A C E L D A M A

"From twenty years old and upwards, all that are able to go
forth to war: thous shalt number them by their armies."

Aceldama would like to congratulate one of its players who has just
won a game. Jack Greene, who plays France in 1967AT, Arma-7, has just
won Xenogogio game X-4, as Russia. Called the Peerijavo Caper, X-4
used a variant board in which a sliver of a province was inserted,
touching Venice, Trieste, Tyrolia, and the Adriatic, i.e., much the
territory of the pre-war Austrian province of Croatio. Our congatulat-
ions to Jack on this win, his first.

Game 1967AY, Arma-8:

T H U N D E R I N G   S I L E N C E   F R O M   W E S T
CONFUSED SIGNALS LEAD TO AUSTRIAN DEBACLE

1906 Spring moves:

England (Harris): No moves received. Armies Moscow, Edinburgh, Mar-
               seilles, fleets Livonia, North Sea, Mid-Atlantic,
               Western Mediterranean, all stand. Fleet Tyrrhenian
Sea stands.

Germany (Schow): No moves received. Armies Budapest, Galicia, Warsaw,
               Bohemia, Munich, Berlin, Piedmont, fleet Gulf of
Bothnia, all stand.

Turkey (Walker): Army Constantinople to Bulgaria. Fleet Black Sea
               support army Rumania. Army Rumania support ITALIAN
army Albania to Serbia. Fleet Ionian Sea to Tyrrhenian Sea. Fleet
Aegean support army Constantinople to Bulgaria. Fleet Greece support
army Constantinople to Bulgaria.

Italy (Welsh): Army Albania to Serbia. Fleet Tunis support TURKISH
               fleet Ionian Sea to Tyrrhenian Sea. Fleet Naples support
TURKISH fleet Ionian to Tyrrhenian Sea. Army Rome to Venice.

Austria (Powlesland): Army Tyrolia to Vienna. Army Trieste support
               army Tyrolia to Vienna. Army Serbia to Budapest.

Russia (Long): No moves received. Armies Ukraine and Sevastopol both
               stand.

France (Celestre): No moves received. Fleet Spain, south coast, stands.

Underlined moves do not succeed. The English Fleet Tyrrhenian Sea is annihilated being dislodged and having received no orders. The Austrian army Serbia is likewise annihilated, being dislodged and having no spaces available for retreat. Deadline for moves for Fall is set for Thursday, 30 January 1969.

Press Release

Vienna. The government of Austria extends congratulations to the new government of Italy and wishes them the best of luck in these difficult times. We also hope that our two governments will be able to work together satisfactorily in combating the menace of Anglo-German expansionism. In furthering that end, we wish to announce our agreement to the accord suggested and mediated by the government of Turkey, and furthermore declare war on England, as well as Germany.

The gamesmaster would like to explain the rather odd change in deadlines for this set of moves. The previous deadline was set for Boxing Day, Thursday, 27 Dec. 1968. There was no mail delivery that day so that the deadline hat to be set back to Friday. Moves were typed Friday, for both games, and run off Saturday. We were then in the middle of the coldest period ever recorded here in December, the temperature fell to fifty below Saturday night. I had originally planned to go into Medicine Hat Saturday afternoon to mail the issue (the local post office is not open Saturday afternoon) but was daunted by the cold and wind. I could find no one on the afternoon shift-bus who lived near a post office and one could not ask any one to go out of his way in that weather, so I held the issue for mailing on Monday. On this game the deadline was set back from the 7th to the 9th and a note to that effect was scribbled on the envelope. In the other game, with nearly 3 weeks to the announced deadline, I thought they could absorb the two days, but that would have been a hardship here with the short deadline. It is now a more comfortable 10 or 15 below.

Calhamer Point Count Rating List (60).

4.3333	John Smythe	1.5	James Latimer
			Harold Naus
4.0	Charles Wells		
	Monte Zelazny	1.3333	Larry Peery
			John McCallum
3.0	James Dygert		Charles Reinsel
	John Koning		
	Don Miller	1.25	Alan Huff
	Jerry Pournelle		
		1.2	Dan Barrows
2.2	Eugene Prosnitz		Dave Lebling
			Mehran Thomson
2.0	Derek Nelson		Conrad von Metzke
	Bud Pendergrass		
		1.0333	Rod Walker
1.5333	Charles Turner		

1.0	John Beshara	0.75	Frank Clark
	Tom Griffin		Terry Kuch
	Ed Hälle		Banks Mebane
	Paul Leiton		
	James MacKenzie	0.5	Rick Brooks
	James Munroe		Ken Davidson
	Harold Peck		
	Bruce Pelz	0.3333	Don Berman
	Buddy Tretick		Ken Levinson
			Chris Wagner
0.75	Frank Clark		
	Terry Kuch	0.2	Hugh Anderson
	Banks Mebane		Doug Beyerlein
			Sherry Heap

Underlining indicates a change since the last edition of the listing.

Epistles

Larry Peery, 4567 Virginia Ave., San Diego, Calif., 92115:

The whole question of when a player can withdraw from a game gracefully, if it is possible at all, is something I have thought about for some time. This because I have known for some time that I would be forced to cut back on my games due to pressing obligations elsewhere and especially if my own magazine was to maintain any kind of quality.

It seems to me, speaking for those who have been on both sides: having quit and having been quitten upon (if you will pardon that bit of phraselogy), that such an act is not always either bad or inconsiderate.

In several cases, such as sTab III where Roland Tzudiker has apparently given up what remaining forces he has, it is merely a recognition of the obvious. A player cannot any longer act as an effective agent in the game. In some games a player quots long before such a state has occurred. This is a condition rampant in some of Brannan's games.

Another, more interesting example would be in the former Arma-8 where as Italy I have been ham-strung by a variety of handicaps, some if not all of which were my own creation. The fact remains that a game such as that where a player was hiding his true identity in a very critical stage of the game (the opening) but it was still known to the gamesmaster and another player, who served as a tool, willing or otherwise, for the fraud, is almost impossible to play. However, this could be borne as part of the interest of the game.

More interesting perhaps is what a player does when he finds he can no longer play his country to the best advantage of that country, regardless of his position. In other words: some players, for a variety of reasons, usually are set-upon immediately by their neighbours when they get in a game (Valhalla and the mass attack on John Smythe, the attack on Charles Reinsel in one of the Xenogogic

games, etc.), and have no chance to play an effective game. If such is
the case I could hardly blame them for playing behind a facade. In
this particular game I found that I could not play to its fullest
potential my position as Italy. It was bad enough to have three
old foes in it, but when my only ally turned against me that meant the
end. However, I had hopes the position could be saved, perhaps by
someone capable of raising less adrenalin among my enemies. So, if
Italy was to survive the player had to go. I don't know if the
experiment will be effective, it may be too late. However, the
question of whether a losing position can be saved by a change in
players remains.

((+(My own view is this. Players should, as far as possible, conduct
themselves as they would among friends at a social gathering. If you
had agreed to : ''p be one of a bridge foursome you would regard
this as in some sense an obligation. Not a major one. If something
arose, say in your job or in your family, which required your presence
that evening, it would certainly take precedence over the game of
bridge. However, you would certainly, in such a case, inform the
other members of the group as early as possible so that they could
make other arrangements, either to find another fourth, or to break
up the party so that they would not waste half the evening waiting for
you to arrive. I think exactly the same principles apply in postal
Diplomacy. A player who, for whatever reason, feels he must drop
out of a game, is well within his rights to do so. He should, in
such a case, do as you did in Arma-8, namely inform the other players
(normally through the gamesmaster) so that action can be taken to
replace him, if that is the magazine's policy, with the least possible
disruption of the game. Given the length of time that the game often
takes (Game 1965C, still incompleted was begun exactly four years ago)
it is inevitable that some players will find that they have to drop
out. Let them resign. But a player who drops without resigning shows
a complete lack of consideration for the other players in his game.
A bridge player who is in the habit of leaving other players in the
lurch will not get many invitations. I see no reason why the same
principle should not apply in postal Diplomacy. A player who drops
out of a game, without formally resigning, if I know of it, will not
play in any future game which I originate. By this, of course, I
mean a player who drops out of a viable position. I must say I can't
get very excited about the case of a player with a force or two
remaining, who has no hope diplomatic or tactical; all he can do is
stand and hope for the best, and if his stand orders are tacit
rather than explicit, what the hell. But a player with any sort of
half way reasonable position has exactly two choices: 1. the prefer-
able choice, play the game, 2. resign. Had all gamesmasters from the
beginning made it a rule that those who did neither of those things
but dropped out without bothering to say "good-bye" would not be
welcome in their games, there would today be fewer postal
Diplomacy players, somewhat fewer games, and a higher percentage of
enjoyable games.
        Your main point, that the best interests of a certain position
may sometimes be served by the player resigning so that the position
can be re-assigned to some one else is an interesting one. One can
certainly think of instances where such resignation would perhaps be

very upsetting to the opposition. As Games Research state in their publicity, Diplomacy is a game with a personal element. Sometimes that personal element takes full command, and there can be little doubt that there have been instances where "Get so-and-so" has been a far more important motive than any desire to win. In such a case for the person being got to resign, leaving his attackers deployed against a replacement for whom they have no particular enmity, may be a disconcerting piece of one-upmanship. -jamcc)+))

Allan B. Calhamer, 518 North Spring Avenue, LaGrage Park, Ill., 60525.:

Regarding your question about spy type games - I have considered the matter, and was aware of the publicity to which it might tie in; but I haven't yet decided the game I want on this subject. Your letter has started me thinking along this line again, however.

On the subject of a crypto variant of Diplomacy, let me suggest that the following is the problem: you must devise rules such that the codes employed will tend to be neither too easy nor too hard to crack. It is not hard to devise codes that are, for certain practical purposes, virtually unbreakable. Where the commander of a vessel, say, can have a whole code book with him, and "oranges" means "six destroyers" and "back" means "five destroyers" and so forth, the code probably never will be cracked unless the book is captured or a spy photographs a copy (at either end of the line). ((+(Thanks for telling us what "oranges" means; much of what has recently appeared in sTab is now beginning to fall into place. -jamcc)+))

Most military decoding concerns "field codes", which are ciphers (one letter substitutes for another letter - but not invariably throughout the message - that would be too easy - each letter is encoded with a different alphabet, cycling every 6 or 8 letters or so, according to some simple key). The point is that they don't ...' want to give a code book to every second lieutenant, because the books could be captured.

The ciphers used can be cracked but usually it takes a few hours - which is as much secrecy as is needed in that type of message.

Individuals playing the game would vary greatly in their ability to crack codes, too.

There is one great advantage to crypto-Diplomacy over just cracking codes, though: when you crack the code you gain something, within the general excitement of the Diplomacy game. ((+(This is the whole point. -jamcc)+))

I have some other, possibly more concrete, ideas. It has to be decided what information the player is to be given by the games-master ... he must be told where his units are at the end of the move... if his units contacted other units, possibly he should be told what units they contacted (one would think he would take a few prisoners anyway and be able to tell what country they came

from and whether they were attached to an army or a task force).
Maybe he should be told everything inside h is own country; also
whenever territory controlled by him is entered.

A player might handle his code cleverly, but a clumsy
gamesmaster might tip just about everything in his response, which is
in the same code. Even if the GM used other codes in reply, the
players light get too much information from the GM's reply. (if his
reply is highly abbreviated, there may be only a few things it can
mean). If the code book approach is used, the players can send a table
in advance which changes the code every season (maybe time-dependent
meanings can be ruled out), then the codes are too hard to crack.

How about this one? The players send moves to the gamesmaster
in the clear – he publishes them in the clear. They also send him
code packets intended for the other players. Only the GM knows who
the players are, then the diplomacy is published in code. If you can
crack the codes you can read the diplomatic messages between other
powers.

One bad feature is that diplomacy gets pretty verbose –
another is that one would need three or four publications per move,
to permit talk back and forth – there would probably be a tendency
to play away and forget the codes.

Of course, diplomacy in the clear might as well be permitted,
too ..., there might even be codes buried in the clear text. If every-
body gave up and just diplomatized in the clear, it might be an inter-
esting game and publication right there.

Variant: every two years or so, players may change their
codes ... often enough that those who didn't get the hang of it at
first can improve their codes, and the better ((crytanalysts)) get new
codes to crack; not so often that cracking them is no use.

If a field code is required, then the players can be permitted
to change it as often as they want, practically. Maybe the code can
be, only one code of the code book variety, per game...but one
"field code" per move.

It seems that you would need seven players who are reasonably
good and determined; then a gamesmaster who was willing to type a
lot of stuff in code; then the game would go fairly slowly. Possibly
certain top limits would have to be placed on the amount of both
coded and clear material which could be sent from A to B.

Also, possibly the GM would have to decode everything to
see that the players were not tipping their identities in the coded
material – he would have to reserve the right to censor such material.
Still, since some of these people could be in contact anyway, they
might connect some way and circumvent the limitations of the game format.

In fact if one player just announced his identity to all

the other players, he would be more accessible, which would be an advantage. Consequently the players would have to be people who wanted to adhere to the variant more than they wanted to win .... and still be good Diplomacy players!

Also there is the possibility that a player would do better by sending everything in the clear - at least you can trust him - and the whole code idea would be subverted. After all, after France has decoded a message from Germany to Russia he still doesn't know whether to believe it or not.

One last notion. If you're using players .nknown to each other who diplomatize in code, you might as well encode the moves too - though I think a constant code would be pretty breakable and the nature of the GM's response in code might offer unequal opportunities for cracking.

The GM of course would be entitled to answer, in the clear if the code provided by the player was not wholly adequate.

Is it fair to encipher stuff and write it in French too? Where code and cipher are both permitted, is it fair for a player to encipher the coded message?

((+(Before answering this letter in detail, Allan, I think it might be well to explain how the correspondence started. Some six weeks or so ago, while musing over the great popularity at present of spy fiction, spies in films and TV programs, and so on, let's call it the James Bond syndrome, and triggered by reading David Kahn's "The Code Breakers", I got to wondering if a Secret Service variant of Diplomacy could be developed. I wrote to Mr. Calhamer and, at about the same time, to Charles Wells to suggest the following variant:

1. In contrast to Mr. Calhamer's variant, above, the player's list for the game would be announced in the usual way. I.e., it would not be, as his is, a game of Anonymity.

2. On being assigned a position at the board each player would devise a code which he would use to transmit his orders. He would inform the gamesmaster of the code and, preferably, they would exchange a few practice messages in that code to ensure that both understood it thoroughly.

3. The player's moves would be published in his code. The games-master's remarks to that player would also be published in that player's code. For instance, "Your army Prussia failed in its attempt to Silesia. Your army Galicia is dislodged and must retreat to either Warsaw or Bohemia." would be encoded in the code of the player owning those forces and so published.

4. Many transposition ciphers depend on a key word. Such a word used by a player must appear in the clear, for example by being included in a press release sent in clear. If the player fails to submit such a plain text use of his key word the

gamesmaster would publish it form him. This would greatly
increase the risk of its being understood, however, as the games-
master can't be expected to spend much time devising an innocent
looking cover for use of the word "oranges", for example. That is
the player's business.

5. The player may change his code as often as he likes. However,
at each change one full set of orders, to all his forces, must
be sent in both codes th e old and the new. The two messages
need not be identically phrased, for instance, they might
order the various units in a different sequence. But the actual
orders must appear in both messages. Any order given in one
message, and omitted in the other, would be given by the
gamesmaster in clear.

This game, which we can call Secret Service Diplomacy, or
crypto Diplomacy has, I think possibilities. I think the preferable
way to play it would be for the players to send their orders to the
gamesmaster, together whith any propaganda or what not, and for
the gamesmaster to Xerox them. W at he would send out would then be
a Xeroxed dossier, contiining the moves of all players, plus a sheet
from the gamesmaster himself, with his instructions to the players.
Note that many gamesmasters, including, in particular, this one, are
poor typists. Many transposition ciphers are converted into gibberish
by the addition or omission of a single letter. The use of Xerox
gets around that difficulty. Even a poor typist can type correctly
a line or two, for instance the coded version of the passage in
paragraph 3, above; but an extended text would almost certainly see
errors creep in.

Now, to return to the answer of your letter, Mr. Calhamer.
Frankly, I think that your proposed anonymous version of this is
unplayable. Consider the player for Russia, for example, who wants
an alliance with Austria against Turkey, not knowing who is playing
either of those countries. He puts his coded appeal in the magazine.
How does he know that it will be the Austrian player and not the
Turkish one, who will be able to read it. And if he guesses who the
Austrian player is (and postal Diplomacy is a small world, he may be
able to do so) why jeopardize his security by putting his offer in code
for all to puzzle over? Why not write directly? There is the further
point that such a game does not closely mimic reality. The "realism"
of Diplomacy can be exaggerated. However, there is a good deal of
it there and it is one of the great appeals of the game. But, in the
real world, the French and German governments are never in the slightest
doubt who is in practical control of the other; if, in the middle of a
war, either of them want to put out peace feelers, they haven't the
slightest doubt about whom their agents in Switzerland or Sweden
should contact.

Your main dislike of my proposal appears to be that you fear
that the gamesmaster's clumsiness will give away a player's code. This
is a difficulty faced by actual governments too, of course. Their
codes may be designed by specialists; they then have to be used by

submarine commanders with dozens of other things on their minds. I
would say that it is up to the player to devise a code that is as
fool proof as possible. His instructions for its use should also be
complete and clear. If he doesn't do so, and if, as a result, the
word "oranges" appears with monotonous regularity in the gamesmaster's
instructions to that player so that everyone guesses it means "army"
then that is the player's failure, not the gamesmaster's.

Your point that the codes adopted may be too easy or too
difficult is well taken. My feeling is that the way to get around this
is not by a long set of rules as to what is and what is not allowable
but by pressure of events. For instance, a dictionary code, with many
replications, is, as you say, virtually unbreakable. But if the
deadline for the first move is 3 weeks after the announcement of the
players' list, he will not have time to devise such a dictionary
and have several practice runs with the gamesmaster. He may well
decide to make do with a simpler cipher. And even if a player does
not succed in breaking his enemy's code at all, he is not completely
without resource. Reconnaisance orders are still open to him. For
example if, in Spring 1901, the French player orders army Paris to
Burgundy and is told in the next issue that the move was stood off,
he knows for certain that somewhere in the German orders there stands
the statement "Army Munich to Burgundy", and that somewhere in the
gamesmaster's instructions to Germany there is something such as
"Move of army Munich failed". At a level considerably lower than
a full army, tranch raids and minor attacks "   ..   . in   the
First World War were often made precisely for this purpose, so that
in the spate of enemy wireless messages which would be heard clues
might be picked up as to the code used.

For some of your specific questions. I would say that
to encipher orders given in French would be fair ball. But note that
the player has to use discretion. If he enciphers Turkish and the
gamesmaster doesn't understand the language, he would find coded
in the next issue, "Orders not understood. All units stand, except
army Bulgaria which is annihilated." I would also say it would be
permissible to encipher a coded message. But I would expect the time
element would prevent this being done early in the game. If it appears
later, the duplicate message may well result in cracking anyhow.

One of the things that attracts me to the game is that it
gives another string to the bow of a weak power. In the standard
game an Italy, say, whittled down to 2 forces, and caught between
a large eastern power or alliance, and a large western power or alliance
may find himself with no bargaining position at all. He is worth more
carved up into 2 supply centres than he can possibly offer either
bloc as an ally. In such a case he is going out, that is all. Not
necessarily so in crypto-Diplomacy. Suppose he has succeeded in cracking
the Turkish code, and that it is apparent by the movements of the French
forces that the player for France has not cracked the Turkish code.
It may well be worth the while of the French player to keep Italy
alive, perhaps more to allow it to expand, in return for the
intelligence which the Italian player can provide. Even a player

stabbed and eliminated, may get his revenge within the game himself.
He no longer has supply centres, armies, or fleets; but he still has
the knowledge which he has picked up about the code being used by his
betrayer. He can give very real assistance to every enemy of that power.
Unlike the game over-the-board, it is generally recognized in the postal
game that a stab is unwise unless the stabbed player is to be
eliminated or so seriously crippled as to be no longer a threat. In
this game even that amount of assurance may not be sufficient.

      I wish I had the time and the energy to run such a game. I
would offer one, in spite of the cost of Xerox paper. -jamcc)+))

New Blood.

Dave Etter, 1235 Elliott Drive, Munster, Indiana, USA, 46321,has
      written asking about postal Diplomacy.

Diplomacy is a game invented by Mr. Calhamer, one of whose letters
appears immediately above. It is manufactured by Games Research, Inc.,
48 Wareham St., Boston, Mass., 02118, who will be glad to sell you
a set for the price of $7.50. It is also available at many game stores
and some department stores.

I haven't heard from any of the following magazines, with whose editors
I have trade agreements, for a very long time: Aeolus, Wild 'n Wooly,
Jutland Jollies, La Guerra, Clockorla, Costaguana. If anyone has
any news as to the status of these 'zines I would be glad to have the
information.

Speaking of the James Bond syndrome, as we were above, does anyone
actually read the Ian Fleming tales? I have tackled 3 or 4 of them
and was never able to get beyond the first chapter. It is not that I
am averse to this form of literature - I enjoy the Len Deighton books,
for example - but none of the Bond stories that I have tried
seems to have the slightest interest.