BROBDINGNAG

BROBDINGNAG would like to take this opportunity of wishing all its
readers, players and ex-players, subscribers and exchanges, all good
wishes for the Christmas season, and the best of fortune in 1968.

Your editor will be away from Ralston from this evening until New
Year's Eve, so please do not phone during that period. For part of the
time I will be in Knowlton, Quebec, Canada and, if the matter is
sufficiently urgent, you could phone me there. The number,
514-243-5852.

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Game 1966AV   Winter 1909

The adjustments:

ENGLAND (Wells). Build army Liverpool. Build fleet Edinburgh. Build
                 fleet London.

RUSSIA (Zelazny): Build army Warsaw. Build fleet Sevastopol.

GERMANY (Shagrin): No removal order received. The two units with
                   lowest priority for retention are the armies in
Piedmont and Livonia. A coin was tossed to decide the issue. Remove
army Piedmont.

ITALY (Francis): No adjustment required.

Deadline for moves for Spring 1910 is set for Thursday, 4 January
1968.

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Address changes:

Jack Greene, Jr., playing Turkey in game 1966AQ will have address
670 Darrell Road, Hillsborough, Calif., 94010, from December
20th to January 3rd.

Earl A. Thompson, playing France in Game 1966AQ, is in the throes
of moving. Players will be informed of his new address as soon as
I learn of it. Meanwhile, as I learned the hard way, his phone is
disconnected.

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RATING LISTS

To return to the discussion of Rating Lists begun in reply to Gene
Prosnitz' letter in the last issue. Due to slight differences in games
counted and, more particularly, to the method of handling drop-outs
and replacements, the names given in the Reinsel Rating List,
published in Big Brother, and in the PROB List are not identical.
There are 76 names in common in the two lists and I thought it might
be of interest to see how much agreement there is, considering the
scores of these 76 individuals. The correlation coefficient of the
scores of the two listings works out to 0.75, not terrifically high,
but high enough to indicate that we are, in a somewhat crude way,
measuring the same thing.

As most of you know, Larry Peery has recently made a more
subjective listing, based on a poll he has conducted. As he did not
rate any individual unless he had received the opinion of at least
three persons, his final list is quite short, containing only 38
names. In the nature of the case, all 38 are people quite active in the
game today, and it omits the names of many former players given in
other listings. On the other hand it includes some who have not
yet been in any completed game and who, consequently, are not rated
in other listings. There are only 23 individuals who are rated on all
the listings and their various scores are tabulated below.

Name	Peery List	Brob. Compl.	Breb. Current	Big Brother
Pournelle	40	12	16	14
Honing	38	14	20	4
Smythe	38	24	18	27
McCallum	37	7	24	10
Zelazny	36	6	11	7
Miller	35	8	15	8
Wells	35	18	24	21
Nelson	34	20	18	16
Peery	34	4	13	2
Turner	34	8	15	1
Walker	34	4	13	0
Ward	34	-1	-8	2
Huff	32	0	4	5
Latimer	31	1	8	7
Reinsel	30	2	10	-2
Mirsan	28	0	-7	-1
Brennan	28	-8	-1	0
Haus	28	2	8	-1
Tzudiker	28	-14	-17	-3
Swenson	27	-1	-3	-3
von Metzke	25	-1	-2	4
Dygert	24	8	10	7
Gemignani	14	-6	-29	-2

In his discussion of his listing, Larry Peery mentions that there
are some individuals who seem to have received less than justice
on it. This is especially noticable in the case of Dygert, who

does much bettter on all the objective listings than he does in the
Peery Poll.

I would have liked to include Dave Lebling's Mean Rate of
Growth Listing, published in Glockorla in this comparison. However,
there is a difficulty. The last complete edition of it appeared
last June. Supplementary scores have appeared for games completed
since but, as the scheme is an averaging one, not a totalizing one,
it would be necessary to re-compute the whole thing in order to
determine the score of a player who has been in two or more games.
So, regretfully, it was left out. I think it would be found to
give relative ratings closely similar to the BROB Completed Game
listing; however, it rates short games more heavily than long one,
at least as far as survivors are concerned. This is a feature which
appears in no other listing, and it might be one which would keep
players from carrying on indefinitely in stalemated games.

Correlation coefficients between each pair of listings
for these 23 players, are tabulated below

	Peery	BROB Comp	BROB Curr	Big Brother
Peery	1.	0.63	0.73	0.55
BROB Compl.	0.63	1	0.84	0.84
BROB Current	0.73	0.84	1	0.65
Big Brother	0.55	0.84	0.65	1

It will be noted that the Peery Listing agrees more closely
with the BROB Current Game Listing than with the completed game
listing. This is not surprising, as people replying to the Xenogogic
questionaire will certainly make use of recent events in making
a judgment. The high correlation between the two BROB Listings
is to be expected, as they are formed on the same principles and
one is, in fact, a part of the other. The high correlation between
the BROB Completed Game List and the Big Brother one, is more
surprising to me, as the two schemes have very different scales
for rewarding victory. It is probably partly fortuitous: when all
individuals are considered who appear on these two listings, giving
us something like three times as many data to work with, the
correlation drops to a lower value, as we saw on the previous page.

Of course, current game listings, like the BROB Current
Listing, or the Peery Poll Listing, should not really be
compared with a completed game listing as it appears now, but with
those listings as they will appear 9 months or a year from now.

The measure of the agreement between each of these lists
and the general consensus of them all is: BROB Completed game 0.83,
BROB Current Game 0.81, Big Brother 0.78, Peery 0.74.

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SEALED BAG

Derek Nelson, 18 Granard Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario.:

On the ratings of players by countries ((BROB #75))
I quite agree the statistical sample is too small to be relevant.
Actually, only a method of correlation between the various country
strengths and player strengths at the same time would be helpful.

((+(John Koning is developing a handicapping scheme. It can be applied,
with some modification, to various Rating Lists, e.g. the BROB one,
or a Centre Year Listing. In it a player for one of the tougher
countries, say Germany, gets a slight bonus; a player for one of
the more successful countries, such as England or Turkey, gets a
small deduction. It involves a very considerable amount of additional
work for the List maker, however: as every game is completed, the
relative achievment of the various countries has to be re-computed,
as I do anyway, and then the handicap point have to be re-adjusted.
This makes it impossible to compile a new list by merely adding in
the outcome of the newly completed game. Everyone's score must be
re-done, even those who have not played the game for years.

The scheme given in BROB two issues ago does, in fact, come
closer to giving a correlation between player and country than is
given by such a handicapping scheme. But we don't have enough data
to make it mean much. I am thinking of adding this feature at the end
of future editions of the Rating List, but listing only players who
are rated on a given country for at least two games.-jamcc)+))

John Koning, 2008 Sherman, Apt. 1, Evanston, Ill., 662,1.:

As you will have noticed in the last sTab ((#40)), my
average supply center year discussion was crowded out. That wouldn't
matter, but the labor of keeping it current for another three weeks
is bothersome. Not only do I have to post changes in supply center
totals to individual cards with almost every issue of a diplomacy
magazine, but I have to recalculate the average and post that to the
average chart. (I know there are easier ways to do it, but I don't
want to know!) Anyway, as soon as I've published them in the next
sTab I will then let averages go until I need to chart them again,
and then recalculate the ones that have to be changed. One thing I
have added to my chart that you might find useful for yours is to
place an asterisk after the name of each player no longer active.
Strangely enough, most of the high ranking players on average supply
center years are inactive...well, not really surprising. The way to
do really well under such a system is to play in one long game and do
very well, like Dian or Bruce Pelz so that the average climbs to 17.
But all that will be discussed in the next issue ((of sTab)), I hope.
Yes, I am afraid a really comprehensive rating system in
Diplomacy games is impossible. But its fun trying.

((+(My system of avoiding unnecessary work in keeping the Listing up
to date is to remove from the main card index file the card for any
player who requires an amendment to his score. I. e., suppose a copy
of sTab comes in and there is a development in one of its games which

affects the scores of five individuals. The five corresponding cards
will be removed from the file, and amended, but not returned to the
file. When it comes time to prepare the next listing it is only
necessary to look at the abstracted cards. All others can be copied
from the last list. That way I can avoid having to sort cards, not
only of players who are no longer active, but of currently active
players, as well, whose games showed no scorable development during
the period between the two listings. This feature would be less use-
ful, of course, in a centre-year scheme, such as yours, as every
year of play will mean an adjustment to the score of every player
in thegame. In the BROB Rating List, on the other hand, it is only
when an elimination, or change of players, occurs that amendment
is called for; usually about 75% of active players will have the
same rating in any two consecutive listings, and the cards for these
I don't have to handle at all.

I am very unhappy about any raw averaging scheme applied to
Rating Lists. To convert the scores for countries given in the BROB
Listing to average percentage points the formula I use is

$$\% = 50 \left(1 + \frac{S}{6N}\right)$$

where % is the percent rating
S is the total score of
the country
and N is the number of games
considered.

The same formula could be applied to the score for each individula
so producing his average Rating on a percentage basis. To do so
seems to me to produce a very misleading picture. Bruce Pelz,
for example, played one postal game, which he won. The formula
therefore gives him a score of 100%, implying that he wins all his
games. But to say that a certain player wins all his games, and
to say that he won the only game he played, are, in my opinion
two very different things.

Many other players, in addition to Pelz, won their first
game. Nelson won his first game; he has won another since but, in
the interval, there have others where he did less well. If we
apply the raw rating formula to Nelson's score we get something
like 78%, 22% lower than Pelz. Do we really know anything to make us
suppose that Bruce Pelz is all that better than Derek Nelson?
Certainly not: all we know about him is that he won his first game,
something which Derek also did.

Smythe is an even more glaring example. In addition to
being rated on a game which he took over in mid-course he is
rated on 6 games that he played through. Four of them he won,
his first game being one of the four. On one game he was a middling
survivor, and in one he was eliminated in mid-game. Yet again, if we
apply the raw average he would get a score some 20% lower than
Bruce Pelz's.

MacKenzie, Pournelle, Wells, and Zelazny also won their
first games. In Wells' case he has won three in a row, without

Intervening defeats. He, therefore, also gets 100% on the Raw average formula. But note that Wells has been eliminated in at least one game, 1965C, the oldest game now on the books, and that that elimination occurred over two years ago. Sooner or later, even with a <u>Wild 'n Wooly</u> game, the game will appear in the lists. When it does Wells' score will drop below Pelz's 100%. From that point on Wells could win every game he enters, perhaps 20 of them, but his score will never again equal that of Pelz who has won one game.

Ridiculous.

Another way to look at it is this. Let us design a computer to play Diplomacy. We will build into its program no strategic concepts whatever, it will not even know the object of the game. This to be a purely random player. If it has an army in Munich, it will know that that army can stand, or move to Burgundy, Ruhr, etc, or support any other army, in or into any one of these spaces. We design the machine to make a purely random choice among those possibilities, and so for all its other units. Put seven such machines to play a game and one of them would eventually win. We can say that one of these machines will eventually win the game. We can say it with a great deal more assurance than we can say that one of seven players beginning a game will win. A deadlocked situation is itself evidence of strategic thought and planning on the part of the players, elements which we have deliberately left out of our machine. There are, however, heat death states that these machines can fall into, i.e. moving purely on a chance basis some of them will run out of supply centres and be eliminated, and we can be sure that eventually the victory criterion will be reached. So that a victory purely by chance is possible. And if we are to use an averaging scheme at all we should use one which subtracts this chance of winning by fluke from the score of a player who is rated on only one game. For a player, like Jerry Pournelle, who has won two in a row without losses, the possibility that he made his wins by chance is very much less, but is still there, and so on. So that what we need is an asymptotic average; a score which, if there are a very large number of games is just the common average as generally understood, but which for a single game is very much depressed toward the mean, for two games somewhat depressed toward the mean, still less for three, and so on.

No doubt some Statistician or Probability Theorist in the crowd will tell me what formula I should use. It will contain roots and factorials and so on, and I will no longer be able to calculate the rating on the backs of the envelopes of the letters which clutter up my desk. It will be possible to approximate the true formula, whatever it is, by using the formula for the raw average on the previous page, if we replace N in that formula by $(N + a)$ where a is a constant greater than zero. It remains to choose a, which I have done purely subjectively. Consider two players. One of them has played only one game and has won that. The other has played two games, one of which he won; in the other game he was the runner-up, the man whom the actual winner had to beat, as Derek Nelson was in 1964A, for example. Which of the two has more clearly established

the fact that he is a superior player? If you think that they are
equal then you must change N to N + 1. In my feeling, however, the
second of these two players is more certainly a superior player
than is the first. This doesn't mean that he is necessarily the
better player; it means that his being a better than average player
is more certain. So I would say that a should be greater than 1.
A value of 2 makes equivalent the player who has played one game
only and won that, and the player who has played two games, winning
one and coming third in the other. This also, I feel, is a little too
low, but only fractionally so, and it is the value of 2 for a which
I used in EROB 62 where I gave the then current Completed Game Rating
List in percentage form.

I think that all averaging schemes should use some similar
asymptotic average. You mention that your centre year listing
appears to unduly favour the Pelzes who played one long game. Any
averaging scheme which uses a straight average will have some
similar case of a player in a single game who gets a phenomenally
high score. This chance element should be counteracted by depressing
the score of a player with a single game, and, to a lesser extent,
those with only a few games. The appropriate factor to use will
differ, of course, for various types of Rating List.

The use of N + 2, instead of N, in the denominator,
although it effectively lowers the score of a player with a single
game, approaches a true mean fairly rapidly with only a moderate
number of games. You, for instance, are rated on 7 games and have a
score of +14; your true average is, therefore, 66.7%. Your
reduced average is 63.0%, a difference of less that 4 percentage
points. A player rated on a dozen games would be within 2% or less
of their true average. In the middle of writing this reply to your
letter I received sTab #41. I was surprised to see how many people
it lists as being now, or earlier, in about 20 games. Most of those
games should be finished and in the rating lists by a year from now.
At that time the difference between their true average and their
asymptotic average will be less than one percent.

By the way, since I didn't receive sTab #41 until half way
through this reply, I didn't really know what I was talking about
in the beginning - something which will occasion no surprise in a
Diplomacy magazine. -jamcc)+))

Eduard Hälle, 107 SE 8th St., Gainesville, Florida, 32601.:

The 1900 Winter builds ((EROB #73)) intrigues me. I
agree, as nearly everyone does, that Germany needs something. Austria-
Hungary will certainly need a fleet eventually. Italy certainly
has an excellent chance to nip that in the bud. So Austria gains
no additional option. Italy gains most, I feel, and may be the
pivotal country.

((+(I once considered the following variant. In addition to allowing
the players to build armies and fleets, as they wish, in 1900, to
permit the players to move supply centres during the course of the
game. A country wishing to do this to declare at the end of a Fall

move, i.e., for postal play, during our winter move, that from the
following winter onward he will regard Bohemia, say, as a supply
centre instead of Budapest. Both provinces to be in the possession
of the power making the declaration at the time of making it and to
still be in possession of the same power at the end of the next Fall
move. From that point on, unless changed in similar fashion again,
Bohemia to be regarded as a supply centre, which would add to the
supply centre count of any invading force, and Budapest to be a non-
supply centre, like Tyrolia now.

        To discourage frivolous changes there would be the further
requirement that no hostile force enter the territory in the inter-
vening Spring move. Suppose, in the example cited, that an announce-
ment of intent had been made in Winter 1903 and that a hostile raider
entered Bohemia in Spring 1904 and left in the Fall. Austria, in such
a case, would be allowed to build in __neither__ Budapest, which it had
declared to be de-commissioned as a build centre, nor in Bohemia,
which was invaded in the interval between the relevant Fall moves

        The idea behind this is that it is what occurs in actual
war. In the last war, for example, Russia transferred as much of its
industry as was movable from its western provinces to the Urals, as
soon as the former came under threat of German attack. And all
powers do likewise - Scapa Flow, not Portsmouth, was the main British
home naval base.

        The year's warning would, of course, not be made, formally,
in actual war. But, in practice, the military world would know of
major transfers - I am thinking here of things like naval dock-
yards. If Germany, say, decided to move its naval bases from Kiel and
Cuxhaven to Danzig and Königsberg, the facts, in a general way,
would be known to all other naval powers long before the transfer
could be completed.

        Originally I thought of restricting possible supply centres
to provinces within the boundaries of the major power concerned.
But it is the case of one of the examples that you bring up which made
me decide otherwise. A real Austrian Empire with naval bases at
Trieste and Fiume, under threat of Italian attack, would, in case of
a long war with that country, transfer its fleet to Split. The
latter is, of course, within our province of Trieste, but we can
achieve the same effect by allowing transfer of a base to Albania.
This ability to transfer supply centres to originally neutral
territory would strengthen Russia vis-a-vis Turkey, as the former
could, after 1901, raise Rumania to a build centre in place of
Warsaw, for example, giving it more possibility for naval building
in the Black Sea. Both the possibilities mentioned above, Austria
able to move its naval base away from the Italian frontier, any
time after 1901, and Russia able to get an additional Euxine base,
would, I think, make for a more equitable game.

        It is with respect to Germany, however, that I feel that the
proposed variant makes for a better balanced game. In game after game,
Germany finds that it has to keep its home centres packed with troops
in order to keep the enemy out, leaving no open space for builds.

If the attack is from the west Kiel and Munich become the front line
and Berlin must also be garrisoned to support Kiel; if the attack is
from the east Berlin is in the front line and Kiel must be used for
support. Of course, if Germany is attacked simultaneously from west,
east, and north, it is going out, just as any other power will when
ganged up on by all its neighbours, and this remains the case in the
variant. But, often enough, the attack which must be defended against
is from one side only, but for Germany, more than for any other
power this means pack the homeland with troops.

Game 1966L, <u>Big Brother</u>'s game #1, is a good example.
Germany played by Koning, was attacked by Brannan's France. There was
no threat from the east; Russia had succumbed early and Germany owned
vast tracts of that country. But Koning could not profit by his
gains in Austria and Scandinavia because of no open supply centres;
in 1914 he was no fewer than 4 forces short of what he was entitled
to, due to inability to build, owning 12 centres he only had 8 forces.
In such a case, in the suggested variant, he would transfer supply
bases to Prussia and Warsaw, say, and make the builds to which he
was entitled, although of course, with a year's delay to announce
intent.

This change would not make much difference to England and
France, which are rarely hard pressed in their home centres, unless
at the end of their tether anyway. England is, perhaps, weakened a
little in the end game. Turkey would gain nothing directly and would
lose indirectly due to some additional Russian threat to the Black Sea.
Italy would only rarely want to move bases, though perhaps, occasion-
ally, there would be an advantage in replacing Venice. Austria's and
Germany's gains have already been dealt with in detail, above. All
in all, I think it would make for a game with a more even distribution
of possibilities for the seven powers.

Note, by the way, that this game would make impossible the
final sealing of the Straits of Gibraltar, and this is where it
weakens England's end-game position. The last ditch stand, Fleet
Mid-Atlantic stand, Fleets Portugal and Fleet Irish Sea, support
fleet Mid-Atlantic, which England, or any other power which previously
has conquered England, can now use to hold out forever against an
alliance of Mediterranean powers, no matter what land forces the latter
possess, will no longer work. The Mediterranean alliance would
promptly change one of its existing build centres for one on the
north-west coast of Europe, say Holland, and take the Gibraltar
position from the rear. In this, as in other respects, it would
make a somewhat more fluid game. With the safeguard suggested, that
the intention must be declared a year in advance, and the transfer
fails if there is an invasion or even a raid within that year, I
don't think it would make it too fluid.

In case I haven't made the idea completely clear, no power
would have, at any time, more than 3 supply centres available for
builds, Russia 4. But the centres so available need not remain the
same provinces as the supply centres established at the beginning of
the game. -jamcc)+))

John Boardman, 592 1oth St., Brooklyn, NY, 11218:

I am also getting exasperated about Diplomacy 'zine publishers who don't publish. In the next Graustark I am going to announce the following 'zines as defunct, since no new issues have appeared in three months:

Barad-Dur   Hostigos   Halmar   Corsair
Harsovia   High Liver   Xeno

I have already thus reported the deaths of Norstrillia, Orthanc, Broken Line, Eurailia, and others, in Grau #139.

((+(The greatest difficulty appears to be with magazines distributed by some one other than the publisher. A few days before getting GRAU #139, with its announcement of the demise of Norstrillia Notes, I received from Brannan, the distributor, a mass of them and other alliterative Alderson 'zines, many of which had been published 8 months or more previously. And, recently, when I questioned Bob Ward about hisMarsovia he told me that it had been published regularly but that the distributor, Anders Swenson, had neglected to send any copies to the exchanges. And, in fact, at about that time I received a number of issues of it. Though California publishing is hard to understand. Anders publishes, for Bob Ward, the latter's Marsovia; meanwhile he does not publish his own Miskatonic University, publication of which has been taken over by Armageddonia of Turner and Dygert.

You will by now have received Chalker's circular letter stating that the Barad-Dur games will be taken over, for the time being at least, by Miller's Diplophobia. This will create a unique situation. Two of the Barad-Dur games, 1966AX and 1966BF were first organized in 1966 and so have 1966 numbers. The effective opening moves of them, however, will not be published until January 1968.

One should note also that the Halmar games are going forward, by carbon copy letter, in spite of the non-appearance of their parent 'zine. This is the same procedure as you used with the latter stages of 1963A, each issue of Ruritania giving the previous 3 or 4 moves, long after the event. And you have used the same procedure with some of the Brooklyn College games.

For the information of interested readers: All the Alderson 'zines and likewise Bob Ward's Marsovia are still being published more or less on time but the distribution is erratic. Barad-Dur games appear now in Diplophobia. Orthanc games appear now in STab. The Eurlia game appears now in ADAG. Hostigos did not, I believe, publish a single issue. Broken Line has suspended publication; it had no game in progress. High Liver has likewise ceased publication with no alternate provision for its game. The Halmar games live, although the 'zine appears only very rarely. I have no information on Xeno and Corsair. And, while on the subject, does anyone know what has happened to von Metzke's promised revival of Costaguana? It was announced with considerable fanfare last August or so, but no issue seems to have appeared. -jamcc)+))