

Scene of Inquiry

This concerns a request that 1979W, otherwise known as Ozog I, be declared irregular by the NS. In terms of the recommendation below, only factors directly related to the game are being considered. While it is true that Ozog is a USN for Oaklyn, and there may have been pre-existing conflicts between some of the participants, no evidence has been presented that these factors directly impacted the game, so they will not be considered. Likewise, the various and murky threats made by Oaklyn in FED V, 6, will be completely ignored.

The Neutrality of the Fall 1901 Orders

The game was played under the Glew and Mang houserules which state that "neutral orders will be used" in case of Fall 1901 R.H. The position around Austria after 501 was as follows:

Italy: A Pie, A Apo, F Ion
 Austria: A Boh, A Ser, F Alb
 Russia: F Bot, F Sev, A Ukr, A Gal
 Turkey: A Bul, A Con, F Ank

When Austria M'ed, Oaklyn submitted the following replacement orders to the GM, Eric Ozog: A Boh-Gal, F Alb-Gre, A Ser A Ukr A Bul-Rom. The first and last of these two moves, on their surface, do not appear to be neutral.

Oaklyn presents two defenses of his behavior. The first is that he was not obliged to submit neutral orders at all. He says this explicitly: "So, Austria was not bound to make "neutral" moves, not as far as Russia is concerned." Instead, Oaklyn suggests a different standard that he is to follow: "It was my duty, as the standby player, not to cause suffering in Austria, but to allow Austria the best possible moves."

The "best possible moves" (bpm) standard is a perfectly reasonable one, and indeed, it is what the player of record is expected to strive for. It may well be a better plan than "neutral orders" for dealing with FDI M'ks. However, it is not what the IRs require. They call for "neutral orders", not "neutral orders unless there is a bpm to use". It must be understood that neutral orders and bpm are not necessarily the same thing. For example, if Italy opens to Tyo and Ven, his bpm in most cases is to haul off and attack someone, which obviously "neutral orders" will not permit. A GM who decides to use the "neutral orders" approach in his IRs presumably understands that "neutral orders" will not necessarily be the bpm. In discarding "neutral orders" required by the IRs in favor of his own philosophy of how best to deal with a 1901 M'ER, Oaklyn is saying that they do not apply to him, and he is free to alter them when he prefers his own approach.

Oaklyn's second defense is that the moves are in fact neutral. In order to do this, Oaklyn sets up a standard that seems to be so high that there are no moves which aren't neutral. As an example of a neutral move, he cites A Boh-Man! Now obviously, if grabbing for the home center of another player is "neutral" then the actual moves used by Oaklyn are neutral, as they are less drastic. Got such a grab is the most unneutral thing that a player can do in FDI.

Oaklyn has thoughtfully provided two definitions of "neutral", viz: "not engaged on either side" and "not aligned with a political grouping". The order for A SER is explicitly engaged on the Turkish side --- aside from conveying there is no more "engaged on" a side that one can be other than supporting another player. A Boh-Gal is more complex. Its only possible function is to deny Russia support for a move to Rom, when viewed in conjunction with the A SER move.

It must be emphasized that there were perfectly reasonable alternatives for the piece. A Boh-Vie would defend Vie against possible Russian attack, and would certainly provide a more neutral stance with regard to Germany, so it could not be criticized on that score. A Ser could support the move to Gre, II, or even move to Bul, tho the latter move ~~will~~ be shortsighted. And support for the move to Gre would in fact have netted Gre, instead of permitting the Turks to stand F Alb out of Gre.

There is a variety of other tactical and strategic commentary provided by Oaklyn, which is only marginally relevant at best. Furthermore, some of it is so peculiar that it is unclear that Oaklyn intends the reader to take it seriously. For example, Germany is said to have "Lionized and marched back into Munich" --- and yet, Rom was threatened by two moves, A Ser, A Boh, so this was hardly a panic reaction. The situation around

A Boh-Vie is dismissed merely as what "a beginner might well do." While a beginner might well also do this move, players of all skill levels can see the value of defending an open home center, especially when 1) The unit has no other pressing duties and 2) The enemy's intentions are entirely unknown, normally the case when a substitute orders are submitted by an outsider.

Ozog's discussion is much more grounded in reality. He accepts the fact that he did violate the C&F "houserules." He attributes this to inexperience, not conspiracy. This I can readily believe. When I spoke to him on the fone just after the incident occurred, I discovered that he did not understand what neutral orders were.

Instead, Ozog argues that since the moves failed, they did not affect the game. The Serbian support was in fact not accepted, and the move to Gal failed. However, Oaklyn's decision not to submit neutral order did in fact affect the game. The more neutral A Boh-Vie would have placed that army in Vie, where it could have defended Bud in the Spring of 1902 (as it was, A Bud was dislodged. Thus, it could be easily argued that Oaklyn's moves did harm Austria.) Similarly, if the normal, and neutral, support for F Alb-Gre had been tendered by Austria, Gre would have been taken, again giving Aus' a better position. Also, it is possible that, by announcing that Oaklyn-as-Austria is anti-Russian, any player deciding that Oaklyn would likely pick up the position in W01 could be influenced. Finally, there is the question of whether it should matter that it didn't make any difference. After all, it will do a bank robber no good at sentencing time to argue that the bank did get their money back, to use a crude analogy.

The Use of Oaklyn for Three Consecutive Seasons for Three Countries

Oaklyn submitted replacement orders for England in S01, Austria in F01, and Italy in S02 (which was combined with W01). To use the same player in so many positions in such a short period of time, and at such a sensitive time in the game is certainly contrary to normal GMing practices. It gives one "player" far too much influence over the game. It is of course not possible to know whether he received any mail after his S01 and F01 moves, on the theory that he might get the position after all if a second NMR occurred.

What is worse, and what is certainly Ozog's most serious lapse of judgement, is that he received a protest over this from one of the players and ignored it. After the F01 moves, a player, whom Ozog does not name, objected to the continued use of Oaklyn. Ozog does not give his reasons, saying only "There is a matter of principle here." He then announces that he will continue to use Oaklyn's moves provided that "no one else objects!" (emphasis mine). It should also be noticed that Eric did not get any prior consent from the other players for this procedure.

The Use of Replacement Orders after 1901

The C&F Houserules permit the use of replacement orders (in place of all units hold) only for 1901. However, Ozog used them in S02 and possibly later too. Such a practice is quite unusual, altho there are a few GMs who will do this, such as Eric Verheiden. However, so far as I know, all GMs who use this controversial practice make it well known that that is how they run their games, so that those who don't want to be in a game like that can avoid it. Here by contrast, not only were the players not told in advance, they were lead to believe by the C & F HRs that the game would be run according to the usual method.

The Combining of W01 and S02 Moves

The C&F Houserules require that W01 and S02^{not} be combined; Rule 9 refers to "the 3 seasons of 1901." Rule 5 says, "In very simple Winter adjustments situations, the Winter and spring moves can be called for at the same time and often will be after the first year." With six countries building 9 units, it could hardly be called "very simple", and the intent of "after the first year" is clear enuf.

Complicating this is the fact that Ozog did in fact announce that he was combining the two seasons. Nonthe less, two players did NMR in S02. However, this announcement was placed on page two, at the bottom. Page two was devoted to Ozog II. This just said that the seasons would be combined. It did not say that this would apply both to Ozog II; reported on page 2, and Ozog I, whose F01 results are reported in their entirety on page 1. Finally, players might well have not even looked at page 2. After all, if they are relying on the HRs, as they have a right to, there would not necessarily be the need to see if the seasons are to be combined.

Finally, there is the question: What is the point of having HRs, if you're not going to follow them? True, there are unusual situations where a discerning GM decides that he must violate his HRs. But these require special circumstances. In addition, the GM will normally either let the players decide on the change's acceptability, or at least make it crystal clear that this is what he is doing, and everyone should please note. These things were not done in this case.

For this all Came About

It is not necessary to the determination of a recommendation that the question of how this came about be addressed. However, if similar fiascos are to be avoided in the future, some understanding of all the factors that caused it is needed. In my opinion there were three essential components.

1. Eric made a lot of mistakes. By and large, Ozog admits these. These arose either primarily or exclusively from his inexperience. I very much doubt that Ozog will ever make any of these mistakes again in his GMing career.

2. Oaklyn submitted the non-neutral orders, and submitted them for three consecutive seasons. Tretick is an experienced hobbyist, and understands exactly what neutral orders are, understands the importance of following the HRs, and understands the reasons why GMs in general do not permit one person to submit so many orders so quickly in succession, etc. As I have observed in other contexts, Tretick understands the hobby's rules; he just doesn't think they apply to him.

3. Don Horton selected a person (Ozog) as a GCM who knew very little about GM^{ing} and who in fact hadn't been in the hobby very long. Had Don checked carefully, he surely would have discovered Ozog's lack of preparation, and could have taken some remedial steps to correct these deficiencies.

I must stress that all three of these factors had to occur for this mess to come about. And thus, in a sense, all three share part of the blame.

Findings

1. A Ser 3 Tur A Bal-Rum was not a neutral order.
2. A Boh-Gal was almost certainly not a neutral order.
3. The use of Oaklyn for replacement orders for three countries in three consecutive seasons violates accepted GMing practices, and was exacerbated by the fact that to do this he had to overrule a players protest on it.
4. The use of replacement orders after 1901 was contrary to the HRs.
5. Combining W01 and S02 was contrary to the HRs. The notification of this very unusual practice to the players was inadequate.

Recommendation to the Boardman Number Custodian

In my opinion, the cumulative impact of the above five points, at a sensitive point in the game, justifies the label of irregular for GMing improprieties, and that is my recommendation.

Distribution: Once in final form, this report will be sent to Konrad Baumeister, Chairman of the FDRC; Steve McLendon, ratingsmaster of DTRS; Doug Hollingsworth, ratingsmaster of CPCL; and anyone sending me an SASE.

Two other persons (Bob Sergeant and Rod Walker) were asked for their evaluation as well. Both recommended the "irregular" status

