

Diplomacy World

Issue 97



**Welcome Back Ketter Loser:
A DipFest Review**

Notes From the Editor and Hobby News

Welcome back for another issue of Diplomacy World. As you are probably aware, this one has been a long time coming. After Issue #96 we had a new Lead Editor come on board, but no new issue was ever produced. Recently my pal Jim Burgess started working on me to return as Lead Editor, a position I held from Issue #74 to #84, and after a great deal of thought and debate we agreed that together we could resurrect Diplomacy World and try to return it to some of its prior glory.

Clearly a lot has changed in the hobby since I left DW. Most zines, like this one, are no longer distributed postally. Instead all the work is done on computer, including the publication and distribution. While this new Diplomacy hobby seems a bit less personal than the one I left years ago, I do believe there is a place for Diplomacy World (and myself) in it. Now the key is to figure out what that place is!

The most important thing for the moment, in my opinion, is to keep Diplomacy World on at least something resembling a normal schedule. If readers have faith that a new issue is on the way, I have to believe that will also motivate potential writers that the work they submit has a place in the approaching issue. So my main goal is to get Diplomacy World #98 out sometime in August 2007. If possible, I'd love to have it available by August 1st, so there would be time to print up some copies for distribution at World DipCon in Vancouver, BC from August 9th to the 12th. With that in mind, **it would be helpful if all article submissions for DW #98 were in to me by July 26th, 2007.** Now it is possible my goal of having it ready before WDC may be just a bit optimistic, but either way you should see DW #98 by the end of that month one way or another.

I know you've all heard the song and dance before: this zine is only as good as the articles we receive for publication. I want to thank all of you who submitted material, and remind those of you who wanted to but for whatever reason couldn't or didn't that it is never too late!

Just because you missed this issue doesn't mean we don't need your material for the next one, or the one after that. ***Consider becoming a Diplomacy World contributor – try writing something!*** I will do whatever you need me to when it comes to editing and formatting.

I don't care if you send me an article in plain text; I know there are some very good writers out there who don't think they have anything worthwhile to say. Believe me, you do. If you need a topic for an article, email me or write me; I'll give you about a dozen ideas right off the top of my head, and if you need more I'll brainstorm and come up with another dozen!

As for this issue, I think you'll find a very entertaining range of material. We have a number of exciting Convention reports, from all over the globe. There is

Part One of a wonderful Variant Roundtable moderated by Jim Burgess. You'll also find details of the Diplomacy hobby in San Marino, an update on the World Diplomacy Database, and all the information on the proposed National World Cup Tournament. And much more!

In hobby news, the biggest upcoming event is unquestionably World DipCon XVII. This takes place from Thursday August 9th through Sunday August 12th at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. If you'd like to attend, don't wait, make arrangements NOW. This promises to be a very enjoyable The website for World DipCon XVII is:

<http://www.diplom.org/~seattle/wdc/>.

And while we are on the subject of conventions, don't forget that you can find the latest list of upcoming Diplomacy events from all over the globe at the Diplomatic Pouch Upcoming Convention page, which can be viewed at:

<http://www.diplom.org/Face/cons/index.php>

Meanwhile, make sure you take a look at the article on the proposed Diplomacy National World Cup Tournament. If you are interested in participating, and I hope you are, grab your mouse and click on over to:

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

Once you get there, register and **be sure to list Diplomacy National World Cup as the tournament you are registering for!** That way the organizers will know you want to participate.

Oh, before I forget, let me mention that the basic cover art is courtesy of <http://www.free-clip-art.com>. (Of course I added the dialogue). Meanwhile, let me remind you that aside from articles and submissions, the OTHER thing I'd love to see more of is feedback. After you've read the issue please take a few minutes and drop me an email or a letter. If nothing else, reader response lets me know that somebody is actually **reading and enjoying** this zine. This isn't like live performing – the only way we know you're out there is if you contact us.

I guess that's about all I need to cover for this issue. Thanks for all of the support and well wishes I've received since I took over the Lead Editor position. I'll close by reminding you that the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is July 26th, 2007. I'd love to hear from more of you, whether it is through an article submission, a letter for print, or just feedback on this issue as a whole. See you in August, and happy stabbing! **PS – See page 41 for a fun DW contest!**

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Diplomacy World Staff:

Managing Lead Editor: Douglas Kent, Email: diplomacyworld@yahoo.com or doug@whiningkentpigs.com

Co-Editor : Jim Burgess, Email: burgess@world.std.com

Strategy & Tactics Editor: Vacant

Variant Editor: Vacant

Interview Editor: Jim Burgess, Email: burgess@world.std.com

Club and Tournament Editor: Vacant

Archive Editor: Tim Haffey, Email: trhaffey@aol.com

Demo Game Editor: Rick Desper, Email: rick_desper@yahoo.com

Contributors: Dennis Andersson, Gian Carlo Ceccoli, Mark Fassio, David Hood, Laurent Joly, J r mie Lefrancois, Dorian Love, Ric Manns, Jim O'Kelley.

Contributions are welcomed and will earn you accolades and infinite thanks. Persons interested in the vacant 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.

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Diplomacy Around the World: Diplomacy in San Marino

by Gian Carlo Ceccoli

[[“Diplomacy Around the World” is a new feature we are introducing in Diplomacy World. Each issue we hope to bring you some history, local flavor, and general details of a different Diplomacy community. In some cases this may be a specific local gaming club or organization, or it could be for an entire country. If you’re interested in seeing your group or region featured in this column, please get in touch with Diplomacy World! Perhaps you’ll discover gaming opportunities in a place you plan on visiting, or maybe you can just appreciate how Diplomacy is popular in so many different locations and cultures. Either way, I hope you enjoy this addition.

San Marino lies in the beautiful Apennine Mountains, near the Adriatic Sea, surrounded by Italy. It has a size of nearly 24 square miles, and a population approaching 29,000. Even in this secluded picturesque location, you have to watch your back – especially if you hope to survive and prosper on the Diplomacy board! Local gaming wizard Gian Carlo Ceccoli gives us the details of the Diplomacy hobby in one of the smallest countries in the world.]]

By special invitation of the new Diplomacy World editor Douglas Kent, I have accepted with much pleasure the honor of writing an article on the spread of Diplomacy in San Marino. The group of players who I usually play with are from both San Marino and Italy, and I am happy to say activity in this corner of the world has increased modestly since 2003 when San Marino hosted Euro DipCon XI.

Where to begin? The history of the San Marino hobby is long, so I will try to tell to you all I can without boring you! First I will tell you a little about myself.

I have been a fan of wargames and boardgames for approximately 25 years. I possess a collection of approximately 300 titles and I am, since 1998, President of the A.S.G.S (Associazione Sammarinese Giochi Storici – the Historical Game Association of San Marino. You can find their web site at <http://www.asgs.sm>). I have always known about Diplomacy, and I acquired my first set in 1995. But I hadn’t played the game much during those years as my true love was larger hex-based wargames. In 1999, visiting a specialized store in Forlì, Italy, I was browsing through the shelves when the magazine rack caught my eye. Among the several titles on sale was a single copy of an issue of Avalon Hill’s The General, dedicated to Diplomacy. On a whim I bought the issue and that evening, after returning home, I began to read through it. I was fascinated by the splendid articles; pages and pages discussing the game, the

strategies, the tactics, the tournaments (!), the postal games, etc. I must admit that it was a real mind-blower! I had never realized that built around “the game” there was such a diverse hobby (at least in the USA). I was amazed to see such a variety of news and articles written by people so passionate about Diplomacy – and I quickly discovered that passion was contagious. A search on the Internet confirmed what I had just learned, and increased my vision of the possibilities of a game I hadn’t given much thought to before.

At the time, with my friends of the A.S.G.S., I was carefully organizing our first game conventions; nothing more than a reunion between myself and some friends, players in the area who we’d known for a long time. Determined to try, I set about to organize a Diplomacy tournament for the convention of 1999 – “Diplomatically in Train.”

I contacted many Italian players, whom I located easily thanks to the Internet where many had published their email addresses ([Campo di Marte](#), as an example, is one of the best ones in Italy). I also contacted some players from outside of the region entirely, whom I found on Diplomacy-related websites, in order to invite them to San Marino for the tournament.

“Diplomatically in Train” was a very successful convention for us, but above all I was proud of the presence of 14 (!!) players who were passionate about Diplomacy. These included 4 players from outside of the San Marino/Italy region (!!). They spoke to us in great detail about the international tournaments, about their long history with Diplomacy, and other fascinating topics. One true manna for the undersigned; it was during those beautiful conversations that the idea of being able to organize something really important in San Marino regarding Diplomacy came to mind!

From that year on, we have held various Diplomacy tournaments in San Marino, organized by A.S.G.S. Our most important event, not only for Diplomacy, remains [SAN MARINO CON](#), which takes place every May. During the Con Diplomacy has always been an integral part of the excitement. Our crowning achievement took place in 2003, when we had the honor of organizing and hosting EuroDipCon XI, the European Diplomacy Championship!

EuroDipCon XI

After four years, during which we could calmly assert that our association has literally re-invented face-to-face Diplomacy in our region, the opportunity to organize an event that carries the title of Champion of Europe 2003

has been one of the most beautiful acknowledgments of the success we have experienced. A total of 42 players made their way to San Marino for the tournament. Among them were such luminaries as Vincent Carry – World Champion for 2003; Simon Bouton – World Champion for 2000; Frank Johansen – European Champion in 2002...and that just scratches the surface. 28 of the players attended from outside of the San Marino/Italy region. The French brought a large contingent, commanded by Yann Clouet, who is a great friend not to mention a great sponsor for our candidacy to this event. There was also the welcome presence of players from England, Sweden, Ireland, Spain, Belgium, Germany – even an American!

Unfortunately the only area that seemed lacking was the participation from Italy; only 14 Italian players participated in the event, which was less than we hoped for although still a respectable number. There was no way we were going to allow that one shortcoming to lessen our enjoyment of the big event! The tournament was played out on six complete tables every day – the largest number of tables ever in a San Marino event! The scoring system we chose to use was C-Diplo, by now a very common system in Europe. It awards a score bonus to the first three players on every table, and creates a final Top Table with the best seven scores after three rounds. The winner of that Top Table is the Champion – in this case the Champion of Europe. The games were played at an optimal level, as always. Most interesting to me was the way various characteristics of the players and their particular playing styles reflected their country of origin. It was a joy to compare and contrast the True Gentlemen of England and Germany, the cold Swedes and Irish, the likeable Spanish, and the French logical computers.

After two days and three rounds, the Top Table was populated with the best the tournament had to offer: Simon Bouton - Russia, Shaun Derrick - Turkey, Niclas Perez - England, Sascha Hingst - France, Gihan Bandaranaike - Austria, Fabio Milinanni - Italy, and Yann Clouet - Germany. After the smoke had cleared and the knives had been sheathed, Yann Clouet was the victorious player left standing, and the Champion of Europe 2003 had been determined!

While working on this event was the highlight of my personal career, I think it is fitting that I mention that all of the associates of A.S.G.S. were of immeasurable value. The convention could never have succeeded without constant and unwavering support from the entire organization.

In 2004 I joined some associates for a trip to Birmingham for World DipCon. Besides participating in the event, we were also attending in order to introduce our candidacy for World DipCon 2006. Alas, Germany was the winning bid in that endeavor. I have no doubt we would have organized a great event had we been selected.



The EuroDipCon XI Top Three Finishers

As we approach the date for the upcoming SMC' 07, Diplomacy is still one of the main tournaments of the convention. We generally attract approximately 100 players in total which is a very respectable sum. And we have not lost hope for a World DipCon!

Over and above the tournaments I've already mentioned, in 2005 I had the idea to organize an Italian-Sammarinese Diplomacy Championship, to take place in multiple stages. That idea gave birth to the CISD (Italian Championship Face Faccia Sammarinese Diplomacy). This year the CISD sees a calendar of 3 or 4 organized stages in locations including Saint Marino, Milan, and Fossombrone.

[[If you're interested in seeing another person's take on the Euro DipCon event in San Marino, be sure to check out Larry Peery's piece which appeared in The Diplomatic Pouch. The direct link is:

<http://devel.diplom.org/DipPouch/Zine/W2003A/Peery/EDC2003.html>]]



GothCon XXXI – Stabbing in Sweden

by Dennis Andersson

GothCon is the only convention in Sweden which regularly hosts a Diplomacy tournament. This year we weren't expecting very many players as the Swedish hobby has been silent for a while. On the first day 14 players showed up, a fair number considering the circumstances. Among the more well-known players were Tage Bengtsson, Tommy Larsson and Geoff Bache. The first round hosted no surprises as Tage and Geoff topped their tables. Interestingly they both played Russia (collecting 16 and 14 Supply Centers each, respectively).

The games finished fairly early thanks to use of the DipTimer program and reasonable deadlines. Afterwards we were able to socialize and play a few other games, such as Memoir'44, Puerto Rico and Roborally. We also tried out a new variant of Diplomacy that I invented a couple of years ago. It was meant to be played by two players only, but since I found no reason it couldn't be played with more players we decided to try it. Actually we were 8 players when the game started (a few dropped out as we went on since they had other appointments to attend to).

The concept of the variant is that you draw a random power to play before the game starts. This power is secret. For each turn every player randomly draws another power to write orders for. The objective is of course to have your secret power win the game. The exact details of the variant are the topic of another article. Anyway, play testing showed that a lower number of players are optimal, say 2-4, maybe 5.

Day two started out by the return of a well-known stabber Björn Westling, who decided to play at least two rounds. Also this round there were two tables even though Geoff and a few others decided to sit out and do something else. Tage Bengtsson again topped his table, this time with a great score of 16 as Austria. The draw for me was the most difficult I could imagine, being sided as Russia against Westling as Turkey and three times Swedish champion Larsson as Austria. Thanks to a good start I managed to solo on 20 SCs already in 1906, the most dominant solo I've ever had against this level of opposition. That was the third major victory for Russia in four tables, and on the fourth table, the one where Tage won as Austria – Russia finished second with 13 SC. Russia was having a great tournament!

After pizza and beer the third round started off on Saturday afternoon. This time Russia felt a reversal of fortunes, facing tougher opposition and being eliminated on both tables. 1999 champion Tobias Bende won on his

table as Italy with 12 SC's while the second table ended in a three-way split at 7 SC's between the central powers Italy, Germany and Austria (Tage Bengtsson, Samuel Karlsson and Björn Andersson). Note Tage's strong qualification with 2 wins and a 3-way shared in his three rounds.

The scoring system used was C-diplo. Your Total Score equals your top two-and-a-half scores plus double your score from the top board, with places 1 through 3 reserved for the top three players on the top board.

We knew well beforehand that a few of the qualified players were unable to participate in the top board, but finally we managed to get 7 players to fill the board – the last player to the final was actually ranked 13th after 3 rounds.































The top board faced a strong vanilla pact between England and Germany who swept the west side of the board and forced well into Russia before England executed the stab that had to come. So the game became a slug fest with England and Turkey racing speedily for the win. Austria and France were eliminated rather quickly which left Italy, Germany and Russia to fight for the third place in the end game. This led to an unusually high score for the top 2 and a remarkably low score for third place. Geoff Bache won (England, 15) before Tommy Larsson (Turkey, 13) and Marcus Björkander (Germany, 3).

All in all there were 24 players participating. A handful of them were beginners being introduced to the game. One of them, Samuel Karlsson, deserves special mention here as he managed to take a share of a 3-way on his first (and only) game of Diplomacy. Well done Samuel! Full scores, statistics and opening moves are available at <http://www.europdip.eu>.

Games were awarded as prizes for the top three players in an informal ceremony after the last round. First prize, a copy of Louis XIV, was awarded to Geoff and a short introduction to this excellent game was the finale for my second GothCon.

It was decided that the Swedish NDC is to be played in Borås, November 2nd – 4th. This will also be the Swedish step of the European grand prix. Tournament director is Tage Bengtsson. Probably this will be the only other Diplomacy tournament in Sweden this year. GothCon will as usual be back next Easter – perhaps with some foreign attendance?

GothCon XIII Top 15 Diplomacy Finishers

Rank	FirstName	LastName	Loc.	Nat.	Score	H1	H2	H3	H4	Award	Best Country	Top Board			
												Name	Rank	Country played SCs	
1	Geoff	BACHE			162	53		1	54		E	A	1	England	15
2	Tommy	LARSSON			82	23	0	3	28		I	A	2	Turkey	13
3	Marcus	BJORKANDER			30	1	0	7	11			A	3	Germany	3
4	Tage	BENGTSSON			125.83	55	55	27.67	1		A	A	6	France	0
5	Dennis	ANDERSSON			92.5	12	73	7	2		R	A	5	Russia	1
6	Christoffer	ANDERSSON			62	4	28	26	3			A	4	Italy	2
7	Tobias	BENDE			52	1		51			I				
8	Biörn	ANDERSSON			40.67		13	27.67			F				
9	Samuel	KARLSSON			27.67			27.67			G				
10	Petter	WIRFALT			23	23									
11	Tommy	ANDERSSON			17		0	17							
12	Mattias	GRUFBERG			13	13									
13	Alexander	MERINEN			9.5	5	1	2	1			A	7	Austria	0
14	Robert	JONSSON			4	4									
15	Axel	JOSEFSSON			3	3									

European Diplomacy Association's World Diplomacy Database: An Update

by Laurent Joly

During the last four months, I've worked very hard to improve the World Diplomacy Database. Here is a list of each area I've worked on, and what my plans are for the future. If you have any additional thoughts or ideas I would love to hear them, as well as any updated results for older tournaments I might be missing which you are able to provide.

The WDD Special Website

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/index_all.php
This is the official website of the European Grand Prix, the Tour de France, and the Tour de Belgique. You can also find the Vier Chancen Tournee and Mediterranean Grand Prix here. All information is currently up to date, including the recent Tour de Belgique event.

I will create new features soon like a system to send an email to the tournament director and also registration of team online.

Results of Tournaments

I decided to change the manner in which I display the results. Now, you can find the full results in a single table, and we can have more details on other pages (awards, best countries, top board...). I've added a new section entitled "History of the Tournament" which is a

good way to show prior events.

For an example, let's take a look at this event:

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche_rencontre.php?id_rencontre=1005

General classification => The general results with the best countries, the number of awards won by the players, and the top board.

Awards' ranking => The specific details of each award.

Best countries award => The best countries with the number of centers, the score, and a link to the board.

Classification by Team => The details by team with the team members listed.

Detail of each board => The list of the boards played.

Statistics => The statistics of the boards.

History of the tournament => All the past winners of the tournament and a link to these tournaments, when

available.

The photos => Obviously, the pictures of this tournament.

Results of Circuits

I've spent some time setting this section up. For example:

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche_circuit.php?id_circuit=65

General classification => The general details.

Classification by Team => The details of each team, including all the members.

Statistics => The statistics of the circuits (Player totals broken down by number of tournaments attended and also by number of players per each nationality).

Results of Leagues

Another way to list results is by League. I want to show the results of the leagues in the same format as I do for the tournament results. For an example:

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche_defi.php?id_defi=35

Results of Social Games

When they are provided to me, this is where I can list results from non-tournament games. Take a look at:

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche_social.php?id_social=43

Find a Player

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/recherche_joueur.php

This section allows you to search by player, and the results give you the date of the last tournament played by that player.

Prize List

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/palmares_rencontre.php

This lets you find the prize list for circuits and tournaments (the winner or the top 3, individual or by team).

Tournaments' Statistics

<http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/palmares.php>

This section is still being worked on.

Face to Face in a Country or in an Area

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/recherche_pays.php

You can find a lot of information about each country such as Tournaments, Best Players, Cast of players per number of tournaments, and Cast of players per nationality.

The Travelers

http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/palmares_voyage.php

This is an old section. I must modify it. It's on my To Do list.

Ranking

<http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/ranking/index.php>

The Dip Pouch Tournament Rating and the World Performance Evaluation can be found in this section. The annual ranking is available for the both as well.

WDD Battle

Coming Soon!

I've been able to add more results recently to the database, including some older ones. With the help of Bill Brown, we have found many old results from Australia. With the help of Dennis Andersson, Björn Westling and a lot of others Swedish players, we have 117 tournaments and all the SDR. I want to thank all the people who send me results or show me mistakes in the database. As of the time of this writing, we're up to:

68 circuits
39 leagues
1024 tournaments
363 local games



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The Proposed Diplomacy National World Cup Tournament

by J r mie Lefrancois and Dorian Love

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

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

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

At the end of 2005 a discussion started on DipWorld as to whether such a tournament was a good idea. Opinion was somewhat divided and the idea failed to catch on. This discussion was staged on a few other forums as well, with the general opinion seeming to be that such an idea was worthy but difficult, even foolhardy to achieve.

Consequently the discussion was taken to a separate forum at

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

This forum met to discuss and amend the World Cup Charter which was published on www.embassysa.co.za/worldcup/worldcup.php. For the better half of 2006 there was a heated debate on the many issues raised by this Charter such as how on earth to select a Team America, or how nationality might be determined, what scoring system would be best, and what interface would best suit a competition of this nature.

The Charter called for the election of a World Cup Council (WCC) to select a bid from any host, which would determine all these issues. Towards the end of 2006 a WCC was elected, more or less democratically, and a call for bids went out. The chosen bid was from French hosts Stabberfou (<http://www.stabbeurfou.org/>). This bid is presented below. The bid is exciting for many reasons, not least because it is a new interface which attempts to be multilingual, and because it involves

innovative uses of the Internet to host an event of this scale, which potentially could bring together the best players in the world to contest the greatest show on earth.

Because it is a relatively new interface, a testing tournament was set up on the site (http://www.stabbeurfou.org/Partie.php?nom=DNWC_testing) where members of the WCC and others have been playing games to stretch the limits of the interface and judge its suitability as a bid to host the inaugural World Cup of Diplomacy. Through this testing process, the interface has been much improved.

I believe that this tournament will not only prove an exciting addition to the Diplomacy calendar, but also see the launch internationally of a very exciting new interface.

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

1) Go on the site :

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

2) Register on the site :

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

=> Make sure you select

Diplomacy_National_World_Cup as tournament so that the organizers may spot you!

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

http://www.stabbeurfou.org/Tournoi.php?nom=Diplomacy_National_World_Cup

(pink window, upper right hand side)

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

http://www.stabbeurfou.org/AffiliesTournoi.php?nom=Diplomacy_National_World_Cup

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

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

The charter for the Diplomacy National World Cup follows :

1. Tournament details

1.1 Overall

- (a) The tournament is staged over two rounds.
- (b) The team incorporating the best results on the second round will receive the **team** trophy.
- (c) The committee (ultimate recourse in the event of litigation) will be staffed by people not involved in any of the teams.

1.2 Parameters of the tournament:

OFFICIAL MAP	Hasbro international										
LAST DIPLOMATIC YEAR PLAYED	No game will go beyond the diplomatic year 9 in round 1 and round 2.										
SCORING SYSTEM	<p>The scoring obeys the system "C-Diplo Namur with whole and worsened calculation", namely:</p> <p>For an outright victory (i.e. 18 centres or more):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 73 points for the winner, ○ -15 point for the others, <p>For a different ending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 point of participation for each player, ○ 1 point for each owned centre, ○ 38 points for the first player (or to divide between the tied first players), ○ 14 points for the second player (or to divide between the tied second players), ○ 7 points for the third player (or to divide between the tied third players), ○ IMPORTANT : Calculations are carried out by not rounding divisions ($7 / 2 = 3$). ○ After this calculation, survival bonuses ("Namur") are allotted, namely: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>1 centre</td> <td>4 points</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 centres</td> <td>7 points</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 centres</td> <td>9 points</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 centres</td> <td>11 points</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 centres and more</td> <td>13 points</td> </tr> </table> <p>Please note that the sum of the points allotted for a game is not 100.</p>	1 centre	4 points	2 centres	7 points	3 centres	9 points	4 centres	11 points	5 centres and more	13 points
1 centre	4 points										
2 centres	7 points										
3 centres	9 points										
4 centres	11 points										
5 centres and more	13 points										
CALCULATION OF NUMBER OF TOLERATED NMR (No Move Received)	<p>One will use the number of NMR averaged of the team and the player instead of the number of NMR of the player himself, established the following way:</p> $N_{anp} = ((5 * nnp) + nnt)/12$										

1 Committee is the WCC (World Cup Council) composed of elected voting members, and observers, all sitting in a YAHOO mailing list.

BEFORE CD (Civil Disorder) 2	Where : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nnp = number of averaged NMR of the player; • nnp = number of NMR of the player; • nnt = a number of NMR of the team
RESTRICTIONS ON CROSS-GAMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No negotiations on a game by players external to this game
TIE BREAKERS FOR TEAM TITLE	In the event of equality between teams, one decides according to following criteria's: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biggest number of victories (excluding shared victories), 2. Biggest number of survivals, 3. Smallest sum of centres on all game (the team wins which has the less in order to award points of position and survival) 4. If there is still several ties, the victory is shared between the teams.

1.3 Round advancement and assignment

- (a) Round one will have at least 14 boards; round two will have exactly 7 boards.
(b) The 7 best teams from round one will advance to round two.
(c) Countries are also assigned by teams themselves on both rounds
(d) No two players at same board on different rounds (if possible)

1.4 Cross gaming

- (a) The considerations known as of "cross gaming" which would encourage a player to take into account the interests of his team before his own (i.e., for example, privileging an alliance against the member of a team at the head of the global temporary rating or actions losing on the game but expecting a profit of a player of his team on another game) are not proscribed in the tournament.
- (b) Needless to say, the only tolerated cross gaming here is the cross gaming where the something at stake outside the game is linked to the tournament itself.
- (c) The discussions between players of the same team may not be prone to restriction.
- (d) The following restrictions may apply to a tournament after convention by majority vote of the captains of the committed teams:
- No negotiations on a game by players external to this game
 - No negotiations between team captains (should a captain communicate with another, he should copy to the tournament director)
 - No subjective public statements (to the appreciation of the tournament director). More precisely the declarations will have to be limited to the neutral comments, related to the play without being directed against a player or a team in a negative way or referring to the alliances.
- (e) Note that on this delicate subject, all that is not prohibited is authorized, more particularly the "local cross gaming" which consists to speak to a player of a table, to pass through information to the representative of the team on the table.
- (f) Comments on the games, i.e. subjective public statements - which are cross gaming - are strictly prohibited on the gazette (reserved for a purpose of diffusion of information.) The gazette should be moderated to avoid this.

1.5 Process of team creation (specific to DNWC tournament)

Since this is a national based event, the team creation will be performed at the tournament level, as explained here after.

- (a) Volunteers for participation to the Diplomacy World Cup tournament will first register individually.

A volunteer is encouraged to express several nationalities according to :

2 There will be a threshold for the NANP value (probably by 3) Any NMR making the NANP over the threshold will be turned into a DC. There are usually 4 threshold values, according to if the tournament is late (DC come easier if tournament is late), and if it is moves or not (DC come easier if not moves)

- Passport,
- place of birth,
- place of residency,
- nationality of parent.

All information useful to determine nation lists in which the player may be affected must be provided, as well as :

- (name, family name, e-mail address),
- language(s) spoken,
- place of residence.

The organizer will group the participants into lists according to nationality.

(b) When the deadline for registration approaches:

- Lists may be disjoined by organizer:

That may be according to language, for instance:

- Spanish list may be split into Catalan and Castilian speaking teams;
- Belgium list may be split into French and Flemish speaking teams.

That may be according to regions, for instance:

- British list may be split into Welsh, Scottish, Northern-Irish and English teams.

That may be according to time zones, for instance :

- American and Canadian lists may be split into PST (west coast), CST, MST, EST (east coast).

- Lists may be merged by organizer :

That may be according to region (two lists of countries from the same continent), for instance:

- Argentinean and Brazilian lists may merge.

That may be according to language (two lists of countries with the same one), for instance:

- Portuguese and Brazilian lists may merge.

(c) When the deadline is reached, players within a same list will elect their captain.

That will preferably be the best ranked player in national face to face championship.

Then the captain will designate :

- the seven official players,
- the substitute players,
- the lieutenant (assistant captain),
- the representative of the team to the committee.

The captain may not bring in the team more than two players from the original list.

Lastly, the captain will organize the diplomacy countries allocation and register the whole team.

1.5 DNWC first edition

The games will start no later than September 2007. Round 1 will be played from September 2007 to May 2008. Round 2 will be played from September 2008 to May 2009.

2. “Stabbeurfou” the site hosting the event

2.1 Introduction to “Stabbeurfou” site

The “stabbeurfou” expression means “Mad Stabber”, the “stabbeur” word being a French (neologism) transcription of the English word.

Readers of this document are advised to peruse the <http://www.stabbeurfou.org/> site to have a more precise idea of things.

2.2 Description of “Stabbeurfou” site

“Stabbeurfou” is a web site written in PHP that uses several core programs themselves written in C language (basically adjudicator, map maker, and ranking calculator).

Here are the advantages of a automaton adjudicator :

- The time consuming effort of adjudication is saved,
- Game masters do not have to be provided by the teams
- Adjudications – and games themselves - are more homogeneous,
- There can not be any adjudication error (or much fewer),
- There can not be any mis-orders, since orders are validated on the spot - this is unhappy for experts in the field of false mis-orders, though,
- All information is available to anyone in real time, and always up to date,
- The human touch is not lost since there is still a human being to care about the game and postpone the dead line on players request,
- Anonymous press is possible (but not to the administrator of the site.) Upon complain the site administrator may remove messages (anonymous or not) that violate tournament or game requirements.

“Stabbeurfou” also has the advantage to be designed with tournament play in mind, several aspects of traditional play are also automatic, such as (at least) :

- vote for ending of game,
- vote for secondary trophies,
- recall of late orders,
- detailed information about players,
- tournament ranking calculation,
- automatic email notification when orders are altered, new mail in internal mailbox, deadline is approaching

Very flexible, “Stabbeurfou” lets players communicate either via e-mail or with simple internal communication mailbox system.

“Stabbeurfou” has already hosted a very similar tournament : the French speaking “Interzines” (10 teams), and much improved from the experience. The aim of “Interzines” was to make various French communities to meet one another. More information about the “Interzines” may be found (in French) on the “Interzines” specific site : <http://membres.lycos.fr/interzines/>

“Stabbeurfou” is the only known web based system with automatic adjudication offering an interface in several languages (French and English at the present time.)

“Stabbeurfou” allows a manual mode, in which players do not interface with the site but the Game Master himself (or herself) enters the orders of the players. This mode is not intended for the DNWC event.

2.3 Games on “Stabbeurfou” site

2.3.1 Members of a game

(a) Each game is supervised by a game master who takes care of its smooth running and carries out the resolution if the system is manual or if the automatic system is failing.

(b) In case of a tournament, the director (and, possibly, several assistants) of tournament is the game master of all the games.

- (c) Each player is supervised by a captain responsible for guiding him on the system and taking action in case of his defection. In case of a tournament, there is a captain for each team.
- (d) Each player will have to communicate his real identity (names and first names) in addition to one possible pseudonym.

2.3.2 Results of the games

- (a) The games are completed on one of the following conditions:

- Outright victory of a player ("victory with 18 centres"),
- Vote of end of the game,
- Stop of the game from the game master due to stability of the centres over three (3) consecutive diplomatic years,
- End of the last diplomatic year (**The year value is defined in the tournament specificities for the round**).

- (b) **Scoring system defined in the tournament specificities for the round**

- (c) **Ties for a specific game are defined in the tournament specificities for the round.**

2.3.3 General running

- (a) The duration of the deadlines will be roughly:

- Deadlines for moves: one week,
- Deadlines for retirements/adjustments: 48 hours.

- (b) The seasonal times will be lengthened of 50% at the time of the first diplomatic year.

- (c) For the games in tournament an approximate calendar is established before the beginning of the first deadline.

- (d) A resolution could be carried out before the deadline if:

- All the players who have orders to submit expressed their agreement,
- No player without an order to submit has expressed his veto.

- (e) The adjudication will be carried out no later than 24 hours after expiration of deadline.

- (f) A Game master should never block a game, in the sense of not accepting modification to orders and still not publishing the result of the adjudication for longer than 24 hours.

- (g) In exceptional circumstances, if no player of the game expresses his opposition (in private or a public), a game could be appreciably accelerated to mitigate a long planned absence of a player. This is in order to avoiding an unpleasant replacement.

2.3.4 Negotiations

- (a) To intervene on a game means to explicitly send a message in diplomatic, strategic matter or tactic with one or more player(s) during the course of the game

- (b) **Contrary to the face to face games**, the negotiations are authorized during all the phases of play - except after the deadline for a player who did not submit the orders requested.

- (c) **Contrary to face to face games**, a player eliminated from a game can always intervene on a game and can take part in the negotiations to determine the winner of the game.

- (d) Unless specifically authorized on the level of a tournament, a player who never ever belonged to the table (prohibited cross gaming) and a player who left a game (he is not thus any more player) cannot interfere on a game.

2.3.5 Press

- (a) The system may allow anonymous public statements, yet the real identity of the author of the messages will be known to the system administrator, and upon official request by game master of tournament director anonymous messages may be suppressed.

- (b) The game master should not forward anonymous public statements.

- (c) The system and the game master should not authorize falsified public statement, i.e. usurping the identity of another player of the game.

- (d) Normal courtesy is required in the contents of the presses. It is possible to complain about the contents of a press to the game master, who will be able to take the adequate measures.

2.4 Detailed regulations of DNWC on “Stabbeurfou” site

All the rules and regulations are on the web page on the “Stabbeurfou” site : <http://www.stabbeurfou.org/Regles.php>. (Please ignore the supplementary rules, not relevant and not translated from French). It is important to note that, before reading these documents on the site, one must go to the site home page and select the English language, since the only available version of the documents is in English.

Documents related to the event itself are also available on the <http://www.stabbeurfou.org/Articles.php> page.

The core regulations consist of several levels of documents, starting basically from the rules, the game, the tournament round and the tournament itself. Several more have been inserted for specificities to a web interface system, they may not apply for a tournament not using this interface system.

There are three specific tournament rules : the “Interzines” (which happened between September 2005 and May 2006), the “World Masters” (a proposal) and “World Diplomacy Cup”.

2.5 Answers to DNWC bid request specific questions

(3.1) Inclusivity and Eligibility to enter: Who will be eligible to play? How will the host ensure that all are welcome to participate, and none are excluded?

The tournament will be run on a web based adjudication system. At least the French and English (perhaps German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese) languages will be available in the interface, and players will only have to perform a quick registration on the site to be allowed to play (and require an access to web and an email address).

(3.2) Nationality: How will the tournament ensure that the focus of the tournament is on the contest between nation and nation?

There will be an IP control (if necessary) to check that players are in the area they pretend to be. See reply to 3.4.1 question for more information.

(3.3) The Scoring System: What type of play will be rewarded?

C –Diplo with Namur bonuses will be used, so getting on the top of the board will be strongly awarded, and the survival encouraged. There will also be a punishment in points for victims of solo so letting other players solo will also be strongly discouraged.

(3.4) The Rules for the tournament: What rules will be used governing issues such as:

(3.4.1) How will teams be selected? How many teams will be allowed from each country? Will composite teams or regional teams be allowed?

For big countries, subdivisions or grouping will be allowed based on geographical, language or political partition. Selection of team members will be left to team captains. Selection of team captains will be voted by people from an area forming something as similar as possible as a country. This selection may be performed on official face to face records of results. The procedure (to be validated) of constitution of teams is that registration is made on an individual basis, and that the organizer may merge or split teams in order to reach 14 teams (or more) for the first round.

(3.4.2) How many rounds will be played?

Two rounds for the first edition of this tournament (or one if only seven teams register).

(3.4.3) What criteria, if any, will be used to determine progression through the tournament? Is there a cut? Is there a Top Board?

There will be a team qualifying round to select the best seven teams. Then a second round of seven boards to determine the world champion. Since this is a team based event, the concept of top board is not conceivable.

(3.4.4) What Interface will be used? Judges, Hand adjudication, Other? How will the interface be mediated to ensure inclusiveness?

Web based interface – with a software inside the site validating orders and carrying out adjudications. Players will select their game, their country, enter a password and submit their orders. Validation will be done instantly. No mis-orders will be possible.

(3.4.5) How will consistency of adjudication be ensured?

Any one will be allowed, at any time, to enter any set of orders within a checker on the site to verify the consistency of adjudication of the engine on the site.

(3.4.6) What appeal panel will be available to settle disputes?

The “World Diplomacy Cup” council will serve a committee to settle disputes. The working process of the committee will be very precisely defined in tournament regulations.

Welcome Back ~~Kotter~~ Loser

A DipFest Review

by Mark Fassio

They say some soldiers of Wellington's army could actually observe the arc of French cannonballs heading toward them during their stand at Waterloo, and dodge them. Other people, throughout recorded history, either can't see the forest for the trees, or never see the train that hits them.

Put me in the latter category.

Maybe it was the fact that I hadn't played FTF Dip since, oh, the turn of the New Millennium, when three barracudas with names of Williams, Emmert and O'Kelley (aka, The Weasel Moot) skewered me at a Potomac Tea and Knife Society Con. Maybe it was the fact that I assumed I could shake off six years of rust in one weekend. Or maybe it was the fact that the 'Con started on Friday the 13th.... But whatever it was, I experienced an epiphany of sorts at a recent convention.

(Cue "Dagnet" music)

The 'Con?: The National Block Party (NBP), which in earlier days I would've equated with either a 4th-grade playground experiment, or some obscure Socialist political movement

The locale?: New Albany, IN, a quaint suburb across the river from Louisville KY – which in itself is a 6-hr drive from (and to) nowhere

The dates?: Fri-Sun, 13-15 April 2007

My name?: Fassio; I'm a Diplomacy player. And, based on the results of the weekend, one who needs remedial National Blockation (or at least the Party part!)

The crazy path toward the NBP started out innocuously enough. I started receiving *The Abyssinian Prince* again after a long hiatus, and read one issue which listed NBP as an upcoming weekend event. I had chosen a self-imposed "splendid isolation" from Dip after the PTKS'er convention thrashing, for a variety of reasons (30 years of brownout from constant playing, the death of my dad, some now-stupid arguments that at the time were all-consuming, etc etc). Most of us have "been there, done that." Around a year ago I started to play on the DipBounced website (<http://www.dipbounced.com>), which allows for human-GM'ed games and computer adjudications for a variety of variants and standard games. That was my way of trying to gradually "ease back into the water" after years of no longer swimming with the Dip sharks. I had toyed with the idea of attending a 'Con, but I don't like the huge annual events that "everyone" goes to (BPA, Origins, etc). Not that there's anything wrong with them: I just don't like tons of people. Also, at bigger cons, everyone knows everyone, and your rep follows you. (For example: utter the words "Jim Yerkey," "Gary Behnen," or "Kathy Caruso" to a

Golden Ager, and watch the knee-jerk draining of blood from the face and the desire to stab before getting stabbed.) At times a good player can transcend a cabal of collusionists who "know the rep;" at times you're merely setting yourself up for irrational stabs and a quick death just because you're, well, you.

With this in mind, it was a neat thing to read about the NBP, because it seemed to be the ideal 'Con for me to attend. It was close by; I knew no one there (and they hopefully didn't know me); and it was a smaller 'Con. (And besides, I couldn't attend O'Kelley's upcoming June WeaselCon because of my son's graduation and also my wedding anniversary. This would satisfy my desire for a Con *without* risking Divorce Court.) So, it was off to NBP!

Some quick background on the NBP (you can also read about them on their web site:

<http://www.ohiovalleygamers.org/nationalblockparty.html>) : these guys are true "block gamers," meaning their *forte* is any game using blocks. They are more of the Columbia and GMT publisher gamers (Hammer of the Scots, 1812, Liberty), but they also play Dip (duh, Faz: maybe it's because they have blocks). As such, I consider all of them to be leagues ahead of me in both taste and ability. I am a "vanilla ice cream" kind of guy: I'm here to play Dip, thank you very much – put away those little squares that simulate 5000 Roman archers or Hannibal's pet elephant. These guys are the Neapolitan ice cream types: a little Dip here, a little Game of Thrones there, a little Crusader Rex over here. Anything and everything in that genre was fair game for these guys, and they're all very, very good gamers. They are also the stereotypical gamers: no GQ male model types among them, no siree! (Standard gamer attire: wargame t-shirts and white socks, often with sandals -- mmmboy). Most of them also have 4,235 games in their closet, with the bulk of them still unopened since 1942. In short, my kind of guys.

I arrived around 1, after getting an MRI for a broken hand (different story; maybe later, after some beers). The receptionist loved my Steeler jacket and made a big fuss about it, even as she told me the room wouldn't be ready for another 2-3 hours. I gave her the Steeler magnet off my car, and the room was ready about 40 minutes later. While I was cooling my heels in the interim, I met the attendees already there. Ric Manns, the overall organizer, is a neat, terrific guy. He's a fellow teacher and, if you add a little more bulk to his goatee, could be mistaken for Bethmann-Hollweg (German Chancellor under the Kaiser) or perhaps one of Mussolini's *geriarchi* generals, he's THAT dashing. (I know most of you would

LOVE to be flagged down on the street and asked, “Hey, aren’t you Bethmann-Hollweg?” I know I would.) He introduced me to the small gathering, most of them from his gaming club in the Scottsburg, IN area (“Uh oh, a band of brothers group; must divide and conquer before the first round,” my already-churning DipMind was computing). The Ohio Valley Gamers have a triad with the Louisville and the Falls of the Ohio Gaming Clubs, so it’s a nice little association of regional gamers. The ‘Con itself is very small: no more than 26 or so this year, but that meant everyone was playing everything.

As I said, I’m cooling my heels waiting for my room, so I asked a Michigan gamer to show me how to play Liberty (that’s me: always ready to jump into a game without knowing squat about it). He proceeded to crush my American rebels in two years, and, unbeknownst to me, actually counted my tutorial as a victory for him in a tourney. I’m thinking, “WTFO?!” (What the F***, Over?)...I need to go back to vanilla ice cream.” (He won that tourney, btw.) So I go upstairs, dress for the gym, go work out in the Japanese prison camp sweatbox they call a workout room, then return for a shower and to don my, um, t-shirt and (cough) white socks and tennis shoes. Armed with such a macho image, I returned downstairs for Round 1 of Dip. Let slip the dogs of war!

The DipCon was a three-round event. Tom Pasko, *Diplomus Expertus Maximus*, was to have flown in from CT to GM the event (he knows these guys from the bigger Cons). Last-minute plans forced a cancellation, which was a semi-relief to me, because if he would’ve also played, I probably would’ve been sent back across the Ohio River by Friday night. Ric took over as Benevolent Gamemaster.

There were a few hardy souls who ripped themselves away from games that used blocks to denote elephants or chariots to instead play a game that used blocks to denote fleets and armies. We played under a PrezCon scoring system that Tom had proposed when he was still planning to GM the event. Draws included all survivors. No player could play the same country more than once, and the games had a secret time limit to them. (The games were slated to end between 6 and 8 hours, with a secret die roll by the GM determining the exact hour / half hour the game would end, i.e., a “1” might mean to end the game after 6 hrs, a “2” after 6.5 hrs, etc.) **RULE NUMBER 1 FOR DIP PLAYERS WITH POOR ATTENTION SPANS OR WHO ARE (COUGH) RUSTY OLD FARTS: KNOW THE FREAKING RULES BEFORE PLAYING.** I didn’t, and it bit me in the bum somewhat during Game 1.

Game 1: The High-Water Mark (Fassio)

I reach high into the box and pull out the light blue of France. Rat farts. I hate Western powers. Well, no sense whining – not yet, anyway. I assess the other players as they unveil their color block:

- Scott Bowling, a guy seemingly as high-strung and intense as I am, who reminds me of Jim Seals (singer partner of Dash Crofts, from the old Seals & Crofts duo of the 70s). I love the guy, but our Fates were to clash the entire weekend. He is England to my France. (See a trend here?)
- Charles “Ducky” Stucker. OK; stop right there. “Ducky Stucker?” Don Williams, ace player, is also nicknamed as a Duck. Am I fated to be surrounded by fowls that play well? (Answer: yes). Ducky becomes Turkey, in a bit of birdish irony.
- Wesley Chapman, the (ahem) 11-year old newbie related to Ric. (Hmmm, maybe this “small-town Con” thing is a bit incestuous after all.) Wesley draws Italy. OF COURSE HE DOES, because I am **\$# &^%\$ France and I now have an unguided V-1 buzz bomb on my flank.
- Ferkin Doyle (You’re ferkin right that’s his name!!), a man who reminded me of one of those Roman busts of great military leaders – only with thick glasses and a few more wrinkles. He was an Ohio game dealer who wandered in and out throughout the tourney. He got the Huns.
- Mark Kuisner, a sophomore at U of L (engineering guy -- dangerous). He played almost no “true” FTF Dip other than learning it on the web and then trashing his friends in slash-and-burn stab-a-thons (no doubt after ingesting much pizza and non-alcoholic water-flavored beverages during their Bible Study nights). Mark gets Russia.
- Jacob “Not Related to George” Bush, a nice teenage teen also learning the Dip ropes. He gets Austria and, had he not been wearing that Colts hat all weekend, I might have allied with him all the way in every game. I ended up befriending Jake in two games to help him learn the ropes—and, if the time was right, to stretch him out on MY rope.

Long story short: England and I are tense over Channel, even as England and Germany “sic” Wesley the Italian Prepubescent on me. (I can actually read their lips across the room as they tell him to counter a move that I, um, lied to them about – double-bouncing myself back to MAR to protect vs PIE in Fall ’01). In the end, I sweet-talked Wes into alliance and into turning East to aid Austria with his on-again, off-again pummeling of Ducky Turkey -- aided greatly by Mark the Knife. Mid-game saw me stab England (who pulled away from me after the Russian/German threat seemed to loom large).

Russia turned West and re-allied with Turkey (who then grew from 3 in the corner to 8 and expanding), and Austria and Italy were soon to be Fadesville.

Insert observation here: these guys seemed to be Carebears, as many turn into at Cons. I like to play unusual, brutal openings (3-way invasions vs one country early on, to break stalemate lines, like War-Sil, Vie-Boh and Ven-Tyo, then take MUN). Strangers do NOT agree to try that with each other, in general...or at least not here. Conservative play reigned, to the point where it was 1906 and NO ONE WAS DEAD. England was reduced to me chasing his one piece across the breadth of his land with half my navy, while the other half sailed to break the Italian zone, now infected with yellow pieces. Germany allied with me, and was heading East vs R/T (God, I should've stabbed his abandoned frontage...rusty, rusty...). Yet no one had the heart (positioning?) to twist the blade that last inch or so. The players called for a 4-way (FGRT) – *this*, after starting at 6 PM and now having it 1:35 AM. I said there was no way I'd settle for a 4-way, as that was akin to kissing your sister. I convinced Ferkin the Germanic Elder that he could, indeed, stay up way beyond his bedtime and help me gut this out to a 2-way. (I also convinced Turkey that "we'd" be doing a 2-way after we stabbed the Hun, mwuhahahahaha).

Flashback to my old fart reminder to "understand the rules" from the above paragraph: by 2:35 am, we had convinced ('browbeaten' is more like it) poor Tsar Mark the Younger that he was out of the draw, and that I personally would play until 8:59:59 that morning, one second before Round 2, if that's what it took to crush him. He then asked the GM what the draw and time rules were, and THAT'S when Ric explained that the game was going to end at the 8-hr time limit (to include the 45-minute food break everyone took late that night), i.e., in 25 minutes. There was NO WAY we could write orders and adjudicate boards to kill even one center before the time limit expired, so we contented ourselves with crushing Italy and Austria (pesky teens, anyway) as well as England...and ended at 3 AM with a 4-way. I got an 11-center France and a nice evening to "personality profile" my opposition and learn their styles. Unfortunately, they also profiled me. It probably didn't help to mention that I used to write S&T articles for DipWorld in the '90s...geez, Faz, do ya think not?!!

GAME 2, Saturday morning: The Tide Recedes

I arrive with a new gamer T-shirt, clean white socks, heading downstairs to eat my fill at the "sumptuous" Continental breakfast bar. I am surrounded by 400 Band Supply Conventioneers with their own matching red t-shirts; hmmm, red...an omen for Austria, perhaps? Thus reinforced with greasy bacon and gallons of apple juice served in 3 oz plastic cups, I swagger into the game room. Hoping for Turkey (my favorite country), I pull: Italy. ITALY? I *hate* Italy, more than I hate France.

My foes:

- Scott, who now has Austria and a bad memory of my stab last night, er, 5 hours earlier. Curse those Red band t-shirts.
- Ducky, who is, by the way, a tremendous and steady, noncommittal tactical player ("Tortoise" might be a better name for him—slow and steady, and unflappable). He gets Russia.
- Mike Sims (the Elder), a veteran gamer who, like me, hasn't played for years. He draws Germany
- Mike Sims (the Younger), who's never played Dip, but knows games and tactics. He gets Turkey.
- Mark the Younger (God, this sounds like a Middle Ages soap opera), the stabmaster who knows I didn't want him in the draw last night. He gets (surprise!) France.
- Jacob Bush, my Peyton Manning look-alike who now gets England.

I'll write less here, because I hate discussing bad times, and my skills slowly devolved as the weekend progressed. In a nutshell, Mark the Younger's France stabbed Mark the Ancient (that would be me), but only in mid-game – a foolish stab, may I say, but hey – the deed is done. Everyone sort of ignored Turkey, the new guy, even as Dad and other club gamers gave him timely tips and advice, which he certainly used well. I open to Tyrolia and stab MUN in 1901. Germany asks me (after I showed it to him) that perhaps the Byrne Opening to BUR might be good for us to try. I agree -- and take KIE instead, with France and Austria helping me for awhile. After helping end the Second Reich with a little help from my friends, I violate my own advice and stab Austria (that's two in two days against Scott Seals-and-Crofts-Resurrected); the rage was palpable. France of course then stabs me. We all become chums again when Mike the Younger grows to Mike the Mammoth and threatens the entire West with legions of Turkish infidels. By this time, the lack of sleep catches up, and I tell France to just take me out, if only to stop the Turk. He takes two centers, and then I wake up and realize (a) I don't really WANT to die, and (b) if I give him anymore, he'll get BEST FRANCE and I won't. So I retreat forward from NAf and threaten Iberia about the same time that everyone proposes another kissing-sister draw. Only England is wiped out, and the game ends with Mark getting 11 French centers; same as me the night before. I dock the Italian fleets and curse myself for sub-par play.

The cursing lasts only a few minutes, however, because I'm my biggest fan (cackle) and I had all Saturday night to spend gaming and cruising New Albany, Indiana.

"Cruising" for me meant finding a church for Saturday night Mass, finding a decent restaurant to supplement the 55-gallon plastic jar of pretzel rods we ate for 8 straight hours, and then returning to try a new game. I played *Game of Thrones*, run by Kevin of Ohio (no relation to the Marquis of Queensbury or the Fresh Prince of BelAir). Kevin (having 4,235 games in his closet) obviously hadn't read the rules for a while. The tournament was reduced to two guys. Thus began an impressments process, where three of us were dragooned into joining so they'd have a board quorum for the tourney. The game was touted as "Diplomacy-like" and I suppose it would've been, had I known the rules (all the rules) and had CareBearism not reigned as well there. (Kind of hard to stab when no one is scheming....or knows the rules very well.) I actually did rather well – made an alliance with a fellow military retiree, despite me drawing the sucky Green kingdom with little hope. I managed to grow reasonably well and was asked by Mike (my ally) if I'd throw a castle to him next season, so he could win. I discovered that if I attacked two castles and didn't comply, * I * might actually win instead. Unfortunately, the old silly caveat I mentioned twice earlier – *know the rules* -- kicked in. Some of us never really mastered movement procedures (well, I didn't, anyway) during the 14-minute tutorial overview, and my castle attack died for lack of a second movement chit. So neither of us won, but hey – just like Dip, I discovered that you CAN stab. And, like I was doing in Dip, you could stab AND LOSE.

Man, what a rockin' Saturday night. Hoo-wee. Hold me back. I retired to my room to watch the History Channel and to lay out my, um, final wargame t-shirt attire for Sunday's Match of Decision.

ROUND 3, Sunday Morning: Low Tide. Real. Low. Tide.

Superstitious me fortifies myself with a different "lucky meal" at this morning's Continental Breakfast, in the hopes of averting yet another sucky country pick on this, the final day of decision. (I mean, who DOESN'T love Holiday Inn Express biscuits and gravy with warm 2% milk?) My return to FTF Dip, while not a disaster, has been a rough road these last two days, and I'm hoping today is the day The Old Faz ("old" as in skill level, not, um, age) finds his groove thing and blows away the board.

Yeah, right.

First draw and first groan are mine: Austria. Well, at least my groan was stifled. I like Eastern powers, and overhear one of the wags say that Austria either grows and wins, or gets vaporized early on. Hmmmmmmmmm.....

At this stage of the 'Con, fatigue and the low numbers begin to take their toll. Prepubescent Wesly, Infant Doge

of the Papal States, went home sick and was unavailable. (I TOLD him not to eat the breakfast eggs, but did he listen to me???) Jacob -- Colts Fan Penultimate – bagged the 3rd day and slept in (these young twerps can't hang) . His ride, Ducky, shows up for (sigh) yet another predictably great game. Scott "Bowling for Dollars," my alter ego, also arrives, as does Mike Sims the Younger, Mike the Elder, and Mark "the Knife" Kuisner, aka Mark the Younger, so we're at 6. Zounds! There are no other Dippers to be had this early in the morning, as there were some other block tourneys being played. (I can't repeat their names because they all sound the same to me: Command and Chariots, Liberty and Fraternity, Castles for Kingdoms, Chutes and Ladders, etc...remember, I'm a Dip-only guy.) Only 6...what's a board to do?! Ric says he'll play if we absolutely need someone, but as tournament master, it seems a little queasy to me. I mean, he's a straight-arrow, no-bias player, but you always prefer the Tourney GM to, well, just GM. Luckily, Ferkin Doyle (Ferkin Right!!) steps back in for a cameo appearance. He's actually trying to leave for his four-hour drive back to central Ohio, but Ric bamboozles him into playing "just for a while." So the line-up commences:

- Faz (aka "Mr Lucky"): Austria
- Scott Bowling (stabbed by me in both previous games): Russia (cue the "Twilight Zone" eerie music—he's ALWAYS next to me...he's as bad as)
- Mark the Younger: Italy (!!!)
- Ducky Stucker: The Mother Stucker draws France.
- Mike (the Elder) Sims: England
- Mike (the Younger) Sims: Germany
- Ferkin Doyle: Turkey

Two things are now going through my brain:

- 1) Ferkin probably "ferkin cares less" about playing this, so maybe I can stab immediately WITH Scott as a friend for once in a game, and actually try to DO something (good feeling)
- 2) How does Mark Kuisner always get BEHIND me on my left flank in these games? (bad feeling)

Play begins about a half hour late. Part of me is in Kamikaze mode, as my daughter has a university concert that night at 7:30, so I want to win (or lose) quickly and make the concert. But part of me is willing to play until Thursday if need be, because *Moi* isn't leaving this 'con without something that resembles recognition for showing up. I mean, the Con * is * in truth about

meeting people and having fun playing games. But heck, a little memento doesn't hurt either, right?

The game opens interestingly: The father-son Sims' (Mikes)² fib to France and open as anti-French as you can get. I'm hoping that Italy gets lured West as well, so "friend" Russia and I can eat Turkey. Scott, patiently waiting three days to pound me for ruining both his earlier games, instead invades GAL and my lands in Fall 1901. Turkey, just to be hilarious, lies to us all and supports in one spot, doesn't in the other, etc. He's not going down without a fight, but he's dispassionate about whom he deals with and messes with everyone's mind; lovely. By mid-game, France has played brilliant defense, and there is a long black-and-blue line of EG blocks trying to outguess an equally long line of aquamarine French ones, with little success. There's really no *green* blocks over there because (surprise!) Mark the Younger has stabbed me again. I now have an IR against me with Turkey, at best, an unpredictable cannon. Time to wheedle, cajole and hope for a miracle.

"Mr Sulu, Shields Up. Lt Uhuru, Open up the Fassio Glib Tongue Communication Obfuscator."

I talk, and it kind of works with Turkey. I wheedle and cajole with I/R, and it gets me a sore throat, but nothing more. I have 4 centers and only one (occupied) home center, and am near implosion stage in about two more game turns. I'm thinking my daughter's concert would really be appropriate if they had a funeral dirge in there somewhere. And then: THE MIRACLE OF THE MARNE, PART II !

Ducky is SO good on "D" that EG make a deal with him, and they open up a 3-way Western, trying (for the moment) to keep Italy on me so they can crack the stalemate line. Germany, the ever-so-quiet and ever-so-deadly Mike the Younger, is creeping east with about 400 billion armies. At this time, Ferkin' A heads home and Ric comes in to take over Turkey, rather than let it go CD. I know from reputation that Ric will, no doubt, stab when the time is propitious, but until then, he can see the same common danger I do. Ric aids me in very unexpectedly turning on Scott's Russia (who WAS semi-buddies with Ferk the Turk (hey, I just made that up; neat, huh?)). Following Scott's initial jaw-drop at his annihilation in SEV, his jaw reopens and closes when E/G violate the empty Scandinavian DMZs and finally come after him. He's now in the vise, not me. One horn of the Zulu Impi trying to impale me is temporarily gone.

However, England makes the "mistake" of forwarding a fleet into WesMed, with Tunis almost his for the taking, as Italy is facing me. This single act, along with my very hysterical yelling, finally convinces Mark K to turn West and let me alone.

Mid-game sees a united West advancing relentlessly, with a weak yet solidifying East trying to form a stalemate line. I'm starting to think, hey, this COULD turn out ok –

ESPECIALLY when France, who, so I'm told, almost never stabs in these situations, stabs. Heck, he had huge oceans and land areas to steal back from a distracted England, so why not? England is now down, as is Italy because I (cough) helped stab him with Turkey, who then (cough cough) stabs me as part of a potential 3-way FGT. At this stage – nearly 8 hours and (surprise again!) NO ONE DEAD IN THIS GAME EITHER, we resolve a three-way, just so we can all grab cheesy survival points and end this puppy before one of us is the first to die. I mean, who wants to be the only poor schmoe killed in a game like this? I get moral victory points for fending off an IR and stabbing my tormentors, but get little else this game.



(L to R): Mark Kuisner, Mark Fassio, Mike Sims (son), Mike Sims (dad), Charles "Ducky" Stucker, and Mike of Some Other Tourney (i.e., non-Dipper)

Sunday afternoon, the results come out. I finish 5th overall and get Best Austria for the timely Round 3 draw. Mark K beats me out for both Best Italy and Best France because of tiebreaker criteria (as in, "Faz didn't read the damn rules before starting"). The rest of the board reads as such: Best Countries: Austria - Mark Fassio, England - Mike Sims (The Older), France - Mark Kuisner, Italy - Mark Kuisner, Germany - Michael C. Sims (The Younger), Russia - Charles "Ducky" Stucker and Turkey - Michael C. Sims (The Younger). Mike the Younger beats the Duck by 1 point and wins the overall tourney...nice plaque, Mike! (Sob.) By then it's time to slip on the ol' Steeler jacket, pose for the home front, and say my goodbyes.

If I had to sum up the 'Con in a few words (and not the 8+ pages I've already written), I'd say, "Great time, great new friends, and worth attending every year." These guys have run cons before, but they're ramping up the attendance and the tourneys in an effort to make it even more visible. If there's anyone within driving distance of the Megalopolis that "is" Louisville, I strongly recommend you come to this puppy next year. For one thing, it would be great to have more than one board of Dip, if only so I can get AWAY from Scott and Mark K, and have OTHER

people stab me instead (just kidding, guys). For another thing, these guys are friendly and offer a smorgasbord of games other than Dip. Those of you who do like variety as your spice of life will find it here and, if the numbers stay small, you could end up winning a tourney you never even played before, just like Mike the Younger in Dip! My hat is off to Ric and the Gang, and I thank them all for allowing an "outsider" to fit in so warmly and get taken to the cleaners without even knowing it (grin)!

Reflecting over the weekend, I liken my "Dip return" to astronomical terms. For example, most stars start small, grow and burn brightly, then go supernova and vaporize into emptiness. I, on the other hand, immediately exploded into Round 1 brilliance, then disappeared into black hole status, sucking up pretzel rods and knife blades with great skill for two days, but little else. I did discover, however, that I still have a glib tongue and can, indeed, talk a convincing story, but my timing is off both for stabbing, and detecting it. Dip, like Wild West gun-slinging, is a game of intuition and quick(er) reaction. I managed to get the ol' six-shooter out of the holster, but either found one round already in my chest or, if lucky, got two off myself and limped to the saloon to recuperate.

Hey, I guess saloons aren't so bad, right? Barkeep, some 2% milk and some Holiday Inn biscuits and gravy, please!

Mark "Faz" Fassio is a 30-year veteran of Diplomacy. He is the former Strategy and Tactics Editor for Diplomacy World Magazine, and was awarded the John Koning award for Best Dip Player (2000) and the Rod Walker Literary Award for his numerous

DipWorld and Avalon Hill Gamer's Guide articles (1997). Currently a Junior ROTC instructor in northern Kentucky, Faz is still active in web-based Diplomacy gaming and, just like Kiss after numerous rehabs and costume switches, is attempting a comeback into the hobby. A smallish man with a largish mouth, he's a surviving Golden Age player and still a swell guy to bring home to Mom.

Special thanks should be given to Ric Manns for stepping in as GM when Tom Pasko couldn't make it, and Scott Bowling for marking the Best Country awards. The final tournament results were as follows (courtesy of Ric Manns):

Overall Score

- 1st** - Michael C. Sims
- 2nd** - Charles "Ducky" Stucker
- 3rd** - Mark Kuisner
- 4th** - Ric Manns
- 5th** - Mark Fassio
- 6th** - Ferkin Doyle
- 7th** - Mike Sims (The Older)
- 8th** - Jacob Bush
- 9th** - Scott Bowling
- 10th** - Wesly Chapman

Best Countries: Austria - Mark Fassio, England - Mike Sims (The Older), France - Mark Kuisner, Germany - Michael C. Sims (The Younger), Russia - Charles "Ducky" Stucker and Turkey - Michael C. Sims (The Younger).

Ask the Amateur Hobby Historian: What Was it Like?

by David Hood

Well, Doug Kent asked me to write something for Diplomacy World, which was something I hadn't done in many years. I'm not very good at the game anymore, being a complete Retread who voluntarily sits out at Dip events whenever the numbers are over (and actively works to MAKE them over so I can sit out), so I am not qualified any more to write strategy-and-tactics stuff. I have written, talked about, and done everything about cons and tournaments so much that anything I wrote about in that vein would be old hat. And the other stuff we used to write about in the old days, like Hobby Services, Zine Reviews, feuds, etc., don't really exist in our hobby anymore.

So, what to write about?

The "old days", huh? I wonder if the current DW

readership has any concept of what the Diplomacy Hobby was like when I entered it in 1984... And then it hit me – it might be interesting for some of you to hear about those old days. When I joined the hobby, one of the best and most prolific Dip authors was Mark Berch. He was a very good S&T writer, and served as my S&T Editor for several of the issues I produced as DW editor and publisher in the early nineties. He also had a series of articles he ran called "Ask the Hobby Historian."

Now, I am no Mark Berch, so I will call myself the Amateur Hobby Historian, and answer my own question: What was it like in 1984? That was the year Michael Lowrey and I bought a copy together of this game called Diplomacy, starting playing it (and immediately started keeping detailed stats of all our FTF games, which is another story.)

Now, I had not really joined the wider Dip Hobby quite yet in 1984, so the best way for me to look back and give some insight is to take out my trusty collection of DW back issues, where I found the Winter 1984 issue, #36, edited by Hobby big name Rod Walker. This was 52 pages, which were 8 1/2 by 14 folded over and stapled, with a colored cover and somewhat amateurish cover art.

Yes, this was pre-computer designed zines, and thus typewriter-produced.

As I started to look at the articles, there were several things that jumped out at me. First, it reminded me of all the Hobby Services that used to exist when the hobby was almost exclusively a place where The Game was played by mail. There was the Boardman Number Custodian (BNC) who assigned numerical designations for all new gamestarts, for later use in ratings and stats work; the Miller Number Custodian (MNC), who did the same thing for variant games, the US Orphan Service, which placed postal games orphaned by the fold or disappearance of their parent GM and “zine” (the magazines that formed the nucleus of the Dip hobby), and so many more. A whole world that has completely disappeared.

One of the most interesting articles was about this new-fangled thing that no one could quite understand – electronic mail! This guy Wes Ives wrote a longish article trying to explain that computers could talk to each other over phone lines, and that Diplomacy games played using this form of communication were really not as different and weird as some of the postal players were saying. Really quite rich. There was also an explanation from the current BNC about how she was determining whether certain games were “regular”, and thus countable in ratings systems and so forth, and most importantly whether these “e-mail” games were regular or some other subspecies. Seriously, that was a big issue in 1984! These folks (and I include myself here) just had no earthly idea what would happen to their hobby way of life only about 12 years later when zines began to almost completely disappear from the world. There are now something like 6-8 available – in the glory days it was over 100.

Another topic – polls and ratings. These made up large portions of DW in the day. We had polls for everything – the Runestone Poll and Marco Poll for zines and players, the Dragonstooth Ratings system for postal games, and various debates about scoring systems for FTF tournaments (now THERE’S an issue that still topical now...). There were awards, pubber (“publisher”) surveys, a relief auction to raise funds for hobby services, just all kinds of stuff on just about everything. And there WAS a zine called “Everything”, which the BNC published to show game completion info and stats on gamestarts.

A final section of the hobby as reported in DW was the

whole world of Diplomacy variants. This is something that has not lived on for the most part into the hobby of today. Yes, I know there are still variants that get played by email, and gunboat too, but variants were a whole different subculture, with zines and services devoted specifically to the publication and promotion of that world.

The Winter 1984 issue had a 4-player variant called The Conquerors by Lew Pulsipher, a bigtime variant designer of the past who later developed other boardgames like Britannia. I like it so much I’ve decided to see if I can get some players this year for Dixiecon during the Saturday night slot.

Some of the other Retreads out there are saying to themselves – “that Hood, he never thought too much about the ‘fannish’ part of the Hobby, which is why he hasn’t mentioned it.” Nope, I have not mentioned that part of the 1984 Hobby simply because it was not part of Diplomacy World itself, for the most part. You see, one of the things that really held the Hobby together, in all the zines other than DW, was what people called “fannishness”- the parts of zines that had nothing to do with running Dip games per se. Contrary to popular belief, I was a big fan of such things, and was an active contributor to the “lettercols” (letter columns) on political and social issues. Again, this is largely gone from our current Hobby, and that’s too bad. We got to know each other really well in these lettercols and other parts of the zines, which built community and contacts that I still treasure to this day.

If you have never looked at old issues of Diplomacy World, I encourage you to get some and do so. I have a pretty good collection myself, would be glad to make you copies of some if you are interested. I know Doug is making some issues and articles available on his site – maybe this will eventually include, somewhere, all past issues going back to 1974. Obviously much of the content is dated and uninteresting, but you’d be surprised how much is completely relevant to today. As I mentioned earlier, you can find some debates about FTF scoring systems that sound like something Dave Maletsky and Jim O’Kelley might have discussed at some con last week!

Next issue, I’ll pick an old copy of DW at virtual random and talk about some specific topic in Hobby History. Hm, people’s opinions of Edi Birsan circa 1971? The debates about Dipcon being in Chicago three years in a row? The turbophreak and “crazed wacko” labels and related controversies? The years we had competing BNC’s and Orphan Services? The Bad Boys? The Great Feud?

Stay tuned, you just might learn something.

David Hood is a former Diplomacy World Lead Editor and Publisher and a major force behind DixieCon, For a completely different and opposite view of the health and popularity of variants in today’s hobby, be sure to read the Variant Roundtable in this issue!

Back to the Windy City - CODCon 2007

by Jim O'Kelley

Chicago, 1975. The Diplomacy universe revolved around the Windy City, which was hosting, for the fourth straight year, the North American Diplomacy Championships. Some were even suggesting that Chicago should be DipCon's permanent home.

Today, our hobby has no idea who won that DipCon in 1975. Back then, the attendees had no idea they were playing in Chicago's last Diplomacy tournament.

Until now.

On April 14 and 15, 2007, at the College of DuPage's CODCon gaming convention in the Western suburb of Glen Ellyn, 30 players vied for the Chicago area's first Diplomacy tournament championship in 32 years, competing on nine boards over three rounds. Following is a recap of the CODCon tournament, which was hosted by the Windy City Weasels Diplomacy Club.

Round 1, Saturday, April 14.

(All games were time-limited and scored with a center-based system featuring bonuses for draw size and topping the board.)



Round 1, Board 1 : From Left - Matt Sundstrom, Laurent Joly, Alex Wyler, Grant Smith

Board 1

The first board featured postal player Matt Sundstrom in Austria; once prolific Diplomatic Pouch contributor Paul Windsor in England; Greg Duenow in France; visiting Frenchman Laurent Joly in Germany; Jim Collins in Italy; Alex Wyler in Russia; and Grant Smith in Turkey. Paul and Greg rolled the board, with Paul's England topping at 11 centers and Greg's France at 10. Other survivors were Turkey with seven, Austria with four, and Germany and Russia with one apiece. The game ended in 1909.

Board 2

Nick Rohn drew Austria on the second board; James Barr was England; Bert Schoose, a veteran of Virginia's PrezCon, was France; Bill "Large" Small was Germany; my nephew Cooper Heinz was Italy; Mike French, the highest rated player in the DipWorld PBEM club, was Russia; and Paul Pignotti was Turkey. The E/F rolled in this one as well, with James and Bert each holding 12 centers when the game ended in 1909. Austria and Russia finished with five centers apiece. (The bastards killed my nephew on the last turn of the game.)



Round 1, Boards 2 (foreground) and 3

Board 3

Pay close attention to the line-up for this board. The players were Brett Smith in Austria; Christian Kline in England; Mike Sullivan in France; newcomer Erica Alemdar in Germany; Thom Comstock in Italy; Andrew Bartlein in Russia; and Thatcher Hallock in Turkey. Whereas the first two boards managed to get through 1909, this game was called after the Spring 1907 turn, and just in the nick of time, as Andrew's Russia was at 15 centers and closing in on the solo. France finished with six centers; Austria with five; Italy, four; England, two; and Germany and Turkey, one each.

So, after one round, Andrew Bartlein, a high school senior from Milwaukee, was leading the tournament with 188.57 points. Paul Windsor was second with 142, and James Barr and Bert Schoose were tied for third with 135.

Round 2, Saturday, April 14

Board 1

Grant Smith was Austria; Erica Alemdar was England;

Nick Rohn, France; Paul Windsor, Germany; Eric Brown's nephew Vincente Cheng, Italy; Cooper Heinz, Russia; and Thom Comstock, Turkey. In this game, Nick Rohn was keenly aware of Paul Windsor's strong showing in Round 1, and he organized another E/F to stop him. Nick's France and Erica's England destroyed Germany and rolled to 12 and 10 centers, respectively, when the game ended in 1909. Turkey finished with eight centers and Russia, with four.

Board 2

See if you can find the common denominator. Board 2 ended in 1907. The line-up was Eric Brown in Austria; Jim Collins in England; Paul Pignotti in France; Christian Kline in Germany; Andrew Bartlein in Italy; newcomer Alex King in Russia; and Greg Duenow in Turkey. This game featured two dominant alliances, an E/F (again) in the West and an A/I in the East. Eric's Austria and Jim's England shared the top, with nine apiece, while France and Italy finished with eight each.

Andrew tacked on an additional 95 points to his already commanding lead. He and the other members of the Milwaukee Mafia (Brett and Grant Smith, Alex Wyler and Mike Sullivan) were heading home after the second round, so it looked like I might be shipping the first-place plaque to Wisconsin...

Board 3

...but Mike French had other ideas. This game saw Dan Burgess in Austria; Alex Wyler in England; Laurent Joly in France; Mike French in Germany; Thatcher Hallock in Italy; Mike Sullivan in Russia; and Brett Smith in Turkey. French played a masterful game, growing to 10 by 1905, and then over the next few years, helping Italy grow at erstwhile ally England's expense and coaxing the Austrians to roll south against Turkey.

When French made his move in 1907, growing to 14, it looked like only the clock could stop him. But the Board managed three more game-years, completing Spring 1910 seconds before the call, which according to the house rules, allowed the Fall turn to be played. French reached 18 in the Fall, earning 450 points and a huge tournament lead. The survivors were Italy with seven, Austria with six and Turkey with three.

After two rounds, Mike French led with 515 points, Andrew Bartlein was second with 283.57, and Nick Rohn was third with 224.

Round 3, Sunday, April 15

The objective was clear. In the CODCon scoring system, no combination of draws could beat a solo. And everyone knew Mike French had soloed the night before.

Board 1

Newcomer John Frangias was Austria; Matt Sundstrom was England; Thatcher Hallock played France; Thom Comstock was in Germany; Paul Pignotti played Italy;

Tournament Director Jim O'Kelley was Russia; and Jeremiah Peterson was Turkey. The Western Triple opened right out of the gate, with Germany moving to Prussia and Silesia!

England and France reaped the dividends of Germany's bold opening, marching to nine centers apiece by 1905 before England pulled ahead, growing to 12 by 1907. It looked as if Matt might solo, but he ran out of time in 1908, finishing with 14. France had 11; Turkey, four; Germany, three; and Russia, two.



Tournament Director Jim O'Kelley managing the tournament - and a tremendous hangover (all photos courtesy of Bill Small and his trusty cell phone camera)

Board 2

Blake Ward played Austria on Board 1; Laurent Joly was England; Bill "Large" Small, France; Bert Schoose, Germany; Christian Kline, Italy; Jim Collins, Russia; and Paul Windsor, Turkey. Bert rolled again, this time working closely with Bill Small to give the tournament its first F/G. Bert topped with 11, and Bill finished with 10. The other survivors were Italy and Turkey, with six apiece, and Austria with one. The game ended in 1907, the third game of the tournament to manage 14 turns or less. And who played in all three of those games? Christian Kline.

Board 3

The line-up was Tournament Director Jim O'Kelley in Austria; Mike French in England; Jeremiah Peterson in France; newcomer Kory Mulcahey in Germany; Greg Duenow in Italy; Laurent Joly in Russia; and Erica Alemdar in Turkey. (Note that in order to fill three boards in Round 3, O'Kelley, Joly and Peterson played on two boards each.)

This was the last chance to catch Mike French, but he would have none of that, rolling to a board-topping 12 centers and looking for a while as if he might solo again. Turkey finished with 11; Russia with five; France with four; and Italy, two.

2007 CODCon Open Final Standings

And thus the curtain closed on the 2007 CODCon Open.

The top board was as follows:

1	Mike French	606.00
2	Andrew Bartlein	283.57
3	Bert Schoose	279.00
4	Erica Alemdar	237.00
5	Matt Sundstrom	230.00
6	Nick Rohn	224.00
7	Paul Windsor	214.00

The Best Country awards went to:

Austria: Eric Brown, 105 points, Round 2, Board 2.

England: Matt Sundstrom, 180 points, Round 3, Board 1.

France: Nick Rohn, 159 points, Round 2, Board 1.

Germany: Mike French, 450 points, Round 2, Board 3.

Italy: Andrew Bartlein, 95 points, Round 2, Board 2.

Russia: Andrew Bartlein, 188.57 points, Round 1, Board 3.

Turkey: Eric Alemdar, 122 points, Round 3, Board 3.

The 2007 CODCon Open was a trial run for the Weasel Moot, the Windy City Weasel's first annual club championship and the group's entry in the 2007 North American Diplomacy Federation Grand Prix. Weasel Moot will be held June 9 and 10 at the Elks Veterans Memorial in Chicago. For more information, go to <http://umbreho.dyndns.org/wcw>.

Place	Player	Points
1	Mike French	606.00
2	Andrew Bartlein	283.57
3	Bert Schoose	279.00
4	Erica Alemdar	237.00
5	Matt Sundstrom	230.00
6	Nick Rohn	224.00
7	Paul Windsor	214.00
8	Thatcher Hallock	157.00
9	Thom Comstock	143.57
10	Greg Duenow	142.00
11	James Barr	135.00
12	Bill Small	116.00
13	Jim Collins	111.00
14	Eric Brown Jeremiah	105.00
15	Peterson	104.00
16	Paul Pignotti	101.00
17	Christian Kline	100.57
18	Grant Smith	88.00
19	Laurent Joly	82.00
20	Mike Sullivan	74.57
21	Brett Smith	73.57
22	Cooper Heinz	64.00
23	Dan Burgess	30.00
24	Alex Wyler	29.00
25	Blake Ward	22.00
26	John Frangias	8.00
27	Vincente Cheng	6.00
27	Alex King	6.00
29	Kory Mulcahey	4.00
INEL	Jim O'Kelley	36.00

Selected Upcoming Conventions

Dixiecon XXI - Friday May 25th, 2007 - Sunday May 27th, 2007- Chapel Hill, North Carolina,
<http://www.dixiecon.com>

GenCon Paris – Saturday May 26th, 2007 – Sunday May 27th, 2007 – Paris, France,
<http://www.gencon.fr/>

Weasel Moot – Saturday June 9th, 2007 – Sunday June 10th, 2007 – Chicago, Illinois,
<http://umbreho.dyndns.org/wcw/>

Boston Massacre 2007 – Saturday June 23rd, 2007 – Sunday June 24th, 2007 – Boston, Massachusetts, <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/MADip-L/>

ManorCon – Friday July 20th, 2007 – Sunday July 23rd, 2007 – Stamford Hall, University of Leicester, United Kingdom, <http://www.manorcon.org.uk>

Heureux Qui, Comme Ulysse, a Fait un Beau Voyage A Travelogue From Paris to Prezcon

by Laurent Joly

Tuesday, February 20:



I left Paris for Washington. Ike Porter was waiting for me at the airport, and took care of me for my first evening in the United States. I was tired by the travel, but

not too annoyed by the time shift. I watched "Stargate-SG1" on TV and then went to sleep. I woke up one hour later, and it was time to eat. Ike brought me to a TexMex restaurant. I was very surprised by two things. No, no, it wasn't that everybody spoke English! We were able to bring back to our house whatever we didn't finish eating, and you were able to drink as many sodas as you wanted! The next time, I will come with a container (something like 10 litres), to take something to drink for the whole evening. Back from Ike's, I watched "The Game" (a movie with Michael Douglas), and then I went to bed.

Wednesday, February 21:

Dring, dring... Oh no, I must get out of bed. I hope that the weather will be good today.

Ike brought me to a bus stop. It was very surprising to see the people waiting for the bus. Nobody tried to take the place of anybody else. It was like after the second world war, when people were waiting for food. Probably Americans would be very surprised by the manner in which people wait for the bus in Paris.

I met Tim Richardson at Union Station, and we had breakfast together. It was a pleasure to eat a croissant with orange juice (like in France ;-)). Finally, food wasn't so different ;-)



I took advantage of this beautiful day to visit Washington. I walked in Washington and it was a pleasure. I saw the White House, The Washington Monument ...

I went back to Union Station for lunch. There I faced a huge problem : How to eat all that I have in my plate? In the afternoon, I had a guided tour of the capitol done by Doug Moore. I saw the Ambassador from Mars, so I was very lucky at that time.



Tim and I took the train back to his house, after a very long day for me. After an excellent dinner prepared by his wife, it was poker time. Hardly arrived, and everyone took care of

me very well, but that good-will changed when it came to poker, I lost \$20 (Oh Damn...). I wanted to keep watching toe game, but I was too tired and everybody said to me : "Laurent, probably, it will be better if you go to bed." Sure, because if I stay longer, I would fall asleep directly on the board.

Thursday, February 22:

It's time to depart for Charlottesville. But before making the trip, I enjoyed lunch with Tim, Buffalo (Andy Bartalone) and Rob (Link). I ate an excellent piece of meat with mashed potatoes. After that, we started our travel for Charlottesville.

Once we arrived at Prezcon, I met many players of the PTKS. And this was my first error of the weekend: I missed the registration for the Britannia competition. That mistake was made up for by the discovery of an excellent restaurant; the meal was a pleasure! I ate some broiled fish with potatoes. It was a French-like restaurant, I was very lucky. The evening was once again devoted to poker. After my elimination in the tournament, I played in a cash game. I lost nothing, I won nothing, so not so bad! Some players didn't have as much luck as I did during the game. I went to my bed early so I could be ready for tomorrow, the first day of the Diplomacy tournament.

Friday, February 23:

I took my habits from Paris : wake up at 10am. After a shower, I started my hunt to find the other players... Finally, David, the man with a hat, Ike and I went to an Italian restaurant. Back at the convention, we decided to play Family Business and then to bang.

The serious gaming was starting now. For the first heat, there were 14 players. For me this game was a little difficult, because it seemed that I was the main target. I found a way to



survive: I (Germany) hid behind Chris Martin (Italy).



My board was special. The Russian stabbed me at the beginning by taking the Black Sea. I told him to leave his fleet in Black Sea, but later the temptation was too big for him, and I was reduced from 4 to 2 centers.

The most important fact of the game was the huge difficulty that Seth Vaughn had understanding the rules on how to vote for a Draw.

"An army is to continue and a fleet is to stop the game???"

- No, Seth. An army is to stop and a fleet to continue!!
- What? An army is to continue?
- No an army is to STOP and a fleet to CONTINUE!"

After that, everybody had some difficulty remembering which was which for the draw. But someone (Seth) voted against the draw, and the game continued and continued...Thanks Seth.

Once we finished the game, I joined in a game of Ticket To Ride. David Maletsky finished with 150 pts, I had approximately 120 pts and Ike finished 5th with 3 pts (for a long time it looked like he would finish with a negative score). It was an excellent day.

Saturday, February 24:

As the previous day, I woke up at 10 am, and had a "real" hamburger for my lunch.

I had the honor to attend to the hobby meeting of the PTKS with Sloth (Joseph Weehler) by phone. Between his marriage and Prezcon, he was to choose the marriage of course.:-) For me, this hobby meeting taught me a lot of things about how to organize a tournament. I was very interested by the discussion about the scoring system used for Tempest.

A tournament of poker was organized between the players of the PTKS. Chris Martin won it and Ike Porter finished second.



For the second heat, we had 2 boards. Roy Rink missed the win with Turkey. And on this board I took my best picture of the entire trip. They're too cute, aren't they?

But fortunately, the Italian stabbed the Russian, who let me have Ankara.

Suddenly I was back with 4 centers. After that, I saw the elimination of the French and the poor Russian (if only he had listened to my warnings). Austria had already returned his weapons before that. I thought a 4-way Draw was in order, but Ed wanted a 3-way draw. After a hard fight, we agreed to the 4-way Draw after all. We spent 8 hours on this game (I tried to play "the watch"). My heroic resistance in this epic battle will earn me the Silver Spike. You know the song : "I WILL SURVIVE!!!!"

Sunday, February 25:

I woke up early, looked out the window, and – surprise - all is white outside! Let's go to ski... Oh no, I've a game this morning. It was the first time in Charlottesville that I had breakfast. It was a good breakfast, but more expansive than in France... Yes, yes, it's possible.



This morning the Diplomacy game was as difficult as the previous one - everybody wanted to attack me! Perhaps I played a little too fun! A 4-way draw (including the western

triple and Italy) was passed. During this game, we took a lot of breaks to let players pay for their rooms. The game was very slow and we decided to vote the draw only to be able to eat. It was a good lunch, feasting on Wendy's (:-p).

The other board was a little unlucky, because they had to eat during the game. Perhaps Seth had some difficulties understanding how to vote for the draw... Poor players ;-)

Tournament Results:



And the time for the results arrived. I was very afraid to come back to France with ... nothing.

Let's go !!



Jeff won the Hammer, for his three games without a point. Well done Jeff, it isn't so easy to do. I won the Silver Spike for my combativeness and for my stubborn ability to force my way into the stalemate.



Roy Rink won the Players' Choice, and that wasn't a surprise to me. Even when he said to me that we were at war, I found him very pleasant. I felt some remorse

attacking him at all! Let us not forget Ed Prem, who won for the best stab. (bbbooooouuuuuhhhh)



Doug Moore and Steve Emmert took 2 best countries each (France & Russia for Doug, and England & Italy for Steve). Roy Rink won the best Turkey with 17 centers, but he didn't have the largest score of the tournament. David Maletsky took the best Germany. And best Austria went to Seth Vaughn - before the last heat, no Austria had survived! Seth had the only Austria included in a draw in the entire tournament!



The tournament was won by Doug, followed by Steve and

David. Despite my

difficulties, it was a real pleasure to play in this tournament.

Monday, February 26:



It was my last day to visit Washington. On the advice of Tim, I visited the Air and Space Museum, and thoroughly enjoyed myself. I regret not having more time to visit the other museums.



Tuesday, February 27:

It was unfortunately my last day in Washington. I walked through the town and I discovered Chinatown.

Tim brought me to the airport. I eat my last dinner in United States. I chose to eat another Wendy's hamburger.



Wednesday, February 28:

I'm back in Paris, and my email box was full of interesting things (Thank you to Björn Westling and Bill Brown)

My first trip out of Europe will remain in my memory for a

long time. It was a pleasure to visit Washington, and I was pleasantly surprised by the excellent reception that I received. I never thought that I would be welcomed and treated as well as I was. I thank everybody, and I will try to return in the near future, but unfortunately I fear I will not have enough time or money to do another trip outside Europe for a while after the WorldDipCon. I encourage you to play in a tournament organized by the players of the PTKS. Moreover, everybody suggested that I make plans to attend DixieCon in North Carolina (organized by David Hood), but unfortunately, I wasn't able to arrange it, and I will miss the famous barbecue. A real disappointment for me!

My next trip will take me to Chicago, where I will meet the famous Jim O'Kelley, the winner of last Grand Prix. I learned much about the organization with the players of the PTKS, and I think that I would learn just as much by meeting the players from the area of Chicago. It's one of the most active groups of the NADF with at least 1 board every month since September 2005. It's the first tournament taking place in Chicago since the Dipcon in the Seventies. It will be a historical event!

To finish this article up, I will advise you about some upcoming tournaments from the NADF.

Be sure not to miss: Dixiecon in Chapel Hill (North Carolina), May 25/27, Organized by David Hood

Appointment with the history: Weasel Moot in Chicago (Illinois), June 9/10, Organized by Jim O'Kelley

On the road of the WorldDipCon: Dragonflight in Seattle (Washington), August 4/5, Organized by Buz Eddy

OR, World Boardgaming Council in Lancaster Pennsylvania), August 4/5, Organized by Don Del Grande

Be Sure Not to Miss 2: WorldDipCon in Vancouver (Canada), August 9/12, Organized by Matt Shield, Nathan Barnes and Mike Hall

A stop after the WorldDipCon: HuskyCon in Long Island (New York), August 17/19, Organized by Conrad Woodring

Finally, results of Prezcon can be found at: http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche_rencontre.php?id_rencontre=1005

And all the pictures of Prezcon can be seen at: <http://eurodip.nuxit.net/report/index.html>

ATTENTION: See the end of the DW Letter Column (page 41) for details on this issue's contest, relating to this article. Yes, there will be an actual prize! All part of our limitless Diplomacy World budget!

2007 Variant Roundtable Part 1

Moderated by Interview Editor Jim Burgess

I'm always looking for interesting interview formats, subjects, and themes, so don't hesitate to contact me if you have any ideas. I'm pleased to be back working with Diplomacy World again and this idea is particularly exciting, I probably will make this format into a standard approach in the future, so suggestions on what you would like to see would be great. The idea in short is this: start up a closed Yahoogroup, invite some experts on a subject in, then I conduct a group interview through threads on the group. I edit the threads together into this (which you'll see the first part in this issue and the second part next time) and then when we're done, we open the whole group up and you're welcome to continue the discussion or any thread of the discussion yourself. I thank David Cohen for his assistance in setting this up. All four of our commentators have something unique to contribute and they all have their moments of self-effacement as well as making it all sound impossible, but I would add this one caveat before you dive in, DO NOT be scared off, if you want to dive in and design a variant, just do it. Have fun and serve yourself. Now, let's get started with some Diplomacy bios from our roundtable of

commentators, Baron Powell, David Cohen, Michael Golbe, and Benjamin Hester (in each case, we will use last names from here on out to identify who is speaking):

Cohen Bio I: I designed my first variant around 1980, shortly after I began playing Diplomacy. It was set in South America, as of in 1901, and it was drawn on paper (!). Looking back, it probably wasn't all that good, since I knew basically nothing about variant design, and not too much about Diplomacy itself. I gave the map over to the Boston University Simulations Society, which was the gaming club at BU.

Cohen Bio II: After college, like many other people, I drifted away from Dip until I discovered PBEM, in my case, in the late 1990's. The first couple of variants I designed, Alien Invasion Diplomacy and Wall of Ice, played off of science fiction themes, and were rather gimmicky, and not all that good, but they taught me some things about variant design. My next variant, Mandate of Heaven, was the first real historically based variant I designed. It deals with China during the Warring States

period. It is flawed, to my mind, in that it is overly complicated, and the geography was somewhat limiting.

Cohen Bio III: Taking the lessons I learned from the design of these variants, Maharajah's Diplomacy was the first variant I ever designed that I was really proud of. I won't discuss it in great detail at this point, especially since I wrote three articles in the Pouch about the variant and my design process.

Cohen Bio IV: My latest project, Known World 901, is entering playtesting right now, and is the first really big variant (16 Powers, 108 Supply Centers) I have ever designed, and the size caused me to design it in stages, with an interim variant, Western World 901 (10 Powers, 67 Supply Centers) being playtested first.

Cohen Bio V: I was also involved in the group design process of the (unfortunately) unfinished, huge, global variant "1648" in the Diplomacy Variant Workshop.

Burgess: This is also a really important resource that all of our Roundtable commentators recommend. There is a YahooGroup called DVWorkshop which we hope any of you aspiring variant designers join. You can ask questions, comment on other people's variants, showcase your own variants, and most of all look through the HUGE archives of this group. This group has 165 members at this writing and over 3000 messages since its inception in 2000.

Golbe Bio I: Played some in college then found PBEM about six years ago. Quit a year or two ago. Began designing variants almost immediately after finding PBEM. I've designed several score I guess. The two best-known would be Daimyos and Age of Pericles because those were the only ones played more than once.

Golbe Bio II: My contributions here will be extremely limited. As a variant designer I basically suck. I saw someone say below they spend 50 to 100 hours designing one; I've done them in as little as ten minutes and rarely take more than four hours.

Cohen: A lot of that time, for me, is reading/research. For example, I did not know all that much about some of the Powers in Known World 901, and read a fair amount of history for the period. Not an unpleasant task, but looking for sources, and going through them took time.

Golbe Bio III: The result is what you'd expect: rather poor designs.

Burgess: Michael, or as "Minister X" as many of you know him, is more than slightly underestimating his contributions here (since I know what's coming!!!), but what I really asked him here for was this....

Golbe Bio IV: However: I am (if I may say so myself)

excellent at the actual making of the maps. I've always loved maps and always been adept at computer graphics. I'll participate and contribute as I can regarding the art and technology of map-making.

Hester Bio I: Played Diplomacy since about 1992...ish. Mostly FTF at first, didn't really discover the PBEM communities until right around 2K. Like Michael, I began designing variants shortly after that time - Don Hessong's Ancient Mediterranean was an early inspiration. I have designed two (hopefully) completed variants, Sengoku and South American Supremacy, plus one in the works, Caucasus 1916. Like many variant designers, various other variant projects of mine somehow fell apart along the development process and are unlikely ever to see completion.

Burgess: See, so this is part of the process, designers in waiting, don't feel like you're a failure just because one design isn't working, you don't have to finish that one if you would have more fun starting over with what you learned.

Hester Bio II: Sengoku I would consider a success - it has had literally years of work poured into it, with over seven major revisions and countless minor "tweaks" at this point. I believe it to be balanced on a par with Standard now, if not more so. Versions of Sengoku have been played on Dip PBEM communities far and wide thanks to the Realpolitik program which drastically increased its appeal. South American Supremacy has been confined to Cat23 to the best of my knowledge, and is not even actively played much there any more. Not sure why - heck, I liked it at least.

Hester Bio III: I focus on four elements of variant design in my work which I think are critical to the success and popular appeal of a particular variant.

Balance - All players must have a reasonable chance of victory versus/relative to their opponents.

Map - Never underestimate the aesthetic factor - nothing sells a new variant like a clear, visually appealing map.

Deviation from Standard - Remember, people are still essentially here to play Diplomacy. The more a variant stops looking like Diplomacy due to special rules, units, etc. the harder the sell. (this is not an absolute law, more of a general guideline)

Maneuver/Options - All players should have viable alliance options with any of their neighbours from starting position. Even A/R is possible in Dip, and can yield big payoffs. If a variant is designed in a way that conflict is virtually inevitable between two powers, then the Diplomatic factor starts to leave the game.

VonPowell Bio I: I must confess up front that before I got involved in variant design, I didn't play all that much Diplomacy, though I absolutely loved the game. I find Diplomacy is a huge investment in time and emotional energy, and sometimes I simply didn't have any of either

of those assets to spare.

Burgess: This is surprisingly common, a lot of people find they spend more of their effort designing Diplomacy variants than playing, this is certainly OK.

VonPowell Bio II: My first attempt at variant design was 1900. The story of how I got involved and the processes I went through are covered in some detail in Chapter 1 to The Gamers' Guide to 1900 and I won't repeat everything here.

Burgess: You may find the first article on this in the *Diplomatic Pouch* back in 2002: http://devel.diplom.org/Zine/S2002M/VonPowell/1900_Intro.html; there were other subsequent articles there on 1900 as well.

VonPowell Bio III: Several years later, I met Jeff Kase on line and we agreed to collaborate on a variant that covered the period immediately after the conclusion of the Seven Years War. We called this variant Ambition & Empire (A&E). It is a ten player variant, with the played Powers being Austria, Britain & Hanover, Denmark-Norway, France, Poland & Saxony, Prussia, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey. The partnership between Jeff and I proved to be a very good one and we were able to come up with a product that met, and in many cases, exceeded all of our expectations. Of course, we didn't get there on the first try, but we are wildly pleased with the current version (V5.0) and believe A&E is ready for prime time. I hope to spend more time giving A&E greater visibility with the Diplomacy Hobby in the not-so-distant future.

Burgess: I want to thank you all for agreeing to be part of this Roundtable. I hope it will be useful long into the hobby future for people trying to get beyond "Variant Design How-To's" into the nitty gritty of practical tips and information that you've learned. Feel free to comment only on the questions that you feel most qualified to comment on and leave others alone. Let's get started, my first question is the killer, how many hours of time in all do you think it takes to design and execute a variant (ranges and qualifiers are good)?

Cohen: I have never quantified it, but it is many, many hours for me. Counting all the research and intermediate work, the map design and re-design, probably 50-100 hours on average.

VonPowell: Regarding the time spent on these variants, I do not think I am exaggerating at all to say that well over 200 hours has been spent on 1900 and probably over 100 on A&E. The maps alone, which I'll discuss more below, took me forever to develop. When I add in all of the historical research, the discussions with people who I bounced ideas off of, the written products to support the variants (such as The Gamers' Guide to 1900), and the periodic adjustments to maps and rules made over time,

I honestly think the time invested that I've listed is underestimated.

Burgess: And of course one of the key aspects of a variant is how to convince players to play it, what makes it attractive. Share with us your thoughts on what the most important "attractiveness" issues are in marketing a variant. And since we know that map design in particular is an element of this, please tell us how you build maps, what secrets do you use to make a Diplomacy map useful and attractive?

Cohen: Regarding this question, unlike some of the other folks here, I really have no artistic skill whatsoever, so I have to settle for the usefulness part, making the maps legible, and putting as much useful information on them as I can. For instance, for my last couple of variants, I have put the actual rules in a corner of the map, and for the very last one (an idea I took from Joe Janbu--and I don't know if it is original to him), province abbreviations are indicated as well. I am very envious of Michael Golbe and other designers, who create beautiful maps for their variants.

VonPowell: First, I'd like to believe 1900 has gained a solid foothold with the Diplomatic community. Since the first game was played in 1997, over 150 games have been started that I know of and there was recently a 1900 Tournament (that is still ongoing). Without question, the variant's big break came when it was put on DPJudge. I can now proudly say that 1900 has grown far beyond my ability to manage it. About the only fly in the ointment is that someone hasn't been able to program RealPolitik to support the variant accurately. Ambition & Empire, on the other hand, is still in the process of trying to gain a foothold. Since I GM'd the first game in 2000, there have been 14 games started. Two of these were started by GMs other than Jeff or myself, so this is encouraging. Unfortunately, until my schedule calms down a bit, there is little I can do to promote the variant.

VonPowell: Second, the map is the single most important element of the variant design, in my mind. I agree with those who stated that the map is critical in attracting new players to a variant. If prospective players see a beautiful map, they'll at least look around a little more. If they see an ugly abomination, they will almost certainly move on, even though the variant might actually be quite good.

VonPowell: Of course, after catching a player's eye, the map serves another key function. It is the stage on which the player's perform. A poorly designed map leads to a flawed game. For me, I tried to avoid the pitfalls of a poorly designed map by relying on historical accuracy as much as possible. If the historical event being simulated was a fairly even contest, I think the odds of creating a fairly balanced game are high, especially if you reproduce the historical boundaries on the map. After all, those historical boundaries that we see in history texts came about for a reason. This does not mean I was

always successful on my first try in creating play balance (and sometimes not on my second or third tries either), but I never felt I was so far off the mark that I had to scrap the whole project.

VonPowell: For both of my maps, I "hand drew" them using that extremely sophisticated (sic) graphics tool Paintbrush. Yes, each map was drawn pixel by pixel, with historical atlases being my source documents. It was a painstakingly slow process, but a labor of love at the same time. Both the 1900 and A&E maps underwent several revisions and each revision required more time drawing and erasing of pixels. Fortunately, the 1900 map has remained the same for several years now and I don't envision any changes. The A&E map is, I hope, in its final form, but only time will tell.

Hester: To recap from my bio and answer the question, these four factors are critical (IMHO) to the success (attractiveness) of a variant, defined as widespread play and interest by people other than the creator.

Balance - All players must have a reasonable chance of victory versus/relative to their opponents.

Map - Never underestimate the aesthetic factor - nothing sells a new variant like a clear, visually appealing map.

Deviation from Standard - Remember, people are still essentially here to play Diplomacy. The more a variant stops looking like Diplomacy due to special rules, units, etc. the harder the sell. (this is not an absolute law, more of a general guideline)

Maneuver/Options - All players should have viable alliance options with any of their neighbours from starting position. Even A/R is possible in Dip, and can yield big payoffs. If a variant is designed in a way that conflict is virtually inevitable between two powers, then the Diplomatic factor starts to leave the game.

Cohen: I agree that all of these are important. To give you my take on two of these factors:

Deviation from Standard – Yes, a designer should have a *very* good reason for making anything more complicated than the original game. Every deviation/complication will lose some of the potential audience.

Maneuver/Options – Yes, each player should have a reasonable option to either attack or ally with any of their neighbors. In addition, variety of opening move, a related concept, is also a good thing. The more possible moves that might be good, as opposed to moves that pretty much *must* be made (as in A Con-Bul, in Standard), the better.

Hester: As for the means I use to build maps (historical), it generally starts from any image I can find on the internet that has clear borders depicted. I then convert that map to a monochrome and make any border corrections required for the time period in question. I then convert the map to the Realpolitik standard format (I can't say enough good things about this program for

variant design). Accordingly, all my maps tend to look like the RP standard. Jim Van Verth's Realpolitik is what makes the map useful. It is a relatively simple matter (can be done in a few hours of work) to program your variant into this adjudicator program, which is priceless for running the endless scenarios required to determine if your variant is balanced and provides viable alliance options for all players. Moreover, it allows players to really get a feel for the strategy of your variant. Many PBEM players have years and years of experience playing standard, and they have their favorite openings with each power, and sometimes well-developed strategies for entire games. RP allows them to run simulations of your variant to get that good comfortable feel with it before/during play.

Burgess: I should have figured a lot of you would get excited about mapping..... even though it isn't what I look at. You're all being very practical and meaty. One key goal in my mind is to show how different variant designers approach things differently. Different is NOT worse, it's BETTER. So don't feel intimidated about what anyone else says, try to describe honestly what you've done (and not done), and why. And then the idea will be that future prospective variant designers can say things like "I like how Hester or Cohen or Powell or Golbe designs a variant, I think I'm going to try to do it "his way". And those ways will be different!!!

Hester: Unfortunately, variant designers usually get only one shot with their variant. Meaning - players sign up, play, and they either like the variant and try to start more games of it in the future, or don't like it, and never play it again. Therefore, playtesting (and incorporating feedback from the playtest) is critical to the success of a variant, and so is attempting to balance it on Realpolitik (or manually) as much as possible before playtesting. Nothing makes a player love a variant more than to see their input make its way into the next revision of a variant. Of course, inform the players prior to the game start if a game is a playtest or a finished product. This is, of course, not the only means to making a successful variant, and I really only have the success of Sengoku to back up what I'm saying here, but I think it is one good recipe for success.

Burgess: When you are thinking about a variant's context (time and place), what are some of the tradeoffs you've considered in balancing historical or context accuracy (which makes a variant interesting) and playability (which makes it something players will come back to and play again)?

VonPowell: I think this is an interesting question. Though I consider myself somewhat of a stickler for historical accuracy, I must admit that I've made sacrifices for the sake of both map aesthetics and overall playability. One of the things that prompted me to design 1900 was a comment I read in *Diplomacy World* #80. Stephen Agar in "New Improved Diplomacy?" was discussing the

merits of some changes to Standard when Steve Rennie stated the following: "I am fascinated by the debate over an improved Diplomacy. The difficulty of adding options, strengthening Austria without weakening Italy too much and the importance of not tinkering too much with a basically excellent game all appear to have been addressed by your option of three new supply centres. I should say that in considering options, history matters not a jot, the game is all."

VonPowell: HISTORY MATTERS NOT A JOT!!!! Not in my mind. Standard Diplomacy has several annoying (at least for me) historical inaccuracies. I thought that these inaccuracies could be improved without sacrificing play balance or making the map unworkable. In fact, I thought the game could be improved and historical accuracy enhanced at the same time. I tried to be historically accurate when designing 1900. Still, there are little things that are not quite right. The Trieste space in Austria-Hungary, for example, makes me wince whenever I see it. I felt I had to leave Trieste and a few other "anomalies" in place, however, for two reasons. First, Hester is correct, I believe, in stating that the more special rules and the more alien the map, the more difficult it is to attract players. I wanted 1900 to be different, but look familiar enough to entice players that knew Diplomacy. Second, some sacrifices were necessary for play balance. I think Hester stated that every player should start a game believing he or she has a fair chance of winning. If history is too slavishly adhered to, you end up with undesirable results. Would you want to be a 2-SC Italy with a 5-SC France on one side, a 3-SC Austria-Hungary on the other, and a 7-SC Germany to the north. Me neither.

Cohen: Ultimately, playability is king. It could be a perfectly accurate map, but if it is not playable, the work will have served no purpose. As I have said elsewhere, Diplomacy is not meant or able to accurately reflect history. It is, however, superb at evoking history. As far as trade-offs go, initially what I find I need to worry about is what to take out, that is how to remove minute details which will not add to playability. As I go through further design refinements, my fixes often involve putting bits of detail back in. As I generally like all Powers to start equal, accuracy has to bend to equalize Powers, just like Calhamer didn't start Germany out with five armies, or Britain with five fleets in Standard.

VonPowell: Also, it's important to keep in mind that historical accuracy can only go so far in a "simulation" as abstract as Diplomacy. Units do not have to worry about logistics. Terrain features don't slow down movement, but arbitrary lines on the map do. Turns last six months. Unit morale, technology, and fighting skills are not accounted for. National economies are only crudely represented. Etc. Etc. Let's face it. Diplomacy on many levels is little better than Risk in terms of simulating WWI. It's unfair to expect Diplomacy to replicate history too closely.

VonPowell: Still, there is often no need to openly violate history either. Why, for example, start Diplomacy in 1901 yet use a map that represents Europe in 1913? It's a little thing, I know, but why do it? Would Diplomacy be any different if the first game turn was Spring 1913? I don't think so. All we really accomplish when we do something so obviously wrong is give people a reason to nit-pick (and design their own variants to correct the "flaws"). The bottom line to this long note is that I believe you can indeed balance historical accuracy and play balance/playability. In fact, if done right, particularly in regards to the map, historical accuracy can enhance play balance/playability, particularly if the time period being represented showed a level of balance between the protagonists.

Burgess: There are lots of comments in the hobby literature on map design guideposts, ratios of centers to provinces, stalemate lines, and the like; but how do you approach putting a new map together? Where do you start? How do you test it and refine it?

VonPowell: When I first drew the map that would eventually become 1900, I used the basic Diplomacy map as my guide. I adjusted my concept map to conform with the ideas I had included in an article that appeared in *Diplomacy World* 81 (Improving New Improved Diplomacy). Even before the first playtest, I made a change (added Alsace) based on my belief that the more muscular Germany that appears in 1900 could take advantage of France. As I drew the map that would be used in the first playtest, I started tweaking several of the internal Great Power boundaries to better replicate the historical state/province boundaries. The first playtest showed me that the variant needed some work. Britain was much too strong. To fix this, I redrew North Africa significantly, removed Iceland as a SC, and tweaked the Middle East to make Turkey more of a menace to Egypt. I also got an excellent suggestion from one of the players, namely the inclusion of Gibraltar. While revising the map to incorporate my changes, I continued to refine the internal boundaries of each Great Power. The second 1900 game revealed another flaw. Austria-Hungary and Germany could combine to virtually ensure the Tsar's doom. Fortunately, the fix (enlarging Bohemia so that it touched Budapest) enhanced the historical accuracy of the map overall. The next three 1900 games used the same map. All three ended in Turkish solos. While the three Sultans were all excellent players, I detected a design flaw that allowed Turkey to easily become the ally of choice in the east. The problem was a minor one, however, and demanded a subtle change. Almost by luck, I stumbled on one (i.e., the elimination of Smyrna as a SC and the creation of a SC in Syria). This change worked wonders on the dynamics in the Mediterranean and would prove to be the last true map change. While all this was going on, I finished up my work on the Great Power internal boundaries. The very last change occurred in Aug 03, six years after I

introduced 1900, when I redrew Berlin to make it look more like historic Brandenburg and less like East Germany. The 1900 map has remained the same since. The pattern throughout this map evolution was to come up with an initial concept, test it, discuss the test with interested parties, refine the product, test it, discuss it, refine it, and on and on until I finally came up with the map that I thought was "perfect." Of course, it wasn't perfect. As I mentioned earlier, I retained some things from Standard Diplomacy because I wanted the map to look basically familiar to potential new players. This made basic map design relatively "simple," but resulted in such historical anomalies as Trieste. With Ambition & Empire (A&E), Jeff Kase and I started with a largely clean slate and we able to do pretty much what we wanted to right from the start. The emphasis was on being as historically accurate as we could be without sacrificing play balance. Our fundamental belief was that the period we were gaming (post Seven Years War Europe) was one of the most militarily and politically balanced periods in Europe's history. If we could recreate this balance on the map, we thought (correctly, I believe) that we'd have a pretty good variant. I won't bore anyone with a blow-by-blow of how the A&E map changed over time. Instead, I'll simply state that the process used with the 1900 map was used again: 1) concept, 2) test, 3) discussion, and 4) refinement. For A&E, much more so that 1900, feedback from players and observers was critical. The handprints of many people are all over the map, though, of course, Jeff and I retained the final approval on all changes. Since A&E was first introduced in 2000, fourteen games have been played using seven different versions of the map. With version five, we thought we were done, but we couldn't stop tinkering. Version six, in some ways, represented a step backward, but we believe we corrected things with version seven. We are now fairly confident A&E is ready for prime time (though, I'll acknowledge that at least one longtime A&E fan felt we should have stopped at version five...can't please everyone!). I'm sure that's more than enough on this topic for now.

Burgess: Actually, not, each of you wrote a lot about this and could have written more, that shows what a key issue this is, here's Benjamin's take....

Hester: The discovery of stalemate lines and identification of ideal center/province ratios emerged from decades of standard Diplomacy play where expert players reduced the tactical aspect of the game to a science. It is not necessary to attempt to replicate all those years of work for a new variant before taking it to press. Stalemate lines will emerge in playtesting, and grossly imbalanced "pockets" of territory with globs of SCs (or vacant of any SCs) are often apparent.

Hester: Again - yet another sales pitch for the Realpolitik adjudicator program - you can test your variant endlessly by running scenarios in Realpolitik, and discover many of the "glitches" in your design before you ever subject

players to the frustration of finding them out during a playtest. Nothing can replace "playing" all positions yourself in a simulated game(okay, several simulated game(s) to ensure that each position is balanced. Pursuing that balance in variant design also generally clears up problems with stalemate lines and center/province ratio imbalances naturally anyway.

Hester: To answer the question - it is best to start from history. (for historical based variants) By the nature of the game, many Diplomacy players are history buffs who love the idea of playing out a "What if?" scenario and rewriting history (i.e. leading Germany to conquer Europe in WW1.) Design the map and allocate the SCs in accordance with historical accuracy, then run tests. Lots of tests, both in play and on adjudicator programs. Revise the design only as required for balance, and then attempt to preserve as much historical accuracy as possible.

Hester: For non-historical/non-standard (i.e. new units (air, e.g.), movement rules, etc.) variants (which I generally disdain, but will address anyway :-)) - attempt to create some sort of design balance when you draw the map. Symmetry, radial design, and/or equilateral shapes work best for starting points, but can be somewhat boring if there aren't some adaptations to it. Beyond that, we have left Diplomacy, I think and gone on to something else, so I'll stop there.

Burgess: And then David Cohen's take....

Cohen: Well, once I have decided on the geographical extent and time period for the variant, I dig up a "clean" map, and crop it to the boundaries I want, then resize as necessary (basically, I want it to be the minimum size I can have so that names, a unit symbol and a Supply Center Symbol will fit into the smallest provinces of the map. This would be an outline map, no physical features or political or other markings. Next step, to the extent I haven't already thought about it, is to start on boundaries and Supply Centers. Many times, I will put some of the neutral Supply Centers on the board, but not all, since until I have everything plotted out, I will not be able to figure out where all the neutrals should be. As for as Supply Centers for the Powers are concerned, many times I mark them, but not the internal boundaries for the Power in question. I will set those up a bit later, when I see what the relationships between the Powers are. My pre-existing knowledge and research will give me historical relationships between the Powers, pointing to directions for design, to give each Power a facsimile of the options it had historically, and sometimes, additional options as well.

Cohen: With regard to ratio of Supply Centers to the total number of provinces ("density"), I have come to the conclusion that less is more. That is, a less dense map will allow for more freedom of movement, and hinder the formation of stalemate lines. I don't like stalemate

lines, because among other reasons, they often lead to static and uninteresting play situations. Many of the characteristics of my variants (especially my more recent variants), such as a less dense map, avoiding impassable provinces, Chaos-type build rules or a variation of them, having mostly or all non-Supply Center provinces around the edge of the map, so that all Powers are somewhat vulnerable to flanking attacks, and having no two Powers start with adjacent home Supply Center, are designed to help create fluidity of play and/or minimize the influence of stalemate lines.

Cohen: Having more spaces for the sake of having them is also something I avoid, since putting a bunch of empty provinces on the map with no significant possibility for using them just makes the map both busy and unnecessarily large. My general rule of thumb is that all non-Supply Center provinces, land or water, should border at least one Supply Center province. Options for each Power are vital. Each Power should have at least three neighbors (which I define as at least one of a pair of Powers being able to put a unit in at least one of the other Power's starting Supply Centers in the first year of play) or near neighbors (which I define as a pair of Powers which can influence at least one common neutral Supply Center in the first year of play), which they could either plausibly ally with or attack. This would generally mean each Power has many plausible sets of opening moves, and a minimum of automatic "A Con-Bul" type moves.

Cohen: Once I think I am fairly well complete, with a variant that is at least basically playable, I look for comments, normally by asking for them in the Diplomacy Variant Workshop, and in Redscap's variant forum, which are the places where a lot of designers tend to talk. I also begin playing through opening scenarios in my head. Once I am familiar with a map, I can plot moves mentally, without actually looking at the map, so each Power has a whole bunch of possible opening combinations checked out, repeatedly. I gradually improve things up in response to comments, and also try to refine the appearance and accuracy of the map, with regard to boundaries and province names. When I think I have done basically all I can do, I arrange a first playtest or two, and will usually make changes in response to the results, before organizing further games.

Burgess: Some variant designers put a lot of effort into considering the starting positions and trying to set up the diplomatic options in the first game year. Do you think that effort is important? How much do you think about creating "Turkeys/Russias/Italies/etc." from the standard Diplomacy game in visualizing opening options? If not, how do you create other conceptual templates for your powers?

Cohen: I touched on several points in my last post, but as far as creating specific analogues of Standard Powers in my variants, I do not do so at all. I let the Powers

create themselves, really, though I do try to keep them similar to their real life inspirations, though geography often takes care of that. Afterwards, when they have been created, I do sometime think about what Standard Power each variant Power is most similar to, since it often is helpful when giving a quick explanation to a potential player, when determining what particular variant Power they might like to play.

Hester: Me either. History is a much better guide for a starting position, and little if anything is gained by making analogies to Standard positions. Which is not to say that it doesn't happen coincidentally. Sengoku has well-known analogies to Austria (Takeda), Turkey (Shimazu) and England (Chosokabe). The key consideration is that all positions have viable alliance options with their neighbours.

VonPowell: I agree with David on this point. Given just about any historical or fictional scenario being simulated, the framework is largely present already. All we need do is read about it. The trick, of course, is fine-tuning the details so that flexibility and balance are maximized without sacrificing the realities of the scenario too much. As I believe I have stated before, the approach I used with 1900 was significantly different from the approach Jeff and I used when designing Ambition & Empire (A&E).

VonPowell: 1900 was meant to be an improvement on Standard Diplomacy. As such, the map was left largely unchanged in many aspects. Of the seven Great Powers, Germany (a new SC), Italy (movement of an SC and elimination of a space, and Russia (addition of a space) underwent changes, while the others remained largely the same. Of course, the map changes just mentioned plus several other that were implemented were sure to alter the dynamics and options of the Great Powers that were familiar to us from Standard Diplomacy. In some cases, I was able to anticipate the effects of the changes and take steps to ensure they didn't negatively impact on play. An example is the inclusion of the Alsace space. With Ruhr now a SC (Cologne), Germany could orchestrate a supported attack on French Burgundy using A Cologne and A Munich. While France could counter this opening, doing so severely limited French options. This put France in the unenviable position of getting off to a painfully slow start or risking a German invasion of its heartland. By inserting Alsace, I was able to defuse the situation AND I got the added bonus of being able to include a space with tremendous historical significance.

VonPowell: Perhaps more often, I didn't anticipate the consequences. Austria-Hungary and Turkey both ended up being redrawn because the new map, combined with the new unit configurations resulted in trends and possibilities that I felt hindered play balance. I want to emphasize this point: even seemingly minor changes may have implications far beyond and far different from

what we anticipate. A&E was an entirely different kettle of fish. Once Jeff and I decided on the period we wanted to simulate (Post Seven Years War Europe), we had to determine which Powers would be played and what they would look like. An important consideration was the fact that Jeff insisted on a variant with more than the usual seven players.

Not surprisingly, several of the played Powers were fairly obvious: Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia. All were major players in the recently concluded Seven Years War. Though not a participant in the Seven Years War, Turkey still seemed like an obvious choice as well. After a lot of discussion, Jeff and I agreed to add Spain, Sweden, and Poland & Saxony (at my insistence). Before the first map was completed, we also added Denmark-Norway, primarily because we felt that Sweden would have a historical advantage if it was the only Power in Scandinavia. Having decided on the played Powers, we then argued (in a friendly way) how many SCs each should start with. Austria and Britain both ended up with four, though that fourth SC (Austrian Netherlands for Austria and Hanover for Britain) was, in some cases, a bit of a white elephant. France, Prussia, Russia, and Turkey were each given three, with the discussion on Turkey being the most lively (i.e., should it be two or three?). The others were given two SCs. Even more significantly, Poland & Saxony's two SCs were separated. The neutrals were also a challenge. Germany was a hodgepodge of minor states that would have been impossible to replicate on the map.

Eventually, we decided to consolidate much of Germany into two neutral spaces (Hesse-Westphalia and Baden-Wuerttemberg). Initially, we had four neutrals in Germany, six in Italy, three in North Africa, and three others. As you might note, this put most of the neutrals in the center of the map. To avoid an Austro-French-Prussian feeding frenzy, a special rule was created that I'll discuss in a future note.

VonPowell: To make a long story short, repeated playing showed that the map needed to be altered to enhance balance and flexibility. Several changes, some significant and others very subtle were implemented over time to fix perceived shortcomings. Six maps later, one can see that much has changed, though the basic framework remains the same. Jeff and I are quite pleased with what we have, but far too few games have been played to determine if we now have it right. The bottom line to all of this is that I believe the preparatory work is important, but no matter how meticulous the planning is there will be consequences and trends not anticipated. The groundwork is critical so that the designer can avoid trying to fix major shortcomings and can instead focus on the fine-tuning. It's hard to tell if a passenger ship has the appropriate cabin amenities if it sinks when launched into the ocean. Assuming a solid foundation, I believe only repeated and carefully monitored playtests will expose the flaws. 1900 was recently tweaked after 120+ games were on the books. The tricky thing is to fix the flaws without creating new problems elsewhere, another topic

I'll get into later.

Golbe: Whenever possible I do attempt to create for each power year-one and year-two options analogous in a general way to those in Standard. That is, no power should be forced to attack one specific other power. Each should have options regarding alliances and openings. The more options the better. I always found the first few years of a game to be the most exciting and I think nothing is more likely to ensure the unpopularity of a variant design than depriving players of that initial excitement.

VonPowell: I absolutely agree on this point. Flexibility and the resulting unpredictability are key elements in successful variant design. One change we implemented after just a few Ambition & Empire playtests was to change the Austro-Turkish border. As originally conceived, Turkey had an opening set of moves that was so clearly its best offensive and defensive choice that to move otherwise would be foolish. This had to be fixed immediately.

Golbe: This can be very difficult and I sometimes spend more time tinkering around with starting positions and/or borders in an attempt to accomplish this than I spend on any other single aspect of design. Why? Because players just hate to get assigned a power and then discover they have little strategic flexibility. And they hate it for a good reason. One of the most attractive aspects of Dip is its unpredictability. I think we all marvel at the richness of articles devoted to openings, and the number of options available.

Golbe: Most of making this happen (for me) entails a bit of geometry. Given the constraints imposed by geography and/or history, how can I fit five or seven or nine powers into their more-or-less assigned spaces while ensuring that each has at least two near neighbors (and preferably one just a bit farther away)? If history dictates that a power must start in a particular place, then I can play with the size and shape of province borders to effectively bring some parts of the map closer together than others. If I have some latitude with initial placement I can use more realistic provinces and adjust starting positions.

Golbe: Note that in either case I'm inevitably sacrificing some realism for improved play balance or better strategic dynamics. That's the iron rule of variant-making: unless you pick the perfect historical conflict to simulate (and so far WWI is about as good as it gets) that compromise will dictate your choices.

Cohen: Well, that's the thing. I don't know that you need to simulate a conflict, and I don't think that's what Calhmer was aiming for. He was (and I try to) evoke a period. The conflicts, if the variant is designed well, will take care of themselves.

VonPowell: Of course, we appreciate there are limits to flexibility even in Standard Diplomacy. I think these limits are what eventually cause players to experiment with Diplomacy variants in the first place. I generally agree with the "two near neighbors and one far neighbor" approach, but math shows there are only so many strategic combinations to work with. For example, at game-start in Standard Diplomacy, Turkey usually cooperates directly with Austria-Hungary or Russia (or is attacked by an A/R). I/T or A/R/T combinations are exceedingly rare and E/T, R/T, and G/T don't occur until mid-game. Still, even these limitations provide us, in most cases, with sufficient flexibility. What we are trying to avoid is A/T or R/T forming EVERY game. That would be quite boring indeed. While I acknowledge that sacrificing realism is largely unavoidable, there are limits to how far I'll go. I suspect this threshold will vary from designer to designer.

Golbe: Sometimes I'll start a fleet or two in a nearby sea zone instead of a port. Once or twice I've started all fleets that way, with a few quite far from home. This gives the designer greatly improved control over game-start dynamics.

VonPowell: In 1900, for example, Britain does not have an army in Liverpool. Instead, it has a fleet in a new non-SC space, Gibraltar. There are several reasons why I thought this suggestion (from Eric Schied after the first playtest) was a good one. Even better, it accomplishes everything I hoped it would.

Golbe: Flexibility in openings can also be improved through the use of special rules. "Army in province X may not move until Fall of Year One" or something like that. Of course, in entirely made-up scenarios this is not nearly as big a difficulty. In fact, the entire design can revolve around overall balance and opening dynamics. I've done a number of designs that fall in between: that is, they have a recognizable degree of historical relevance and realism, but I'm not simulating any one specific historical war. For instance, "Age of Pericles" pits seven powers of ancient Greece (ie Sparta and Athens) against each other in a "war" that never actually took place. But the seven start in quite accurate starting positions. By playing around with which provinces are made SCs, where neutrals are positioned, and so on, I was able to give each player a decent amount of early choice without sacrificing too much of the historical flavor/value of the design. Even so, I couldn't get nearly as much choice as players have in Standard.

Cohen: To me, that makes Age of Pericles a perfectly "valid" historical variant. It wouldn't bother me in the slightest that it doesn't simulate a particular conflict. Ultimately, why don't you think players have as much choice as in Standard? Do you think further map modifications would give that degree of choice?

Golbe: Why is there so much early choice in Standard? Is it because Calhmer went through so much play-testing and made so many adjustments before publishing the game? Or is it because so much mental effort has been spent by players seeking out and perfecting alternate openings? Or is it just luck? Probably all three but my guess is more the first than the others by a large margin. Calhmer spent years perfecting the design and if memory serves hundreds of play-tests were played in the process. Which of us has the time, players or resources to match that? Ain't happening. And that's probably why just about all variants that depart significantly from Standard offer players a LOT less choice in early strategy than Standard.

Cohen: I am not sure I agree here. Many variants do offer less choice than Standard, but I think a fair number out there are at least equal, if not superior, in that regard.

Burgess: I'm not sure Calhmer had all that many more resources, but he did have time, it seems people had more of that back in the 1950's. But you're spot on otherwise.

VonPowell: Like David, I don't agree with this statement. For starters, I think variant designers need to commit to a long term project involving lots of playtests if they truly want to see their variant gain acceptance by the Diplomacy community. Otherwise, any flaws will be exposed and the variant will end up on the dustbin. Fortunately, the advent of judges makes it much easier to gather a useful sample of games more quickly (assuming one can get the variant on a judge). Next, I do believe there are variants (or the potential for variants) that simulate conflicts other than WWI without sacrificing strategic and tactical flexibility. I'll go so far as to contend that variants that fail to achieve a level of flexibility commensurate with Standard Diplomacy are not long for this world, and perhaps rightly so.

Golbe: That's our cross to bear. To make up for that deficiency we drawn pretty maps, or simulate interesting wars, or locate our games in geography that will entice players, or devise rules that offer players some diversion, or whatever. Novelty is important. Offering a good environment for role-playing can be important. In my game "Daimyos" I think I may have used all those "tricks" to overcome what was essentially a rather limited strategic set-up. Lots of people are intrigued by Shoguns and Samurai. Japan is an unusual bit of geography and rather interesting and intriguing. My map was very pretty and even included a pic of a colorful Samurai on horseback. And I had special rules for cavalry and mercenaries. Players really liked the game even though the shape of Japan really limited the strategic options I was able to offer them. They demanded a rematch.

VonPowell: Beautiful maps, interesting rules, and a compelling scenario are all important. However, in the long run, if the game is not a good one at its core, it will

fail to attract repeat players. Without repeat players selling the variant to other players, it will eventually die of neglect.

Cohen: I agree that Japan offers some difficult design challenges. I will leave it to Ben Hester (the designer of Sengoku) to comment in-depth on that.

Hester: Let's not go there. No need to start variant rivalry. I was miffed enough when Joe Janbu's South America was released right on the heels of my South American Supremacy, which I put great effort into balancing and playtesting. In large part, I blame SAS' failure to gain popular support on that simultaneous release. That and I failed to follow my own guidance - SAS has a few "special" rules. Besides, interesting to note that I had to do the very thing Mr. Golbe has mentioned previously to make the linear nature of Japan

work in Sengoku - a little creative editing of historical boundaries to make some provinces adjacent, others not adjacent, overvalue some from a historical perspective by making them SCs, etc. etc. I think we all agree that when push comes to shove, sacrificing SOME historical accuracy is usually a good idea, and often required, to achieve the more important objective of a balanced variant with multiple alliance and tactical options. Pretty map, while important, only lures people in once, good gameplay keeps them coming back for more.

Burgess: Well, there you go, that's a good place to stop. As some teasers for Part II, I asked our Roundtable experts about some of their most variant variants. We also got into an interesting discussion on playtesting. Ah, and each of our experts also divulge their biggest mistakes in Variant design. Come back and check it out.

Least Favored Nations

Italian Openings in Diplomacy

by Douglas Kent

You're all set to go. This is it, the Diplomacy gamestart you've been waiting for. Gone are the haunting memories of your last game, where that bastard France convoyed into your England's London in 1902 and set off your rapid demise. Between that, and Russia supporting himself into Norway, you were lucky to make it to 1904. Well, not this time. You've got your map board ready, your opening emails pre-written and needing only minor modification, your mental card catalog of strategies indexed and prepared. You sit, waiting for the game start announcement to arrive in your inbox.

Oh, look, you've got mail! Your mouse hovers over the subject line in anxious anticipation. You click, and wait as the message opens.

Suddenly, your entire body slumps in the chair and a huge sigh can be heard by anyone within a three-mile radius. You're doomed: you've drawn Italy. Might as well start writing your end-game excuses now, right?

We've all been there, believe me. Italy is probably the most difficult nation on the Diplomacy board to master. True, it doesn't generally suffer immediate dissection the way Austria sometimes does, swarmed by three neighbors before you can say "F Trieste to Albania." But the narrow routes out of its territory, as well as only having one neutral supply center within its grasp in 1901 commonly considered fair game (Greece having been claimed by either Turkey or Austria), keep Italy's rate of growth limited early in the game. To make matters worse, by the time you've gotten a second build and started to devise a plan of attack on a neighbor other than Austria, you often have a fortified France or Turkey

(or both) hungrily eyeing your dots like Pac Man after taking a few bong hits.

So what is a Diplomacy player to do? In my experience, the key to Italian success lies in thinking outside the box.

Aside from the obvious anti-Austrian opening of A Ven-Tri, A Rom-Ven, let's take a look at some of the other options available to the Italian in Spring 1901.

The Hammer: A Ven-Pie, A Rom-Ven, F Nap-Tyn (or F Nap-Ion). This is the most neutral of the Italian openings, in that you can easily defend your actions to both Austria and France. You've stayed within your borders, attacked nobody, and at the same time if Austria tries a move on Ven (or France a rare march into Pie) you've successfully bounced either move without incident. In this scenario you have plenty of options left for Fall 1901 if your moves succeeded, and if not you know from which side the attack is coming from. In the meantime, Tunis is yours and your first build can be determined by the results of the Fall move. Even if Austria has gone all-out, ordering A Vie-Tyr and F Tri to Ven or Adr in the Spring, you are able to direct two units to defend Venice in the Fall.

The Lepanto: F Nap-Ion, A Rom-Apu, A Ven H. This opening is the classic anti-Turkish Lepanto, but only if in the Fall we see the A Apu convoyed to Tunis. Otherwise it protects the Italian against immediate Austrian aggression (the A Apu available to support A Ven if necessary in the Fall) while displaying pro-French inclinations. I've used this opening both as anti-Turkish, or on occasion as an arranged opening when allied WITH Turkey to hide my true intentions. Then, if the Austrian is convinced by my Spring orders to leave

himself open, in the Fall I slide into Trieste. Once in a while the Italian may choose to skip the Tunis build in 1901 here if he is sure of the taking of Trieste. In that case he would either convoy into Greece with Turkish support, or even perhaps convoy into Albania to set up a very powerful invasion force for 1902.

The Sneak: A Ven-Tyr, A Rom-Ven, F Nap-Ion. This is a rather common opening, generally used as blatantly anti-Austrian. You're left with two units bordering on Trieste, allowing for a supported attack in the Fall. If Austria tries to get cute and order F Tri-Ven, you've denied him the center. And if it looks like there will be a full-scale battle for Trieste, you have the option of trying to sail into Greece in the Fall with or without Turkish support.

However, one strategy I like to employ every now and then is arranging this opening with Austria in advance. Especially in the face of a suspected F/G alliance, the idea is to make the board believe you and Austria are at war. Then in the Fall you try the sneak, ordering A Tyr-Mun and A Ven-Tyr. If you've convinced Russia to help out, you can see a rapid collapse of the German interior.

The Piedmont Shuffle: A Ven-Pie, F Nap-Ion, A Rom-Apu. This is an odd opening I played recently, for a change of pace. The plan was for a central A/G/I

alliance. I didn't want to order A Ven H because it would signal distrust of my Austrian neighbor, so instead I vacated the center for a quick vacation in the Piedmont mountains. The A Apu/F Ion combination left my options open for the Fall turn. I could go Lepanto with a convoy to Tunis, defend myself if Austria tried to stab me, or leave it for future use. In the Fall I chose to convoy to Tunis, while at the same time making use of the "fake arranged bounce" in Mar; France and I agreed to bounce there for defensive purposes, and instead I held, denying him the use of that SC as a build location. I wasn't planning on attacking France, and in fact never did. This particular strategy requires quite a bit of Diplomacy on the part of the Italian player. But I did find the opening interesting nonetheless.

Look, I'm no expert...I've never had a solo win as Italy. And there are other openings available to Italy. Hopefully this brief article will simply get you thinking about the different possibilities, instead of falling into a routine of the same Italian openings over and over again. I'd love to hear comments, or better yet, why don't **YOU** write up some of your own ideas for an article? Now **THAT** would be thinking outside of the box, wouldn't it?

From the Archives: Eggs in One Basket or Tsarting Out Right

by Chris Warren
(Originally appearing in Diplomacy World #73)

One of the most unique things about playing the Russian in Diplomacy is that not only do you have an opportunity to effect the West or the East, you have no say in the manner of how you do. The dual fleets -- one in the Baltic, one in the Black -- lead to intervention that's as often harmful as helpful. So, the question rests -- how do you dispose of your armies to account for your dual involvement?

I contend that it's best to pick one theater -- and hit it with all available force while securing the other with Diplomacy. This allows actual expansion opportunities instead of a slow tug of war on both sides of the board. And, in most every case, both armies are almost immediately useful. Let's examine the possibilities, depending on your target.

Austria: Probably the favorite first meal for a Russian bear coming out of hibernation, the Austrian attack can be carried out with either an Italian or Turkish ally. In either case, A Mos-Ukr and A War-Gal are almost automatics. F Sev-Rum is usually the move for the southern fleet, but I prefer F Sev-H for a couple of reasons.

First of all, an army in Rumania is extremely useful, much more so than a fleet. In a war with the Hapsburg would you rather control Bla or Ukr/Gal/Bud/Ser? I thought so. By leaving the fleet in Sev, you could still support A Ukr-Rum while allowing A Gal to try some fun stuff. But the Austrian always moves A Vie-Gal, you say? Try this tactic with the Italian: Get Italy to approach the Austrian suggesting this:

Austria: A Vie-Bud, A Bud-Ser, F Tri-Alb

Italy: A Ven-Trl, A Rom-Apu, F Nap-Ion

The plan being to pressure Rumania while covering all bases with Trl-Vie, Bud-Gal, should the evil Russian (you!) try something that this will happen in the fall:

Austria: A Bud-Vie

Italy: A Tri-Tri

Russia: A Gal-Bud, A Ukr-Rum, F Sev S A Ukr-Rum

Extremely nasty, isn't it? It also gets your armies next to each other and isolates the A Vie.

This is a lesson I learned, unfortunately, as the Austrian player. Kudos to Ken Kohn and Eric Aldridge for zinging me with it in conventional play. Playing off a strong R/T will make the Austrian more likely to band together for the Italian, as well as keeping the Black Sea clear. A Serbian or Viennese attack in 1902 suddenly becomes automatically successful, banning Turkish intervention.

Turkey: Russo-Turkish wars are difficult and usually net you little early on because the booty is split 2-3 ways. But if you have other reasons, you had better commit full-force. Objective one is to hold and keep the Black Sea, which means building F Sev in Winter 1901 if at all possible. So what needs to happen for that?

I prefer F Sev-Bla, A Mos-Sev, A War-Ukr. Here is the thinking: if F Sev-Bla goes, chances are that Armenia is clear as well. You can either try A Sev-Arm, F Bla S A Sev-Arm. Terribly effective. Or play it safe: A Sev-Rum, A Ukr S A Sev-Rum, F Bla S A Sev-Rum. Then build F Sev as soon as possible, and fill the gap with the Ukrainian or a newly-build A Mos, if you're lucky enough to get Sweden.

Actually luck has little to do with it. You need some pretty severe diplomacy to hold your northern position. But that's the second part to this strategy -- keep things in the west as confused as possible until you clear the east (it works exactly the same if you go north/west first). The way to slow things down is to get 2 players in the theater to go at it (I/A vs T or F/G vs E) while offering a little help or, especially against the Turk, non-intervention.

Nobody said this would be easy, but it's better to plead your case on one half of the board and over run the other half militarily than doing both verbal and tactical fencing in each. Now let's look at the northern attacks:

Germany: Attacks on Germany can be quick and devastating because you'll usually get a lot of help. The problem with this is, that more people who know, the better the chances someone will bet on. The spearhead of your attack is A War, fighting it out for either Pru or Sil. I say it all depends on what you think the German will do. If you believe your attack is a surprise, I prefer A War-Sil, A Mos-StP. If the British forbid StP, Lvn is an inferior substitute. Here is why:

If Germany opens F Kie-Den, their obvious fall move is F Den-Swe. If you move F Bot-Bal

and A StP-Fin, he still gets only one Scandinavian build, you none, but now instead of threatening Swe was a unit or two, you have units on Swe, Den, Kie and Ber. Add a little pressure in the West and it is too much for the Kaiser to handle. If he moves F Kie-Hol, you have the option of convoying any army (as you could from Lvn) or moving F Bot-Swe, A StP-Fin. From there the Baltic is yours, or, with Detente with the Germans, a three unit attack on Norway in the Spring 1902 is possible. The advantage Lvn has over StP, besides not scaring the English, is moving A Lvn-Pru in Fall 1901, but since you'll build A War there isn't much point to the move.

What if the Germans are expecting an attack? Let the fleet go StP-Bot-Bal and use the armies in the spring as follows: A War-Pru, A Mos- War, and in the fall, A Pru S A War-Sil, A War-Sil. A sparring match, true, but how long will the British and French ignore an exposed German backside.

England: The English attack is really the only one that does not require both armies, with only one English territory (Nwy) handy. But don't let A War stray to far. A move to StP as a F StP(nc) vacates in Spring 1902 may be required.

As with the southern strategy, you need a two on one on one of your neighbors to keep you safe, either A/I versus T or I/T versus A. Shoot for the former, since a retreating Austrian in Galicia or (heaven forbid) the Ukraine can cause all sorts of trouble. In addition the Turks take longer to kill, thus giving you more time to consolidate your position.

So in summary, no matter who is your target:

1. Put all of your eggs in one basket (north or south) and go for fast gains so you can defend yourself.
2. Negotiate furiously in the theater you're largely ignoring.
3. Try to get your bored neighbors to attack a witch (England or Turkey).

Good luck to you and may your next game start be your borscht ever.



Knives and Daggers

The Diplomacy World Letter Column

Tim Haffey – Comments on the Diplomacy Hobby as it used to be and how it is now.

In the Postal Diplomacy days all games, as you know, were played out in dip zines. The game moves came out in a monthly zine, more or less, and the zine would also contain press in the games that could be very entertaining reading. Other things were often included in the zine also such as articles, convention reports, crossword puzzles, cartoons, interviews with various persons, etc. All of this promoted others to submit things to their favorite zine.

Today there are still a few postal zines left but only a handful. Most games today are played on the internet via email. Gamemasters of these games seldom include anything more than the game moves so the zine feel is not there. Also, since email is used and even IM, it makes the use of Press less and less relevant. Few of these games are tracked or trackable. The games only exist between the players and the Gamemasters and there is no central archive of the games like we had with Everything in the old days.

The judge systems are very popular too, but they make a game very impersonal as most Judge players don't want to provide you with their emails for direct communications. They prefer going through the Judge program - a process I find down right unsociable. As you know we made some very long-term relationships in our Dip gaming careers. I have friends I met in dip games and then met in person at a convention or ftf game later that I have know for over 30 years now. But this seems to be a thing of the past, except, perhaps, at conventions. And, there seems to be a lot of conventions lately but not everyone can afford to go to them all.

I have found myself in the same position as you numerous times, Tim. The hobby that I started with is no more. Much of the community feel is gone. Most of the games carry a lot less flavor or personality compared to the ones I remember in the "good old days." Email communications are brief, impersonal, and rarely include anything other than game-related material. This compares to back when I started Maniac's Paradise (just about the beginning of my hobby involvement, a month or so after I saw my first issue of Shawn Erikson's Victim's Wanted) when the main topic of letters were often the zines themselves rather than the games contained within. Over time you really got to know some of the people you were playing with. You knew where they lived; if one of them was passing through your city, sometimes they'd call to arrange a meeting. I

consider myself very fortunate to have developed some of the friendships I have since I first put an ad in The General looking for Diplomacy players.

I guess all I can say is, if you want a certain type of hobby all you can do is search for sectors which match that, and do what you can to help keep those areas thriving. I am not in a position right now which allows for a great deal of face-to-face gaming (although I am slowly trying to build a Dallas-region ftf group). So I spend most of my hobby time these days on the few play-by-mail zines I read like The Abyssinian Prince, off-the-shelf, Northern Flame, and Damn the Consequences. Then there are the web-based publications like Western Front, Boris the Spider, The Blue Nose Special, and Corps Diplomatique. I also do a subzine for TAP called "Eternal Sunshine" which I put as much of my personality into as possible; I don't want it to be just a games flyer. I want it to reflect who I am, and hopefully help get others to put some of their own selves back into their letters and feedback. The games are fun, but they aren't the be all and end all of what I want to accomplish.

Jim Burgess and I are both committed to trying and make Diplomacy World a zine filled with personality, colorful stories, and details about not just the games but the people and the places and the faces behind the armies and fleets. Hopefully you'll find some of our efforts are successful. We can't turn back the clock and rejoin the hobby that once was, but with luck we can at least help make today's hobby a little bit more the way we want it. I haven't given up yet!

Thanks for the letter Tim. Now how about the rest of you? We'd love to get some true feedback on this issue. Send those letters in! What articles did you like? What would you like to have seen more of? Ideas, suggestions, praise, complaints, criticism, even a message as simple as "I liked the issue" or "I read the issue" would be appreciated.

PHOTO CONTEST! *To celebrate the return of Diplomacy World, we're offering a little contest. Look through the photos in Laurent Joly's PrezCon article, and try to identify as many of the people pictured as you can. Be descriptive, so we know who you are referring to. Make it fun and creative. Two entries will be printed next issue – the funniest, and the one with the most correct answers. Plus, one entry chosen at random will win a prize. Send your answers to diplomacyworld@yahoo.com. Deadline for entries is July 24th, 2007.*

Moot: *n* a deliberative assembly primarily for the administration of justice.

Weasel: *vb* to escape from or evade a situation or obligation. *n* 1: small carnivorous mammal that is able to prey on animals larger than itself. *n* 2: slippery and scheming Diplomacy player indigenous to the Chicago area.

Weasel Moot I

June 9-10, 2007

Elks Veterans Memorial, Chicago



◀ *We'll be playing two boards per round in the elegant Reception Room of the Elks Veterans Memorial. The room is pictured here.*

When: June 9-10, 2007.

Where: Elks Veterans Memorial, 2750 N. Lakeview Ave., Chicago, IL 60614. (Free parking on site!)

What: A three-round Diplomacy tournament.

How much: The entry fee is \$40. Pre-registration fee is \$35. (\$20 for students and kids; \$18 if they pre-register.) You may pre-register through June 4 by PayPaling to ***redpawn3@yahoo.com***.

Schedule:

Saturday, June 9

Round 1

Registration: 9 to 9:30 a.m.

Board Call: 9:45 a.m.

Round 2

Registration: 5:15 to 5:45 p.m.

Board Call: 6 p.m.

The call period for Rounds 1 and 2 will be between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m.

Sunday, June 10

Round 3

Registration: 8:15 to 8:45 a.m.

Board Call: 9 a.m.

Call Period: Between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.

The awards ceremony will begin 15 minutes after the end of round 3.

Questions? Contact Tournament Director Jim O'Kelley at jimthegrey1013@yahoo.com or visit our Yahoo group at games.groups.yahoo.com/group/ChicagoDip/ or our website at umbreho.dyndns.org/wcw.