

Diplomacy World #153



Spring 2021 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the first issue officially titled as being with the “game year” of 2021. Despite the global struggles endured over the last twelve months, I believe the Diplomacy hobby has actually seen some silver linings. Interest in the game itself remains strong, and continues to grow in some areas. Out of necessity, a large number of exceptional face-to-face players dipped their toes into the online and virtual hobby pool. In the same way, players who had previously only played anonymously on one of the major Diplomacy websites crossed swords with other sections of the hobby. With luck, those who had lived under the guise of a pseudonym have started to discover how much more the hobby has to offer than the game itself. Nearly everyone who has spent a long time in this hobby agrees: the game is what brings us together, but the *people* are what keep us together. Different personalities, different experiences...the friendships and connections you build last a lot longer than the memory of whether you moved F Lon to Nth or to Ech in Spring 1901.

One of my favorite recent developments has been the introduction of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network (DBN). And the folks there have taken what they started and run with it. Originally, I thought it was just going to be the enjoyable monthly news reports anchored by David Hood, discussing the latest hobby happenings in a formal and tongue-in-cheek manner. But soon, with the shift to virtual tournaments, we were treated to live play-by-play coverage. Those have been a blast to watch, whether live or through YouTube after the fact. It’s very similar to the **Diplomacy World** Demo Game format, adapted to the fast, frenzied pace of face-to-face and virtual play.

Rank	Player	T/S/E	Score
1	Markus Zijlstra	1 / 1 / 0	392
2	Peter McNamara	1 / 1 / 0	381
3	Russ Dennis	1 / 1 / 0	210
4	Andrei Gribakov	1 / 1 / 0	147
5	Matthew Crill	1 / 0 / 1	130
6	Farren Jane	1 / 0 / 1	110
7	Nicolas Sahuguet	0 / 2 / 0	109
8	Maxim Popov	1 / 1 / 0	108
9	Jason Mastbaum	1 / 1 / 0	107
10	Sergey Seregin	0 / 2 / 0	102

When the inaugural DBN Invitational 2021 was announced, I knew I'd have to make some time to watch the coverage. And I was not disappointed. I especially loved seeing how the Top Board worked out. Jack McHugh and I watched the live feed on Twitch, trading

barbs back and forth in the chat section as things progressed. (You can watch live on both Twitch and YouTube, but because YouTube has more viewers, we decided to stick to Twitch so we could feel free to revert to our typical sarcastic and personal sense of humor).

Brandon Fogel, Doug Moore, and David Hood (and the rest of the DBN Staff) did a wonderful job of introducing each of the players to us, explaining how the seeding was accomplished, and then walking us through the power selection. And the game results were then revealed, discussed, and debated, turn by turn.

The details and nuances were quite fascinating. Peter McNamara, who had already soloed as Italy in one of the prior rounds, was seen as the biggest threat on the board. So, he chose Italy as his nation again (with the second overall selection) in order to keep a target off his back early in the game. While Russ Dennis (France), Matthew Crill (Russia), and Andrei Gribakov (Germany) were all looking strong early on, Peter hung around. Biding his time, he soon stuck the knife in Austria, and then Turkey. Personally, I felt he should have swung west against France sooner than he did. But you can't argue with results!

If you would like to join in on the DBN fun, the best thing to do is subscribe (i.e., sign up, no cost involved) to their Twitch or YouTube channels. Or you can sign up for both, as I did. The links are:

<https://www.twitch.tv/diplomacybroadcastnetwork>

and:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj88H0KNyakiUXuN7jSz_EQ

I'm sure DBN will continue to explore new ideas and expand coverage until they're tied into nearly every part of the Diplomacy hobby. So please do yourself a favor

and sign up. I even took part in a **Diplomacy World** roundtable (moderated by David Hood) to talk about the past, present, and future of Diplomacy World and its place in the hobby. You can find that roundtable as part of the latest DBN News Update, here: <https://youtu.be/w1OKj8l54dQ>

And now let me move on to another important topic...

DIPLOMACY WORLD NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Take a moment and look at the **Diplomacy World** Staff table on Page 5. If you'll look closely, you'll see there are three (and possibly four) vacancies. I haven't heard from Fang Zhang in some time, and he hasn't responded to my emails or Facebook messages, so it is probably best that I look to replace him as well.

During the confusing mess that was known as 2020, I wasn't very aggressive about keeping up with staff members. I didn't think it was appropriate to press people on their contributions when real world stuff was obviously taking precedence. And while plenty about the world and daily life is still a confusing mess, I simply can't allow things to continue the way they have been.

I desperately need new blood, new energy, new ideas, and new points of view in the staff. That's the only way this zine can survive and thrive.

In truth, I've lost some focus. I put plenty of time and energy into getting each issue out on time, in the best shape it can be in given the material submitted. But for the last few years I haven't been spending much time thinking big picture. It wasn't until I sat down to contact some of the staff members that I realized I haven't had the Co-Editor position filled since Jim Burgess passed away in 2017. Somewhere in the back of my mind I had convinced myself that there had been one or two replacements along the way. But there haven't been.

For clarity, let me explain what a normal Editor position in the **Diplomacy World** Staff entails. First, you're committing to submitting an article for publication at least three out of every four issues. Every issue would be preferable, but sometimes that simply isn't possible. Just as importantly, when you take on the position of Department Editor you are also expected to solicit material from the rest of the hobby (primarily in your topic, but not limited to that). Suggesting, pleading, badgering; whatever tools you have at your disposal, you make use of them in an effort to develop new, quality material for **Diplomacy World**. If you see an interesting conversation on a hobby topic, perhaps you try to get one of the participants to write about it. If you play in an event, you might ask one of the other players

to write about their experience, or about the strategy they used in a game. If you come across a new variant – or an older one you weren't familiar with – you could decide to ask the developer to write an article outlining the development of the variant, or get someone skilled in the variant to write about some of the strategy and tactics used to master it. We have a very broad hobby, build out of distinct and separate communities. **Diplomacy World** has always been – and still is – a perfect place to bring those disparate groups together.

If you're interested in the Co-Editor position, that one carries slightly different responsibilities. Using Jim Burgess as a guide, the person holding that post is expected to be a source of inspiration and direction. You still write at least two articles a year. But you also help me proofread each issue. You're my sounding board for whether an article I am unsure about needs major polishing before it can be published. When I'm buried under the weight of an individual issue, you keep an eye on the bigger picture. Are there things the zine is lacking or needs more of? If so, what are some of the ways we might fill those needs? Finally, after an issue is finished and published, you help me take a fair look at the product and recognize where it succeeds instead of just noticing the flaws. As my own worst critic, I generally am very aware of the negatives.

If you'd like to put your name into the hat as a new potential staff member, or if you have someone else in mind for a given position, please contact me so we can discuss it.

This zine is only as good as the material that is submitted, and the quantity and quality of the material can be greatly influenced by the effectiveness of the **Diplomacy World** Staff. Bob, Randy, and Rick are all doing a tremendous job at the moment. But the more bodies we have, the easier it is to carry the load.

And I want to say thank you to all the staff members who have given their time and energy to the zine during my tenure, past and present. It takes a strong commitment to perform the duties of a staff member, and it takes honesty and wisdom to recognize when it is time to step aside and make way for somebody new. There's no shame in that. One of these days I'll be passing the torch on as well. It's inevitable.

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is July 1, 2021. 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 summer, and happy stabbing!

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Lewis Pulsipher - Reading the discussion of ways to vary the Diplomacy rules made me think of this.

Diplomacy itself encourages lots of secret negotiation (within a time limit). Gunboat Diplomacy outlaws negotiation. (There's an Oxymoron!)

It's the negotiation sessions that make Diplomacy such a long game, likely much of the reason for Gunboat's popularity.

Here's a minor variation for face-to-face play. Negotiation is only allowed over the table, except that each player has (three?) tokens that enable him or her to have a secret negotiation session (time limited) with one or more other players as a group (the others don't use a token). You lose the token when you use it, of course. (Comes from a board game called Feudal, I think, published in USA by Academy Games under license from Europe.) And other players may talk over the table while you're away!

I devised an (untested) token-passing system to allow more or less secret negotiation across the table in play.

Each player has a set of tokens of his/her color that say things like "Ally to attack", "Maybe", "yes", "no", "Are you heading", "Non-aggression", compass point tokens (North, etc.), and names of the other nations. So, you could pass "Ally to attack" "France" and even "Entire Game" or "Five years". The other player can respond with other tokens. You could still talk over the table; this is just a way of at least partially hiding from other players what you're proposing.

Who knows how it would work in practice?

OTOH I don't think a "you cannot lie" set of rules would ever work, as there would be constant disagreement about half-truths. In other words, no way to clearly define true and not-true in the rules.

As for variants in general, many well-known games can be simplified in variations. My game Duel Britannia, for example, is a two player simplification of (four player) Britannia, and takes about a third as long to play. But Diplomacy is pretty much bare-bones as is. The only simplifications I've seen involve fewer players and smaller boards, but not simpler rules for move/combat systems.

Selected Upcoming Conventions

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/>

2021 Virtual Whipping – April 10th, 2021 – See the ad (with links) on Page 6 of this issue!

Euro DipCon XXIX at SanMarino Con – April 30th – May 2nd, 2021 – San Marino - <http://www.sanmarinogame.com/>

DixieCon 35 – May 28th – May 30th, 2021 – Virtual (normally Chapel Hill, North Carolina) - <http://www.dixiecon.com/>
See the ad on page 20

Anjou Feu – July 10th – July 11th, 2021 - Bellevigne-en-Layon, France – Contact: Gabriel Lecointre at [diplomatiegabriel "of" Hotmail.com](mailto:diplomatiegabriel@of.com)

A lot of upcoming events have been cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic; be sure to contact organizers for the latest updates

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Contributors in 2021: Chris Brand, Rick Desper, Bob Durf, Jonathan Frank, Bill Hackenbracht, Jon Hills, David Hood, Jack McHugh, Matt Pickard, Lewis Pulsipher, Harold Reynolds, Adam Silverman. Add your name to the 2021 list by submitting something for the next issue!

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 Calhamer. It is currently manufactured by Hasbro and the name is their trademark with all rights reserved.

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Bay Area Diplomacy Association (B.A.D.Ass.) Presents: 2021 Virtual Whipping

A two-round stab-fest on April 10, 2021



To be played on the vWDC Discord server (<https://discord.gg/jbdZtRFMTA>) and Backstabbr.

Round 1: 8am Pacific time

Round 2: 4pm Pacific time

Games go until a solo victory, or all players agree to end.

Questions? Email adam.silverman@gmail.com or reach out to him on Discord (The Agman)

You can't win a bear if you don't play.

Register here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdHiyruqXqJIyc-kTDvSjLHOsILUoRLGb4mzEZujGdBfvwaVA/viewform>

Virtual Cascadia Open Report

By Chris Brand

Since 2017, the last weekend of January has been the time that Diplomacy players gather in the Vancouver area of BC, Canada to play the annual Cascadia Open tournament. 2021 is a little different, of course, and a face-to-face tournament wasn't an option. So, this year, Cascadia followed in the footsteps of a number of other face-to-face tournaments in moving online. The format this year was two rounds in one day, with negotiation using voice on Discord and adjudication on Backstabbr. One advantage of people already being at home was that nobody had planes to catch, so there was no real need to put any sort of time limit on the games. Every previous year, Cascadia has used the Sum of Squares scoring system, but this year I decided to use the ManorCon scoring system, which is similar but tends to reward survival a little more. Of course, the other advantage of a virtual tournament is that it's significantly easier for players to participate, and that showed in the numbers – in 2020 we had 4 boards for two of the three rounds but in 2021 we had 6 boards in the first round and 5 in the second (with Mikalis Kamaritis kindly volunteering to sit out the second round).

The Diplomacy Broadcast Network did a great job of covering the games, so I'm just going to summarise the key results and refer the reader there or to <https://diplomacytv.com/tournaments/30/> for all the details.

In round 1, apparently nobody really wanted to push too hard. Board 6 drew after 1906, with Turkey and England eliminated and Russ Dennis' France leading with 9 centers and 27.4 points. Board 2 drew after 1907 with Austria dead and Nicolas Sahuguet's England ahead on 9 centers and 27.3 points. Board 3 also ended after 1907 with Austria and Russia dead and a tied board top on 10 centers and 28.2 points for Karthik Konath's England and Andrei Gribakov's Germany. Board 5 ended after 1909 with Turkey, Germany, and England eliminated and David Hood choosing to settle for just 14 centers and 44.5-points as France. Board 1 ended after 1911 with France, Germany, and Turkey dead and a 2-way tie at 11 centers and 29.6 points between Garry Sturley and Ed Sullivan and board 4 also ended after 1911 with Turkey eliminated and Morgante Pell's Austria topping with 12 centers and 39.1 points.

Going into round 2, David Hood was leading, but had agreed to commentate for DBN rather than playing round 2. That left Morgante in the lead with Ed and Mikalis just under 10 points behind. With a solo worth 75 points, everyone definitely was still in the running.

Round 2 played out very differently, with generally much more aggressive play. The shortest game was game 3, which ended after 1909 with Andrei Gribakov's Austria topping with 13 centers and 42.8 points and just Turkey eliminated. Game 1 was soloed by Ed Sullivan as Germany going from 13 to 20 centers in the final year. Game 5 ended after 1911 with Doug Moore's Austria having 14 centers and 43.4 points with Russia, Turkey, and Germany all dead. The other two games both went very late as people played to obtain or stop a solo. Both ended after 1916, with board 2 soloed by Jaxon Roberts as Turkey and board 4 soloed by Matthew Crill as England.

When the knives were finally put away, the top seven were

Ed Sullivan	104.58
Jaxon Roberts	96.05
Matthew Crill	75.80
Andrei Gribakov	70.94
Doug Moore	66.32
Karthik Konath	57.45
Russ Dennis	47.58

With David Hood just outside with 44.52 points.

Best Country awards went to

Austria - Doug Moore	14 centers and 43.4 points
England - Matthew Crill	18 centers and 75 points
France - David Hood	14 centers and 44.5 points
Germany - Ed Sullivan	20 centers and 75 points
Italy - Mikalis Kamaritis	11 centers and 29.6 points
Russia - Ed Sullivan	11 centers and 29.6 points
Turkey - Jaxon Roberts	18 centers and 75 points

So, pencil in the 29th/30th January 2022 for the next Cascadia Open, and let's hope that we'll be able to play face-to-face by then.

Ask the Hobby Historian – Game Box Flyers

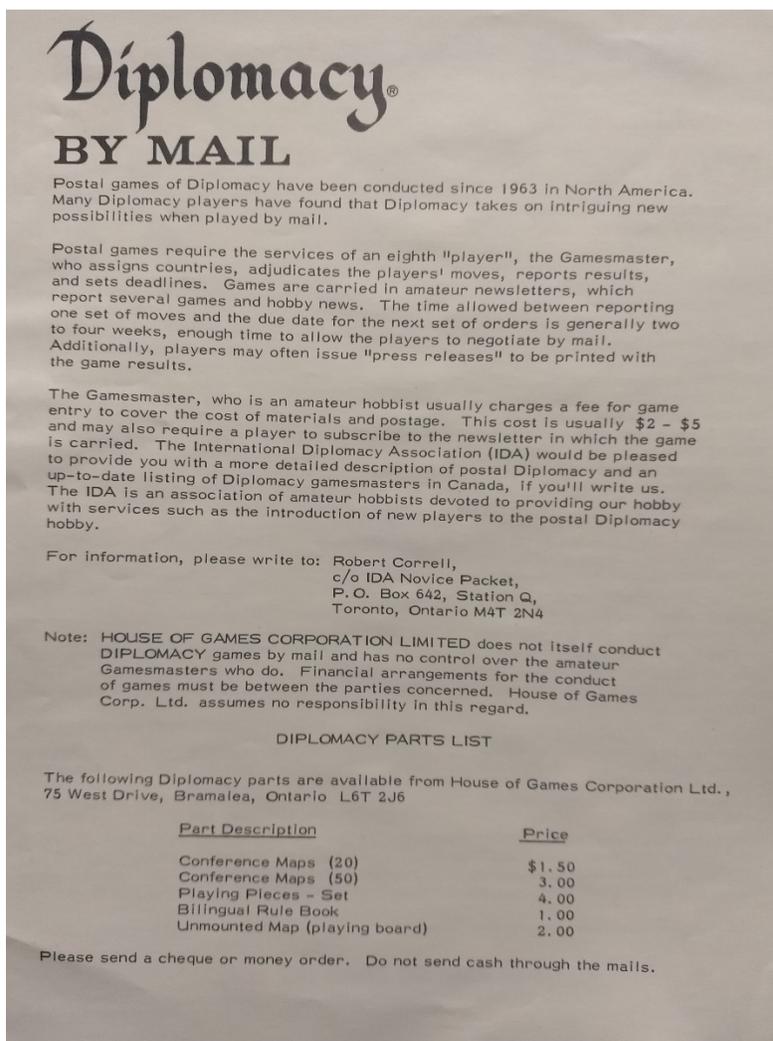
By David Hood

So, how do we spread the word about the Diplomacy hobby today? We have, of course, a smorgasbord of options: the NADF website, various Discord servers, the World Diplomacy FTF page on Facebook, the Diplomacy Broadcast Network and other content creators on YouTube and elsewhere. Etc. It's really kind of insane right now.

In the olden days before the internet, though, how did folk find out about the game? And then once they had the boardgame itself, how did they find out about the wider hobby? Because the publishers of the game had an incentive to help evangelize, so that more copies could be sold, those publishers supplied the answer - there was a flyer in most games of Diplomacy which directed the player to the hobby at large. That is how, for example, I myself entered the hobby back in late

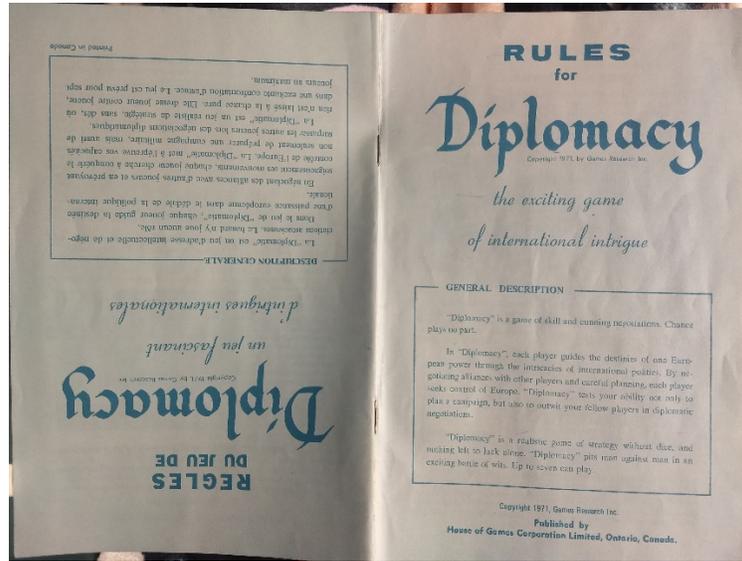
1985. The flyer directed me to Diplomacy World, a copy of which I then used to find the organizers of the 1986 Dipcon my group attended in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

The flyer took various forms. Because I have a collection of sets created at various times, I was able to find quite a collection of gamebox flyers. I have included photos of some with this article. My particular copy of the 1971 edition was published in Canada and marketed specifically to Canadians. The flyer directed Canucks to a Novice Packet generated by the International Diplomacy Association (a subject we discussed in the last issue of Diplomacy World) and made available through a hobbyist in Toronto. Novice packets were a thing in the hobby right up to when the Internet supplanted and destroyed most hobby infrastructure.



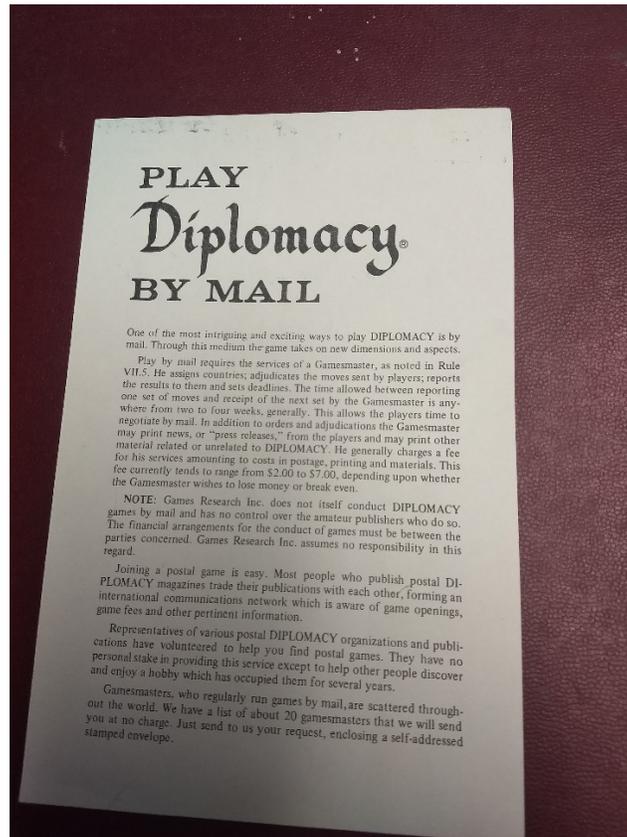
While we are on the subject of the Canadian set, I thought you all would enjoy a photo of the front page of the bilingual rules set - as I said recently on an episode

of Deadline News, the French-language hobby has a very long history in Diplomacy!



Many of you will know the name Walt Buchanan, who started this very magazine Diplomacy World in 1974. His name appeared on the next hobby flyer I was able to find - from a set published in the mid-1970s. Often the hobby flyer was specifically focused on Play By Mail

Diplomacy, as was this Buchanan one, which of course was the primary backbone of the Diplomacy hobby for many years even though face to face tournaments were also a major draw.



Not all the flyers were about that, though. Take a look at this doozy I found in a set published during the Ford and Carter Administrations! As the flyer says "our foreign policy is in shambles", apparently because Nixon's people were no longer in charge. So what might the solution be? Well, those State Department folk clearly

just all need copies of the board game Diplomacy! That'll fix 'em right up. No word yet on the extent to which this entirely helpful boost to American foreign policy formulation was actually implemented. You've got to hand it to the Avalon Hill marketing people though - this was bold.

What the White House Needs Now . . .

. . . is a copy of **Diplomacy**, the internationally famous board game!

Today our foreign policy is in shambles. The worst it's ever been! Is there any parallel to the fact that our diplomatic expertise started going downhill when those cabinet members familiar with the **DIPLOMACY** game left their government posts???

Whatever your opinions of the Nixon administration have been, you must admit they had one sharp foreign policy . . . due, perhaps, to the fact that members of the Nixon cabinet were **DIPLOMACY** players.

In *All the President's Men*, the award-winning novel exposing the Watergate mess, it was stated that cabinet members, including David Eisenhower, played **DIPLOMACY** to get their minds off of Watergate.

It was told to Gyles Brandeth, *Games & Puzzles Magazine* editor, that **DIPLOMACY** was Dr. Henry Kissinger's favorite board game. Dr. Kissinger was Secretary of State at the time.

Charles Grenville, *London Daily Mail*, wrote back in November 1962, "they play it in the White House. In fact, it's the rage in America. And at Cambridge, the Dean of Trinity College, John Gallagher, is an expert. In ecclesiastical circles, the Bishop of Woolwich knows all about it . . . IT? The game called **DIPLOMACY!**"

Angus McGill, *London Evening Standard*, claims that the Kennedy's were said to play **DIPLOMACY** at the White House.

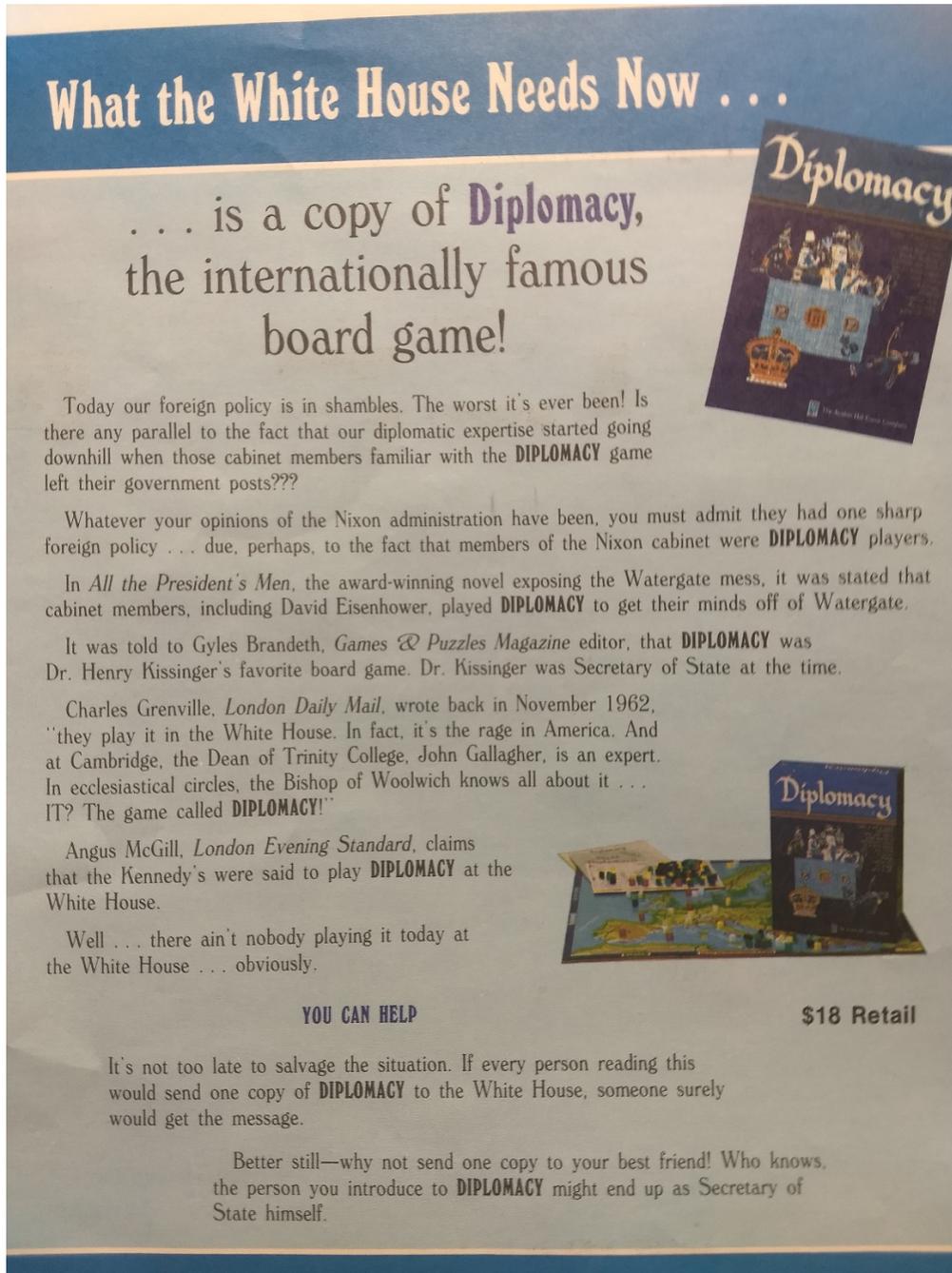
Well . . . there ain't nobody playing it today at the White House . . . obviously.

YOU CAN HELP

It's not too late to salvage the situation. If every person reading this would send one copy of **DIPLOMACY** to the White House, someone surely would get the message.

Better still—why not send one copy to your best friend! Who knows, the person you introduce to **DIPLOMACY** might end up as Secretary of State himself.

\$18 Retail



During the 1980s, various flyers were put into the game box by Avalon Hill, mostly directing interested parties to Larry Peery's address in San Diego. This is how I first learned of Diplomacy World. As you can see from the exemplar here, the quality improved with the color, although I notice no specific criticism of Reagan's foreign

policy in the text. A different version of this flyer was produced after a hobby meeting at the 1992 Dipcon in Kansas City, also included with this article, which gave contact information for five regional representatives, with the idea that finding a contact closer to home would help to promote face to face and tournament play in addition

to postal. This flyer also comprised the back page of the new Gamers Guide to Diplomacy published that same

year, which I mentioned in my Hobby History piece several issues ago.

Play DIPLOMACY by Mail!



DIPLOMACY® is one of the most captivating games ever invented. Seven players, each representing one of the pre World War I Great Powers of Europe, vie to gain control of the continent through any means possible, militarily if necessary. Treaties and alliances are made and broken, and interplay on the diplomatic level between Great Powers is where the game is won or lost. Deciding who to trust and who to betray is the game's most fundamental aspect.

Diplomacy is a great face-to-face game, but it is not always easy to assemble exactly seven players for the period of time necessary to bring the game to a satisfactory conclusion. But, when played postally such problems disappear: **Postal Diplomacy** offers boundless possibilities for intrigue and excitement. There is an international network for amateur play-by-mail Diplomacy enthusiasts, many of whom have been playing for years . . . and here is your chance to join them! In order to help you join your first **Postal Diplomacy** game and find out more about this exciting hobby, send a large stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

DIPLOMACY INFORMATION, Box 8416, San Diego, CA 92102.

By return mail we'll send you all the information you need to begin exploring an entirely new, and affordable, aspect of the gaming hobby that will provide many hours of enjoyment.

If you can't wait to get started, send \$4.00 for a DIPLOMACY WORLD sampler. DIPLOMACY WORLD is the Diplomacy hobby's flagship publication, and each issue is filled with articles and information about the game, the hobby and more, whether you are a face-to-face, computer or **Postal Diplomacy** player. For a dozen years DIPLOMACY WORLD has provided the best original materials for the novice and experienced player alike. For all the latest information about **Diplomacy**, you should read DIPLOMACY WORLD. Contact:

DIPLOMACY WORLD, Box 8416, San Diego, CA 92102.

PLAY DIPLOMACY BY MAIL!



One of the most intriguing and exciting ways to play **DIPLOMACY** is by mail. Through this medium, the game takes on new dimensions and aspects. For three decades thousands of gamers, who would otherwise not have had the chance, have enjoyed the challenge of **DIPLOMACY** through by-mail play.

Play-by-mail requires the services of a "Gamemaster", as noted in VII.5 of the rulebook. He or she assigns countries to the seven players, adjudicates the moves mailed by the players, reports the results to them, and sets deadlines for the next turn. The time allowed between reporting the result of one set of moves and receipt of the next set of orders by the Gamemaster is usually from four to six weeks. This allows the players time to negotiate with each other by mail. In addition to the orders and adjudications, the Gamemaster may also pass on news of the game, or public "Press Releases" from the players, and may even print other material related (or not) to the game of **DIPLOMACY**. Generally, a nominal fee is charged for his services to cover the costs of postage, printing and materials. This fee tends to range from \$2.00 to \$10.00. Many Gamemasters also require that their players maintain a subscription to an amateur **DIPLOMACY** magazine, or "zine", wherein the results are published; the cost of such a subscription can range from free to around \$2.00 an issue.

Joining a postal game is easy. Most people who publish amateur 'zines trade their publications with each other, forming an international network with news of game openings, game fees and other pertinent information on the postal hobby. Various representatives from the wide-spread postal **DIPLOMACY** hobby have volunteered to serve as "Contact Persons" to help you find postal matches. Their sole purpose is to help others discover and enjoy the game which has occupied them for so many years. Their names and addresses appear below.

If you are interested in playing **DIPLOMACY** by mail, write to the Contact Person in your region. You will be provided with information designed to familiarize you with the postal hobby and help you become involved in a game in short order. Please include a **STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE** with your inquiry.

Once you have joined a game, please bear in mind that six other players must still sign up for the same game before it can begin. This may take a few weeks. However, once your game is underway, you will find the suspense and keen competition of a postal game unrivaled. Postal play is sure to add new excitement to your enjoyment of **DIPLOMACY**!

NORTHEAST:

John Caruso
636 Astor Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania
USA 19401

SOUTHEAST:

David Hood
P.O. Box 218
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USA 28603

MIDWEST:

Gary Behnen
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USA 66062

WEST:

Don del Grande
142 Eliseo Drive
Greenbrae, California
USA 94904

CANADA:

Cal White
1 Turnberry Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M6N 1P6

NOTE: The Avalon Hill Game Company does not itself conduct **DIPLOMACY** games by mail, and has no control over the amateur publishers who do so. Financial arrangements for the conduct of such games must be between the parties concerned. The Avalon Hill Game Company assumes no responsibility in this, or any other aspect, of the postal play of the game. Should you have a problem with any postal Gamemaster, you should write to your regional Contact Person for guidance.



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It's interesting to consider how hard it was to reach Diplomacy hobbyists back in the day. Obviously, things have changed drastically, as I mentioned at the top of the article. A few challenges remain though, primarily related to how we reach folks who are playing on the two Android apps Conspiracy and Diplicity. There are literally thousands of folk playing that way who don't know about the wider hobby and, frankly, may not even

know they are playing the boardgame "Diplomacy" at all! I have reached out some to their Discord servers, but it's a challenge. It's one that we are likely to solve though, as the hobby in general (and some hobbyists in particular) have put in hard work during the pandemic to build out our hobby infrastructure to help support our future growth and development.

Virtual World Diplomacy Classic Recap

By Bill Hackenbracht



Talk about ending the year with a bang! The [virtual World Diplomacy Classic](#) (vWDC) wasn't just the largest live tournament of the year, but at 100 players and 39 boards - it was the largest live Diplomacy tournament since the 2006 World Dipcon in Berlin! And, as it would turn out, the 2006 World Champion, Nicolas Sahuguet, nearly won this tournament too - losing on a Top Board tie-breaker to Morgante Pell of Vermont. Morgante came into the hobby by way of a [Reddit](#) post, was Player's Choice at this year's virtual Liberty Cup, and is part of the next generation of players coming to us from the ranks of the online communities.

The 'World Classic' consisted of 100 players from 19 countries, and nearly as many time zones, participating in 6 rounds of Diplomacy over a 48-hour period. This was made possible in two ways - one, by beginning each round 8-10 hours after the last, and two, through the tireless work of the Tournament Director, Markus Zijlstra. Markus personally TD'd two rounds and was present at the start of each of the other four to ensure that his co-TDs were able to kick theirs off without issue. The other four co-TDs were Chris Brand (Cascadia), Garry Sturley (MaccCon and Tour of Britain), Peter McNamara (DAANZ), and the vWDC host, Bill Hackenbracht (Liberty Cup). Hobby legend, David Hood, served as TD Emeritus and was on stand-by in the event a TD had to miss his appointed round.

Games were force-drawn at the end of 1910 and scored with a new scoring system custom created by Peter McNamara for the event - '[World Classic Scoring](#).' But even with the games being time limited, there was still enough time for 'Farren Jane' to score a solo (England) in the final qualifying round and make her way onto the Top Board. In addition to the normal best countries and 'special' awards, organizers recognized the international

nature of the event and determined regional sub-champions for the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Pacific (best two rounds in "regional-friendly" rounds).

No one likes the fact that due to COVID the hobby can't get together in-person and lie to each other face-to-face. But events like the 'World Classic' are keeping the hobby moving forward, introducing it to new audiences, and really developing a new way of playing Diplomacy. In light of this, the [vWDC discord server](#) has been re-branded as the virtual World Diplomacy Community and is specially designed to host world-wide virtual house games (imagine being able to play a house game with people continents apart!). Additionally, the vWDC will play host to the Virtual Diplomacy League and DBNI; the virtual editions of NADF events Whipping, DixieCon, Massacre, and Liberty Cup; the virtual edition of UK's 'Tour of Britain;' and next year's vWDC World Classic - which has a pretty high bar to meet!

Results:

Final Seven:

Champion: Morgante Pell

2nd: Nicolas Sahuguet

3rd: Bill Hackenbracht

4th: Farren Jane

5th: Maxim Popov

6th: Matthew Crill

7th: Peter McNamara

8-100th: [here](#)

Best Countries:

A: Maxim Popov (14 SC board top)

E: Farren Jane (19 SC solo)

F: Claeser de Graaff (15 SC board top)

G: Nicolas Sahuguet (17 SC split board top)

I: Christophe Borgeat (15 SC board top)

R: (TIE) Christian Kline and JJ Raymond (9 SC 3-way board top)

T: Jaxon Roberts (17 SC split board top)

Regional Champions:

Asia Pacific: Peter McNamara

European: Claeser de Graaf

Americas: Farren Jane

Special Awards:

Golden Blade: Conrad Woodring

Player's Choice: Tom de Greef and Alex Lebedev

Whoopsie Doodle: Cyrille Sevin

Diplomacy Board Limericks

By Harold Reynolds

To my knowledge, creating a collection of limericks on the theme of the Diplomacy board has never been done before, so I took it upon myself to fill this gap in the Hobby literature. I dedicate this to the memory of Larry Peery, who encouraged this form of self-expression in a game that we played together a few years ago.

Austria

Bohemia

In Bohemia we find Prague City
Where people say things wise and witty.
But only a Dipper
Who's not feeling chipper
Would say that about this little ditty.

Trieste

The beautiful town of Trieste
By climate and culture are blessed.
But people's fondness for wine
At quarter-past nine
Makes many a fight and arrest.

Budapest

It's unfair to call Budapest.
He's nicer than most of the rest
Of Austria's neighbours
Who do it no favours
By making its player depressed.

Tyrolia

A curious contest in Tyrol
Is a real difficult pie roll.
If losers complain
They need time to train
The winner will say "Shut yer pie hole."

Galicia

Galicia's a region of Spain,
And also is found near Ukraine.
They claim limericks
Are linguistic tricks
For reasons I cannot explain.

Vienna

Vienna's the city of dreams
Where nothing there is as it seems.
It gave us "that" waltz,
That musical shmaltz,
Played so much it generates screams.

England

Clyde

Glasgow is a city in Clyde,
Unloved by the world far and wide.
When picked up by cops,
And dumped at the docks,
They call it the Edinburgh Ride.

London

Yes, London is known for its fog.
It's not good for taking a jog.
You can't see too far,
Or know where you are,
Watch out or you'll trip on your dog.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is a capital city,
Where Robert Burns wrote things very witty
Ault Reekie's its name,
Since smoke, to its shame,
Often hid how the city is pretty.

Liverpool

The Beatles were from Liverpool
And music was their greatest tool
For promoting change
Over a wide range
Of social injustices cruel.

Wales

They say in the country of Wales
There's a definite absence of whales.
It isn't a fluke
There isn't a fluke
And the sounds of their upset are wails.

Yorkshire

Yorkshire is known for its Dales,
They say are more scenic than Wales.
The people of York
Are handy with forks,
And say that they're better than nails.

France

Brest

Some immature players say Brest
Is featured on a woman's chest.
A convoy to Naples
Is one of the staples
Of these lame losers' weak jests.

Marseilles

There was a young lass in Marseilles
Whose guy wouldn't do as she'd say.
"You must support me in Spain
Or you'll feel the pain
Of a kick in the nuts every day!"

Burgundy

Burgundy borders the Rhine,
And it is known for its wine.
And on the occasion
Of German invasion,
Guzzling buys the French time.

Paris

Is Paris the City of Light,
Wherever you look there's a sight?
The Champs Élysées,
Oh, what can we say?
We all like to shop in the night.

Gascony

In Gascony's city of Bordeaux,
You will find an impressive chateau
Where wine can be tasted
Until you are wasted
And under the table you lie low.

Picardy

Grapes grown on the Picardy coast
Are fancied by connoisseurs most
Often for flavour
They like to savour
While wishing the English were ghosts.

Germany

Berlin

You need not be clever like Merlin
To trash-talk the city of Berlin.
It seldom is sunny,
The Germans talk funny,
And they won't take cash in pounds
sterling.

Ruhr

As night starts to fall in the Ruhr,
The sky goes to blacker from bluer.
When armies pass through
They lose quite a few
To ladies with knives and allure.

Kiel

The north German city of Kiel
Is really not such a big deal.
Though there's a canal
Within the locale
That really adds to its appeal.

Prussia

In Prussia the city of Posen
In winter does tend to get frozen.
Some folks like to frolic
In places bucolic,
But that's not the place I'd have
chosen.

Munich

What can I say about Munich?
It wasn't involved in Wars Punic.
But when Italians invade,
They're not there for the shade,
They claim all they want are new
tunics.

Silesia

Silesia's an important spot,
Despite its not having a dot.
It's time to move in
When you want Berlin,
According to tactics we're taught.

Italy

Apulia

There was a young lady named Julia
Who came from the hills of Apulia.
Her eggs over easy
Make everyone queasy
Because their appearance will foolya.

Rome

A priest from the city of Rome
Whose bald head was shaped like a dome
Was given some art
With which he'd not part
Because it was shaped like a comb.

Naples

Naples is quite close to Pompeii,
Where Vesuvius once had its way.
When it blew its top,
It made a loud pop,
And blew all the people away.

Tuscany

In our legs we have the joints three:
The ankle, the hip, and the knee.
Italy ends with a toe,
And is leg-shaped, so,
Its main joint we call Tuscany.

Piedmont

Piedmont a mountain of pies?
That's nothing but slander and lies!
But mountainside bakers,
Amazing pie makers,
Make it seem so to your eyes.

Venice

To cook deer in Italy's north,
To win first and not come in fourth,
You put some menace in
And call it Venice-in
But you'll be an outcast thenceforth.

Russia

Livonia (September 1, 2020)

Diplomacy puns are a crime,
Yes, even if placed in a rhyme.
Prepare to be blue
If you say that you
Livonia day at a time.

St. Petersburg

In St. Petersburg, seat of the Tsars,
It's too easy to get behind bars.
One slip of the lip
And it's a short trip
To a prison more remote than Mars.

Moscow (September 7, 2020)

Moscow's the hardest of all.
It led to Napoleon's fall.
General Winter,
Death notice printer,
Will lead to invaders' recall.

Ukraine

There's one thing we know of Ukraine
That travelers find quite a pain.
Although it's not daily,
It rains ukuleles
Which is why they call it Ukraine.

Sevastopol

Sevastopol's no place for pity.
Sarcasm's used by the witty.
You got a sliver?
Crimea River!
It's a tough life in this city.

Warsaw

Our invasion of Poland was flawed:
You can't win a war with chutzpah.
We lost our brass band
When they got stuck and
Things went from badda to Warsaw.

Turkey

Ankara

From Ankara the Turkish First Fleet,
Will leave port today and will seek
Enemy Russians
To give concussions
Then will beat a hasty retreat.

Smyrna

Yes, Izmir used to be Smyrna
Lived in by ladies named Myrna...
This rhyme is so lame
I should be ashamed
And banish myself to Burma.

Armenia

In Armenia there is a man
Who transforms things whenever he
can.
He had a Dodge Charger
That he wanted larger,
So he said "Presto! Yerevan!"

Syria

In the small zone known as Syria,
Armies so seldom appear-ya.
The place is remote
To get to by boat,
And to the Turk this won't endear-ya.

Constantinople

A woman from Constantinople
Lost her favorite jewel: an opal.
It was found by Sam Eppy,
A priest who was peppy,
And the opal is now episcopal.

Scandinavia and the Low Countries

Denmark

In Denmark we find Copenhagen,
With treasures around to be taken.
But you won't find meat
At any retreat
Since they are exclusively vegan.

Sweden

In Sweden the city of Stockholm
Is a really good place to walk home.
On one starry night
I saw a strange sight:
A teacher was taking her chalk
home.

Finland

In Finland, the city of Turku
Is a place where they really work you.
Working in Summer
Isn't a bummer
If long days don't make the work shirk
you.

Belgium

In Belgium the city of Brussels
Is known for its cons and its hustles.
The Mob Boss is Russell,
Has plenty of muscle,
And is known for sheep that he rustles.

Norway

Norway's at the top of the world,
With vistas that make your head whirl.
It borders St. Pete's
And leads to defeats
That can make the Russian's hair curl.

Holland

In Holland you'll soon find The Hague,
Though directions to get there are
vague.
You'll find that the Dutch
Won't help you that much,
Until you start serving Lafroaig.

The Balkans and Adriatic

Albania

An Albanian dinosaur
Needs a name that isn't a bore.
So Harold Munster,
The awful punster,
Dubs it Fred the Tiranosaur.

Rumania

Rumania leaves me depressed.
Their law system isn't the best.
Shoplifting a book
Will make you a crook,
And subject you to Bucharest.

Bulgaria

Plovdiv's the name of a town
That cannot be said with a frown.
It's known in the area
Of central Bulgaria
As a good place to put on a crown.

Serbia

In Serbia they rate their bells
By their sounds and not by their smells.
When a rating is made,
It's called the Belgrade.
It's a joke that nobody tells.

Greece

The Greek people know that the key
To keep hair from being icky
Is coffee sipping
During a clipping
By folks in Thessaloniki.

Adriatic Sea

The Bora's a wind katabatic
That blows to the Sea Adriatic.
The roar and the howl
Bring weather most foul
And make us all hide in the attic.

Iberia, Africa, and Water

Portugal

A Portuguese woman has done,
A stunt that's annoyed everyone.
She's made a soft roll
Whose name takes a toll
Because she has named it
Lisbon.

Tunis

Tunis, on the Barbary Coast,
Has a harbour admired by most.
Carthage it once was,
And made lots of buzz,
Until Romans turned it to toast.

Spain

The province of Spain has two coasts,
The people who live there will boast.
This fact can cause slips
In the placement of ships
That make you look dumb as a post.

Black Sea

The Black Sea is an oversized lake
Where Turkish and Russian fleets
make
A battle each season
Without any reason
Except for some SCs to take.

North Africa

In North Africa we can find Algiers,
Where disrespect is handled with all
jeers.
And it's hot and it's dry,
With no clouds in the sky:
What I'm thinking of drinking is all beers.

Helgoland Bight

When you think of Helgoland Bight,
It's seldom in terms of a fight.
A small blob of water
Is no place for slaughter
Hostile forces: stay out of sight.

Flights of Fancy in Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

Hello All, and welcome back to Airstrip One.

When writing one these articles my inspiration is often drawn from a recent news article but sometimes it may be a recollection or something that I have seen while out and about.

Either way, I like to think that the more interesting or entertaining pieces are those which are more personal. I certainly hope that the more of myself I put into them the better received they are.

Of course, if you disagree you can tell me at the usual e-mail address – jon.airstrip1@gmail.com

It will surprise no-one to learn that I rather enjoy writing – although perhaps not quite as much as dear Larry Peery did – and the act of preparing each article can be quite therapeutic and cathartic. Looking back at my last few columns any half-decent psychologist could chart my mood with a fair degree of accuracy. Many commentators suggest that having a sound grasp of human psychology is a vital weapon in the Diplomat's arsenal, so I suspect that some of you will have too.

My muse today, was triggered indirectly by one of my other interests - general aviation (that's flying small aircraft, to the uninitiated).

It has been said that there are two types of people in the world; those who look up when they hear the sound of an aircraft's engine, and those who don't. Me, I'm firmly in the neck-craning camp - and if you are too, that's

great – but if you don't know what I'm talking about, be happy. That's one bug that you haven't caught this year!

Don't get me wrong. I don't have a pilot's licence and I can count the number of times that I have actually flown in a single-engine plane on the fingers of one foot, let alone a hand. It is, though, a subject that has long fascinated me and one of my pipe dreams is to one day take flying lessons. Maybe, if I get lucky, I might even get to own a share in a small aeroplane.

Now, this minor fetish manifests in various different ways; one is in the titles to many of these columns; another is my YouTube subscription list; still another is the far-away look in my eyes when out walking the dog and a Cessna 152 or Robin 400 flies over.

As well as a pilot-wannabe, regrettably, I am also a terrible procrastinator – or should that be a very successful one? Something that I recently found myself doing – when I should doubtless have been doing something far more important – was researching different airfields in the UK.

My justification for this was to consider the feasibility of performing a charity challenge of trying to visit an airfield in each county of the UK – or at least England - in one day. The information was fairly readily available as most airfields and Aero Clubs have websites that provide useful information for visiting pilots as well as advertising their training facilities, café and such like.

Anyway, as it turns out, once you factor in distances, available daylight, aerodrome opening hours and restrictions, typical cruise speeds, fuel loads and all that malarkey, this challenge probably wouldn't be either practical or possible – at least not in any kind of aircraft I'd potentially have access to. Honestly, it was mind-bending how complicated it got very quickly.

Still, it would just about be possible to do only England's counties in about two days so maybe I'll go back to it in a year or two. Who knows?



It was during this flight of fancy that I came across something unusual and which finally brings me round to today's theme.

One website - which shall have to remain nameless - stood out from the others in quite a spectacular way. It didn't have any clever animation or anything like that; in fact, as websites go, it was quite basic.

What set it apart, though, was the pure, unadulterated passion coursing through each page – but strangely this wasn't a passion for aviation. No. This was an anger burning deep in the very heart of the organization, informing it's every word and deed and action and focused – very particularly – against another local club.

What we had here was feud!

From what I could make out – and to be honest, all the vitriol made the website something less than coherent – this club had been operating for many happy years without incident. However, the local geography and proximity of certain roads and footpaths made flying into and out of their airfield a little tricky. In *Diplomacy* terms, I'd say it was like trying to winkle Turkey out of the bottom right corner; not impossible but something that has to be approached in the right way.

Anyhow, it seems that about ten years ago – the website even has a counter tracking the duration of the dispute - a rival club purchased some dormant flying rights over the airfield which they then sought to exercise. This didn't go down well with the original club, who took particular exception to the type of aircraft that the rival club intended to fly-in. Harsh words were exchanged,

followed up by threats of litigation and both sides "tooled-up" with expert witnesses, brought in to support and bolster their respective arguments.

From then on things just got worse, with attempts at individual character-assassinations and the discrediting of these hired-in experts. Even the UK's aviation regulator, the CAA, got involved – apparently supporting the rival club – which didn't help the situation in any way.

Now the situation seems completely irreconcilable.

But what, I hear you ask, has this got to do with *Diplomacy*?

Well, I could at this point talk about the "Great Hobby Feud" from several decades ago but I won't. For one thing, it was long before my time in the hobby so I have no insight into what it was even about. Also, many of the parties involved have since shuffled off this mortal coil and for those still with us, I'm conscious that it may be a painful memory that I have no desire to re-awaken.

Instead, it occurred to me that there might be some lessons to take from this aeronautical quarrel that could help us both as a hobby and as individual players.

My first observation is that for this Aero Club, the dispute is draining their emotional and physical energy, not to mention their financial resources. The website carries a picture of the owner "in happier times", to use their words. Clearly, this dispute is exacting a terrible toll and making them miserable, and that is the real tragedy of their situation.

Now, I don't believe that this is what they wanted to happen nor do I imagine that this is what we would wish for anyone involved in our hobby either. One of the great strengths of our community – indeed, of our game – is that it is inherently social. You can't play *Diplomacy* without talking to folks, and you can't talk to folks without getting to know them, even just a little bit. This has really come to the fore during the pandemic, when other social contact may have been more limited.

Despite having a cherished place in my heart, as it has for a good many of us, I'm sure, *Diplomacy* is not my entire world. Hopefully we all have wider hobbies and interests which [should] make us interesting and well-rounded individuals. It is worth taking the time to discover what these are.

And as we get to know each other better, so we learn what makes each other tick. We find out our preferences and dislikes, we develop a feel for how people will react to different situations, to gauge whether they will tolerate a cheeky swipe of a dot or not. This is all useful information that helps us to establish and build a rapport

with our fellow players. From such rapport so we can build trust – and it is trust that creates the opportunity for both fruitful alliances and devastating stabs. These are the two sides of the “trust coin”. No one can win a game without a strong and reliable partner – and it is almost impossible to solo without betraying that trust at some point.

Although it sounds almost too simple, success in *Diplomacy* owes more to being likeable, friendly and interested in people than it does to great strategy or brilliant tactics.

My second lesson is that feuding causes us to lose objectivity. Human beings are emotional animals and it is impossible not to get angry or frustrated if things do not go as we had hoped or promises are reneged upon. As I think I have said before, when I first started playing the game with my cousin, my uncle would have to play too – to act as referee and prevent fist-fights. How does the tag line go? *Diplomacy*... ruining friendships for generations!

Of course, the game does not do that. Rather it is players becoming emotionally over-committed – perhaps laced with a dose of immaturity/tiredness/strong liquor - that does the damage. My point is, we primarily play this game for fun and because we enjoy it. Obviously, we want to win and I'm sure we would all try our damndest to do so. But if we lose our cool and forget that this is only a game, then how much fun are we really having?

It may be controversial to suggest but, if we cannot sit down after a game and share a friendly drink with our fellow players – whether that is physical or metaphorical – then perhaps we shouldn't really be playing in the first place.

Likewise, in-game, allowing ourselves to get riled up simply means that we are more likely to make mistakes. Some players will try to deliberately provoke just that sort of reaction in the hope of gaining an advantage. The best remedy is to remain calm, keep talking to everyone and never to make snap decisions based solely on emotion.

Sadly, that is far easier said than done.

And finally, my third point is to recognise how quickly feud can develop. All it really takes is for one individual with a strong (read stubborn) personality to have a misunderstanding with another player. What might start as a simple misunderstanding or perceived slight – “honestly, I thought you said that I could have Belgium!” - can quickly become a massive point of contention.

It doesn't even have to be in-game. ‘Meta-gaming’ – that is, two players trading of favours across separate games or agreeing to a joint strategy outside and independent of a shared game – is rightly frowned upon. However, it is surprising how often events in one game can influence behaviour in another. It is impossible to avoid. In a tournament, strategy can be determined as much by the scoring system and relative positions on the leader board as it is the players, their pieces and positions. If a player believes that they have been deliberately targeted – either for another's gain or to be denied a spot-on top board, the sense of injustice could easily trigger a reaction.

If we have played the game for any length of time, we will have come across individuals with strong personalities – and quite possibly some for whom compromise is a dirty word. The risk, therefore, of a feud developing must always be regarded as ever-present. This increases - in my view - with the perceived anonymity that comes with on-line play.

So, what is the remedy? Well, in addition to cool heads and warm hearts the answer is vigilance.

Appreciating the damage that a sour relationship can cause, we should constantly be looking out for unhealthy signs in correspondence or, in face-to-face play, reading the room and the body language of the other players.

And what about when we see the signs of a feud developing? How should we react?

Well, then I'd suggest going back to the golden rule of *Diplomacy*: Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!

It's hard for anyone to be angry with someone who is genuinely interested in what they have to say and, if there has been a misunderstanding or disagreement, you won't solve anything by ignoring it.

Anyway, that's my take on it. Whether you agree, disagree or think it's all in my head, please let me know. I really value the feedback.

Sadly, I don't have time now for a UK round up but I sincerely hope that there will be some commentary on the first round of the Tour of Britain elsewhere in this edition of *Diplomacy World*. If there is not then I'll try to remedy that for the next issue.

In the meantime, stay safe and have a Stabby Easter!

Jon

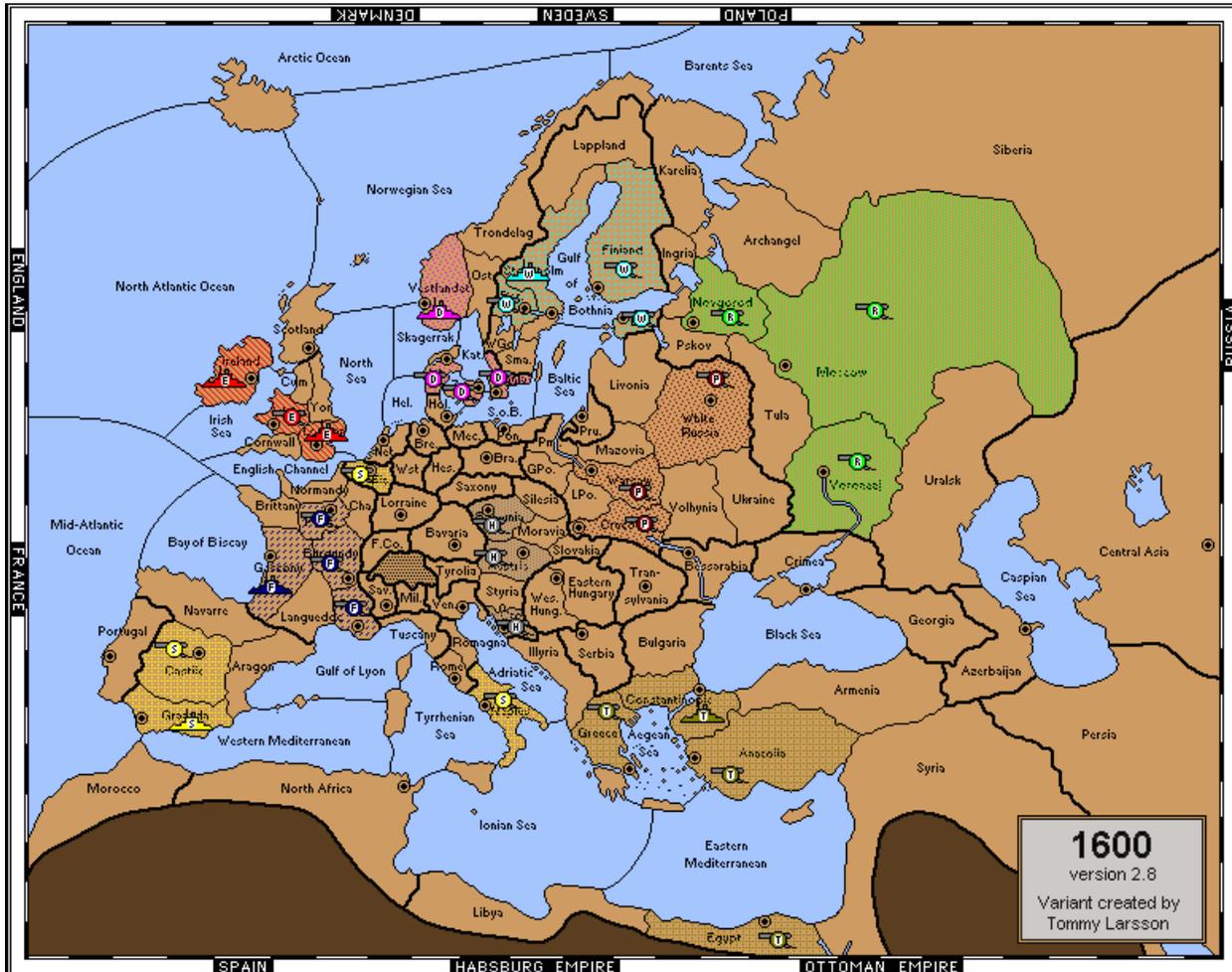
Search for the Worst #1

By Bob Durf

I mentioned last issue that I would be accepting submissions for my search for the worst variant. Too long have we spent searching for what makes a great variant. Too often have we chided amateur designers for poor map design or obtrusive rules. It is time to sit back

and search for the true champion of bad Diplomacy variants. Each submitted variant will be analyzed in a variety of categories and scored. Make no mistake, we are searching for the lowest score possible—we are Searching for the Worst.

This issue's submission: 1600, Designed by Tommy Larsson



Overview: 1600 is an older variant, and one I have actually had the pleasure of playing. 1600 is, you guessed it, a take on 1600s Europe and features nine different Powers. Is this variant an 'oldie but goodie' or is it a serious contender for worst variant? Let us see.

Category One: Setting

1600 is a variant that takes place in historical Europe. A completely unoriginal geographic setting is coupled with a fairly unoriginal time period. The Powers we see in the variant include such stalwart competitors as England, France, Russia, Turkey, and Austria. Poland, Denmark,

Sweden, and Spain make up the newcomers. A sliver of central Asia and Africa fill out the map.

Setting Score: A very impressive 2 out of 10 for the unoriginal Europe setting is coupled with a less impressive 5 out of 10 for the time period to give a total category one score of 7.

Category Two: Graphical Design

1600's map design on its face is not offensive. First, the graphical design is hard to complain about. There are no awkward looking borders, everything is legible and

discernable. No space seems too small or too large, and while there are certainly more spaces than standard Diplomacy, the graphical design does not feel crowded. Only the canals possibly detract from what is otherwise a clear and attractive map.

Graphical Design Score: This category does 1600 no favors in our search for the worst with a score of 8 out of 10.

Category Three: Feasibility

Too often, variant designers throw out variants without considering how difficult it may be to ever arrange games with those variants. 1600 is a nine-player variant, which is slightly high for being able to organize, run, and complete a game, but not out of the range of feasibility. The rules are standard besides a series of canals, making the game easy to understand and play. I think the canal rules create some very silly fleet building locations—the better alternative would have been to allow landlocked Powers to build a fleet in a neutral coastal space later captured.

Feasibility Score: 1600 does not require an army of players and it has almost completely standard rules. 12 out of 15.

Category Four: Balance and Playability

Balance can be hard to opine on with many variants due to a lack of hard statistics about game results. On vDiplomacy.net, there are 67 recorded finished games of 1600. From said games, Denmark has a mighty 13 solos with 22 draws. The next best Power would be the Ottomans, scrounging up 7 solos with 18 draws. Every other power lags behind according to that site.

The cause for Denmark and Ottoman hegemony appears clear by examining the map. Denmark starts with four supply centers. Of those four, only one can fall under concentrated attack in year one. Ottomans similarly start with four supply centers, and absolutely none of those centers can be attacked by multiple enemy forces in the first year. The map design shows a typical hallmark of poor variants—giving edge powers strong defenses while also giving them access to plenty of neutral growth.

Denmark also benefits from a flaw in this variant that can be seen in other variants, such as Modern—a big blob of neutral supply centers within easy reach. In Diplomacy,

nearly every neutral is in small clusters of territory, encouraging distinct areas of conflict and negotiation. In 1600, we see a big blob of neutrals in the middle of the map and then other neutrals strewn aimlessly across the rest of the map. One solution to this flaw can be seen in *Ambition and Empire*—rather than just leave a group of free neutrals in the middle of Germany, it puts neutral units in each with diplomatic rules. Whatever that variant's other issues, such a solution creates a more even playing field than just leaving an open pot of supply centers in Germany.

Still, its tough to dock too many points for balance, because as far as variants go, this one is undeniably playable. I played it personally as Spain (about ten years ago at this point) and remember enjoying it, although I did not win. Each Power has plenty of negotiation opportunities with others, and the map is not so far flung as to slow down the game. Back then, variant forum games on PlayDiplomacy did not have the best completion rate, and as far as I remember, this game made it to some sort of conclusion.

Balance and Playability Score: The game is not particularly well balanced, but is still playable, and at least for me, enjoyable. 11 out of 15.

Total Score: 38 out of 60.

Well, I will thank our anonymous submitter for starting our Search for the Worst off, but let us be frank—1600 is just not a bad variant at all. Tommy Larsson cranked out a solid variant that is eminently enjoyable, as I can personally attest to. Therefore, our search still continues. Feel free to submit other variants to lead our search to a design that truly deserves our unmitigated criticism.



Introducing Center-Count Carnage

By Jonathan Frank

Players attending David Maletsky's virtual eCarnage Spring Edition tournament the weekend of April 30th will be playing under a new scoring system. As the designer of this system, which I am for convenience calling Center-Count Carnage scoring, I would like to give **Diplomacy World** readers, many of whom I am sure will be playing in the event, a preview of what they are getting into. Here it is:

In every game, 45028 points are awarded, split between the 7 players as detailed below.

If a game ends with no player winning, each player receives 500 points per supply center owned, plus bonus points based on their board rank:

1st place	7007 points
2nd place	6006 points
3rd place	5005 points
4th place	4004 points
5th place	3003 points
6th place	2002 points
7th place	1001 points

Eliminated players are ranked by year of elimination, with players eliminated later ranking higher. Players tied on center count or tied on elimination year split the total rank bonus that would be awarded to their ranks evenly.

If a game is ended by a player's victory, that player receives 39028 points and each losing player receives 1000 points, regardless of previous center count or elimination year rank.

In my comments I would like to emphasize first of all that the Carnage scoring system works. The more I have participated in *Diplomacy* events, and the more I time I spent working on this project, the more I have become resigned to whatever theoretical weaknesses Carnage may have, which pale in comparison to its demonstrated usefulness. However, its incentives may relate to a theoretically pure game of *Diplomacy*, the Carnage system's simplicity makes the incentives actually in play at an event absolutely clear, and barring shenanigans at the table the tournament winner fairly achieved a goal that every player can easily recognize and understand.

Carnage scoring's most unusual aspect, when compared to the rest of my *Diplomacy* experience, is that it awards points to all players regardless of result. This incentive I have kept, with barely modified values, and in fact expanded, so that even in the event of a won game the other players receive some points.

This project began, however, as an effort to apply my theoretical principle which is that absolute and not relative center counts provide the best key to differentiating positions on a *Diplomacy* board. Even in the base Carnage scoring system, at the top of the scoring table where tournaments are won and lost, it is the centers held that win and lose the trophies. But can Carnage simplicity and positive incentives be mated with significant value placed on center ownership?

In fact, my early efforts abandoned simplicity fairly comprehensively. I made the mistake of attempting to also include some personal ideas – which I will not detail here – about what power sizes “really” represent. Maletsky's insistence on getting something useful, once he decided to trial the system at his event, is mainly responsible for dragging the point values back to comprehensibility. But under the influence of that editorial guidance, I believe the answer becomes a fairly clear “yes”.



The other fairly unique aspect of Carnage scoring is the value attached to outright victory. Victory is worth about four times any best possible other result; even the tiny modification of awarding points to losing players would leave the value at well over three times. But as soon as centers are made more individually valuable, it becomes impossible to maintain this relative value of the solo without contortions; and the relative value starts shifting, sometimes dramatically, with the centers held – especially by the leader.

In my center-count modification, a soloist who plays no other games in a typical three-round event can lose out to a player who tops three draws with an average center count over 12; if the soloist plays and loses two more games, he raises the required average to beat him to over 13 1/3 centers per game. Even a modest result in

one other game still makes a soloist practically uncatchable except by another soloist.

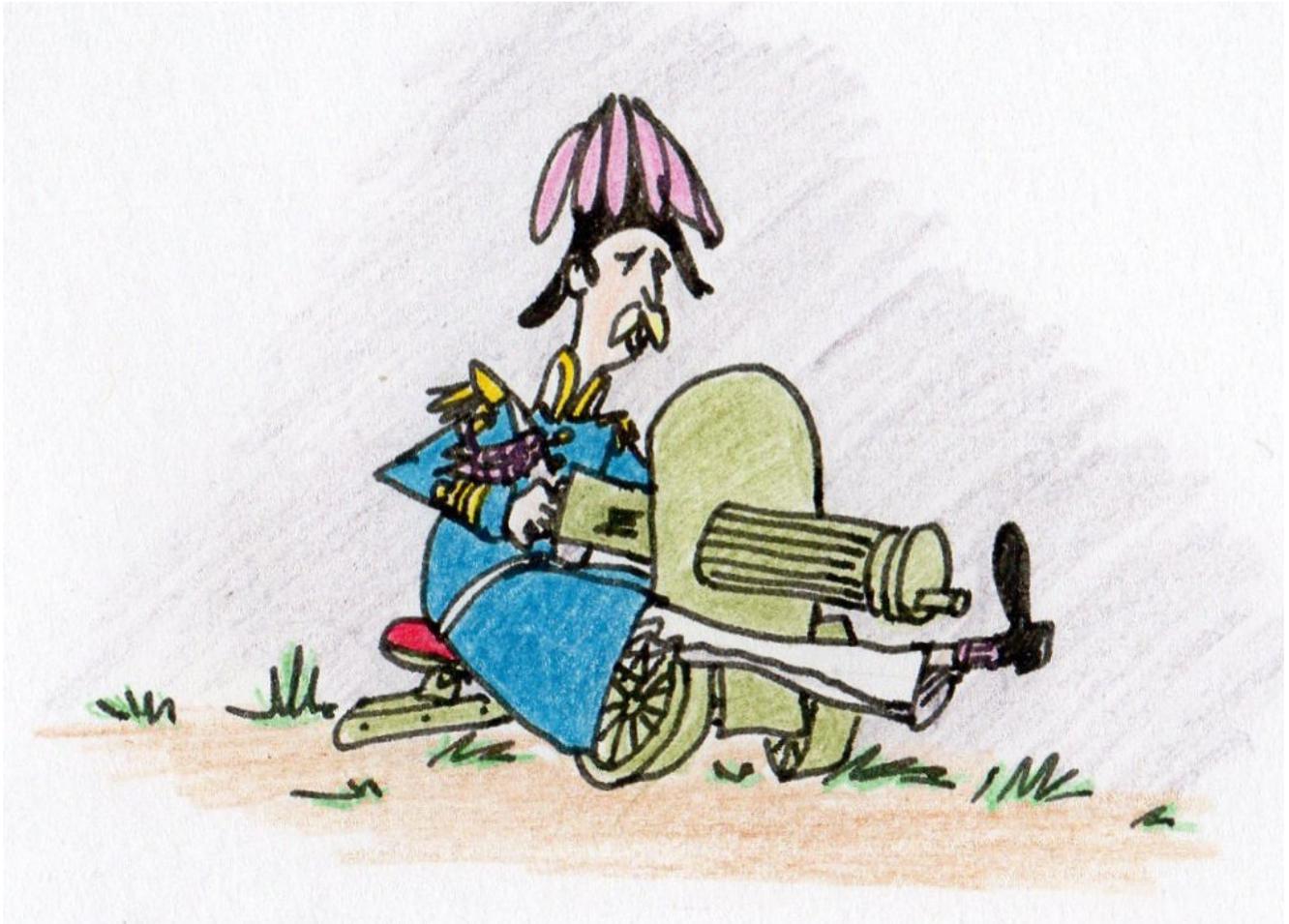
My primary practical complaint about Carnage scoring has been that a player willing to risk another soloist can score well in an event by taking a series of *small* board tops – of course, if everybody is trying to do that that will raise the required center count to keep ahead of the crowd. My primary concern about pure center counts would be overly encouraging game-long alliances where both players will still “do well” even if neither wins and the final draw favors one, perhaps 15 centers to 12 with assorted minor powers remaining. The 12-center power, after all, may gamble that he can pull off another double-digit second place while this rounds leader will founder under the increased attention next time out.

I found it, in the end, indispensable to retain a significant rank component as well as the base participation bonus. A lead gives a player essentially the value of two bonus

centers and a tie-break over a second-place player: the 12-center power in the previous paragraph scores less well than a 10-center board topper.

(The relative value of rank and center I worked through several test values. If worth less than two centers, rank bonuses were essentially meaningless, especially at the top of a scoring table, and the relative value of a solo victory was even lower than in the system I settled on; if worth more than two centers, large rank bonuses diluted the entire point of the center-count experiment.)

This system began as an intellectual exercise. I owe a large debt to David Maletsky, both for his work shepherding the original Carnage scoring through its several iterations to its current robust incarnation, and for deciding to give this alternate form a trial at his event. I can only hope it proves half as robust as the original and I am looking forward to hearing the – no doubt varied – impressions of players afterward.



The Diplomacy Broadcast Network Invitational

A Step Forward for Diplomacy

By David Hood

We all know how much the global pandemic has affected our lives in the Real World. We also know there have been tremendous effects on our Diplomacy hobby, as well. We've been unable to enjoy the face-to-face experience now for over a year, both in the form of tournaments as well as house games. On the other hand, readers of DW know that the shutdown has also spawn significant innovation in the world of Diplomacy, from the onset of virtual tournaments to new websites like the NADF to Diplomacy media like DBN itself.

The Diplomacy Broadcast Network on YouTube and Twitch was the brainchild of Zachary Moore, Brandon Fogel and Bryan Pravel. Starting as a way to broadcast coverage of virtual face to face games within the Chicago and Minnesota clubs in the spring of 2020, DBN soon morphed into the vehicle for livestream coverage of tournaments and other fun Diplomacy-related programming. The hobby is really now a very different place than what it was pre-Covid.

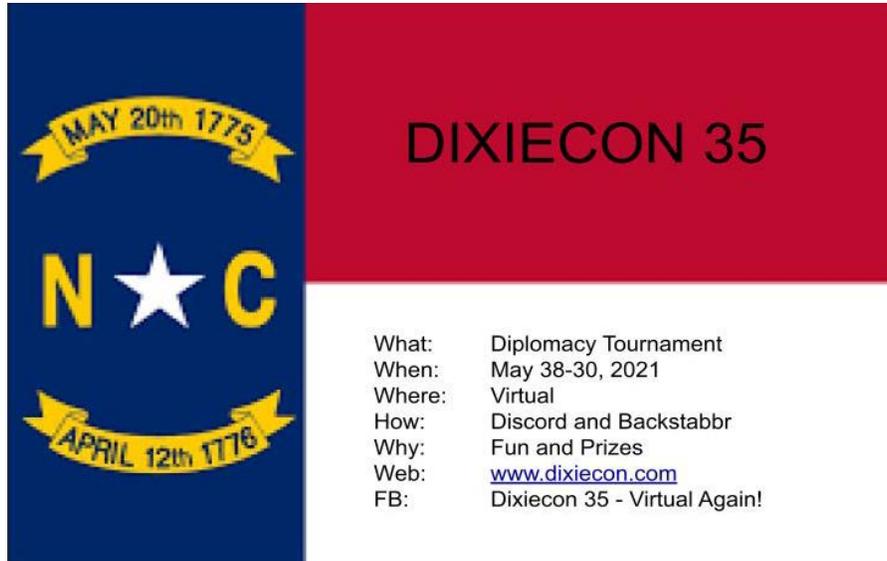
Another aspect of this change is the DBN Invitational, the event I have been promoting during the past year as "Diplomacy's Big Dance." The idea was to have an overarching structure to tie together the events being run during 2020, mostly virtual, as well as to tie together the sub-hobbies of FTF, online and virtual FTF. The DBN guys came up with a ranking system based on result and size of event, kept up with and promoted the rankings through the 2020 season, and increased the hype by periodically filming the Countdown show as a fun way to analyze which players were likely or unlikely to make the field of 28. This field, by the way, was designed to be similar to the NCAA basketball tournament, with automatic bids given to winners of big enough events, and then the remainder being filled with at-large bids based on DBNA ranking at the end of January (the DBNI season is considering to start in Feb and end the following Jan, given that the DBNI event itself is run over three weekends in February.)

Speaking of which, once February 2021 rolled around, the field was set and the preliminary games commenced virtually, of course with full DBN coverage. The top seven finishers, based upon their two scores from the prelim rounds, then advanced to a Top Board on February 27 – from which Peter McNamara of Australia rose as inaugural champion. That championship board was the most viewed DBN program of the entire year.

Was this first DBNI a success? Undoubtedly. Dip hobbyists followed the event with significant interest, from beginning to end, and I know that the existence of the Invitational and qualifying for it did indeed drive turnout to Diplomacy tournaments in general, which was always a side benefit of having this thing. Was the DBNI perfect? Undoubtedly not. The interest level of some of the qualifiers was not great, although I think this problem will right itself over time as the qualification system is tweaked for 2021 and beyond. Will the DBNI happen again? Hey, reader, it's literally happening right now! Tournaments have already been run from which results will start helping or hurting a player's chances of making the February 2022 field. Winners and strong finishers from club play, like the Virtual Diplomacy League and the Tour of Britain, are eligible for DBNI entrance – and those leagues have already had their season starts in March. Upcoming virtual tournaments in April and May have already began promotion of their events with the understanding that top finishers will be trying like the dickens to make next year's Big Dance!

The Invitational is definitely an example of a success story in today's Diplomacy hobby. But how does it fit into the overall scheme of championship events? Quite nicely, I think. Dipcon and World Dipcon will continue to be considered the yearly North American and global championships for face-to-face play, as will the European Dipcon for its region. The new Virtual Diplomacy Championship now set for the December of each year should be considered the world championship of virtual face to face play, much like the Online Diplomacy Championship fulfills that role for the extended deadline online Diplomacy community. The DBNI supplements all these – by providing an invitational format, versus the open formats of DC/WDC/VDC/EDC. It also provides a good opportunity for hobby subsets to interact with each other, since the Invitational features players from all formats of Diplomacy play.

How can you get involved in the next DBNI? Easy – just win a tournament or league, or failing that, get a bunch of good results. Mostly, just join the fun and frivolity stemming from something like the DBNI. It'll be good for you.



Dixiecon Diplomacy Tournament

The 35th Annual Event — Virtual This Year — May 28-30, 2021

Tournament Director: David Hood

Assistant TD and Gamesmaster: Michael Lowrey

Overview

Normally held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina over Memorial Day weekend, Dixiecon is the longest-running Diplomacy tournament location in the world. It has hosted the World championships three times and the North American championships four times, as well as providing fun boardgaming experiences for Diplomacy hobbyists since 1987.

This Year's Details

1. Virtual event due to pandemic, with Diplomacy and Speedboat played on Backstabbr.com
2. Pre-tournament updates, chat, and gameday negotiations to use vWDC server on Discord
3. One round each on Friday, Saturday, Sunday — best two scores count using Dixiecon scoring
4. Speedboat (5 min. turn Gunboat) event with prelim rounds starting Friday and championship board Saturday
5. Side tournaments in Terraforming Mars and assorted other boardgames to be played online
6. Full tournament coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network YouTube and Twitch channels

For More Information

Email davidhood@dixiecon.com or Visit www.dixiecon.com and on Facebook at:

https://www.facebook.com/events/4003537813047420/?post_id=4005774136157121&view=permalink¬if_id=1616343693569533¬if_t=feedback_reaction_generic&ref=notif

Diplomacy World Demo Game “Dirty Rotten Scoundrels” – 2019A

The Players:

Austria: Brad Wilson
England: Vick Hall
France: Steve Cooley
Germany: Dick Martin
Italy: Lance Anderson
Russia: Steve Nicewarner
Turkey: Stephen Agar

The Commentators:

David Hood - Rick Desper - Jack McHugh

Spring 1906



Austria: A Moscow Supports A Warsaw.

England: F Baltic Sea Supports A Kiel – Berlin, F Barents Sea Supports A St Petersburg,
F Gulf of Bothnia Supports A Livonia, A Kiel – Berlin, A Livonia Supports A Warsaw,
F North Atlantic Ocean - Mid-Atlantic Ocean (*Bounce*), F North Sea Hold, A St Petersburg Supports A Moscow.

France: A Burgundy Supports A Munich, F Gulf of Lyon - Western Mediterranean (*Fails*), A Holland Hold,
A Marseilles - Piedmont (*Fails*), A Munich Supports A Silesia, F North Africa Supports F Tunis, A Silesia Hold,
F Tunis Hold, F Western Mediterranean - Mid-Atlantic Ocean (*Bounce*).

Germany: A Prussia Supports A Silesia, A Warsaw Supports A Moscow.

Italy: A Piedmont Supports A Tuscany (*Cut*), F Rome Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Serbia – Trieste,

A Tuscany Supports A Piedmont, A Tyrolia Supports A Bohemia.

Russia: A Sevastopol Supports A Ukraine, A Ukraine Supports A Galicia, A Vienna Supports A Galicia.

Turkey: F Aegean Sea Supports F Ionian Sea, A Bohemia Supports A Galicia, A Galicia Supports A Bohemia, F Ionian Sea Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Rumania Supports A Galicia, F Tyrrhenian Sea Hold.

Now Proposed: 7-way Draw. Please vote with your Fall orders. NVR=No

PRESS

dateline berlin: rematch, anyone?

everyone to berlin: no way hosea!

Spring 1906 Commentary:

David Hood

Rick Desper

Jack McHugh

OK...so...not much to comment on here. EF sticks together, that bounce in MAO is arranged. They decide they don't need two German puppet armies, so England takes out Berlin. The Eastern powers are just in defensive formation. Whole lotta nuthin.

Is this game over? Possibly, although with England building it probably ought NOT to be over. Vick can certainly stab France. The question is what France should do about that. Preemptively move backwards to defend? Might depend on whether any kind of deal could be cut with Turkey. Clearly Turkey should be amendable to taking out his vassal states in exchange for France pulling back, but doesn't that just guarantee that Turkey's position become unassailable down the road, for whichever of France or England wins the Battle Royale in the West? Entirely possible.

This could be the line of reasoning which prevents Vick from stabbing Cooley. My own thinking is, do it anyway, it's just a bloody game and this draw result would not be terribly satisfying. Maybe you get the jump on the Turks somehow. As far as what Cooley should do, I think I would probably stand pat like he is doing and try to convince Vick to take the draw (if Agar will do it.) What

should Agar do? Probably veto the draw, at least for a while, to see if that makes Vick jumpy.

Maybe instead of calling these demo games, we should call them cautionary tales?

Nothing of interest is happening here. In honor of Jim Burgess, we should give the highest scores to the powers with the fewest SC's.

This game should be called "dirty rotten moves" as there is nothing to comment on here as my fellow commentators' state, virtually nothing is happening. Everyone is waiting for someone else to make the first move or they simply can't because they are too weak.

I agree with Dave, do something, anything. Stab, don't stab, just stop standing around—not a single power has been eliminated yet. Shameful, might as well play Candyland.

Fall 1906

Austria: A Moscow Supports A Warsaw.

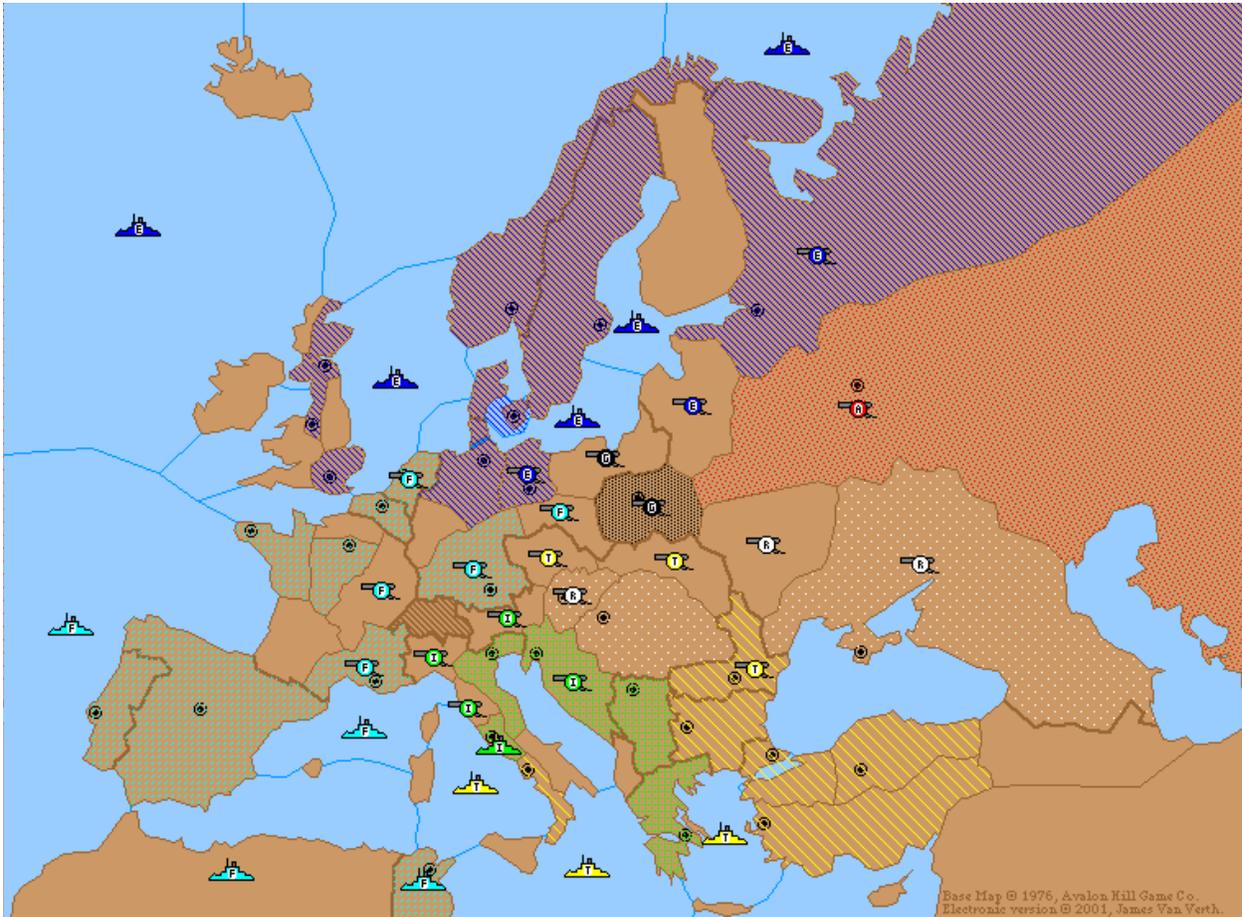
England: F Baltic Sea Supports A Berlin, F Barents Sea Supports A St Petersburg, A Berlin Supports A Silesia, F Gulf of Bothnia Supports A Livonia, A Livonia Supports A Warsaw, F North Sea - Holland (*Fails*), A St Petersburg Supports A Moscow, F Norwegian Sea Hold (No Such Unit), F North Atlantic Ocean Unordered.

France: A Burgundy Supports A Munich, F Gulf of Lyon Supports A Marseilles – Piedmont, A Holland Hold, A Marseilles - Piedmont (*Fails*), A Munich Supports A Silesia, F North Africa Supports A Marseilles - Piedmont (*Fails*), A Silesia Supports A Warsaw, F Tunis Hold, F Western Mediterranean - Mid-Atlantic Ocean.

Germany: A Prussia Supports A Silesia, A Warsaw Supports A Moscow.

Italy: A Trieste farts loudly in the direction of London and Paris, A Piedmont Supports A Tuscany (*Cut*), F Rome Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Tuscany Supports A Piedmont, A Tyrolia Supports A Bohemia.

Russia: A Sevastopol Supports A Ukraine, A Ukraine Supports A Galicia, A Vienna Supports A Galicia.
Turkey: F Aegean Sea Supports F Ionian Sea, A Bohemia Supports A Galicia, A Galicia Supports A Bohemia,
 F Ionian Sea Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Rumania Supports A Galicia, F Tyrrhenian Sea Hold.



The 7-way Draw Fails

Supply Center Chart

Austria:	Moscow=1	Even
England:	Berlin, Denmark, Edinburgh, Kiel, Liverpool, London, Norway, St Petersburg, Sweden=9	Build 1
France:	Belgium, Brest, Holland, Marseilles, Munich, Paris, Portugal, Spain, Tunis=9	Even
Germany:	Warsaw=1	Remove 1
Italy:	Greece, Rome, Serbia, Trieste, Venice=5	Even
Russia:	Budapest, Sevastopol, Vienna=3	Even
Turkey:	Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Naples, Rumania, Smyrna=6	Even

PRESS

NEAR SMOLENSK: Whose idea was this, anyway?

RED SQUARE to DICK: One more year?

KvK to WORLD: We want a fleet to go cruising on the Volga Canal.

Fall 1906 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Okay, so...there were only a handful of non-support orders in this turn, and only one move which actually worked (F Wes-MAO). No, I think I speak for most of the peanut gallery when I say: gentlemen, why are we continuing this game, exactly? Now, perhaps the answer is that one or more folk think that an Anglo-French war is coming, eventually, so why not wait until then to see what dynamism that could allow for the game. That would appear to be the only event which could cause any such dynamism, though. It would make no sense for Turkey to plow into Italy at this point, for example. He is more likely to wait until an EF conflict.

Given that we have nothing much to talk about, then, let's talk about what did NOT happen this turn. The English misorder about F North Atlantic is probably just a screwup, but I question why the English and French did not agree to bounce in MAO to begin with. If you wanted to maintain the alliance, that would have been a decent idea. The French not being in Western Med does allow for the eastern guys to move their units around, if they wish to, and try to guess right vis-à-vis the French fleet in Lyo.

Of course we also saw no French snaking of Kiel, no English grab on Belgium, no real funny business at all in that regard. It's conceivable that the EF could have arranged some of screwiness like that, on purpose, to see if that caused Turkey to hit Italy and/or the vassal Russian remnant. Without some sort of move like that, though, this game will remain static. Unless Turkey gets an itchy trigger finger, I suppose, but that seems doubtful to me given the position and the fact that he only has six centers as is.

So, what, one piece moved? I/R/T have a minority stalemate locked up. France is pulling back to encourage Turkey to attack somebody. That's a strategy that usually doesn't work. Why not? Good question.

The Eastern powers have spent a good part of the game bickering with each other. It took a lot of work to put their differences aside to build the trust required to work together. And a stab at this point would be a sucker's move. Were I Turkey in this position, I would go to England and/or France and say "You first".

Now if I were England in this game, I would hope that I didn't let the game reach this point. In the rule book, under "Object of the Game", it says that the

goal is to get a majority of the SCs. Sticking with France as an ally this long has not helped him in the pursuit of said goal. Indeed, since the Western alliance was so obvious and so strong, a counter-alliance was nearly inevitable, at least on a board with reasonably good players. And why have five fleets? His balance and disposition of forces mean that his odds of winning from this position are basically zero. I say this not to pick on Vick. This alliance-focused game is strongly encouraged by tournament scoring systems, where victories are rare and usually come as the result of poor play and/or people deliberately helping others win.

The stalemate line is the bane of interesting play in Diplomacy. What can players do to avoid games getting bogged down like this one has done? I think it requires a different philosophy of play right from the start. Legend has it that in the earlier days of the hobby, people just kept playing until somebody won and weren't as averse to losing. These days people seem to try harder to not lose than they try to win. From a very early stage of the game this was very drawish. So many factors led to this point: the infighting among the Central powers, the early crowding around Munich, the corner powers growing slowly and keying on the linchpins of the stalemate line, etc.

Jim Burgess used to float the idea of a scoring system that rewarded the smallest players in a draw. While that would have the unfortunate effect of draw whittling (which I think is also the wrong path to go down if you're looking to get a solo victory), it would at least avoid situations where players who could grow just chose not to.

I don't know what happened around Italy. It looks like Lance steered the game towards an end where neither Turkey nor France would be able to significantly push into the other's position. This is where less experienced players would lead to a more interesting result. Why did France and Turkey not simply divvy up those Italian dots? Each of them would have significantly improved his position. I'm guessing this didn't happen because Turkey was strongly worried about the E/F. (*shrug*)

Well, it is what it is. This position is an exercise in the power of a minority stalemate line. If E/F didn't see this coming, that's on them. England only has three armies in any case and would have been hard-

pressed to move inland. France, France...how did France not crack Italy? Hmm...he sent all his armies at Germany instead. France pretty much stopped attacking once he took Tunis. Looking back, it seems that France didn't send any armies to the boot. Why didn't he attack England, then, instead of Germany?

I don't get what's going on with France--why move out of WMed to MAO? Why isn't it WMed where it belongs--if you're going to build lots of fleets then you should use those fleets to get over the stalemate line and collapse the other side's positions.

I look back at my previous commentary. Comments I made over a year ago address similar themes. Why did England build so many fleets? Is this game going to stalemate? After Winter 1903 I said "the point of the game is to get to 18, not 9." After Fall 1904 I said "This could wrap up quickly, but at least I hasn't stalemated into a blah 6-way draw." No, Rick, thanks to the generosity of the Western Powers, it appears we'll get a 7-way draw instead.

This whole board is one long stalemate line at this point. The only possible place that the Western alliance can make any headway is in the Med area.

I agree with my fellow commentators, unless E/F stabs each other this maybe a 7-way draw.

Winter 1906



Austria: Has A Moscow.

England: Build A London..Has F Baltic Sea, F Barents Sea, A Berlin, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Livonia, A London, F North Atlantic Ocean, F North Sea, A St Petersburg.

France: Has A Burgundy, F Gulf of Lyon, A Holland, A Marseilles, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Munich, F North Africa, A Silesia, F Tunis.

Germany: Remove A Prussia..Has A Warsaw.

Italy: Has A Piedmont, F Rome, A Trieste, A Tuscany, A Tyrolia.

Russia: Has A Sevastopol, A Ukraine, A Vienna.

Turkey: Has F Aegean Sea, A Bohemia, A Galicia, F Ionian Sea, A Rumania, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Now Proposed: 7-way Draw
Please vote, NVR=No

PRESS

dateline used-to-be-berlin-but-is-now-warsaw: has there ever been a more obviously stalemated game? vote yes so we can get on with our lives!

dateline warsaw to moscow: yes, one more year (sigh!)

Constantinople: The Sultan was not happy – the entire continent was in lock-down. The treacherous English or the pompous French had concocted some sort of virus between them, which had now spread across the whole of Europe. No one could move. The Sultan's dreams of a

pan-European Turkish Empire were on hold. Social distancing meant that he couldn't even throw his arms around his Italian and Russian allies – while the virus had all but wiped out the Germans and the Austrians. "We need a vaccine" the Sultan mused, "if we are to get things back on the road". The English and the French had started this pandemic – now it was up to them to do what was necessary to change the situation. "The sooner one of them kills the other, the better!" screamed the Sultan – only then could Europe be at peace under never-ending Turkish hegemony.

Winter 1906 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

No commentary needed, since really nothing happened.

