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Number 15.

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 ALBION
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April 23rd 1970.

ALBION is a journal of postal Diplomacy, gradually expanding its frontiers to cover more and more items of general wargaming bent. It is edited and published by Don Turnbull, from the pavement outside 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, England. Any reader who can find my door key deserves a free subscription.

Game fees for all ALBION games are announced at the start of such games. The new game, 70/3 (to commence in issue 17) is announced on page 26. Other games with places currently vacant are listed on page 27. Applications for the latter welcome.

This is the last issue for which subscriptions are 1/- per issue (British Isles and Ireland), 25 cents per issue (U.S.A.) and pro rata elsewhere. Both figures include postage. For explanation of this alarming announcement please consult the first few pages of this issue.

All-for-all trade with other postal Diplomacy magazines is currently limited to those appearing in the trades list. We hope that trade arrangements will be expanded in the future.

ALBION exists primarily to record the progress of postal Diplomacy games taking place within the British Region of AHIKS, or within the area covered by the British Region, AHIKS membership notwithstanding. The magazine also aims to develop into more of an all-round wargames magazine, with Diplomacy playing the major part. Some ALBION games are designed for British players only. The current games, 69/1 and 69/2, are examples. Others will run on double-length deadlines, and hence are open to all. The soon-to-be-commenced 70/3 is an example of an all-comers game. The policy of the magazine is to maintain a reasonable balance between single- and double-length games in future.

ALBION is a member of the Diplomacy Division of the NFFF Games Bureau (Chairman - Don Miller; Division Chief - Rod Walker). We encourage readers to join the Games Bureau as regular members; among other advantages, it will allow you to read the game theory articles twice. Seriously, there are many real advantages - for information consult the editor, or Don Miller.

Diplomacy is a game manufactured and marketed by Games Research Inc., 48 Wareham Street, Boston, Mass. 02118, U.S.A. For availability within the British Isles consult the editor.

Cover by George Forster. Cartoon, at rear by Malcolm Watson.

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Hummmmm - seems I've left little space for editorial meanderings this time. I'm sure you welcome the idea.

In this issue, the featured article concerns the financial status of this ridiculous magazine. If you bear in mind the thought that any cash I lose on ALBION I can't drink, you will find the article funnier than anything we have printed so far. Sure has been a dry year.....

We regret the price increase, of course, and assure you we will try to make a reduction when finances allow. In the meantime, here's a large-ish issue for you to get your teeth into. Saves food....

ALBION ACCOUNTS TO DATE.

During a visit to my supplier of duplicating paper recently, I discovered that said paper had risen in price by 2/- per 500 sheets. This fact, combined with the recent announcement that postal rates are likely to be increased in the near future, set me thinking about another revision to the ALBION subscription rates etc. Therefore I decided to try to find out just what the overall position of the ALBION finances look like, with the following results.

EXPENDITURE.1. Production of issues of ALBION.

Each issue costs me cash in the form of duplicating paper, 'normal' stencils for the ordinary pages, and electronic stencils for the cartoons, covers etc. Prices for these items are:-

Duplicating paper 16/- per 500 sheets. Now 18/-.

'Normal' stencils 1/- each.

Electronic stencils 2/- each.

Correcting fluid negligible, if you will believe it.

A summary for issues 1-14 inclusive looks like this.

<u>Issue.</u>	<u>'Normal' stencils.</u>	<u>Paper.</u>	<u>Electronic stencils.</u>
1	9	180	1
2	15	600	0
3	19	300	1
4	29	550	1
5	12	270	1
6	12	280	1
7	22	445	1
8	22	445	1
9	32	630	1
10	29	560	3
11	30	630	3
12	18	385	2
13	22	585	5
14	20	540	2
	<u>291</u>	<u>6400</u>	<u>23</u>

A few figures need accounting for - I ran off far too many of issue 2, hence the high paper consumption and the large stock of back issues. Issues 10, 11 and 13 were to have had full-colour covers (two of them actually managed it), hence the large number of electronic stencils.

Anyway, the totals are:-

291 'normal' stencils	£14-11- Od.
6400 sheets of paper	£10- 4- 6d.
23 electronic stencils	£ 2- 6- Od.
	<u>£27- 1- 6d.</u>

From this figure must be subtracted cost of stencils and paper which I obtained free in the early days. Call the final total £25.

2. Mailing account.

All issues to British players and subscribers go by first class mail (5d); some issues have been heavier than others, and at odd times the weight was such that British mail cost 9d, but these were exceptions.

US copies went printed matter airmail to Bob Johnson for the first few issues; Bob distributed them in the U.S.A. (at extra cost, of course). From issue 10 onwards, subscriber copies continued to go printed matter airmail, but trade copies went surface direct to the recipient.

I have no figures on the cost of posting back issues, unfortunately. This item will have to remain imponderable.

It seems logical to separate the British and USA accounts, since the methods and costs differ. The total picture looks like this.

<u>Issue.</u>	<u>British.</u>	<u>US airmail.</u>	<u>US surface.</u>	<u>Others.</u>
1	5	5 (1½ ozs)	-	-
2	6	6 (2½)	-	-
3	7	7 (1½)	-	-
4	7	7 (2½)	-	-
5	7	7 (1½)	-	-
6	9	8 (1½)	-	-
7	11	10 (2)	-	-
8	11	10 (2)	-	1 @ 1/7d.
9	12	10 (2½)	-	1 @ 2/11d.
10	11 (9d)	5 (3)	4	1 @ 9d
11	12 (9d)	7 (3)	4	1 @ 9d
12	11	9 (2)	4	1 @ 9d
13	11	10 (2½)	4	1 @ 9d
14	12	10 (2)	4	(1 @ 9d 1 @ 6/6d 1 @ 1/7d.)

Totals. British 109 @ 5d = £2- 5- 5d.
 23 @ 9d = 17- 3d.
 132 envelopes @4d = £2- 4- 0d.

 £5- 6- 8d.

USA. Printed matter airmail 7d per ½ oz.
 237 ounces total = £13-16- 6d.
 Plus redistribution costs 97 @ 9d. £ 3-12- 9d.
 Plus 14 envelopes @ 6d. 7- 0d.
 20 surface copies @ 1/7d (average) £ 1-11- 8d.
 Plus 20 envelopes @ 3d..... 5- 0d.
 Plus extras listed as 'others'..... 15- 1d.

 £20- 8- 0d.

Total mailing bill £25-14- 8d.

(Plus post costs of back issues - unknown).

Now for the bright side - money coming in, or being paid to Bob Johnson on my behalf.

INCOME.

By game fees	£ 6- 1- 0d.
By British subscriptions	£ 5- 9- 4d.
By American subscriptions (in hand and credited)£	7- 1- 8d.
By postages pre-paid	£ 2- 0-10d.
	<hr/>
	£20-12-10d.
	<hr/>

Note that the figure for pre-paid postage doesn't include such payments beyond issue 14 - all game players have a certain amount of credit which is not accounted above.

Now, the crunch, and I haven't been looking forward to telling you this, although you will have gathered it for yourselves by now.

Total expenses	£50-14- 8d.
Total income	£20-12-10d.

Deficit to date	£30- 1-10d.
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Actually, this figure is false on a number of counts. There is the question of mailing of back issues, mentioned above, and the approximation of the amount of paper and stencils I obtained free in the early days. But there is also the question of cash I have received in the form of magazines from the trade agreements. A trade account isn't worth going into in detail, since quite a few of the magazines I trade with must be on their way to me at the time of writing, and hence any figure would be certain to be wildly approximate. Let's guess that I have about £5 worth of trade copies of other magazines, which brings the deficit down to a more reasonable dimension.

So - there you are. Many of you have enquired how much beer I am able to buy out of the cash you have sent me, and here's the answer.

NOW, let me make this clear - I have not printed these accounts in order to ask for sympathy (!) nor to ask you to delve into your pockets and donate vast sums to ALBION. In fact, the typing of these accounts has assisted me a lot, since it is a job I wouldn't normally do unless the motivation were strong enough. So I am not asking for enormous donations, even if I thought I was likely to get any.....

No. The main reason I have announced all these grim figures is in order to introduce a totally new system for the ALBION finances. After all, you might reasonably say that it was up to me to produce the magazine on a viable financial basis, and that I have only myself to blame if all my beer money vanishes; and you would be quite right. However you can't expect this state of affairs to continue, and it's clear that some changes are necessary. You don't need to be a financial wizard to see just where the trouble lies, either - the USA mailing bill is the real culprit, and that is the area in which the most drastic of the changes will have to take place.

Before discussing what I intend to do about this state of affairs, a few more figures.

First, one I have omitted from the calculations:-

Value of back issues still unsold (assuming anyone is ever crazy enough to buy them) = 61 issues @ 1/- or 33- 1- Od.

Now, the average cost of producing a single copy of an issue can be worked out in a vague way from the above figures. I have produced, in issues 1-14 inclusive, a total of 333 copies. The total printing cost and production cost was £27- 1- 6d. Ergo - the average cost of a single copy is around 1/8d.

To mail this copy to a player or subscriber in G.B. works out at 9¹/₂d, including the cost of the envelope (and believe me, I will be looking around for cheaper envelopes). To mail a single copy to the US, on the other hand, has cost an average of 3/-.

Hence everyone in Great Britain who has copies of ALBION can reckon that each copy cost around 2/5d. The corresponding figure for a copy in the USA is 4/8d. These figures include production and delivery to your door.

And I've been charging 1/- and 2/6d respectively. No wonder things are the way they are.

Mind you, this isn't really a fair basis on which to budget a future subscription structure, since there is income from game fees to consider. The fact that all the game fees to date have come from British players is pure coincidence - when the all-comers games get going this will change rapidly.

Also, I am aware that all the American magazines I have read charge a good deal more than 10/- for each game fee; figures of 3 and 4 dollars are not uncommon. It would therefore seem realistic to charge more for the games, except that I refuse point-blank to charge more than 15/- (except in special cases such as Rene Nokin's business game, where a particular reason exists for the high fee). Nor am I willing to put up the game fees for those games already announced but not yet started, since to do so would be unfair to those players who have signed up for these games. And I am of the opinion, rightly or wrongly, that a game fee higher than 15/- (at the most) is just not on. I don't see why players, who already suffer my terrible games-mastering, should also have to pay the major portion of the costs of producing ALBION.

So, game fees will never rise above 15/-, and I am not going to try to recoup this deficit by these means.

There are therefore two alternatives remaining - subscriptions and mailing costs - in which changes can be made. Clearly there is no cheaper method by which issues can be mailed in this country, while retaining the right of players to get their copies as soon as possible. However there is a method of reducing costs to the USA, and it looks like this will have to be adopted.

So now to business, and to reveal the future plans for the solvency of this ridiculous magazine.

FUTURE POLICY - ALBION Subscriptions etc. With effect from issue 16.

1. Subscriptions will be at the following rates:-
British Isles and Ireland - 2/- per copy.
U.S.A. - 50 cents per copy.
Both figures are inclusive of postage. Within the British Isles, postage will be at first class rate, and subject to any change in this rate. For the U.S.A., postage will be by surface mail, any subscriber wishing to receive his copy by printed matter airmail being liable to an extra charge, to be calculated at the time of mailing (probably around 30 cents).
2. Trade copies will continue to go surface mail to the USA and Canada.
3. Game fees for the current games, and the games open for players, remain at 10/- per player (£1 for the business game). Future game fees will also be 10/-, unless circumstances force them up to an absolute limit of 15/-.
4. Anyone whose copies are delivered by hand can claim a return on their subscription (in effect, this means they pay 1/2d per copy, which subtracts 5d postage and 5d for the envelope).
5. Other countries outside the UK, USA and Canada will obtain pro rata rates for subscriptions. These will be based on a charge of 1/7d per copy, plus an appropriate postage charge.
6. Overseas players in ALBION games will receive the game report by airmail; the rest of the issue (odd-numbered) will arrive by surface. Postage charges, to be added to the game fee and paid in advance (preferably) will be 1/6d for the airmail reports and 1/7d for the surface copies. This applies whether the issue in question is odd-numbered, in which case the game report will have been extracted and sent ahead, or even-numbered, which will contain no report on all-comers games and will be a complete issue. In other words, overseas players will pay:
the game fee
3/1d postage per issue (odd-numbered)
1/7d postage per issue (even-numbered).
7. Current credit will be re-calculated as from issue 16 onwards, on the new basis, and in issue 16 there will appear an up-to-date trade/subscriber list giving the credits under the new system. However subscribers are at liberty to withdraw any surplus credit if they wish to terminate their subscription before issue 16 is printed. Anyone wishing to do this should let me know as soon as possible, and their account will be settled to include this issue (the last at the old rate) only.
8. It will be a policy of the magazine to run competitions at regular intervals, the prizes being free games in ALBION. The winner will be expected to pay for postage of the issues only, the game fee being waived. A system will be introduced for these competitions so that American readers do not suffer an unfair disadvantage by virtue of their remoteness.

One final point. The cost of mailing issues to the USA can be reduced significantly if Dave Johnston's suggestion can be put into operation - whereby I send the stencils for each issue to the USA, and some kind soul runs off the appropriate number of copies and distributes them over there. If this method can ever be arranged to the satisfaction of everyone, it would have the effect of making life easier for those in the USA who can't do without ALBION.

In the near future, I hope also to be announcing a new policy whereby ALBION will be combined with the AHIKS British Region members' bulletins; however there are a number of problems to be overcome in this respect, and no formal announcement can be made at present.

All in all, readers may think that the new arrangements regarding subscription rates etc. are a bit harsh - the doubling of the subscription itself appears quite a heavy factor. In order to put the matter in a comparative light, here are the subscription rates for some other Diplomacy magazines.

NUMENOR (including EREHWON) - 30 cents per issue.
LAURANIA - 100 pages for one dollar, making around 20 cents per issue.
LONELY MOUNTAIN - 20 cents per issue (first class mail).
- 30 cents per issue (air mail).
LEBOR GARALA (including THE VOICE) - 25 cents per issue.
DIPLOMANIA - 35 cents per issue.
DIPLOPHOBIA - 15 cents per issue.
GRAUSTARK - 10 cents per issue.

With these figures in mind, it seems the new price of ALBION isn't above average, after all. Our price of 2/- per issue (24 cents) is about middle-of-the-road. However American subscribers may feel cheated by the 50 cent per issue rate for them; if this is so, they must remember that a) the magazines whose rates are quoted above do not, with one exception, announce a special rate for overseas mailing (although they would almost certainly ask one if the case arose), and b) to date, you have been getting ALBION at a ludicrously low price AND airmail into the bargain. Hope this appeases anyone who feels cheated by the new rates. Anyway, the figures above tell you that, unless something like the restructuring announced is carried out, ALBION would be forced out of business.

I make one more announcement: I will be making every effort to reduce the costs of printing and mailing this magazine, and if this proves possible, I will be happy to reduce the subscription rate in the future, when the situation is ironed out. The increases do not, as you will see, go any distance towards recouping the deficit so far - they merely allow me to run at around par, and if I find this gets easier as time goes by and more cash-saving ideas come in, then you will be charged less.

It's perhaps only fair to add that, with the proposed increases in mailing charges in this country and the current increased price of duplicating paper etc., I am not over optimistic about any reductions in subscription in the near future.

Anyway, enough of this gloomy talk, and on with the magazine. At least, in this last issue at the old rate, you will be getting a large issue, on which you can look back with fond memories of things that might have been. Whatever that means.

GAME THEORY. Part 11. 3x3 games - an introduction.

At an early stage in this series, I made the rather alarming statement that game theory isn't merely a do-it-yourself method of ensuring victory in games. I said that it would be some time before the theory could be applied to any real-life situation, in any more than the most trivial respect. And you have already seen numerous examples of this, in the rather trivial games we have considered so far. After all, it's not often a stranger in a pub suggests some stupid game involving displaying a certain number of fingers on the bar counter. Life just isn't that simple.

Hence the astounding fact emerges - in the first ten parts of this series, you have done no more than scratch the surface of the theory, and any real application of it is still far away. Disconcerting, to say the least. However, when a small child in short pants, you felt some exultation when you finally were able to write DADDY (or whatever the American version is) - yet the process whereby you got to this crucial stage was an arduous and lengthy business, if you can remember that far back. At the time, you didn't consider the fact that further education would mean the construction of longer words, sentences etc., and you were just happy to have got that far.

So it is with game theory; this-wise, you have so far learned how to write DADDY, and there's still a long way to go.

It need not be hard work, though. You already know, if you have followed the previous parts of the exposition with diligence, the basic methods involved. Now we come to the stage where we apply these basics to more complicated situations. More complicated because they are more realistic, and this should be a sufficient spur to you even if you find no intellectual pleasure in messing about with figures. Numbers, I should say.

It will be useful, at this stage, to consider the general outline of the problem-solving technique we are in the midst of developing. If you are faced with a real-life conflict situation, just how do you go about applying the theory to it?

First, obviously, you must construct the game matrix, which in turn means you must list the alternatives available to each player. You must be sure to include chance outcomes, if experience shows that Nature can insert them at will. Actually, this step is usually impossible, taken literally, since in any situation you can always define a near-infinite number of choices available. However it will be sufficient to include those alternative strategies which appear significant in the context of the game. Every strategy you add means an increase in the number of calculations you have to perform in the solution, and you would therefore be wisely directed to stop adding strategies when it appears there are enough to give a reasonably confident measure of success from the analysis.

Second, you must calculate (or guess) the effects each strategy will have on each other (i.e. the payoffs in the matrix). Sometimes the payoffs are included in the rules of the game (Vietnam, for instance, is an example of this type of game); at other times, you must calculate them by one means or another. In the remainder of the cases, you must estimate the payoffs, and here again judgement enters into the business.

Anyway, having solved the problems associated with the construction of the game matrix, you must then solve the matrix and apply the results. In other words, you must find out your best approach to the game, and the amount you are likely to win with this approach.

Back to 3x3 games, with the previous discussion in mind. Some are easy to solve, others are not. Much of the work to be done is the same as you have already done with the 2x2 games; however there are problems, which you must have suspected, that arise specially because you are dabbling in larger games than before, and these will have to be conquered by new methods.

On with the job, then. And again we apply the rule concerning our search for possible saddle points. This rule applies equally to larger games, and the process exactly as before.

1. List the row minima. At the end of each row, conveniently.
2. List the column maxima. At the foot of each column.
3. Mark the largest of the row minima and the smallest of the column maxima.
4. If the two marked numbers are the same, a saddle point exists which is associated with the marked strategies.
5. If they are not, then at least you know that the value of the game lies between these values.

Let's apply this to an example, to show how disarmingly simple it is.

Example 17.

		Red			
		1	2	3	
	1	5	2	3	2*
Blue	2	1	0	4	0
	3	2	1	2	1
		5	2*	4	

The maxmin is 2 (Blue 1). The minmax is also 2 (Red 2). These are the same, and therefore there is a saddle point, at Blue 1 / Red 2. The players should use these strategies all the time, since they ensure maximum gain for Blue and minimum loss for Red. In this case the game is biased to Blue, who wins 2 each time. The idea is still the same. A player can be hurt if he plays a strategy not leading to the saddle point while the opponent plays the saddle point strategy. If Blue were to play Blue 3, for some crazy reason, he would only win 1 against Red 2. Some remark about the path of virtue being narrow seems appropriate here.

If a game has no saddle point, then we can still hope to reduce it to 2x2, or 2x3, by considering dominant strategies. Again, the method is exactly the same as before, and here's an example to show the operation.

Example 18.

		Red			
		1	2	3	
	1	5	2	3	2*
Blue	2	1	0	2	0
	3	2	3	5	2*
		5	3*	5	

The maxmin is 2 (Blue 1 or Blue 3).

The minmax is 3 (Red 2).

Therefore no saddle point.

However, we soon see that Blue should never play Blue 2, since it is worse, box by box, than either of his other strategies. And Red would be crazy to play Red 3, since it would lose him more, box by box, than Red 2. Don't forget, when considering dominance, that Blue wants high numbers, Red wants low ones.

Therefore we can delete these dominated strategies from the matrix, which now looks like this:-

		Red	
		1	2
Blue	1	5	2
	3	2	3

And we know how to solve this one. Applying the normal methods for a 2x2, we get the result:-

Blue plays in ratio 1:3. Red plays in ratio 1:3. Value $2\frac{3}{4}$.

So the complete solution, including the zero for the dominated strategy for each player, is:-

Blue plays 1:0:3.
Red plays 1:3:0.
Value $2\frac{3}{4}$.

And a nice consoling check that the value of the game lies between the maxmin and the minmax, which should give you some satisfaction.

A small point here. You may have noticed, in 2x2 games, that an error on the part of one player does not necessarily penalise him, providing his opponent plays the right strategy, or combination of strategies. However in 3x3 games you can't rely on the good play of your opponent to keep the game in balance for you, which is just as it should be. If either player uses the strategy omitted from his best mixed solution, he loses, as follows:-

If Red plays Red 3 against Blue's best mix, the payoff (average) to Blue will be

$$\frac{1x3 + 3x5}{4} = 4\frac{3}{4}.$$

While if Blue errs and plays Blue 2, the result will be:-

$$\frac{1x1 + 3x0}{4} = \frac{1}{4}.$$

Which is quite a large swing in the results. A poor player pays a price for being stupid, which is, unfortunately for the humanists, quite right.

Of course, the real test comes when a game cannot be solved by either finding a saddle point or by reducing it to a simpler form. This we will deal with next time. A final warning - always remember to test for a saddle point, since the process to be explained will not reveal the saddle point if you woefully failed to check for it first.

No Homework this time, giving you a rest in preparation for the labour to come. Nice of me, ain't it?

Prof. Erasmus Thing.

LETTER LETTER LETTER LETTER LETTER LETTER LETTER

Editorial comments, as usual, appear between *,*,*.

David Lindsay, 2245 Fairmont Parkway, Erie, Pennsylvania 16510.

Dear Mr. Turnbull,

If you are like me, the first thing you do when you receive a letter is to see who it is from, in the hope of pre-guessing the contents. Since you don't know me from Adam my return address probably gives you little help. Rather than keep you in suspense I am presently connected with LONELY MOUNTAIN. And to move quickly to the contents, it concerns your Christmas 1969 review of Tactical Game 3.

Modesty, David! I read HALF 'N' HALF with interest (readers may recognise this as the section of LONELY MOUNTAIN under David's care), and in particular your articles on the rules and analyses

Before moving on it might be wise to preface these remarks.

The reason I am writing is that I was so taken to see a review of the game that I could not resist passing on my own opinion. Any comments made from here on are made in a friendly spirit; remarks which seem to violate this should be ignored.

First off, I think that your counters are simply a bad bunch. Mine are about three-fourths the thickness of AH's. Too, mine seem to be cut nearly perfectly (far better, say, than 1914). I think you are right when you say that the board would look better coloured, but I have been able to manage fairly well without it.

TAC3 was the first of the S&T Test Series Games I received, and since both sets of counters were thin, I thought that this was standard; however when NORMANDY arrived, the two sets of counters were of different thicknesses - the first the same as TAC3, the second nearly the same as those produced by AH. Clearly they had not standardised on material for the counters at that time. Thanks for pointing this out, David. I suppose the question of adding colour to the board is one of aesthetics rather than anything to do with playing; nevertheless, the ANZIO board, for instance, would be impossible to use without the colours. I am not saying this is true of TAC3 or NORMANDY, but merely mention it as a guide to the sort of presentation we can expect.

You are correct when you say that the physical quality of the rules is pretty poor. The reproductions of the map, especially, are nearly unuseable in about two out of six situations. They *(The rules)* do seem to be fairly clear: a fellow AH devotee soaked up the rules in three minutes with only minor errors. (Which beats the previous record held by U-BOAT).

Well, well - my maps are perfectly clear! Just goes to show the variance we can expect, particularly on early runs.

And I find your comments on the 'action' especially apt. Play is fast and furious. A faster game would be hard to find.

And since there are likely to be several units turned upside down, the player not moving can use the usual 'dead' time to either plan his counter-fire or guess what type an upside-down unit is. (But of course you know all this!) What could be more logical? What could be more practical?

AMIKS BRITISH REGION MEETING.Saturday April 11th 1970.

(This report will be circulated around the members of the region who do not, on advice from their psychiatrist, subscribe to ALBION).

Your errant reporter, armed with wife and child, set off for our destination early on Friday afternoon. We proceeded down the M1 in convoy with around 5,000,000 supporters of Leeds United, who were billed to appear in the Cup Final on the Saturday; those who organised this event should take heed, in future, that their fixture does not clash with the AMIKS meeting. Anyway, ducking the bombardment of swear-words, broken bottles etc., we finally arrived at the Newport Pagnall service area, where we had arranged to meet John Poole.

Of course, we had to queue for $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours to get a cup of tea, but after all everything must stand aside for soccer in this country. Perhaps the 6 ft. model of George Best on our radiator didn't help here.

Eventually John arrived and managed even to silence the crowd of football supporters (who were by this time indulging in a spot of youthful and innocent stabbing, rape etc.) with his car horn. I think the tune he played was something about a welcome in the hillsides, but couldn't be sure. Anyway, he ordered us to carry on down the M1, and he would catch us up before the slip road. We should add here that John, when driving, manages to get from A to B rather quicker than Concorde. And with about the same amount of noise.....

So off we set, and arrived at the slip road with no sign of John. In defiance of all regulations, we parked on the hardshoulder of the motorway to await him, only to see him flash past in a cloud of dust and disappear from view in the direction of London and all points south.

Our feeble efforts to catch him were to no avail, and it was with a total lack of John Pooles that we eventually arrived at Romford and were greeted by Michael Nethercot and his charming family. Pausing only to dump wife and son, I drove down to our meeting place at Ingatestone with Michael, there to await Henry Radice and possibly John Poole.

The first sight that met our eyes on entering the hotel was John, ordering the third portion of chicken and chatting up the blonde waitress. Now he had got there was beyond me, but the carcasses of innumerable chickens and the distinct smell of scorched rubber in the car park were indisputable evidence, and Michael and I tottered into the bar to restore our equanimity and discuss possible amendments to the motorway regulations.

John joined us two chickens, four peach melbas, five cups of coffee and one blonde waitress later, and we had a very pleasant chat about gaming and various ideas for the morrow. We were rather surprised that Henry Radice had not yet arrived, but assumed that he had been delayed in leaving York, and were content, once again, to blame it all on the soccer traffic.

Funny, really - you either like soccer or you don't; it's totally impossible to be indifferent to it. After all, it's a great game, full of team spirit and other very British qualities. Including wrecking trains, mob violence, destroying shops, terrorising bystanders, kicking people with special boots, beating people over the head with clubs and truncheons etc. etc. Nice to have a good old traditional British sport to keep the population occupied.

Sooner or later, the drink ran out, and we parted for the night, John to wait for Henry, and Michael and I to go back to Romford and explain our lateness to the ladies.

Just as well that Malcolm Watson wasn't with us, since Elaine (Michael's elder daughter) had by that time arrived home after an evening in swinging Romford. Besides being a very attractive girl in other respects, Elaine has the most beautiful eyes I have seen, and my notions of remaining for ever in a single-sex school started to undergo radical changes..... Teaching girls might be interesting, after all; they don't like mathematics, though. Anyway, I'm glad my wife isn't going to read this report....

Early to rise the next morning, and down to the hotel to set up the room. Among those present by this time were Henry Radice (held up the previous evening by mysterious clankings in the car), Slasher II (Henry's ferocious dog, who should have been christened D back 2) and Tony Jones. And, of course, John Poole, hearty breakfast already installed.

In quick succession, the rest of the party arrived - Chris Hancock, Harry Tucker, Eric Slack, Sheila Minion, David Wood (plus fiancée). And the battle commenced.

The complete range of Avalon Hill games was represented (except for Waterloo, for some reason), plus Battle of Britain, Normandy, Remagen Bridge, Tactical Game 3, 1918 and Hannibal. We also had copies of two 'vintage' games - Task Force and Invasion.

Assignments were undertaken as follows:-

Eric Slack v Sheila Minion. Tactical Game 3.

John Poole v Tony Jones. D Day.

Harry Tucker v Chris Hancock. Normandy.

David Wood v Henry Radice. Stalingrad.

Michael Nethercot v Don Turnbull. Anzio II (UEF).

With necessary, but annoying, breaks for meals, drinks and other facts of life, the games continued until 6 p.m., when a round of drinks was bought on John Robertson, who had kindly sent me some cash for the purpose. During the gaming session, Eric Slack and Chris Hancock disappeared from time to time to watch the progress of the Cup Final on tele; at the end of the afternoon, Eric had managed to see all the goals, while Chris was outraged by the fact that he contrived to enter the tele room just when the ball was being picked from the back of the net, or left the room only to hear loud cheers, smashing bottles etc. as soon as his back was turned. Chris could be heard from time to time grumbling that he had a chance to go to the Final, and why he should come to the meeting only to be beaten by Harry at Normandy was more than he could understand. However he changed his tune when Harry rolled a D back 1 at overwhelming odds, and Chris won a marginal victory. Harry's innermost thoughts on the Normandy combat results table can not be printed in this most exclusive and polite magazine.

Other games were interesting, too. John and Tony had a ding-dong battle in France, only decided round move 40. David Wood, pretending to teach Henry the game of Stalingrad, managed to hold back the German advance by the simple means of failing to tell Henry half the rules, such as the attacker advancing after displacing the defender from a river position. Sheer cowardice, really, particularly since Henry had not called on the services of Slasher II to chew David's leg during Russian moves (a tactic which has proved itself at the previous meeting).

When most of the games had come to an end, Harry and Michael set down to a quick look at Blitzkreig, while John and Tony challenged Chris and I to a game of Invasion.

For the uninitiated, Invasion is a sort of wargame invented before the war by Dennis Wheatley, who has since achieved some dubious fame for his black magic novels. The mapboard is a vague representation of Europe, with the names of the countries changed to protect the innocent. Each country has land, sea and air units, and the object, as in all the best games, is merely to reduce the opponent to rubble and then occupy all his cities. The names of some of the cities are perhaps worth recounting - Dunderhead was one of mine, which some cruel reader might remark as typical and appropriate. Tony had, as one of his border towns, the happily-named Bog, while just across the border, in the country commanded by John, was Manur. No prizes are to be given to the reader who guesses the comments made about this area, and about the people who commanded countries with such enterprising cities. Also appearing on the board were Schnaps and Topoff, and many others of like ilk.

With these names in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that the game was treated with a degree of levity unbecoming to wargamers and gentlemen. The rules didn't actually state that the game should be played on a table inside a pentagram chalked roughly on the carpet, but we did so just to be sure, and armed all combatants with bell, book, candle and pints of good ale.

Chris and I commanded with considerable skill, acting on sound military and statistical principles. John and Tony, however, were obviously inexperienced at these intellectual games, and approached the whole thing in quite the wrong spirit. By sheer luck, John and Tony defeated us soundly, and the enemy were just entering our gates when the call came that dinner was served; Chris hastily knocked over the board, thus rendering null and void the plaintive requests from the opposition to carry on after the meal. And we all went in to eat again.

The meal over, the assembled company were then treated to the high spot of the entertainment - a film show. Let me hastily add that the films were war films, before anyone gets any ideas.

Commentary on the silent epics was supplied by David Wood, who never failed to point out the 8-8-6 marked on the side of German tanks, the hexagons painted on the desert etc. etc. It was with a sense of relief that I inserted the first of our sound films into the projector - a relief which was quelled a moment later when we found that the entire soundtrack was in German, a fact which encouraged yet more ribald comments.

After the films, the party once more assembled in the games room. We were much reduced in numbers by now, Eric, Sheila and Tony having left earlier. The time being late, the rest of the evening was spent in discussion on wargaming in general and AHIKS in particular.

Finally we dragged ourselves away to bed, and the day was over. And, if my judgement is anywhere near accurate, a very enjoyable affair for all concerned.

The weekend was not yet over, however, and we spent the next afternoon speeding up the M1 in pouring rain to catch a train at Derby which would get Henry and Slasher II home at a reasonable time. We made Derby station just after the prescribed time, but British Rail was running true to form, and I imagine Henry had time to get a meal, read three newspapers and take Slasher II a 5 mile walk before the train actually pulled up its socks and departed for York. It must be recorded here that Slasher II behaved perfectly in the car during the entire journey; despite the comments made above, he is in fact a grand dog, and not at all fierce. He's just darned heavy when he leaps at you in a spirit of brotherhood.

There were, of course, many interesting and useful discussions during the meeting, too long to be recounted here. However I should report that Normandy received high praise, and the comment 'I wish we could be sure the S&T people would send us games we order in a reasonable time' was heard more than once. I am as confident as I can be that the members would be interested in buying somewhere around 30 copies of the S&T games miscellany, if only the organisation would reply to letters promptly, despatch games equally promptly, and acknowledge cash sent to them. Wake up, you guys - there is a market here, you know.

Anzio, also, came in for high praise, and for my own part, the sooner I can get a postal game III going, the better. Or a mini-game at any rate.

I should also record that Tony Jones brought to the meeting a draft of his new game set in the Atlantic in 1944. David Wood, who is designing a (more complex, I gather) game on the Western Approaches at around the same time, was particularly interested. Also, Michael Nethercot made a short speech on the future of Cranwell House Developments, an organisation which we hope will cater, in some measure, for the production and marketing of old and new wargames in this country, in an effort to cut down on the expense of constant importation, and to establish the British wargaming community firmly on the map with original games. Our particular thanks are due to Michael, not only for his efforts in this latter respect, but also for arranging the meeting at such short notice, and on Cup Final day in addition.

And so, with our particular thanks to Michael, this report comes to a close. Truly a most enjoyable affair, and one which we all hope will be repeated at regular intervals in the future.

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ALBION Game Review Number Three.

1918

Published by Strategy and Tactics Magazine, Poultron Press,
Box 4267, Long Island City, New York 11104, U.S.A.
Price - 5 dollars plus postage.

Our thanks are due to Jim Dunnigan, who supplied the game which is the subject of this report. The organising body of S&T are to receive all future copies of ALBION, and are at liberty to reprint portions of ALBION in future issues of S&T; please advise when considering doing so, but go ahead - you have permission!

Background.

The game concerns the first major German offensive of 1918 - the blow aimed at the two British armies in the Amiens area. This blow was intended to precede the second attack, on the Ypres salient.

Action in the game is fought at divisional level, with Corps counters used for artillery and supply.

Presentation.

We have come to expect less-than-average presentation from S&T. This game, at least in the form in which it is delivered, is no exception. However, as in the cases of TAC3 and Normandy, the criticisms are minor, and much improvement can be made quite simply by the purchaser in a short time and with minimum effort. The map is a single sheet of hex paper, delivered in a mailing tube normally, we presume, but in this case folded into a large envelope. The counters are around the same thickness as those produced by Avalon Hill, and the printing is quite clear, though rather coarse. Once again the S&T resident moron has been given the unenviable task of cutting the counters from the main sheet, and once again he has made a bad job of it. The counters, which should be equal in size and square, arrive in a variety of sizes and shapes. Stacking of units, particularly in the virtually continuous lines demanded by this game, becomes untidy, at the least, and awkward and annoying at norm. In fact, of course, these defects can be cured, or partially so, painlessly. We mounted the map on 3/8" ply, using wallpaper adhesive, and the result is a perfect playing surface without, as David Lindsay comments, any folds in the board which could have nuisance value. The mapboard can easily be coloured using felt pens to make the terrain details stand out more clearly. And the counters can be trimmed to approximate size, using a razor blade or scissors.

So these complaints are really minor quibbles; we merely repeat what we said before - these games are intended to be in 'kit' form, and hence S&T should not fight shy of asking purchasers to cut their own counters from the main sheet, or strips. That way the company moron could make the coffee, or do something else more useful.

The mapsheet is normal size - the same as AH mapsheets for Stalingrad etc. and as those issued for TAC3 and Normandy. However only about $\frac{1}{2}$ of the area is actual playing area, the rest being taken up with the combat results table, orders of appearance etc. We found this useful for quick reference, and would like to see this policy adopted in all cases when the actual playing map is smaller than the size we have become accustomed to regarding as 'standard'.

So it's really the mixture as before - room for improvement in this department, but not to a critical extent. And as we will see, the actual play of the game more than compensates for any disadvantage under this heading. Nevertheless, minor points such as these can make the difference between a purchase and a refusal to do so; I am not suggesting that S&T should provide a board, but they can do something about those darned counters....

The rules.

As usual, these are printed on loose sheets of paper rather than being assembled in book form. This is no disadvantage, to our mind, although we found it helpful to file the rules in polythene 'pockets' which were then mounted in a loose-leaf folder - for the sake of cleanliness as much as anything else.

Clarity of the rules in the case of 1918 is well above average. They are perhaps longer than the rules for Normandy, but can be assimilated in quite a short space of time. One or two ambiguous rulings were found (these will be discussed later) but on the whole the rules are a model of clarity.

The play.

The designer has concentrated on producing a reasonably simple game, and the result is around the complexity of Bulge. This means that players with experience of the 'standard items' of wargames can get to grips with the game fairly quickly - they have no worries about the meaning of 'zone of control' etc. Set-up time is, with all but the original placement (which is given as an option, and which is very quick to set up), perhaps 20 minutes in length. This we consider very reasonable, particularly with the number of units available to each side.

Actual placement is left to the discretion of the player, of course, although one can use the original set-up, which is printed on the mapboard. The latter takes no time to set up, but the poor French player will find that it takes no time for the German to penetrate, either. So we would recommend using your own placement, and leaving the original aside, to examine as a quaint historical oddity.

One new innovation to the rules concerns the combat results table. Instead of the normal 1,2,3,4,5,6 down the left hand side, we were initially surprised to find the numbers from 0 to 10 inclusive. A search for an eleven-sided die revealed nothing! Then we found the answer. Instead of messing about with defence factors when in rough terrain, behind a river, or whatever, the die roll is made to increase or decrease according to a series of simple rules about terrain, isolation etc. Thus, a defender in the fortified zone would add two to the die roll, and the combat results table is formed so that the extra two pips gives an extra advantage to the defender.

We think this is a magnificent system - easy to operate and most logical. It has a few advantages over the original system (of doubling and tripling etc.) and, as far as we can judge, no associated disadvantages. We hope to see the idea used again in other games - the flexibility of its application is indisputable, and, apart from anything else, it must be a darned sight easier to compile, once the initial idea has been fixed.

This is the only really new innovation in the mechanics of the rules, but there are other changes in the representation of the units. The German Stoss divisions - the largest unit in the German force, and the largest in numbers - can infiltrate the Allied lines by moving from one zone of control to another. This plays a very important part in the game, and is usually the reason for the Allies pulling back the line.

The use of the corps units (both sides have them, but the German starts the game with an excess) is most interesting, and might be said to determine the outcome of the game more than any other factor. They can be used either to supply attacking divisions, or as artillery units to assist attacking or defending divisions. In the case of supplying an attack (either with actual supplies or with artillery fire), they are removed from the board temporarily and only re-appear at the board edge on the next turn. Thus, as the German line advances towards Amiens, it becomes increasingly more difficult for the German player to get his corps units up to the front in a short space of time, and since he cannot attack without at least one of them, they tend to dominate the final stages of the game. With this factor in mind, and depending on the order of battle used by the Allies, we think the game is slightly biased in favour of the 'good guys'. A tactical German victory is reasonably easy to come by, but an overwhelming victory is well-nigh impossible. This, of course, duplicates the actual situation accurately.

Play itself is absorbing, yet fairly quick. We found a complete game could be played in under three hours, which suits most potential buyers down to the ground. And we mean three hours - not the sort of three hours they talk about for a 1914 game..... The outcome of the game is always in doubt until the final moves, which promises an exciting finish, and all in all the game can provide a very pleasant and interesting afternoon or evening.

Other comments.

In the rules for TAC3 and Normandy, we found very few sources of possible confusion. However there are one or two in 1918, which we would like to pass comment on at this juncture, plus one or two minor criticisms/questions on the design itself.

1). The supply rules. In order to defend, a unit must merely be supplied - artillery can be added at will. On the subject of supplies for defending units, the rules say:- 'Supplies are received by units if they are within five squares of a road which can be traced back to the east side of the board for the Germans and the West side of the board for the Allies without encountering enemy units or zones of control on the road.' (Underlining mine). 'Without these supplies, a unit may not move, it may not attack and when defending its combat factor is cut in half with the fraction being lost.' Elsewhere the rules also state that if a defender is isolated, one pip is subtracted from the die roll. Now this ruling could be interpreted to say that any unit can be supplied providing it is within five squares of a road, the latter being untouched by zones of control until off the right edge of the board. In other words, a unit which is completely surrounded may be supplied, since the rules make no mention of enemy zones of control impinging on the initial five-square route to the road. Clearly this is a ludicrous situation, and we think the entire route from unit to road to board edge should be clear of enemy units and zones of control. But the rule doesn't actually say this, and if anything else is intended, or even if this is the right interpretation, the designer should let us know as soon as possible, to allow us to circulate this information to the readers. In passing, we might remark that the combination no movement/no attacking/defence factor halved/one pip subtracted from the die roll seems to be a harsh penalty. However we would be happy with it if the rule is clarified.

2). One other situation isn't clearly stated. The rules allow a defender benefit when in a fortified zone - the question is does this allowance still apply even when the fortified zone is that previously occupied (at the start of the game) by the enemy? We are not sure whether the practice of destroying ones own fortifications when retreating from them was current in those days. In the game, of course, the situation arises frequently, since the Germans, advancing out of their own fortified zones, immediately encounter those of the Allies which have by then been vacated or partially so. So the question really boils down to - do the Germans get defensive benefit from the Allied fortified zone? Answers from the designer would be appreciated.

3) Comment on the design. The rules say that corps units are 'used up' (i.e. removed temporarily from the board) when providing artillery fire for an attack, but not when they provide artillery support in defence. We think that this situation is too biased in favour of the Allies, who do the lion's share of the defending. Agreed that ammunition would be used up at a greater rate when attacking than when defending, and that the Allies presumably had more time and opportunity to replenish their ammunition supply. However we feel that corps units used to provide artillery fire in defence should also be 'used up' after supporting, say, defence against three attacks. After all, this change would only marginally affect the balance, since the Allies can bring on replacements closer to the front line than can the German. However we feel it would be a more realistic state of affairs.

4). The rules do not state clearly the mechanics of using artillery only in an attack (an event which takes place at low frequency, but which nonetheless can be a useful tactic for the German player in certain situations).

5) Another comment. The rules say that the German should set up his units first. However this allows the Allies to defend, when setting up afterwards, that portion of the line which seems most likely to be the area of the largest attack, and this is not a realistic situation. The attacker should have the advantage of choosing at which part of the line the major thrust should be directed. Hence we think the Allies should set up first, then the German. Comments from the designer would be appreciated.

This concludes the comments/criticisms. Few in number, and minor in overall effect, except possibly the supply ruling.

Conclusions.

Another first-class game, and one which we have no hesitation in recommending to readers. Adaptation to postal play would be relatively easy, the only difficulty being the allocation, by the defender, of corps units to assist in defence. Movement in two impulses makes the game around 20 turns long, which is quite acceptable.

Well worth getting, therefore. You might think you are paying a bit more than you should, considering the physical quality; however we assure you that the play more than compensates.

Don Turnbull. Malcolm Watson.

ALBION STANDS ON THE TOUCHLINE.

British readers of this magazine will, for the most part, be comfortably unaware of some of the goings-on in American Diplomacy magazines. However ye olde editor, having collected a reasonable cross-section of American Diplomacy 'zines, has gradually become aware that all is not as it might be across the water. Nowadays scarcely an issue arrives - in the case of some magazines more than others, granted - without my reading therein of some new feud, some criticism of one kind or another, emanating from one editor/player and aimed at another. Readers of ALBION will already have seen reference to a feud in which Charles Reinsel played an important part, and others who have been subjected to criticism at one time or another include John Boardman, Allan Calhmer, Rod Walker and (the latest, as far as I know, although these things change rapidly and unpredictably) Buddy Tretick.

Now, ALBION is such a middle-of-the-road magazine that you can almost see the marks on the editorial trousers - the results of an over-long period of sitting on the fence. It will, I hope, be with some sense of relief to British readers that I announce our continued policy of indifference to these activities. Until we become the subject of the criticisms, that is..... Of course, these things mean different things in different places. When one American gamesmaster insults another (and they don't mix their words, you know) it may just be the American equivalent of a jocular quip - a spot of harmless fun-poking aimed at someone you know is equipped to treat the matter in the right light. This magazine has, sometimes, aimed some jab at the unfortunate Malcolm Watson - however the entire editorial staff know Malcolm well, get on fine with him, and we are secure in the certain knowledge that he treats our barbed comments with the same disregard as we treat his. It's just that we have the advantage of being able to do it in print.....

However, back to the Americans. These 'feuds', as I remark above, may merely be fun-poking. However I suspect that this is not the case, and the latest 'feud' (between Rod Walker and Buddy Tretick) has all the makings of a lulu, concerning as it does Rod's status as Diplomacy Division Chief of the Games Bureau, his responsibility in regard the allocation of Boardman numbers to postal Diplomacy games etc.

We are not going to take sides, despite the fact that Rod is the Division Chief and a trader for ALBION, and Buddy is a subscriber to this magazine. It's not my function, as editor, to spread such quarrels round the British readership - let them stay in America, where they belong. So, being serious for once in these columns, let me re-affirm my editorial intent to remain totally outside all such mud-slinging. Diplomacy is a game, after all.

There is one other marginally relevant matter which arises from Dick Holcombe's Pacific Diplodeur Vol. 1 No. 5. I think this section is worth re-printing in full, since it makes a distinct connection between the world of postal Diplomacy and that of postal wargames (i.e. AHIKS). I will omit any short passage which appears less relevant than the main item, indicating the omitted section with

Dick writes:-

'The Avalon Hill Intercontinental Kriegspiel Society was formed, among other reasons, to provide a milieu for ADULT mail gaming. For years we remained aloof from the "Diplomacy Scene" due to the confusion and adolescent bickering therein. Although several of our members (for example Bob Johnson, Sid Cochran and Monte Zelazny) maintained their outside involvements, Society games were carefully kept within our own 'zines (Diplodeur and Albion) virtually without trades, and completely apart from the strange political world outside AHIKS.

Then, when Rod Walker settled down in San Diego, and, with the support of Don Miller, promised to provide some organisation to Diplomacy outside our Society, we joined in. Three months later, we find the same childish onslaughts among Gamemasters continuing, and we must wonder into what we've gotten ourselves.

.....
There has been no effective body to provide guidance to Gamemasters and/or players upon Diplomacy rules, ethics and standards. Surprisingly, even some of the most reliable Gamemasters seem more intent on their own little empires than the overall good of postal Diplomacy. Dr. Calhmer, the games inventor (who is still active in suggesting the Bourse through SerenDip, and comments on game 1969G in Beserovia, published in Numenor), also is indicating no interest in reducing the chaos rampant in the Diplomacy world by his failure to assist in the very necessary re-writing (or at least clarification) of the rules. The owner/publishers of the game, Games Research Inc., likewise show a lack of interest in cleaning up their product.

.....
As AHIKS has done with Avalon Hill games, when that corporation was unable/unwilling to correct faulty or confusing rules, so can the NFFFGB Diplomacy Division do for the Diplomacy world. We don't really NEED Calhmer or Games Research. If they're too busy on other projects, we can jolly well clean up the rules ourselves. It was with this in mind that AHIKS decided to join and support the Diplomacy Division.'

.....
It appears that we will have to clarify the position of ALBION in respect of all this, and there are quite a few things to answer. First and foremost, of course, is the status of the magazine in regard AHIKS. The front page has always stated, since issue 1, that 'ALBION records the progress of postal Diplomacy games taking place within the British Region of AHIKS, or within the area covered by the British Region, AHIKS membership notwithstanding.' In other words, although ALBION was formed as a sort of by-product of the British Region of AHIKS, and although the editor and the regional director are one and the same person, ALBION is not strictly an AHIKS magazine in all senses of the definition. At present we have one player who is not an AHIKS member, and two subscribers in this country alone who are not members. We do not require that they should be members - we merely require that they pay the right amount of cash.

Now let me make this clear, in case anyone thinks I am trying to dissociate ALBION from AHIKS. Nothing of the kind - we merely cater for the British Isles in their new Diplomacy ventures -

membership of AHIKS is not obligatory, although it is, of course, preferable. I am very fond of AHIKS, and will continue to serve that Society for as long as they want me to do so, but in ALBION I am not aiming to produce an all-AHIKS magazine. You will have read earlier in these pages that the combination of ALBION with the AHIKS British Region Members' Bulletin is being considered. This seems a logical step, but if it takes place AHIKS members will not get the Diplomacy section unless they are already involved, and those subscribers who are not members of AHIKS will not get the 'bulletin' section. So let me re-affirm: ALBION is produced with the prime intent of spreading the Diplomacy 'word' around the British Isles. If, in doing so, it attracts non-AHIKS members as subscribers, from Britain or elsewhere, and attracts subscriptions from AHIKS members outside this country, and attains its ends by virtue of the high proportion of AHIKS members who play and subscribe - then fair enough. But these are means, and the end is as stated above.

ALBION is for Diplomacy fans. It happens to be strongly linked with AHIKS. But it is not strictly an AHIKS magazine. Another point leads on from this. Dick's comments make it appear that the membership of Diplodeur, Albion and Pacific Diplodeur in the NFFF Games Bureau Diplomacy Division was part of AHIKS policy. Not so. I was personally a regular member of the Games Bureau, and ALBION was a member of the Diplomacy Division, before any question of AHIKS participation arose. I joined the Games Bureau as a private individual a) to get as much information for ALBION as possible and b) to assist the Bureau in any way I could referent to my hobby. Obviously the production and future of ALBION featured strongly in my thinking at the time, as they do now, and I also hoped that I might perhaps contribute to the Bureau in other ways - by writing articles for TGL or The Gamesman, for instance. In fact, I recall a letter earlier in ALBION, from a prominent AHIKS member, which tended to ridicule the idea of ALBION joining the Games Bureau at all. Issue 9, page 8, if you want to check. The writer used a pseudonym, as it happens, but the facts are there.

In regard support for the Diplomacy Division, then of course ALBION is firmly behind Rod and Don in their efforts to make some sense out of the confusion presently reigning. Our geographical remoteness, coupled with the frightening ineptitude of the post office, makes this little more than an empty promise. However we will do all we can, and if our sole contribution is to spread the word around the British Isles, then at least that is something.

One final point. Dick talks in various places about schemes for the clarification and amendment of game rules (both for Diplomacy and Avalon Hill games). In fact, in a portion I have omitted, he accuses Games Research Inc. and Alan Calhmer of irresponsibility in not undertaking this task in respect of Diplomacy. We are now on one of my favourite hobby-horses. Have you ever noticed that, when a new game is produced from whatever source, there are always people who reckon they could have done the design better than the poor bloke who has been

sweating over the game for goodness knows how long before final publication? Malcolm and I have done precisely this elsewhere in this issue. Not that there is anything wrong in making such suggestions - the fault lies in assuming that you are right, and everyone else is wrong.

Take our old friend Stalingrad, for instance. Ever since it was first produced, people have argued that the order of battle was wrong, that the combat results table is wrong, that the Russian (or German, or both) replacement figures are wrong, that the entire game is totally inaccurate, biased and not worth playing. Many critics have produced their own Stalingrad attempt, only to encounter similar comments from yet other sources on their version.

Side by side with these criticisms is the, perhaps not so surprising, fact that rarely do these critics coincide in their criticisms. The original order of battle could be wrong - I am not qualified to comment - but the 'right' versions proposed by others fail to agree most of the time. The same is true of amendment to the replacement rates. AHIKS once tried to amend the combat results table, but (as far as I can gather) didn't obtain a majority support for the new version.

And, of course, of all the games of postal Stalingrad in play at the moment, I would reckon that at least 90% of them use all the original rules, with the possible exception of the amended Russian replacement rate, which is but a drop in the ocean of criticisms past and present.

Why do they play the original game? Because they like it, I suppose, and they don't feel qualified to comment on any failings they consider the game to have. When they consider Stalingrad is too simple/inaccurate/biased for them, they move onto another game.

All this is a roundabout way of coming to the point, but I hope the space hasn't been wasted.

And the point is this - why on earth do people take it upon themselves always to criticise the efforts of others, when without the arguments the game is perfectly playable and enjoyable as it stands? This refers, of course, not only to Stalingrad, but to Diplomacy and virtually any other game whose rules have been questioned. Why not stop messing about with the product and get on with the game? If you feel so strongly about it, then no-one is forcing you to play the thing. You could design your own game (providing you are prepared for the criticisms floating your way from others); S&T have produced Barbarossa, which I gather is a fine game. Does it really matter if they omitted the 14th Light Kitchen Sink unit from the order of battle?

If you don't want to play the game, and can't be bothered either to design your own or exchange it for another, then you could take up gardening, or run a strip club, or comfort yourself with long and profound contemplation of the navel. Your own, for preference.

So there you have it, and I hope the message strikes home, and that it says what I have intended.

For goodness sake don't take this as the opening feints in a feud with Dick Holcombe. Nothing could be further from the case. It's just that his article seemed to me to require my answer, and nothing personal to Dick is intended whatever. In fact, he's my President, so it's just as well.....

A NEW ALBION GAME GETS UNDER WAY!!!

The game is a regular, all-comers game, using the standard rules together with the ALBION house-rules, a copy of which is enclosed to all players. Those players who are already subscribers will receive this issue by **first class** mail, as usual, if British. Other players will receive this page by airmail, the remainder of the issue following by the usual means if a subscriber. Those who are not subscribers already will receive this page only. Gad, that's complex.....

The game: ALBION 70/3. Boardman number to be allocated.

Gamesmaster.

Malcolm Watson, 3 Hawthorn Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, England.

Countries (drawn by lot by the GM in person).

Austria. Richard Redd, K'vutzat Urim, Doar Na Negev, Israel.

France. Edi Birsan, 48-20 39th Street, Long Island City, New York 11104, U.S.A.

Germany. Chris Hancock, 17 Mallard Road, Chelmsford, Essex, England.

Italy. David Jones, 4/58 Deveron Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, England.

England. Don Turnbull, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, England.

Russia. Bernie Ackerman, P.O. Box 6, Daggefontein, Transvaal, South Africa.

Turkey. Buddy Tretick, 3702 Wendy Lane, Silver Spring, Maryland 20906, U.S.A.

Deadline for the Spring 1901 orders will be approximately:-

MONDAY JUNE 2nd.

The report on these orders will appear in issue 17, the Autumn 1901 report in issue 19, etc. This timing will, we hope, allow plenty of leeway for diplomatic negotiation, despite the widespread geographical locations of players.

Truly an international game!

To save on postage, players may send orders to me for passing on to Malcolm. However to safeguard security, make sure I can't get access to such orders without Malcolm knowing about it, in which case he would, quite rightly, disqualify me. If you aren't writing to me anyway, then it doesn't matter, of course, and your orders can go direct to Malcolm.

GAME FEES are now due from all players. 10/- (British) or \$1.20 for Americans. Add as much postage cash as you wish. If you are already a subscriber and have credit, this can be put to the game fee and postage, and this will be done unless I hear from you to the contrary. See page 6 for guidance. I already have some game fees, of course, including my own.....

The ALBION editorial staff hopes that everyone will enjoy 70/3, the first of our all-comers games. Experienced players are represented by Dave Johnston and Buddy Tretick, both of whom also edit magazines. Bernie Ackerman, Chris Hancock and myself have taken part in one or two games each, while Richard Redd and David Jones are (I think, in the case of Richard) newcomers. Should be quite a tussle.

Naturally, not being called Blake (which joke can be taken in two ways, one for each side of the Atlantic), my position as editor of the magazine and player in one of the games is perhaps prone to comment from outside. I can do no more than assure everyone that everything will be above board - Malcolm would see to that even if I tried to twist.

LISTS FOR OTHER ALBION GAMES.

We have three other games open at present, and certain people have already signed up for them. As below, with account of the possible start date of the game.

The Abstraction Variant. 70/1V.

Type:- All-comers, rules in issue 11.

Game fee:- 10/- plus postage as necessary.

To commence:- As soon as filled.

Reporting:- Alternate (odd-numbered) issues.

Players already in:- Richard Redd, Malcolm Watson, John Robertson,
Bernie Ackerman, Bob Stuart.

Vacancies:- Two places only.

Gamesmaster:- Don Turnbull, with advice from the inventor,
Fred Davis.

ALBION 70/4.

Type:- British players only, regular rules.

Game fee:- 10/-, plus postage as necessary.

To commence:- As the current 69/1 draws to a close - perhaps
round about issue 21.

Reporting:- Every issue, starting with an odd-numbered issue.

Players already in:- Chris Hancock, Rod Blackshaw, John
Robertson.

Vacancies:- Four places.

Gamesmaster:- Don Turnbull.

The Business Game (Rene Nokin). 1970/BG1.

Type:- British players only, rules in issue 14, plus some extra
clarifications in this issue, page 12.

Game fee:- £1, plus postage as necessary.

To commence:- As soon as filled.

Reporting:- Every issue, starting odd or even (if I had said
'any parity' would you have understood??

Players already in:- Michael Nethercot, Bob Stuart (?).

Vacancies:- Two places.

Gamesmaster:- Don Turnbull/Rene Nokin, with the latter doing
the real work.

There we are - roll up, folks, and let's get these under way. Please don't send game fees yet - the time will come, I assure you! I have credited Richard Redd with the already-sent game fee for Abstraction.

LETTER EXTRACTS. LETTER EXTRACTS. LETTER EXTRACTS. LETTER EXOR

Richard Redd, K'vutzat Urim, Doar Na Negev, Israel.

Dear Don,

..... We've got problems!! I waited until here to enter my scathing denunciation of the British Postal Service since here's where it hurts the most. I spent the day off the kibbutz today in Tel Aviv bolstering the Israeli economy by buying more junk than I can afford. To my great delight, when I returned I found the usual brown envelope in my mail box which signifies my ALBION hasn't been blown up for another month. To make a long gripe short, it had stamped all over it "Nitkabel b'derech Hayam", which roughly translated means "Any organisation with a name like that has to be a commie front, so, despite how much postage you wasted, we sent it surface mail". I cursed all the way home. Especially when I found the deadline for the Jutland move was six days ago, which means I'll be two weeks late for my move.

.....
Until next time, Richard.

Yet another indictment of our Post Office, and on the day when the Postmaster General stood up in the House (or was held up, I'm not sure quite which) to say that, despite the imminent increases, the British still have the best Post Office system in the world. Good for Britain, I say, and heaven help the savages.

Dave Johnston, 5451 Rockwood Road, Columbus, Ohio 43229.

Dear Don,

Your letter is much appreciated and informative, as I've yet to receive ALBION 10 through LM channels; though George Patton insisted I read his issues with 10-12, because he imagines some of the ALBION qualities will seep through to LM. Your interest in PARLEMENT caught my eye, and your success in starting a game would be greeted with loud cheers. Unlike the Diplomacy variants, Parlemtent is a coalition game with an entirely different tempo. Coalitions are even more important, and the possibilities of four and five way alliances exist without the limitations geography brings to Diplomacy. But the game develops much further before parties must commit themselves. Diplomacy players, myself included, feel the first session develops too slowly, as all the games to date have of necessity begun with a majority of inexperienced players.

.....
Of course, England is hardly satiated with Diplomacy yet, and this is an easier game to approach and to learn some of the concepts which distinguish coalition games from the Avalon Hill variety. Still, I can't help but feel that a country which can produce George Brown AND Malcolm Watson has the resources to master Parlemtent.

If not, I understand Charles is working on a game called 'House of Lords'. It's like Parlemtent, except that instead of voting on a budget the players have a hearty lunch. The first to wake up, clean the crumbs off his suit and go home is the winner.

Best, Dave Johnston.

** Pity - we're out of space on this page to comment. However my thanks to Dave and Richard for their interesting and amusing letters. Keep 'em coming, folks.**

REPORT. ALBION 69/1. (1969BG)
 Winter 1907 builds etc.

France builds A(Par), A(Mar), F(Bre).
 Italy annihilated.
 Germany removes F(Liv).

Note on Autumn 1907 report:- I wrongly stated that the German army displaced from Warsaw could only retreat to Silesia, whereas in fact there were two alternative spaces open. However Colin Newcombe wishes to confirm the retreat to Silesia, as reported, and does not wish to amend this.

REPORT. ALBION 69/1. (1969BG)
 Spring 1908 orders.

Austria (Nethercot); A(Gal)-Sil. A(Ven) stands.
 A(Boh) S A(Gal)-Sil. A(Tri) S A(Ven).
 A(Tyr) S A(Ven).
 France (Watson); A(Nor)-Fin. A(Par)-Bur.
 A(Ruh) S German A(Mun).
 A(Pie)-Tus. A(Mar)-Pie.
 A(Rom) S A(Pie)-Tus. F(NTH)-Nor.
 F(INWG) S F(NTH)-Nor. F(Bre)-ENC.
 F(Ska) S F(NTH)-Nor. F(Tun)-IOS.
 F(Nap) S F(Tun)-IOS. F(WMS)-TYS.
 Germany (Newcombe); F(BAL) S F(Den). F(Den) S F(BAL).
 A(Mun) S A(Sil). A(Sil) S A(Pru).
 A(Pru) S A(Mun).
 Russia (Hancock); A(Swe)-Liv. F(GoB) C A(Swe)-Liv.
 A(Mos) S A(War). F(StP-NC)-Nor.
 A(War) S Austrian A(Gal)-Sil.
 F(BAS) S F(StP-NC)-Nor.
 Turkey (Wood); A(Arm)-Smy. F(EMS)-IOS.
F(AES)-EMS. F(Alb)-ADS.
 (No such unit).
 A(Gre) stands.

Retreats:- The German A(Sil) retreats to Berlin (only place).

Notation:- Underlined moves fail.

Deadline for the Autumn 1908 orders is:-

TUESDAY MAY 12th 1970.

69/1 PRESS RELEASES.From the French Press.

Bonjour, mes enfants - this is the voice of France bringing you all the up-to-date news.

Units of the French Imperial Army and Navy have occupied strategic positions in the Mediterranean, following the discovery that the treacherous Italian Government was entering into negotiations with the enemies of France with a view to attacking her. For some time now the Italian Press has placed a great strain on relations between our two countries and the Italian Government has steadfastly refused to curb their barbed comments, claiming that they confused the Eastern Powers. This explanation has so far been accepted as genuine. However, in the light of the evidence given by the Austrian Counter-espionage team, our beloved Emperor had no alternative but to order the disarming of the Italian army, whose crack units have now been formed into a pioneer corps. Roads in France have deteriorated drastically since their employment as navvies.

One note of happiness in this sad time was the emigration of Pope John G. Robertson to Belfast, where it is reported that the Right Rev. Ean Paysily has given him a key post in the Government. The Royal Locksmith, I understand.

On now to other events. The liberation of Norway from the Russians was greeted with great joy and jubilation by the Norwegians, especially the women, who welcomed our troops with open arms. As they entered Oslo, they were Oslo welcomed in Berne.

Naval and Army units have now been ordered to press on into Russian territory. Chasseurs march onwards waving placards which read 'Moscow or Bust'. One Corporal disappeared mysteriously after shouting 'You can forget Moscow - give me Bust.'

The Imperial Staff confessed dismay at Germany's expulsion from Warsaw, but assured the Kaiser that French forces would be made available to him if required. Emperor de Gaul has issued an assurance that Germany will in no way be affected by the recent events in Italy, and that as long as she keeps her head, and continues to recognise France as her friend, she has nothing to fear. Any movement of German forces towards the French frontier, however, would be considered a threat to French internal security. The Emperor has shown extreme confidence that this misunderstanding will not occur.

From The Turkish Press.

The present Government under King Reshadieh has apparently taken a 'softer' line to the old Tri-Pact, and it is rumoured that discussions have been finalised with a specific aim in mind. The French domination of Europe continues, and her satellite country, Germany, is doing as she is told, as usual, and obviously believes that she will still be there if and when this struggle terminates. We sincerely hope that McGaul does not turn on his ally with the intention of personal gain; it would of course probably shorten the war,

and speed the French cause.

We at TRASH have at last been allowed to inspect the secret documents concerning discussions with the French tyrant. A wafer-thin non-aggression pact was formulated, whereby Turkey tentatively conceded not to enter the Western Mediterranean Sea without a years notice. Now, Our Glorious King devours both wafers and treaties for breakfast, and the results are reflected in the present dispositions of our armed forces. The aim of this Government is that a country will eventually win through the struggle and reign supreme, but it will not be France.

From The German Press.

The betrayers shall be betrayed! Bulow.

XX

REPORT. ALBION 69/2. (1969CF).
Winter builds etc. 1903.

England removes F(Lpl), A(Yor).
France builds F(Mar).
Germany builds A(Ber),A(Kie).
Italy builds A(Ven),F(Nap).
Russia - no orders received. GM removes F(NWG).
Turkey removes A(Bul).
The French Fleet retreats to IRI.

REPORT. ALBION 69/2. (1969CF).
Spring 1904 orders.

Austria (Wood);	A(Vie)-Boh. <u>F(Alb)-IOS.</u>	A(Ser)-Bul. <u>A(Bud)-Gal.</u>
England (Hancock);	F(NTH)-Hel.	
France (Evans);	A(Wal)-Lpl. A(Spa)-Mer. F(IRI)-MAO. F(Mar)-GoL.	A(Bur)-Bel. F(Lon) stands. F(MAO)-WMS.
Germany (Stuart);	F(Edi)-NTH. F(Swe)-Fin. A(Sil) S A(Mun). A(Kie)-Den.	F(Nor)-Swe. A(Mun) S A(Sil). A(Pru)-Liv. A(Ber) S A(Sil).
Italy (Watson);	A(Ven) S A(Tyr). A(Tyr) S Austrian F(Con)-Ank. A(Gre) S Austrian <u>F(IOS)-AES.</u>	<u>F(AES)-Smy.</u> A(Vie)-Boh. F(Nap)-TYS. A(Ser)-Bul.
Russia (Robertson);	A(War)-Gal. A(Liv)-War. A(Ukr) S A(War)-Gal.	F(BAL) stands. <u>F(Run)-Bul.</u>
Turkey (Thomas);	F(BLA)-Con.	<u>F(EMS)-Smy.</u>

Retreats: none. Notation: Underlined moves fail.

DEADLINE FOR AUTUMN 1904 ORDERS IS TUESDAY MAY 12th 1970.

From the English Press. The Government has seen fit to issue the following statement:- "The Frogs are everywhere!" However we are undeterred and will continue to work for peace in Europe. There are some black devils who sailed into Edinburgh uninvited, and what's more, they did so after giving an assurance of friendship! They will pay for their treachery, however, before someone can sink my Imperial tubs. The parties to the Franco-Russian alliance had better realise that the Germans have been plotting against them, and we might as well help them down the road to disaster. This may well be the last statement issued from this source. The next one might well come from the heart of some novel in some foreign land that is.....

From the German Press. As victorious German naval units freed Edinburgh, personnel noticed many strange and startling things. The People of Scotland crawled out of the holes in the ground where for hundreds of years they have hidden. As they crawled, they kicked before them the dreaded haggis. In an interview with our correspondent, one of the natives, by name MacMalcolm, stated 'You cannot know how we have suffered - you cannot understand what it is like to be free after hundreds of years of control. All my life I have had to live on porridge and goat milk - we did not know of the sausage. Always we have had the stinking haggis watching over us and keeping us in misery. Once I was free, I kicked the haggis out of the house, then set to work on the bagpipes. As you know, every house in Scotland had to keep the pipes and we had to blow them daily!' Wat went on to describe his actions. 'I took down th pipes and slit them up the middle. The dreaded whine which every bag contains glared at me. I grabbed it and pulled it out by the roots, threw it to the ground and jumped up and down with joy, smashing the thing into the ground. Praise the Kaiser, who has given us freedom!'

From the Italian Press. Despite continued demands by the Italian Government for the release of the First Fleet, the Turks continue to hold this inoffensive force prisoner. The Government has accordingly issued Turkey with a final ultimatum. Italian forces in Greece have been ordered to aid Austria regain her lost territory of Bulgaria. It is hoped this operation will be carried out without trouble from Russia. The French have been warned not to sail her fleet into the Mediterranean. To do so will be to break a long-standing agreement and will force Italy to mobilise against her. Italian naval forces are taking up positions for defensive action only. It is hoped the French will not be led astray by their foolish Germanic allies.

From the Russian Press. We have still been unable to purchase new printing presses to replace those destroyed during the recent anti-German riots, so news has not been printed recently.

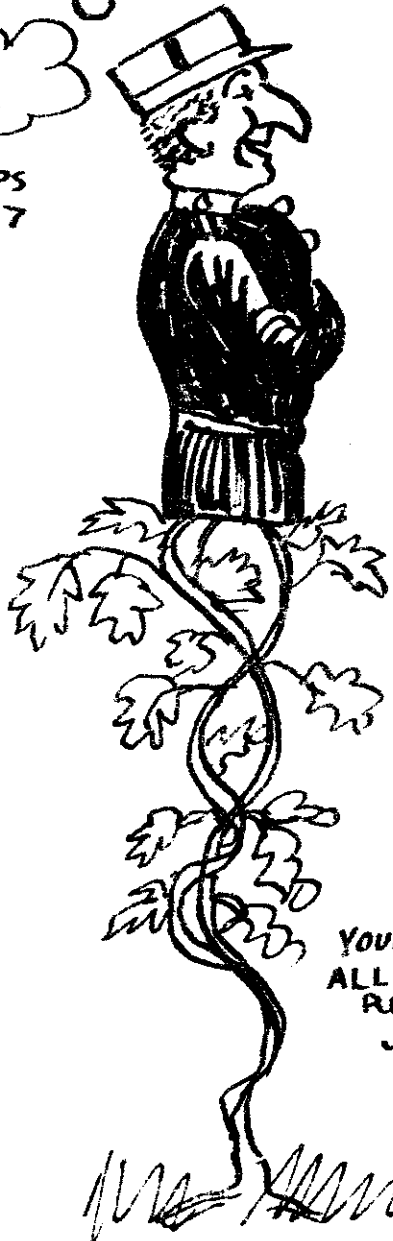
From the Austrian Press. Count Molochite, despite repeated attempts of collaboration by the Russian Bure, adheres to his original strong alliance with Italy. It becomes apparent that the Russian is in need of an ally since the demise of Turkey.

xx

Well, that's it until next time, having squeezed a 34-page draft onto 32 pages. Apologies to those whose press releases were edited to allow this (only unimportant material omitted, obviously). Thanks to all for your continued support (in expectation.....)



ITALIAN TROOPS
OCCUPY CLOUD 7
BRITISH GRAND
FLEET SUNK IN
MILKY WAY

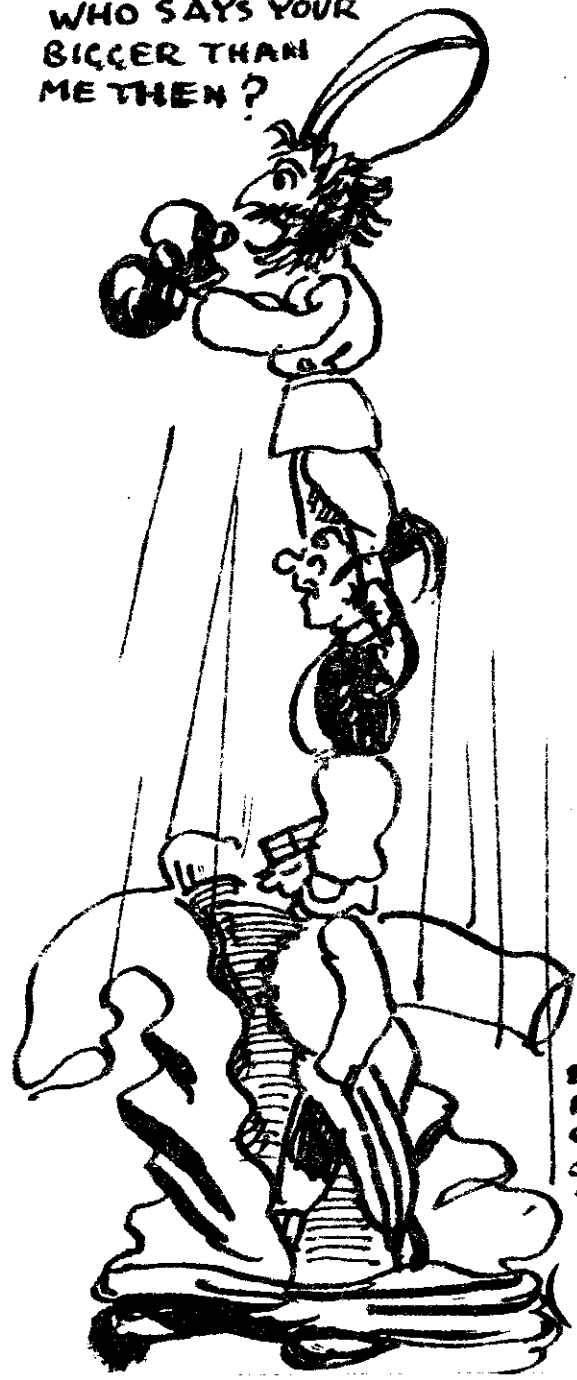


AND HE GREW
AND
GREW

YOUR
ALL
RIGHT
JACK



WHO SAYS YOUR
BIGGER THAN
ME THEN?



EASTERN
POWERS
CLOAK
OF
SECRECY