. But on this map, every province is a border province. There's no secondary line to fall back to.

The US/Japan position looks pretty strong. Even if you have to write off Baghdad, the sea provinces in Japan would be tough to crack. And given the headaches his neighbors will have on their other fronts, it would probably be relatively easy to get one of them as an ally (I would nominate East Russia).

East Russia has the advantage (or disadvantage) of being at the turning point of the sea provinces (a la France on the regular map). The Sakhalin issue looks like it would be tricky to resolve. The army in Vlad could be the kingmaker for North Korea.

Well, it's hard to know exactly how this position would play out. Given that it's a 1990s variant, I was hoping that more would be involved than a simple map variant. Air units? Nukes? The map looks clunky and I don't have faith that it wouldn't quickly stalemate. Also, I really hate the map with all of its tiny provinces. But the map offers a good number of diplomatic variations, so maybe it'd work out. I just wish there were more here.

Greek Diplomacy (by Hyrum Hibbert)

18 centers is a good number, so the designer makes his game fit this notion, even as he states that there are a few non-center land spaces? I'm not sure that makes sense. Pel-Ther is a land stalemate from north or south, but this may be a fleet game. Yet why are there so many sea areas in the southwest, don't we want to use seas to speed up movement "around" (and in the standard game)?

Byzantium and Rhodes would not come into play

historically as powers until the time of the Diadochi. I can see adding one for balance, but two? Then we have six powers, and an odd number always seems to work better, to me.

Choosing initial centers is interesting, as is the variety of pre-set starting positions.

This is pretty much a map variant. The non-standard options include rules for bidding for home SCs and

a few scenarios with alternate arrangements of forces (Persian Invasion, Peloponnesian War, and Macedonia dominance).

At this point, I'll make my usual whine about people who design variant maps and insist on using three-letter abbreviations not only on the map, but pretty much everywhere. Yes, a list of abbreviations is provided, but the full names should be used by default in the rules, not the three-letter abbreviations. Perhaps the most annoying thing is that lbr is not even on the list of abbreviations. This must be Imbros?

So, if this is a map variant, what do we think about the map? Well, it's got a bunch of islands and a ton of sea spaces compared to the basic board, but relatively few neutral land provinces. The total number of provinces is close to that of Standard Diplomacy, but the large number of sea provinces would affect the flow a lot, especially since the islands serve as choke points.

What I don't like about the sea spaces is that there is a ring of sea spaces at the perimeter that don't serve much of a function. The end result is that there are areas of the map that are packed with SCs, and other areas that are nearly bare.

Asia Minor looks particularly ugly. There are 11 land provinces in Asia Minor and only 3 of the 11 are not SCs. But there is no room to maneuver here. That could make for easy true lines, say, manned by 1 or 2 forces. That's exactly what we don't want!

So, let's give this a run as a thought exercise. We have three Greek powers and three Asian powers (roughly speaking).

Sparta starts with A Spa, A Mes, and F Oly. Crete is begging for attention, but the only Spartan fleet is out of position to go there. So Sparta goes for Ith instead, and sends his armies to lock down the Peloponnesus. Does Sparta have anything to do other than attack Athens? It doesn't seem like it. He can get to Corc faster than anyone else, since neither Athens nor Macedon has any fleets on the West coast of Greece (nor any ability to build fleets over there).

Athens starts with F Ath, F Del, and F Cha. Athens is very much in the middle here, with the fleets on the Aegean that can either try to scoop up island SCs or can try to jam Sparta in the corner. Possible neutrals include Cor, Theb,

Macedon starts with A Pel, F Ther, and A Lar. A Lar can scoop up Delp or Theb, A Pel can go for Apo or be a second army going South, and the fleet can make a token effort to keep Byz fleets at bay. Not a

lot of neutral SCs for Macedon after the first year.

Byzantium starts with two fleets on the Aeg in lbr and lli, as well as an army in Byz that can crawl to Tha or be used to put pressure on Persia.

Persia starts with A Sar, A Lao and F Eph. A Sar has nothing better to than to go to Per, which Byzantium could contest. A Lao would presumably go to Mil. F Eph can go to one of two sea spaces and try for an island.

Finally, Rhodes starts with fleets in Rho and Sam, and the army in Hal. The army has nothing better to do than try for Mil. The fleet in Rhodes has a path to Crete than seems wise to take, while the fleet in Sam likely has to contend with the Athenian and Persian fleets for the Eastern Aegean provinces.

Persia and Athenians look very constrained in terms of growth, and a sandwich on Persia looks likely. On the whole, it looks like a very tight map. It would probably develop very quickly.

Sparta looks like he has a nice corner position to grow out of, with fewer distractions than the other have.

Athens would have to be an incredible negotiator to grow much, and seems like he'd be impinged upon by Macedon and Sparta quickly.

Macedon has a couple SCs that he can get easily and are unlikely to be threatened in the early game. Also, an army or two would make the position reasonably defensible.

Byzantium has potential conflict in the first year with three different neighbors, and would likely have to quickly come to terms with somebody.

Persia is very constrained, as the two neutrals bordering his home SCs also border home SCs of Byzantium and Rhodes. Upon reflection, I think he'd be well advised to use the fleet in a supporting capacity in the first year to make sure he gets the two neutrals on Asia Minor. But it's hard to see fleet builds happening quickly enough to get off Asia Minor.

The position of Rhodes looks decent with the early access to Crete and the corner position.

Well, it's worth play-testing, but the map is very crowded in the middle. There is an obvious East-West 17-17 split, and I suspect there are mini-stalemate lines all over the place.

Using the language of graph theory, there are too many low-degree vertices (provinces) for my taste.

Any degree 3 vertex (i.e., and province with exactly 3 neighbors) is easy to hold in a stalemate line. And degree 2 vertices (of which there are a few) are even easier. There are choke-points all over the place.

So while it would have to be play-tested, my feeling is that it's a map variant, and I'm a bit down on the map.

Napoleonic Diplomacy (by John Kyker)

Too many centers in Africa? (Ottoman and Spanish "only")? How will the Spanish do with the English in Gibraltar? No threat to England elsewhere, German fleet very far away, only one French fleet vs. 2 English-- England looks almost as invulnerable as they were in the real Napoleonic Wars. This is not good for play balance.

Italy has been replaced by Spain, who has no other neighbors (excepting F Gib) and would appear to want to hit France.

The excitement of the Balkans has been watered down by the removal of SCs.

Well, this is basically a map variant, and the map is closely related to the original map. So there's not all that much going on here. No alternate rules.

Spain starts with an army in Naples, which seems very silly.

England starts with four SCs and 3 units?? Does he have to conquer Liverpool?

Prussia is further away from the North Sea than Germany on the regular map. This would seem to make England stronger.

There are 6 more SCs than on the standard map.

On the whole, I'm just not seeing enough different on this map to be of interest.

The variant is supposed to model the Napoleonic era, but France starts in a relatively weak position.

Spanish Ulcer (by Ricardo Moraes)

This may be a good representation of history, but about play balance we can have grave doubts. Can militia move into (empty) France? All those blue dots are French? This should be explicit in the rules.

to compete with.

The alternative is that France and England only gets extra forces relative to their SC count, i.e. Paris and London are essentially double-size SCs. I think that has to be the interpretation.

Spanish Ulcer uses a couple extra rules and goes well beyond the normal idea of a map variant. The setting is Iberia in a state of rebellion during the Napoleonic wars. There are six Spanish rebel provinces, as well as Portugal, and two great powers: France and England. The Iberian powers have access to half-strength militia units that are supported by ownership of provinces (as opposed to SCs). Also, England and France can build extra forces in their capital to bring into the field. Naval combat doesn't exist, even though there are sea provinces, since only England can build fleets.

The map is fascinating. The Spanish powers are hopelessly intertwined, with French armies spread all over the place. Also, some powers are beset by considerably more French forces than others. Castille has 3 French occupying armies, while Andalusia is relatively unthreatened.

Turns are monthly, not twice per year, and adjustments are made every three months. The rules are not clear enough about the support of the extra English and French units. If they can be build as "extra units", must they be supported by other SCs in subsequent years? If not, then it looks like France and England just get to build two extra forces per build phase. That would be a huge advantage that the Iberian powers would not be able

It is impossible to try to game out the opening moves, since there are no neutral provinces and the powers are so intertwined. Presumably the Iberian powers would need to cooperate against France. But it's hard to forecast exactly it would turn out.

Points have to be given here for creativity. When considering a variant, one of the things I like to see is exploration of different possibilities. The militia rules are very interesting, and I like the intertwined powers. It's hard to predict what exactly would happen.

USSR vs. USA/Cold War (by Hugh Polley)

Rules turgid, very unclear in several places--the writer makes assumptions that the reader knows these other games/methods, I guess, and that's usually a bad idea, as some people won't. Interesting rules as far as I can see, but very difficult to balance.

This variant uses a global map (purloined from David Norman's Global2 variant) and adds in some rules relating Super Powers, non-nuclear powers, and "rogue states". There are also some rules for railroad building (but oddly enough, no explanation on how to use the railroads to move forces) and some rules for how powers can write orders for other powers that happen to be in CD.

Ultimately this is not a polished product. I like the basic idea of having different rules for nuclear powers and non-nuclear powers, and I also like how nuclear war is implemented, but the presentation of the rules is confusing and unclear. For example, what is the disposition of forces? Do we use the starting positions from the Global2 variant? Presumably so, but if that's the case than this variant is not bringing much new beyond the Global2 variant. And the power distribution for Global2 is unlikely to give the best balance of play

So with those comments and opinions, I took Lewis' and Rick's ranking of the variants (which I have not reprinted), compared it to my own (I didn't write out comments for print...they're all in my head), and came to the final results. Actually, all five variants easily could have made the list of winners; the race for 3rd place was almost a tie. But final decisions had to be made, so with the help of my cats Toby and Sanka, the field was

for the Super Power rules. The key question for this variant is where the minor powers are. Presumably a minor power that can seize control of a rogue power (and thereby achieve Super Power status) has an advantage over the other minor powers. But the distribution of the minor powers makes this a decidedly unequal proposition. Minor power Brazil has an easy target in Argentina, but minor powers China and India are stuck next to each other with no easy targets anywhere near to each other. And there are a bunch of minor powers in Africa competing with each other.

If I were refereeing this variant as a submission to a journal, I would send it back to the author and tell them it needs major revisions, but that there are interesting ideas here. In particular, the rules need to be written much more clearly (a list of definitions is not all that helpful, rules are better when their motivation is given and examples are provided). Include the railway movement rules (which I found at the website – but I shouldn't have to look!) and explain why there should be any CD order replacement rules at all. But beyond that, we need to design the map specifically with these rules in mind.

narrowed down to three. Thanks to all four variant designers (as John Kyker submitted two variants – which was specifically permitted in the rules). Whether you won a prize or not, you're winners for being brave enough to submit variants that hadn't been playtested to the contest!

And the winners are:



First Prize: Greek Diplomacy by Hyrum Hibbert



Second Prize: Spanish Ulcer by Ricardo Moraes



Third Prize: Napoleonic Diplomacy by John Kyker

So, faithful Diplomacy World readers...what do YOU think? Check out the variants, which are on the pages immediately following these results (in alphabetical order, the same order in which they were reviewed), and send in your own comments...or your own article as a whole. And keep your eyes open for the next Diplomacy World contest, which I hope to announce in Diplomacy World #111. Now, get off your butts and go play some Diplomacy variants!

The Collapse of the Soviet Union by “airborne” (John Kyker)

Instead of the relative peacefully collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, instead all out war is declared.

Defense of the Motherland is only the beginning...

Russia has split into the Far East Union and the Motherland both convinced of its duty to reunite Russia. Central Russia collapsed into civil disorder and lawlessness...It is time for a counterattack...

Successful Secession! We must protect our freedom!

Ukraine and the Kazakhstan Empire are now out to make their mark on the world, to bring justice, freedom, and revenge...

You are authorized for anything, this is a level one priority, Director

The United States alarmed by the mobilization and coming carnage and the threat of nuclear missiles getting into wrong hands has put out a plan, to unite Russia under the US flag. The United Coalition of USA (in Iraq still) and her allies plans its next move...

This is a chance we cannot miss...

China and the expanded European Union declare war; to expand power and influence. Who will come out on top?

Standard Diplomacy Rules. 20 SCs to win.

Dagestan (Dan) is a canal region a fleet in Dagestan can move to the Black or the Caspian Sea.

Crossing lines mean that a unit can cross directly between the two regions.

The off-board boxes allow a circular map to be represented on a flat sheet of paper. There are several interpretations on how movement between the off-board areas is intended to work. The original idea comes from Youngstown.

1. Any Fleet in a sea area that contains an off-board box may move into the box as though moving to a normal sea province. Any unit in an off-board box may move into the sea province, which contains the off-board box.
2. A fleet in an off-board box may move to an adjacent off-board box.
3. A fleet in an off-board box may move into the sea which has the box
4. Off-board boxes are considered as sea areas so only one unit may be present in an off-board box.
5. Support orders and convoy orders apply to off-board boxes.

The seven Powers starting positions

1. European Union (E)
A Berlin A Prague F London

2. United Coalition (N)
A Bagdad A Seoul F Tokyo F Osaka

3. China (C)
A Wuhan A Changchun F Beijing

4. Far East Union (F)
A Vladivostok A Kamchatka F Magadan

5. Motherland (M)
A Moscow A Omsk F St. Petersburg (South Coast) F
Astrakhan

6. Ukraine (U)
A Kiev A Odessa F Sevastopol

7. Kazakhstan Empire (K)
A Astana A Tashkent F Ashgabat

Greek Diplomacy

By Hirus Hibbert

Designer's Notes

I chose the Greek City States time period because it evolved powers that could be equalized without too much harm to historical accuracy. In addition I feel that in order to have a map where army and naval units were about equally important the land or the sea must mostly surround the other which is a good fit for Greece. I tried to make the map with the same number supply centers, land and sea spaces as the original because I feel that 18 supply centers is a good number to win the game with. I ended up with very few non-supply center land spaces and I tried to make the land movement hard whereas I hope sea movement would be much easier. I hope that people enjoy playing this map.

Rules

The standard Diplomacy rules apply on this map except at the start the game if you chose the Diplomacy bidding start for the game set up.

Victory Conditions

A player wins if they control 18 or more supply centers at the end of the winter adjustment phase.

Starting Centers

There are several sets of starting centers to begin this game with, including: Standard, Diplomacy Bidding Start, Persian Invasion, Peloponnesian war, Macedonia dominance.

Standard

Sparta: A Spa, A Mes, F Oly
Athens: F Ath, F Del, F Cha
Macedonia: A Pel, F Ther, A Lar
Byzantium: F Ili, A Byz, F Ibr
Persia: A Sar, A Lao, F Eph
Rhoades: F Rho, A Hal, F Sam

Diplomacy Bidding Start

Each nation starts with their capital city (as marked on the map with two lines under the name of the territory) and four tokens to bid for other home centers with. There is a 15 minute negotiation period where the players discuss with each other how they are going to bid. Then after writing down their bids (example: Sparta – Oly 1, Cor 2, Ith 1) all of the players reveal their bids at once for the bidding phase. If a player is the only player to have bid on a supply center then that supply center becomes a home center of that player. If two players bid on the same supply center the player who bid the most on the supply center gets it as their home center. If they bid the same amount on the supply center then the supply center remains neutral. (example: Macedonia bids as follows: Ther 1, Ibr 2, Tha 1. While Byzantium bids as follows: Ili 1, Tha 1, Ibr 1, Les 1. Macedonia wins Ther because he was the only one to bid on it. Macedonia wins Ibr because his 2 bids beats Byzantium's 1, Neither nation gets Tha because they tied with 1. Byzantium wins both Ili and Les because no one else bid on them. This is ignoring any possible bids by the other 4 players.) All Supply Centers that become a nation's Home Centers will have either a navy or army in the territory according to the table below, named supply centers (example: if Sparta bids on and gets Cor then that Home Center will start the normal game with a F on the west coast of Cor).

Persian Invasion

Sparta: A Spa, A Mes
Athens: F Ath, F Cha
Macedonia: A Pel, F Ther
Byzantium: A Byz, F Ili, A Tha
Persia: A Per, A Sar, A Lao, F Eph, F Mil, A Hal
Rhodes: F Rho, F Sam

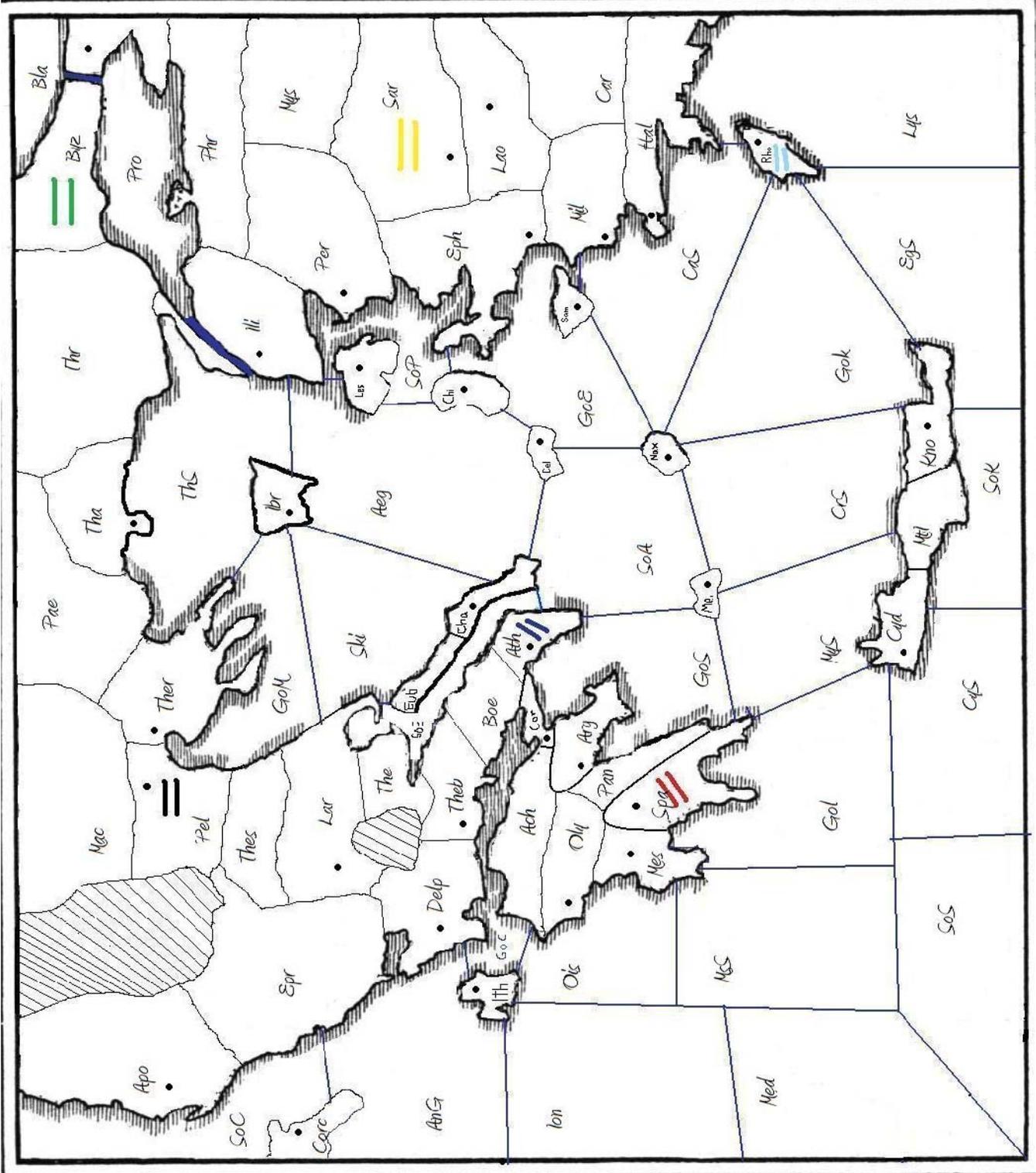
Byzantium: A Byz, F Ili, F Les
Persia: A Lao, A Sar, F Eph
Rhoades: F Rho, F Sam, A Hal

Macedonia Dominance

Sparta: A Spa, F Mes
Athens: F Ath, F Cha
Macedonia: A Pel, A Apo, A Lar, F Ther
Byzantium: A Byz, F Ili
Persia, A Sar, A Lao, F Eph
Rhoades: F Rho, F Sam

Peloponnesian War

Sparta: A Spa, A Mes, A Oly, F Cor (wc)
Athens: F Ath, F Cha, F Del, F Les, F Nax, F Cha
Macedonia: A Pel, F Ther, A Tha



Supply Centers

Short Form	Full Name	Unit	Type of Land
Apo	Apollonia	Army	Land
Arg	Argos	Army	Land
Ath	Athens	Fleet	Land
Byz	Byzantium	Army	Canal
Cha	Chalies	Fleet	Land
Chi	Chicos	Fleet	Land
Cor	Corinth	Fleet EC	Land; Coasts WC & EC
Corc	Corcyra	Fleet	Land
Cyd	Cydonia	Fleet	Land
Del	Delos	Fleet	Land
Delp	Delphi	Army	Land
Eph	Ephesus	Army	Land
Hal	Halicarnassus	Army	Land
Imb	Imbros	Fleet	Land
Ili	Ilium	Fleet	Canal
Ith	Ithaca	Fleet	Land
Kno	Knossos	Fleet	Land
Lao	Laodicoa	Army	Land
Lar	Larissa	Army	Land
Les	Lesbos	Fleet	Land
Mel	Melos	Fleet	Land
Mes	Messenia	Army	Land
Mil	Miletus	Army	Land
Nax	Naxos	Fleet	Land
Oly	Olympia	Army	Land
Pel	Pella	Army	Land
Per	Pergamum	Army	Land
Rho	Rhodes	Fleet	Land
Sam	Samos	Fleet	Land
Sar	Sardis	Army	Land
Spa	Sparta	Army	Land
Tha	Thassos	Army	Land
Theb	Thebes	Army	Land; Coasts SC & EC
Ther	Therma	Army	Land

Land Territories

Short Form	Full Name	Type of Land
Ach	Achaia	Land
Boe	Boeotia	Land: coasts NC

		and SC
Car	Caria	Land
Epr	Epirus	Land
Eub	Euboea	Land
Mac	Macedonia	Land
Mtl	Mount Ida	Land; coasts NC and SC
Mys	Mysia	Land
Pae	Paeonia	Land
Pan	Panon	Land
Phr	Phrygia	Land
The	Thermopylae	Land
Thes	Thessaly	Land
Thr	Thrace	Land

Sea Spaces

Short Form	Full Name
Aeg	Aegean Sea
AnG	Anactorium Gulf
Bla	Black Sea
CaS	Carian Sea
CrS	Cretan Sea
CyS	Cydonian Sea
EgS	Egyptian Sea
Ion	Ionia Sea
AmG	Ambrican Gulf
GoC	Gulf of Corinth
GoE	Gulf of Ephesus
GoK	Gulf of Knossos
GoM	Gulf of Macedonia
GoS	Gulf of Salamis
GoL	Gulf of Laconia
LyS	Lycian Sea
Med	Mediterranean Sea
MsS	Messenian Sea
MyS	Myrtoan Sea
OIS	Olympian Sea
Pro	Propontis
Ski	Skithos Sea
SoA	Sea of Athens
SoE	Straits of Euboea
SoC	Straits of Corcyra
SoK	Sea of Komos
SoP	Sea of Pergamum
SoS	Sea of Syracuse
ThS	Thracian Sea

Napoleonic Diplomacy

By John Kyker

Gamestart: Spring of 1801AD. 40 Total SCs; 21SCs to win

Powers and Starting Positions

Austria: A Vienna A Trieste A Budapest

France: A Paris F Brest A Marseilles

Britain: F Gibraltar F London F Edinburgh

Ottoman: A Constantinople A Damascus F Ankara

Prussia: A Berlin A Breslau F Danzig

Russia: A Smolensk A Moscow F St. Petersburg (sc)

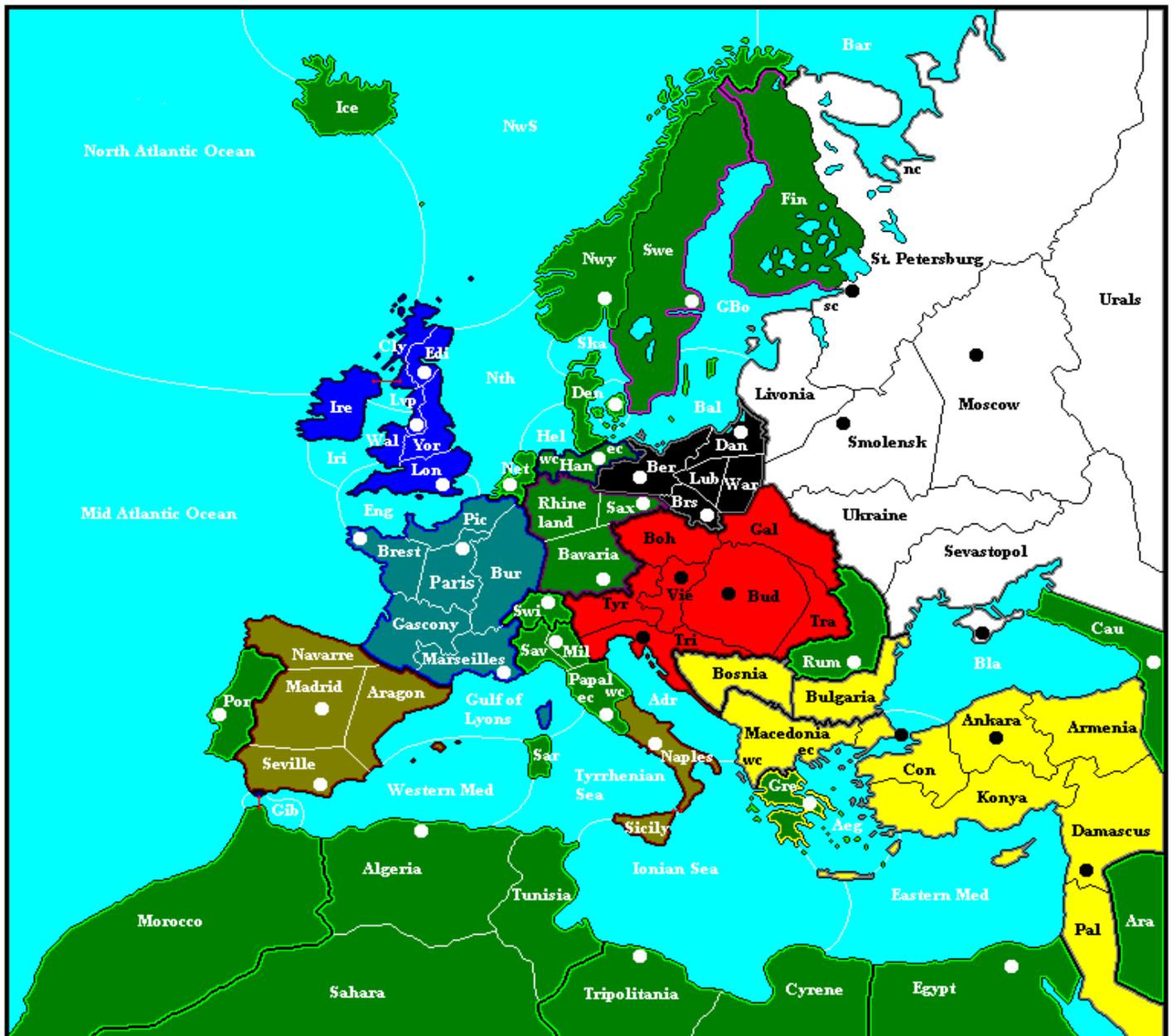
F Sevastopol

Spain: A Madrid A Naples F Seville

Crossing points exist between Gib-Mor, Den-Swe, and Ire-Lvp.

The Purple Outline represents the Holy Roman Empire and the pink represents Sweden this has no effect on game play. Gibraltar is a sea space for convoys but, armies can move into it. An army in Gib can block fleets. Seville is just one coast.

Designer Notes - When I started on this one I had a pretty good mind how to start. I was familiar with the Napoleonic Wars so I just started with a paper map and then found an 1800 map to fill in the details. At first I had Sweden as a power but, Sweden was taking out because of the lack of space in the Northwest it causes. I decided against adding a fourth French Home SC due to the explosive growth France can and most likely will achieve: **8** SCs reachable in 1801.



Spanish Ulcer

by Ricardo Moraes (redmoraes@gmail.com)

Short description

This is a variant of Diplomacy in the Napoleonic Era, specifically the Peninsular War. The map displays Iberian Peninsula in May 1808, when Spain rebelled against enthronement of Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, as King of Spain.

Powers and Starting Positions:

- Andalusia: A Sevi, M Cadi, M Murc
- Aragon: A Sara, M Arag, M Vito
- Asturias: A Leon, M Oviedo
- Britain: A Lond, F NATL
- Castille: M Sala, M Vall
- Catalonia: A Vale, M Alic, M Gero
- Estremadura: M Meri
- France: A Barc, A Burg, A Lisb, A Madr, A Tarr, A Tole
- Portugal: M Evor, M Opor

Victory conditions:

There are 24 home centers in the game. Any player that controls 13 or more home centers before a Building Phase wins.

Game calendar:

The game starts at May 1808, succeed by June 1808, July 1808 and so on.

Abbreviations:

Albu: Albuera	Ferr: Ferrol	Perp: Perpignan
Alcn: Alcantara	Gero: Gerona (*)	SAGU: Gulf of Sagunto
Alcz: Alcaniz	GIBR: Gibraltar Strait	Sala: Salamanca (*)
Alic: Alicante	Gran: Granada	Sara: Saragossa (*)
Alma: Almaraz	Huel: Huelva	SATL: South Atlantic Ocean
Almr: Almería	Hues: Huesca	Sego: Segovia
Almd: Almeida	Jaen: Jaen	Sevi: Seville (*)
Arag: Aragón (*)	Leon: León (*)	Tala: Talavera
Asto: Astorga	Leri: Lerida	Tarr: Tarragona
Bada: Badajoz (*)	Lisb: Lisbon (*)	Tole: Toledo (*)
Bale: Balearic Islands	Lond: London (**)	Tort: Tortosa
Barc: Barcelona (*)	LYON: Gulf of Lyon	TorV: Torres Vedras
Bayo: Bayonne (*)	Madr: Madrid (*)	Toul: Toulouse (*)
Bilb: Bilbao	Mala: Málaga	Tude: Tudela
BISC: Biscay Bay	Meri: Merida (*)	Vale: Valencia (*)
Brag: Braga	Moli: Molina	Vall: Valladolid
Burg: Burgos (*)	Moro: Morocco	Vich: Vich
Cadi: Cadiz	Murc: Murcia (*)	Vito: Vitoria (*)
CATL: Central Atlantic Ocean	Narb: Narbonne (*)	WMED: Western Mediterranean
CMED: Central Mediterranean Sea	NATL: North Atlantic Ocean	Sea
Coim: Coimbra (*)	Ocan: Ocaña	Zamo: Zamora
Cord: Cordoba (*)	Opor: Oporto (*)	
Coru: Corunna	Orth: Orthez	
Cuen: Cuenca	Ovie: Oviedo (*)	
Evor: Evora	Pamp: Pamplona (*)	
Faro: Faro	Pari: Paris (**)	

Territories marked with (*) are Home Centers, and those marked with (**) are capitals.

Rules:

1. All standard Diplomacy rules apply, except when stated.

2. Units.

2.1. Militias.

Besides standard Fleets and Armies, there is a new unit, Militia (abbreviated "M"). Militias are exactly like Armies, except that they have half strength. This means that if an Army or a Fleet attack a territory occupied by a Militia, the Militia will be dislodged, since it has strength 0,5 against an unit with strength 1.

2.2. Fleets.

Only Britain can build Fleets. Besides, the maximum number of Fleets that can exist on the board is two.

3. Capitals.

The greater Powers, Britain and France, have two special Supply Centers in its Capitals. They can produce two units each Building Phase without extra cost.

However, they are not counted as Supply Centers to win the game.

An important feature of Capitals is that they cannot be reached from outside. This means that once a unit moves off a capital it cannot move back.

4. Building Phase.

Each turn has a Movement Phase, corresponding to a month in game calendar. After each 3 months there are also a Building Phase, when units are built or disbanded. This means that Building Phases occurs after July, October, January and April months.

The units are built in the following sequence: Fleets, Armies and Militias.

Fleets and Armies are built as in Standard Diplomacy. Militias are built with the following rules:

a) Portugal: Each unoccupied original Portuguese territory is counted (including the own Portuguese units just built). The sum is divided by 4 and rounded down, if needed. This will be the maximum number of Militias of Portugal.

b) Andalusia, Aragon, Castille, Catalonia and Estremadura: Same rule than above, but dividing the sum by 3.

Any Militia can be built in any unoccupied original territory of its Power.

Example 1: Portugal has 1 French Army in Lisb, 1 Army in Opor, 1 Militia in Evor and all remainder territories unoccupied. The Portuguese player first builds 1 Army in

Coim. Next he counts free territories and finds 5 (Brag, Almd, TorV, Alcn and Faro). Maximum number of Militias is 1 (5 divided by 4 and rounded down). Since Portugal already has 1 Militia, nothing more is built.

Example 2: Estremadura has Armies in Huel and Medi and there is a Castilian Militia in Alma. No Armies are built, since Estremadura already controls its 2 Supply Centers. The free territories are 3 (Tala, Albu and Huel), which gives 1 more Militia (3 divided by 3). The Estremaduran player build it in Tala.

Optional Rules:

1. Time limit

If no player controls the board, the game will finish at June 1815. In our world, this date marked Napoleon defeat in Waterloo.

2. Fleets unleashed

Both Britain and France can build any number of fleets. Fleet building is subject to same rules that Army building, and it happens at same time.

3. Unified Spain

All territories belonging to Asturias, Aragon, Catalonia, Andalusia and Estremadura are unified under a single player, Spain (grey). Home centers and starting units positions are the same as in the original board.

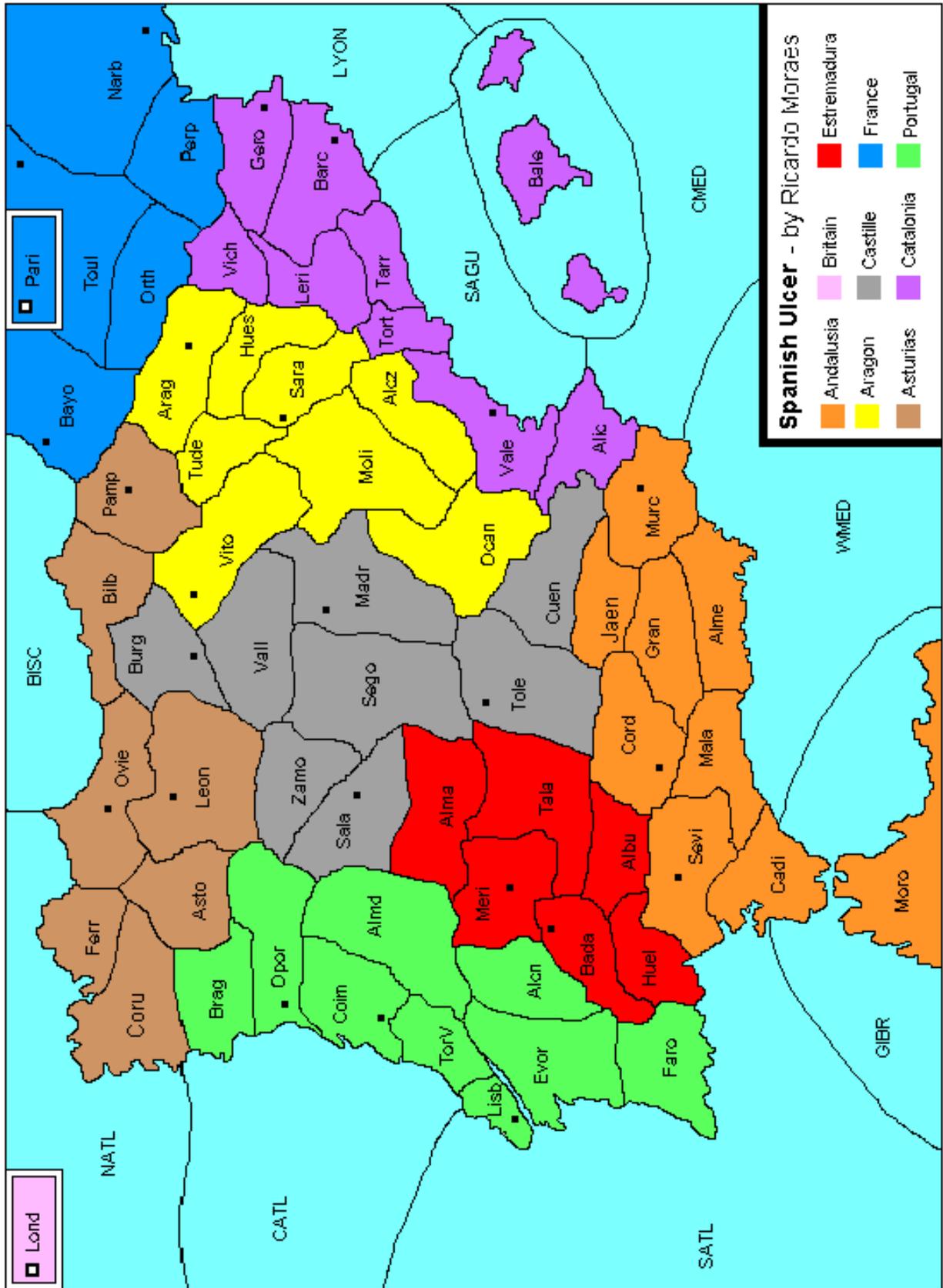
4. Napoleon and Wellington

Britain starts with an additional Army marked with an "W" in London, representing the Duke of Wellington. France starts with an additional Army marked with an "N" in Paris, representing Napoleon Bonaparte. Both units have a strength of 2, contrasting with the strength of 1 of ordinary Armies.

There are only one Wellington and Napoleon units in the game, and they cannot be rebuilt if destroyed.

Designer's notes - This game was specially designed for the Diplomacy variant contest sponsored by Diplomacy World e-zine, so some limits were defined from start, such as the historical periods, number of players and so on.

The Peninsular War (1807-1814) was especially interesting for me by several reasons. First, it seems to be a somewhat unexplored theater of war, especially in Diplomacy. In second place, the period and the Iberian geography poses some interesting design problems, such as lack of strategic cohesion of troops, the large diversity of players (France is powerful but its forces are very scattered), the unbalance of land and sea territories, and so on. Finally, I have a personal interest in this period, since one of my Portuguese ancestors



THE USSR VS THE USA The COLD WAR:

By Hugh Polley

Diplomacy (c) Hasbro Inc, Engineer Diplomacy copyright 2001, 2003 by Hugh Polley

Credits: World2 Diplomacy: David Noman; Map: John Frederick, David Knight

World War4 Diplomacy: Tom Reinecker, Tom Mulledy

If you should be included in these credits get in touch with Hugh Polley

Introduction Once again, as in the time of our Grandfathers and Fathers, we face the Americans, with their decadent Cities, and their 'Rock and Roll' - 'Red October', not verbatim. This game is created to make workable the cold war formula of 'Deterrent Effect = estimated capability X estimated intent - David Singer'. Back around 1975 a Poly Si student was going on about how JFK was the greatest politico of our time.

I being something of a shit disturber said he was a light weight compared to Khrushchev (April 15, 1894 September 11, 1971). Back in 1975 this was not the Politically correct answer, after all everyone has watched 'PT109'. Nikita convinced the world Russia was far more powerful than it was. He survived being a part of Stalin's entourage, he - not Kennedy - started the space race with Sputnik and Uri Gagarin. After Stalin's demise he ended 'The Terror' by having the state spy master killed as soon as he entered the Kremlin. Some go so far as to speculate he arranged for his bosses' sudden exit to avoid another one of his purges. While Kennedy was

floating around in the Pacific Ocean, Khrushchev was directing the Battle of Stalingrad, the most important battle of the 20th Century. You young folks know him from 'Enemy at the Gate', he was that ugly man who demanded that the Russian soldiers cross the Volga river with a bit of ammunition and one gun for every 3 men or be killed. He agreed to the Hot Phone and the first Nuclear Arms agreement. And last but not least; he fully expected to be killed for backing down from the brinkmanship of the Cuban Missile Crises which threatened to destroy all of the Northern Hemisphere. ***Are we here today with our 'Rock and Roll' because of Kennedy or Khrushchev?*** This game reflects in a limited way the political life and times of the shoe pounding, daring, ruthless yet practical man called Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, *First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964.*

Detailed Rules in HTML form can be found at my Web Site [<http://hapolley.webs.com/index.html>]. Email Hugh Polley at [hapolley@yahoo.ca] to play in the game.

Concept Chris Davis, the winner of my prize game, suggested I adapt my rules to create a USA vs. USSR Cold War Game. After some thought I decided that the USA and USSR start out as the only Super Powers, but that other super powers can form by growing to 6 (HSC), six Home Supply Centers, in size. Once you are a Super Power completely taking over another country has certain disadvantages; your units must remain in place to own a foreign SC, move it and the SC reverts to the former powers ownership.

As a Player you will assume the leadership of one of the Worlds 2 Super Powers or 7 Developing powers. Your goal is to make your nation the most dominant power in the world, uniting the world under your favored political system.

Terms and Concepts:

Super Power A Player Controlled Diplomacy Country which has Nuclear Missiles.

power controlled by a Diplomacy Player.

Minor Power A Player Controlled Diplomacy Country which does not have Nuclear Missiles.

Mother Power What the Super Power controlling an occupied or Client state is called.

Rogue State A Diplomacy Country not controlled by a Diplomacy Player or Super Power.

Missiles On their Winter Retreat Phase; Super Powers have Nuclear Missile Launchers equal to: their total Winter SC count 'with retreats OTB', divided by three, rounded down. [M USSR - Alaska]; destroys the Alaskan Supply Center and its railway. Alaska will never be listed again as having a supply Center, however the rail link can be rebuilt in the next Winter turn.

Client State A Rogue State with only one of its home Supply Centers occupied by a Super Power.

Missile Strike Refers to a number of missile strikes at the end of the Retreat Phase against another Player Country's Supply Centers.

Occupied State A Player Controlled Minor Power with one of its Home Centers occupied by a Super Power.

Player Controlled is either a super or minor or occupied

Super Power Rules :

1. A Super Power can only Launch Missiles after one of its Units has been Dislodged by a Super or Minor Power unit, or after it has been the object of a missile strike. The Super Power can then Strike the Attacking Player's Controlled Country SC and any of its Client Country's SC. The first Missile strike can be followed by a second missile strike from the nuked Super power on the next retreat phase. This strike and counter strike may continue until a retreat phase passes without a missile strike.
2. If by chance two or more foreign player powers in the Winter season occupy a Rogue or Minor country's Home supply Centers before its status changes to Client or occupied State, and one is a super power, the occupied country can not become a client or occupied state so long as it remains divided by more than one player power. In such a situation One player can not attack a super power SC without risking a Missile Strike.
3. A Super Power can control a Rogue Country so long as he occupies only one of the Rogue Country's Home Supply Centers for two Winter Season's in a row. In this situation the Rogue Power is now called a Client State. If a Super Power Unit leaves a Rogue/Client Country's Home SC and does not occupy it on the Winter turn, the SC once again belongs to the Rogue Power and a Rogue unit may be built on this SC by the GM. A Super Power can move a Unit from one Client Home SC to another, before the Winter Season, without losing control of the Rogue Power.
4. A Super Power can attempt to control a minor power by occupying one of its Home Supply Centers. If he succeeds the Minor power becomes an Occupied Power. If the super power can hold on to only one of the Occupied Powers Home SC for three Winters in a row, the Minor power becomes a Client power and its Player is out of the game. The Occupied Power can send in orders for its units but those units can also receive Civil disorder moves from the super power or any other Player controlled Diplomacy Country. The Occupied Power's orders become just one set of Civil Disorder moves which can be over ridden by other CD orders. Unlike other units in Civil Disorder, a foreign Player must bid at least two of his unit moves, for each Civil Disorder Unit, for the bid to be accepted.
5. Except for the USoA and the USSR; Super Powers have the word Empire attached to their name. A super power SC

occupied by another country in the Winter Season no longer belongs to the Super Power and when left unoccupied does not revert to Super Power Ownership.

Minor Power to Super power!

Once a Minor Power owns 6 Home Supply Centers it becomes a Super Power for the rest of the game. The captured Home Centers are transferred to the minor power as Home Supply Centers, If the losing Minor or Rogue Country has no Home Supply Centers left, its units become owned by the games Neutral Player and the Country and its player are out of the game.

Railway Building

Each Super Power can build only once a four area railway on its Winter turn. The railway must start at one of its supply Centers and not end at or go through any other Countries Supply Center. The railway may not touch the border of an adjacent area more than once; in other words it can not double back on its self. A super Power can then extend the railway, by the same rules, one area every winter turn. The railway can only be extended at one of its two ends and once built it can only be damaged by missiles not a foreign occupying unit. A power which captures all or part of a railway does not take over the captured railway unless it builds its railway up to one end of the defeated powers railway.

Civil Disorder Unit Control Rules

1. Any Player Power may attempt to control the fall and spring unit orders for Rogue and Occupied Powers using Civil Disorder Moves. These are referred to as Madman moves in Engineered Diplomacy. Only the Mother Power may send in CD orders for its Client Diplomacy Country. Players will be notified of what Player powers have not sent in preliminary orders for their Units within three to two days of the movement deadline. Other powers may then send in CD orders for these units. If these players NMR, these CD orders will be listed first and take precedence over duplicate mortgaged units moves for Rogue, Occupied and Client CD Moves.

CD ordered units and Occupied Country units which capture a super power SC do not trigger a missile attack. You must list CD orders by Country for them to work on Occupied Powers, Otherwise they go into the Rogue and NMR file and may not work.

Victory Criteria

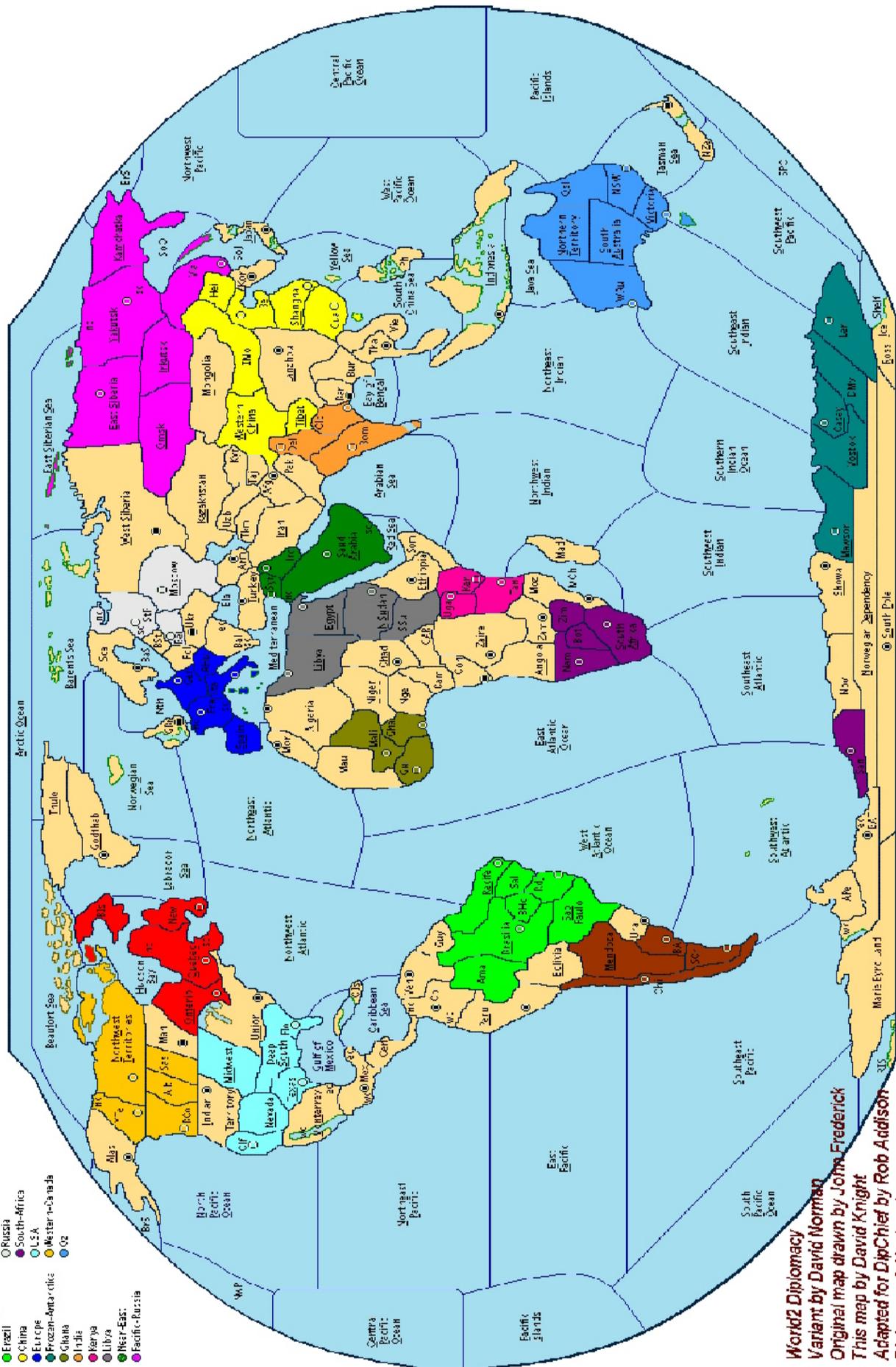
The First Super Power to control more than 50% of the Worlds existing Countries Wins the Game.

The Country Setup for World2 Diplomacy Map

Africa South - Minor
Antarctica - Rogue
Argentina - Rogue
Australia - Minor
Brazil - Minor
Canada - Rogue

China – Minor
Europe – USoA Client
Ghana - Rogue
India - Minor
Kenya - Minor
Libya - Minor

Near East - Rogue
Pacific Russia - USSR Client
Quebec - Rogue
USSR - Super Power
USoA - Super Power



World12 Diplomacy
 Variant by David Normaq
 Original map drawn by John Frederick
 This map by David Knight
 Adapted for DipChief by Rob Addison
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to take away A KuS and A Wal's
Nintendo time when they get
home)
Axum F GAd C A Mro - Phe
(behave so they don't get a
smackdown)
Axum F SRS C A Mro - Phe
(pokes F GAd for being such a
momma's boy)
Axum F Soc S F GAd H (laughs
when F GAd and F SRS start
fighting)
Axum F Oma S F ArS H (laughs
when F Soc catches a beatin' right
alongside F GAd and F SRS)
Axum F ArS S A Sha - Ujj (smiles
at the fine display of how to raise
kids in the good ole days)

Byzantine A Epi S A Dal - Sla
Void
Byzantine A Mac S A Epi *Cut*
Byzantine A Thr S A Mac
Byzantine F Egs - Bar *Bounce*
Byzantine F Ios S F Scl *Cut*
Dislodged
Byzantine F Lis S F Egs - Bar
Cut *Dislodged* *Disbanded*
Byzantine F Scl S F Ios *Cut*

Chinese A Jia - Cha
Chinese A Orb S A Sam
Chinese A Qar S A Sam
Chinese A Sam S A Sog
Chinese A Sog S A Tib - Kas
Chinese A Tib - Kas
Chinese A Uyg S A Sam
Chinese A Yan - Khi
Chinese F Yes H

Danish A Bas S A Kyr - Kip
Danish A Bul S A Udm - Mrd
Danish A Che - Kom
Danish A Kri S A Ros - Vya

Danish A Stb S A Bas
Danish A Udm - Mrd *Bounce*
Danish A Yug S A Kyr - Kip
Danish F Tas S F Sos
Danish F Borussia Just Beats It
(holds)
Danish F North German Sea
Throws a Memorial For Michael
Jackson (holds)
Danish F White Sea Pretends It
Didn't Hear That (holds)

French A Gra H
French A Jer - Dam
French A Kut - Ifr
French A Kyr - Kip *Bounce*
French A Rom - Slr
French A Ros - Vya *Bounce*
French A Sla S A Aqu - Dal
French A Slr - Tar
French A Spo H
French A Vya - Sev *Bounce*
French F Bar S F Ifr - Lis *Cut*
French F Crs - Bls
French F Ifr - Lis
French F IIs S F Tar - Ios
French F Lgs H
French F Nos H
French F Sjt H
French F Sta - Tka
French F Swo S F Tka - Wts
French F Tar - Ios
French F Tka - Wts
French F Tri S F Ifr - Lis
French F Tys - Scl *Bounce*

German A Aqu - Dal *Bounce*
German A Dal - Mac *Bounce*
German A Maz S A Vol - Kie
German A Ono S A Dal - Mac
German A Pol - Vol
German A Smo S A Vol - Kie
German A Vis S A Ono
German A Vol - Kie

Russian A Kie S A Pec *Cut*
Dislodged
Russian A Pec S A Kie

Srivijayan A Ind S A Ujj - Sha
Srivijayan A Knj S A Ind
Srivijayan A Nep S A Tib - Kas
Srivijayan A Ser - Ujj *Bounce*
Srivijayan A Ujj - Sha *Bounce*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
Srivijayan F Cob S F Mas
Srivijayan F Gos S F Wts - Sos
Srivijayan F Mah S F Mas
Srivijayan F Mas C A Ser - Ujj
Srivijayan F Mis S F Mas
Srivijayan F Nam S F Wts - Sos
Srivijayan F Ras S A Ser - Ujj
Srivijayan F Sus S F Mas
Srivijayan F Wts - Sos

Wagadu F Sos S F Tka - Wts
Cut *Dislodged*

Retreat Possibilities

Byzantine F IoS can retreat to
AeS, Con, Cre or disband
Byzantine F LiS is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
Russian A Kie can retreat to Vla or
disband
Srivijayan A Ujj is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
Wagadu F SOS can retreat to Awl,
Bur, Jel, Kng or disband

Retreats

Byzantine F Ionian Sea retreats to
Aegean Sea
Russian A Kiev retreats to Vlacha
Wagadu F Southern Sea retreats
to Awlil

Spring/Summer 912 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

To the extent there are interesting alliance changes going on in this game, B. remains the architect, so the key to this season was Axum's marines hitting the beaches in Madagascar while also assisting the Arabians, who may yet play a role in where this game is going. The interesting part though is that if that requires

Arabia to join Axum in toadying to the French, the Nigs may have an even easier path to the solo, we'll have to see. But since Germany and Denmark still are showing no interest in generating an anti-French alliance, there is no reason Axum/Arabia should either. Now some more specifics.

Denmark is essentially stuck in place for the moment. His only real attempt to advance (into Mrd) bounced, just as did the French move into Vya that he supported. There is a terrific bottleneck of Arabian armies there. Nobody is likely to advance much until Germany finishes off Russia and starts hitting Arabia from the west.

In a bit of a shift, now Denmark isn't moving and Germany is. The advancement corridors for Denmark are exceptionally narrow, there really isn't anything Denmark is going to get in the South Atlantic, and the other fleets are bored. Why not stab France.... sure, it won't succeed, but at least you would be taking some action that moves the game. And basically why should France stab anyone when they can just negotiate their way to victory? I do not entirely mean this pejoratively. It can be said, that the best way to solo is by acclamation (bow to the Bir Sauron for this, otherwise known as Edi Birsan).

Really, why not stab France? What's the down side? Will Denmark lose opportunity for massive growth in Asia? (chortle)

What's his next SC? Does he think he can invade Arabia? China? He cannot.

Denmark's play at this point can only be interpreted as a lack of interest in trying to win. Some players just don't try to win. Players like that annoy me.

Germany finally breaks through the Russian bottleneck, with help from the French who cut the Arabian support. Once he starts hitting Arabia from the west, Arabia will no longer be able to hold out. The western coalition are all working together here.

While I agree with Suzanne in general here, the key about Arabia is whether the support for Arabia from Axum means anything regarding France's northern allies. It probably doesn't, but if it does, then Denmark/Germany are REALLY bottlenecked. And yes, Germany is finally advancing and gaining some centers.

Arabia cannot hold? Shouldn't we concern ourselves with Byzantium first?

And after Byz falls, France is going to stab Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for the solo, right?

One Russian army down and the other to fall next year. This is the end of a long, long story of resistance to attacks, first from Khazaria, then from Denmark/Germany and also from Samadia. It is astonishing that Russia could hold out this long.

Russia has held out with solid tactics every season, but seemingly no effective diplomatic action. This is another reminder that making great tactics is fine, but you need

to talk to people effectively (remember we have no way of knowing who IS doing the most talking, but we know when we don't see any results).

That seems a bit pessimistic. Somebody talk and talk but never actually accomplish anything. I think we can only conclude that Russia hasn't accomplished much diplomatically. I don't think we can conclude he didn't try.

Of course Russia takes the only possible retreat. That only gives him a year's reprieve, but he will continue resisting until the last possible minute.

Go Darren, keep up the never say die attitude.

France tried hard (double support by Denmark) to move from Kyr west to Kipchek, perhaps to show China that Arabia is the target, and so encouraging China and Indonesia to keep up their push against Arabia.

France seems committed to attacking Arabia from the north, if for no other reason than to guarantee Germany and Denmark limited paths of expansion. There is no evidence of supporting the Axum's move to shore up Arabia, or if that move by B. will cause Nigs to focus on Axum as his next target? We are left with these as the most exciting remaining choices for Nigs.

The French actions in Russia are not terribly important. They will give the illusion of possibility to Germany and Denmark. What matters is that he is sinking the Byz fleets. He'll take Sicily in the Fall and will be moving on Crete in short order. As long as Germany is helping in the Balkans, he'll be able to take Greece and the SCs in Asia Minor. Then he can move into the Black Sea basin.

Once France reaches that point, it'll be very easy for him to stab his allies for a solo. Axum's actions will only make this even easier.

The fact that none of the other powers seem to care about these strategic possibilities is disheartening. Not quite up to snuff for a demo game.

In the eastern Med, he finally moved into the Libyan and Ionian Seas. The Ionian Sea fleet is now adjacent to Constantinople, one of Byzantium's original home centers. Sicily is now surrounded by French fleets. Byzantium can still slow the French advance significantly, but France will be able to grind his way through the Byzantine opposition.

As I've noted throughout, a lesser tactician than Gregory would not have held out even this long, but this really is the end now. It is no longer possible for Byzantium to offer any help (another reason why if other countries were going to stab France they should have done so while Byzantium was still viable, now it is not).

Along the African coast, France took the Western Sea, thus building on the advance that Wagadu made last year (but lost this year).

We would have thought this was irrelevant, but with Axum's moves, could France get all the way to Sri Vijaya's home centers? Possibly, really, possibly.

The loss of the Ionian and Libyan seas is a serious dent on the Byzantine position. Byzantium will continue to resist for two or three years, but he won't be able to hold out indefinitely. The only way that Byzantium could have hoped to hold out longer would have been a solid alliance with either Arabia and Axum, or as part of the Western alliance.

However, the support offered for a German move against France is intriguing. Was there really diplomacy going on between Byzantium and Germany, or is this a gesture?

I see nothing here at this point, just Byzantium making the best moves they can.



Both Constantinople and Crete are now exposed to the French Ionian sea fleet; but the retreat to the Aegean Sea allows a guessing game in the fall. If Byzantium wins it, he will have a build to replace the disbanded Libyan Sea fleet.

Maybe, but the fleet in Sicily will be disappearing at that point. Also, after all our speculations about a fleet build for Arabia in Jerusalem, France could now take advantage of that possibility.

The shame of it here is that there would still be a line in the Eastern Med that could be held, but Byz and Axum have shown no signs of cooperation or even communication.

I suppose there is a guessing game, Suzanne is way,

way more excited about this than I am, just more evidence that Gregory doesn't make many tactical mistakes.

Wagadu continues to stick with France.

Indonesia takes back the Southern Sea, but France took the Western Sea with Wagadu's support. For the moment, it looks like a perfect stalemate. However, if Indonesia has to pull back, the French and Danish fleets will be able to advance further, eventually holding all of Africa hostage if necessary.

Nobody's going to be moving fleets around Africa. It's a long corridor that's too easily blocked at every point.

Wagadu makes the obvious retreat to his remaining SC.

Wagadu does the matador act, graciously stepping aside. The most likely outcome is that Mikael sticks around for awhile and continues to support France. But this is no different from what everyone else is doing genuflecting at the altar of the Cathedral of Notre Dame.... whoops, guess that doesn't quite exist yet, not even being a dream for another 250 years or so. So, since the East Franks (Germans) are toadying, we all can genuflect at the altar of Charlemagne/Pepin's cathedral in Aachen. Bonus points if you know which French owned province in this game had Aachen as its capital.

Wagadu's support is entirely natural.

I seem to recall that Aachen is is modern Germany. But the capital of Swabia is Stuttgart. Aachen is further to the North - near the Rhineland. That would make Lotharingia the candidate.

In a new switch-around (how many does that make?), Axum is now attacking Indonesia and helping Arabia, while still helping the French (support of Barca and other moves discussed below). Actually, the switch to an attack on Indonesia makes some sense, since apparently it may have been the implicit menace from Indonesia that led to his latest stab on Arabia. But how can he justify working with both Arabia and France? It's getting increasingly difficult to make a coherent interpretation of the ensemble.

I would say it's impossible. Axum is picking a fight with Indonesia while helping France attack Byzantium.

I doubt Indonesia would retaliate by seeking a deal with France, should France want to pursue a solo.

(Is that too dry?)

It is not B's responsibility to be coherent, most players

do not take enough advantage of opportunities not to be in "0/1" alliance structures with other players. The issue is consequences. I've been predicting Arabia goes out, he may not if Axum helps him. And perhaps that could lead to a stand against the French once Byzantium is gone. But as Rick said a couple of seasons back, the math will not be with the defenders if they wait that long.

As stabs go, the stab on Indonesia is limited but will have a certain effectiveness. He helped Arabia take back a center from Indonesia this spring, and he will probably take back Zimbabwe this fall. The army in Phebol will probably be destroyed, although Indonesia will have to balance the pressure from the French fleets with the need to face Axum.

Oh, perhaps, but I like the boldness of the army in Phebol. I'll go out on a limb and predict it will survive somehow.

Actually, the stab of Indonesia fits in well with the French plans. In fact, Axum seems to be working more and more for France. Not only is he interfering with the Indonesian resistance to the French and Danish fleets, but he also made two other interesting moves: he moved away from that last Wagadu center, quite possibly at French request, and moved Damascus into Cappadocia, next to an unoccupied Byzantine SC. Is Axum trying to get his part out of the Byzantine collapse? If so, how will he possibly hold it?

As an aside, why does Axum suddenly spend so much energy playing games with his orders? Perhaps it is a game he is playing with France's other allies. Does he think that it disguises the real sense of his orders? In any case, France is not bothering to participate in this metagame.

I found Axum's cutesy carp to be really annoying, esp. since even with his mock orders he made a mis-order. (The second one.)

Axum is taking a big chance here, by daring to express his sense of humor. It's one thing to play Diplomacy poorly, but to make jokes that nobody finds funny is the kind of faux pas that could be hard to overcome.

France is trying to go low and stay under the radar, why antagonize anyone if you can just win?

Arabia is still doing more holding and supporting than actually trying to move. With Axum's help, he moved back into Uijjain, but lost Kashmir to China. Perhaps the latest Axum turn-around will allow him to do more. But Axum's contradictions will affect Arabia, too. Axum gives him a hand against Indonesia, but blocks his bath to Damascus.

I still think Arabia does not survive the game and it

seemed before the B. got much more antsy with Matt after Arabia stabbed the Samanid and John R. So I don't think this is a major shift or rapprochement between Matt and B., just a meeting of opportunity.

There is no way to remove Arabia from the board faster than France would solo. So if the Eastern powers continue to drive at Arabia and somehow make it into a draw, it'll only be because France isn't interested in trying to solo. I've seen nothing from France to indicate such a possibility.

Indonesia was obviously completely surprised by Axum's latest about-face. He is going to have to balance his fleet moves around Africa with the necessity of facing the Axum attack. I'd guess that his priority will be to face Axum, since that is a direct threat, while the French advances are a very minor and indirect danger.

Sri Vijaya has not been threatened much by anyone all game, it is about time for him to have to defend something. On the plus side for stopping France, if he does give up centers to Axum, Axum can build them in Africa, but I'm suspecting this is mostly an entertaining diversion.

Well, he'll lose Zimbabwe right away, but can hold the Madagascar dot for at least a turn.

But really, so what?

I've been critical of the SV strategic vision for a while. Did he think he could blast his way up along the West coast of Africa? Well, if he trusted Stabby McStabberton, it's his own fault.

The Chinese gain Kashmir with Indonesian support. This move was apparently not planned last spring, since the army that had descended to block an possible Arabian rogue army had gone back to Jia, and now as a two-season trot to move to Tibet.

Again, what's the plan here?

Does China know that the vast majority of SCs are beyond his reach through a brute force strategy?

Does he care?

Good point by Suzanne. The game would become a bit more interesting if China joined in with Axum against Sri Vijaya, but that would be a heart attack inducing shock at this point.

That's one thing that won't happen.

At this point, the diplomatic waters are hopelessly poisoned between anybody in the East, with the exception of China/SV.

Position Power Abb 911 912 Change SCs changing possession

- 1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 24 25 +1 +Scl
- 2 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 17 16 -1 -Kas
- 3 Kingdom of Axum X 14 15 +1 +Zim
- 4 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 14 13 -1 -Zim
- 5 Kingdom of Denmark D 11 11 0
- 6 Tang Empire (China) C 9 10 +1 +Kas
- 7 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 8 9 +1 +Kie
- 8 Byzantine Empire B 7 5 -2 -Scl, -Chs
- 9 Principality of Kiev (Russia) R 2 2 0 -Kie, +Chs
- 10 Kingdom of Wagadu W 1 1 0

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 1 unit, can build in Ard, Aze, Geo, Isf, Tam, Urg

Byzantine Empire makes no adjustments

Tang Empire (China) builds 1 unit, can build in ChA, Kai, Nan, Sil, Yan

Kingdom of Denmark makes no adjustments

West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 2 units, can build in Aqt, Bri, Cad, Cor, Crs, Dub, Gas, LBU, Lot, Mau, Nar, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Rom (wc), Sal, Sar, Swa, Val

East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 1 unit, can build in Bav, Bre, Mor, Pol, Sax

Principality of Kiev (Russia) makes no adjustments

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya makes no adjustments

Kingdom of Wagadu makes no adjustments

Kingdom of Axum builds 1 unit, can build in Adu, Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), AQA, Axu, JeJ, Kan, KuS, Mak, Mal, Roh, Wal

Fall/Autumn 912 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

I figure Arabia is the one pressing for the draw. That's the way these things go - look at a proposal and see which power mentioned has the worst position.

I agree, Arabia surely proposed the draw. Sometimes that is a useful strategy, but here I think it was just wishful thinking. There was/is no chance it will be accepted, both because most of the other powers believe Arabia will be eliminated, and that someone here has solo chances....

Quite possible that it was Arabia who proposed it. Also agreed that the player with a solo chance will vote against it. I don't see why anyone else should vote against it, at this point.

Denmark: How to stand in place while ordering every unit.

Movement is scary!

A mix-up between Denmark and Wagadu stopped either of them from moving into the Southern Sea, at a turn where this would have worked. Nothing much else of note.

This remains the history of Denmark and Germany toadying to France. They mostly just hold territory stable so France can maneuver elsewhere. The mixup over the Southern Sea also suggests to me this is NOT a priority for France (he is planning to go at Arabia once he is done with Byzantium) so he didn't guide his toadies properly.

This time France did move into Kip. The alliance units are surrounding the Arabian units, but it will still take a few turns before they approach the bulk

of the northern Arabian centers. Meanwhile, the eastern coalition have got the message, and are attacking Arabia more aggressively.

Right, this seems like where Nigs was concentrating his attention. Byzantium is resorted to mopup duty.

Well, he is certainly still interested in taking the Byzantine centers. ☺

In the Med, France took Sicily and is filling in the eastern Med. France will certainly get Cyprus next year, quite probably at least Crete as well, since Byzantium has two disbands this year. Lots of forces in the western Med are waiting for space to move to.

One odd move : the Damascus army moved to Jerusalem, instead of following Axum to Cappadocia -- or did he know that Axum would be moving that army? Maybe he didn't quite trust the Axum forces around Jerusalem.

Byz could have moved to Jerusalem from Egyptian Sea. Since France was making a supported moving into said province, he surely didn't want to leave Jerusalem open for a retreat.

You're right.

I think that's it.

Germany was playing it very prudently around Pec, waiting for the Russian disband which won't happen. If he had been a little more aggressive, he might have simplified things for himself next year.

At least he finally got a build. However, as he certainly won't stab France, it will be hard to find a useful place to put it.

You know, now would be a good time for Germany to stab France. Or at least to think about doing it. There is no Russian threat and it gains him little to continue to play the role of monkey-in-the-middle.

In other news, the sun rose in the East this morning.

Agreed, Germany has had few opportunities, but now is his best one, and maybe with the Denmark screw up in Southern Sea the chance is there to get Denmark to join (or at least not interfere). But no, I don't expect it either. Follow the sun.....

It would probably be as well if he popped that French army in Slavonia, both for himself and for France.

In an unexpected move, Russia takes the Byzantine center of Cherson. Could this have been an agreement between the two of them? If not, he is paying Byzantium back very badly for all the carebear years. His fall will now take a little longer, and the Med will collapse entirely a little sooner.

(snicker)

I approve of this move. But I wouldn't be surprised if he told Byz he was going to do it. An empty Cherson would not be useful for Russia. With two armies there he can hold those two SCs for a little while. Also, it would be interesting to see what happened if Byz stopped showing any resistance to the French growth. I think we're at that point.

I agree, this is the sentinel hold out position and I can't see why Byzantium would bother to oppose it, Russia was the one set to do it.

Byzantium is still holding out as well as he can, but it's a losing battle -- all the more since he lost one more center to his Russian ally.

So Byz is down to five. Cyprus goes down in the Spring, and then at least one more in the Fall. Actually, Thrace could fall in the Spring, too. (Hmm...is there anything that could spring in the Fall?) And when Thrace falls, that army should pop.

Gone, gone, gone. Might be time for Byzantium to join the toady parade instead and march toward the rising sun.

I think that he lost his chance for a toady role several game-years ago, when he might have had an offer, but tried a mini-stab instead. I gather that France wants only thoroughly reliable toadies.

Wagadu and Denmark couldn't get together about who would go into the Southern Sea, so nobody did.

[whatevah]

Backwaters....

Axum just recuperated Zimbabwe this year, and understandably did want Indonesia to have two fleets around his regained center. Still, he has a solid land support for Zimbabwe, so that wouldn't have been so serious; and Arabia really needed the support to hold on to Uijain.

On the positive side, he moved his army into position to be able to exert influence on either of two Byzantine centers. Will France let him take one of them?

I still don't understand the whole Zimbabwe thing. Why did Axum give it up in the first place? What did SV think he'd get out of having a toehold for his fleets? Why is it important for Axum to retake it?

Does Axum have a strategy here other than "Take SCs and hope I don't lose"?

If so, it's difficult to find.

I know I do this myself sometimes, flip and flop and hope to shake up the board. If anyone is going to shake up the board and assemble an anti-French alliance it is B. I think attacking SV has a shot at getting to that outcome, even if it is quite dimly seen to date.

If B was going to do that, he would have started a while ago, before France had quite this much momentum.

Arabia lost out this turn. He couldn't hold on to Uijain without Axum's fleet support, so it went right back to Indochina.

He had two useful armies in front positions popped, which should at least give him a build.

Arabia made the logical retreat, since he already has a build coming.

I still want to see a fleet on the Khaz sea. It would help his front immeasurably. Uncuttable supports are wonderful.

Arabia is still not engaged, he likely proposed the unlikely draw, he is getting pounded from all directions, it is a measure of his early success that they've been pounding him for so long and he still is hanging in there.

The Eastern Juggernauts continue to chip away at

Arabia, instead of trying to stop the Franco-Danish advance. Still, one Chinese army is winding its slow trudge up north towards Yugra.

China seems to have Danish advances adequately blocked. So the question is - can he do anything to stop a French solo? To that end, blasting away at Arabia would be, IMHO, counter-productive.

Certainly it's counter-productive. But that doesn't keep him from doing it.

But it would be predictably likely.

For Indonesia as for China, the priority is the front against Axum and Arabia. Countering the Western advance is obviously secondary.

I have to admit I've pretty much given up trying to follow the exact tactics in the East. The big problem is these

damnable 3-letter abbreviations. When you have so many provinces named in such an obscure fashion, 3-letter abbreviations only serve to confound the reader. Ken Lowe's Judge accepts 3-letter abbreviations as _input_, but has the decency to publish full names for readability in the published results.

I move that demo games should have full province names published with all of the moves. We want this stuff to be reader-friendly, right? What do I think when I see "F Ras S A Ser - Ujj"? I wonder where Ras and Ujj are, and wonder how an army in Serbia is controlled by the Indonesian power. (That leads to my second point: don't use 3-letter abbreviations that are standard for the regular game, but in the variant are intended to refer to a province very distant from the original.)

Good idea from Rick. But SV seems to be falling to the easy pushing the pieces as well. Sayonara, no real interesting moves again this year.

Winter 912 Results

Winter Adjudications

Arabia builds A Urgench

China builds A Yanjing

West Franks waive their builds

East Franks build A Polania

Axum builds F Malao

Winter 912 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

As predicted, the draw failed.

It could not have done otherwise, I would also predict that it had very little sway over the course of negotiation, which is NOT what you want to do. If anything, if they determine that it was likely Arabia who proposed it, to hasten Arabia's demise. An underlying interesting level of the game question is whether someone OTHER than Arabia proposed the draw, in order to blame it on Arabia, in order to hasten Arabia's elimination. This is more than possible as well. This is one of those underused strategies that is especially helpful in large variants, where as Rick suggested people easily can see who is the "last power" in the proposal.

As Rick remarked, the Arabian build could have been a fleet giving uncuttable support, which would have been useful. As is, it will take a long time before this army will be in a useful spot.

Matt remains uninventive, possibly even unengaged.

The northernmost empty center. Even if China eventually forms a line in northern Asia, it probably wouldn't affect France's solo chances.

I do expect China to try to hold French northern expansion to the east at Yugra. And I agree it will have little to no impact on the game outcome.

Is that the second build held in stock by France?

Yes, it is, they are clearly now holding the builds until the next phase of the game. As you readers can all tell (and you can skip ahead faster than we can as you read it) that is the next point of interest and it likely won't come until Byzantium is gone or almost gone. We're desperately trying to entertain you until then.... ;-)

Germany builds in the most eastern empty center. The three western centers remain free for the taking, if France ever feels like it.

Boo, hiss, boo... well, not that bad, but still, the East Franks pass up the opportunity to offend their senior counterparts to the west. We're not surprised, but we're always disappointed.

Axum is low on fleets, if he is going to be fighting Indonesia. But Malao is only useful for holding or moving into the Gulf of Aden.

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Arm - Dam *Bounce*
Arabian A Ati H
Arabian A Bag - Dam *Bounce*
Arabian A Bal S A Ati
Arabian A Bsr S A Man
Arabian A Buk S A Kyk *Cut*
Arabian A Ghu - Kip
Arabian A Her S A Buk
Arabian A Kyk S A Ghu - Kip
Arabian A Man S A Sha - Ujj
Arabian A Mrd S A Sev *Cut*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
Arabian A Sev S A Mrd
Arabian A Sha - Ujj *Bounce*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
Arabian A Sjs S A Man
Arabian A Srk S A Ati
Arabian A Urg S A Kyk

Axum A Ale - Aqa
Axum A Buc - Con *Bounce*
Axum A Jel - Kng *Bounce*
Axum A Kon S A Zim - Nam
Axum A Mec - Ale
Axum A Nio - Kng *Bounce*
Axum A Phe - Mah *Bounce*
Axum A Rha - Zim
Axum A Zim - Nam
Axum F Ars S A Ujj
Axum F Gad - Mes *Bounce*
Axum F Mal - Aza
Axum F Soc - Mas *Bounce*
Axum F Srs - Gad *Bounce*
Axum F Yem S F Srs - Gad

Byzantine A Con S A Thr *Cut*
Byzantine A Mac S A Thr
Byzantine A Thr S A Sla - Ono
Void
Byzantine F Att - Aes
Byzantine F Cre - Cis

Chinese A Blk - Buk *Bounce*
Chinese A Kas S A Ind - Sha
Chinese A Mer - Tun
Chinese A Orb - Kyr

Chinese A Qar S A Orb - Kyr
Chinese A Sam S A Blk - Buk
Chinese A Tib S A Kas
Chinese A Uyg S A Sam
Chinese A Yan - Khi
Chinese F Yes H

Danish A Bas S A Kip - Ati
Danish A Bul S A Vya - Mrd
Danish A Che S A Ros - Vya
Danish F Takrur Sea - South
Ocean Sea
Danish A Kri - Nov
Danish A Stb - Yug *Bounce*
Danish A Udm S A Vya - Mrd
Danish A Yug - Kyr *Bounce*
Danish F Bor H
Danish F Ngs H
Danish F Whs H

French A Gra H
French A Ifr - Tri
French A Jer - Dam *Bounce*
French A Kip - Ati *Bounce*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
French A Ros - Vya
French A Sla S A Aqu - Dal
French A Slr H
French A Spo H
French A Tar H
French A Vya - Mrd
French F Bar - Egs
French F Bls - Sjt
French F Egs - Cyp
French F Ios S F Bar - Egs
French F Lgs H
French F Nos H
French F Scl H
French F Sta H
French F Swo S F Wts
French F Tka S F Wts
French F Tri - Bar
French F Tys - Lis
French F Wts S F Tas - Sos

German A Aqu - Dal

German A Ava S A Vol - Vla
German A Dal - Epi
German A Kie S A Vol - Vla
German A Ono S A Aqu - Dal
German A Pol - Vol
German A Smo S A Kie
German A Vis S A Ono
German A Vol - Vla

Russian A Chs S A Pec
Russian A Pec S A Sev

Srivijayan A Ind - Sha
Srivijayan A Knj S A Ujj
Srivijayan A Nep - Ind
Srivijayan A Ujj S A Ind - Sha
Srivijayan F Cob S F Mas
Srivijayan F Gos - Mes *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Mah H
Srivijayan F Mas S A Ujj *Cut*
Srivijayan F Mis S F Mas
Srivijayan F Nam - Gos *Bounce*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
Srivijayan F Ras S A Ujj
Srivijayan F South Ocean Sea -
Namib (*Bounce*) (*Dislodged*)
Srivijayan F Sus S F Nam - Gos

Wagadu F Awl S F Tas - Sos

Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Mrd is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
Arabian A Sha is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
French A Kip is destroyed (no valid
retreats)
Srivijayan F Nam is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
Srivijayan F South Ocean Sea can
retreat to Bure or OTB

Summer Retreats

Srivijayan F South Ocean Sea
retreats to Bure

Spring/Summer 913 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

I don't know about the other observers, but I'm a bit disappointed in Nick here, as he seems to be taking a "side" in urging the players to call it a day. I've been at this game for a long time, and JUST once did I interfere as a GM in a case like this, pushing things to a draw that

really wasn't a draw. The details are irrelevant, but basically I almost lost a friendship with the player that was angling for the solo. With my interference, he felt he was unable to pursue his Solo strategy and felt compelled into the draw. Ever since I have vowed "no

game shall end before its time".... wherever possible. And GM task #1 is to (if anything) err on the side of encouraging games to continue on and on and on and on.

Agree that the GM should remain neutral.

There are two philosophies about GMing, from what I've seen : strict neutrality, or comments/observations to make the adjudication interesting for observers and players. Nick practices the second sort. I've usually found his adjudications more interesting and his comments appropriate and non-interfering. He also tries to encourage press and even the "cute" games the players have been playing with their orders. Perhaps this is excessive, but it does make following a big game a little easier and a little more lively. I don't think that he was taking a side about the draw; I think that he was only encouraging the players to read and consider it. Why not?

As for the press...Yawn, as I discussed last time, the draw proposal was coming from Arabia, clearly (now he admits it). And he is wrong about the slog to eliminate him. I even think it is possible for Nigs to solo WITHOUT stabbing his allies, at least possible enough to keep playing. And, are there stalemate lines on this board?? I admit that my approach to the game is not to look for stalemates, but keep probing, pushing, thinking, and not drop into stalemate lines until I absolutely have to. So, I am not hunting for these lines, but I don't think any exist that I can see which will save Arabia. Going even more public will just push people to take him out even faster (if they had needed the push or the help). Done.

The Arabian arguments are flawed. It's pretty obvious that his position has no stalemate lines and that his presence in the draw is unnecessary.

He is also pointing out that Axum is at much at risk as himself of annihilation. I'd bet that isn't going to change Axum's point of view of the game, though.

An important tactical lesson for readers: try not to have your front-line forces disbanded during the Spring phase.

Again, Arabia still is pressed distinctly on all four sides, north, south, east and west and I'll comment on each as he is losing on all four.

North: Mordvinia is annihilated and there is no fleet in the North Khazar Sea (uncuttable support) to save him. This front will continue to lose at least one space/province every turn. You're going to argue that the annihilation in Kipchak is significant, and I'm going to say, not really.

If the Danes were in Kipchak, Atil would fall in the Fall season. If Arabia had a fleet on the Khazar Sea, it could be moving North now to prop up that front.

If I were running this Arabia, I would be throwing SCs to France left and right. If China and SV are going to attack him, why should he bother to keep the French stuck in Jerusalem? Not that it'll really matter in the long run.

Rick has a point here. However, there are players who just don't throw games, whatever the situation; and Arabia seems to be one of them.

South: This is the only front where the pressure has slackened. Axum is now focused on the war with Sri Vijaya and is not pressing for Basra at present. Since Axum really needed to get an army in there to do anything, this seemed like the prudent thing to do for B. And here is one place Arabia is not losing.

East: Shahiya was the one annihilated this time, and Arabia knew it would be. The SV/Axum war means that progress on the southern edge of the eastern line also is impeded, and Denmark is impeding the northern attack, so it is possible that this front too will be locked up for a bit. This is intentional on the part of the toadies to France (specifically Denmark). Denmark is keeping Yugra (that is a defensible place) and from there he can keep interfering in the advance. This seems to be because the aim of France is to take most all of Arabia himself, or with the help of the toadies. This is bad for the long term argument Arabia is trying to make in seeing the game as being ended in a draw. No draw here....

West: Jerusalem continues to bounce over Damascus until he starts shooting in convoyed armies next game year. Arabia doesn't have a line here either, though he does have a reprieve.

So, in sum, yes, the SV/Axum war slowed the advance against Arabia, but doesn't change the expected outcome.

The annihilation in Kipchak will certainly slow down France's advance there significantly (and make it even more of a slog, if you will). However, what Arabia is doing is slowing down his fall, not reversing it. Pretty hard to do that all by his lonesome.

In the southeast, trying to re-take Uij from Sha would have been a long shot at best, even with support from Axum, which he didn't get.

Axum is not being threatened in Africa, and though Alexandria can be taken does not feel threatened, so the attack on SV seems to be buying French protection. The Mecca army does move back in defense though,

rather than advancing toward Arabia. So again, if anything this looks like a deal where Axum leaves the way open for France to strike through Asia Minor toward Asia. Axum will have trouble advancing against SV until Denmark comes around the horn of Africa, but this is the direction we're moving. If SV does retreat the dislodged fleet to Bure, will Axum assist in its annihilation too? This is a minor question in the grand scheme.

I half-expect Axum to walk into Georgia and cackle with mirth.

France could take Alexandria right now, if he wanted to. The timing isn't right, but it's worth pointing out exactly how this board's power imbalance persist.

For some reason, Axum is content to let France maneuver his forces in a way so a later stab could be easily pulled off. There really is no good reason for the French to be in Tripolitania.

Oddly enough, even though Axum is at war with SV, he supported the SV army in Uij. I don't really see why, but it didn't matter much, either way.

Gregory continues to TRY to be France's next toady, but the stable stalls are full and there is no room in the inn. Thrace's support for France against Germany is again, not surprisingly, ignored. Byzantium is likely the next power to be eliminated, though this year may still keep three, more likely only two though. The one thing Arabia is correct about is: these are long and slow slogs through the tactics.

Getting through Byzantium isn't that slow a slog at this point, but Arabia certainly will be.

I still wonder whether Byzantium was really offered alliance a long while back, when he reacted by a mini-stab. If so, perhaps he regrets that today. In any case, France is quite capable of deciding when and if to stab, and by doing it all by himself, so support from Thrace was useless.

I think that the moment when it looked like Byz might work with France against Germany was the result of French diplomacy. By which I mean: France was always planning to continue against Byz, but pretended to be open to a stab (for one turn only) to get Byz to make the critical mistake of convoying his army off the boot. The removal of that army was a huge tactical mistake, and made it impossible for Byz to hold the line at Italy. And then his problem was exacerbated when France was allowed to walk down the shore of North Africa and take one of his SCs.

Byz needed to hold the line at Italy, and he needed to convince Axum that holding the line was in Axum's best interest.

Control of the Black Sea is too important for France to ease up on this front.

It seems that on this front France will concentrate on knocking out Byz for the time being. Once that is done, he can pretty much stab everybody and go for the solo.

Let's see...I think the armies in Mac and Thrace will both be popped. It's easy to hole Attalia and Crete, but doing so would leave Con vulnerable. But if he guesses right he might hold three SCs at the end of the year.

But he should be gone next year.

I would not be surprised to see France press forward to the strategic sea provinces, not caring so much about dots. He knows the dots will fall. Looking for a supported move to Cilician Sea, followed next Spring by the capture of Aegean Sea.

Yes, that's the way France has been playing this since he entered the Med, and it's served him well. It's just as well for him to have a center count that is lower than his true strength.

At that point, I expect the Germans to put France into Con, giving him access to the Black Sea. That'll be accompanied by a big stab of Axum.

China moves in to lock up the line against Denmark at Yugra. Denmark cannot advance further and China cannot dislodge it. We await what happens to the Arabian armies to the southwest. As stated, right now, the advances seem to be primarily in the hands of the French alliance. That isn't especially good for China. Since he is unlikely to stab SV now, there is not much to do but keep probing the defenses of Arabia.

And China wins the award for rearranging deck chairs...

Hard to say what the Chinese strategy is at this point. He's lined up his armies next to the east of the Arabian forces, but to do what? Is he gaining anything himself, or is he just helping the Westerners advance. Is he talking at all with anyone other than SV ?

In addition to the advance into South Ocean Sea (finally getting his act straight with Mikael) the only other piece of Denmark's that moved was A Kri moving backwards to Nov. This is interesting for two reasons. First, is Denmark actually worried about a stab by Germany? One would doubt it, but that is the Danish center where he could build most closely on that front next to Germany. Now that looks impossible. Is Bjarmaland now the designated Danish build center as Denmark tries to advance in a very narrow channel to the Khazar Sea? Denmark seems to have been assigned very narrow passes on either end of the French juggernaut

line. Otherwise, everyone else sits and waits.

Let's see how many SCs in Russia Denmark can help France take, thereby continuing to place a higher priority to French growth than his own growth, and also irritating the observers ever more than he already has done.

Nothing new here.

France seems to be going a bit slower right now, but I think there is an attempt to lull to complacency here. Yes, to guarantee the advance he wanted, France allowed the A Kipchak to be annihilated (moving to cut support) and the moves in the Eastern Mediterranean are designed to put Byzantium out efficiently. This is that touchy time where he wants others to reject the Arabian draw proposal and does not want Nick mucking in the debate. I think that is behind the softer trend in the French orders this turn. Perhaps not, Either way, no clouds on the French horizon.

The endgame vote doesn't really matter, since it is private and, if it doesn't pass, no one will know how many players voted for and against. Since France at least will certainly not vote for the DIAS, it won't pass.

Of course France doesn't want public opinion on the board to be heavily against him, which is essentially what happened to Arabia. But he only needs the good opinion of his chosen group of allies.

We were all prepared to see a stab of Germany many game-years ago -- but it didn't happen. I'm sure that France will have to stab at least one of his allies. But he can always wait until the player in question does something provocative. But that is very likely to be Axum -- which would make Rick's prophesy come true.

I think at this point France's biggest goal will be to ensure that he gets access to Istanbul, and thus the Black Sea.

If Germany isn't willing to play ball with that, France could walk into Moravia and show just how nasty such a stab would be.

To address a question here: yes, Germany deserves to be stabbed. Sometimes people think that a player leaving himself so wide open to a stab shouldn't be stabbed. The logic is: well, you can stab him later, or the guys' armies are so useful that it's not worth doing. But if France wants a solo, he is going to have to stab Germany. Maybe not Denmark, but definitely Germany. I think he'll turn on Axum first. It'd be easier to sell such a move to his other allies.

Frankly, I can't see Germany refusing to play ball with that. He has made gains here recently, to the

observer's great surprise. I can't imagine him not helping France get a center that the latter considers crucial.

Three German units move this season, might be a record over the last five game years. Germany seems poised to keep moving forward to take Thrace. Since the Russians are now committed to Arabia (hey, Arabia DOES have an ally!) Thrace may fall this fall.... hey, when the game bores, I have to entertain myself with weak wit.

So he prostrates himself utterly for France and then, after years of stalemate, he gets two builds.

Well that was worth doing!

After Thrace, what's his next SC?

Maybe Pechenega, once France gets fleets into the Euxine sea. Which is a good reason to help France get Constantinople. I'm sure that France could sell it that way, if it needed selling.

Russia continues the abandonment of Byzantium by supporting Arabia instead of Byzantium. This allows Russia to hold out longer than Byzantium, not too big a deal but likely to be the small victory Darren is seeking.

There wasn't any Byz force that Russia could have supported.

Arabia might hold onto Sev for the fall move, since Germany will likely be too busy attacking Thrace to worry about the Russian dots.

When Arabia is knocked out of Sev, he'll start having no-win choices to make. Will he support Atil or Pec or Sarkel? Of course, if he had any fleets to use here, the choices would be easier.

I wonder if a fleet build in the inland sea even occurred to Arabia. Land-based powers don't always think of the various uses fleets could have. But it's true that would have been a useful build. Maybe the possibility will still be open.

At best, Sri Vijaya is now stuck. At worst they keep getting pushed back. The defenses are strong, so the movement will be slow, but Mike has nowhere to gain centers. I don't know that the retreat to Bure that Nick is pushing is where he wants to be. It will engage bored Wagadu and Axum units to eliminate him, I suppose.

The SV/Axum war is really one of the most pointless features of the current board. The end result will be that Axum will be out of position when France stabs in about two game years. SV cannot blast into the Arabia seas, but he can certainly hold the line at India.

I think that war is about over, anyhow. I'd guess that Axum saw it as self-defense, but doesn't have any reason to continue it.

I wonder why Axum isn't going after this Axum dot. I mean, the obvious explanation is because France has told him not to, but really, why should that be sufficient cause?

If Axum didn't consider it necessary to appease

The Fall 913 adjudication is completed. Sorry for the delay, but Excel kept crashing (booooo! very frustrating). As such, I will dispense with the commentary this time. The draw proposal has failed.

Before publishing the adjudication results, we have another submission of press from Li Bo.

Anonymous Press

France, he wouldn't have supported him in the Med. If France makes a request, Axum probably considers that it would be suicide to refuse it. That's the only possible reading of his support for France.

Does Mikael hope for that retreat to Bure, so he gets some action? Is this as simple as a deal to remain in the game for being the micro-toady to France? Probably. Mikael may now just sit.

Fall/Autumn 913 Results

Under the stars is wisdom,
But the sun brings joy.
Mild breezes stir the soul,
while beer makes the traveler whole.

The roads pulse with rumours.
Each prince must ponder his fate.
To predict events reveals the mind's workings,
but to act without understanding brings remorse.

Li Bo

Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Arm S A Bag - Dam
Arabian A Ati H
Arabian A Bag - Dam
Arabian A Bal S A Ati
Arabian A Bsr S A Man
Arabian A Buk H
Arabian A Her S A Buk
Arabian A Kip S A Kyk *Cut*
Arabian A Kyk S A Kip *Cut*
Arabian A Man H
Arabian A Sev S A Pec *Cut*
Dislodged
Arabian A Sjs S A Man
Arabian A Srk S A Ati
Arabian A Urg S A Kyk

Axum F South Red Sea - North
Red Sea (purely defensive)
Axum F Yemen - Gulf of Aden
(nothing but a shuffle)
Axum F Azania S F Gulf of Aden -
Menuthian Sea (move along folks,
nothing to see here)
Axum F Gulf of Aden - Menuthian
Sea (somewhat aggressive)
Axum F Socotra - Malabar Sea
(rather cheeky) *Bounce*
Axum F Arabian Sea S F Yemen -
Gulf of Aden (icing on the cake)
Axum A Phebol - Mahilaka (very
cheeky indeed) *Bounce*

Dislodged *Disbanded*
Axum A Kongo - Jeliba (stepping
courteously out of the way)
Axum A Zimbabwe S F South
Ocean Sea - Namib (a royal
welcome for the visitors from the
far north) *Void*
Axum A Namib - Kongo (also
stepping courteously out of the
way)
Axum A Jeliba - Kanem (checking
into the retirement home)
Axum A Niore - Walata (checking
into the adult living golf
community)
Axum A Alexandria Holds (the
rather idle sort) *Dislodged*
Axum A Bucellaria - Attalia (both
cheeky and aggressive)
Axum A Al-Qatta'i S A Alexandria
H (not much of interest to say
about this one then, is there...)

Byzantine A Con S A Thr
Byzantine A Mac - Ono *Bounce*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
Byzantine A Thr S A Mac - Ono
Cut *Dislodged* *Disbanded*
Byzantine F Aes - Cre *Bounce*
Byzantine F Cis S F Aes - Cre

Chinese A Blk S A Sam
Chinese A Kas S A Blk
Chinese A Khi - Orb
Chinese A Kyr S A Qar - Kyk
Chinese A Qar - Kyk *Bounce*
Chinese A Sam S A Blk
Chinese A Tib S A Kas
Chinese A Tun S A Kyr
Chinese A Uyg S A Sam
Chinese F Yes H

Danish A Bas S A Udm - Ati
Danish A Bul S A Mrd
Danish A Che S A Bul
Danish A Nov H
Danish A Stb S F Whs - Yug
Danish A Udm - Ati *Bounce*
Danish A Yug - Kip *Bounce*
Danish F Bor H
Danish F Ngs H
Danish F Sos - Gos *Bounce*
Danish F Whs - Yug *Bounce*

French A Gra - Brg
French A Jer - Ale
French A Mrd S A Vya - Sev
French A Sla S A Ono
French A Slr H
French A Spo H
French A Tar H
French A Tri S A Jer - Ale

French A Vya - Sev
French F Bar S A Jer - Ale
French F Cyp S F Egs
French F Egs S F Ios - Cre
French F Ios - Cre *Bounce*
French F Lgs - Tys
French F Lis S F Egs
French F Nos H
French F Scl - Ios *Bounce*
French F Sjt C A Gra - Brg
French F Sta C A Gra - Brg
French F Swo S F Wts
French F Tka - Tas
French F Wts S F Sos - Gos

German A Ava S A Ono - Thr
German A Dal - Mac
German A Epi S A Dal - Mac
German A Kie S A Vya - Sev
German A Ono - Thr
German A Smo S A Kie
German A Vis - Ono *Bounce*
German A Vla S A Ono - Thr
German A Vol S A Kie

Russian A Chs S A Pec
Russian A Pec S A Sev

Srivijayan A Ind - Sha *Bounce*
Srivijayan A Knj S A Ujj

Srivijayan A Sha - Man *Bounce*
Srivijayan A Ujj S A Sha - Man
Srivijayan F Bur - Sos *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Cob - Mas *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Gos - Phe
Srivijayan F Mah S F Cob - Mas
Cut
Srivijayan F Mas - Gad *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Mis S F Cob - Mas
Srivijayan F Ras S F Cob - Mas
Srivijayan F Sus S F Gos - Phe

Wagadu F Awl H

Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Sev can retreat to Tam or disband
Axum A Ale can retreat to Mec, Zaw or disband
Axum A Phe is destroyed (no valid retreats)
Byzantine A Mac is destroyed (no valid retreats)
Byzantine A Thr is destroyed (no valid retreats)

There is a DIAS proposed with the Winter 913 deadline. 10 affirmative votes will be needed to pass the proposal.

Retreat Adjudications

Arabian A Sev retreats to Tam
Axum A Ale retreats to Zaw

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 2 units, can build in Ard, Aze, Bag, Geo, Ghu, Isf
Byzantine Empire disbands 1 unit
Tang Empire (China) makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Denmark makes no adjustments
West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 5 units, can build in Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), Aqt, Bri, Cad, Cor, Crs, Dub, Gas, Ifr, Jer, Lbu, Lot, Mau, Nar, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Ros, Rom (wc), Sal, Sar, Swa, Tka, Val
East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 1 unit, can build in Bav, Bre, Dal, Mor, Ono, Pol, Sax
Principality of Kiev (Russia) makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya builds 1 unit, can build in But, Cah, Cho, Jam, Kal, Kam, Plm, Ser, Var
Kingdom of Wagadu makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Axum builds 1 unit, can build in Adu, Axu, JeJ, KuS, Mak, Mal, Nio, Roh, Yem

Position Power Abb 912 913 Change SCs changing possession

1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 25 27 +2 +Ale, +Cyp
2 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 16 16 0
3 Kingdom of Axum X 15 15 0 -Ale, +Att
4 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 13 13 0
5 Kingdom of Denmark D 11 11 0
6 Tang Empire (China) C 10 10 0
7 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 9 10 +1 +Thr
8 Byzantine Empire B 5 2 -3 -Att, -Cyp, -Thr
9 Principality of Kiev (Russia) R 2 2 0
10 Kingdom of Wagadu W 1 1 0

Fall/Autumn 913 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

(taking credit for reading the board correctly)...

Did you expect France to stab Axum already? I thought that he might have waited until Axum gave him a good excuse, which was sure to happen sooner or later. But if the stab of Axum doesn't elicit any negative reactions from Denmark or Germany, it might as well be now.

Already? I had no idea. But I was pretty sure he'd go after Axum next.

The key thing here is that the major gains are all France's, with Germany and Axum making some minor gains. Arabia continues to surprise me by holding his own.

The key question at this point is whether Axum will now try to drum up an effective anti-France alliance, starting with Arabia and trying to bring in Denmark and Germany. If he can do that, the game is still open. If not, it's a throughway for France.

I'm counting on Germany and Denmark to do the wrong thing.

Not all that much of interest here by Arabia. The only move was a supported move to Damascus, which might impact Jerusalem. But of course, France can build in Jerusalem.

Correct, and this time (with five builds) I think France has a couple of places where he needs builds, Jerusalem is one. Arabia has another unit dislodged and thus will have builds himself, though he is even in supply centers. He could bring about a more coordinated battle back against France here, but Axum would have to join him.

France has given Arabia a major diplomatic opening here, if Axum is ready to listen and reconsider.

Arabia's builds could be interesting. A (defensive) fleet in Ghuzz and perhaps a fleet in Georgia might start changing the game direction, especially if Axum was now working with him.

I thought France might snag Alexandria this move. There really wasn't much of an excuse for having the army in Tripolitania otherwise. Hopefully this grim development will lead to Axum cutting back on the inane parentheticals.

The interesting question is, how will Axum react now. If he joins Arabia, tries to bring in Denmark and

Germany, gets Germany to join him, try to fit at least SV, if not China, into the picture, it's a new game, and stabbing Axum was a major mistake on France's part. But if he decides that his only possibility is continued appeasement, then he is dead and so is Arabia.

The key outcome here is that France is just one game year now from a nearly assured situation having the Mediterranean as a completely French lake. Once that happens, and France has those fleets roaming there to convoy armies and make supports, he becomes more or less impregnable.

It occurs to me that Axum wants to be considered a man of infinite jest. Given his grim situation, I think I'll start calling him Yorick, to continue the Hamlet theme.

Whether it is better to dodge slings and arrows, of African origin, that is the question.

Axum takes a SC in Asia minor. All that means is that France will take the SC away from him instead of away from Byz.

The only point to the cheeky and aggressive move is if it leads to something, I can't see how it does. It does offset the loss of Alexandria.

Two armies popped, as expected. Byz makes holding Crete his priority and as a consequence loses Attalia. With two SCs left, he cannot hold anything. Maybe he can become a slave to France by taking Attalia? But he's probably dead next year.

It seems to me that being dead is guaranteed (unless Germany stabs France). Maybe Gregory's vacation (the game delays for a week here with Gregory being away) will bring a miracle rebirth, but we doubt it. It just delays the hangman's noose.

If a major alliance against France is formed, Byz could be in a crucial spot. But even in that case, I wouldn't bet on his survival.

If there is no anti-France alliance, Byzantium is finished. France doesn't need another slave.

Byzantium is finished regardless. He's got Crete, which France can take without any help from anybody, and Con, which is not worth letting him keep. Well, sure, if _everybody_ on the board decides to keep him and his two useful fleets alive, it could possibly happen. I don't see it happening.

China still blasting away at Arabia.

Making very, very slow progress where he needs to take Matt out quickly if Lynn's strategy to stop France is to work.

Does Lynn have a strategy to stop France? If so, I've never noticed it.

No Danish forces moved. For readers in the home audience, this might be interpreted as a sign that Denmark is getting nowhere.

Interestingly, earlier on, it appeared that Denmark was the one growing while Germany was stalled and we worried about Germany getting crunched. As Germany gets another build we have to wonder if France decides to throw one of his allies over to go for the win, if it will be Denmark. Nevertheless, the key is that Yugra can be held against the Chinese. As long as the Danish take up that position for France, the ultimate ending seems assured.

Actually, Denmark is in better position to make gains against Arabia than France is. That doesn't mean that Denmark will actually make the gains, though. Still, if Axum manages to convince him and Germany to change tack, Denmark has a lot of possibilities here.

France slips the knife in and takes Alexandria, fulfilling my prophecy that Axum would be his next victim. I don't quite get why he's stacking armies in Italy. But he can start moving them into Africa next year, in addition to building one down there.

Correct, if the French decide to press the African advantage, he can actually build armies in both Ifriqiya and Mauretania. I think that again, once you have the Mediterranean French lake, Italy becomes the rifle for French expansion in any direction.

Axum can rebuild an army, which would give him...seven armies to defend the continent. But the problem is that he has ceded control of the Western Seas to France and Denmark. France has three armies in Africa already, can build two more immediately, and can drop a few more at various access points.

Right, and there is line from Saju to Sanhaja of open space which France can fill (mostly) before Axum can get there. I suppose the main question here is whether France attacks this pressure point all out, or moves mostly into Arabia. He could do both, of course.

I suppose there is some question as to whether Denmark and/or Germany will turn on France now that he's turned on Axum. Somehow, I don't think that's

likely.

The "death pact" seems to be primarily between them (Denmark and Germany), if Axum bought into this, he was the latecomer. Plus his annoying press ;-) may have turned everyone's stomach.

We heard about that pact from the Axum player. In fact, I had understood that he had put it together when he joined the French Fan Club. So it is up to him to activate the pact; and to convince the others that it is in their best interest, as well as his.

They really cannot do all that much at this point. France doesn't need help from Germany or Denmark to fight Axum. And the two of them are way out of position to try to attack him.

Germany takes Thrace. So Rosencrantz builds this year, while Guildenstern doesn't. Or wait, was Germany Guildenstern?

Does it really matter when Germany won't build anywhere but Onoguria or Dalmatia? It is possible that Germany will waive and set up make this build as a fleet in Thrace next year, They do have to take Cherson from Russia by sea eventually. But for the whole game here, after Germany presumably gets Pechenegs, for the WHOLE board, Germany has a thin line of expansion through Tamantarka, if France lets him take it. Otherwise, Germany is about done after this. Does that change anything? Again, us cynical lot sees the die as cast.

As long as Germany and Denmark decide that it's not worth reacting to the stab of Axum, Germany's slight advance doesn't matter at all.

Russia will outlive Byz. But probably won't outlive Wagadu.

Russia just awaits the fleet in the Black Sea. He seems to lose one center next year and goes the year after.

Whether he hangs on a while longer or not is hardly important to the scheme of things, is it?

F Bure looks comically useless. Well, SV gets points for actually trying to do something about France. Too bad he'd have to work with Yorick to accomplish anything. He would probably be Fortinbras in this play. Too little, too late.

Ah yes, Fortinbras indeed! I do honestly think that the Chinese/SV plan is to keep charging forward and then stopping France, but they have to be gaining FAR faster than they are to accomplish this. Perhaps if Axum starts collapsing next game year, this will move a bit faster. But as I count the centers, France wins before SV truly engages France.

Frankly, I've never seen evidence of a Chinese/SV plan. SV seemed to have had a plan, of sorts, but he needed more allies than he had for it to be at all effective.

The Hamlet theme doesn't work completely. The biggest problem is France: who would be? I can see Arabia as Claudius, based on his early advantage. Polonius could be Russia or Byz? Ophelia would be...Spain? Was he the most suicidal?

Maybe France is Claudius. After all, wasn't Claudius the real winner?

Still, you are right, the metaphor doesn't extend very well.

OK, the metaphor doesn't extend very well. We don't have a Hamlet, and we don't have a role for France. And France cannot be Hamlet here. He's more like a Macbeth, or better yet, a Lady Macbeth. But there is no Macduff on this board.

I'll say this now: the big deal for the Winter phase will be the five French builds. I expect to see A Jerusalem, A Ifriqya, A Mauretania, A Tkanaren and possibly A Cadiz.

And nothing back home? That would mean that France was certain that there would be no repercussions to stabbing Axum -- which may well be the case.

Yes, I think it is time for us to see France making most or all of his builds and charging forward, especially if Germany does not stab him with his lonely build. Although France could still be coy and keep a couple of builds in hand.

Keeping a couple on hand is a good idea, there is a limit to what he could fit in Africa.

He's not near that limit. He can put all five builds on the African front, counting builds in Jerusalem and Tkanaren and/or Cadiz. He's going to take Crete immediately no matter what else happens. He's also got three armies in Italy which can move North quickly. Or, if Germany wants to tangle with him, he can blast at the Balkan dots.

Builds in hand are way too powerful in a game like this, where you can build them anywhere. (The so-called 'chaos builds' for Judge players.) If you are allied with a large power, and he offers to waive builds to be less threatening, a wise player would insist that the builds be used.

Rick is absolutely right about that.

The possibility of dropping down so many new units at once is extremely powerful.

Right, I agree. I wonder if a compromise Chaos build is possible, maybe where you need to own a province for three consecutive years (a GM nightmare to track?) before you can build there??

Anyone in a situation to drop five builds usefully at once, at this advanced stage of the game, has the game already pinned down, whatever the build rule is. The chaos builds were to compensate the large size of the board.

I like the Machiavelli rule. You can only build in your home SCs until you capture all of another player's territory. And then you can build in their home SCs, too.

Ah, I had forgotten that rule, that's it, that's the better rule. This also gives a bonus for actually taking ALL of another power's home centers.

As to Wagadu: Yawn.

Winter 913 Results

Adjustment Adjudications

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Geo
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Ghu

Byzantine Empire Disbands A Con

East Frankish Kingdom (German) Builds A Ono

Kingdom of Axum Builds A Kus

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya Builds F Cho

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Ifr
West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Jer
West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Mau

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Tka

Position Power Abb 912 913 Change SCs changing possession

1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 25 27 +2 +Ale, +Cyp

2 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 16 16 0

3 Kingdom of Axum X 15 15 0 -Ale, +Att

4 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 13 13 0

5 Kingdom of Denmark D 11 11 0

6 Tang Empire (China) C 10 10 0

7 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 9 10 +1 +Thr

8 Byzantine Empire B 5 2 -3 -Att, -Cyp, -Thr

9 Principality of Kiev (Russia) R 2 2 0

10 Kingdom of Wagadu W 1 1 0

Winter 913 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

If there was a possibility of a major change of alliances, a tight deadline is completely contra-indicated. But the players can always request an extension, it would certainly have been granted.

F Geo would have been much better. Arabia's refusal to build fleets is killing him. Given where he was in the mid-game, he should have fleets in the Black Sea and the Med already or at least in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. What is A Georgia going to do?

I agree, I have been disappointed for so long with his lack of fleet builds that I don't even bother saying so any more. But now, with the stab on Axum, it would have been the ideal time to turn over a new leaf.

I agree, the reason to build armies is if Arabia is resigned to just hanging on, falling back and surviving as long as possible. That doesn't move the game forward much. Axum didn't try to build a fleet in the Med and France still attacked him, so Arabia must be seeing that building in ways trying not to annoy France does not gain him any French favors. I think A Georgia presumes that France will be putting armies into Asia Minor and pushing east, so it isn't bad for the defensive front. Unimaginative building though.

Germany builds A Ono? That's really all we need to see. Axum was a fool to think that Germany would be any part of an anti-French alliance.

Right. Even Axum doesn't seem to believe in any such alliance any more.

Yes, so Germany has officially NOT come to B.'s aid as B. was stabbed. Byzantium's removal didn't even bother to get a mention from Rick, but the main point is that A Con off doesn't point toward anything Byzantium can do by dealing with anyone else (e.g. Germany) to stop France.

A Kus is just buying time, to hold on to his armies in Africa a little longer.

What does yet another fleet do for SV? Give him a lock

[[Beginning at this point, because of the near-total lack of change in the direction of the game – France seeming to plod slowly on to inevitable victory – the commentators decided to switch to commenting on each game year as a whole, instead of season by season.]]

on the Malabar Sea? WHO CARES??

Nobody seems to be bothering with a change in strategy, why should SV be any different?

Sri Vijaya is still playing like this is an Eastern Juggernaut with China, moving steadfastly forward (presumably against Axum, maybe even in a deal with France) until the Victory Condition comes more directly into play. And maybe even after that. No one believes that SV is using that fleet to attack China, do they? Dream on.....

France builds four armies on the African front and keeps a build in hand, as protection against any German friskiness.

Just one build in hand, but clearly France plans on working to conquer the entirety of Africa next. He could possibly gain four more next year and then the momentum toward solo starts to get pretty serious.

There are many ways that this can play out tactically. France will definitely take Crete and either France or Germany will take Constantinople. I'm going to assume Wagadu keeps working with France, in which case armies will march forward at least in Western Africa. France will have him outnumbered, so the question is only if he can find some sort of line.

Axum has a real diplomatic problem. It's hard to see anybody shedding a tear for his departure. He's stabbed Wagadu and Arabia and SV. I expect him to give up relatively quickly, when his anti-French insurance plan turns out to have been a fraud.

I don't expect him to give up, but if he hasn't got a stop-the-leader alliance going, it's not going to happen.

Well, B. will never "give up" per se, but he will practically have no allies and a collapsing position. Wagadu has little choice in keeping the toady moves with France going, so I expect he won't shed the Axum tear for sure.

Russian A Pec S A Chs *Cut*
Dislodged *Disbanded*

Srivijayan A Ind - Sha *Bounce*
Srivijayan A Knj S A Ujj
Srivijayan A Sha - Man *Bounce*
Srivijayan A Ujj S A Sha - Man
Srivijayan F Bur S A San - Awl
Srivijayan F Cho S F Mas
Srivijayan F Gos S F Sos - Wts
Void
Srivijayan F Mah S F Phe
Srivijayan F Mas S F Mah
Srivijayan F Mis S F Mas
Srivijayan F Phe S F Gos
Srivijayan F Ras S F Mas

Srivijayan F Sus S F Gos

Wagadu F Awl S A Tka - San
Void

Retreat Possibilities

Axum A San can retreat to Awd,
KuS or disband
French A Zaw can retreat to Tri or
disband
Russian A Pec is destroyed (no
valid retreats)

Position Power Abb 913 914
Change SCs changing possession
1 West Frankish Kingdom (France)

F 27 27 0 -Ros, +Wsx
2 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 16
16 0
3 Kingdom of Axum X 15 15 0
4 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 13 13 0
5 East Frankish Kingdom
(German) G 10 12 +2 +Con, +Pec
6 Kingdom of Denmark D 11 11 0
+Ros, -Wsx
7 Tang Empire (China) C 10 10 0
8 Byzantine Empire B 2 1 -1 -Con
9 Principality of Kiev (Russia) R 2
1 -1 -Pec
10 Kingdom of Wagadu W 1 1 0

Autumn 914

Retreats

West Frankish A Zawila retreats to Tripolitania
Axum A Sanhaja retreats to Kumba Saleh

Winter 914

*All draw proposals fail. Both a DIAS and 7-way
draw (the same one excluding the 1-SC powers)
are again proposed.*

Winter Adjudication

Byzantine Empire disbands F Crete
East Frankish Kingdom waives 2 builds
West Frankish Kingdom waives 1 build

914 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

I want to make some more general comments about "bored" players and long games. One of the reasons why it is interesting for DW to feature a large variant like this is that pretty much everyone who ever plays Diplomacy at one time or another thinks, "gee, with seven players just confined to Europe, this will be great, what would happen if you had more players and more geography?" The very first major popular variant, "Youngstown Diplomacy", stemmed from this. There are a couple of big problems that you have in these variants. One is simply finding the players. Where do you get a lot of players to play and will they be reliable? FTF play of these games requires a club setting (like was done with the original Youngstown variant where this was a club in Youngstown Ohio that devised the variant -- good history question for Doug and others, has a good history ever been written of the Youngstown Diplomacy club and its role in the development of the Diplomacy hobby? I've often wondered if the number of ten players that John Koning chose was the number of regular players in the Youngstown Dip Club) since the games are even longer than the regular game and require carryover to multiple sessions. We did a bit of

this at my college club. Postal and E-Mail approaches have allegedly solved this problem, but as Suzanne notes attention and focus to the game can lag. We seem to have reached this point. Good players both recognize that this is part of the game and exploit it. Nigs has done a brilliant job of this.

In general, a very slow year, with little movement and several mis-coordinations. Looks like more and more of the players a getting bored, including the board leader. Several end-game proposals made, none passed.

Western alliance (France, Denmark, Germany) :

France moved a fair amount in Africa, but ran into very active resistance from Axum and Indonesia, working together. In the resulting tangles, both France and Axum had fall retreats. France did manage to move two new armies into the continent, but did not achieve a solid offensive position anywhere.

Recall that I've said for some time that France's victory winning supply centers should come from Arabia, since I expected that a battle for Africa would be a very slow slog. We are now seeing the fruits of that. France can get more armies into the continent, and I think as such has the capability to continue to gain, but it will be slow. B. has signalled through his long battle with Mikael his ability to exploit the tactical capabilities of this variant in Africa. Many times I thought Mikael would prevail, but he didn't.

Well, not on land, but the fleet position leaves Axum wide open. A convoy to, say, Kongo would drop an army behind the Axum line. Not that Axum really has a line, per se. He's got two armies too far forward, where they can be popped, and has gaps on the other side. Poor tactics.

Axum really needs a couple SV armies to plug the gaps. But of course, SV doesn't have armies, just a bunch of fleets.

Another challenge in a long variant like this is getting your army/fleet balance right. Allies can be used to pop units that can rebuild as the other type. And especially with forward build rules, so many unengaged units, etc. we should see more of this. Lynn could pop a fleet for SV that could turn into an army for the front. If they (as a group) really want to stop Nigs, these sorts of tactics are needed.

Yes, but oddly enough, France doesn't have many armies in position to convoy -- only the ones in the north of Africa. Of course, he can build one this winter, certainly.

Would there be interest in engaging Germany in this front? Depends on how much of a toady he is! More on this below, but if there really were a concerted effort to stop France, it might actually work now. The central role in deciding what happens is shifting from Denmark squarely to Germany.

Denmark did not move at all, although he made a serious try for Atil in the fall, with French support. He mis-coordinated with both China and France in the spring.

Yes, Denmark clearly is not really paying attention and not initiating the discussions. As such, deadlines approach and he's just moving.

Germany had the best season of the lot. He moved into Constantinople in the spring, then took Pec in the fall with support from himself and France's Sev army. He also moved his Con army to bounce Arabia in Buc in the fall (with a supported move to hold on to Con).

We pretty much saw all this happening last game year since those last Byzantine centers clearly were going to

fall and the question is what Germany does next. Is a big push made to collapse Arabia (likely)? Or does Germany come down and help in the attack on Axum? Or, do Germany and France stab Denmark?

He had two builds, but sent in no adjustment orders. This could well have been deliberate. Since he is not stabbing France, the build he needed would have been a fleet in the Euxine sea, and there was no space available for this build. He therefore has two builds left next year.

The one thing he is NOT doing, is stabbing France. This was the chance, and the waived builds clearly keep Germany in France's pocket.

I would not be surprised by a German fleet in Thrace.

My guess is that he will move Con into Axum's Att next year, while France takes Con with a fleet that will go into Euxine Sea the following year. Of course, France may continue to let Germany grow one more year. While Germany and Denmark did not stab France, they may have used the threat to get French support for their growth.

Some readers are no doubt stewing about the lack of "win only" play in this. But using threats to grow and meet goals of finishing second or third ARE part of the game, especially part of the game in large variants with huge commitments of time over long periods. That's the way it is, and Nigs is exploiting it more than getting stuck by the implied threats.

I think France is peddling the talk of a 3-way draw, at least for now.

I'm sure he is. BUT, if there really is to be a three way, then Arabia needs to be the push, since they need to start breaking into Central Asia (especially for Denmark). In that, I guess we need to wonder, is there a stalemate line for China to halt further advance? I can see clearly that Arabia doesn't have one, not so sure whether Lynn does.

France had a build left over from last year, but didn't use it. This too was quite probably deliberate.

Axum and SV (Indonesia) :

Although Axum got nowhere with his former allies in the Western alliance, he did form an active and successful defensive alliance with SV in Africa. He also seems to have tried coordinating with Arabia a little in the region bordering the northeastern Med.

My view is that Lynn (China) and Mike (SV) in their game long alliance still harbor thoughts of sweeping through the board (though they have to start moving a bit faster), but they see that right now Axum is their

salvation, so despite their previous skirmishing, they ARE strongly coordinating here.

Axum moved at least as much as France in Africa, keeping France's many armies at bay. But it may become still more difficult next year, as France has brought two new armies into play. It was all jockeying for position, though; no gains or losses for either side. Axum did, however, make an attempt on Wagadu's last center, in coordination with SV. This was blocked by French support for Wagadu.

Axum doesn't have enough armies, and his Southwestern flank is unprotected.

SV tried to support a Danish fleet to pop a French fleet. I don't see why Denmark would have gone along with this move; he would lose a powerful ally without gaining anything.

SV also made some token attempts on Arabia's position in India, all unsuccessful. There was no coordination at all with China.

Given the long alliance (and good personal friendship between our SV/China players) this was my surprise of the year. Why didn't they do better at moving forward? The required coordination wasn't THAT difficult.

Arabia and China :

The two big loners on the board did not even try to coordinate with any other powers.

Arabia will start to lose the SCs in the Caspian area next year. Hmm...perhaps a fleet or two would have been useful there.

Agreed, Arabia remains our strongest tactical player who never talks to anyone. I'm amazed he hasn't lost more given that approach. That almost has to change this upcoming game year. And once he loses two more centers he starts losing a lot more and collapses (again as I see the board).

Arabia managed to hold his own, despite attacks from almost all of his neighbors. However, he chose to support his Atil army rather than continue to support Russia, which led to the latter's loss of Pechenga. He made a spring bounce with Axum, which may well have been agreed upon, but moved on his own in the fall to bounce Germany in Bucellaria.

China did not coordinate with anyone. He and Arabia were in position to try to pop Denmark's army in Yugra, but nothing was attempted. (Denmark however used a unit to support Yugra, just in case.)

The minor powers (Russia, Byzantium and Wagadu):

Russia lost Pechenga when Arabia didn't provide the necessary support, and is down two one (the Cherson peninsula). Cherson will hold, however, until France or Germany manages to bring in a fleet, so he will survive the following year -- but no longer.

Byzantium managed to last this year, which was already something of a prowess. He chose to disband the fleet in Crete (his last remaining center), thus making it a guessing game next year among Germany's Con, Crete and Axum's Attalia. He will certainly lose Crete, however, and almost certainly won't regain Constantine. He may be able to help Axum hang on to Attalia next year, but won't survive himself -- and Attalia will fall the following year in any case.

This is all of course inevitable.

France should try to sink the fleet in the Spring.

Wagadu managed to hang on with France's support. That can last as long as he is at a point of contention, but France will probably take the center if the front moves elsewhere.

I don't see that, the Wagadu fleet is still important, and until Arabia starts collapsing, Africa is France's main push, so Wagadu keeps around. Mikael may actually be one of the more active negotiating powers with France, more than Denmark to be sure.

An army there might be more useful. The fleet cannot do very much.

I'm unimpressed by Axum here. He seems unconcerned about how bad his position in Africa is. Why is he still investing so many fleets to holding the Gulf of Aden? I suppose SV isn't helping things much with his insistence of building uncountably many fleets.

Of course, there is its use in topology, set theory, and in limit points. I'm not sure if we have any of those direct applications here or not.

For 915, we should see at least two Arabian SCs falling, as well as Crete and Attalia. That will open up the entire Middle East to Westie forces. Axum's position won't hold much longer - say two years until it starts collapsing.

My view and Rick's coincide. I do think that Arabia's collapse as he does lose those two or more centers can happen in a number of ways. Arabia COULD focus everything against France and Lynn could gain a great deal, possibly SV too. OR, they could back off and try to support Arabia. We'll see how that goes which will determine the next main front.

The Diplomacy World Reader's Survey

This survey is designed to allow the staff of Diplomacy World to get a better idea of exactly who is reading this zine, what they enjoy, and what they want to see more of. There are three ways to submit your responses. 1. Email a scan of this page to me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com; 2. Mail it to me postally at Douglas Kent, 911 Irene Drive, Mesquite, TX 75149, USA; or 3. Just type in the answers manually to an email instead of scanning the page. Regardless, I will select one entry (or two, if we get more responses than I expect) to receive a prize. I'll contact you if you win, and then give you some choices of prize to select from. Please take some time and respond. The more we understand who is reading Diplomacy World, the better we can make the zine!

1 . Your name: _____ . 2 . Your email address: _____

3 . How many years have you been playing Diplomacy? _____ 4 . Do you play face-to-face? _____

5 . Do you play on the internet? If so, where? _____

6 . Do you, or have you ever, played Diplomacy by mail? If so, where? _____

7 . Would you classify yourself as an avid reader of Diplomacy World, occasional, or first time? _____

8 . What is your favorite article from this particular issue? _____

9 . Please list these topics from favorite to least favorite, when it comes to seeing them covered in Diplomacy World articles(if filling this form out directly, just number them with 1 being the favorite): Strategy & Tactics ; Demonstration Games ; Variants ; Tournament Reports ; Fiction ; Humor ; Hobby News ; Interviews ; Contests ; Hobby History ; Theme Material ; Other (please fill in) _____ .

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11. Have you ever submitted an article to Diplomacy World, and if you haven't, please give a reason or two why not: _____

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13. In what other ways do you think Diplomacy World could be improved? _____

14. What is your favorite Diplomacy power to play? _____ And least-favorite? _____

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16. Any final comments? _____

Thanks again for taking the time to fill this out and submit it. The deadline to be eligible for the contest is **September 15, 2010**. But if you don't send it in by then, please submit it anyway when you have time...whether or not you're eligible for a prize, your opinion is of great value to us!

Sometimes Diplomacy World can be a real joy to produce, and sometimes it can be a real chore. But countless hobby members have done their part for decades to keep it going, in good times and bad, through peaks and valleys. Starting with Dr. Walter Buchanan with issue #1, and on through today, Diplomacy World has done it's best to be a must-read for Diplomacy players worldwide. Thanks for all of your support!