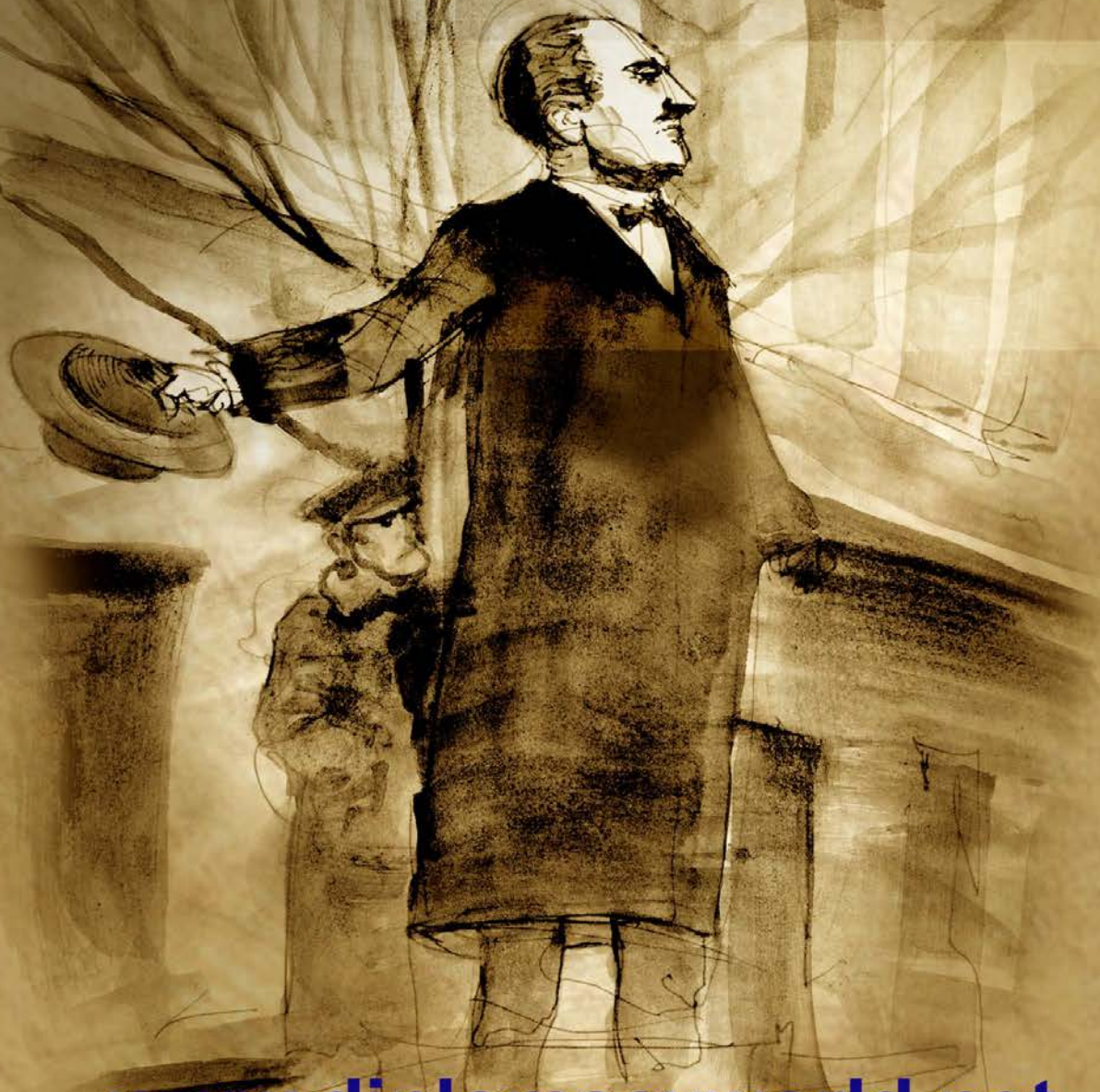


Diplomacy World



#118 - Summer 2012



www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, #118. The 100 degree dog days of summer are upon us here in Texas, and as it turns out, in much of the rest of the United States as well. But summer isn't all just hot temperatures...it's also going to include hot-blooded competition at World DipCon in Chicago. Jim Burgess has made it his personal mission to get attendance up to the "old days" levels of over 300. I had some important things I wanted to say here, but because Jim threatened my life I'm going to keep quiet and step aside. So allow me to turn the major portion of this section over to Jim Burgess, who will make his case for why YOU should make plans IMMEDIATELY to attend World DipCon in Chicago:

UPDATE on The Drive for 330 at World DipCon: In the "old days" there used to be as many as 330 Diplomacy players from around the world showing up at World DipCon. The point of "showing up" was not to win the Tournament, as remember the more players there are, the more YOUR chances go down, but to get together make friends, laugh, drink, play, as you cement old relationships and make new ones. I've not been to DipCon in a while (either World or North American), at least one that counted.... (I really think the Debacle in Bangor was really memorable and fun in a certain sense). So it seemed that THIS year, with World DipCon in Chicago, the proverbial center of North America and reachable in direct flights from anywhere in the world, that THIS was the year to head back toward numbers like 330. Of course, to date, this goal doesn't look achievable. We have 78 officially signed up as of June 20th. We will break 100, which hasn't been broken for World DipCon in almost ten years, but I really wish I could convince more of you to show up. Within the US, flights on Southwest into Midway are REALLY cheap. GO, right now and look at www.southwest.com, you might be surprised how cheaply YOU can get there. There are people driving from all over the place that might pick you up. Post at the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/chicagodiplomacy#!/events/237129306368896/>) with requests for help of any kind, but especially to get rides. There are all sorts of options for crashing in Chicago as well, ask the Weasels themselves for advice.

You also probably are saying, "how can I convince my spouse, significant other, guardian, or whatever why I should go to this?" You would be shocked as to how your web, E-Mail, or IM games will be improved by some fun FTF play. It's loud, it's fast,

it's overwhelming, but then you can go out with lots of fun people in the heart of Chicago with a mob better and more exciting than Chicago has ever seen. And as you know, Chicago has seen some mobs in its history. I have waltzed down the streets of Paris, Birmingham, Denver, and Baltimore among others with scores of Dippers. I count these experiences as among some of the most memorable and fun in my entire life. You really are missing out on a lot if you're not meeting other Diplomacy hobbyists in person. The mirth and laughter is contagious. Another plus that you probably will never get a chance to do again. Our Founder of the Feast Allan B. Calhmer recently turned 80 (on Pearl Harbor Day, as I recall...) and he lives just outside of Chicago. I have met him on a number of occasions and am on his Christmas Card list. We are trying to get him to make an appearance (contingent on health etc. of course) and this is likely to be all of our last times to do this. That is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity. Operators are standing by, let's create a last minute stampede. YOU can attend your first Diplomacy convention, your first World DipCon and meet all of us, all in one fell swoop. How can you refuse?

I'm optimistic, though yes, I'm always optimistic. I still think that Dan Burgess (no relation, but a heck of great guy anyway) can still be overwhelmed with the boards he's putting together (which will be quite special) if 330 of you show up. Find more information at <http://www.windycityweasels.org/wdc> and I *****WILL***** see you there soon!!! I want every last one of you reading this to E-Mail me with your lame excuse (that includes you, Doug!!!) at jfburgess@gmail.com and I will shred it. Well, maybe not all of them, but a significant number of them. If your brother is not getting married that weekend, your kid is not in the Olympics in London, or your wife has not scheduled you for the weekly yard cleanup, then YOU should join us in Chicago.

So there you have it...if you're NOT going, email Jim Burgess your excuse so he can judge whether it is worthy or not. And odds are, he'll decide it isn't.

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is October 1st, 2012. 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 Calhamer. It is currently manufactured by Hasbro and the name is their trademark with all rights reserved.

In This Issue:

| | |
|---|---------|
| Editorial: <i>Notes from the Editor</i> by Douglas Kent | Page 2 |
| Feedback: Knives and Daggers – the Diplomacy World Letter Column | Page 4 |
| Strategy & Tactics: <i>The Clyde Lepanto</i> by Alfred Nicol | Page 5 |
| Hobby History: <i>My Life With Ulrika: Part 7 (More Trouble)</i> by Richard Walkerdine | Page 6 |
| Feature: <i>I Don't Play Much These Days: A Diplomacy Appreciation</i> by Joshua Danker-Dake | Page 8 |
| Point/Counterpoint: <i>How to Handle NMR's</i> by Jack McHugh and Alex Maslow | Page 9 |
| Convention Report: <i>DixieCon 26 (2012) Report</i> by David Hood | Page 10 |
| Feature: <i>Xenogogic: An Occasional Column Devoted to the World of Diplomacy</i> by Larry Peery | Page 13 |
| Face-to-Face: <i>Big Rounds, Small Rounds, Drop Rounds</i> by Matthew Shields | Page 18 |
| Strategy & Tactics: <i>Havoc Behind The Lines: Celebrating the Rogue Unit</i> Joshua Danker-Dake | Page 22 |
| Feature: <i>Ask the GM</i> by The GM | Page 24 |
| Feature: <i>Solo Derby: A Team Tournament Concept</i> by Chris Babcock | Page 25 |
| Point/Counterpoint: <i>Sould England Ally With Germany of France</i> by Jeff Hall and Éamon Driscoll | Page 26 |
| Face-to-Face: <i>Keeping Time</i> by Brendan Hickey | Page 28 |
| Convention News: Selected Upcoming Conventions | Page 28 |
| Variants: <i>What Not to Put in a Variant Design</i> by Jack McHugh | Page 29 |
| Demo Game: <u>Diplomacy World</u> Demo Game – “Rotary Phones & 8-Track Tapes” 1914 - 1915 Results | Page 30 |

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column

Charles Roburn: Dear Diplomacy World, I'm writing to let you know that I'm still alive! Also to offer a few comments on the topic of reader and contributor participation - both with regard to the Diplomatic Pouch Zine, and in general.

This has been a common theme throughout the past few issues. It was first addressed specifically in DW #113, in Doug's article "The Hole in the Pouch", and continued with my friend Chris Dziedzic's article "Fixing a Hole" in DW #114.

I did officially resign as DP Zine Editor back in March 2011, roughly six months after publishing the Spring 2010 Movement issue - which was itself horribly late. It had become clear that in spite of my hopes, I wouldn't be able to produce another issue for some time. However, as Doug noted in his article, since then nobody had taken up the position. Manus followed up on a few possible leads, but without success. And I'm afraid that I'm not sure how to fix it.

I was distressed to learn from the Editor's Note in DW #116 that Doug himself has been getting a bit discouraged. I sympathize - I know what it's like to feel burned out! However, I think he's been doing an absolutely stellar job with Diplomacy World during the whole time he's been in charge - it would be a terrible loss to the hobby if he stopped. Speaking as a (former) Zine editor myself, I greatly admire what he's been able to do.

As I said in the "About the Pouch" article of the S2010M issue, I don't have any one explanation for why I suddenly lost steam. It wasn't because of a specific personal crisis (thank goodness). And while it's always nice to get recognition, I don't think that lack of feedback was a significant problem for me in itself. I can say that I did enjoy publishing the Zine tremendously for a long time - but at some point, it simply became too much. I just became partly burnt out, partly busy with other commitments, partly short of articles, and partly short of quality articles.

Having seen something similar happen in a professional group I'm a member of, I think that this cycle is actually pretty normal for any volunteer-based organization. People are eager to participate when they first get involved; but in time their priorities change, and they begin to direct their energies elsewhere. The key seems to be recruiting new volunteers to replace the old; but I'm not sure how to do that with any reliability. It seems that I beg for submissions and volunteer help in each issue (as have the Editors before me), but with disappointing results.

Larry Peery expresses doubts about younger writers' abilities in the Letters column of DW #116, but I think he's overly pessimistic. The Internet is full of crap, it's true: but it's also full of some very interesting and well-written material too. I'm sure there must be some younger Diplomacy players out there who could do a wonderful job in the position of Pouch Zine Editor. The only question is where to find them!

In an effort to jumpstart the Pouch again, I just posted another issue of the Diplomatic Pouch Zine last night (the Spring 2012 Movement issue, now available at <http://www.diplom.org/Zine/S2012M/> - please check it out!). This is intended as a one-time effort on my part - and I hope it will encourage somebody else to step up and resume publishing the Zine regularly.

I do think the Pouch still has a lot to offer the hobby (as does Diplomacy World!). And I don't think it necessarily has to change format to a blog in order to do so (although the suggestion is something to consider). Of the questions Doug asks in DW #113, the third - "Who is willing to take over stewardship of the Pouch?" - is key. The main thing is to find someone with the motivation and drive to keep it going, in whatever format it takes.

I hope we will.

Racan Souiedan: A few of us are trying to organize a Diplomacy tournament in Vancouver during the fall, which would run from Friday, September 21 to Sunday, September 23. The exact structure of the event is not clear yet, but it would in all likelihood be a three or four round event (one round Friday night, one or two rounds on Saturday, and a final round Sunday morning). The scoring system is also up in the air for now. We have a tentative venue booked (the Holiday Inn at 1110 Howe Street in downtown Vancouver), and there would be a small fee to cover the cost of renting the space, but we'll try to keep it as negligible as possible.

We think this would be a great way to further develop the Diplomacy hobby in Vancouver. Believe it or not, but the city hasn't had a real Diplomacy event since the 2007 World Championship. Frankly, it's high time Vancouver stepped up and enshrined its place on the Diplomacy map.

If you're new to the game, please don't feel intimidated by the idea of a Diplomacy "tournament". Really it's just a way for us to get together, meet, socialize, and have fun on and off the board. It's difficult enough putting together a seven player house game, so sometimes a tournament is the easiest way of making sure boards fill

up and everyone gets to play. Learning Diplomacy is easy (only takes about ten minutes), and you'll probably find that players of all levels are welcoming and eager to try and ensure that you walk away with a good experience. Players are free to commit to the entire tournament, or simply a round or two.

We're also happy to direct out-of-towners to potential lodgings in the area, and will try to provide crash space if renting a hotel room is outside of your budget. Vancouver's a beautiful place in early fall, so in our time away from the board we'll hopefully get the opportunity of sampling some local flavor. Downtown Vancouver is easily accessible from YVR Airport by the Canada Line Skytrain, and is a short drive from the American border.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask me, or the other friendly members of our organizing

committee: Chris Brand, Jay Heumann, and John Jamieson. Right now we're trying to gauge interest in the tournament, and assess whether or not it's even a feasible idea, so if you're committed to attending, please let us know as soon as possible. Otherwise this whole idea might suffer a sick, sad death. Let's not let that happen, people!

See you in fall 2012, where I'll be supporting YOU into Belgium.

Email – racansouiedan “of” gmail.com

Facebook Event Here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/480794888601019/>

The Clyde Lepanto: An Original Opening Strategy for Turkey

By Alfred Nicol

This article works on the premise that surprise and the unexpected have especial cache in a Diplomacy world defined by familiar openings and predictable strategies. It came to me in a moment of particular pseudo-spiritual insight when meditating on the role of the region Clyde. Consider first this question: Which zone is least entered in any game of diplomacy? I'd argue Clyde would be a good contender. Secondly, who is England's most unlikely enemy early on? Yes it is Turkey, so combine these two facts and you have the beginnings of a full-proof opening strategy already potentially as popular and quite literally game changing as the Hedgehog, Octopus or recently revived Zombie Hamster.

The essence of the strategy involves an unexpected (and that's the beauty of this idea) convoy of army con-Clyde in fall 02. I know it sounds simple and you are already itching to try it, well here's how it works. Turkey needs French fleets in Mid and NAO. He needs Italian fleets in Wms and Tys and then an A/H fleet in Ion and of course a Turkish fleet in Aeg. The order is A Con-Clyde with all the appropriate convoy orders in place. "But how does one establish such an opening?" I hear you say; well here's what to do.

Establish rock solid alliances with A/H and Italy, beg borrow and promise to consolidate them, pretend you're going for Russia, and bounce him in Bla to prove it. France will be easy to get on board as England is surely his greatest threat. Secure good communications with

Germany and it may well be good to seduce Russia's cousin's postman's brother. This could provide useful diplomatic leverage in the crucial period at the end of the beginning of the middle game.

Once you get to Clyde pass it off as a defensive move on his behalf...after all France is in NAO and England desperately needs armies to complement his obsession with fleet builds. From Clyde apply the devastating stab on Lvp or Edi and watch England crumble. In return for the convoys promise support into Finland for Italy, A/H and France and then sit back and watch them squabble over Finland. Once they are fully embroiled in Scandinavia, something most Italians can't resist, you mop up the centers until you get all 18. It could not be more original or simple.

Next issue I shall be discussing the merits of a new approach to openings in contrast to the norm where the strategy is developed and then a name chosen. In this eagerly anticipated article I will be advocating the advantages of coming up with names first and then trying to develop strategies to match. Suggestions include "Kangaroo pouch", "Lichen in Lichtenstein", "Flying penguins" and the "Vegetarian transvestite vampire".

If you've been reading Diplomacy World lately, Alfred Nicol is becoming a familiar name to you.

My Life with Ulrika: Part 7 (More Trouble)

by Richard Walkerdine

THE STORY SO FAR. Walkerdine has finally won the Zine Poll, his ultimate ambition and something that would almost certainly cement his dream of total Hobby domination. His beloved Ulrika has been rescued from her coffin and now surely nothing can stop him from becoming the most famous and successful editor in the entire history of the World (and with the lovely Ulrika permanently in his arms). But he has admitted to her that something is wrong (these things never go smoothly) and Ulrika looks at him in horror. Oh dear, what can have happened while Ulrika was in that coffin? Well, quite a lot actually, and none of it good.... Now read on...

I hugged her more tightly. "It's Piggott, he's been even more devious than I could ever have expected."

She looked up at me in surprise. "Piggott, but I thought von Metzke had taken care of him?"

I managed a small grin and a shrug of my shoulders. "No Ulrika, that was apparently yet another simulacrum – so good it even fooled that hideous multi-dimensional creature von Metzke. My goodness but that man Piggott is clever."

She hugged me more tightly. "Oh Richard, what has happened?"

I broke the embrace and picked up a sheet of paper. "I've had to give him the Zine Poll, which of course means I will never win it again – Piggott will see to that."

She looked at me in horror. "But why?"

I managed another small grin as I handed her the sheet of paper. "Because the alternative was to have him send this notice to every planet in the galaxy."

She looked at it and shuddered. "Oh Richard, you mean you gave up the Zine Poll to save me from this? Oh my darling." She fell into my arms again and I held her close, knowing I had done the right thing.

But then she pulled away. "But what do we do now?"



I laughed as I held her slim body closely against me. "Oh Ulrika, my love, there is only one thing we can do now. We timeslip and get out of this mess, to a time long after Piggott has left the Hobby. Now that I have achieved all my aims I don't much care about it anymore."

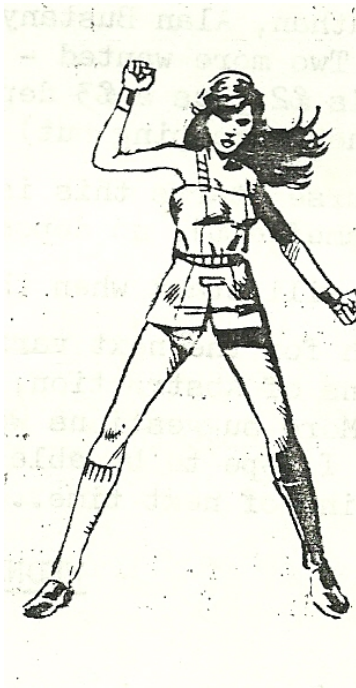
She looked up at me with wonder in her lovely eyes, "But how Richard, how can we do that?"

I kissed her gently. "Well the Tardis finally fell to pieces so we can't use that. But come to the storage room and I will show you."

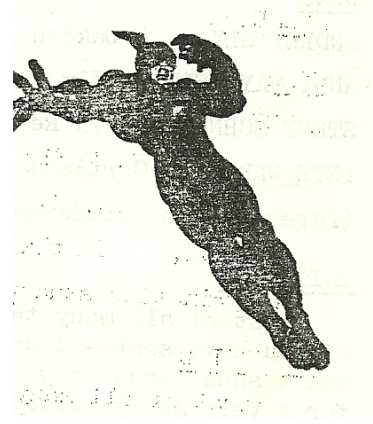
We stepped over the cleaning robots and made our way to the storage room. When Ulrika looked inside she looked at me and smiled.



"It's astounding, time is fleeting," sang the Cornelius brothers, "madness takes its toll."



Ulrika understood and joined in. "But listen closely," she sang, "not for very much longer. I've got to keep control."



"I remember," hissed Tarantula, "doing the time warp, drinking...."



"Those moments when," muttered Doctor Strange, "the blackness would hit me and the voice would be calling, LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN!"

With my beloved Ulrika beside me we all took up the chorus.

"It's just a jump to the left and then a step to the right, with your hands on your hips you bring your knees in tight, then it's the pelvic thrust which really drives them insa-a-a-ane
LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN!"

And in an instant the storage room was empty...

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Ever notice how Richard always threatens you with "To Be Continued" at the end of each installment?

I Don't Play Much These Days: A Diplomacy Appreciation

By Joshua Danker-Dake

Let me make a confession: I haven't played Diplomacy much lately. As you can probably attest, it's often well-nigh impossible to get seven people around a table. But that's really not why. And I just had my second kid, but that's really not why either. No, the real reason is the investment.

In the 2012 movie *The Grey*, Liam Neeson and a bunch of oilers try to survive a pack of wolves in the Alaskan wilderness. With a thoughtful, pervasive focus on the ever-present threat of death, the film is imbued with an engrossing level of visceral energy.

A good game of Diplomacy is like that: emotive, suspenseful. If you're like me, a good game of Diplomacy can leave you hanging on every order reveal. If you're like me, a good game of Diplomacy can make getting stabbed feel like getting gut-punched.

I suspect that this is so for many people. *Diplomacy World* #114 featured an article by my brother Sean about the bad sports of the Diplomacy community. Undoubtedly, a major underlying factor for bad sportsmanship is a lack of maturity, which can be severely exacerbated by the particular capriciousness of Diplomacy's shifting winds of fate. I'll be the first to admit that games have gotten to me on a number of occasions, and that I've lost my cool more than once.

I have to be in the right frame of mind to play Diplomacy. I have to be able to steel myself to remain calm, to not take it so seriously, and to roll with the punches. It takes a level of mental energy that I don't always have available.

I know of no other gaming experience that can kick you in the stomach like Diplomacy can, if you let it. But this is also exactly why we play, is it not? Are the highs as high as the lows are low? Well, your mileage there may vary depending on your personality, but they can be pretty darn high. Being on the giving end of a crushing blow, pulling off a successful coup – these things can be immensely satisfying. One man's rage is another man's triumph. For me, at least, the satisfaction of winning at Diplomacy is greater than that of winning at pretty much any other game. You work so hard for so long – to be the last man standing over six other players trying to screw you to the wall – what's better than that?

Not that we conquer by trolling (although some certainly do); rather, we often simply troll by conquering. Such is the nature of conquest. There's very rarely anything malicious in the initial attack or stab; like Herm Edwards said, you play to win the game. *All* the players are trying to win the game, but it's easier to lose sight of that in

Diplomacy than in most any other game, in large part, I think, because we tend to invest ourselves in our alliances. And then we take it personally in spite of knowing perfectly well that we shouldn't: "Why would he stab me? Doesn't he know how good a player I am? What an idiot."



If any of you out there can get through your Diplomacy games with the clinical detachment of a sociopath, well, kudos to you. I can't. I feel the strong pulls of conquest and betrayal, and they wear on me over the course of a game. The game calls upon me to invest, and I do, because sometimes it pays off tremendously.

That's the biggest reason why I haven't played much lately. It's also the biggest reason why I love Diplomacy so much.

Joshua is Diplomacy World's S&T Editor.

Point-Counterpoint

by Jack McHugh and Alex Maslow

Should a GM stop a game for NMR and wait for a new player to send in orders or should the GM just process the orders with player's units in CD?

Point (Jack): A GM should wait for stand by orders from the new player and allow players to negotiate with the new player.

NMRs don't just hurt the powers that make them, but it hurts all the other powers in the game, even powers attacking the country that NMRs. If you're in a situation where the country that NMRs may allow one of the attacking powers to take more centers than they could with that player sending in orders--even if those orders are simply to support his own units, then that changes the tempo of the game. By definition one or two players tend to reap the benefits from NMR since countries doing well rarely NMR so by definition some power or powers will make out much better.

I agree that a new player makes a huge difference but without a player there is no one to negotiate with which is what Diplomacy is all about. The rules are so simple that there isn't much a player can do unless he has someone to try and work with. I realize that there is no guarantee that the new player will work with you or even listen but there is zero chance that you can work with a country in civil disorder.

As for having to change strategy, well this is Diplomacy where players can change at any time, even if players don't change. Hell, any Diplomacy player worth his salt should be prepared for double dealing and backstabbing players at any time since that is what Diplomacy is all about.

The other problem with ignoring NMRers with civil disorder is that I have is that I think it subtly encourages NMRs by saying they don't matter. I also think it lessens the social forces, e.g. hobby and player disapproval, of players who consistently NMR. Even though I was a serial NMR myself due to over extension and I think the lack of hobby disapproval contributed to my willingness to do that--I think GMs and players should be cognizant of players who NMR and try to shun, avoid or otherwise make it clear that NMRing is frowned upon. NMRing does affect the game and we should not try and sugar coat that so that players think NMRing is acceptable.

Counterpoint (Alex): The GM should simply resolve the orders with the player who did not send in orders units in Civil Disorder, e.g. all units hold, and the game should move on with the GM simply calling a standby for next turn.

I have heard it said that NMRs hurt countries, and surely this is true. I'd never argue that NMRs are a positive force in Diplomacy. They can easily disrupt the balance of the game and change the whole dynamic. NMRs should be prevented at all costs - anything else is unfair.

Wait. This is Diplomacy. OF COURSE it's unfair. That's how the game works.

Diplomacy is a wargame. As such, anything that can happen on the Diplomacy board ought to have some real-world rationale in the realm of war. You need supplies to increase your military, an army cannot support another move if another unit attacks it - it must defend itself first! NMRs also have a very simple real-world explanation. Sometimes, in war, military commands get mixed up. Bulgaria is ordered to Berlin while the Baltic Sea is ordered to Serbia. It is obvious what the commander meant, but "orders is orders" and, dammit, we wouldn't be in the early 20th century military if we didn't follow orders to a crippling degree! No one would argue, except of course in a house game when you're trying to recruit new players, that these orders should be corrected. They are read as is, and that's that. This is also true when individual units are left unordered. Too bad, tough love, but you'll remember next time, right??

So it's a little artificial to say an NMR is different. Surely sometimes entire order sets get misplaced or don't make it to their destination. And, in the game world, this player has now dropped to the bottom of the "people I can trust" list everyone has, not because they'll lie, but because they've shown themselves to be unreliable. The punishment is in-game.

But sometimes a player calls it quits, and the country is placed into CD (I prefer to call it Anarchy). Again, this can happen in the real world of war. War can be stressful on nations, and it isn't unheard of that the local population revolts during a war, thus causing the whole war effort of that country to screech to a halt.

Many would say this is game-breaking, especially if the power has a lot of units (or a few well-placed units), but in Diplomacy we must be able to react to such situations. If we're holding a stalemate line with another against a monster power, and that other player falls off the map, we shouldn't complain that our line is compromised - we should be able to adjust accordingly to the new reality.

Also, calls for this being unfair are a little odd. There's no rhyme or reason to NMRs or countries falling into anarchy. It could easily be your opponent's key ally, and

then what? You'd game ahead! You, as a player, would feel bad and, post-game, might discuss how the game would've gone had that not happen, but only the noblest of us would stop the game until a replacement had been found.

Speaking of replacements, moving with my idea of anarchy, one person can rise to the top of the ruins and grab hold of the national reins. In our game, these are replacement players. This is perfectly acceptable and, ultimately, better than a country staying in CD. But the war continues. Search for new players but don't stop the game. In game terms, stopping the game ruins the flow. As a GM and player, I'd rather have a game continue unbalanced than have it die while we wait for a new player. I've seen it happen just too much.

Moving away from the realities the game should try to reflect, there is yet another reason to troop on in the face of NMRs. Given that a paused/delayed turn can hurt the game so much, a GM who does that risks penalizing the other players while letting the offending player off free. NMR too much and you're blacklisted from that site, sure, but there are LOTS of Diplomacy sites. Meanwhile, 6 other players are stuck with an unfinished game and at least a few days in limbo while a new player is found. Better to let the game troop on. A replacement player can jump in regardless of the "pause," so if it hurts the game but doesn't benefit the new player, why do we do it? It's a silly and dangerous tradition that hurts a lot of games.

Dixiecon 26 (2012) Report

By David Hood

Thursday night at Dixiecon is always fun. As I arrange the tables and chairs, procure more of each from other rooms, and unload all my supplies for the weekend I relish the anticipation of what is to come. Then, Maletsky and others show up to start playing games – and all I care about is making sure he does not win.

Mission accomplished. Of course, I really did not win anything either, but that is beside the point.

The gaming Thursday night consisted of Bruce Allen, Rich O'Brien, Peter Yeargin, Dave Maletsky and David Hood playing Twilight Struggle, Small World, and Acquire – which were appetizers for the Here I Stand game which actually did not end that night but was stopped and started the next morning. Eventually that game would end in a Papal victory. I was playing the Hapsburg/Papacy combo Thursday night. Of course at the time of the victory, Ed Rothenheber had taken over for me so I can make airport runs. Thus, the Papacy was able to win. Cause and effect relationship.

Other games began to trickle in as usual throughout the day on Friday, causing a number of games to hit the tables. These included more Twilight Struggle as well as Ticket to Ride, Dominion, Monsters Menace America, Last Will, London and Chess. No basketball was played this year, but we did have a number of swimmers to take advantage of that aspect of staying at Granville Towers. By the time 6pm rolled around, the room was ready for the 26th annual Dixiecon Diplomacy tournament to begin in earnest.

Three boards were announced, no one at all complained about their board or country assignments, and the action commenced! There were no wins at Dixiecon this year, for the first time in a while, but the Round 1 results were

important to the ultimate tournament standings as Game 1C ended in a two-way draw between Pete Yeargin's Germany and Doc Binder's France, eventually leading them to a one-two finish in the final results. Game 1A was a particularly long one, lasting until 1911 when Graham Woodring's Turkey was stopped at 16 by some combination of Ecton, Turnage and Maltz.



Friday night non-Dip action included more players than the 21 playing Dip, which has become standard at Dixiecon. Games played that night included Through the Ages, and yet more Twilight Struggle/Chess/Last Will. In addition to the late night poker, the other game that debuted Friday night was Virgin Queen, the Here I Stand sequel that was to see 4.5 games played throughout the weekend. Given the popularity of Here I Stand with both the current and former Dip players at Dixiecon, VQ was bound to make such a splash just weeks after its release by GMT Games. Most reviews were very positive – no doubt VQ will be played many, many times at future

Hickcons and Dixiecons, as well as other Dip tournaments throughout the country.

On Saturday morning, Round 2 of Diplomacy also doubles as the Dixiecon Team Tournament. Ecton and Richardson sewed up another Brick award this year by submitting two different teams with them on each. Um, no. Once the three boards began, though, humor was out and the knives in as all three games were to last into the early evening. I do not believe it has ever happened at Dixie before than no games were concluded prior to the 5pm break for barbeque. Clearly the players were taking these games very, very seriously. Game 2A was, of course, a complete travesty freak-of-nature as the EFG triple formed with Chris Martin, Tom Kobrin and Richard Maltz and they swept the board to an 11-11-11 three way draw in 1913. Yuck. Game 2C ended in 1912 with another two-way draw that included eventual tournament winner Peter Yeargin, this time with partner Tim Richardson in an EF face-crush of the rest of the board.

Saturday for the non-Dip gamers was a complete free-for-all as many, many additional titles were added to the list of played games. This included two games of Outpost, Princes of the Renaissance, Survive, Combat Commander, Puerto Rico, Maori, Munchkin Ctulthu (I kid you not), Axis and Allies D-Day, Primordial Soup, Hawaii, and Bang. Repeat games included Virgin Queen, Twilight, Poker, Through the Ages and a bloody game of Here I Stand that began at bloody 2:30am!

As has become standard there was a drop off of Diplomacy players for the Sunday morning round. Some succumb to sleep deprivation from gaming or, ahem, other activities from the night before – others bail on Dip to try their hands at other games. At any rate, both games ended well before the time limit, with the three-way draw in 3B helping to lift Tim Richardson to his first top three finish at Dixiecon. Actually he and Doc Binder are both new entrants to the Dixiecon Hall of Fame (top three finishers each year) and Peter Yeargin became the newest member of the Order of the Knife (Dixiecon champions.) Non-Dip gaming during the day on Sunday included Twixt, Glory to Rome, Battlestar Gallactica, Power Grid, Wrasslin, and repeat titles Puerto Rico, Monsters, VQ and Munchkin.

As usual many Con goers went off to eat together after the award ceremony, this year to a steakhouse, and then it was back to gaming for most. Sunday night gaming was all over the map, but the big games were yet another Virgin Queen and another Outpost. VQ was certainly the Game of the Con this year in terms of non-Dip gaming, although Dixiecon staple Outpost was in the running as usual, as was Twilight Struggle. All in all, a fun time was had.

If you are reading this and would like to game with much

of the same crowd before next year's Dixiecon, please let me know so I can confer with you about the date for our annual Hickcon house convention, hosted now by Ken and Debbie Gutermuth at their Hickory games palace. It is usually around the last couple of weekends in October, depending on schedules. Diplomacy players also have lots of cool options for more Dip this season, including World Dipcon second weekend of August and the possible last Huskycon on Long Island the following weekend.

2012 Diplomacy tournament results:

1. Peter Yeargin 448
 2. Michael Binder 392
 3. Tim Richardson 368
 4. Tom Kobrin 348
 5. Jeff Ladd 344
 5. Doug Moore 344
 7. Richard Maltz 336
 8. Adam Sigal 328
 9. Edwin Turnage 216
 10. Graham Woodring 209
 11. Andy Bartalone 185
 12. Brian Ecton 176
 13. Chris Martin 174
 14. Travis McTighe 166
 15. Jimmy Koehler 128
 16. Claude Worrell 77
 17. Nate Cockerill 70
 18. Brian Lee 66
 19. Stephen Weingarten 75.3
 20. Chris Barfield 38
- Ineligible players (1 round only)
Dave Maletsky, Tyler Mollenkopf, Rich O'Brien

Best Countries

- A Doug Moore/Jeff Ladd 3way, 9
E Pete Yeargin 2way, 15
F Michael Binder 2way, 11
G Pete Yeargin 2way, 12
I Jeff Ladd 3way, 12
R Tom Kobrin 3way, 11
T Graham Woodring 3way, 16

Team Champions: Team Car Crash (Ladd, Ecton, Richardson)

I Got Hammered: Dave Maletsky

Brick: Brian Ecton and Tim Richardson (again!)

Golden Blade: Jeff Ladd

Player's Choice: Michael "Doc" Binder

Iron Man Tournament (non-Dip gaming)

1. Bruce Duerer 33.5
2. Kevin Brown 26.5
3. Dan Mathias 23.5
4. Mike Lowrey 23
5. Adam Nicewarner 23

Other non-Dip players this year: Ken Mathias, Heather Duewer, Ravindra Prasad, Mary Prasad, Steve Koehler, David Hood, Dan Mathias, Carol Mathias, Ed Rothenheber, Jesse Martin, Craig Good, Beth Good, Nathan Turnage, Alison Blake, Bruce Allen, Bruce Reiff, Jim MacDonald, Dave Long, Steve Nicewarner



Total Attendance – 42

Game 1A – EFT Draw 1911

A Brian Lee 0
E Brian Ecton 9
F Edwin Turnage 6
G Andy Bartalone 0
I Rich O'Brien 0
R Richard Maltz 3
T Graham Woodring 16

Game 1B – AGR Draw 1906

A Doug Moore 9
E Jeff Ladd 1
F Stephen Weingarten 1
G Adam Sigel 11
I Chris Barfield 0
R Tom Kobrin 11
T Tim Richardson 1

Game 1C – FG Draw 1907

A Nate Cockerill 4
E Travis McTighe 0
F Michael Binder 12

G Peter Yeargin 12
I Dave Maletsky 0
R Claude Worrell 0
T James Koehler 6

Game 2A – EFG Draw (!) 1913 (!)

A Travis McTighe 0
E Richard Maltz 11
F Chris Martin 11
G Tom Kobrin 11
I Brian Ecton 0
R Nate Cockerill 0
T Chris Barfield 1

Game 2B – AER Draw 1911

A Jeff Ladd 9
E Doug Moore 12
F Brian Lee 3
G James Koehler 0
I Stephen Weingarten 0
R Andy Bartalone 10
T Michael Binder 0

Game 2C – EF Draw 1912

A Claude Worrell 5
E Peter Yeargin 15
F Tim Richardson 9
G Graham Woodring 0
I Tyler Mollenkopf 0
R Adam Sigel 0
T Edwin Turnage 5

Game 3A – GIT Draw 1908

A Chris Martin 0
E James Koehler 5
F Brian Ecton 0
G Richard Maltz 8
I Jeff Ladd 12
R Brian Lee 0
T Travis McTighe 9

Game 3B – GIT Draw 1906

A Andy Bartalone 0
E Graham Woodring 0
F Tom Kobrin 0
G Michael Binder 11
I Tim Richardson 8
R Pete Yeargin 9
T Adam Sigel 6

David Hood is a former editor and publisher of Diplomacy World, and remains a major force behind DixieCon each year.

XENOLOGIC: An Occasional Column Devoted to the World of Diplomacy

By Larry Peery

As promised, this time we'll be looking at dip and Dip events primarily in one of the world's largest states, Russia, and one of its smallest, Vatican City. The underlying theme of this column is the power of money in diplomacy. As Woodward and Bernstein didn't write in "All the President's Men," And Deep Throat didn't say, "Follow the money." Watergate at best involved a few millions. By the time we get up to today we'll be talking about billions. The numbers change, but the common link is power. Nixon sent his attorney general, John Mitchell, on a tour to collect "donations" to pay bribes to keep the Watergate burglars quiet. The tour collected seven million in cash, conveniently stored in seven Samsonite suitcases (at least it was when I saw it). Today we have Sheldon Adelson, one of the world's richest men, using his Las Vegas money-machine and Super-PACs, to bankroll, to the tune of tens of millions, the Gingrich and Romney campaigns. And that's small change when you compare it with the billions flowing in and out of Russia and China.

Money and power are not the same thing, although they are almost inter-changeable. Money brings power and power brings money seems to be the basic formula. You may have read last week's reports of the Romney meeting with some wealthy donors in Utah, or about the Koch Brothers secretive meeting for big contributors to their conservative causes just a few miles down the road from where I live. If you've read David Hoffman's "The Oligarchs" you'll probably recognize the similarities between the Romney/Koch meetings and those The Oligarchs held in Moscow during the Yeltsin days. By the time you finish reading about what's going on with China's politico-military oligarchy and its money laundering you'll realize that Russia and China have managed to out-capitalist the capitalists in the USA.

From Wall Street Journal, 27 June 2012
Europe Still Seeks Voice, Kissinger Says
Marcin Sobczyk

HK doesn't actually claim he said it, but he does say it sounds like something he could have said, referring to his comment from his White House days that when he picked up the phone and tried to call the leader of Europe his calls never went through.

From San Diego Union Tribune, 1 May 2012
Turkish soldiers guard sacred tomb in Syria
By Christopher Torchia

As I write this Turkish armed forces are moving into position along the Syrian border after Syria shot down a

Turkish fighter that might have strayed into Syrian territory. Yet, as this story points out, Turkish soldiers are on guard at a memorial to Suleyman Shah, grandfather of Osman I, founder of the Ottoman Empire, located well inside Syria on the banks of the Euphrates River.

From San Diego Union Tribune, 1 May 2012
Turks See Ottoman Legacy in New Light
By Christopher Torchia

Turkey is a country torn between its past and its future. On the one hand, as Torchia writes, it is trying to rehabilitate its Ottoman past. On the other it's asking its NATO allies for their support in the crisis mentioned above, at the same time it's complaining that the EU won't allow its citizens into their countries without a visa.

A Perfect Site for a DipCon would be the grand art deco ballroom located underneath The Park Lane Hotel in London. The hotel was one of the first buildings built in London with steel-reinforced concrete and as such was considered to be virtually bomb-proof. During WWII it was used as a bomb shelter and in fact, plans called for it to be used as an alternative location for the Houses of Parliament if the original had been destroyed. The ballroom even had its own underground station in case of need.

From The Atlantic, April 2012
Sovereignty The Royal Me, What's With Australia's Secession Obsession
By Matt Siegel

Micronations isn't a word we commonly see but Siegel's story about the 30 or so micronations in Australia and 70 or so worldwide is interesting. There's got to be a Diplomacy variant in there somewhere

From Foreign Policy, 22 June 2012
The Great Caspian Arms Race
By Joshua Kucera

Another potential Diplomacy variant would be centered on The Caspian Sea, part of which does appear on the Diplomacy map. Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Iran/Persia all border on the Caspian and what makes that body of water valuable isn't the water, but the oil and natural gas underneath it. And with its new Hilton Hotel where better to host a DipCon than Baku?

From blog.syracuse.com, 20 June 2012
Consider This: Transparent Diplomacy
Post-Standard Editorial Board

If a picture is worth a thousand words, this one fills the bill.

It's been an interesting couple of months for Vladimir Putin and Russia. There was no doubt he would win his third, non-consecutive term as Russia's president. The only question was, by how big a margin. Protests before and after the election couldn't over-come the fact that Putin is very popular in Russia OUTSIDE Moscow. In fact, Moscow was the one area he didn't carry in the election. Oh, and did I mention that Moscow just happens to be the center of The Oligarchs? The big question is how will Putin use his new term in office to work his diplomatic will? Read on to find out.

From the New York Times, 6 May 2012
In the Spotlight of Power, Putin Keeps His Private Life Veiled in Shadows
By David M. Herszenhorn

Russian, like Chinese, leaders, have traditionally kept their family life's secret. Remember Stalin's problems with his sons and daughter? And God knows The Princelings have driven China's leaders to distraction.

From The Washington Post, 21 May 2012
Moscow Police Chief Promoted to Russian Cabinet Following Protest Response
By Will Englund

It would be interesting to know who is more worried about their popularity among the masses, the leadership in Russia or the leadership in China.

From the Washington Post, 22 May 2012
In Poll, Russians See Wide Gap Between Democratic Ideals and Reality
By Will Englund

Change Russians to Chinese in the above headline and you've got the situation in China with one major exception, the internet. In spite of its hundreds of thousands of censors and its firewall, China hasn't been able to control what its people know or think. The same doesn't seem to be true in Russia, perhaps because the vast majority of the population doesn't have access to the internet or care about much more than where their next meal is coming from.

From The Los Angeles Times, 31 May 2012
Russian Spy Case: 7,000 Maps Bring 12-Year Sentence

Now here's a story for a Diplomacy variant designer. Imagine the kind of variant you could come up with with

this kind of topographical information?

From The Wall Street Journal, 2 June 2012
Russia Raps U.S. Ambassador

US Ambassador Michael McFaul's blunt-speaking brand of diplomacy hasn't made him popular in Moscow with Russia's leadership. Hmmmm, a trait he shares with US Ambassador Gary Locke in Beijing.

From CNN
Would Moving Capital Kick-Start Russian Economic Reform?
By Fareed Zakaria

One Russian academic has suggested moving the country's capital to Vladivostok as a way of jump-starting its lagging economy. After all, it worked for Turkey, Brasil, and Kazakhstan. Why not Russia? It makes sense, sort of. The magic number is 97. If the price of oil falls below \$97 a barrel Russia can't pay its bills. In essence the Oligarchy is really an Oilgarchy.

From The Washington Post, 29 June 2012
Corruption Turns Russians Radical
By Kathy Lally

As this article shows, Russia and China have more in common than their Communist past and a serious problem with corruption at the center of government,

From The Washington Post, 29 June 2012
In Russia, Doubts About Putin's Legitimacy Signal Tough Days Ahead as Inauguration Looms
By Kathy Lally

Corruption in Russia has undermined Putin's position, but the election is over and he seems reasonably safe in power for another seven years. Corruption in China has undermined the potential Hu/Wen succession; We'll know more after this fall's Congress confirms the leadership and membership in the Party's Politburo. The situation in Washington isn't quite so volatile since no matter whether Obama or Romney wins, the Super-Pacs will continue to control the country.

From Associated Press, 8 June, 2012
Putin's Hard Line Against Protests to be Tested

From The BBC, 11 June 2012
Moscow Poised For Huge Opposition Rally

From CNN, 12 June 2012
Russia Protestors Demand Putin's Resignation
By Phil Black

Tens of thousands of anti-Putin protestors turned out in Moscow after the election results were in. No Red Square equivalent to Beijing's Tiananmen Square

Massacre happened, however. Putin had his next seven years in power secure, so he could afford to be lenient to his critics. Now, for him, the question was how to deal with those pesky foreigners.

From USA Today, 14 June 2012
Putin Says Russia Needs New Strategic Bomber

Even though Russia is struggling financially because of the low price of oil, Putin wants to spend more billions on military goods and services. Hmm, see the stories below on China's increased military spending. The Russians and Chinese both continue to use the Tu-95 "Bear" bomber in various configurations. The plane dates back to the early days of The Cold War. It seems strange, until one remembers that the USA continues to use the B-52, another plane that dates back to the early days of The Cold War, while the F-22 Raptor, a fifth generation fighter has yet to see combat due to its design/construction problems.

From The Chicago Tribune, 21 June 2012
Russia Jails Two Men for Giving China Nuke Secrets

What secrets? Apparently the design of the Topol-M mobile ground launched ICBM and the submarine launched Bulava sea launched ICBM, both of which have suffered from various mishaps and neither of which are considered to be especially reliable.

From The New York Times, 21 June 2012
Putin Seeks to Reassure Foreign Investors
By Andrew E. Kramer

After making nice with the opposition after his spring re-election and in light of the continued low price of oil, which funds his oligarchy, Putin has been buttering up to foreign investors, whose money he needs to keep the country marginally solvent, and to fund his next seven years in power.

From The Associated Press
Russia's Putin Orders Reform of Parliament

And to make sure that somebody else takes the blame for whatever problems Russia has; Putin's "reforming" the upper house (Senate) of its Parliament. The end result, of course, is to increase his power over the rubber-stamp body.

From Foreign Policy, June 2012
Vatican: Leaks Are the Work of the Devil
Joshua Keating

And when we all thought Dan Brown was the root of all evil in the Vatican it turns out that it's really The Butler who did it, as any Clue player could have told you.

From The Telegraph, London, 16 May 2012
Vatican Tomb of Mafia Don to be Reopened Over Teen Murder Mystery
By Nick Squires

Well, if Mary can be buried under the Louvre why can't an Italian Mafia don and a teenage flute player he may or may not have murdered are buried in a crypt underneath Rome's Basilica of Saint Apollinaire?



From The Los Angeles Times, 25 May 2012
Vatican Butler Arrested in Documents Leak
By Sarah Delaney

Pope Benedict XVI's private papers have shed unwanted light on power struggles and alleged corruption within the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church.

From The Associated Press, 26 May 2012

Vatican In Chaos After Butler Arrested for Leaks
Yes, no doubt, the butler did it. But who else was involved? Now there's the mystery.

From USA Today, 29 May 2012
Vatican Says Leaks Scandal Violated Conscience of Faithful

The real question isn't whether all this happened and the Vatican is sorry for that, or whether it is sorry that it's become general knowledge among the faithful and faithless.

From CNN, 30 May 2012
Vatican Scandals Lift Lid on Secret Power Struggle
By Richard Allen Greene

Links the killing of the teenage girl and the Vatican's current woes, not to mention the struggle over who will succeed Benedict XVI.

From The Washington Post, 28 May 2012
Pope's Butler Pledges to Cooperate With Vatican Scandal Probe, Meaning Other Heads May Roll
By Nicole Winfield.

Twenty-five years of the Vatican's dirty laundry is about to be hung out to dry unless the Vatican can find a way to clean up or cover-up the scandals it might reveal. Fascinating story.

From The Associated Press, 23 June 2012
Pope Convenes Cardinals to Discuss Leak Scandal
By Nicole Winfield.

Again the under-lying theme isn't what actually happened but that it was revealed what happened, or might have happened. The same as in Russia and China. It's all about money and power.

Speaking of money and power, let's move on to China, always a good source for stories about both.

From 4hoteliers.com, 5 April 2012
The Chinese Luxury Consumer In-Depth, Evolving Lifestyles.
By Hurun Report Research Institute

There are 2.7 million high net worth individuals in China and 63,500 ultra-high net worth individuals. The first group is worth about one million each. The second group about sixteen million. This report shows the difference between Chinese millionaires and American ones. For example.

From the Washington Post, 20 March 2012
Mercedes Record 25% Discount Leads Shrinking China Margins: Cars

A few months ago Chinese buyers paid a 25% premium for high-end luxury cars and often had to wait months to take delivery. Now they're getting a 25% discount, plus bonuses, and taking delivery in a matter of days or weeks. Oh, and did I mention that Mercedes is now building some of its models in China?

From Foreign Policy, 24 June 2012
The Rules of the Game
By Xujun Eberlein

China's booming bureaucracy lit is part expose – and part how-to guide. This article talks about how China's

bureaucracy functions. A careful read shows it isn't that different from Russia or the USA.

From The Washington Times, 21 June 2012
Inside China: PLA Hawks Decry Sellout by Leaders
By Miles Yu

It's a bit complicated but follows the money trail through these stories. About 400 senior (e.g. general rank) Taiwan military officers have retired and moved to mainland China, most linked to various Taiwan businesses that have opened mainland operations (Keep in mind that about one-fourth of China's foreign investment comes from Taiwan). Taiwan has invested billions in mainland China.

From The Epoch Times, 27 June 2012
Chinese Military Officers Secretly Moving Money Offshore
By Sheri Ming

At the same time that Taiwan has been investing money and expertise in mainland China, the mainland's Peoples Liberation Army's top brass have been moving money offshore. Guess where? Taiwan would be a good bet. How much and how high does the corruption go? This article suggests that former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, who was chairman of the Central Military Commission (Think of a combination of the National Security Council and Joint Chiefs of Staff.), is reported to have moved two billion offshore during his last days in power.

From The Diplomat, 19 June 2012
China's Monroe Doctrine
By James Holmes

Remember the Monroe Doctrine? Probably not. But consider what's happening in the South China Seas and the disputes between China, the Philippines, Vietnam, etc. over the waters, the fish in them, and the oil and natural gas underneath them; not to mention the tankers that carry oil from the Middle East to China on them.

From The Economist, 8 June 2012
Not So Warm and Fuzzy, Amid Political Tensions at Home, China's Military Leaders Play Safe Abroad

Military diplomacy is alive and well in China, even if nobody else is sure who's running the show in Beijing. The Party and civilian leadership say one thing, and the military says and does something else. Hummm, sounds familiar huh? Consider the three following articles.

From China Daily, 28 June 2012
Seoul, Tokyo to Sign Military Pact
By Zhang Yunbi

Love Thy Neighbor? How China and Japan See Each Other

By Yoree Koh

From Asia One, 27 June 2012
China's Military to Strengthen Ties With US
Zhao Shengnan and Cheng Guangjin

And what about the USA? Are things any better, let alone any different, here? It appears now.

From The Washington Post, 8 June 2012
Woodward and Bernstein: 40 Years After Watergate,
Nixon Was Far Worse Than We Thought
By Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward

This long retrospective on The Watergate Scandal brings back memories for me and still manages , after all this time, to raise my blood pressure to dangerously high level. I leave it to you to decide for yourself how many parallels there are between what happened then and what's happening now in Moscow, Rome, and Beijing. After all, it's still about power and money.

From The Washington Post, 14 June 2012
Secret Money Fuels the 2012 Elections
By E. J. Dionne, Jr.

From The Associated Press, 25 April 2012
Ex-Pentagon Chief Gates Joins Rice In New Firm

Power, money, and who you know is what counts and this version of Kissinger Associates , founded in the 1980s by Henry Kissinger and Bret Scowcroft, brings together Condi Rice and Thomas Gates. It will be interesting to see what clients they bring in and what kind of fees they can command.

I wrote earlier about Hillary Clinton 's early performance as secretary of state. Now, as her term nears its ending a variety of in-depth articles about her work are appearing. Within a week three major stories appeared, each wondering "What's next?"

From Foreign Policy, July 2012
Head of State, Hillary Clinton, the Blind dissident, and the Art of Diplomacy in the Twitter Age
By Susan B. Glasser

From The Washington Post, 25 June 2012
'Little America': Infighting on Obama Team Squandered Chance for Peace in Afghanistan
By Rajiv Chandrasekaran

Another look at Hillary's early days at State. It's interesting to compare her performance and relationships with Obama, Jones, and Holbrooke with

how Condi Rice got along with Bush 2, Cheney, and Powell.

From The New York Times, 27 June 2012
Hillary Clinton's Last Tour as a Rock-Star Diplomat
By Steven Lee Myers

Is this the first round of a Hillary For ??? campaign in 2016? From first lady to senator to secretary of state suggests all options are on the table. The question is, "Is the table big enough to hold all those plates?"

And now to close with a bit of esoterica.

From the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 23 May 2012
Diplomacy Camp for High School Students Set for June 19-27

The "I Want to be an Ambassador" Camp is hosted by Luminari, a nonprofit foundation founded by Hilda Pang Fu, which sounds suspiciously like an Illuminati front and with funding from names like Grable, Heinz, Mellon, and Brown Brothers Harriman that might not be far off. Still, if you've got high school age kids looking for something to do next summer, and who you think might be good diplomats if not Dippers, check it ought.

From MSNBC, 18 April 2012
Top Universities to Offer Online Courses – for Free
By Sevil Omer

If you don't have the time or money to attend a bricks and mortar university this might be the way to go. Do a Google search on Coursera for more info.

Who ever thought of Diplomacy as an art? But here are two examples of that.

Japan's Cultural Diplomacy Future
By Hirotaka Watanabe, 20 April 2012
From The Free Press, 21 May 2012

Dance With 'Diplomacy'
By Tanner Kent

Daniel Stark's contemporary dance number, "Diplomacy" was performed at the Minnesota State University at Mankato. Who would have known it?

That's it for this time. More a reading list than anything else, I suppose. Again, the common thread that binds all these articles is made of power and money. Whether its diplomacy or Diplomacy makes no difference. Enjoy the Summer!

Big Rounds, Small Rounds, Drop Rounds

How the Size of an Event Changes Tournament Strategy

By Matthew Shields

Those of you who know me probably already know that I have something of a nerdy interest in the mechanics of how competitive Diplomacy is played. That way even when I'm losing I still can be hyper-analytical about exactly how I want to lose. Those of you who are fans of DiplomacyCast, and those of you who had nothing better to do with your time, may have listened to Eric and Nathan's last episode which I crashed so I could weigh in on scoring systems and other tournament structural issues, and talk about how they apply to the upcoming WDC in Chicago.

In that podcast we covered some of the issues that I thought were interesting, glossed over a few others, and simply didn't have time to get to a handful more that are well worth discussing. So I thought I'd try to continue that discussion here, before so much time passes that I forget what I wanted to say.

Part of the point of the episode was simply to go over the basics of how players (often) play differently in various scoring systems. That's sometimes interesting, but it's not really what I want to talk about today.

The other thing we started to talk about, and which I don't think we got deep enough in to, were the ways in which factors other than the scoring system can and should change the way you play. I'd especially hoped to spend a bit of time talking about how the number of games in the event changes what I believe is the optimum strategy for a player who's trying to win. For example how your strategy can be different in a 4 round event from what it would be in a 3 round event, or how you play differently in a 50 player tournament than you do in a 20 player tournament. We touched on this, but I'm not sure we were clear on why this was important. So let's try again here.

You might think that for a player who's trying to win a Diplomacy tournament, that the optimum strategy would simply be to amass as high a score as possible. While that's true after a fashion, it presents a false choice. While you have to make countless tactical decisions throughout a game and throughout a tournament, it's not really the case that the choices you make are between tactics that result in more points versus tactics that result in fewer. It's rarely that simple. Instead, your decisions are very often between a more conservative approach – which would entail less risk of a poor result and less chance of a very strong result – versus a more aggressive approach – which is a higher risk higher reward strategy.

Should I cover an open SC or support myself into yours? Should I kill my opponent more quickly, or attack a second opponent now and deal with my first opponent more slowly? Should I stab my trusted ally and see if I can solo, or just settle for the safe and solid results I'm certain to get if I don't stab?

All of these are essentially choices between safer paths which offer smaller but more certain rewards, or riskier paths that potentially offer a greater benefit, but which are far less certain.

Understanding the tournament rules can be extremely beneficial to making good decisions between aggressive and conservative play. In my opinion however, it is not so much the scoring system that informs your decision-making. The more relevant issue is how many boards and being played each round, how many rounds are being played, and how many of those rounds are going to count for the final score. I believe these things should change your play style far more than the mathematics behind how we convert the SC chart into points.

The scoring system is still important for understanding what is and isn't an exceptional result of course (e.g. understanding that a 9 center top is perfectly good in C-Diplo but nothing special in Squares). Understanding that allows you to properly evaluate how well you're actually doing in the game you're in. But once you understand that, the more important question is how well you need to do in order to win the tournament. Answering that question requires understanding what the likely range of results will be in all the games you aren't playing in.

A quick note on scoring systems - Throughout this article I'm generally going to stick to referring to hypothetical results based on how many people are in the draw. I'm doing this only because draw based scoring is extremely simple, and referring to 2-ways, 3-ways, and 4-ways is a good shorthand method of referring to results of a certain quality. The same basic premise applies to any scoring system. If I were writing a more rigorous analysis I'd probably refer to results as falling into a percentile range of all results of that scoring system. The important thing to understand is simply that if I refer to a 3-way draw, you can substitute "3-way" with a result of equivalent average value under what ever system you're using. (For example a 3-way might be thought of as being similar to a weak board top or a strong 2nd place under some systems. Sorting THIS PART out really does involve understanding your scoring system.)

Why the number of boards per round matters.

In any given set of games, we understand that there are more common and less common results. In a purely draw based system for example, you'll see a lot of 3-way draws and a decent number of 4-way draws. You don't see many two-way draws because (In DIAS at least) they're quite hard to get. You also don't see many 5-way draws because it's not hard to eliminate at least one player from them. Obviously you don't see a lot of solos either. Why is this important? Because your goal is to maximize your chance of doing better than the best results on the other boards, and in order to do that you need to guess how big those results are going to be.

Let's imagine that you're at a relatively small event, and there are only 3 boards being played in the first round. Assuming that you have a fairly normal distribution of skill level, it is quite likely that all of these games will end in 3-way or 4-way draws simply because those are by far the most common results. This means is that if you get a 3-way draw in your game, there will probably not be any players on any other board that have done better significantly than you.

If there are 10 boards being played however, the situation changes. We're still using the same scoring system, but now simply because there are so many games being played, we have to seriously consider the possibility that there will be at least one solo or two way draw somewhere in one of these games (or equivalent exceptional result in the scoring system used). This has nothing to do with the scoring system, it's simply that if there is an X% chance of a massive results in each game, then the more boards that are played the greater the chance that someone hits that jackpot. This means that while you still may take that 3-way draw in your first game, you probably won't be leading the tournament after that first round.

The analysis is the same in any scoring system. When there are more boards being played per round, there is an increased likelihood of at least a handful of exceptional results showing up. Strategically then, what this means is that in a larger event with more players, you are incentivized to play more aggressively, simply because the large number of games means that statistically someone somewhere is probably going to get a monster result.

On the other hand, in smaller event with fewer players, it is often wise to adopt a more conservative strategy where you take any above average result you can, at least until you hear that another player has already hit a massive result.

Why the number of rounds itself matters.

This is related but subtly different. At the end of the day, what we're concerned about is not how many games ended with such-and-thus a result. What we're concerned with is how many players ended up with scores in what range. Since every player has some chance of failing to get a good result every time they play, increasing number of rounds decreases the chances that any particular player gets a "good" result in every round.

To take an obvious example, suppose there are 35 players playing in a 2 round event. In such a situation it is extremely likely that there will be multiple players who get top end results in every game. Even if the results were distributed randomly, there would likely be multiple players who score a 3-way draw in both rounds of this event. Because results aren't random, this likelihood becomes a near certainty. Acknowledging this, you now know that if you merely get a 3-way draw in every round of this 2 round event, you will probably at best tie for a win, because there will certainly be other players who get this top end result in every round as well.

On the other hand, if those same 35 players were going to play in a 5 round event, the odds of anyone getting a 3-way draw in every single game are significantly lower. If you find yourself a position to settle for that 3-way draw for the fifth time, you can know that there is a significant chance that nobody else has pulled that feat off. Even if it's only the forth round, you might consider taking the safe result simply to set yourself for the chance to go 5 for 5 come the final game. The take home message here is clear.

In an event with few rounds, players are generally rewarded for a more aggressive approach, because they have fewer chances to differentiate themselves from other players. Settling for a result that is worse than you could have gotten is crippling because you have so little chance to make up for it. Merely getting a good result every round - like that metaphorical 3-way draw - is simply not that great because other players are likely to have achieved the same thing.

On the other hand, in an event with more rounds, a player is often rewarded for a more conservative approach. Because we are playing a large number of rounds, even good players are likely to have a bad game or two. This results in a kind of attrition where good players one by one fall from the group at the front of the pack. Sometimes in events with many rounds, the winner is simply the player left standing at the end of the day. The one guy who managed to make par on every hole, while everyone else had one slip up.

Understanding this difference might results in a subtle change in your approach to the game. An early acceptance that a more modest result is acceptable will

result in your adopting a more conservative strategy early on in the game. Adopting such a conservative strategy can both increase your chance of a good result and decrease your chance of a great one. Conversely, an early realization that a modest result just won't get it done will encourage aggressive play right out of the gate - likely resulting in both more eliminations and more truly exceptional results.

The complication of "Drop Rounds"

If you aren't familiar with the concept, 'drop rounds' refers to a situation where only the results of some of your games count for your final score. For example, a tournament might have 4 rounds, but only each player's three best scores count for their final standing, and their 4th best score would simply be ignored. A variation on this system is having lower scores count for partial value. For example, your two best scores count at their full value, your 3rd best score counts a 50% and your 4th best score counts at 25%. While you aren't technically "dropping" the results of any round, the diminished value of lower scores has a similar, if lessened, effect.

The consequence of drop rounds is interesting and not always obvious. A tournament with drop rounds in some ways appears similar to an event that simply had fewer rounds to begin with. Like our example of the two round event earlier, because fewer rounds count it is more likely that all of the players at the top of the heap will have good scores in every scored round. However, because we are actually playing additional rounds, this effect is exaggerated.

If we simply played 3 rounds, there would be some moderate number of players who got 3 good results in those 3 games.

But if we play 4 rounds and count 3, there will be significantly more players who end up with 3 good scores at the end of the day. If all players were of similar skill level and all played with a similar conservative approach, you would likely end up with a great mass of players with approximately the same score. Lots of games three 3-way draws, and a relatively small point differential separating a large number of players. For any individual player among the group, the odds of winning are small because there a large number of other players who have more or less the same results. Three good-but-not-great scored results.

This conservative approach, where you aim for good-but-not-great results in order to minimize the risk of a bad result, does not really work in a tournament with drop rounds. On the one hand, the existence of drop rounds increases the number of players who will end up with those good-but-not-great scores in every scored round, meaning that even if your strategy works, you actually haven't accomplished that much. At the same

time, major risk of aggressive play - the increased chance of getting stuck with a bad result when things don't pan out - is significantly minimized because you were going to have to drop a low score anyway. At the end of the weekend, it makes no difference if that low score was a 4-way draw or an elimination. Both are equally worthless.

On the podcast I gave a hypothetical example of a best 3 rounds of 4 tournament, but I'd like to throw out a more interesting variation on that. Suppose that after 3 rounds of play I had scored 45, 45 and zero, while Eric had scored 35, 35, and 35. (These scores are out of a possible 100 for soloing) Right now he's beating me 105 to 90, and if neither of us get any more points he'll comfortably beat me in the tournament. But because we are unlikely to actually get shut out in the last round, that lead is largely illusory. Any points I score, however minimal, will increase my score. So long as I score at least 16 points I'll pass his current score. He, however, must do better than 35 to have any effect on his score at all. So suppose we both score a fairly modest 20 points in round 4. Even though we tied in round 4, and even though he was supposedly beating me after 3 rounds, I'll pass him. I'll end up with $45+45+20=110$ points. He'll end up with $35+35+35=105$ points. His lead was never real.

While this example is an exaggeration, it represents the kind of results you might see when comparing a player who played aggressively for the first 3 rounds with a player who played conservatively. The aggressive player did better in a couple games, but had one game go sideways where he was eliminated. The conservative player did very solidly in each game and was never eliminated, but also never got an exceptional score. In a tournament where all rounds counted, the conservative player might well have had the better strategy. But in a tournament with drop rounds, slow-and-steady may well not win the race.

What's going on in Chicago?

Part of the point of the podcast was to talk about strategies for the upcoming World Diplomacy Championship in Chicago. WDC has five scheduled rounds. Your best three scores from the first four rounds will be used to determine the top 7 players who get to advance to the top board. Then your final tournament standing will be determined based on your best three scores from all five rounds. Having multiple drop rounds is a rarity, and one that could have significant strategic implications.

Everything we just said about drop rounds encouraging aggressive play probably counts double when we go from one drop round to two. Each individual player will have many chances to amass a relatively small number of high end results. Add to that the fact that there will be

quite a large number of players at the event as compared to most tournaments. Writing this in late June, we've got over 75 players who've said their coming. While some will surely drop off, there will likely be more who jump in at the last minute. The point being that 10 boards or more each round seems not at all unlikely. If there are 10 boards each round for 5 rounds, that's 50 opportunities for a player to end a game having topped the board. Since each individual only gets to count 3 of these anyway, you could theoretically have as many as 16 players who all have 3 board topping scores counting for their final score. Add a few more boards in and the number just goes up. Throw in a handful of very strong second place finishes (which in Sum-of-Squares are sometimes better scores than mediocre board tops), and it is entirely realistic to end the tournament with 10-14 players all of whom have 3 very strong scores to their credit. Perhaps even more than that.

Under such circumstances, simply finishing the weekend with 3 above average results will come nowhere close to winning the tournament. You'll do fine. You'll finish in the top third probably. Maybe higher. But you won't win.

Players are going to be seriously encouraged to take risks and play aggressively, because that's what will be needed for a top 7 finish, and because they know that if they fail right now, they don't have to count this round anyway. I'd be shocked if the winner doesn't have a solo, and I wouldn't be that surprised if someone has more than one.

Ok, but what other weird things are going on in Chicago?

There actually are a few other interesting notes. The event has two "winners". In order to win the World Championship, you have to win the top board, which of course means you have to be ON the top board. However the tournament winner and DipCon winner is simply the person with the highest total score from their best 3 of 5 rounds. In principle these could be the same person, but I don't think they will be.

The person who tops a top board usually isn't the person who was leading the tournament going in. Given that the 7 players on the top board by definition probably already have 3 good games, and given that top boards usually have pretty modest scores (topping with 8 or 9 centers is not uncommon) there's a good chance that the top board will actually count as a drop round for most if not all of the players on it. Even if the player who wins the top board does improve on their score, they probably aren't improving on it that much.

The point being, even if the guy leading the tournament after round 4 fails to win the top board, it's likely that the guy who did top it won't improve his score enough to catch him anyway.

Secondly, you've got a whole bunch of other players who missed out on the top board who still have a chance to leapfrog and win the tournament. For example, a player who had two really good results and two eliminations in the first 4 rounds is likely to miss out on the top board. However, if that player comes back with a monster result on Sunday (aided by the fact that 7 really good players can't be on their board!) there's a good chance that their result jumps them over all 7 players on the board - especially noting what we just said above, that the top board is quite likely to be a drop round for most of the guys on it.

I personally think this is a fun twist for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it means that a lot of players still have at least a chance to win right up until the end.

Final Thoughts

A long time ago, a good friend of mine made a comment to me when we were killing time between rounds of a tournament. He said that he's always found it interesting that we spend so much effort talking about scoring systems - the mathematics of turning the supply center chart into a score - and yet we spend so little time thinking about the broader tournament structure. There's a lot there that can change the way you play, and we don't spend a lot of time talking about it.

There are a number of other weird systemic issues about tournaments that I'd like to talk about, but perhaps that best saved for another day. I still think it's interesting that there seem to be tendencies in how people play in different rounds themselves, especially if you account for how those players are already doing. There are a few other nuances about Chicago that we could get into too, but I think I'm going to save that for the post tournament write up.

If you have thoughts or comments I'd love to hear them. Feel free to either email me (MChirchill@gmail.com) or post them on one of the relevant Facebook pages. If you want to followup on anything we talked about on the show, or how it relates to this nonsense, I'd recommend: <http://www.facebook.com/DiplomacyCast>

Also as a final pitch, do think about coming to Chicago if you're able. August 10-12. Check out <http://www.windycityweasels.org/wdc> for all the details.

Havoc Behind the Lines: Celebrating the Rogue Unit

Joshua Danker-Dake

I love the rogue unit. There are few in-game achievements I find quite as satisfying as getting a unit past enemy lines and running amok there, if for no other reason than seeing the simple joy of the free-range commando frolicking in opposing territory. Well, that plus the sheer amount of work it will typically take for my opponent to evict it (the other side of that coin, of course, is that having a rogue unit loose behind *your* lines is about the most irritating thing you can have happen).

Many new players have their first experience with a rogue unit when they find themselves on the receiving end of a forward retreat. New players often consider their opponents' moves as though they themselves were playing; in terms of retreats, this means that the new player will frequently expect a safe retreat toward the home centers; to circle the wagons, as it were. And thus a forward retreat can come as something of a surprise.

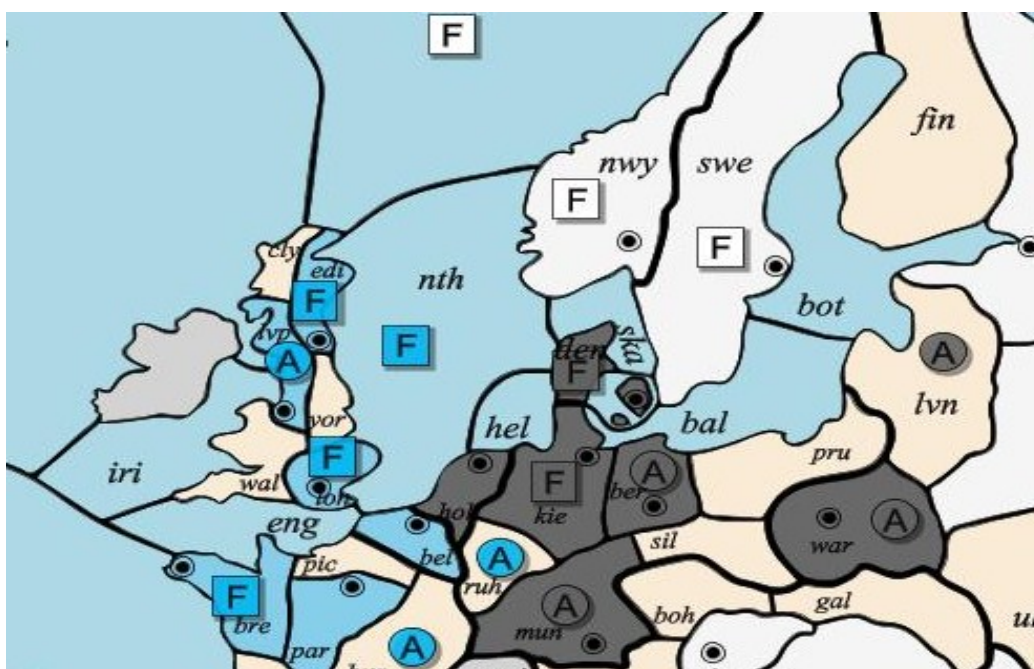
Here's the most obvious type of scenario:

The crafty Italian has gotten into Munich. Without an adjacent Italian unit for support, Germany can dislodge him at will. But is such an action worth Germany's time? Italy can retreat to Kiel, and from there can threaten a number of Germany's supply centers. Worse, without more units, Germany will be unable to do more than chase Italy from supply center to supply center. Here, Germany does better with a self-standoff in Kiel, a move RUH-KIE, or simply ignoring Italy's army for the time being.



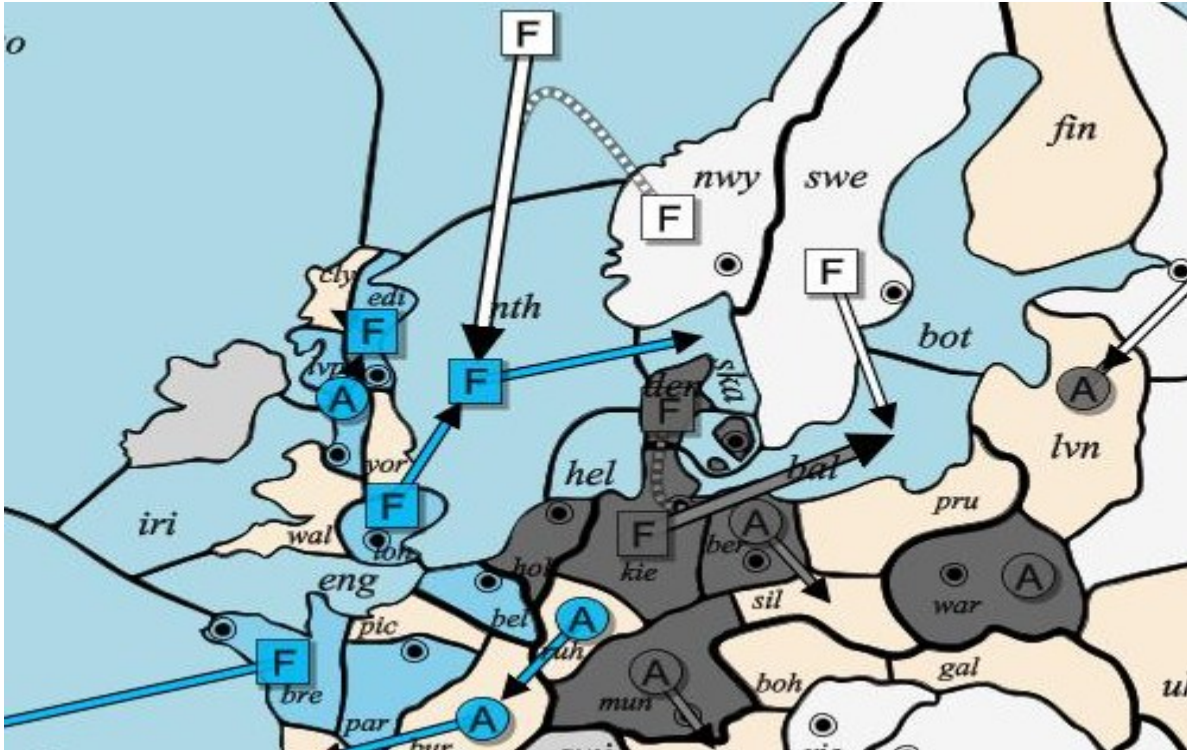
But you will say, "A forward retreat into an unoccupied supply center is horrendously obvious." Indeed, once the dislodgement happens, that is certainly true. But many new players don't see this right away, don't order with consideration for where a dislodged unit can go. Slightly less obvious is the forward retreat to a threatening non-supply center space. No matter the circumstances, this principle is sound: if you're going to dislodge a unit, make sure you have a good idea where he's going (or, at the very least, where he's *not* going). This is Diplomacy; there are harsh consequences for stretching yourself too thin, and the rogue unit is one of them.

The rogue unit can also be achieved by design, should the player see a gap in the enemy's lines and make a successful dash for it.

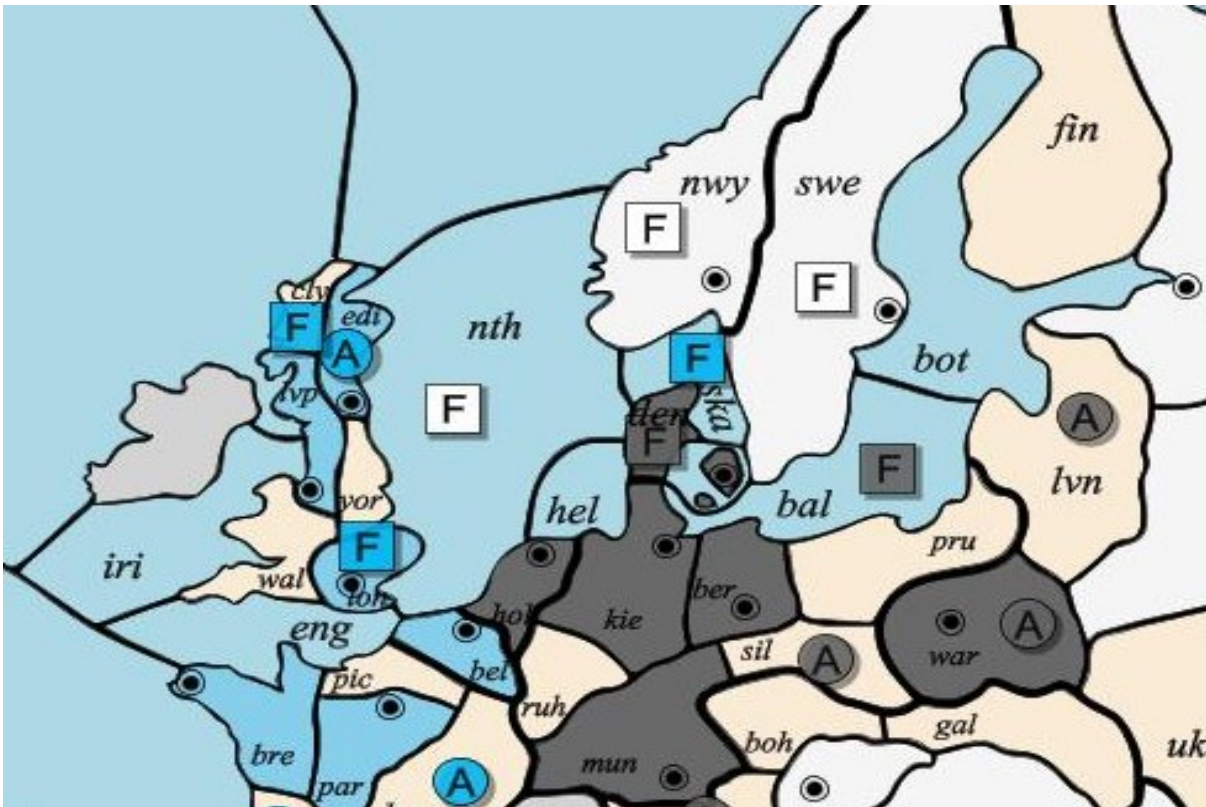


Here we have an example from a France/Germany versus Russia/Turkey mid-/endgame, where F/G is putting the squeeze on Scandinavia and Russia doesn't

have enough fleets to hold out there longer than another year.



Russia makes a play for the North Sea, and, to his surprise, gets in. This is poor planning by France, who was looking to cover the North Atlantic and clearly was not expecting Russia to take such a direct offensive.



And here is the result. Russia will lose Sweden now, but that was inevitable. Meanwhile, the fleet in the North Sea has options. It can go to Holland. It can try to go to the Channel. It can try to go to London. More importantly, it ties up multiple French units. The army in Burgundy must cover Belgium. The fleet in London must cover the Channel or hold. France is *pretty sure* that Russia will take the guaranteed build in Holland, but he has to play it safe, lest the Russian fleet get even deeper into his territory. Thus, the Russian fleet demands the immediate attention of several French units.

In a zero-sum game, successfully using a single unit to engage multiple enemy units is the height of efficiency. And if you can divert your opponent enough to give yourself some breathing room on the home front, so much the better.

New players should also keep in mind that the forward retreat is particularly favored by players on the verge of extinction, who are desperate for survival and resigned to the loss of their home centers, who are ready to cause as many problems as they can for their conquerors. And thus the forward retreat fits well with this trustworthy Diplomacy saying: if you can't beat them, drag them down with you.

What, then, shall we say? The rogue unit is not something to be planned or counted on, but is rather an opportunity to be recognized and seized when it presents itself and is tactically advantageous.

Or, heck, just for the fun of it.

Editor's Note - Images generated with jDip 1.7.

Ask the GM

An Advice Column for Diplomacy World



Dear GM:

I am an old school Diplomacy player and would like to play by postal mail—seems like I can't find anyone running anyone running it using the good old USPS. Any ideas as to where I can find a true postal game as I don't have an email address?

Old Time Player

Dear OTP,

You want to play a postal Diplomacy game using US postal service??? What's next—maybe you'd like a mimeographed zine as well—for those of you less than 35 years old mimeograph, ah, what the hell, look it up on Wikipedia like you do everything else.

Listen here you hobby old fart, the reason why no one uses postal mail anymore is for the same reason we don't put Diplomacy zines on stone tablets and we don't have four week deadlines—there is no reason for either. Join the rest of the human race and embrace the internet and get a damned email address.

Your Pal,
The GM

Dear GM,

I find most scoring systems and their discussions to be a colossal bore—what should I do when other players insist on droning on about their favorite scoring systems?

Scoring Equals Snoring

Dear Snoring,

I agree and what I do when players insist on talking about scoring systems is explain how only Diplomacy and math nerds give a rat's ass about scoring systems. Every game should be played ruthlessly and independent of the others, in other words, I don't need no stinkin' scoring system to tell me how to play Diplomacy---just give me your dots and we'll get along just fine.

Your Pal,
The GM

Solo Derby: A Team Tournament Concept

by Chris Babcock

With the Diplomacy World Cup wrapping up, there has come the inevitable critique of the scoring system used. Here is one suggestion for a tournament system that has at its heart the goal of promoting Soloism to the exclusion of all else. Accordingly, it should appeal strongly to Soloists and be enormously unsatisfying to anyone else.

With that in mind, I introduce the solo derby. This is a team tournament concept for teams of 5-7 players. Each team member can play as many games as he wants. The goal is for the team to score one of the following combinations of solos – 3 players score 5 solos each, 4 players score 4 solos each, or 5 players score 3 solos each. The first team to do so wins the tournament. It's amazingly simple and the name is apt. Solo derby.



What about draws? Draws don't matter. They aren't wins. They don't count. Some people may find that offensive. Good. This format is designed to offend such people. Draw mongers.

What about top of board? It doesn't matter. There's no top of board in the rules of Diplomacy, just win and draw.

Topping the board is another expression for didn't win.

What about supply center counts? The only supply center count that matters in the rules of Diplomacy is who gets 18 first. If you don't get 18 then it doesn't matter.



Unsatisfying? It depends. Are you a winner? Can you shut the door on the solo? Can you rally team members to do likewise? Can you put in the games and take the risks needed to solo enough to win in this format? Five solos is a lot of games for most players. Five players who can close 3 solos is a deep team. Whatever team can put together the right string of victories deserves the title.

What I, personally, find unsatisfying is any tournament format that rewards static, boring, sterile play. It should take more than a top of board or two to win a tournament. In my opinion, nobody should be able to win an individual tournament without soloing and no team should win a team tournament without multiple players who are capable of playing to win. I find complicated scoring formulas frustrating and unsatisfying. If the goal of a scoring system is to reward solos then it should do so directly. If the goal of a scoring system is not to reward solos then it has no business in the Diplomacy hobby. That's the whole rationale for Solo Derby.

Chris Babcock is the technology editor of Diplomacy World, but obviously that doesn't mean he has a lack of opinions on other topics!

Point/Counterpoint: Should England Ally with Germany or France?

By Jeff Hall and Éamon Driscoll

Everyone who has played diplomacy understands the concepts of the initial triangles at the table. EFG and RTA are the most important ones (Italy, of course, doesn't count) and any player sitting down at the table (or computer) for the opening of a new game would do well to figure out where the power dynamics are in each of those. This article will examine one triangle in particular, EFG, and specifically address the issue from England's point of view. How is the triangle best resolved?

Jeff: Having played a number of games with England, I've come to the conclusion that, all things being equal, you almost certainly want to ally with France against Germany. Once Germany falls, the French position is untenable against a strong English Navy while the German position is difficult to open up without the aid of French troops on the ground.

Éamon: It's actually the French position which is more difficult to open up (Germany can always be surrounded later by England and an Eastern power). The alliance with Germany gives England the best possible position for the mid-game, along with a sense of security which is either not present or significantly diminished in the E/F pact. The Anglo-Saxon alliance benefits England far more than does the Entente Cordiale, and brings the historic enemy of both England and Germany to its knees.

Jeff: I couldn't disagree more. A French/English alliance necessarily results in an extended French line. Even cursory diplomacy will prevent France from ever building in Brest while any turn in which England captures two centers will result in fleets in Edinburgh and London. This provides many opportunities to shift into an anti-French stance.

Sure, the German/English alliance will work. France will fall as any 2 v 1 will occur. But Germany will take more dots, more quickly. Denmark, Holland, Paris and often Belgium will go to the Germans while the English take Brest and Norway. Sure the English have additional spoils to take, but this is the exact point that the German stab will come. A fleet in Holland and Denmark is a dangerous thing to a Northern Sea fleet.

Éamon: We could easily go back and forth and say that one nation or the other will take more dots, but that depends entirely on the players themselves and their negotiations. Any diplomat will know that "cursory diplomacy" won't prevent a determined neighbour from building on the frontier, and France can put fleets right

on the English Channel—Germany, however, will face a long and protracted fight just to reach the North Sea, which is jealously guarded by England, more so than the North Atlantic or even the Channel. I should know; I managed to pull off a successful stab of England as Germany in a F2F match, and it was only through the assistance of the lone Russian fleet and a resurgent France (who later took Belgium from me) that I was able to crack through the North Sea. It can be done, but England is protected by geopolitics as well; a strong Russia or Austria will prevent the German stab.

The alliance with France will also cause England to become overextended; by comparison the German alliance allows England to control three corners of the map: the British Isles, Petersburg, and Gibraltar. Especially if an English army or two is used to defeat France, and an army can get into Petersburg, then England can harass Germany by sea and use armies on both sides to surround Germany when the time comes for the stab.

Jeff: "Two" English armies? What kind of tank loving Brits are you playing with? You've proved my point, however. The situation you describe is precisely the one that I fear as England in an EG v F. A German player taking advantage of early builds (you had both Holland and Belgium one presumes) to ally with a weakened France and kick England to the curb.

As for the diplomacy surrounding builds, my point was that a French fleet build in Brest is almost certainly an aggressive action against England. It's telegraphed and difficult to disguise, which allows England to move accordingly in the spring. Conversely, an English build in London is much easier to spin. A fleet in Liverpool is decidedly more anti-French than London. This permits the English player to make a stab at France that may not be defended against (my favorite kind of stab!).

Éamon: On the contrary; that was only possible because England was out of position. It still took two years to breach through to the North Sea and another two to take one English center. My point is that it takes a true herculean effort within a very small window of time for the Kaiser to enjoy an afternoon cup of tea in Piccadilly. Beyond that, England has all the say in the alliance with Germany; it is very difficult for Germany to defend himself once France is eliminated. Even if Germany does try to defend against the stab, the Royal Navy has lovely places like Heligoland to project power over three German centers.

Games of Diplomacy are not only determined by the balance-of-power; they are also determined by the balance-of-threat. The window of opportunity for Germany to stab England is significantly smaller than the window of opportunity for France to stab England, due in no small part to the map itself. Not only does an alliance with Germany offer England better geopolitical positioning, but also security against offensive capabilities and intent. Germany can only surprise England with fleet builds, which need time to get into position just to have a chance to take the North Sea—England can easily reform his lines to defend. When France stabs, it is often not until the fleets get into the Irish Sea or North Atlantic that England will realize what is about to happen, and then there is not much that can be done. The alliance with Germany offers England not only better positioning in the mid-game (three corners of the map), but also the security against a stab. In fact, once Germany turns east, the prerogative to stab is entirely England's, and the fate of the Kaiser is in the hands of his cousin across the sea.



Jeff: I'm not seeing how an EG alliance gets you both corners? You're assuming that Russia just lets you have StP? One of the ancillary benefits to an EF alliance is that the natural motion of your early fleets (towards the north and west) puts you in a position to both pressure Germany but, MORE importantly, it puts you in a position to actually take StP rather than relying on luck or incompetence by Russia to allow you to get it.

On the other hand, moving against France forces units away from that oh so important Northern shore of

Russia. One fleet in the North is not likely to "secure the corner" by itself.

So if securing the corners is your goal, taking some German units, StP and then swooping down wholesale on France would seem a much better strategy. It is a plan that secures both corners while making sure that NTH stays safe and that ENG can be protected with near impunity. It permits a very fleet heavy force composition which is generally good for England. Because of the map structure and the way things layout typically, EG gives England more ready access to Belgium and Holland (whereas those particular two territories are more tricky for England to take from Germany).

Éamon: Well, I think you've missed the concept of the "alliance" with Germany which would provide a bit of assistance if needed in acquiring Petersburg, if not for an English fleet in the Barents. The Anglo-Saxon gives England both flexibility and security; with fleets in Scandinavia and Gibraltar bolstered by a few armies in France proper, England is in a fantastic position, analogous to an A/T in which Turkey controls both Russia and the Mediterranean. Conversely, the alliance with France restricts the English to the north, forced to funnel armies either through the narrow corridor from Holland to Prussia or through Petersburg to Moscow, which has the rather nasty side-effect of leaving the North Atlantic open for an easy French stab. Yes, England can take the upper-hand in the Entente Cordiale, but this is a 50/50 proposition and France is much easier to defend than Germany. England can have Germany trapped on three of four sides, whereas your argument suggests that France is not keen on the Royal Navy providing aid in the Mediterranean, for which any move south by England is an immediate tell, and sending English armies into France through Belgium is not as simple as it seems on first glance, a la Herr Schlieffen.

Naturally it is the prerogative of Britannia to rule the waves, but a fleet-heavy England is less worthy as it might seem; England cannot project power beyond the coastal territories. England needs armies on the Continent, and France is the ideal landing spot because it permits England the superior tactical position and removes the temptation for Germany to stab, under the nagging threat of English armies moving north with naval support at the same time that English fleets establish supremacy in Scandinavia, causing the German position to implode.

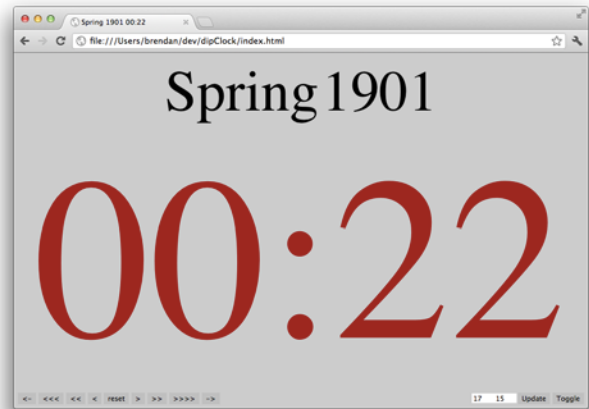
Alex Maslow, Point/Counterpoint Editor: Apparently, the best EFG strategy is for FG to ally and destroy England, because that Brit is one sneaky son of a gun.

Keeping Time

By Brendan Hickey

I had the misfortune of playing a game that used an iPhone as the sole timepiece. Immediately following the game, I began writing a web-based clock. The result is the Diplomatic Timekeeper, a modestly faithful clone of David Norman's DipTimer. It supports options such as random game ending and drop-dead deadlines. It is clumsily translated into French, German, Italian and Spanish. Hopefully a reader like you will provide Hungarian, Russian, and Turkish translations to round out the field. Sound in English is provided courtesy of David.

I've tested it with Firefox 12, Chrome 17 and Safari 5. Internet Explorer 9+ and Opera will probably work. It was used with success at Whipping and I hope others find it useful.



It is free and open source software released under the MIT license. Patches, feature requests and additional sounds are welcomed. Download Diplomatic Timekeeper at:

<https://github.com/bhickey/Diplomatic-Timekeeper>

Timekeeper's key feature is platform agnosticism. It runs on Mac, Linux and Windows alike. Written in JavaScript and HTML5, it works under any modern web browser.

Selected Upcoming Conventions

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

ManorCon XXX - Friday July 20th 2012 - Monday July 23rd 2012 - Stamford Hall, University of Leicester, United Kingdom - Contact: [Dave Simpson](mailto:dave@manorcon.org.uk) - Website: <http://www.manorcon.org.uk>

World Dip Con at Weasel Moot VI - Friday August 10th 2012 - Sunday August 12th 2012 - Chicago, IL - Contact: [Jim OKelley](mailto:jim@windycityweasels.org) - Website: <http://windycityweasels.org/wdc>

GenCon - Thursday August 16th 2012 - Sunday August 19th 2012 - Indianapolis, Indiana, United States - Website: <http://www.gencon.com/2012/indy/default.aspx>

Buckeye Game Fest XIII - Thursday September 20th 2012 - Sunday September 23rd 2012 - Columbus, Ohio, United States - Website: <http://www.buckeyegamefest.com>

BerliCon 2012 - Friday October 12th 2012 - Sunday October 14th 2012 - Berlin, Germany - Website: <http://www.diplomacy-bund.de>

Italian Egg Step Como - Saturday October 27th 2012 - Sunday October 28th 2012 - Brunate (COMO), Italy - Website: http://www.signoridigioco.it/index.php?option=com_seminar&Itemid=53

MidCon - Friday November 9th 2012 - Sunday November 11th 2012 - Hallmark Hotel, Derby, United Kingdom

What Not to Put in a Variant Design

by Jack McHugh

A lot of articles on variant design cover only what the variant is about and what the designer chooses to put in the design, e.g. what sets their design apart from other variants or just plain Diplomacy. This is all well and good but designing a variant is a lot like sculpting about which Michelangelo supposedly said: he just removes the excess rock from the statue that is already there.



have moved from your interaction with the players to interacting with the rules, map or both.



Second, any rule or map change should be done with the ultimate goal of the design in mind. For example, if you are doing a design that is simulating a specific period in history most of the time all you need do from a design perspective is to change the map and leave the rules alone. Most of the time this will be enough as all wars until the twentieth century were fought in two dimensions, on land and sea, so you can simply use the armies and fleets of standard Diplomacy to simulate most other time periods.

If you must add rules it's best to keep them to a minimum—again if you don't it will be difficult for players to plan their moves or do much diplomacy since they won't be able to predict what their moves will be like. I also don't like rules that add a lot of bookwork so I tend to shy away from economic variants—I also think they are difficult to find GMs for since they often don't just make more work for the players but the GM and if the work is just a few minutes for each player it can be several minutes for the GM since he may have a few minutes for each player.

Third, if you do want to change the rules try and keep the map changes to a minimum. Even if you do have to change the map completely due to the time or place of your variant—keep the ratio of sea to land spaces similar to regular Diplomacy as too many of either can result in an easily stalemated board or a board that can be crossed too quickly.

The key in any good variant design is to only add as much as you need to show the differences between your design and that of regular Diplomacy or to get the players into the mind set of whatever era that you are attempting to recreate. For example, I don't like designs that have a lot of rule and map changes because it becomes difficult to visualize the turn which in turn makes it harder to negotiate with the other players.

Diplomacy is a simple game at heart. The rules are short and can be explained in less than 30 minutes to anyone over the age of 12 years of age with average intelligence. The reason for this is that the emphasis in the game is not the mechanics of the rules or the map, the emphasis is on the interaction between the players. If the rules or map become too large or unwieldy then the players will naturally have to concentrate on those aspects of the game which means that the focus will

Diplomacy World Demo Game

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

The Players:

Austria: Steve Cooley
England: Bill Quinn
France: David Hood
Germany: Mark Fassio
Italy: Melinda Holley
Russia: Don Williams
Turkey: Gary Behnen

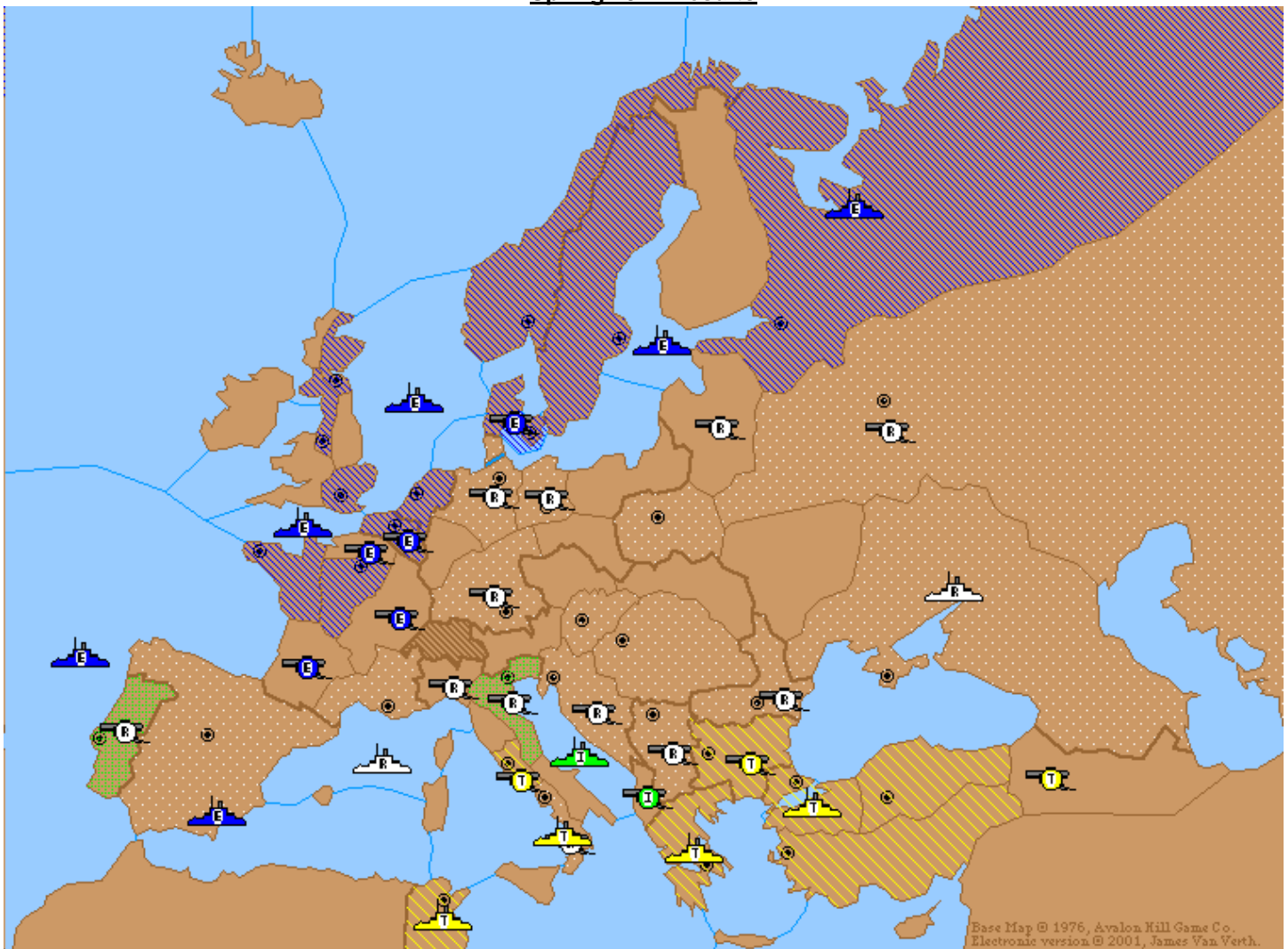
The Commentators:

Jim Burgess (**BOLD**)
Rick Desper (Normal Font)
Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

The GM:

Douglas Kent

Spring 1914 Results



Marines are quite busy this season; amphibious landings galore.

England: A Brest – Gascony, A Edinburgh – Denmark, F English Channel Convoys A London – Belgium, F Gulf of Bothnia Supports F St Petersburg(nc), A London – Belgium, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - Spain(sc), F North Africa - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F North Sea Convoys A Edinburgh – Denmark, A Paris – Burgundy, A Picardy Supports A Paris – Burgundy, F St Petersburg(nc) Hold.

Italy: F Adriatic Sea Convoys A Venice – Albania, A Venice - Albania.

Russia: A Berlin – Kiel, F Gulf of Lyon Supports F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - Spain(sc), A Livonia - Moscow (*Fails*),

A Marseilles – Piedmont, A Moscow - Sevastopol (*Fails*), A Munich Hold, A Naples – Rome (*Dislodged*, retreat to Apulia or OTB), A Prussia – Berlin, A Serbia Supports A Venice – Albania, F Sevastopol - Black Sea (*Bounce*), A Spain – Portugal, A Trieste Supports A Tyrolia – Venice, A Tyrolia – Venice, A Ukraine - Rumania.
Turkey: F Constantinople - Black Sea (*Bounce*), A Greece – Bulgaria, F Ionian Sea – Greece, A Rome Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea – Naples, A Smyrna – Armenia, F Tyrrhenian Sea – Naples, F Western Mediterranean - Tunis.

PRESS

GFL Lutterbie: watching from a crowded bed in Totonto:
"Dang, these boys can dance! Too bad there won't be a girl to 2-step with soon!"

(Somewhere on a foggy mountaintop) - Arthur G. Pettibone of the law firm of Dewey Cheatham & Howe cleared his throat before speaking. "I quite understand the nature of your investigation, Sheriff. However, I am bound by professional ethics to protect my client."

"Your client, Counselor, seems to have disappeared." The Sheriff coldly smiled. "Now you wouldn't have anything to do with that, would you? Seeing as how you hold her power of attorney."

Pettibone flushed and adjusted his wire-rimmed glasses. "I protest! Yes, sir, I protest that! I hold the power of attorney only for the property formerly owned by..."

"Formerly?! You mean she sold it? To who?"

Pettibone sighed. "Once again, Sheriff. I'm bound by professional ethics..."

The Sheriff leaned across the desk and hissed, "I wonder if Mrs. Pettibone would like to discuss your professional ethics as they relate to you and Miss Kiki LaBoom employed by the KittyCat Palace." He smiled when Pettibone gasped and reached for his inhaler. "Now where has that Woman gone and who did she sell that property to?!"

Pettibone breathed deeply as he lowered the inhaler and babbled, "I don't know where she's gone. She closed out all her bank accounts. She sold the property to the Widow of Bunnell Run."

"Hellfire and damnation!"

London: Don't jump the gun.

Spain: The Irishman received an unexpected welcome to Rota.

London - Italy: You are my Dear Sister.

RUSSIA to TURKEY: As you are fond of telling me, you are familiar with my "tells", so I'm guessing this latest twist in the Russian strategy will not be a surprise to you. Nor should Moscow's reasoning. Our discussions have been excellent and stimulating but, alas, not convincing. And while I appreciate (I really do) that you would like us to continue on the "journey" we started together a few seasons ago toward either a triumphant Russian solo or a three-way draw with (to be determined by the luck of the draw and guesswork), Russia's journey in this game started long before you so ably joined it. The solo isn't there, my friend, and so my calculations changed. Rage, rage, rage against the dying of the light, do not go gentle into that good night.

Russia: Don, you wanted the shot at the win and I was good to my word. Then you were slow developing it, but the deal was you had right of final moves. Then, Bill beat you to the punch so now you want my centers? C'mon man, I wanted the game over but I told you when we first talked I wasn't giving you my centers...Then you leave me hanging? What's wrong with a 3-way?

South to West: Hey soul sista' still think we can carve him up if he doesn't agree to the 3-way?

Summer 1914

Suddenly everybody is in a hurry?

England: Has A Belgium, A Burgundy, A Denmark, F English Channel, A Gascony, F Gulf of Bothnia, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F North Sea, A Picardy, F Spain(sc), F St Petersburg(nc).

Italy: Has F Adriatic Sea, A Albania.

Russia: Retreat A Naples - Apulia..Has A Apulia, A Berlin, F Gulf of Lyon, A Kiel, A Livonia, A Moscow, A Munich, A Piedmont, A Portugal, A Rumania, A Serbia, F Sevastopol, A Trieste, A Venice.

Turkey: Has A Armenia, A Bulgaria, F Constantinople, F Greece, F Naples, A Rome, F Tunis.

Spring and Summer 1914 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Well, let's take a look at this...

England has consolidated his position in Western Europe. He's got the Russian army trapped in Portugal and has Marseilles threatened. Kiel will be under siege soon.

This is correct, the movement to increase England's long term possibilities increases. If we get to three powers and the stopping points around the stalemate lines, we can expect he will be stopped, but uncertainty exists.

I've forgotten whether we were supposed to think that Turkey was throwing the game to Russia or not. In any case, clearly he's not doing so. He may lose Greece, but he's picked up Naples. Russia's still not in the Black Sea! That's unforgivable. He should have moved there a long time ago.

I think the way to interpret this is that Russia seems to have THOUGHT that Turkey was following

SPRING 1914

After The Doctor finished explaining the situation to General U'til the old Fndili soldier looked puzzled.

"But Doctor," he asked, "the 'Further Glory' can timeslip of course, but how do I take it to another realm?"

The Time Lord smiled. "Don't worry old friend," he replied. "The Tardis can take us there and if I link its controls into your ships computers I can take you there as well. Come, let us get started. Oh, and I will need the help of Lieutenant B'des."

The old General looked across at his young Lieutenant. "Whatever The Doctor needs B'des, see he gets it," he said.

"Yes Sir," replied the young Lieutenant and walked out of the cabin with The Doctor.

But then it was time for the next briefing session and General U'til was now standing at the lectern preparing his thoughts. "Hail Fndili," he cried.

through on throwing the game to Russia, but Turkey has other plans.

Russia is going to be outnumbered in Germany pretty soon if he keeps fighting Turkey. And he's not going to make good progress against Turkey quickly, not even with Italian help.

Italy is on the way toward being eliminated, and when that happens we have the stable three way draw, with any two being able to stop the other from winning, but no one being able to eliminate a player without a solo.

This seems to be headed toward a 3-way draw. I feel that Don should have won this game somehow, but it's way too late for that.

That's precisely right, Don wanted to have an Edi Birsan solo that was conceded to him, that was a laudable goal. He is still trying to get one, but as noted, that ship seems to have left port and sunk.

"Hail Fndili," replied the trainees.

"Well Gentlemen," began the old soldier, "this training mission gets ever more interesting, and will do your final reports no harm at all. Even as I speak The Doctor and Lieutenant B'des are linking the Tardis to our ships computers and then we will be travelling to another realm to assist some of The Doctor's friends. But first, the briefing."

"As you can see England continues its advance in the west with assistance from Russia - and still believe a joint England/Russia victory is a likely outcome. Russia clearly has its eyes on the south and an attack on Turkey is almost inevitable. But what of Italy? Although almost eliminated is there some sort of agreement with Turkey that may yet allow both countries to form some sort of stalemate? I doubt it very much, but our next briefing may give us the answer. Hail Fndili."

Back on Earth Merlin looked at the entrance to the labyrinth and gasped. "My Lady, old as I am I had no idea such places as this existed."

"There my friends, at the end of this tunnel we will reach Lothlorien."

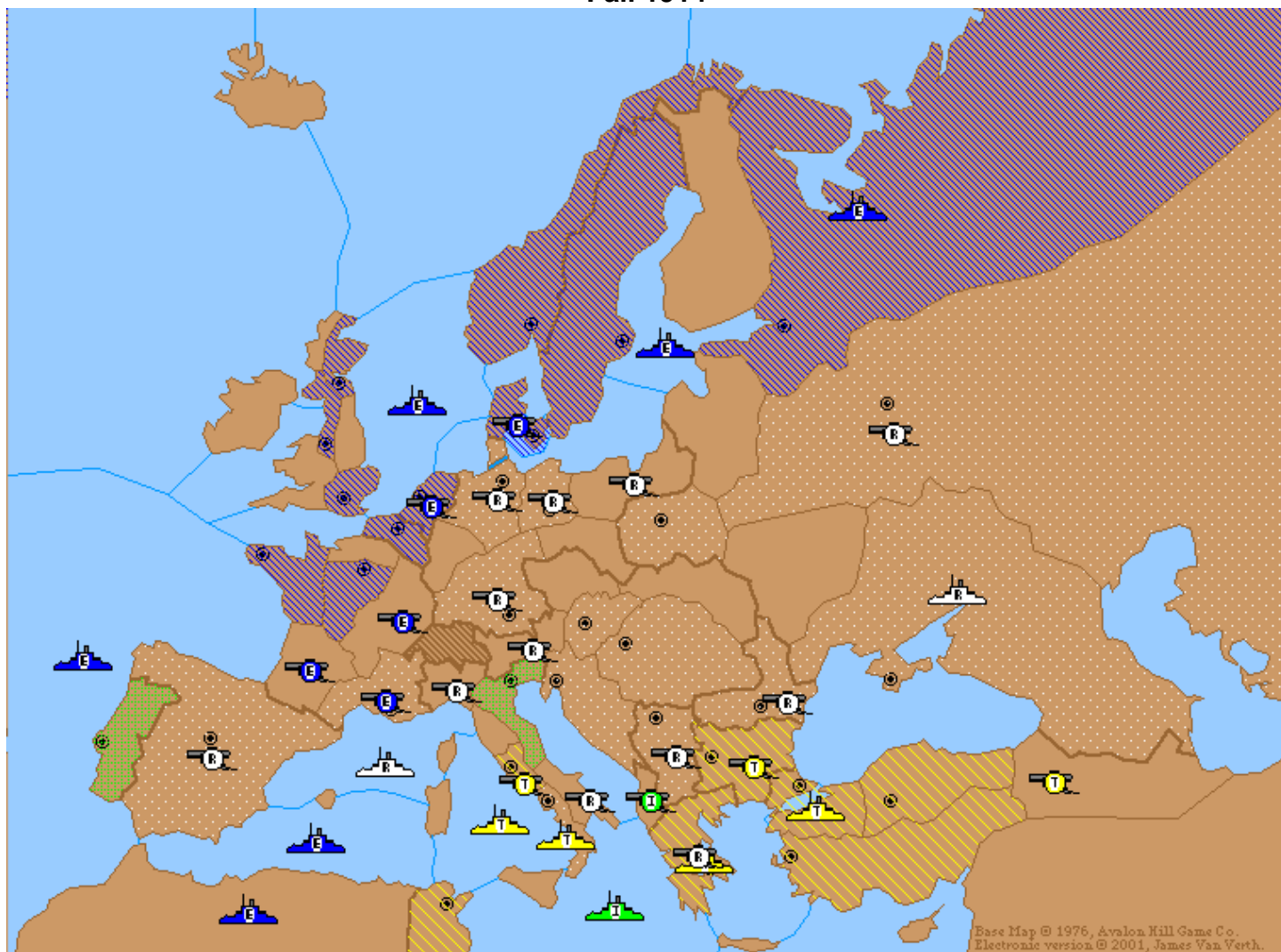
Galadriel laughed her lovely laugh again. "It is an Elvish secret and not one we share with many others. But be not afraid for I do know the path."



With Merlin's staff lighting the way he and Brooklyn followed the Elf Queen deep inside the labyrinth. There were many side tunnels, some of which she led them down and many of which she ignored. Eventually they came to one long and rather narrow side tunnel. Galadriel stopped and smiled at her companions.

All three walked down the tunnel.

Fall 1914



England: A Belgium – Holland, A Burgundy – Marseilles, A Denmark Hold, F English Channel - Mid-Atlantic Ocean,

A Gascony Supports A Burgundy – Marseilles, F Gulf of Bothnia Supports F St Petersburg(nc), F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - North Africa, F North Sea Supports A Belgium – Holland, A Picardy – Burgundy, F Spain(sc) - Western Mediterranean, F St Petersburg(nc) Hold.

Italy: F Adriatic Sea - Ionian Sea, A Albania Supports A Serbia - Greece.

Russia: A Apulia - Venice (*Bounce*), A Berlin - Kiel (*Fails*), F Gulf of Lyon Supports F Spain(sc) – Western Mediterranean, A Kiel - Ruhr (*Bounce*), A Livonia – Prussia, A Moscow - Sevastopol (*Bounce*), A Munich - Ruhr (*Bounce*), A Piedmont - Venice (*Bounce*), A Portugal – Spain, A Rumania - Bulgaria (*Fails*), A Serbia – Greece, F Sevastopol - Black Sea (*Bounce*), A Trieste – Serbia, A Venice - Tyrolia.

Turkey: A Armenia - Sevastopol (*Bounce*), A Bulgaria Supports A Albania - Serbia (*Void*), F Constantinople - Black Sea (*Bounce*), ~~F Greece Supports A Bulgaria~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Aegean Sea or OTB), F Naples Supports A Rome, A Rome Supports F Adriatic Sea - Venice (*Void*), F Tunis - Tyrrhenian Sea.

PRESS

(Somewhere on a foggy sea) - "Look alive, you swine! Hoist the mainsail! Trim that ballast! Step lively or I'll have your livers for breakfast!" The Woman stopped in mid-rant and gave an all-over body shiver. "EWWW!! Liver!" Then she scowled at the hunchback who scurried about the deck. "You there! Igor!" "It's pronounced EYE-GORE, mistress." The Woman sighed. "Fine, EYE-GORE. Is the crew ready?" She turned to stare at the sun-drenched horizon. EYE-GORE looked about the small deck. "Mistress...I'm the only crew."

"Well, are you ready?" she snapped. "Yes, mistress." EYE-GORE respectfully bowed low. "Then hoist the anchor!" The Woman struck a majestic pose as the hunchback hurried to obey. "Let all beware," she solemnly intoned. "The JOKER has set sail."

London - Ankara: Speak to me, and please make sense when you do!

London - Moscow: Speak to me, in 100 words or less.

Autumn 1914

I kinda guessed he'd do that.

England: Has A Burgundy, A Denmark, A Gascony, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Holland, A Marseilles, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F North Africa, F North Sea, F St Petersburg(nc), F Western Mediterranean.

Italy: A Albania, F Ionian Sea.

Russia: A Apulia, A Berlin, A Greece, F Gulf of Lyon, A Kiel, A Moscow, A Munich, A Piedmont, A Prussia, A Rumania, A Serbia, F Sevastopol, A Spain, A Tyrolia.

Turkey: Retreat F Greece - Aegean Sea.. F Aegean Sea, A Armenia, A Bulgaria, F Constantinople, F Naples, A Rome, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Supply Center Chart

England: Belgium, Brest, Denmark, Edinburgh, Holland, Liverpool, London, Marseilles, Norway, Paris, St Petersburg, Sweden=12, Build 1
Italy: Portugal, Venice=2, Even
Russia: Berlin, Budapest, Greece, Kiel, Moscow, Munich, Rumania, Serbia, Sevastopol, Spain, Trieste, Vienna, Warsaw=13, Remove 1
Turkey: Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Naples, Rome, Smyrna, Tunis=7, Even

Fall and Autumn 1914 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Well this is an interesting move.

Still getting "foggy" press, which I'm thinking is Melinda's.

I've still long been thinking it is Mark Fassio, and I still think it is, even though he is long gone from the game itself. Melinda never was much for writing long press stories. But who knows, it does sort of seem like her point of view. Here it is related,

possibly, to her stray fleet. **Bill Quinn's short press items reflect a growing frustration with Gary and Don, which is not surprising. Bill is taking a bit more practical view of things.**

England has gone for the position around Tunis. I suspect he can get Tunis, Spain, and Portugal. At that point, it'll be up to Russia to hold the center.

Well, we know what Yeats thought about that.

I agree that England has more room to grow and all three of the major players are still attacking each other. So the main question is when England grows enough to get Don and Gary allied to stop him. I think that is a ways off though. England should build another army this time. And a few more armies after that.

The attack on Greece and the bounce on Venice seem to indicate that Don is trying to keep Italy alive and is still fighting Turkey. If he thinks Turkey can be eliminated without an English solo, well, that'll be exciting!!

FALL 1914

"How goes it Doctor?" asked General U'til as he joined the Time Lord and Lieutenant B'des in the control room of the 'Further Glory'.

"Quite well General," was the reply, "although your ships computers are rather unfamiliar to me and the connection to the Tardis is taking longer than I expected. But young B'des here thinks he has the answer and we should see the results in another hour or two."

"Good man B'des," replied the old soldier, "keep up the good work."

The young Lieutenant smiled at the compliment from his commanding officer. "That I will Sir," he said as he made some more connections inside one of the consoles. "I am fairly sure I have an answer to the problem."

General U'til looked at the Time Lord. "He is a bright lad Doctor and I am sure he can sort it out. My goodness but I am going to enjoy writing the final reports on both the trainees and all the crew when this mission finally ends. But now I must leave you and conduct the next briefing."

Indeed, it will. But there is a bit of a problem in that Melinda's center is Venice and Turkey can retreat there. The tactics are messy. Does Don really make a play for Turkey and head the army in Moscow south? That's his big choice this next game year.

I don't know if England and Russia are trying to arrange a 2-way or if England is going to try for a solo. I kinda hope Russia and Turkey keep fighting.

I don't think anyone is agreeing on anything, they're just going around and around and back and forth.

I may devise a new scoring system that heavily penalizes 3- and 4-way draws.

Yes, you could. You do agree though that the stable equilibrium outcome for a well-played Dip game is a three way, this is showing why. Melinda eventually will be eliminated unless someone keeps her alive just for fun.

Inside the console the Lieutenant twisted two tentacles in the sign of 'Promotion hoped for' as he continued his work.

The next briefing was about to begin and the old General stood at the lectern and looked at his charges, feeling very proud of all of them. "Hail Fndili," he cried.

"Hail Fndili," replied the trainees.

"Well Gentlemen," began the old soldier, "The Doctor and Lieutenant B'des continue to make progress although it is proving slower than expected, but I am sure they will get there soon. But first, the briefing." "You will see that England is still advancing in both the north and west and Russia continues its advance in the centre. It also looks as though the expected Russian attack on Turkey has now begun. As for Italy I think it is close to being eliminated from the war and Turkey is clearly going nowhere - my previous thoughts of a possible Italy/Turkey agreement seem to have been in error. But I still suspect a probable joint England/Russia victory as a likely outcome. As always I will look forward to your reports by midday ships time tomorrow. Hail Fndili."

On Earth the three companions had continued their journey through the labyrinth with Galadriel leading the way. There were many branches and side tunnels but the Elf Queen was sure of the route and had walked on with total confidence. Eventually they had arrived at the narrow side tunnel which would take them to Lothlorien.

They walked down the gentle slope and then reached the end of the narrow tunnel where Galadriel led them to what looked like a wall of solid rock. She smiled at them. "It is but an illusion to deter enemies. Come friends and follow." She walked forward and disappeared through the rock.

Merlin laughed. "Yes, I have seen such things before and even created a few. Fear not Brooklyn, just follow me." Having said that he stepped through the rock.



Brooklyn gulped. "Crikey," he muttered, "well if they can I guess I can too." He took a firm grip on Excalibur and stepped through.

On the other side the young boy gasped as he saw what seemed to be an enchanted forest. Galadriel was waiting, with a look of some sadness on her face.

"Welcome to Lothlorien Brooklyn," she said quietly. "My home for several thousand years and a place with so many pleasant memories. It is such a shame the Elves finally had to leave, but alas there was no choice."

Then she smiled again as Brooklyn brushed away a tear. "But enough of memories for there is work to be done and battles to fight. We will go through that door in that large tree and see if we can find some horses to take us to Rohan, for that is where Araborn and his forces are fighting the Orcs.



The Elf Queen opened the door and they walked inside.

Winter 1914

England: Build A London..Has A Burgundy, A Denmark, A Gascony, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Holland, A London, A Marseilles, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F North Africa, F North Sea, F St Petersburg(nc), F Western Mediterranean.

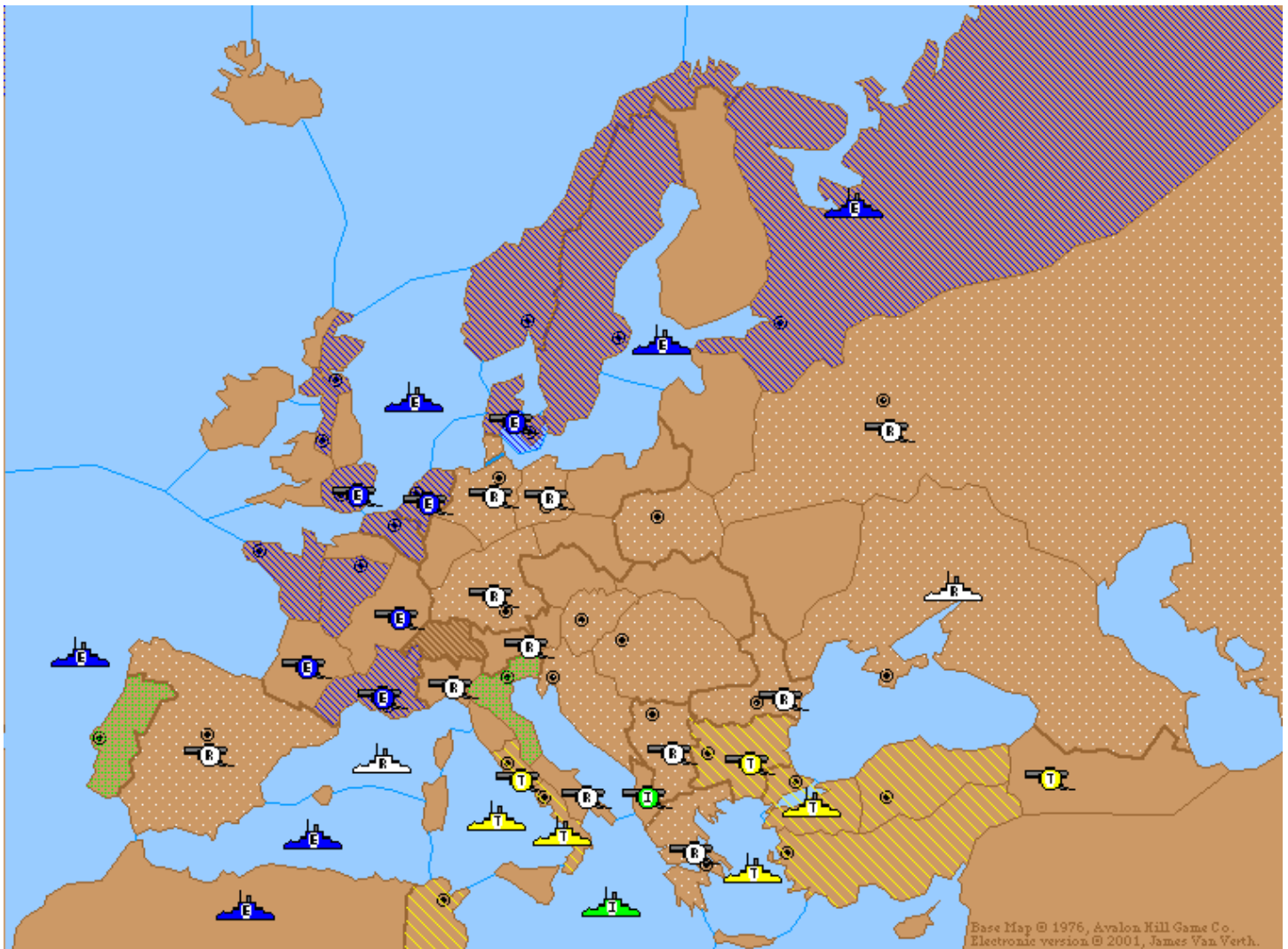
Italy: Has A Albania, F Ionian Sea.

Russia: Remove A Prussia..Has A Apulia, A Berlin, A Greece, F Gulf of Lyon, A Kiel, A Moscow, A Munich, A Piedmont, A Rumania, A Serbia, F Sevastopol, A Spain, A Tyrolia.

Turkey: Has F Aegean Sea, A Armenia, A Bulgaria, F Constantinople, F Naples, A Rome, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

PRESS

None.



Hardy worth calling it winter, as we hit 80 degrees this week in Dallas.

Winter 1914 Commentary

Jim Burgess (**BOLD**)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Then Winter is as expected where England builds the army London and Russia removes the Army Prussia that is the only army he doesn't immediately need. This boosts the interpretation that Russia intends to press the attack on Turkey. Here are some brief comments on where the key tactical questions are headed going into 1915.

Tunis: Three powers have fleets on Tunis, plus Russia is in Gulf of Lyon. ANYTHING can happen here. The expectation is that Melinda is back working with Don. Don and Melinda have been talking about meeting at World DipCon in August, we hope ALL of you reading this will join us there, and I think Don knows he needs Melinda and Melinda is OK with toadying to Don. So, a wider view

is that **THREE** powers have two fleets brought to bear in this area.

Sevastopol: As I mentioned before, Don's key choice is whether to move Moscow to Sevastopol now and go all-in (Gary's a poker player) on Turkey. If it were me, I would take this risk. England can't have an army in St. Pete until the fall and I don't think that's the way he's going.

Germany: England needs to focus on bringing units to bear on Germany, as Rick said last turn, this is the key place to determine where the line is. F GOB-Bal, London convoyed to the continent rather than Norway is what I would predict. I would be aggressive and support A Hol-Ruh, and convoy the

army to Holland, predicting Don will be defensive. I sort of expect Bill to do the more conservative convoy to Belgium.

WINTER 1914

"Still making progress Doctor?" asked General U'til in the control room of the 'Further Glory'.

"We are General," replied the Time Lord, "but it is taking longer than expected. The Tardis and the 'Further Glory' are such different craft, with such different systems, that connecting the two safely is a bit tricky. But Lieutenant B'des has done some excellent work and I think we are very close to a solution."

The old soldier moved across to where the young Lieutenant was still half inside one of the consoles and patted his back with a tentacle. "Well done B'des," he said, "this will not be forgotten."

"Yes Sir," came a muffled reply from inside the console.

The General turned to the Time Lord. "I must admit Doctor I am intrigued to see this Middle Earth of which you speak, it certainly sounds like something I have never experienced before."

The Doctor smiled. "Oh it is certainly that General."

"I always look forward to a new experience. But excuse me Doctor for the next briefing is now due." They both smiled and nodded and General U'til headed for the briefing room.

He was soon standing at the lectern and looking out at the trainees, thinking for a moment at what he would put into his final reports. Then he stopped, for that was for later. "Hail Fndili," he cried.

"Hail Fndili," replied the trainees.

"Gentlemen," began General U'til, "Progress continues to be made by The Doctor and Lieutenant B'des but it is not an easy task so we must wait a while longer. But now we need to conduct the next briefing."

"As you can see England has raised another army. I think we can expect a lot of blood to be flowing in

Nothing to add beyond what I already said. It was only one unit build after all.

central Europe in the near future although I still have a feeling that England and Russia might still have some sort of pact. Time will tell and your views on the subject will be most interesting. Hail Fndili."

On Middle Earth the three companions passed through the door in the large tree and Galadriel led them down a path of stone steps. Merlin used his staff to light their way. "There are still some Dwarves living down here," she explained, "for it is still somewhat enchanted. They continue to build their tunnels and caverns, for that is what they do. But they also keep a stable of horses and we will need some for our journey to Rohan."

At the mention of Dwarves Brooklyn held Excalibur more tightly. Magicians, Elves, serpents, dragons and now Dwarves, with Orcs to come. His young heart began to beat faster.

As they descended further they began to hear, faintly at first but then becoming louder, the sound of chisels tapping against rock. Galadriel paused. "They are still here," she said softly, "that is good news indeed." She led them further down the stone steps.

Brooklyn gripped Excalibur even more tightly.



Eventually they reached the end of the steps and entered a large cavern, the rock floor smooth and flat. The sound of stone working was now very loud as the Elf Queen paused and waited. Then they saw the Dwarf. Galadriel smiled, Merlin bowed his head and Brooklyn gasped.

He looked uncertain. "I am Himli, son of Gimli, and you are invading our lands."

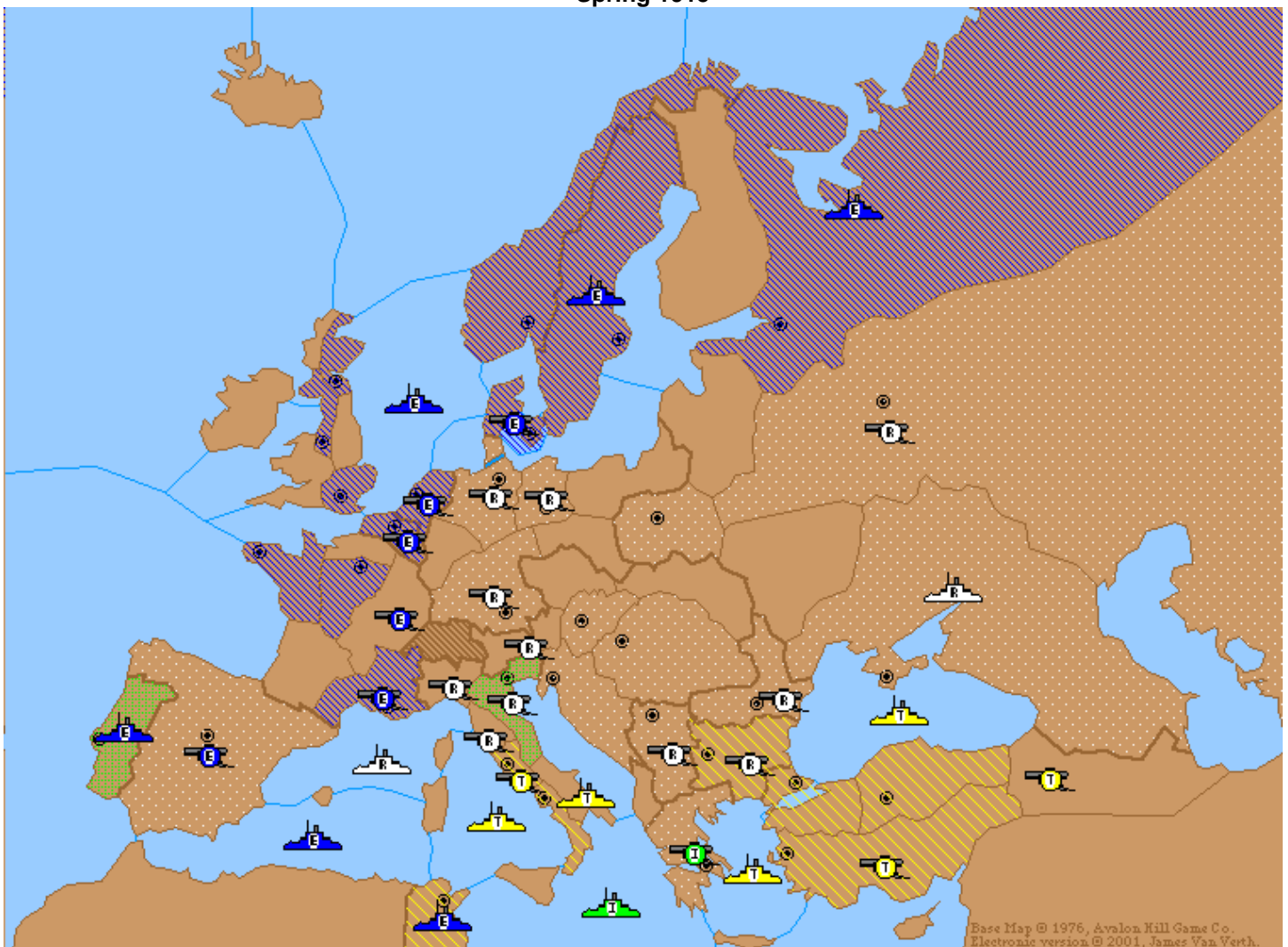
The Elf Queen smiled her lovely smile. "I am Galadriel and these are my friends and companions Merlin and Brooklyn. We come to seek your help."

Himli looked confused, then shocked, then bowed his head. "My Lady, I have heard the old tales from my father and others but never thought to see your face. Tell me what you need and it is yours. The Dwarves owe much to the Elves and will be forever in your debt."

Galadriel smiled and placed a hand on his shoulder. "Thank you Himli," she said softly. "We need horses and supplies for we journey to Rohan, where the forces of men are again fighting the Orcs."

"You will have it my Lady," replied the Dwarf and scurried down a side tunnel.

Spring 1915



At least some units MOVED this season!

England: A Burgundy - Ruhr (*Bounce*), A Denmark - Kiel (*Fails*), A Gascony - Spain, F Gulf of Bothnia - Sweden, A Holland - Ruhr (*Bounce*), A London - Belgium, A Marseilles Supports A Gascony - Spain, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - Portugal, F North Africa - Tunis, F North Sea Convoys A London - Belgium,

F St Petersburg(nc) Hold, F Western Mediterranean - Tyrrhenian Sea (*Fails*).

Italy: A Albania – Greece, F Ionian Sea - Aegean Sea (*Fails*).

Russia: A Apulia – Venice, A Berlin Supports A Kiel, A Greece – Bulgaria, F Gulf of Lyon Convoys A Spain – Tuscany, A Kiel Hold, A Moscow - Sevastopol (*Bounce*), A Munich Hold, A Piedmont Supports A Spain – Tuscany, A Rumania Supports A Greece – Bulgaria, A Serbia Supports A Greece – Bulgaria, F Sevastopol - Armenia (*Fails*), A Spain – Tuscany, A Tyrolia Supports A Apulia - Venice.

Turkey: F Aegean Sea Convoys A Bulgaria – Smyrna, A Armenia - Sevastopol (*Bounce*), A Bulgaria – Smyrna, F Constantinople - Black Sea, F Naples – Apulia, A Rome Supports F Naples – Apulia, F Tyrrhenian Sea - Ionian Sea (*Fails*).

PRESS

London: To what end these troops that we send to the continent shall have we know not. What we do know is

that the hand that holds the sword shall guide the hand that holds the olive branch.

Spring 1915 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

General Read of the Board: It appears that Melinda's usefulness is ended. While she will survive this game year in all likelihood, I think Don is signalling with his concession proposal that he now has had enough and is going for the win for real. In this sense, he will give up on the Edi Birsan super-dictum that the greatest solo is the one that is handed to you, and he will just try to take it. Bill Quinn is trying to move on the Russian German centers, but as his press indicates, he is doing it somewhat halfheartedly. He bounced over Ruhr rather than setting up to take a center in the fall. And Gary Behnen is challenged in Italy and the Balkans, and most likely will be down to four centers after Fall. So, where does that put us. Here's the likely center summary after Fall 1915. England will have 15, taking the Iberian peninsula and Tunis, but not anything from the German homeland. Italy will likely have one, just Greece. Turkey will have four, Turkey plus Naples. Russia will then have the remaining 16, also taking Rome in the Fall. From there, can he take the other two centers for 18 next year? The key will be, does Bill Quinn really push as hard as he can? He needs to worry with Russian builds about defending St. Petersburg, and he needs to get serious about taking Kiel and moving into Germany. Don has a short window there. With Turkey, it will depend on which units he keeps and whether England and Turkey work together in Italy or not. I think Don COULD do it, but it is not assured. Let's say that as enough for now, and I'll give a fuller assessment down below after we see what happens in the Fall. But it would be a darn good idea for

everyone to be attacking Don if they want to stop him, no pussyfooting around.

I wonder if Don is the one who proposed the concession. He doesn't have a credible solo threat. He doesn't even have the Black Sea! And I don't understand why he let the Turks in.

I said earlier that if Gary wanted Don to solo, he was going to solo. Maybe that's what's happening here. But Gary could also throw the solo to Bill pretty easily, too.

It seems like Bill is playing along with a two-way E/R finish. For now. He can easily blitz the German centers, though, and force Kiel and perhaps Munich before Don could stop him.

In theory, this should be a three-way draw. But if somebody is saying that they refuse to take a 3-way, who knows what'll happen? We're at a point where everything depends the negotiation, and those darned players aren't sharing them with us!

It was easier to figure these things out when I was the GM, we had the demo games on the Judge adjudicator software, and I could read all the press.

Regardless of what else happens, I expect to see the English in the Bight, the Baltic, and Ruhr after the Fall move. No good reason to not do that, unless he really strongly prefers a 2-way draw to the threat of a 3-way draw.

SPRING 1915

General U'til was getting more impatient. "Doctor, surely we must be ready by now?" he asked.

The Time Lord smiled again. "We are General, Lieutenant B'des has done a superb job and all the links are now in place, although as I said before it will be a slow journey as the Tardis is really not designed to carry a ship as big as the 'Further Glory'. But I am sure we will get there."

"That is good news indeed old friend," replied the old soldier, "and B'des, be sure this will be included in your final report. This will make very interesting reading when we return to Homeworld and will do your career no harm at all."

The young Lieutenant smiled. "Thank you General, your words are much appreciated." Although he said nothing more the thought of promotion was now in his mind.

General U'til waved two tentacles in the sign of 'job well done'. "Well done to you both, but now I have to give the next briefing. By the Goddess this is proving to be a most exciting venture."

The Doctor laughed. "A fitting end to your long and distinguished career General, and you deserve no less. Go give your briefing and B'des and I will make the final preparations."

General U'til bowed and left for the briefing room. The Time Lord winked at B'des. "So far so good I think." The young Lieutenant just waved some tentacles in the sign of 'hope is eternal'.

General U'til stood at the lectern and looked at the trainees, feeling a little concerned at what might be yet to come, although very proud at what had been achieved so far. "Hail Fndili," he cried.

"Hail Fndili," came the response.

"Well Gentlemen," began the old soldier, "The Doctor and Lieutenant B'des have now completed their preparations and we will soon be on our way to this realm known as Middle Earth. I am sure you will find

it interesting, educational and a great boost to all your careers in the Fndili Empire."

"Hail Fndili," came the response, even louder than before.

The General waited for a moment before giving his briefing. "Well, we see some interesting developments. England continues to progress on the European mainland and now has a strong defence against Russia. Italy is in a very precarious position and I do not see it surviving. Russia is also building a strong defence against England and is in place to make gains from Italy and Turkey. As for Turkey it seems to be holding for now but with few chances to advance."

"Also note that England now has all its forces out of its homeland and in position to attack with full strength whereas Russia still has to defend its home territory and so has fewer attacking options. I still favour a joint victory for England and Russia and will read your reports with great interest. Hail Fndili."

On Middle Earth the three companions waited while Himli made his preparations. He soon returned with two large stallions and a slightly smaller pony for Brooklyn. All of them were festooned with panniers containing provisions. Himli bowed. "I do not know how long your journey will last My Lady, so I thought to provide you with as much as I could."

Galadriel smiled and laughed, then placed her hand on the Dwarfes head. "Oh Himli," she replied, "you have provided more than we could ever need. I will be forever in your debt."

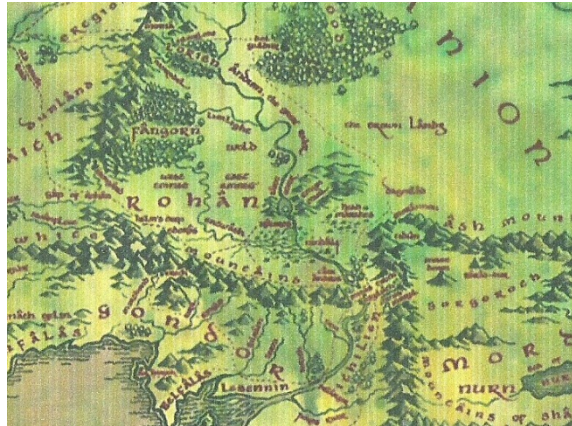
The little Dwarf looked even more pleased and bowed deeply, "I wish you and your companions well My Lady and I pray that your quest turns out well."

The Elf Queen smiled again and then leaned forward to kiss Himli on the head. "You have already done more than we could have expected. I thank you again but now we must depart."

The three companions mounted their steeds and rode off, leaving Himli to look after them in awe.

They rode up the slope and back into Lothlorien. The Elf Queen guided them to the edge of the forest. "Er, Queen Galadriel," said Brooklyn, "where exactly are we going?"

She laughed her lovely laugh again and stopped her horse. "I am sorry Brooklyn, of course you are not familiar with Middle Earth. I give you my apologies. Here, let me show you." She reached into her robe and took out a parchment.



"We travel south along the banks of the river Anduin and then head for the forest of Fangorn. We should stay there overnight for this journey will not be short. Then we continue to head south until we reach Rohan, where I hope Arborn and his comrades are still resisting the Orcs. Come, let us continue." They rode on.

Fall 1915



Is the press better than the game? Probably...

England: A Belgium – Ruhr, A Burgundy Supports A Belgium - Ruhr (*Cut*), A Denmark - Kiel (*Fails*), A Holland Supports A Denmark – Kiel, A Marseilles Supports A Burgundy, F North Sea - English Channel, F Portugal - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Spain Supports A Marseilles, F St Petersburg(nc) Hold, F Sweden - Gulf of Bothnia, F Tunis Supports F Ionian Sea, F Western Mediterranean Supports F Gulf of Lyon - Tyrrhenian Sea.

Italy: A Greece Hold, F Ionian Sea Supports A Greece (*Cut*).

Russia: A Berlin Supports A Kiel, A Bulgaria Supports A Armenia - Constantinople (*Void*), F Gulf of Lyon - Tyrrhenian Sea, A Kiel Hold, A Moscow - Sevastopol (*Bounce*), A Munich - Burgundy (*Fails*), A Piedmont - Venice (*Bounce*), A Rumania Supports A Moscow – Sevastopol, A Serbia Supports A Bulgaria, F Sevastopol - Armenia (*Fails*), A Tuscany Supports A Venice - Rome (*Cut*), A Tyrolia Supports A Piedmont - Venice (*Fails*), A Venice - Rome (*Fails*).

Turkey: F Aegean Sea - Ionian Sea (*Fails*), F Apulia - Venice (*Bounce*), A Armenia - Sevastopol (*Bounce*), F Black Sea Supports A Armenia – Sevastopol, A Rome Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea - Tuscany (*Cut*), A Smyrna – Constantinople, F Tyrrhenian Sea - Tuscany (*Dislodged*, retreat to Naples or OTB).

**Concession to Russia Fails
Now Proposed – Concession to England. Please vote. NVR=No.**

PRESS

(Somewhere on the open sea) - "This is the experience of a lifetime! Embrace the classical past! This is where democracy and stoicism began! Athens and Sparta!"

EYE-gore glanced around. "Are you speaking to me, mistress?"

The Woman shrugged. "Sure...well, you and the chipmunk." She wrathfully glared at the rodent who was reclining on the deck, sunning himself. "Assuming, of course, the drunken sot is even listening to me!" she screamed.

EYE-gore watched with wide eyes as the chipmunk slowly raised first one paw, then one tiny finger in the Woman's direction, then turned over to allow the sun to tan his furry backside.

"Worthless little...."

"Will we be in port long, mistress? We're getting low on supplies," EYE-gore respectfully interrupted.

"Supplies...oh yeah, get whatever we need." The Woman handed EYE-gore a credit card. "I'm going sight-seeing. I wanna get a t-shirt."

EYE-gore glanced at the card then coughed. "Pardon, mistress, but the name on this credit card is Sheriff..."

The Woman held up her hand to silence him. "Don't worry about it. We'll be long gone before he gets the bill."

Naples: Declared an open city to save its inherent beauties...err, beauty! Please do not step on the grass.

Constantinople: Good thing there is a common enemy to keep the Czar's attention!

Con-Lon: You ARE an excellent driver!

THE TANTRUM OF THE OTTOMAN*

RUSSIA: A screed he wrote to me
With scathing blame
"A grudge you're carrying
From some old game!"
And though I disagreed
His screams I get
The Tantrum of the Ottoman I hear!
He's not done yet ...

TURKEY: A three-way draw with me
You won't regret!
Or plow right over Bill
For a duet!
But if you turn on me
to work with Quinn
A Tantrum from this Ottoman you'll hear
"I'll let Bill win ..."

RUSSIA: Those who have heard your schemes
All say "Bullshit!"
I'll get the win you say –

TURKEY: But not quite yet ...

RUSSIA/TURKEY: All's fair in love and war
And yet you'll find
You'll panic when the Ottoman is there
Fucking your mind ...

ENGLAND/ITALY: It's there, the Tantrum of the Ottoman!
Beware, the Tantrum of the Ottoman!

TURKEY: Just stab Melinda first
Then Quinn – again
You've done it once or twice –

| | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| RUSSIA: | Just for the win ... | RUSSIA: | (Whimpering louder) |
| E//R: | We spin in Rotary Where Truth's a lie! The Standby for the Ottoman's still here Why won't he die? | TURKEY: | Stab - just go for the solo! |
| TURKEY: | Stab and go for the solo | RUSSIA: | (Whimpers even louder) |
| RUSSIA: | Just hear, the Tantrum of the Ottoman! (Whimpering) | TURKEY: | STAB FOR ME! |
| TURKEY: | Stab for me! | RUSSIA: | (Whimper louder still; shatters glass) |
| | | GM: | What fresh Hell was that? |
| | | | *Sung to the tune of "Phantom of the Opera" |

Autumn 1915

And to the one who tried, no you can't propose a concession to an eliminated power...

England: Has A Burgundy, A Denmark, F English Channel, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Holland, A Marseilles, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Ruhr, A Spain, F St Petersburg(nc), F Tunis, F Western Mediterranean.

Italy: Has A Greece, F Ionian Sea.

Russia: Has A Berlin, A Bulgaria, A Kiel, A Moscow, A Munich, A Piedmont, A Rumania, A Serbia, F Sevastopol, A Tuscany, A Tyrolia, F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Venice.

Turkey: Retreat F Tyrrhenian Sea - Naples...Has F Aegean Sea, F Apulia, A Armenia, F Black Sea, A Constantinople, F Naples, A Rome.

Concession to England Fails

**Now Proposed – Concession to England, Concession to Italy, Concession to Russia, and Concession to Turkey.
Please vote. NVR=No.**

Supply Center Chart

| | |
|----------|--|
| England: | Belgium, Brest, Denmark, Edinburgh, Holland, Liverpool, London, Marseilles, Norway, Paris, Spain, St Petersburg, Sweden, Tunis=14, Build 2 |
| Italy: | Greece, Portugal=2, Even |
| Russia: | Berlin, Budapest, Bulgaria, Kiel, Moscow, Munich, Rumania, Serbia, Sevastopol, Trieste, Venice, Vienna, Warsaw=13, Even |
| Turkey: | Ankara, Constantinople, Naples, Rome, Smyrna=5, Remove 2 |

PRESS

Act I : Upon an Open Place:

A Witch: When shall we meet? In Thunder? In Lightening? Or in the rain?

Another Witch: When the hurleyburley is done. When the battle is lost and won.

A Bear: That will be ere the set of sun.

A Witch: Where the Place?

Another Witch: Upon the Heath!

A Bear: There to meet The Turk!

A Witch: I come.

Free Naples: we will defend to the last.

Fall and Autumn 1915 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

FALL:

Press: Somewhere on the open sea is a stupendous classic of 1980's era press, read it carefully, and have as much fun with it as the author is having.

The triple and quadruple entendres abound. Revel in them and enjoy what Doug accurately identifies as the best part of this game. Then we have some cool infield banter. Then we have a brilliant display of classic filking. Recall that the science fiction/fantasy fan hobby and Diplomacy fan hobby were highly intertwined in the early years. Most people say you aren't filking unless you're in fandom. Of course, ALL of us are subscribers to the FIAWOL ideals, right? If you don't know that acronym, you should since it is an integral concept to the Diplomacy hobby. Anyway, back toward the point, this is filking because it is completely fannish and brilliantly done. I can say no more, but I practically cried when I read this with laughter and irony. I'm pretty sure Don is the mystery filker.

England: This is a fall turn, it took awhile, but Bill finally is set up to take the German centers back beginning with Kiel in the Spring. Sometimes slow and steady wins the race, and Turkey may be trying to throw, so Bill still has a chance. It would have been better had he moved faster from my perspective, but maybe then Gary would be playing things differently. This is one of the issues that most players just DO not understand, the complexity of setting the right balance on moving forward fast enough, but not TOO fast. Part of this balance is how to deal with Melinda. Bill walks out of Portugal, to keep Melinda's unit in the game. Though it isn't clear that Melinda is doing anything favorable to Bill, but this keeps her two units on the board. Oh yes, and Bill supports Don in an attack on Gary.

Yes, Bill

- a) walked out of Portugal
- b) supported Don's attack on Gary

What can we make of this?

I've been reluctant to get too much into the tactics, but clearly Portugal and Kiel are Bill's whenever he wants them. To solo, he'd need two more of Berlin/Munich/Rome/Naples. With I/R having a grand total of two fleets in the Med, I think he could make a credible run. But if he really wanted to take a solo thrown by Turkey, I'd have thought that he would have stayed in Portugal. And if the blue fleets coordinated with the yellow fleets, they would rule the Med in short order.

So this seems like a carebear-ish elimination of Turkey.

FALL 1915

General U'til addressed his trainees for the next briefing. "Gentlemen, The Doctor and Lieutenant B'des assure me that we are now on our way to this

Italy: Melinda is just hanging on, Don is not attacking her and Bill moves out of the center she can't defend. This is not just a charmed life, it is adept negotiating stances. Is she just playing the fiddle though, while Rome burns??

Russia: Don continues to play the real fiddle here as the game lurches back and forth. We will see if he can make it to the solo.

Don cannot possibly solo. It's Bill or nobody.

Turkey: Gary continues to get frustrated, plays excellent tactics, but things are slipping away. Does he retreat to Naples or not? I think perhaps not, but we will see.

AUTUMN:

Press: Wlitches, witches, where are witches? Shakespeare of course. Even mentioning the "Scottish play" can be bad luck, and this is our English major speaking. One wonders what it is saying. And Gary is just resolute.

England: So, two builds for Bill, he really needs the armies, but isn't that well set up for the convoys he needs. I don't get why North Sea went to English Channel in Fall. Given that's what he did, and indicates that moving another fleet south suggests a fleet and an army.

The move to Eng was curious. Is he intentionally hurting his ability to drive into Germany? Not that it really matters.

Turkey: OK, so Gary says he's defending Naples to the last, does that mean he keeps all of those units and removes Aegean and Black Seas, for example? One wouldn't think so, but we'll see. England is now the one threatening the solo. What does Turkey do about it, if anything?

There's little point for Gary to keep A Rome. I expect him to keep the forces around Asia Minor.

The excitement level goes up now for the rest of the game, I await the next turn (which you can go read below) with some real excitement.

strange realm of Middle Earth. It will be a slow journey but we will be able to timejump back to the planet below as we need to. Hail Fndili."

"Hail Fndili," came the response in a louder reply than usual. The old soldier paused for a moment, greatly impressed that the young recruits were clearly enjoying this adventure. It would certainly serve them well in their future careers in the service of the Empire. He made a mental note to add more praise to his final reports when they finally returned to Homeworld.

"Well Gentlemen," began the old soldier, "the war continues to be most interesting. England and Russia now apparently locked in battle with England making several advances. But Russia still has to be wary of Turkey although any possible threat from Italy seems to be at an end. My expectation remains a joint victory for England and Russia but I will read your reports with great interest. Hail Fndili."

On Middle Earth the three companions rode south along the banks of the river Anduin and then headed south west to the forest of Fangorn. As they approached the forest the sky was darkening as evening drew in. Galadriel stopped, and Merlin and Brooklyn did the same. "I think we should camp for the night," said the Elf Queen, "and continue our journey tomorrow."

They prepared their tents, ate some of the provisions supplied by Himli, and made ready for their rest. But then there was a sudden roar from the forest as a fearsome creature emerged. "Oh no," shouted

Galadriel, "it is a black Uruk, an Uruk-hai, how could it have come so far north?"

She waved her hands and muttered an Elvish incantation, but to no avail. Merlin pointed his staff and a blast of energy shot at the evil creature, but it just laughed and brushed it aside. Then Brooklyn rushed at it, brandishing Excalibur. The Uruk-hai raised its mighty war axe but the young boy was quicker, slashing his sword at the creature's head. It screamed and fell back, its head severed and with dark ichor oozing from its throat. The young boy waited a moment and then turned to his companions. "Queen Galadriel," he said, "I will protect you and all on Middle Earth as best I can. On that you have my word."

The Elf Queen rushed to him and hugged him closely. "Oh Brooklyn," she whispered, "that was so bravely done. Thank you."

Then she turned to look at the old magician. "But Merlin," she said quietly, "the Uruk-hai should not be this far north. I am so fearful now of what is happening in Rohan and what awaits us there."

"Yes My Lady," he replied, "but we need a night's sleep and then we must continue south with all haste."

Galadriel nodded and the companions retired for the night.

Winter 1915

England: Build F London, F Liverpool..Has A Burgundy, A Denmark, F English Channel, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Holland, F London, F Liverpool, A Marseilles, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Ruhr, A Spain, F St Petersburg(nc), F Tunis, F Western Mediterranean.

Italy: Has A Greece, F Ionian Sea.

Russia: Has A Berlin, A Bulgaria, A Kiel, A Moscow, A Munich, A Piedmont, A Rumania, A Serbia, F Sevastopol, A Tuscany, A Tyrolia, F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Venice.

Turkey: Remove A Armenia, A Constantinople..Has F Aegean Sea, F Apulia, F Black Sea, F Naples, A Rome.

All Concessions Fail

Winter 1915 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

England builds F Lon, F Lvp.

Yes, two fleets was far from what we expected, since it is armies that are needed to overwhelm the German centers.

This signals an intent to avoid fighting in the North.
Could be a ruse.

It could, but we really have no idea.

Either he's not going for fight for the German centers or he figures it doesn't matter. Right now he has the majority of all fleets in the game.

And he really didn't need two more.

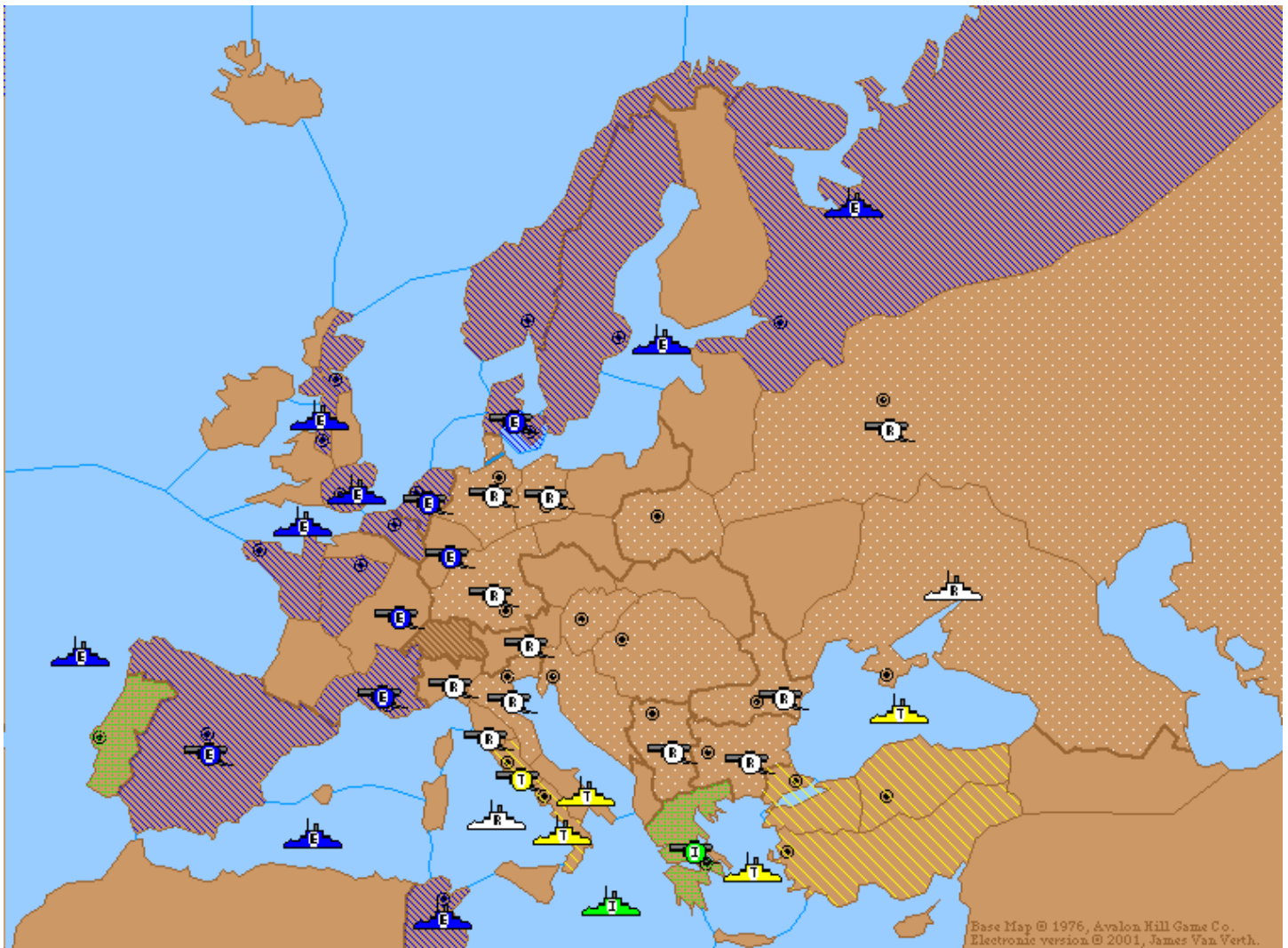
Turkey keeps the forces in Italy and leaves the door open in Turkey. Perhaps if England has been ignoring his offers to throw the game, now he'll throw the game to Russia? (Or threaten to at least.)

This was hinted at in the press before, so we can imagine that it is "out there" in the negotiations.

We should get an idea this year how things are going to finish.

I would love to see what the negotiations are at this point. Without knowing exactly what people are saying, there's not much for observers to say.

That's right, these were "strange" builds and removals, so for sure we have negotiations driving some of what is being done. We can only guess what those are like.



This space for rent.

WINTER 1915

General U'til addressed his trainees for the next briefing. "Gentlemen, we continue to progress

towards this strange realm of Middle Earth but it will take quite a while. The Doctor tells me that his

Tardis was not designed to take a ship the size of the 'Further Glory' but is confident it will be done. We must simply wait until we arrive there and in the meantime the briefings need to continue. Hail Fndili."

"Hail Fndili," came the response in another louder reply than usual. The young recruits were still clearly enjoying this new adventure and the General made a few more mental notes. They would certainly prove to be worthy of service in the Empire when they finally returned to Homeworld.

"Well Gentlemen," began the old soldier, "England is now building new fleets and naval battles in the northern waters and the Mediterranean now seem inevitable. Turkey continues to decline and Russia is clearly poised for an attack in the south. I must confess that although I have predicted a joint England and Russia victory I am just beginning to wonder if England has its sights set on a victory by itself. As usual I will read your reports with great interest. Hail Fndili."

On Middle Earth the three companions broke camp and continued on their journey south towards Rohan. Galadriel and Merlin kept looking around for more signs of Uruk-hai but none were seen. Brooklyn kept a firm grip on Excalibur.

They left the forest of Fangorn and continued into Rohan. Then Galadriel stopped her horse and gasped. She pointed ahead with a hand that was shaking. "Oh no, look ahead my friends."

Her companions looked ahead and saw a scene of devastation. Hundreds of bodies of both men and Orcs were strewn across the land. The Elf Queen turned to Merlin with tears in her eyes. "Oh Merlin," she said softly, "this is terrible and I am so fearful. There was clearly a mighty battle here but who were the victors? Come, we must continue with all haste." She spurred her steed and rushed forward, with her companions doing the same. Brooklyn held Excalibur even more firmly.

An hour later they saw movement ahead and slowed their pace. It was a man, a Rider of Rohan lying against his dead horse and bleeding from a dozen wounds. Galadriel rushed across to him and Merlin waved his hands and muttered a magical spell, but they were clearly too late. She rubbed his brow and he opened his eyes for one last time. "Oh my Lady," he gasped, "there were just too many. We could not hold them. Arborn and his remaining forces have retreated to Helm's Deep. There they will make their final stand, but without further help I fear it will mean the end." Then he slumped to the ground.

The Elf Queen looked at Merlin with tears in her eyes but a look of total determination on her face. "Helm's Deep it is old friend," she said. Then she looked at Brooklyn. "And you young man?" she asked.

Brooklyn waved Excalibur and gave a slightly nervous grin. "Queen Galadriel, I swore to protect you and all on Middle Earth and I will stand by that promise."

(Hopefully) Coming in Diplomacy World #119:

**Complete detailed coverage of World DipCon,
being held in Chicago this August.**