

VIVA



MIGUEL HIDALGO Y COSTILLA  
1753-1811

MEXICO!

THE DEADLINE

for all games remarked in this issue will be

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1987.

(Please note how we've changed back to original deadline day....)

Of course some games, esp. LION, ALI BABA and ANACREON, will be offset. Please refer to specific game reports for these data.

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GAMEFINDER

We, the Editors - all one of us - hope you will deign to wade through every last word of my brilliant muse. However, if you are unutterable scum and choose not to do so, here's how to find your game report:

|                         |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ALI BABA                | 11, 31, 44                          |
| ANACREON                | 37                                  |
| AUTISTIC AOUDAD         | 14                                  |
| BISEXUAL BEAR           | 32                                  |
| WILSON S. BISSEL        | 44                                  |
| CONVOLUTED CASSOWARY    | 32                                  |
| SCHUYLER COLFAX         | 38                                  |
| IL CRESCENDO            | 25                                  |
| DELIRIOUS DIK-DIK       | 28                                  |
| FANISKA                 | 2                                   |
| L'HOTELLERIE PORTUGAISE | 23                                  |
| RICHARD M. JOHNSON      | 38                                  |
| LOPSIDED LION           | 12                                  |
| RETURN J. MEIGS, JR.    | 37, 43 (an inadvertent duplication) |
| NARCOLEPTIC NILGAI      | 27                                  |
| PIMMALIONE              | 26                                  |

One person has suggested that I encode the 'Gamefinder' with a symbol indicating the type of game each name represents, viz. % for Railway Rivals, & for regular Diplomacy, ( for a Diplomacy variant...I'm not sure of the purpose for this coding, but hey!, I'll try anything once. Here are your codes:

%%&&&&(((

Clip 'em and paste 'em as you see fit.

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CIRCULATION this issue 115, and I think you'll find that to be absolute tops, as a whole batch of subs are about to expire and I'm no longer actively seeking new people (except for Rivals).



GAME OPENINGS listed on the preceding page. For "Blind Dip," see comment and rules later in this issue. For "Rivals," I will continue to solicit players and begin games as long as there is an interest; I now have multiple copies of all maps in existence (a couple of dozen of them). If you want to play, first go buy the game (\$15 postpaid from me, or roughly \$18 in your local shop); then join the next open section (fee \$2, cost of map \$1-\$2, plus the same old COSTA sub you've been renewing year after year anyway).

As to the Regular game open, this will be the last regular Dip game COSTA will run. This section will remain open for two more issues; if it fills, fine; if not, it will be cancelled, and COSTA will begin the process I have now envisioned for it, of gradual conversion to other things (mainly Rivals and, sooner or later, Empire Builder, Rails Through the Rockies, and possibly other rail games. You'll never guess what my dream is....?)

But don't be misled. I'm not giving up Dip. Quite apart from the occasional variant, I plan to continue actively GMing Dip games - just not here. Instead, I'll be doing them by computer (PBEM Dip), on the CompuServe network.

Anyway - you want to play here, now's your last chance.

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LATEST GAME START is another Rivals game, this time using the one and only fantasy map for this game system - 'Middle Earth,' based of course on the Tolkien mythos. The announcement was sent on Oct. 1, and initial starts and colouring are scheduled for Oct. 20. Players are Tony Sait, Robin apCynan, Brian Longstaff, Melinda Holley and Doug Brown. It is called 'Faniska.'

After an awkward start, the Rivals 'Spred Game' is also moving along, with ten-day intervals for build turns and fourteen-day run turns. If we can keep to our schedule (a slight expansion may be needed over Christmas owing to postal slowdowns), we'll be done by Groundhog Day '86. I'd be willing, if ever I could get a game going with all players west of the Rockies, to try 7-and-10 and get it over six weeks sooner. But let's see how this works, eh? Anyway, this one is 'Ali Baba.'

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WITH THIS ISSUE we will have cleaned up the entire backlog of letters which have been languishing around here. Many which I've dredged out of my boxes have proved obsolete, so they won't be printed at all. Others are on topics that are no longer timely. Still others, it turns out, have already been printed. In other words, my files were in chaos; they are so no longer. So - if it isn't in here, it ain't coming. And since the next two issues (maybe three) will have no letters, we'll be starting the "Mailbox Filleth" bit all over again from scratch when we resume normal operations.

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AND FINALLY: It is worth remarking that, despite my outbursts last time about all manner of things, not one single person has seen fit to comment on anything I said! (This as of Oct. 2.) Oh well, so much for my efforts to inject some liveliness....

Rod Walker:

I'd like to make a relatively brief reply to Craig Mills' letter. I still regret that he wants me to "have the last word" in our previous discussion. Well, we may yet hear from another party, although in fact the case against the "Inerrancy" of the Bible is self-evident to anyone who deals with that document with the same objectivity accorded, say, the histories of Flavius Josephus, Philo, Herodotos, Manetho, or Homer.

Craig's letter surprised me a little. Generally speaking, these days, my impression has been that the "inerrancy" position generally goes with an "election" eschatology. This is the Calvinist position on "salvation" -- by which Christians mean the question of "going to Heaven or Hell", an interpretation of the word I don't use and I suspect (on good evidence) that Jesus didn't use, either. The Calvinist position is that only certain people are going to be "saved", and that these people have been "elected" by God "from the foundation of the world". The idea of the "elect" can be found in the letters of Paul and in the "Revelation of John", among other places. I assumed Craig was of this persuasion, and am delighted to find out he isn't.

The New Testament is in fact rather schizophrenic on this issue. The "election" and "remnant" passages are counterbalanced by many other passages which are far more "democratic" in scope -- implying or saying that anyone who "believes" will be "saved". This conflict (and it is a very real case of conflict and internal disagreement) can only be resolved by special pleadings on one side or the other. The Calvinists will argue that, yes, anyone who "believes" will be "saved", but only the "elect" will truly "believe". Those who prefer the "democratic" interpretation, as Craig apparently does, must argue that the "elect" and "remnant" passages are somehow more symbolic or allegorical than they would seem, and refer to God's "pre-knowledge" of whom would be saved, rather than "pre-selection". These special pleadings, alas, in either case do considerable violence to the text as written. Unfortunately, within the context of Judaeo-Christian theology, the "election" eschatology is the more logical.

The question of "the afterlife" is so tangled, intangible, and speculative that discussions of it are best left to late-night bull sessions and the quick-buck-book artists. Virtually all human beings apparently feel, instinctively, that the existence and consciousness of the "self" doesn't cease with death. That feeling could as easily be wish-thinking as recognition.

Various religious traditions have answers to such questions, and many people are more or less content with them. The Christian answers are solidly based in various (not always in agreement) passages in the Bible. Statements by Jesus of Nazareth on the subject might be regarded as definitive. Unfortunately, every single statement on this subject attributed to him occurs in a context which suggests strongly that what we've got is a later rewrite of words really on a different subject or a whole-cloth editorial insertion.

Craig, however, speaks in the more general terms of, e.g., "God's mercy". I haven't the slightest doubt that God is merciful and loving, inherently. I seriously question what practical efficacy these qualities of God may have in practical human terms. Regardless, however, the entire question is exclusively between God and man (or Man in the aggregate).

God's mercy clearly does not extend to our judicial system. No conversion to any religion, however sincere, can be allowed to short-circuit the normal processes of the criminal justice system. Translation: you can't release a killer from prison just because he's become a Christian.

But this statement goes hand in hand with the observation that our criminal justice system is all screwed up. Too many people are still operating on the assumption that "punishment" is the purpose of justice. Punishment is really only one means to various ends, among them deterrence and reform. The problem is that our prison system hardens far more criminals than it reforms, and there is therefore something wrong with it. The experts can't agree on what, and I'm certainly no expert. However, while I do not agree with Craig that the case he mentions is a "sad miscarriage of justice", it may at the same time be indicative of one of the things that's presently wrong with how criminal justice is administered.

OK, so this ain't brief. I have a last monkey-wrench to throw at the works. This gets at the questions of "free will", God's love/mercy, and other items raised in Craig's letter or in this reply. It is the most fundamental question of traditional Christianity, and a logical horror gnawing at its very roots.

"Free will" is an interesting theory, and has been much debated. It's not necessary here to get into Jung, Skinner, Russell, and all that bunch -- nor even Lewis, for that matter. The fact is that "free will", whatever it is and however it operates, doesn't operate in a vacuum. We all make our decisions out of the gestalt of our experience, heredity, environment, and so on and so on. It don't believe it's possible to argue that if some portion(s) of that gestalt were different, our decisions would sometimes be different. So, in that sense at least, "free will" isn't entirely "free".

Well, how did our gestalt get the way it is? It grew out of other gestalts which existed before it; and so on and so on, back to the beginning. Which is, of course, the rub.

In traditional Christianity, God is (a) the creator of the universe, (b) omnipotent, and (c) omniscient. That's rather a deadly combination for "free will". A being of this sort doesn't just say, "Let there be a universe," in a random fashion as it were, and then wait to see what happens. You don't have just any old universe being willed into existence but a particular universe. Being omniscient, God will know, down to the last detail, all the consequences of that particular act of creation. Furthermore, being omnipotent, God can alter the initial act of creation so that any individual consequence will come out differently, -- that is, so that the gestalt on which any given decision is based will be different, so that the decision will be different. Therefore, every single event in a universe created by such a God represents a conscious choice to have that event occur rather than some other event. Therefore, not only is "free will" an illusion in such a universe, such a God bears the total moral responsibility for all the events with\_in it. The fundamentalist/traditionalist Christian argument that "sin" represents conscious choices by individuals and/or a mythical "first ancestor" is a logical howler, because an omnipotent/omniscient God could have arranged the universe so that the conscious choice at issue would have been made differently, and the human will would be no less "free" than it is now, and yet chose not to.

The traditional argument that God chose not to control the human will is a straw man. He doesn't need to control the will, but merely the gestalt out of which a given decision arises -- and that control is an inevitable consequence of the act of creation by a God who is omnipotent and omniscient. If you argue that God somehow does not control the gestalt, you are perforce arguing against omnipotence (or omniscience, or both). And once you suggest that God is not omnipotent (or omniscient, or both), the real argument then become, by how much does He fall short of that ideal? (My argument is that He falls short as much in His way as we fall short in ours, but that's not only another letter but probably a book.)

In fact, however, if you read the early sections of Genesis, you're going to see omniscience, at least, given very short shrift. God is clearly surprised when Adam and Eve eat from the forbidden tree. He is clearly nonplussed and disappointed by the performance of humanity prior to the "Flood". Indeed, the traditional theology is involved with so many difficulties in the Old Testament in general and Genesis in particular, that it's no wonder the Gnostics declared that the "creator God" Yhwh in the Old Testament and the Abba of Jesus in the New are two different entities.

I don't wish to belabor this point. Clearly, modern religion, for all its exalted theology, is built upon a defective logical base. Sooner or later, the time will come to rebuild from the base up. Those who may be interested in this possibility might want to delve into the one fictional speculation about it I'm familiar with: the "Orange Catholic Bible" of Frank Herbert's "Dune" series. Check out, particularly, the sections in The Dune Encyclopedia dealing with it. I often wonder whether Herbert's writing isn't to some degree predictive, or even prophetic (which is not a synonym for "predictive"--if you think it is, look it up).

Best,

*Loel*

((Replies and comments are more than welcome - this is getting more interesting by the moment! - but I must warn you that we're looking at 3-4 months before they'll be printed....))

BLIND DIPLOMACY (or 1801 DIPLOMACY)

A variant designed by Doug Brown, P.O. Box 584, Penngrove, CA 94951-0584

The starting countries and map are all the same as standard Diplomacy. There are only two changes. First, you have no view from heaven of the entire board (there are no spy 'planes to show you where everyone moved). Second, the addition of Spy/Scout units has been made. (Henceforth, these will be referred to simply as 'spy.')

Since your units will not have an overview of the entire European battle, they will be keeping their eyes open, but as they attack, stand, support or convoy, they will be seeing different things depending upon how occupied they are.

Stand - Order allows you to see all bordering areas.

Support - Order allows you to see all actions taken in the province you are in and the province you are supporting, and in one additional area bordering you. You must specify in which direction you wish to look. Example: If you are in Sevastopol, whether army or fleet, you may look to Black Sea while you are supporting Moscow.

Attack - Order permits you only to see actions taken in the area you attack and the area you attacked from.

Convoy - Order allows you to see actions taken in the place you picked up the army, the sea that you occupy, and the place you drop off the army. If the convoy goes across two seas, this still applies. Your dropoff point would be where you put the army on the second fleet.

Always, when you see a province, you see any supports and attacks on that area. Example: If in Sevastopol and you are supporting Moscow, you would also see any attacks on or supports for Moscow, even if they are coming from the St.Pete side.

SPY/SCOUT: You automatically receive a Spy for every three centers you own. Fractions less than three do not add to this total. Examples: 1 to 2 centers, zero spies; 3-5 centers, 1 spy; 6 to 8, 2 spies, etc.

Since spies are sneaky and only a single person, they can always get their hands on a boat, therefore they are amphibious. At the outset, the initial spies (everybody gets one in the beginning) start the game in the following provinces and belong to the player in charge of that province at gamestart: Lon, Far, Mun, Ven, Vis, Con and War. All future spies may be built in the winter after armies and fleets are built. These new spies may be built wherever you currently have an army or fleet unit. They do not have to be built in a home supply center, unless you wish to do so and have an army or fleet in that center.

The advantage to your spy is that he can travel up to three spaces in a single turn. However, you don't know what your spy sees until he rejoins one of your regular units. Also, when you send your spy out into the field, he has a complete set of orders that he must follow. He may not have contingency orders (he's dumb, you see). For example: With your spy starting from your army in Warsaw, you may order your spy as follows: Spring 1801, War-Sil-Mun-Kie. Fall 1801, Kie-Ber-Pru-Lvn, etc. Whenever a spy comes in contact with one of his own units, he breaks off his order and reports his findings.

Spies move after the normal spring and fall moves but before any retreats. The spy sees no actions (such as who attacked whom, or supports, etc.) but only reports who is in what province at the end of a spring, fall, etc. For spy purposes, a retreating unit goes unnoticed (because the retreat may be off the board, or to a different province).

Spies may help you with either offense or defense. You can keep a spy circling areas at your back and see approaching enemies trying to sneak in. Or you can send your spies to regions where you plan future attacks. The enemy never sees your spy. Spies cannot be killed or captured except by losses of supply centers and the forced de-build of a spy if insufficient centers are held.

Other strategies to note regarding spying. Remember that if your army Warsaw is attacking Galicia, that army only sees Warsaw and Galicia. You may want your Warsaw spy to move War-Fru-Sil-Gal. If your move succeeds into Galicia with the army, you would get a report on units in Prussia and Silesia as well. But remember, if your army move to Galicia fails, your spy still goes to Galicia. Therefore, it is necessary to supply your scout with long orders before he leaves (otherwise, in the present case, he'd just sit in Galicia forever if you never get your army into Galicia). So while the above spy order may be a great Spring 1801 order, do remember to make a Fall order, and perhaps more, to make sure your spy eventually gets back to one of your own units.

Spy reports will come back with the season the spy was in the province and what was seen in that province.

As for running this game in COSTA, I need seven people to sign up with preference lists. I'll CM the first one. The only reports that will appear in COSTA will be press - since move results are never published. Each player will receive his/her individual moves and sightings privately. Game fee for postage is \$3 each.

((Sounds like a fine, fun frolic; I'd love to have it tried here, and the list is now open. You may advise Doug directly, or tell me. Send the \$3 only to Doug, however.

((I do have a few questions and comments on the rules, which I'd like to put out in public, hoping that Doug will answer and/or that others will comment. This will be the one exception to my stated advice that the next couple of issues are filled; replies to this issue will be printed regardless.

((1. In the early example of a unit in Sevastopol ordered to support and looking out into the Black Sea in addition, may I suggest a rewrite to give a clear statement that a unit of either type can look into a province regardless of whether the unit could actually move or support there? That is, an army in Sev. can 'look' into Black even though it can't go there; likewise, a fleet Sev. can look to Ukraina.

((2. On the matter of multiple-fleet convoys - are we to understand that the sequence A Nap-Smy, P Ion and Eas (C) Nap-Smy, because it is a multiple, does not 'see' Smyrna? Is this answer different depending on whether the convoy succeeds or fails?

((3. If you 'see' any attacks and supports on a given province, do you see the nature of that attack in depth, or just the fact of an attack? For instance, in the double-convoy example in the last part, would a unit holding in Smyrna see just the fact of an attack, or would it see the specific nature of the attack (via a convoyed army)?

((4. Long-term spy orders - I gather that, at any time the spy is in a province with one of your own units, you may issue whole new orders for the future even if there still exist unfulfilled prior orders - if this is the case, I suggest spelling it out specifically.

((5. When you state that any time a spy meets one of your units, it "breaks off" and reports - does that mean it does not finish off its move if some of it is not yet made? You have A Mos, Spy moves (War) = Ukr - Mos - Lvn. Does it stop in Moscow and stay, or does it report in Moscow and continue to Livonia?



((Oh, and finally: Doug, in an 'aside,' asks how to get this game registered with the various variant "authorities," i.e. the variant bank and the Miller Number Custodian. Consider it done, Doug; by virtue of its publication here, it will end up in the Variant Bank at Fred Davis' house, and the Miller Man, Fred Hyatt, also gets a copy. So you are now 'official' and 'legal.'))

((SO: LET'S PLAY!))

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ERIC OZOG (P.O. Box 5225, Munds Park, AZ 86017) is attempting to start a postal section of the commercial game "Warrior Knights," and has put together an excellent set of rules and postal modifications. I am not in a position to join in, but I have had occasion to look over the game and study Eric's rules and have the impression that this could be an extreme fine bit of fun. If you have any interest in this game - whether or not you wish to play - I'd suggest you send Eric a 22c return envelope and get a copy of his efforts.

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OH, ALL RIGHT. I'll give you a very quick synopsis of what caused my new address. Jean and I have separated. We don't know yet whether it's permanent or transitory, but at least we are discussing it in what I'll call a "warmly civil and respectful way." I promise not to bore you with a big long essay on the reasons and backgrounds; suffice it to say that all of the various trials I've mentioned in past issues, plus a few I haven't, combined to put us both so thoroughly on edge and at odds that we decided, rather suddenly on a very explosive Sept. 15th, that it was time to call things off for a while. So I (you'll pardon a slight embarrassment here, but finances made it essential) went back to mommy's house. If this drags on, I'll get my own place soon' - somewhere where I can respectably entertain my thousands of girlfriends and mistresses (or, maybe, hold a Dip game). If, somehow, Jean and I work it out - rough guess, it's about 50-50 - then I'll be back at the old place shortly. And for now, let's leave it there.

A million thanks to those who have guessed the truth and have sent messages of support - I needed that, and thank you for them. COSTA, by the way, is not affected; it's largely self-supporting now, and time is not currently a problem.

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WHAT FOLLOWS, over the next two pages, is the Melinda Holley column - once again, a great gem. Except this time I am required by law to issue a number of warnings:

1. Check with your doctor before indulging in patent medicines. COSTA does not endorse the items listed.
2. Check with your psychiatrist before getting on a roller coaster. COSTA does not endorse risking heart attacks.
3. Check with your otologist before putting on a Walkman and turning Van Halen all the way up. COSTA does not endorse deafness, particularly when caused by trash.

Some of you people may not know this...but I have an addiction. A severe and incurable addiction. (No, I'm not referring to Tom Selleck. That's another story.) I refer to amusement parks. Be they large or small, when I get within 20 miles of one, my pulse pounds, my breathing quickens, my palms get sticky...well, you get the idea. Every summer my best friend & partner-in-crime, Donna, and I make a pilgrimage to King's Island which is located just north of Cincinnati.

This year it was Donna's turn to drive so I figured I could sleep late. (We planned to leave between 6:00 and 7 am.) Since we would only be gone 1 night, packing was simple. One grocery bag would suffice. However, my mother objected. What reputable motel would allow someone to check in when their luggage consisted of a grocery bag? Okay...I dragged out a suitcase and threw in some clothing.

Packing my purse required a little more effort. Since I wear glasses, I had to take a sturdy glass case since 50% of the rides I would be on could lose me the glasses real quick. Camera & film; money; sunscreen (I burn very easily); and finally, Aspercreme. Aspercreme has become indispensable. It is very good for aching muscles and, as I've discovered, aching feet. It's better than Ben Gay & doesn't smell.

I figured I needed to get up no later than 6 am & my mother set her alarm clock. Why didn't I set mine? Easy...I don't have one. And even if I did, it would do me no good. I can literally sleep through anything. I have had the stereo earphones cranked up to "10", put on Van Halen, and still gone to sleep.

So all night I tossed & turned, wondering if mom would hear the alarm clock. About 3 am I realized I would not be able to get any sleep until I heard two things: 1) the alarm clock ringing; and 2) mom getting up. Then I could sleep knowing mom would get me up.

Sure enough, as soon as I heard the alarm ring and mom get up, I fell asleep. Mom said she woke me up about 10 minutes later but I know it was only 2 minutes.

Nonetheless, I was dressed and ready by the time Donna arrived. After making vague promises to my mother that I wouldn't ride anything dangerous (which is a judgement call...what I consider dangerous probably doesn't coincide with my mother's idea of dangerous), we left.

With only 2 quick stops (one for breakfast and one for me to buy some toothpaste...I always forget something), we arrived at Kings Island. Now, you don't simply go to a place like Kings Island without a game plan. Unless you want to spend your time standing in lines (which you'll do anyway), you must plan your assault. Which rides have the longest lines? Get to those rides first. The longer you wait, the more people arrive. Don't dash all over the park; check the map and use your time constructively.

The newest ride at Kings Island is The Vortex. Since it would have long lines, we headed that way first. The line marker told us we would be in line for 1 hour. We were actually there less

than 45 minutes. It didn't seem long since the line stretched around The Vortex's track. In other words, you had a front-row seat to watch the ride. Which is probably the main reason we were in line only 45 minutes.

You are strapped into your seat, and you have a total feeling of security. Nevertheless, my hands hurt from holding the restraining bar so tightly. I had removed my glasses which probably helped. I really didn't need to see what was coming. All the restraints are checked 3 times and off you go.

Unlike most roller coasters (which is what The Vortex actually is), the riders were quiet. All making their respective peace with God, no doubt. That's what I was doing. My friend, Donna, was muttering something about how a jury would never convict her for killing me...but I didn't pay any attention to that.

I did take the time to look around as we ascended the first hill. The height of The Vortex's first hill is higher than any other ride in the park, including Kings Island's famous roller coaster, The Beast. The height of The Vortex's first hill is equal to four stories of a building.

Once at the apex of the hill, you round a corner and pick up speed. Then you go down. The angle is very steep. Without my glasses, I couldn't see the bottom...which made for a very interesting descent.

The Vortex includes a double loop where I closed my eyes. It was either that or lose breakfast. Then you hit the corkscrew/boomerang run. You are turned upside down while simultaneously being rotated 360 degrees. You do this twice. Your last run is through the double helix. That's a 360 degree turn on your side. As the car slowed down to enter the loading house, both Donna and I were promising each other that we would never do this again.

When we stopped, the restraining bars are automatically disengaged allowing the riders to get out of the cars. For some odd reason, my restraining bars didn't release. Now, I was really serious about not riding this again...especially back-to-back rides. But, not wishing to look like a fool, I wave my arms in an attempt to gain the attention of the people in charge. In the meantime, a new set of riders are getting in the cars. So what does my best friend do? This individual who has been with me through thick and thin for 16 years...this person who knows me better than anybody else...what does she do? Calmly steps over me and leaves me! What's worse...she was smiling cheerfully as she did so.

By this point, the attendants are checking the restraining bars for the new riders. Now, there's no way I'm riding this thing again so I let out a yell at the nearest attendant. I'm gratified to see Donna jump (she wasn't expecting me to go to that length). When the attendant comes over, I explain the problem; and she releases it manually.

I'm not sure, but I think Donna got even with me for something.

((I'm sorry, Melinda, this is the first time in your adventures that I've felt wholly out of step. I have been on roller coasters and similar 'thrill' rides, but I never much liked them, and I haven't been near one in at least ten years. Nor will I knowingly go again. To me, terror is not pleasurable; and in addition, I have a bit of a phobia about heights, to the extent for example that when driving I have to plan my route in advance to avoid certain bridges that I just can't take.

((And then I suppose it's worth mentioning my two bad experiences on roller coasters. The first was minor, really, but damned annoying. I and my then-girlfriend were riding the roller coaster at Belmont Park in San Diego, a ride long since shut down for safety reasons. I was probably twenty. And, of all the absurd things, I was dressed in a suit and tie complete with French cuffs and fancy cuff links. One of the links must have been loose when we climbed aboard, because - somewhere on one of the more harrowing turns - it popped out of my cuff and fell over the side. Boy, was I mad! My favorite cuff links - \$20 worth! And of course there was no way in the world to find it, crawling about under the framework in the dark....

((The other incident could have been far worse. It was on the Matterhorn at Disneyland - the original Matterhorn, which was much slower than the present upgraded version. If you don't know about the ride, it is a coaster in the form of bobsleds speeding in and out of caverns in the replicated mountain. And the bobsled cars are small, and the caverns rather narrow. I was there with yet another girlfriend and her two children, and we rode two to a sled - I and her son were together. Now, I'm 6'8" tall, and barely fit in these amusement park cars in the first place; but when I was squeezed into this little thing with an 8-year-old boy in front of me, a great deal of my gangling body was sticking out and not very well stabilized.

((So. Up we went, then down we went whipping round the hairpins in the caverns, and as we zipped around the sharpest of all, I lost my grip on the sled and my head swung out and hit the wall of the mountain.

((Now it was not a solid blow; it was probably not much more than a graze, just enough to provide the sensation of contact and the inner-skull sound effect, but nothing more. It did no damage, and didn't hurt then or ever. But it did sour me forever on roller coasters; I have tried one more since, but hated it, and won't try another. I'm sure it's just "Matterhorn trauma," just as my fear of airplanes is probably linked to driving down the freeway in 1979 and glancing up to see a small Cessna smash into an airliner and knock them both down into a block of homes, killing 146 people. And I'm willing to bet that when you add the two together, it spells "fear of heights." After all, I used to drive over all those freeway bridges I now avoid - but that was before 1979....

((However, I would gladly, even joyfully, ride the world's fastest roller coaster over the top of San Diego's highest bridge rather than listen to even one minute of Van Halen. Let alone at full blast....))

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I have just posted a message on the CompuServe bulletin board asking for names of people interested in playing (or at least looking into) postal Diplomacy. Three replies in 24 hours! Including one former postal publisher, Bruce Schlickbernd (PGICTESME). Next ish, I'll have a list of all who respond, and you other pubbers may feel free to send samples or solicitations.

RAILWAY RIVALS - "Ali Baba" - Game US ? (no number yet) - Round One

This is the so-called "speed" game, with ten-day deadlines (expanded to fourteen during the runs) and using the 'intimate' Yorkshire map.

One small problem; in my hasty move I have lost or misfiled the original setup sheet I produced for this game. All has been reconstructed save one item: The color that Melinda's line is using. Melinda, could you please enlighten me? Thanx....

Round One - Throws 5-5-5

WALLACE EXPRESS (Melinda Ann Holley, colour follows): 1a:(Castleford) - M15 - N15 - Selby. 1b: (Castleford) - Wakefield - K12. 1c: (Wakefield) - I9 - I8.

YORKIE RAILS (Doug Brown, brown): 1a: (Doncaster) - F12 - Mexborough - H9. 1b: (H9) - I9 - Barnsley - H6 - H5. 1c: (H5) - I5 - I4 - J3 - Penistone; (F12) - G13.

OLLIE'S OVERLAND FREIGHT (OOF) (Paul Gardner, "olive drab" - green): 1a: (Leeds) - N14. 1b: (N14) - Castleford; (D52) - D54; (Leeds) - G51. 1c: (G51) - I50; (N14) - N17.

REVENUE:

WALLACE: 20 +6 (Selby) +6 (Wakefield) +7 (OOF, N15-N17) -4 (YORKIE, I9-I8) = 35.

YORKIE: 20 +6 (Mexborough) +6 (Barnsley) +6 (Penistone) +4 (WALLACE, I9-I8) = 42.

OOF: 20 -7 (WALLACE, N15-N17) = 13.

Note the computation of payments to rivals for track built during the same round: One per half-hex of parallel track, plus one for the junction in each hex involved.

DEADLINE FOR ROUND 2: OCTOBER 14, 1987 (a wee bit extra to allow for the postal holiday on Oct. 12).

THROWS FOR ROUND 2: 4, 3, 5.

//////

NOTE: The above was posted by photocopy to players on Oct. 2. Ditto the moves on the next page for LOPSIDED LION. They are reprinted here for the edification of any interested reader.

//////

LETTERS TO THE  
EDITOR, LOS  
Angeles Times,  
Oct. 4, 1987

I'm having trouble reconciling two recent current events:

• The United States violates international law and places mines off of Nicaragua.

• The United States fires on an Iranian ship placing mines in the Persian Gulf, citing Iranian violation of international law.

Maybe it's because the President and the ayatollah are so much alike they can't get along on a personal level.

Maybe the President simply forgot we had mined Nicaragua.

Maybe he thought he was talking to South Africa's prime minister when he said, "Shoot the miners."

Maybe Pogo was right: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

JOHN KENNEDY  
La Jolla

GAME 1987HL - The Lopsided Lion - Spring 1901

Please note two things. (1) The deadline for Fall 1901 will be Wednesday NOVEMBER 4, 1987; (2) There is a strong possibility of a postal strike in Canada around the time of this deadline: if it happens, the game will be held by until a reasonable period after the strike is settled.

AUSTRIA (Melinda Holley): a vie-gal. a bud s vie-gal. f tri-alb.  
 ENGLAND (David Pierce): a lvp-yor. f lon-nth. f edi-nwg.  
 FRANCE (Tom Engelhardt): a par-bur. a mar s par-bur. f bre-eng.  
 GERMANY (Ran Ben-Israel): a mun-ruh. a ber-kie. f kie-hol.  
 ITALY (Bob Acheson): a rom-apu. a ven-tri. f nap-ion.  
 RUSSIA (Doug Baker): a mos-ukr. a war-gal. f sev-bla. f stp sc - bot.  
 TURKEY (Dan Gorham): a con-bul. a smy-arm. f ank-bla.

Hey Dan - are you okay? Did the earthquake today cause any trouble for you? I sincerely hope you haven't been hurt by it....

FRANCE TO ENGLAND: I speak and write in English. Is this a problem?

JAMUL: ¿Mande? Ésta es "La COSTAGUANA Mexicana," y en ésta edición no entiendo tu pregunta....

FRANCE TO ITALY: Do you write in English or Italian? Is this a problem?

JAMUL: It may just be that the problem is with the Canadian postal clerks; they may just be gearing up for their walkout. Don't panic....

AUSTRIA TO G.M.: Oh, goody! Just what I like! Surrounded on all sides by susceptible men!....

JAMUL: It's worse than you think! If it weren't for a small logistics problem, like about 3000 miles, this game would be GMed by the most susceptible of all.... (I'm lonely; care to see the Pacific?)

A FRIEND OF RUSSIA: Do not wait on enemies; be offensive. Many in this game are offensive. The best offense is a good defense (or something like that; you can quote me if you wish....)

NOTE: For anyone who doesn't know, "Jamul" is the press dateline of the GM. You may not use this one; I won't use any other. If you care, Jamul (pronounced "ha-MOOL") is the name of a small town in the foothills east of San Diego. I've been using it as the GM's dateline for almost twenty years. So why should I stop now?

**CALVIN AND HOBBS** By Bill Watterson



**ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL PUBLISHERS:** I have been asked to upload to CompuServe some sample pages of COSTA by way of an introduction to the "best" 'zine of '86-'87, but mainly by way of introduction to postal (versus PBEM) Dip. My feeling is that I would prefer to upload a file containing excerpts from many different 'zines, complete with addresses. COSTA may have won the Poll, but let's be fair; it is not the sort of thing that gives a particularly good intro to the novice. No, I think it would be better if we had bits from DIP DIGEST, DIP WORLD, BUSHWACKER, PRAXIS, BLUNT INSTRUMENTS, etc. - items relating to the hobby, not to chat or camping or the impending come-uppance of Robert Bork.

So. If you are a publisher and would like to have some representative sample of your 'zine uploaded, please send me immediately the sample you want to represent your work. (No matter what format, I have to put it up on the word-processor anyway.) If you have no sample but would wish to be listed in a 'games open' summary at the end of the upload, please tell me that as well.

I have already uploaded a file giving a general synopsis of the postal hobby (giving Larry Peery, Bruce Linsey and me as contacts). I've also uploaded my own PBEM house rules, in preparation for GMing games there. So the market has been primed. Send me your contributions and I'll put together a couple of fascinating files to be accessed by anyone interested from now until Doomsday. (Note to British publishers - also Andrew and Thomas - I shall be listing you as well, but any excerpts will have to be my own choice owing to the time factor.)

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**AS I WRITE THIS** (Oct. 2), the newspapers are still filled with stories about the recent earthquake, and - even though it'll be obsolete by the time you read this - I suppose it's only reasonable to make some comment on the effect this massive disaster had on me.

The comment is, "No effect whatsoever."

I suppose that, one of these days, the Big One is going to destroy us. On the other hand, I've lived in California for 43 years, and they've been predicting the "Big One" the whole time. And you'll note, eh?, that I'm still here....well, of course, it's like anything else. In Florida they quiver in anticipation of a killer hurricane; in Kansas, it's the killer tornado; and out here, it's the earthquake.

Well, you'll forgive me, but I just ain't gonna worry. I have lived through one big one - in 1971, in north Los Angeles, in which 64 people died. I was in a cinema that day, and the screen wobbled and the chandelier quivered, and yet I seem to have come out with all limbs intact. I've survived a number of smaller ones. And I came through the recent one as intact as ever; in fact, I didn't even notice it (though others around me claim to have felt some tremor).

It is worth remarking that fewer than 100 people have died in earthquakes in California during my entire lifetime. That contrasts with an average of 5,000 who die every year in traffic accidents in this state. To make it even more graphic, on the average, there are more deaths each year from attacks by swarms of bees and hornets than from earthquakes.

On that basis, I hope you'll forgive me if I don't get all that upset about the possibilities.

On the other hand, I do have in my Family Archive a batch of letters written to my grandfather from San Francisco by Charles Ross, journalist and namesake of my father, who lived through the immortal quake of 1906. If you're inclined to worry about quakes, forget my statistics; read Mr. Ross' letters....

THE AUTISTIC AOUADAD - Interim

This poor game - orphan that it was in the first place - I have the greatest sympathy for. It is simply not doing very well....

Recent events: Marshal Linder has dropped. Nhan Vu has been forced to withdraw. And to top it all off, in a big dispute over my house rules, Paul Milewski - for reasons of personal principle, and despite my attempted compromise offer - has affirmed his resignation in protest over my house rules.

Please note - FOR THE RECORD - that I have the utmost respect for, and fully support, both Nhan's and Paul's actions. Nhan writes that he has "...signed up for too many games and too many standby lists. I am now partially burned out and have almost no free time left...please accept my humbles' apologies. I hope some day to make up for this."

Paul writes, "I have developed certain principles by which I live. Among these are: Not to pick up a hitchhiker who asks what planet this is, to not do business with brokerage firms that plead guilty to a couple thousand felony counts of wire fraud, and to not play in a game Ghed by a guy who glibly writes, "...under my own house-rules, of which I admit none of you has a copy (neither do I)...." Unfortunately, standing by these principles may create the impression of being whining or antagonistic. It is because I so much enjoy playing in well-run Diplomacy games that I am withdrawing from this one. It is not so much my concern over what has happened already, and whether it can be undone. I am worried over what unpredictable foolishness will occur next."

With regard to Nhan's comments, I must remark that I have been in the very same position so often that it's painful. I am now 43 years old, and have - entirely by experience (= having done it wrong) - come to the following conclusions: (1) I cannot drink a fifth of Scotch per day and expect to function to the fullest, (2) I cannot treat my wife like a pig and expect her to remain at my beck and call, (3) I cannot play in 300 Diplomacy games at once and expect to do well in any of them.

Still, despite the seemingly "obvious" nature of all of these items, it took me (you know, the tall guy with the 154 I.Q.?) over forty years to accept them as truths. I hardly think I'm in any position to criticize, or endorse criticism of, a rather shorter man twenty (or so) years younger who has suddenly found a problem with Principle Three (but not with the other two)....

Nhan, my friend, you have nothing to "make up" for. You are absolutely welcome any time you want to be here, and we will be honoured to have you. If you feel you must, withdraw for a time and retrench; but, please, once you are revitalized, come back and let us have the pleasure of your company. We're all pretty good people here, and frankly, we deserve you.

And to Paul. I'm very sorry that you were put off by COSTA's seemingly "glib" approach to the game. I happen to love well-run games too; I would not have stayed with this hobby for twenty-six years, nor invented postal Dip in the first place, if I did not. But you have not the benefit of that background, and can judge only from what is plopped upon your plate. In retrospect, I think I'd have done the same thing; after all, I pulled my money out of E.F. Hutton too.

Thank you very much for your candor and your principles; never mind that we have no common ground, the fact is that this hobby needs more like you. Please immediately engage in a program of self-cloning - and I look forward to a meeting under better circumstances.

And with that, I am forced to one conclusion, which pains me greatly: Under the circumstances, I declare Game 1987Q unviable and thus cancelled.



However - I hate like hell to just chuck a game in the trash. So here is my offer to the surviving players (including replacements) (Bob Addison, Melinda Holley, Bill Rose, Jack McHugh, Stephen Wilcox, and Jeff Hoffman): If you wish, I will do this game over. New countries, new seventh player, everything. Please signify your preference NOW; if there are any yes votes, no matter how many, I will make an arrangement.

If not interested, that's fine, but I'd appreciate a reply by return mail.

/// // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // //

THE MAILBOX FLOAFTR:

Daniel ((Note: Because of its scattered nature, this letter will be  
Scott presented in stages with intervening commentary.)) On behalf of  
Palter the right, I'll be happy to stop babysitting the Kuwaitis/Iraqis/  
Saudis. When the Imam's armies take Baghdad and the Saudi oil  
provinces, remember that backing the lesser scum is never worthwhile. We'll  
just sell our souls to Texas/Oklahoma/Louisiana, then freeze slowly in the  
dark while choking on the exhaust from coal-fired plants. It'll be fun  
watching California run without private autos. And then you can wait for  
your boy to be drafted to defend our newly-conquered oilfields in Mexico  
and Ecuador. It's a nasty world out there....

((True, it is a nasty one; but why must we continually go out of our  
way to make it nastier?

((There is no earthly reason for us to worry about what happens between  
Iran and Iraq; neither country can reasonably be included in any list of our  
Mideast friends; neither provides any significant share of our oil; and  
neither really represents a major threat to regional or world peace - or  
at least no more of a threat without our presence than with it. Actually,  
an argument can be made for the crazies in Iran that our presence actually  
incites them....

((I suggest that we have no worries at all about our oil supply drying  
up merely because we cut ourselves off from Iran/Iraq/Kuwait. Now if we  
were to be cut off from Mexico or Brunei, or see Alaska conquered....

((No...actually, every scientist worth his/her salt has been preaching  
for years that we have simply got to develop energy sources apart from  
fossil fuels, and we go blithely on our way failing to do so, or doing  
so with inadequate preparation (cf. Three Mile Island). Too many vested  
interests, I guess; maybe we already ARE slaves to Texas. But - wouldn't  
it be worthwhile, instead of spending millions to intervene in a distant  
war that neither is needed by us nor needs us, to invest instead in develop-  
ment of safeguards for nuclear generation and effective disposition of  
nuclear waste? Then we could tell all those Islamic loonies to kiss off,  
and confine our dealings to places like Egypt and Oman and Tunisia that  
are governed by human beings, not fruit-cakes and petty tyrants.

((Don't misunderstand; I am no fan of isolationism. My objection to  
Ronnie's intervention policies is that he doesn't sort them out very well;  
he needs to confine them to significant, useful, potentially helpful times  
and places. But the way Ronnie has been about it, I'm still waiting for  
the Marines to land on Kiribati - they do have a civil insurrection, you  
know. Take a page from the French book; notice their careful, calculated  
restraint in Chad. They intervened in a very useful way, and held back  
when further action would have been excessive. Now why can't we do that?))

On Bork. Okay, let him lose. The GOP will get a campaign issue. They will then nominate an equally right-wing type with no public record who'll breeze through. Bork is the stalking-horse for the second nominee, a 40-year-old closet Nazi of some sort.

((Yes, I've heard this argument; some very respectable authorities are convinced of this possibility. My problem is that I cannot see capitulating to mediocrity as a defence against possible disaster. Remember the Nixon days and his efforts to put a mediocre judge on the court? The same predictions came up then, and Nixon's first two nominees - Haynesworth and... oh hell, I forget the other one...were nevertheless rejected. So what did we wind up with? John Paul Stevens, conservative to be sure, but a superb jurist and one of the finest Justices this country has seen in decades. And Nixon's other initially "iffy" nominee, the recently retired Lewis Powell, proved to be quite decent if not spectacular. So - who knows? Reagan may yet hit on someone worthwhile. I hardly expect to see him latch onto a liberal, but there are some excellent conservative justices roaming the land; one of those mentioned as a possibility in advance of Bork's selection was a San Diego appellate justice, J. Clifford Wallace, who is a right-winger to the Nth degree but also a fine legal mind and possessed of a superb sense of Constitutional and precedential analysis. Given that Reagan ain't gonna name one of my idols, I could live with Judge Wallace easily. And there are lots more like him out there.

((It's not so much that I object to conservatives, but I do object to Neanderthals.))

RE: Robert ((Sacks)). Robert is a friend. He is also a resource for the hobby. He is also impossible to work with. Then again, most volunteer types tend to one of two camps - impossible or useless. You rarely get one who is neither. You sometimes get them when they are both.

((Well, Robert is definitely not both, because he is light years away from useless. I think the real reason I get so upset about Robert's crazy vagaries is that IF ONLY HE COULD CALM DOWN A BIT, he could be what amounts to the King of the Hobby. There's no question that there is a stunning mind at work there. So - how the hell do we access that brilliance without tripping over the stumbling-blocks his personality erects against us?))

RE: Pg. 16 ((the comment on Gary Hart re-entering to collect matching funds)): Yes, it would work. It would also not be the joke you mention. Hart could just make speeches, ignore the primaries and wait for lightning to strike. The seven dwarves were just cut to six. They go back to seven when Snow White, Patsy Schroeder - Danny Ortega's stand-in - enters the race. There probably won't be a deadlocked convention, and a deadlocked convention probably won't turn to a clumsy adulterer who picked the bimbo of the year as his bedmate, but then stranger things have happened in U.S. politics. As for the law being fucked - the law, as with most such laws, was written to appear to be doing good while favoring the interests of one candidate, Hubert Humphrey, over another, 'Scoop' Jackson.

((Well, of course, recent events have changed things a bit. Hart has not opted back in; Schroeder has decided to stay out; and we've lost Biden, thank God, as well. And now Dukakis appears in jeopardy. Sam Nunn is out too. So what do we have left? Some pretty fine people, if you ask me; Paul Simon and Dick Gephardt are superior legislators, and Jesse Jackson (albeit unelectable in a still-racist society) continues to astonish with his ability to cut through the crud that usually oozes through politics. I could easily live with Dukakis and Gore as well.

((But for me, my candidate is Bruce Babbitt. Dwarves, these guys? Hogwash; they just aren't as well known as Ronnie's parrot, George Bush. But give 'em time.

((Pat Schroeder the stalking-horse for Ortega? And where does this rubbish originate? If true, does this then make Reagan and his cohorts the stalking-horses for Calero and his Fascist Contras? Did it ever occur to you that Pat Schroeder just may believe that Ortega isn't the Satanic horror that some would have you believe. Okay, he isn't perfect; but how much of that is merely his defense against unwarranted U.S. opposition without real cause? We went through that with Ho Chi Minh, and again with Castro; and here we go again....

((Finally, I'm sorry, but I just don't comprehend the Humphrey-Jackson reference. If you've a moment, could you please explain?))

If you believe in letting God sort out the sinners, why not capital punishment? You are sending the innocent to a better life hereafter, and the sinners straight to their just reward. In circles with different politics than yours, the slogan is "Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out!"

((I can accept the second clause, but not the first. Judgement - sortation, if you will - is God's province. Not mine. Not yours. And not any other fallible being's. My problem with human judgement of other humans, in a manner leading to execution, is only partially that errors may be made. That's bad enough; but there's also the little matter of, who the heck are we to make these determinations? Your little comment about "Kill 'em all..." leads to a fairly obvious, if disgusting, extension: How about we start a nuclear war, annihilate the world, and let God sort 'em all out at once? Hey, that sounds like the sort of excuse Hitler would have liked: "Jews are inferior. I'll kill every one; if I'm wrong, God will make it right...."))

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I RECENTLY READ a review of a new book called "Disorderly Conduct," a collection of legal humour gleaned from actual trial transcripts by three California attorneys, one a prominent San Diegan, another a former San Diegan whose wife and I used to sing opera together. I have not read the whole book, but some of the excerpts I've seen are true gems. A small sampler:

Judge: The charge here is theft of frozen chickens. Are you the defendant, sir?

Defendant: No, sir, I'm the guy who stole the chickens.

Judge: Are the People ready in the next case?

District Attorney: Yes, Your Honor, but we move to dismiss in the interest of justice.

Judge: And what is the interest of justice?

D.A.: The case sucks!

Counsel: How do you feel about criminal defense attorneys?

Juror: I think they should all be drowned at birth.

Counsel: Well, then, you are obviously biased for the prosecution!

Juror: What makes you think that? I hate prosecutors too!

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RAILWAY RIVALS  
House rules for COSTAGUANA

1. Unless otherwise indicated herein, the commercial rules flyer shall govern (1985 edition, Games Workshop Inc.).

2. Any dispute arising from an adjudication, if not resolved with the Gamesmaster, may be appealed to the inventor, David Watts, 102 Priory Rd., Milford Haven, Dyfed SA73 2ED, U.K. His decision will be final.

3. Players may correspond, make deals, break deals, or otherwise conspire and/or backstab. The GM will not be a party to any of this.

4. Any player missing the first move, or any two consecutive moves, or any three moves overall, will be removed and replaced if possible. If replacement is impossible or unrealistic, the dropping player's track will normally be auctioned in logical segments in the following round. The GM reserves the right to "fiddle" the auction such that the game is not unduly unbalanced thereby. In late rounds, generally the dropping player's track will be allowed to stand as is, and any player may then use it at half the normal cost. These matters will be individualized in each game. However, players missing the first move will have neutral builds made prior to the replacement being appointed; this procedure will prevent having one company severely handicapped.

5. Postal games consist in twelve rounds: Six build turns followed by six race rounds (with provisions for builds appended). There will also be a preliminary turn for determination of start points, colours, and company names.

6. A player may go in debt at any time to the "bank," but will be charged 20% interest for each round the debt remains unresolved. No player may go in debt to another rival.

7. It is requested that all orders be dated. There is no penalty for the failure, but in the event of supplementary orders (revisions), the GM accepts no responsibility for failure to use the last undated set. You date 'em, or I pick 'em and you take your chances....

8. If at any time a player's orders involve a payment of more than 15 to any rival, the player will pay the full amount, but the rival will receive only the 15.

9. The payment for building parallel to another's track built in the same round is only one per half-hex.

10. If two (or more) players' tracks junction, or run parallel, at exactly the same time in the same round, payments will cancel out. By the same token, if two (or more) players are the first to reach a town at the same time, the bonus will be divided equally.

11. For each of the six build rounds, the GM will provide three die throws, and retains the right to determine what throws are acceptable. Players may build from these throws in any patterns they choose, up to the total.

12. For purposes of this rule, please treat the three die throws of each turn (Rule 11) as three separate sub-rounds. Players may NOT order builds conditional on the actions in the SAME or SUBSEQUENT sub-rounds, but may order builds on PREVIOUS sub-rounds. Thus, if the throws for a given turn are 3-4-6, no conditional orders will be accepted for actions occurring in the '3' portion; conditionals will be allowed during the '4' portion for actions taken during the '3', but not the '4' or '6'; and in the '6', conditionals are accepted for '3' and '4' only.

13. In general - unless the particular map in use militates otherwise - each round of races will consist in seven runs offered (five regular, two special), with each player allowed entry into a maximum of four.

14. The number inside each town hex constitutes a 'key' number. (Note that larger towns may have more than one 'key' number.) In determining runs, each key number will be used once during rounds 7-9, and once again during rounds 10-12.

15. The first digit of any key number is a sector number; thus, each map has six sectors. Unless the specific map requires otherwise, each sector will occur twice in each run round. Thus, by the end of the game, every possible pairing of sectors will have occurred twice in Rounds 7-9 and twice more in Rounds 10-12.

16. In any round, if a given race offered is not taken up by any player, it will be re-offered in the next round and will not be subject to the four-run limit of Rule 13. If, on the second offering, it is again not taken up, it will be dropped.

17. Unlike in the first six ('build') rounds, payments to rivals for parallel track do include payments within town hexes during Rounds 10-12.

18. In Rounds 7-12, the races will be run by the GM using the COSTA-GUANA version of the so-called "average die," to wit: Each throw will be cast twice, and the results averaged, except that never will two 'ones' or two 'sixes' be allowed. If the average is a fraction, the higher number will be used.

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#### THE NEXT BIT IS ABOUT COMPUTERS

I've recently acquired a program called D.COM, which is a cute little utility that has a fairly limited function. However, the documentation is to my mind a true gem. I quote herewith a slightly compressed version of this bit of fun.

. . . . .

This software took many long weeks of sweat, pain, agony and gruelling labour to complete. In the process my family left me, the finance company repossessed everything I own except for my socks (which they said they didn't want back), I contracted six diseases (all of which are terminal), and an alien spacecraft came down in my back yard and set up a time warp with which its occupants travelled back and killed my parents before I was born. However, I feel that free software is a worthwhile thing, and so I am releasing this version into the public domain. Please help people like me continue to destroy their lives to write trivial code by sending me money to assuage your guilt.

If you like this program, please send \$3.11 in used fives and tens to Steve Rimmer, P.O. Box 313, Markham, Ontario.

The DIR command, like the directory commands of all operating systems since the invention of the English language, lays information on one in the least useful way possible. Under MS-DOS, it actually has two ways to do it, both of which are as useless as they can be. This is quite a feat....

(D.COM) rounds the file sizes up to the nearest K, except for files that are less than a K....Most of the time one doesn't give a phlegmatic wallaby about the size of a 50K file down to the last snivelling byte....

The D.COM program is a very sophisticated and complex piece of software, so don't be embarrassed if it takes you several weeks to learn to use it.

Many business users have to take intensive seminars and courses just to fully comprehend all of its modes, submodes and options. Books you might want to purchase include "A Beginner's Guide to D.COM," "A Hundred and One Uses for a Dead D.COM," and "D.COM for Lower Life Forms."

Before you use D.COM, make at least a dozen back-ups, storing three of them in strategically located safe deposit boxes around the city.

Please read your licence agreement carefully. Return it with the warranty registration card immediately. This will not insure you of any updates, but I like getting mail from lots of people I've never heard of.

D.COM, when properly applied, can greatly increase your productivity, magnify the power of your computer, and make your breath smell sweet even after you've eaten a live squid dripping with anchovy paste and chili sauce. ((If you believe this about D.COM - or for that matter about any other software package - please call me. I have a 1963 Chevy Biscayne with three wheels that you'd probably like.))....

If you have a hard drive system, you can have D.COM accessible in every subdirectory by creating a subdirectory called NOSEHARP and placing the D.COM program in it. Actually, you can call the subdirectory anything you like. I chose NOSEHARP because it has eight characters, none of which are G's, which I don't really like....

((Yes. Well, that's a batch of excerpts, totalling maybe half of the documentation for D.COM. The rest is along the same lines. And the best fun of all is that D.COM does essentially nothing useful that the DOS "dir" command can't do, except list files in alphabetical order. Now I suppose that might be useful, especially on a cluttered fixed disk, but as it develops, DOS these days comes with a sort filter that can do it too - just not with "dir" directly. Big deal....

((No, this silly little program's value is in the pleasure of reading Mr. Rimmer's writing. But don't be put off by this 'joke.' The man is a brilliant programmer, and he does write a lot of stuff of real value. He is also the editor of my favourite computing magazine, "Computing Now," which is also the only one I actually subscribe to. (Originally it was a free sub, thanks to Mark Weidmark, but I recently actually paid money to renew.)

((I do, however, have one bone to pick with Mr. Rimmer. Two issues ago he did a fine article comparing and analyzing the two major 'C' compilers on the market, Microsoft and Lattice. He gave a very slight nod to Lattice, which as it turned out was also about \$30 cheaper. So I paid the best price I could find, \$185, and thought I was happy....

((Until, about two weeks later, Borland sprang its Turbo C on the world, which can be had for \$55 - and Microsoft dropped its price to compete!

((Oh well.))

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MY GOD!

Last issue I tossed in a quiz about characters in Joseph Conrad novels, and - I'll be damned! - someone entered! Not only that, they got a batch of them right!

The entrant, and automatic winner, is Doug Brown, but his triumph isn't the seemingly insignificant one it may appear. In a day when Joseph Conrad has sadly receded into the realm of English Lit. classes, the fact that

someone is as well-versed as Doug is shines. Here follow Doug's answers; I'll list the novels followed by Doug's answer for the characters. Where Doug is correct, that's all you'll see. Where Doug is wrong, the correct character will appear in parentheses. Of course, first I gotta go find my list....

| NOVEL                  | CHARACTER                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| NOSTROMO               | Charles Gould                  |
| THE BLACK MATE         | Capt. Blunt (Capt. Johns)      |
| CHANGE                 | Powell                         |
| THE SEED AND THE SOWER | John Kemp (oops!)              |
| THE DUEL               | not valid (Gen. d'Hubert)      |
| THE ROVER              | Payrol                         |
| ROMANCE                | Capt. Johns (John Kemp)        |
| HEART OF DARKNESS      | Marlow                         |
| ALMAYER'S FOLLY        | Dain                           |
| THE SECRET SHARER      | Leggatt                        |
| THE ARROW OF GOLD      | General d'Hubert (Capt. Blunt) |

So that's six correct, and of the incorrect ones, Doug freely admits that he has never heard of 'The Duel' and has never actually read 'The Arrow of Gold.' (And believe me, no matter how much you may love Joseph Conrad, you don't want to read it!) Personally, I would consider that superb - I must tell you that, even though I'm named for the writer and have read every single work listed (except 'The Arrow of Gold,' through which I've never - in four tries - managed to get more than about 2/3 of the way), I'd have scored a mere five. Partly, of course, this is a function of the Conrad style; he was a writer of atmosphere, of setting, of description, of mood - but not so much of characterization. And so the actual names tend to stand out less than in most other major writers.

Loose ends - the 'red herring' in my list was 'The Seed and The Sower,' which is not by Conrad at all; it was written ca. 1950 by Col. Laurens Van Der Post, and may very well be my favourite 'novel' of all time; actually, it's a grouping of three novellas based on Col. Van Der Post's experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese in 1942-5. For mood and setting of impression, it is unsurpassed. It very much reminds of Conrad - but it is, to be sure, the work of a different master.

Doug confesses to never having heard of 'The Duel.' It is not one of the standard Conrad works, yet it is a true gem in its own manner. Set in the Napoleonic era (as was Conrad's final, and unfinished, novel 'Suspense'), it concerns the endless feud between two Napoleonic officers, Gen. d'Hubert and Gen. Feraud, and is unique in Conrad for its attempt at humour; Conrad was not noted for this element, and it is here - and only here - that he demonstrates that capacity.

Well. For his prize, Doug has chosen a sub to BLUNT INSTRUMENTS, and one has been duly entered.

Finally. Doug asks why one of the prizes was dog or cat food - "You have a surplus?" No - in fact, I don't have any! I don't have a cat or dog, either. I just wanted to offer something in the way of a prize that would appeal to those who sub/trade for everything....

Which leads us into ANOTHER CONTEST!!!

The following are first lines from works of Ernest Hemingway. Identify the work in each case. Best answer wins a free \$10 sub to Australia's BEOWULF.

- 1. (see bottom of previous page)
- 2. "Manuel Garcia climbed the stairs to Don Miguel Retana's office."
- 3. "In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains."
- 4. "Everybody was drunk."
- 5. "He lay flat on the brown, pine-needled floor of the forest...."

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RECENTLY I received a letter from Bruce Geryk in which he comments on my frequent - but uneven - use of European styles and British spellings in COSTA. And he asks, in effect, why - inasmuch as I am a native of the U.S. and have never been in Europe in my life.

The answer is simple: Affectation. It all started in 1958 and was caused by a gent named Andrzej Sawiczewski of Sopot, Poland. Andrzej became my first of many pen-pals in that year, by the end of which I'd made contact with perhaps fifteen in various places: Three in Poland, one in Australia, one in Hungary, two in East Germany, one in Vietnam, one on Pitcairn Island - and several others in less exotic places. Most evaporated rather quickly. Only four of them continued beyond a couple of years: Andrzej, the only one with whom I'm still corresponding (he is an architect and still lives in the same house where I first met him, Bieruta 43-1, Sopot); another Pole, Witold Rowicki of Warszawa, to whom I wrote for eight or nine years and suddenly, one day, met silence (lost interest? died? was arrested?); Vinh Nhan, the Vietnamese, with whom I maintained a correspondence until 1975, when Saigon fell to the Viet Cong and the letters suddenly dried up; and Betty Christian on Pitcairn, to whom I wrote about four times a year (it took two months to exchange letters) until, frankly, we just plain lost interest.

Well anyway - all of these people used European spellings and styles in their writing (crossed sevens, ones with tails, stuffing the 'u' back into 'colour,' etc.), and in an effort to meet them on their own terms, I adopted the same format. And it has carried over to COSTA. I don't cross my sevens (I was instructed not to by my employer, who got confused), but I have adopted "British" spellings and tend to use them whenever I can.

The reason for the inconsistency? I am, after all, an "American," and sometimes I forget. It's that simple; I am The Incomplete Affectee.

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"I beg you to convey (to the President of France) that I will support the just claims of France concerning Alsace-Lorraine...as for Belgium, she must be restored in her entirety as a sovereign state...Serbia, too, shall be restored in her sovereignty...."

(Karl I, Emperor of Austria, in a private letter to his brother-in-law, Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, March 1917)



RAILWAY RIVALS - Game US 511X (L'Hotellerie Portugaise) - Round 4

One small correction. Last move, I listed Es Gud as having built into hex B56, which happens to be the town of Linköping. In fact the build was to B58. Funny how that happened; Doug actually miswrote his build as B56, but I - following my usual policy of interpreting obvious errors - corrected it to B58 on my master sheet. However, when I came to type the round, I used the individual move sheets instead of my master, and duplicated Doug's error.

But if you think that's silly, wait for this one! This time, I sat down to adjudicate the current round (after Robin 'phoned his builds to me this afternoon), and suddenly discovered that I had lost Melinda's builds! I'm usually pretty faithful about filing and recording moves, for fear of losing or misfiling them; I'm particularly attentive to those coming in on standard typing paper or index cards. But with Melinda I have less fear, because she invariably writes on such distinctive paper - note-sized coloured sheets, a veritable rainbow which would stand out in any pile; I have seen moves on pink, orange, green, blue, yellow, gold... but NEVER white. So I was extremely distressed when I suddenly couldn't find them...and I spent at least a half-hour (really!) poring over every scrap of paper I had, hoping to locate where I'd put them. No luck. I checked, and double-checked...and finally, in depression, I decided I had in fact lost them, and resolved to call her tomorrow for a repeat. And then I took the other three moves in hand and opened the file folder for this game....

Yes, of course, you guessed it! Melinda's moves were right on top of the folder stack, precisely where I'd put them in their proper place when they'd arrived....

Next item. There is one more problem this time. You will recall that Round Three was sent to you via supplement to the last issue. Well, now that it is time to print the current round, I suddenly find that I have no copy of the previous round to use for reference! Don't misunderstand; there is a copy. But it is not on paper; it's on floppy disk, and that means I need my computer to read it, and I am (for reasons outlined earlier in the issue) rather suddenly apart from my terminal.

The result for this move is that I cannot reference current revenue for the players. So I shall be listing this move's plus-minus figures, but will be unable to give a final total. In a week or two I'll be moving at least one of the computers over here (I think I'll take the Tandy and leave Jean and the boys with the Amstrad) and all will be solved. Meanwhile, please compute the final totals yourselves.

## ROUND 4 - THROWS 4-3-5

DIXIELAND EXPRESS (Melinda Ann Holley, orange): 4a: (J15) - J14 - K14 - K12.  
 4b: (Kalmar) - E64. 4c: (J30) - Kristianstad - G30 - G29.  
 SCHEISSEN (Brian Longstaff, red): 4a: (B18) - Uddevalla - B14. 4b: (B14) - B13 - A13; (B13) - C13. 4c: (N26) - Växjö; (Kalmar) - E63.  
 FAUSTUS (Robin apCynan, green): 4a: (D19) - Göteborg; (G28) - G30. 4b: (G30) - G33. 4c: (Kristinehamn) - K10 - J9 - Karlstad.  
 ES GUD RA-RODE (Doug Brown, brown): 4a: (B58) - B67; (B59) - A60. 4b: (A60) - N19 - L20. 4c: (F42) - Gävle; (L20) - Jönköping - K23.

There are no retreats, and Spring 1905 moves...whups, wrong game....

REVENUE (remember, as noted previously, I cannot provide totals)

DIXIE: -11 (FAUSTUS, K12-K14) -4 (FAUSTUS, G29-G30) +8 (SCHEISSEN  
564-E66) +1 (ES GUD P61)  
SCHEISSEN: -8 (DIXIE E64-E66) +1 (FAUSTUS G33) +6 (Uddevalla)  
FAUSTUS: +11 (DIXIELINE K12-K14) +4 (DIXIELINE G29-G30) -1 (SCHEISSEN  
G33) +6 (Karlstad)  
ES GUD: -1 (DIXIELINE B61) +6 (Gävle)

Note, as you double-check these figures, that parallel track built in  
the same round costs ONE per half-hex plus one per junction, and parallel  
track built in a subsequent round is two per half-hex plus junctions. That  
is why Dixieline's K12-K14 cost so much....

THROWS FOR ROUND FIVE: 6 - 2 - 3.

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FINANCIAL UPDATE

(A new regular feature of COSTAGUANA from Doug Brown. Each issue will  
have the names of subbers: (1) About to have their subs expire; (2) Running  
low on funds...two issues left, and (3) Recent contributors.)

About to expire this time: Pete Gaughan, Dan Gorham, Pierre Touchette.  
This is the last COSTA they'll see unless they send some money (at least one  
week before deadline).

Running low on funds: Cal White, Ron (Canada) Brown, Keith Sherwood,  
Peter Mateunas and Blair Cusack. Send money in the next month or so, please.  
Now is a good time....

Recent contributors include: Derwood Bowen, Eric & Cathy Ozog, David  
Pierce, Larry Peery, Dan Palter and Jacques Bélanger. These chaps chipped  
in with \$73, amost 50% of Conrad's cost. ((Well...closer to a third,...  
that last one ran \$210)) I think most subs seem to be running out within  
five issues. By that time, COSTA should receive several hundred dollars...  
or cut subscriber substantially....

If your name isn't mentioned in the above list, you have at least three  
issues of award-winning COSTA coming your way soon. There will be notice  
before your sub expires.

((It remains to be noted that the following people each have \$6.25  
credit that Doug knows nothing about: Jeff Hoffman, Stephen Wilcox, Bob  
Addison, Bill Rose, Jack McHugh, Dan Gorham, Conrad Minshall and Bart Denny.  
Please do not ask why; just accept it on faith. The practical effect for  
the moment is that Dan Gorham, survivor of a recent earthquake ("Have you  
ever tried to hold up a grandfather clock while the earth quakes?" - Well,  
actually, no; I did once try to comfort a panic-stricken wife during a  
'quake, but apparently failed, as we divorced a year later; but a grand-  
father clock is something I'd be willing to try my luck with. I may have  
failed with an hysterical 5'11" wife, but at 6'8" I still tower over any  
clock I've ever met....), is off the "about-to-expire" list. Doug, please  
adjust the above-remarked balances accordingly.... ))

"Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton."  
(Ernest Hemingway)

## RAILWAY RIVALS - "The Crescendo" (U.S. 486B - Round 8)

Note that in the last report, PISTOL's revenue was mis-totalled. The actual total is 62, not 49 as stated. I inadvertently omitted to credit revenue in runs 2 and 5, never mind that they were remarked in the breakdown. On the other hand, PISTOL also thought that he had additional revenue from the build phase (i.e. fewer payments), but a re-check of my totals denies this. Perhaps the discrepancy stems from the fact that it costs TWO per half-hex to build against track constructed during a prior round....

Race 1 - London to Manchester. HO HO 20 -8 (Python) - 4 (Deutsch). PYTHON 10. DEUTSCH 0 -1 (Python) -7 (Pistol).  
 Race 2 - York to Stoke. DEUTSCH 20. PISTOL 10 -4 (Deutsch).  
 Race 3 - Liverpool to Coventry. HO HO 20 -6 (DYFED). DYFED 10. PISTOL 0 -4 (Dyfed). PYTHON 0.  
 Race 4 - Derby to Bristol. DYFED 20. PISTOL 10 -6 (DYFED).  
 Race 5 - Birmingham to Oxford. DYFED 20 -1 (Python). PYTHON 10 -4 (Dyfed).  
 Race 6 - Birkenhead to South England. DYFED 20 -1 (HO HO). DEUTSCH 10 -1 (Ho Ho). Note, Dyfed went to Bristol, Deutsch to London.  
 Race 7 - Sheffield to Wales. HO HO 20 -3 (Dyfed). PISTOL 10. Note, Pistol went to Newport, HoHo to A18.

## BUILDS:

PISTOL: (N15) - E58 - E61; (E59) - Leicester. -1 HOHO A56, -1 HOHO E60, -5 DEUTSCH E58/Leic., -1 PYTHON D57. Total cost 12.  
 HO HO HO: (B43) - J6; (K18) - K19. -1 Deutsch A44, -2 Dyfed J6. Total cost 12.  
 DYFED: (Manchester) - Huddersfield. -3 Deutsch I7. Total cost 12.  
 PYTHON: (Nottingham) - F53 - F47 - E47 - Doncaster. -1 Pistol F50, -1 HoHo F51. Total cost 12.  
 DEUTSCH: (F57) - F58 - E59 - Leicester; (F55) - F54 - J54 - K54 - K52 - Lincoln. Total cost 11.

I would be prepared to take comments on whether or not there are any additional payments due on that parallel building this time between Huddersfield and Manchester, other than to Dyfed at J6 as noted. I have had great trouble, because the mountain hexes fouled up my system, in feeling comfortable about this. Anyone?

## REVENUE:

PISTOL 62 (+7 Race 1) (+10 -4 Race 2) (-4 Race 3) (+10 -6 Race 4) (+10 Race 7) (-12 builds) = 73.  
 DYFED 57 (+10 +10 Race 3) (+20 +6 Race 4) (+20 +4 -1 Race 5) (+20 -1 Race 6) (+4 Race 7) (-12 builds) = 137.  
 HO HO HO: 81 (+20 -12 Race 1) (+20 -6 Race 3) (+2 Race 6) (+20 -3 Race 7) (-12 builds) = 110.  
 PYTHON 64 (+10 +9 Race 1) (+10 +1 Race 5) (-12 builds) = 82.  
 DEUTSCH 122 (+4 -8, Race 1) (+20 Race 2) (+10 -1 Race 6) (-11 builds) = 136.

I might note that in all races the shortest route won, and the second shortest came second, save only in Race 3 where Doug's 24 snuck in under David's 21 - both other entrants had longer runs.

## ROUND NINE RACES:

1. London to Hull
2. Shrewsbury to Birmingham
3. Liverpool to Leicester

4. Grimsby to Burnley
5. Wolverhampton to Bolton
6. London to the North (special)
7. Bradford to the North (special)

In reply to a query, one may enter any four races, never mind whether they are regular (specific points on the map) or more general (broad areas on the map).

And builds taken up to 12 points. (Again remember that must include predictable payments to rivals, i.e. for track already built; it need not allow for track which will be built simultaneously).

David, of course, is sitting by with bated breath to see in Round 9 whether or not I've learnt to do runs....

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AN ASIDE:

A few days ago I tentatively proposed to one person that RIVALS games be offered via Electronic Play-by-Mail on the CompuServe service. He said 'sure, sounds good,' and promised to look into it for me. Tonight when I logged on, what do you suppose I found? A FULL GAME! Six people have the game, want to play, and are anxious to hear about all the other maps. So I'm scouring to see what maps will work well, besides the present ones of course, for six, and when we've selected, I'll report on how we do.

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RAILWAY RIVALS - "Pimmalone" - U.S. 487C - Round 8

- Race 1 - Butte to San Francisco. HOBOKEN 20 -4 (Achtung). HOG 10 -6 (Hoboken).
- Race 2 - Santa Fe to Minneapolis. DGW 20 -9 (Achtung) -1 (Hoboken). ACHTUNG 10 -2 (Doctor) -7 (Hoboken).
- Race 3 - San Antonio to Omaha. HOG 20 -4 (DGW). ACHTUNG 10 -9 (Doctor).
- Race 4 - Dallas to Seattle. DGW 20 -3 (Hoboken). HOG 10 -4 (DGW) -3 (Hoboken).
- Race 5 - San Francisco to Oklahoma City. DGW 20 -4 (Achtung). ACHTUNG 10 -5 (DGW). HOG 0.
- Race 6 - Memphis to Eastern port. ACHTUNG (to New OrL.) 20. HOBOKEN (to New OrL.) 10.
- Race 7 - Denver to Eastern U.S. DGW (to St.Louis) 20 -2 (Doctor). DOCTOR 10 -2 (Hoboken) (to St.Louis). HOBOKEN (to Milwaukee) 0.

Again, all shortest routes won, all second-shortest were second, except in Race 5. There, the shortest still won - but only by one hex - but the longest route came second (again by one hex)! Lengths were 35, 39, 42.

BUILDS:

- HOG: (Kansas City) - Y36. -2 (DGW V34) -1 (DOC W35) -1 (HOB Y36). Cost 15.
- ACH: (K11) - Phoenix; (K22) - K27 - L27 - Oklahoma City. Cost 11.
- HOB: (L32) - I31 - G32 - G30. -1(DGW I31) -1 (ACH G32) -2 (HOG E31,C30). Cost 13.
- DOC: (R31) - M29 - Oklahoma City; (D72) - G74; (U21) - Denver - S19. -4 (DGW Q31,M29). Cost 16.

DGW: (Kansas City) - V34; (Q32) - P32 - K30; (H30) - G31; (V36) - W37.  
-1 (ACH, G31) -1 (Doc W37). Total cost 16.

The parallel builds Kans.City - V34 were simultaneous and involve no payments. And I'm eager to see what DOCTOR's branch S19 is for....

REVENUE:

HOG: 81 (+10 -6 Race 1) (+20 -4 Race 3) (+10 -7 Race 4) (-15 builds) = 89.  
HOB: 142 (+20 +6 -4 Race 1) (+8 Race 2) (+6 Race 4) (+10 Race 6) (+2 Race  
7) (-13 builds) = 177.  
ACH: 45 (+4 Race 1) (+10 +9 -9 Race 2) (+10 -9 Race 3) (+10 +4 -5 Race 5)  
(+20 Race 6) (-11 builds) = 78.  
DGW: 39 (+20 -10 Race 2) (+4 Race 3) (+20 +4 -3 Race 4) (+20 +5 -4 Race 5)  
(+20 -2 Race 7) (-16 builds) = 97.  
DOC: 78 (+9 Race 3) (+10 +2 -2 Race 7) (-16 Builds) = 83.

ROUND 9 RUNS:

1. Salt Lake City to Phoenix
2. Sacramento to New Orleans
3. San Diego to Duluth
4. El Paso to Des Moines
5. Kansas City to Houston
6. Milwaukee to any Pacific Port (special 1)
7. Spokane to Eastern U.S. (special 5)

And builds may be made up to 14 points (see note in CRESCENDO as to what this means).

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GAME 1985D - The Narcoleptic Nilgai - FINALE!

By vote of the players (i.e. no dissent), this game has ended as a draw between Italy and Turkey. In the final data for the game (next issue) it will be assumed that all Winter 1910 actions were properly taken, and that the final strengths are per the s.c. chart last round.

My hearty congratulations and thanks to Michael and Pat, two very worthy winners if ever I saw them...and to Bob, Kevin, Paul and Conrad as well for faithful efforts on behalf of bringing this game to a rousing conclusion. I'd like to pay special thanks (without intending to slight anyone) to Conrad for making a "hopeless" position a real part of the game, and to Paul for staying with us despite what can only be major disappointment. Well, and Bob too; he can't be exactly turning cartwheels right now, yet he held fast to the end. And Kevin too, despite the horror of seeing yet another of his units explode every time he poked his nose out of the redwoods.

Aw hell - this has been ONE WHALE OF A GOOD ROMP, and I thank you all very sincerely for the joy I've had with it. Think of it this way: If not for this game - and you - I'd never have discovered Air Supply, Billy Joel, Bonnie Hayes, Survivor, Foreigner, Genesis, Peter Gabriel, T-Pau, Scandal, Young Marble Giants, a-ha, Elvis Costello, Kraftwerk, Bob Seger, The Cocteau Twins, Midge Ure, Electric Pencil...oh, wait, that's a word processor... well, anyway....

Final stats on this game, to send it into the record books and its



DEAR COSTAGUANA READER:

You may or may not recall, but I'll tell you anyway: A short while ago I adopted two games from John Walker of San Antonio, Texas: THE AUTISTIC AOUADAD and RICHARD M. JOHNSON. I did so because John is undergoing major medical treatments for cancer, and needs (obviously) to concentrate on them rather than on gaming.

A couple of weeks ago I received a very encouraging letter from John, advising that the treatments had made major gains and had reduced the tumor by about a third, with more still to come. At that point I turned my first cartwheel in many years. But just a day or two ago I received a very different letter, reproduced below; this frightening note was wrapped around a \$50 bill, and I might also remind that, in the Spanish language, the word 'Adiós' is a very final sendoff, not merely a "see-you-later" cliché....

*Friday*

*Dear Louie,*

*Please apply the enclosed money  
toward the games I explained in  
your case.*

*Adios.*

*John*

*P.S. Thanks for being a super friend.*

*but the prolonged threat of death is  
often worse than death itself.*

Now. Let me tell you all a big secret. I think that John did not have in mind that I want this very intense note; and, as far as he is concerned, I have not done so. He will be receiving a unique COSTA, one in which pp. 29-30 are quite different from the ones you are reading.

But I want the rest of you - many of who are John's friends and hobby colleagues - to know that John is apparently in serious trouble; I have no specific information, but this note reads to me as if John knows, or thinks he knows, that the cause is hopeless. I sincerely hope that this is just a sense of depression speaking, and that the matter is still in doubt. But you'll agree, I think, that I have a right to worry....

PLEASE. If you are a friend of John's, and care about him as I do, look over his note; draw your own conclusions; and respond to him in any way you consider appropriate. But PLEASE keep in mind two things:

1. I have sent John an "altered" copy of this issue. Pp. 29-30 in his version are different. I beg you not to refer to what amounts to an invasion of privacy.

2. Likewise, the pages of this issue that refer to the abandonment of his game THE AUTISTIC ACUDAD have been altered in his copy; there is no reason to burden him with this. I respectfully request that you not discuss this game in any way with him.

For the record, I have John's \$50 bill set aside. I have no need for this money. Nor will I accept it. My plan is: If John recovers (I hope), I will return it to him at an appropriate time in the very near future. In the alternative, I will hang onto it for a reasonable time and then, in whatever way I can, return it to his wife Patty.

/// // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // // //

ANYBODY want to try an Australian quiz? This is stolen from BEOWULF:

The following are anagrams of Australian cities. Can you name the cities? I missed 'em all....

1. Sin Car
2. Dog Be In
3. Hay Wall
4. Not Proved
5. Dire Map

This kind of thing can be fun, but perhaps it isn't really fair to put forward obscure (to us) points in Australia. Try these three; they should be at least as familiar, they're towns in Brunei Darusalaam:

1. Burton gem
2. A rise
3. Tug not

Anybody want to create this sort of thing for points in the U.S., U.K. or Canada (oh, all right, Thomas - Germany too....)?

Or if you want to stay with the sillies, how about one of you genius types putting something together for Brunei's capital city - Bandar Seri Begawan?

If nobody enters guesses, answers will not appear next time.



Railway Rivals? "Speed" game - yup, and here's proof....

ALI BABA - Round 2

First, I need to discuss an awkwardness that has come up.

In my earliest 'Rivals' games, I let it be known that I would allow a rather (ahem) unique interpretation of the three-throws-totalling-'x' rule; namely, that a player could, should he/she choose, treat the three separate throws as one Grand Total without separations between the throws. Under this method, if throws are 4-4-4, the following build would be legal: (D21) - D26 - Grimsey. Grand total of twelve, to be sure, but not in an orderly 4-4-4 manner. Compute the hex-by-hex progression yourself: It goes like this: (D21) - D22, one; (D22) - D23 (two); (D23) - D24 (five)....huh? But the throw was only four!

You see what I'm driving at? The problem is, when I first started doing 'Rivals' I offered this up as a legitimate interpretation of the rules. Later, I came to find that it was not the standard method, and I reverted to the normal manner of having each throw rounded out exactly. And when I introduced Melinda to the game, it was in the latter way; thus, she had no expectation of the original system.

So here's what I've done for this turn: Doug's and Melinda's moves were made in such manner that each of them obviously expected a 50% 'bonus' for first arrival at Elmsall. However, Doug's moves were written in the "old" way and Melinda's in the "new" way. So what I have done is this: I've rearranged Doug's moves to conform with the each-throw-is-rounded-out-exactly system, which is technically correct, but I've also given him the anticipated 50% credit for Elmsall. That seems fairest. If any complaints, please write the Rivals Ombudsperson (God knows who that is).... (Hmm. Maybe this is my golden opportunity to teach John Caruso how to play 'Rivals'....)

ROUND TWO BUILDS (Throws 4-3-5)

YORKIE RAILS (Doug Brown, brown): 2a: (Penistone) - K3; (G13) - H12.  
2b: (K3) - L2. 2c: (H12) - Elmsall; (L2) - A44 - Huddersfield.

WALLACE EXPRESS (Melinda Ann Holley, blue): 2a: (K12) - J12 - Elmsall - I14. 2b: (I8) - L6. 2c: (Selby) - C60.

OOF (Paul Gardner, green): 2a: (I50) - I48 - H47 - Bradford. 2b: (Bradford) - F48 - E48 - D48. 2c: (D48) - Dewsbury; (H47) - Shipley - I48; (Leeds) - D51; (Castleford) - L14.

Note: Wallace's moves were attenuated slightly owing to the fact that they failed to allow for the river crossing Selby - A59, cost of three.

REVENUE: YORKIE, 42 +6 (Hudd) +3 (Elms) = 51. WALLACE, 35 +3 (Elms) = 38.  
OOF, 13 +6 (Bradford) +6 (Shipley) +6 (Dewsbury) = 31.

DEADLINE Thurs., OCT. 22, 1987

ROUND THREE:

THROWS: 6-4-4

Paul has remarked an error he's discovered in the map, and based on his lead I've found a couple of others. You must keep in mind that this little map is one of the earliest, and - unlike many of the others - was never commercially produced not thoroughly 'vetted' for minor flubs.

The errors are simply in numbering of hexes. F56 is actually F55; H57 is H56; and J58 is J57. It's possible there are others lurking, but I haven't found them yet.

UPDATE: Just found another one, though this may be lousy photocopying rather than a real error: The mountain hex apparently labelled C45 is in fact C46. Ta, boug....



GAME 1986AC - The Bisexual Bear -

I must tell you that I am utterly astounded, but...THIS GAME IS OVER.

The draw between Austria and Turkey has passed, and (apart from my normal policy) we may as well reveal that there were four 'yes' votes, one no-vote-received, and one "no vote received but press release indicating that he'd have voted 'no' had he voted." But a press comment is not a vote, and I therefore declare 'The Bear' (sob - I'm gonna miss this one!) concluded effective the end winter 1905. This is the shortest game in the 22-year history of COSPAGUANA.

My very surprised, but completely sincere, congratulations to Nelson Heintzman and Stephen Wilcox, the joint victors - and my thanks to all others for the fine play and reliability of all others. Not bad, eh? You see, this game also sets one other 22-year record; not only was it the shortest, it was also the only COSTA original in history (orphan adoptees don't count here) to have seen all original players finish their positions. Amazing....

For next time, when we'll have the statistical summary, any and all players are warmly invited to submit end-game statements.



GAME 1986O - The Convoluted Cassowary - Fall 1907

Retreats: Aus a tri-vic; Tur a rus-bul; Eng a den-swe.

Peter Sullivan now takes over England, and has a change of address, to St.Chad's College, 18 North Bailey, Durham DH1 3RH, UK.

AUSTRIA (Evans Givan): a gal-war. a rum-bul. a vie-bud.

ENGLAND (Peter Sullivan): a stp s swe-lvn. a swe-lvn. a nwy-swe. f eng-lon. f hot s swe-lvn. f bal c swe-lvn. f nth h.

FRANCE (Larry Botimer): a pic s par-bur. a par-bur. f bre-eng. f mid s bre-eng. f lvp h.

GERMANY (Michael Fustilnik): a hol s bel. a bel h. a kie s den. f den s RUS pra-bal.

ITALY (Robert Greier, Jr.): a ven s AUS bud-tri. f nap-ion. f adr s AUS bud-tri. f tur s n.p-ich.

RUSSIA (Peter Mateunas?): N.M.R. a's lvn, ber, mos; f pru h.  
 TURKEY (Melinda Ann Holley): a ser s tri. a bul s ser. f ion s alb-adr.  
 f tri s alb-adr. f alb-adr. f oze s ion. f eas s ion.

Retreat: Its f adr-anu. o.t.l. Rus a lvn annihilated.

## CENTRES:

A: 4: vie, bud, rum, war. Build one.  
 E: 5: edi, lon, nwy, swe, stp. Remove two.  
 F: 6: par, bre, mar, spa, por, lvp. Build one.  
 G: 5: mun, kie, hol, bel, den. Build one.  
 I: 4: nap, rom, ven, tun. Even.  
 R: 3: sev, mos, ber. Even.  
 T: 7: con, amy, ank, bul, ser, gre, tri. Even.

I am very hopeful that Peter's missed move was just an oversight. What I'm really worried about is the possibility of failure in postal forwarding. (For instance, Pat Jensen's moves arrived four days late owing to sluggish forwarding service) (Pat, by the way, isn't in this game; he's just an example.)

Here's what we'll do: Peter, if you plan to play on, please notify me by next deadline (via 'Meigs' moves?). If Peter says he's out, or if I don't hear from him, I will hold the game up at Winter only and appoint a new player. I hope, however, that it doesn't come to that.

Anyway - pursuant to the above - Winter adjustments and Spring 1908 moves (which may be conditional) are due together next round.

TURKEY TO FRANCE: If I recall my King Arthur stories correctly, Lancelot was from France, wasn't he?

JAMUL: Yes, he was, and I understand he recently passed away - you do, of course, refer to the finest classical clarinetist of our time, Jacques Lancelot?

ITALY: Glad to see no change in rules (i.e. 9 centers for victory)....

JAMUL: What is that, Dip's equivalent to the putting green?

AUSTRIA TO ITALY: Which side are you on? The never-ending game side?

ENGLAND TO FRANCE: You are welcome to Liverpool (for the moment), but no more. Note that I have withdrawn from the English Channel to try and keep friendly with you.

TURKEY TO ENGLAND: Better lock up Guinevere! Lance is a'comin'!

ENGLAND TO GERMANY, re: DENMARK: I forgive you, my son.

ITALY TO ENGLISH ENGLAND: Welcome to the wierdest game I've ever been in.

TURKEY TO ITALY: Better up your bid.

JAMUL: Oh yeah? Well, up yours, too....

ITALY TO GERMANY: Damn!, you're good.

ITALY TO G.M.: You too....

JAMUL: Well, I've had my moments....



image than by his stand on most issues. Reagan is, of course, the classic example of a candidate with supreme image-projecting ability and no other redeeming quality being swept into office over far more competent but much duller rivals. Jimmy Carter is a brilliant man with tremendous ability; however, he lacks 'image.' He won in 1976 only because his rival, Ford, had the same lack and was further burdened by the Nixon tarnish. Had the rescue of the Iranian hostages succeeded flawlessly two days before the election, I suspect it would only have narrowed the gap; Reagan is just too good in the media department. Reagan is to American politics as McDonald's is to American cuisine: Glittery, glib, well-marketed and requiring absolutely no deeper thought than whether or not to add salt to the fries.

And thus, Simon - still unaccustomed to the requirements of modern American politicking, but still bright enough to cut through some of the crud - sees part of the reality and misses on other parts.

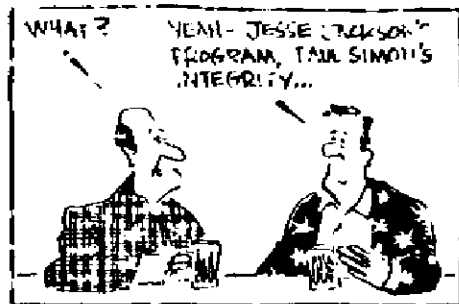
The only polished 'glitter' candidate the Demos have this time is Jesse Jackson, who also happens to be the most liberal and the least electable. The rest are still feeling their ways into the arena, and some are polishing themselves more quickly than others. Maybe this is why Simon considers Dick Gephardt such a sleaze; Rep. Gephardt has over-polished himself, has "honed his image" so quickly that he has adopted an unfinished Reaganesque veneer that resembles the original but is still too artificial to convince. Gephardt is no flaming liberal, but he is by no means the 'issues sleaze' that Simon implies. (Nor, for that matter, is Joseph Biden.) In addition, Albert Gore (God!, how I respected his father!) is no 'token conservative;' he may be the least liberal of all, but he is at worst a moderate shifting in the liberal direction.

Simon misses again with this statement about Bruce Babbitt: "I figured that anyone who can remain as liberal as Babbitt has, while governing a conservative state like Arizona, has guts and ability." Well, yes, he does have guts and ability; on the other hand, he is no liberal, and Arizona is no longer the conservative bastion it once was.

The one facet of American politics that Simon has missed is the feature known as "tailoring one's image" to the constituency one seeks. Gore's likeliest base is in the south, so he has come forward with a more conservative (= 'militaristic') stance; yet he still opposes the "contras," and look at his record in the Senate for evidence of strong social liberalism - just like his almost legendary father. Babbitt comes from the southwest, which means populism and environmentalism; and so his aim is in that direction. Dukakis is from the urban east, and Gephardt from the urban midwest, and those origins - and bases - color what they offer.

But in fact, every single one of them - from the liberal Jackson to the relatively moderate Gore - is just about the same on the base issues. All oppose aid to the Contras; none would rule out military intervention if warranted in Central America. All oppose "abortion-on-demand" but would not legislatively change the current Supreme Court posture on the matter. All oppose Robert Bork as a Justice but do not oppose a conservative per se. And so on....

Writing on a somewhat different tack (namely, the issue of whether New York's Governor Cuomo is planning to step in and run), columnist David Broder has some very revealing comments on the current candidates, which again I excerpt:



"The plausible predicate for a Cuomo rescue mission would be a stalemate, in which no avowed candidate has gained a significant edge. The odds against that are very heavy. Why? Because the six candidates who are out there keep getting better. I saw three of them - Dukakis, Gophardt and Gore - last week in New Hampshire. Every one of them had improved his stump speech markedly since I last heard him. The same is true of the tapes and television reports I've seen of Simon and Babbitt. And Jackson was darn good on his feet to begin with.

((And after a long analysis of why Jesse Jackson can't win, Mr. Broder continues)) "My hunch is that someone will emerge pretty quickly as the alternative to Jackson, and we will see a series of 65-35, 70-40, 55-45 (primaries). The high man in these...will be the Democratic nominee. I don't see when, where or how the opening for Cuomo appears...."

Well, neither do I. I'm not as sure as Mr. Broder (in an unprinted portion) that Cuomo wants to run; but even if he does, I agree that it's too late, the field is already full of strong and continually improving good people. I could, as an avowed leftist, vote for any of the six; I prefer the strong liberalism of Jackson to the moderated version that Gore espouses, but any and all would be better than the right-wing lunacy of any of the likely Republicans. Nevertheless, I do have preferences, and predictions: In my view, it's going to be either Dukakis the urban liberal, or Babbitt the populist. A third possibility, a kind of cross between the others, is Simon. Any will be palatable to me; my private preference is the eminently rational Bruce Babbitt.

I would, however, suggest that there are two other people - neither of them in the running, one in fact ineligible - that I would prefer over any of the possible candidates mentioned. In order of preference, they are:

1. Jimmy Carter
2. Neil Kinnock

GAME 1986APVJ06 - Return J. Meigs, Jr. (Rather Silly 2.75) -

...will return (heh heh) by flyer within five days. I'm revising the rules, waiting for second opinions on a whole series of protests, finding a new Soothsayer (hi, Pete!), and mainly under a whole batch of pressure and under the gun on time and too bloody busy to worry about this idiotic thing. But never fear: Let me get the basic issue posted, and I'll get to this outrageously complex game by the following week-end....

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GAME US (?) - Railway Rivals - "Anacræon" - startup

This is the Isle of Man map, and was supposed to have run in Rip Gooch's subzine "Transatlantic Railway." However, it now appears that Rip has not proceeded as planned, and so I'd like to take it over and get it under way. This will also give me the chance to name a game after Luigi Cherubini's finest opera (aside, of course, from "Medée," the only well-known one) - at the rate we're going, I'm going to have to switch to some other composer, as we're rapidly running out of Cherubini names. Donizetti next? That gives us almost sixty!

Anyway - players are John Colledge, Robin ap Cynan, Brian Longstaff and Richard Walkerdine. BY RETURN MAIL please advise your preference of colour, company name, and hex by which you wish to exit Douglas. (Hmm...maybe we should switch to Rossini operas, eh? I once won an audition with an aria from the obscure Rossini opera "Robert Bruce," taking the part of Douglas - but of course "Robert Bruce" is in French, thus Douglas is pronounced "doo-GLAH," whereas on this map it's "DUNG-luss," which isn't the same....)

CANTABILE



QUE TON A-ME SI NOB-LE, SI BON-NE...

(Opening theme of my prize-winning aria from Rossini's last opera, "Robert Bruce," 1846 - in actuality a pastiche assembled by the Master's pupils from his earlier works. This particular aria is a revision of a piece from "La Donna del Lago" ("The Lady of the Lake"), composed 1819. The original is for tenor.

(In the recap, here's the ornamentation I use....



QUE TON A - ME, SI NOB - LE, SI BON - NE

GAME 1985Mrb32 - Richard M. Johnson ('Gunboat') - interim

I regret that this game must go on brief hold owing to a massive error last time - the result of a miscompilation of John Walker's old issues, as provided by Paul Milewski, into my own statistical system. (In other words, I didn't double-check....)

Last time, Austria was credited with eight centers and Turkey also with eight. Two of Austria's were Naples and Rome. However, you will notice that there are Turkish units sitting splat in the middle of both of those places. This makes it tough for the supply centre chart to be right....

So - CORRECTION. After Fall 1907, Austria removes one; Turkey builds three. Corrected builds and Spring 1908 (revised as needed) due on the deadline stipulated.

In a way, it's just as well. There is very good reason to believe that one move was lost in the sudden postal forwarding that occurred recently. Something Jean said...I can't tell you what, because it would serve to identify one of the players, but it triggered a strong suspicion that one set of orders was delivered to my old house and accidentally misplaced.

I will tell you this much on other subjects: All draws were voted down, and the proposal to convert the game to Regular was likewise smershed. And one of the anti-conversion votes was labelled 'perpetual.' Does that answer that?

Look - I'm sorry for the stall. It was probably inevitable that something had to go awry in this hasty move. I'm sorry you were the victims.

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GAME 1986Arb32 - Schuyler Colfax ('Gunboat') - Spring 1908

ENGLAND: a ber s ruh-mun. a stp-mog. a ruh-mun. a lon-bel. f eng s pic-bre. f nth c lon-bel. f wes s ITA por-spa. f mid-gas. f kie s ber. f bal yells at Black Sea fleet. f pic-bre.

FRANCE: a gas s bre. a bur s mun. a mun s bur. f spa sc - mid. f bre s spa-mid.

ITALY: a tyo-ven. a ven-apu. f tun-ion. f nap s ven-apu. f por-spa sc.

RUSSIA: a mos s war. a war s mos.

TURKEY: a vie-tyo. a ser-tri. a tri-ven. a apu s ion-nap. a sev s RUS mos. a con-rum. f aeg s gre-ion. f adr s tri-ven. f bla c con-rum. f gre-ion. f ion-nap.


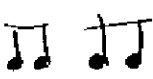
RETREATS: Ita a ven to pie, tus, rom, o.t.b. Fre f spa to mar, lyo, o.t.b. Fre f bre grunched.

VOTED CONCLUSION PROPOSALS FOR FALL 1908: (1) E/T draw; (2) T win. In the absence of nays, one yea passes; however, any nay vetoes. If both pass, the one with fewest survivors triumphs.

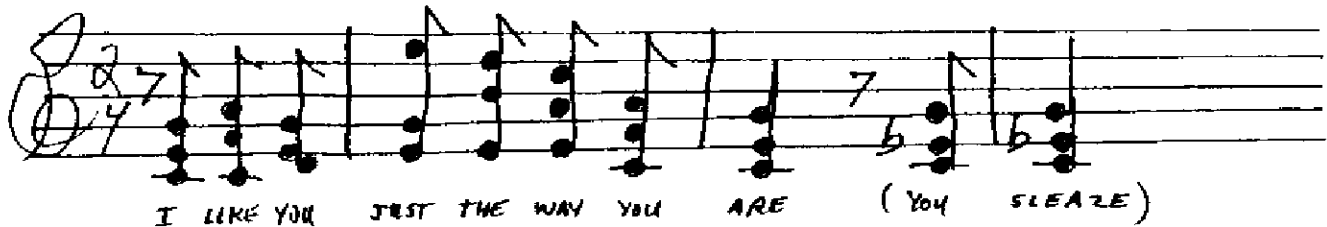
RUSSIA TO WORLD: Okay, so I am not Eric. But I thought I might fool you for a bit, especially since Daddy keeps on saying how badly short of standbys he is. *Lots, Lots.*

JAMUL: Short of standbys? No chance! After all, now that you've told the truth, I still have Eric! (Oh, and by the bye, for forging Eric's name last time, no dessert for a week!)



TURKEY TO RUSSIA:  I like you the way you are!  (Sung in three-part harmony.)

JAMUL: Well, heck, if you're gonna sing it that way, let's at least write it that way:



TURKEY TO ITALY: We pledge no disruption of your country. Our forces are passing through to get into position to repulse the treacherous English and fanatical French.

ST. PETERSBURG TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE: I will continue to attack Moscow, like Sevastopol is doing to the south. Meanwhile, you can take Warsaw and Moscow armies and attack Rumania. If you do this, I won't send in a new army, you should keep Mos AND War and build one extra!

ROME TO PARIS: After all the trouble I've caused you, you're only offering 20,000 francs? I'm insulted! I'm easily worth twice that much....

FRANCE TO RUSSIA: I am sure that Turkey will not be attacking you, when he sees how hard you are attacking the English mendicants in Germany! Hold out, you deserve it! Our special commando squad is now on its way to London to offer you protection while they bring you here!

ENGLAND TO ITALY: Hope we finally got you into Spain! In the fall, I'd like you to support my F Wes-Tyn. I will not attack Rome, Naples or Tunis, but only wish to help you against the Turk.

TURKEY TO ENGLAND: The Mediterranean is too far from home for you. Go back to bed and pull the covers up over your head.

RUSSIA TO TURKEY AND/OR ENGLAND: If you want my centers, you have to come and get them. (N.B.: This is not an invite!)

ENGLAND TO FRANCE: What was that about your ability to hold me back forever? I wasn't aware forever came in 1908. Your tower of 'prisoners,' consisting of three English nuns and one British postman, will soon fall. You will finish fifth, while I'll be eating Bangers in the Louvre with my fingers!

TURKEY TO FRANCE: Prepare the bouillabaisse for me. I like it hot and spicy. Have it ready in Marseilles by Spring 1910 at the latest.

PARIS TO THE SULTAN: We could use some of your 'very willing servants' to help knock out some more of those 'wops' who have turned into 'gofers' for the English; and we know that you will soon sink the English fleet in the Med.

ENGLAND TO TURKEY: Next?

**TO:** The Sultan  
**FROM:** His most Loyal and Obedient Secretary  
**LOCATION:** East coast of Italy

I have arrived in Italy as you ordered. Your most efficient navy conveyed me here from the capital in only one season, a vast improvement over the overland route.

Your armies are preparing to march on Rome. I save your invitation for the Italian ruler safely in hand, and have begun drafting one for the French ruler. Our troops have roused the Italian populace to be very friendly. Most of the men are in the Italian army, fighting off a combined French and English attack. The remaining women have enthusiastically greeted our Turkish troops. We have encountered no resistance so far. An unofficial Italian emissary has told me that the Italian government would vastly prefer our occupation to that of France or England.

Your loyal troops are now marching to victory. We will dismantle the Vatican and ship it to Constantinople as a present for you and Princess Suzanne.

/ / / // / / // / / / // / / / // / / / // / / / // / /

And just to prove that things do indeed move quickly in a 'speed' game:

**ALI BABA** (Railway Rivals, Yorkshire) - Round Three, throws 6-4-4

**YORKIE RAILS** (Doug Brown, brown): 3a: (Huddersfield) - A46 - B46; (Mexborough) - F9 - Rotherham. 3b: (Rotherham) - C5 - Sheffield. 3c: (Doncaster) - E17.

**WALLACE EXPRESS** (Melinda Holley, blue): 3a: (c60) - F61 - York - G63. 3b: (I14) - I18. 3c: (I18) - I19 - Goole; (G63) - G65.

**OOF** (Paul Gardner, green): 3a: (Dewsbury) - C47 - D46 - D45 - Halifax; (D47) - D44. 3b: (D44) - D43 - F42 - Hebden Bridge. 3c: (Dewsbury) - C50; (N17) - Selly; (L14) - L13.

**REVENUE:**

**WALLACE:** 38 +6 (York) +6 (Goole) +2 (Oof, N17) = 52.  
**OOF:** 31 +6 (Halifax) +6 (Hebden) -2 (Wallace, N17) = 41.  
**YORKIE:** 51 +6 (Rotherham) +6 (Sheffield) = 63.

Note: Wallace's builds slightly attenuated owing to a misread of the throws as three sixes instead of the given 6-4-4.

Round Four moves will be due **OCTOBER 30, 1987 - Friday**. And throws for Round Four will be 5-2-4.

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TODAY, just before I closed this issue down and sent it off to press, I received what I am told is an advance on a subzine to appear in print soon. It's called "Reality Check," and emanates from Steven Clark, 5425 S. Woodlawn, #3-B, Chicago, IL 60615. Steve tells us that he will be printing this thing as a subzine to RANDOM THOUGHT, which I don't get and have never before heard of. Still, based on the excerpts of Steve's essay which I will quote hereinafter, it might be worth an enquiry; certainly Steve's writing style and sense of the arcane is quite classic.

There follow several excerpts from Mr. Clark's "Reality Check" essay, followed by a photocopy of his cover letter complete with personal p.s.

"I would like to call a reality check on the entire hobby. I've seen entirely too many examples of people taking themselves and their games way too seriously.

"I would like to call a reality check on Gary "Mouth of the South" Coughlan...Gary, believe it or not, seems to take the Runestone Poll more seriously than Linsey. Gary is extremely upset and now refuses to answer Linsey's letters simply because Bruce made the mistake of rating Gary's folded 'zine.

"I would like to call a Reality Check on Conrad von Metzke, who spent so much money on his 'zine that he actually wiped out his childrens' trust fund, and then told everyone on his sub list about his personal problem in graphic, self-indulgent detail. He is easily able to afford to send everyone an original Bolivian stamp, yet can't seem to find the grocery money. Apparently, Conrad is so emotionally tied to the hobby that every letter he receives which contains any kind words whatsoever causes him to stop typing in order to get a handkerchief to wipe his eyes with.

"I would like to call a reality check on Bob Sacks, who accuses a mild-mannered old man like Fred Davis of sending death threats to people. Come on, Bob. Bob's terribly upset because he doesn't have a monopoly on giving numbers to games. It's good that little things don't bother Bob.

"I would like to call down a reality check on Bruce Linsey, who has to put out 80 pages of analysis about a poll on game newsletters. Is there really a need for a "Hobby Health Index" or "Longevity Points" or hopelessly corny Carly Simon lyrics? Only to people who believe that all of this has a profound impact on the world....

"I would like to call a reality check on Melinda Holley. Melinda, I am told, plays in something like seventy games. Melinda, don't you have anything better to do? Do you have time to cook, or are you reduced to ordering pizza every night while you write Dip moves?"

It goes on. And on. And on. And it eventually reminds of STAR TREK ONE in its incessant repetition of the same basic theme.

Whatever would motivate a person, of whom I've never heard, to write such a thing? I dunno. It can be taken as biting satire, or it can be taken as vicious offense. I prefer the former, and will so interpret it, though I think perhaps it goes a little far. To boot, some of the factual data are inaccurate: It was an Austrian, not Bolivian, stamp; and at no time did I remark having absconded with money for food. In fact, this whole blurb seems to be nothing more than an exaggerated parody based on a desire to hurt.

But, I said I was going to take this in the more charitable vein, as satire (albeit overdone) rather than vitriol. Still, I am inclined to do a 'reality check' on the author himself. Why was this important to you? If you sincerely feel that some of us take things too seriously, why do you take that too seriously? Do you truly feel motivated to redirect our lives, or are you just by nature a complete boor?

Oh well. It could be worse. At least the fellow is literate....

!! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !! !!

BEGINNING NEXT ISSUE, Costa will carry results of the PBEM game I'm running - thus merging postal and electronic gaming! Another hobby first, brought to you by the founder of postal Dip....

((Cover letter to Steve Clark's magnificent essay as referred to on the previous page. Note the extended level of social grace employed.))

Hello Subject of Reality Check,

I am sending this to you so you don't hear about it second hand, which would be uncool. The hobby is full of freaks, and a purging or reordering of priorities amongst hobby participants is clearly a necessity. Hopefully, it is not too late for you.

Sincerely,



Steven Clark  
5425 S Woodlawn #3B  
Chicago, IL 60615

\* Apparently, for you, it is too late.  
That really is sad.

((And as a matter of fact, there are a few comments in here that make some sense, never mind the terms in which they're couched. Many of us do go too far overboard on what is, after all, a recreation; I have been one of the worst offenders in my day, though finally no longer.

((But if Mr. Clark calls upon us overdoers to examine our motives, I think it would do him well to examine his own for his unusual efforts. It's one thing to express concern privately to a friend, or in general public terms as a sort of warning to novices, etc. But this approach is best counter-productive, and at worst bloody rude!

((Mr. Clark does, however, have one tellingly valid paragraph which says (offensively, of course) what I've wanted to say nicely for years, but haven't had the gall:

"I would like to call a general reality check on anyone who gets mad about folds. Someone who decides that living a real life is more important than running games should really have his head examined, huh guys? Publishers finally decide that spending all of their free time and disposable income on a newsletter isn't right, and subbers get pissed off. I can't believe that people actually write nasty letters demanding their \$5 or \$10 or whatever back from a publisher who might lose ten times that much each issue...."

((Well said, if overly harsh. I do think folding publishers at the very least have an obligation to notify people of what they're doing, but beyond that, Mr. Clark is quite correct that the 'real world' ought always to overrule the 'fantasy' one. To inject another of Mr. Clark's points



"Of course, some sacrifice of personal and family privacy would be necessary to enforce these laws, but I'm sure we would all be happy to give up a little privacy for the sake of stronger families. Besides, Judge Robert Bork has already told us that we have no constitutional right to privacy in the first place. If the state has a legitimate right to legislate the nature of relationships between parents and children, it must have the tools to exercise this right."

Patrick T. LaFollette  
Highland Park, California

((Interesting. And it makes one wonder. I have no specifics, of course- I read the thing off the cuff just as you did - but the name of the writer makes one stand up and take note. Is this gent any relation to THE LaFollette family of libertarian-style politicians from Wisconsin? Regardless, I wholly concur with the letter's sentiments; and whether the author's implied heritage is actual or coincidental, I suggest that his name puts him in excellent company.))



GAME 1984YGF24 - Wilson G. Bissel ("W.W. IIIb") - interim

Yet another game delay, but this one only momentary. Results will be transmitted either as an insert with this, or as a supplement within a couple of days. I simply didn't call David when I should have. I will. But meanwhile, this must get to the printer's tomorrow, or we're looking at another delayed deadline ...



And in conclusion to this issue, a few words about the subject of its cover. Fr. Miguel Hidalgo is generally credited with being the 'Father of Mexican Independence,' and it is from Hidalgo's ringing of a church bell and subsequent declaration on the church steps of Mexico's autonomy - on September 16, 1810 - that Mexican independence is commonly dated. Mexicans refer to Hidalgo's speech as "El Grito" - "The Cry" - and celebrate its anniversary as their Day of Independence.

We are more than a month late in honouring this day via a dedicatory issue of COSTA, but no matter; it took Hidalgo's successors many years to achieve their aims, I'm sure they would allow us a few short weeks to make our memorial.

Until next issue - ¡VIVA MEXICO!





TOP WORLD LEADERS

Photo by Doug Brown

## ¡VIVA EL GRITO!

This issue of COSTAGUANA is dedicated to one of my very best friends - she lives about 20 miles away and is as warm and generous and friendly as can be imagined. That friend is the Republic of México.

Far too many Yanquis do not know México. They've heard rumours and believed them, or they've looked only in the atypical border tourist towns. To many gringos, México means filth, poverty, prostitution, drugs, stray dogs, unsanitary water, and a willingness to perform backbreaking labour for one-fiftieth of the salary that we would pay to an 'American.'

Actually, every bit of this is true. The problem is that it is only true in isolated pockets of the nation, and under certain special conditions. And it is just as true of the U.S.; we just don't see it here, because we don't go as tourists to poor towns in our own country. Instead, we cross the border into Tijuana or Mexicali or some other Mexican city, and we see a few adverse things, and we express superficial pity and go home glad that we're so much better off (= 'better' inherently) than the poor peasants we've just escaped.

But, my friends, México is ever so much more, and if you miss seeing the beauty and only gaze on the pockets of squalor, you are the loser. México is beauty: Shining beaches, unlimited flowers, lush forestation in the south. México is warmth: From personal experience, I can tell you that if you will only learn ten words of Spanish and go into México and use them, you will be mobbed by friendly people eager to help you learn more, and use what you have to best effect. México is glorious art: The heritage of the Aztec and Maya nations, the mosaics and murals of Diego Rivera, the stunning music of Carlos Chávez, the magnificence of handmade jewellery in onyx, turquoise and silver. México is history: From the pre-Spanish Indian ruins of Yucatán to the sources of civilisation that wended their way north into southwestern 'America' and gave so much to California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. México is pride and valour: Against the legendary bravery of such as Nathan Hale and John Paul Jones, México can easily place her own heroes: Father Hidalgo (on the cover), Benito Juárez, the boys of Chapultepec....

However. Above all else, México is human warmth. It could easily be argued that the people of México are among the most giving, most open on the face of this planet. I have been there; I've seen it, and felt it; and I can testify to it. I've had field workers, trying to earn a living on piece-wages, drop everything to rush to help get my car out of the sand - and refuse payment for it; I've had a man offer to spend his last twenty pesos on repairs for my overheated car - only to have the repairman refuse payment from both of us; I've sung opera in México, to be greeted, not just by the customary applause, but also by a spokesman for the whole audience coming onto the stage to offer a public thank-you for the honour we had done; I've asked directions of a stranger on the street, only to have them - instead of pointing - walk with me to my destination, and offer to buy me a drink en route....

The United States - 'America' (though we often forget that México is part of 'America' too) - is a fortunate nation. Unlike many places, we have two neighbours that I wouldn't trade for (as we say) 'all the tea in China.' Most 'Americans' would agree without question with this assessment of Canada, but they'd likely balk at a similar view of México. Too bad.

Try to know México as I have known her; it will be your gain - though, as usual, the Mexican people will insist that it is their gain....