

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Italy

Mark L Berch
11713 Stonington Place
Silver Spring MD 20902

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With this issue, the cycle of country theme issues begins anew. I have found over the past 10+ years that I've published that the country theme issues are the most popular ones when it comes to ordering back issues (except for Lexicon and Son of Lexicon). I use a higher print run for these than other issues. For the first time, I'm doing a country as a double issue. This allows me a lot more depth than I've had in the past. For those further interested in the subject, the previous one, DD #2 is available for a mere 30¢. The only really major piece I've written on Italy was "The Italian Wins" a comprehensive look at over 70 games where Italy won, using a statistical approach to see where the paths for Italian victory lie. This was in DD #31, which is unfortunately out of print. You can see it, tho, in the DW Anthology, Vol II (#12 from Larry Peery Box 8416 San Diego CA 92102)

THE ZINE COLUMN #102

The Canadian Diplomacy Hobby has been said to have a history of cycles of growth and decline, especially in terms of the number of zines. Of course, this may just be an illusion, an artifact of the relatively small size of the hobby to begin with, so that normal fluctuations don't get smoothed out. But if true, the latter half of 1987 may well represent the rising part of the cycle. Hagalil Hamaarvi started up this summer, and now two former pubbers have returned to the task. Cal White (63 Oakwood Ave Toronto Ont M6H 2V7 Canada) has begun publication of Northern Flame. In the late 70s, Cal became the quintessential teenage burnout. He was at one time the BNC, put out a full sized zine Electra Glide Blue as well as two other zines plus other hobby activities. As has often been the case with Canadian zines, this will be a team effort, with Frank Paston handling money, deadlines and variants. Two other people will be contributing. One of them will be under a pseudonym, and I see that Cal indicates he will be GMing a game. I hope it doesn't come to that. Certain problems can arise from the notion of an anonymous GM. While I seem to recall that the Canadian zine Ozymandious had this too, I think its a poor practice. There are legit reasons for writing under a pen name, but I don't see how they'd apply to GMing.

Turn to page 23

1976. EN

((Kicking off this issue will be what is one of the most detailed end-game statements you'll ever see. I think you'll find the time it takes to read thru this carefully will be rewarding. This was the most "varied" postal game I've ever played, in terms of shifting my alliances structures. The game points to several important lessons for Italy. The first is not to be discouraged if the game starts off badly. Second, Italy is uniquely well placed to win without completely overrunning either side of the board. And third, a more general lesson: Never let a defaulting GM have the last word. So settle back, and let the DipiMaster tell you of his very first game of postal Diplomacy.))

1976EN was my very first postal Diplomacy game, so this is a particularly gratifying victory. At one point or another I fought every country on the board save Germany, and the original GM to boot. This is my second Italian win, and, since I suspect that there are very few active players with two Italina wins (Italy is statistically by far the most infrequent country to win with) I will have some comments on winning with Italy in general.

The game began in Cliff Mann's The Watergate. Austria conducted little or no diplomacy, and failed to get orders in. Neutral orders were used in SO1, with John Machir taking over in FO1. With Turkey moving his fleet to Con, and Russia into Gal and Bla, attacking Austria did not seem any longer prudent, and I settled for a simple convoy to Tunis. With Russia taking Swe, Bud and Rum, and Turkey in Aeg, I was in big trouble. Russian F Bla would assure that Turkey would do pretty much as he said, and Austria, who blew his F Dl orders, wasn't going to be much help. I began a vigorous attempt to unhinge the T-R alliance. At first, it did not bear fruit. SO2 saw Russia buldoze into Serbia, as Turkey convoyed to Gre, and swung his new fleet into Eas, in preparations from the first assault on Ion. Russia took advantage of English preoccupation with fighting Germany in the lowlands to expand into ^{Nov} I had no effective military allies, and powerful enemies. It was unquestionably, the low point of the game.

Then an unexpected turn: Turkey decided, for reasons that he did not state, to move on Russia. His new A Gre supported A Bul into Russian held Serbia, and he shifted his fleets to Bul and Aeg. An interesting dispute arose at this point. Turkey had ordered "F Aeg-Bul". Cliff had disallowed the move because no coast had been stated. I argued that the Rulebook in no way required that information be given. I was unable to persuade him, but he had an interesting provision in his HRs: In such a dispute, the IDA Ombudsman could be appealed to, and the GM would agree to abide by the result. This I did ---evacuation of Eas by the Turks would improve my security immensely--- and Cliff to his credit did abide by the ruling which went against him.

SO3 saw dramatic action in the east. I grabbed Tri, but Russia took both Ser and Greece. The fate of the Balkans was about to be decided. From Russia I received an offer: If I would leave him alone, he'd let me have all three Turkish home centers. This struck me as both impractical and insincere. With Russian units stuffed in the Balkans, I'd have to go around them to get to Turkey proper, and even then would need considerable Russian help, which I doubted would be forthcoming. Turkey just asked for help retaking his lost possessions. I countered with a plan: I'd support him back into Serbia with my new A Tri only if he'd support my convoy into Greece. This is the type of deal I like: Faced with a common danger, the plan has something for both parties, and both are to get it at the same time.

It worked like a charm. Russia's Balkan holdings were restricted to Bud and Rum. I balloned to six centers, and my ally had five.

Meanwhile, other things were happening. While my military activity was exclusively in the east, I kept up a steady correspondence with France. I feel that many Italian players neglect this, not being able to think of anything to say. But it is important to write! You are very vulnerable to a sudden French attack during this time, as you likely don't even have F Tyr in the area. Also, you want to get some idea of how he thinks, how he views the game, how good a player he is. Even if there is no possibility of joint military action, there is one matter that will frequently come up: F Mar. That's the one build that you don't want to see: The army route thru Pie is narrow and easily blocked. Depending on your posture, you can either urge or insist that such a fleet not be built. Point out what a wonderful alliance you have, and how much it will be damaged by that build. Point out that F Mar is no way to go against England because it takes a year to bring it to the fore and in that time, you could just build F Bre the following winter.

And there is one other reason why the correspondence is so important: some day you will have to choose between your eastern ally and France as the next victim. To do this properly you want to know as much as possible about him, both as to what type of ally he'll make, and what type of opponent he'll make. You'll be finding this out about your eastern ally because of constantly having to work with him, but for France you have to find out deliberately. Of course, sometimes you don't have to make this choice. Perhaps your ally and France will get together and attack you. Or perhaps Russia will attack your eastern ally and you'll not participate, and instead ally with France against Germany. But these are the exceptions, rather than the rule.

Anyhow, getting back to the game, the English player, Budke, NMRed out, and the new English player entered with a splash, taking Hol from Germany and Swe from Russia, even as Russia relieved ~~Germany~~ ^{Ger} of ~~Sweden~~ ^{Den}, and Germany took Bel from France, so things were nice and roiled in the west, which is how Italy wants it.

In W03 I built the predictable A Ven and F Nap, and concluded a very important deal with Turkey, with far-reaching consequences. Turkey was to get Rum and Sev, I was to get Bud, and Vie (the latter from Austria). Russia had to be pushed back as fast as possible, with maximum speed. Turkey's F Con, F Ank were needed to take Bla, but the F Aeg could guard the open Bul only by entering the south coast, which would be useless. So it was agreed that I would move A Gre-Bul, even as F Aeg-Gre: A swap. This led to a peculiar situation: An I-T alliance of equals in which Italy had Bul, tho we agreed later we'd swap them back. One comic side effect was that Cliff, the GM, never quite got the hang of that, and kept leaving Bul off my list. 1904 saw the fall of Sev, but little else in the east. The sudden reappearance of Austria complicated matters.

By then I had decided that I would attack France, and decided to do it sooner rather than later. Altho he (Mueth) was a decent sort, he had violated our neutrality alliance by entering Wes in W02, and had delayed leaving until F03. Turkey by contrast had kept all his promises. Then in Spring 1904 --- actually beginning in W03 --- France made a profound error. France was as I said at war with Germany, and had been unable to retain Bel at year's end, tho he took it in spring. He had driven into Ruhr, and by virtue of a S03 annihilation, had a build coming to him. I knew he was toying with F Bre, altho A Par as clearly in order. He had hoped that England would accept the build as a necessary part of the assault on Belgium, or some such, and would be too busy with his own war on Germany to object. England on the other hand told me that such a build was out of the question, and indeed, said that he would not even bother to write S04 orders contingent on Build F Bre because it was so unlikely. Thus it was that in S04, France gave England support into Bel, even as he took the channel, while Eng moved F Lon-Nth. Any questions that I had about the timing of the attack on France were gone, and I was relieved that I had been able to get my fleets ready. In F04 I entered Lyo, Wes, and Tyrr. Apparently having failed to persuade England, France switched sides again, and took Belgium against E-G cooperation, even as E-G cooperated against my other enemy, Russia. Thus, I had two allies in both areas.

I might add that, while all countrys to some extent must rely on, and thus be dependent on, allies, no country is more dependent on allys than Italy. Because of the fact that early builds usually come slowly, and because Italy has limited mobility (Italy has no winderanging Nth sea, cannot barrel armies out of her borders as quickly as can Germany, cannot present as compact a front as Turkey, lacks Russia's ability to wage a two front war, etc etc) she cannot go one on one as well as others, and even two on one will not be as quick for Italy as many other pairs on the board. Fortunately, Italy's central position makes her a useful ally to others, and relatively non-threatening to others, as most other players will think that they can take Italy all by themselves if need be. You must work harder to gain allys when you are Italy than any other country.

In Spring 1905 I decided that I could really trust Turkey, but needed some help from him. My fleets entered Mar and Sardinia, and, with F Tyr-Lyo, I had a rather large gap in my lines, and was terribly afraid that France would move F Mid-Wes/NAF in S05, threatening Tun, and even worse, a raider behind my lines. So I invited Turkey into the Ion. In the east, A-R cooperation was anticipated, and with A Ser involved in the assault on Rum, I correctly predicted that I would be expelled from Tri, so asked Tur to move a second fleet into Alb. He was actually reluctant to do this, as he felt that these forward fleets would just make me nervous. But I told him that as long as I was allied with him, I might as well reap the full benefit of the alliance, and use those extra fleets. Besides, I knew that he could not stand up to an I-R alliance even if he pulled off a good stab. In the fall, Turkey did indeed help me retake Tri, but since France used F Mid against England in S05, and would need in for Poz in F05, Turkey withdrew F Ion to Adr. In the east, we took Rum, but made no other progress. Thus, Turkey had taken both of his eastern targets, tho I had neither of mine, and with A-R holding Vie-Bud-Gal-Ukr we had plenty of work to do, tho England had taken Nwy from Russia. Thus, both England and Turkey were helping me in two different arenas.

In 1906, France tried to make up with England by removing A Lpl, tho he knew England was in no position to retake that year. My growth continued smoothly, as I took both Mid and Por in the west, and finally knocked out Austria by taking Vienna. By this point, Tur has withdrawn his fleets only as far as Gre and Alb. His next target was Mos, some ways off, and was behind me in S.C.s, 10-7 due to my unexpectedly rapid takeover of Iberia. Altho Bud was promised to me, I proposed to loan it to him. In S07 I gave his A Ser two supports into Bud. He accepted.

He also stabbed me. He knocked me out of Bul, and slid his fleet into Adr. All this in the season that he accepted my support into Bud. Fortunately, that move left Ser open for a retreat. Perhaps he was greedy in wanting Bud, perhaps he wanted to be sure of getting a build, perhaps he thought he could retake Ser in the fall, but his failure to ann the A Bul deprived the stab of some of its sting.

At this point a diversion: 1976EN was about to undergo the final act in an almost unique type of turmoil. The players were getting disgusted with the GM. #15 had appeared a month late, in Oct 1977. By late Jan 1978, the issue had not appeared, and Cliff was telling me that it had already been mailed, and that he would reset the deadline. Cliff had been ill, but that had been cleared up before the end of 1977. By mid-February, Cliff was saying that only a limited numbers of copies had been sent to "special players". All these stories were lies. #16 finally appeared in late March. A bizarre item, #16B appeared in mid May, but no games were moved. Another player, John Sokol was also being lied to about this matter. The game was being very poorly run, with Major errors every season, almost. Cliff had promised to restart the QKD games, but had merely taken John's issues without returning them. Meanwhile he had been phoning players trying to get hold of a set of his own Houserules. In late May John and I agreed that we were no longer interested in Cliff's fresh sets of lies and would look for a new GM. My first choice was McLendon, who was quite familiar with Cliff. He required that all players consent to this transfer, as it was being done without Cliff's consent. Germany (Kador) was quite agreeable. Russia (Fraser), who

had just NMRed, was not interested in the game in any location, telling me on the phone that the game had become irremediably stale. England (Jerry Smith) was an even sadder case. He was in four games, all of the in the Watergate. He became totally disillusioned with postal diplomacy, and left the hobby at that time. He felt that he had been totally burned by Cliff and did not want to risk this with anyone else. Finally, Mueth (France) agreed to go along with this, altho he said that he'd be sending a set of orders to Cliff as well. Thus, four were willing to move the game, and the other two were not willing to play in the game wherever it was played. Cliff of course was furious. He stated at that time that he fully intended to continue with the game, and that as far as he was concerned, so long as the GM stated that he intended to carry the game, the players could not under any circumstances vote it out, even if the vote were unanimous. He also said at that time that Mueth would never agree to the sending in of new orders to McLendon, because, he hinted, Mueth was dependent on his help in another game (which I later found out was in Ninth Circle).

Alas, two snags developed. Mueth, despite repeated promises to me, did not send in orders to Steve. And Smith failed to get his resignation in. So things were delayed. Then in Mid June, 1978, Cliff published #17, and set a July 4 deadline. Cliff then persuaded another player to give him a chance. We sent in orders to him and it looked like things might get back to normal.. When the next issue became many weeks overdue, and Cliff became completely impossible to get hold of by phone, and would not respond to letters, I started up the entire process again. Then Cliff suddenly called, saying that he was willing to let the game be transferred, but only because he was being transferred. He said that he planned to publish one final issue, and when the game could be moved. I asked him if he had informed Steve; he had. Then another wait began. It became clear to me that no such final issue was going to appear, and that I would be a fool to wait for it, so I asked Steve to restart the game. After a short delay caused by the need to reassemble all the records, the game was restarted in early Nov, 1978. Mueth dropped out, but Kador, Sokol and Berch remained, giving the game plenty of continuity.

So far as I know, this is the only game to escape the wreckage of the Watergate. This is due, in part, to the fact that Cliff was able to get various GMs to print in their zines (in LDNS in 1978, and The 9th Circle in 1979) that the games should be restarted once Cliff got that last issue out. Unless there has been an issue not sent to me, it has not been published in over 13 months, and the rest of the games are probably dead. Restarting EN took an enormous expense in phone calls, but it was worth every penny, and I'd say that even if I hadn't won. The point is that the GM should not have the last word when he is killing a game by neglect. If the players care about a game, they should move to have it transferred, even if it has to be ripped from the clutches of its GM. Cliff, I might add, is still playing in some t9thC games, even joining a new one, and has never returned my deposit.

Anyhow, back to the game. When the FO7 dust settled, I had correctly determined the manner in which Tur would try to retake Ser, and for his pains, all he had was a Bul/Ser swap, plus Bud. I had snatched La from France, so we both had builds. Tur at this point began the first in a series of insincere apologies, tho he blamed me for pulling so far ahead. Germany took Bel back again from France, reducing him to Par and Bre, no longer a major power in the game. An alliance was formed with Germany to divide these two, a continuation of our earlier anti-France deal, even as the new English player, Ron Kelly, took StP from the Russians, and positioned himself against Germany. Turkey wanted to make up, and I was inclined to go along. But then he built F Smy in WO7, so it was back to war again. I tried to enlist Russia in this, but he was more interested in attacking Germany, so he stripped his southern defenses. 1908 followed the same pattern as 1907: Bud and Ser were exchanged, giving us both clearer lines, as we both scrambled elsewhere for builds to fuel the battle, me taking Bre, him taking War. However, I got in a crucial tactical move. At the risk of weakening my Balkan positions, I convoyed A Alb-Syr. In that FO8, we were groping

toward some sort of truce. Turkey had moved F Adr-Alb, but didn't want to get in (F Greece held!), just comply with his agreement to move out of Adr. I took no other action against him, nor did he attack me.

Again in w08 we had another of our how-can-we-end-our-war powows. By this point, it was clear to me that I had the upper hand, if only slightly, but I had run out of other centers to take easily. I was also tired of Sokol's unfulfilled promises. I resolved that since Sokol had stabbed me first, I would stab him.....last. I set up a limited agreement whereby I pledged not to do some things (especially enter Aeg) that I didn't plan to do anyhow, and permitting battle in certain border areas (esp Galacia) where I wanted to place my pieces. I got Russia to agree to move to Sev, to cut any support from there. Turkey agreed, further suggesting that I am a fleet, so that it could be rebuilt as an army. I took this as a green light to try to dislodge F Smy, the only available fleet. But Sokol supported it, saying that he meant in another season. But at least I had an excuse. A similar deal was set for F08. Turkey took no S08 against me, instead expelling Rus from Mos.

That season, ^{F08} was to be my big splash of the entire game. I masterminded a four nation attack on Turkey. The retreating Russian army was given support into Rum. I smashed my way into Serbia. I got England to do A StP-Mos, cutting support, so that the German attack on War would succeed. The only target not taken was Smy, which I could have had if I had thought that he would not use A Con to defend it. The only country not participating was the one center France! Tho he gained Mos, the loss of War, Ser and Rum meant that he could not stand in the way of my victory.

That was not all I did that season. In addition to supporting Germany into Paris, I also attack England, taking Lon, which, along with F Bre-Eng, assured that I would take Edi next year. I must say that this is the one move of the game that I was and am, not particularly proud of. True, it was a grand gesture to attack both T and E, the 2nd and tie-for-third strongest powers on the board, both in the same season. And I did want to be sure of my victory. There was at least the possibility of a GTE grand alliance, which was the only thing which could stop me at that point. England would be building from the seizure of StP, and an army would imperil my Lpl. Plus Ron had told me that he was not negotiating with others in the game, so I figured that the game probably didn't mean all that much to him at the time. Finally, my longest term ally at that point had been Germany, who was under attack by England, so there's the ~~my-friend's-enemy-is-my-enemy~~ rationale to rely on as well. However, my attack on Ron was entirely unprovoked, so I did it with some regret, and probably a good measure of paranoia.

Anyhow, 1910 was just mopping up, as I took Smy, Gre, Edi, and Mos. S10 was fun, in that I had a chance to do a rare "half annihilation". This is when you dislodge two pieces, each of which have just the one, same retreat place (here, Con), forcing one of them to be disbanded. I ended up with home centers of every country except Germany under my belt, which is quite an accomplishment, considering that I finished with just the regualtion 18, and was playing Italy. I was at various points, both the enemy and ally of every country except Germany, with whom I was never at war.

I'd like to thank the other players of the game who survived to the end, plus Bill Schiwautz, who took over a hopeless French position and played it out. But most of all, my thanks goes to Steve McLendon, for taking over this game. There was certainly nothing "in it" for him. And it was certainly well run. As long as there are people like Steve McLendon around, providing such services to the hobby as the creation of a new rating system, and a splendid global variant, work with the new Postal Tournament, picking up a troubled orphaned game, and publishing a highly readable zine, it is easy to be hopeful about the future of the hobby.

((In retrospect, that F08 season was the most energetic season I've ever had in any postal Diplomacy game))

LEPANTO

((For reasons which aren't clear to me, the original essay on the Lepanto opening is probably the most widely reprinted single article in the hobby's history. What follows are two attempts to put this opening into context ---widely differing contexts, I might add. The first comes from the first anniversary issue of The Pouch, #53, March 1974))

SOME SECOND THOUGHTS ON THE LEPANTO OPENING

by Douglas Beyerlein

When Edi Birsan first introduced the Lepanto Opening¹ to the Postal Diplomacy public in the fall of 1971 the opening almost immediately changed the balance of power in the Balkans. The Italian opening, combined with an Austrian alliance², doomed the once invincible Russo-Turkish alliance. Suddenly Turkey is not the most successful country on the board and Italy actually has a chance of winning the game. Or does it? That is the subject of this article.

There is no question that Italy has always been a difficult country to win with. Stuck on a lousy peninsula with only one uncontested neutral supply center (Tunis) within 1901 range, Italy is given the great option of either attacking France or Austria. France is a long distance away and is usually strong enough to withstand the small (never greater than three units) striking force that Italy can assemble. In addition a quick stab into France or Iberia is nearly impossible because of the sea and land buffers. The conventional attack on Austria does not suffer these drawbacks, but then by the time Italy has taken Trieste and maybe Vienna it is faced with opposition from the east in the form of Russian and/or Turkish units from Galicia to the Aegean Sea. Well, a little glory is better than none.

So that was Italy's future before the Lepanto Opening was published. Then with the idea of an Italian sea assault on Turkey and the possibility of amphibious landings in Syria Italy had a great future in the makings. Always Lepanto. And that has been the way things have been ever since. Unquestionably Italy is doing better than previous performances and Turkey is doing worse. But why isn't Italy winning proportionally more games? Austria and Russia are. And I would guess that even France is again on the upswing.

1. The Lepanto Opening was first published in HA #43 (6 Nov. 1971). For those who are not familiar with the opening it starts in Spring 1901 with IF Nap-Ion, IA Rom-Apu, and IA Ven (H). IA Apulia is convoyed to Tunis in Fall 1901. That winter F Naples is built. Then in Spring 1902 IF Ion-EMed and IF Nap-Ion. If they succeed Italy can convoy A Tunis to Syria or Smyrna (it can be a guessing game with the Turks) in the fall. By Spring 1903 Turkey starts to crumble.

2. Further expansion of the Lepanto Opening was made in the article "Austria-Italy: Superpower" written by this author and first published in THE ARENA #5 (29 April 1972). This article slightly changed the Lepanto and further outlined Austria's role in the alliance. The opening's orders now were: (cont'd on bottom of next page) 7

I think the problem lies, and this was pointed out by Allan Calhmer in his seminar at DipCon VI, in the fact that Italy is helping its neighbors (Austria and France) and Turkey's northern neighbor (Russia) more than itself by attacking Turkey via the Lepanto. Italy will at least initially do well, but when the final game stage comes it will be Austria or Russia or France winning -- with the possible accomplishment of a stab into Italy or Italian-owned centers for that 18th supply center. The physical outlay of the board alone makes this more likely to happen than the other way around with Italy doing the stabbing.

The answer? Well, I am not sure. Just in the past year we have seen the Key Variant (the di Chiave Opening³) of the Lepanto where Italy attacks Turkey through Austria (IA Ven-Tri-Ser) in 1901. This also gives Italy an extremely clean shot at Austria's homeland as Walt Buchanan so neatly demonstrated in 1972BR⁴.

(cont'd)

Spring 1901

AUSTRIA: AVie-Gal, ABud-Ser, FTri-Alb

ITALY: AVen-Tyr, ARom-Apu, FNap-Ion

Fall 1901

AUSTRIA: AVie-Gal, ASerSFAlb-Gre, FAlb-Gre

ITALY: ATyr-Boh, AApu-Tun, FIONCAApu-Tun

Winter 1901

AUSTRIA: Builds ABud & ATri

ITALY: Builds FNap

The Austrian fleet in the south helps the Italians against Turkey while the northern Italian army (A Bohemia) supports the Austrians into Galicia and then forms part of the buffer zone between Austria and Germany.

3. Jeff Key published this Italian attack in an article titled "Lightning Warfare -- Italian Style" in his zine, THE VOICE, Vol. V, No. 12 (22 June 1973). Edi Birsan later reprinted the article in THE ARENA #35 (18 Sept. 1973) under the title "And Now the Key Opening for Italy." Basically the Italians start with A Rom-Ven, A Ven-Tri, and F Nap-Ion in Spring '01. In the fall (if Italy decides to ally with Austria) Italy orders A Ven-Apu, A Tri-Ser, and F Ion-EMed. Austria orders A Ser-Gre, A Bud S IA Tri-Ser, and F Alb-Ion. Then in Spring 1902 the convoy is made to Syria or Smyrna. Or (and this is what Buchanan's Italy did to Key's Austria in 1972BR) in Fall 1901 Italy can attack Austria with A Tri-Vie, A Ven-Tri, and F Ion-Gre. Combined with Turkish aid (TA Bul S IF Ion-Gre) Austria comes up with only two centers (Serbia and Budapest) at the end of Fall 1901 while Italy has six. This opening used against either Turkey or Austria gives Italy an excellent beginning.

4. Played in von Metzke's COSTAGUANA, 1972BR was won in a blitz by Fall 1905 by Walt Buchanan's Italy. As this was Buchanan's fifth win in a row it is difficult to tell whether the win was because of Walt's brilliant play on the board or the use of the di Chiave Opening. Undoubtedly it was a combination of both.

Also there is Eric Verheiden's Munich Gambit⁵. An Italian-German attack on France; it was found to be a very powerful and swift blitz through France in an international face-to-face game⁶ played in Surrey, British Columbia this past summer.

Those two openings give Italy more variation in its attacks; but they are only a start in the right direction. If the Italian player wants to win (and isn't that why we play the game?) he or she must make the greatest use of imaginative strategies which while guaranteeing Italy's growth will also either militarily or diplomatically give Italy the edge over Austria, France, and/or Russia. This will make Italy a leader and not one of the followers when in the end game the victor is chosen.

5. The Munich Gambit was published in HA #122 (24 Sept. 1973). It is too new as yet to have been postally play-tested. The gambit:

Spring 1901

ENGLAND: FEdi-Nth, FLon-Eng, ALiv-Wal
GERMANY: FKie-Hol, ABer-Kie, AMun-Ruh
ITALY: FNap-Tyr, AVen-Tyr, ARom-Ven
FRANCE: FBre-Eng, APar-Bur, AMarSAPar-Bur (these and the following French orders are the best that France can do against this attack)

Fall 1901

ENGLAND: FNth-Nwy, FLon-Eng, AWal
GERMANY: FHol-Bel, AKie-Den, ARuhSIATyr-Mun
ITALY: FTyr-GLyo, ATyr-Mun, AVen-Pie
FRANCE: FBre-Eng, ABur-Bel, AMar-Spa

Winter 1901

ENGLAND: Builds FLiv
GERMANY: Builds ABer
ITALY: Builds FNap
FRANCE: Builds AMar

Spring 1902

ENGLAND: FLon-Eng, FLiv-Iri, AWal
GERMANY: FHol-Bel, ARuhSIAMun-Bur, ABer-Mun
ITALY: APie-Mar, FGLyoSAPie-Mar, AMun-Bur, FNap-Tyr
FRANCE: FBre-Eng, ABur-Bel (-Gas), AMar, ASpaSAMar

Fall 1902

ENGLAND: FLon-Eng, FIri-Mid, AWal
GERMANY: FHol-Bel, ARuh-Bur, AMunSARuh-Bur
ITALY: ABur-Mar, APieSABur-Mar, FGLyoSABur-Mar, FTyr-Tun
FRANCE: FBre-Mid, AGassAMar, AMar, (-Spa), ASpa-Por

If Italy doesn't gain Marseilles then it can retreat to Paris.

6. The Munich Gambit was first used in a game played on Sunday, 26 August 1973, at Herb Galenzoski's place in Surrey. I played Italy and Eric Verheiden was Germany and therefore we decided to try his new attack plan. We blitzed the French player, who obviously knew nothing of the gambit, and eliminated France in 1904. The game later ended as a four-way draw between England, Germany, Italy, and Turkey. (This was from an account of "Local Play and a Trip to Canada" published in WASHINGTON REPORTS ((now CALIFORNIA REPORTS)) #9.)

((Our second item is by Robert Correll, and appeared in one of the hobby's odder publications: Erehwon #100, which appeared in Dec 1983, a mere 7 years after #99. Rod Walker had collected items for it, but could never actually bring himself to publish the issue until 1983 (altho 5 poetry issues were put out, #101-105 prior to #100))

THE HIDDEN MESSAGE IN THE LEPANTO OPENING

What do all those strategic articles really teach you; are they worth reading? Perhaps. I guess it depends on what you are trying to get out of them. For the Diplomacy player who really knows how to move the pieces around, I can't stand behind the value of such articles. The old timers of the hobby have come in for a lot of criticism in the past few years. First it was their rating systems, then their feuds, and now finally that most sacred ghod of all, the original "how to fake out the whole world with my super opening" article. There was the Churchill Opening, the von Metzke suicide opening and finally, the ultimate Bir-Sauron Lepanto Opening. This was the Opening that turned the lowly Italian good-for-nothings into Italy Superpower. At least until someone thought of an antidote.

But we are not here to discuss the glories of the past; there are plenty of old timers who will be doing this in Rod's wonderful centenary issue. I seek to prove to you that the strategy & tactics Diplomacy articles are virtually worthless. Certainly they have been kicked around enough in the last few years; what vestige of the old order hasn't been? Old timers tell me that the hobby of their day was one where everyone knew everyone else. If this is true, then the postal Diplomacy hobby would be an excellent example of the economic principle of "perfect information". That is, that everyone basically was informed about almost everything that was happening in the hobby. There were only a few 'zines, and those who didn't subscribe to a large number of them didn't play in all that many games anyway. Therefore, I think I can justifiably assume that whenever an article of merit appeared, nearly everyone would have seen, read, or heard about it within a short period of time. This is the concept of "perfect information". I think this is also largely true of the hobby today, especially since the advent of DIPLOMACY WORLD. However, since strategy & tactics articles have declined substantially in popularity over the past couple of years, this is not important.

Let us now analyze what the value of s&t articles is. The basic theme of most of these articles is to outline some fantastic new opening, or reveal a stalemate line that everyone up until now must have been bonkers to miss. The idea was to let the hobby in on a secret of yours; so that first and foremost, everyone would marvel at your brilliance, and secondly to help some of those poor suckers along who weren't very smart. After all, the new opening was beginning to wear out and get boring anyway, and if you didn't write the article quickly, one of your opponents might break the secret and get all the credit. To summarize succinctly, s&t articles demonstrate the ability of their authors to think abstractly or their ability to steal some other guys' secrets and get them into print before they do.

Let's examine the abstraction principle. What was Ed Birsan really saying in his Lepanto article? His opening statement contained the phrase: "Italy is the weakest power on the Diplomacy board." However, by the end of his article, he had turned the boring and almost certain obliteration of the Italian position into an exciting new challenge. Everyone was dying to try out the Lepanto Opening and conquer Turkey. ((At Dipcon 1976, Birsan gave a talk on Italy, and half of it discussed the Lepanto Opening. In the next (second) round, I'm told, a lot of Italian players bottled up the Turks with just this opening. The only problem was, the jig was already up. Implicit in our definition of "perfect information" is that everyone else has already read the article too. That is why Italy didn't rack up

20 wins right away. Yes, Italy did do better, but that's because of the stupid dopes who, upon seeing the Lepanto coming their way, dropped out because they did not have the same power to think abstractly and come up with a solution.

The plain fact is, the Lepanto Opening carried a hidden message. Do it Monty Python style--Do Something Completely Different--THINK ABSTRACTLY!!! Don't accept the plain old patterns of previous games. Change the angles--do something your opponent won't expect.

Well, it that's all the S&T fraternity is telling us, there is no reasoning for reading them. Unless of course you can't think abstractly. And it's true, many of us can't--but we should try. Before I close, let me deliver one final blow to the S&T articles and an encouragement to try out your abstract powers--think--when do you need that professional advice most? When you have 3 units on the board and have 1/3 of your time to involve yourself with their individual placement among relatively few options--OR--when you have 10 units and are trying to crack that stalemate line being thrown in the path of victory? We both know the answer--and

we both know that no one could possibly write articles about all the possible ways Italy could move its 10 pieces against all possible defenses. What does Italy do after Lepanto? That is your problem. If you are going to win, you'd better apply the same abstract thinking that gave you the original opening.



((Back in DD #2, I reprinted an essay on the Key opening, along with a look at two games which featured the Key opening. Apparently I wasn't aware at the time of the fact that a few issues later, the essay was then discussed in an exchange of letters. This exchange stands fairly well on its own, when supplemented by my comments))

Nicky Palmer: Re: The Key Opening((In which Italy opens A Ven-Tri, and in FOL, Italy is supposed to pass thru to Serbia)). Is Jeff Key a hypnotist or something? Either he has to persuade Austria to let him in voluntarily in SOL, with a backup unit in Ven, on some specious promise of it being useful against Turkey (and even with the best intentions on Italy's part, Turkey has only to stand Austria off Greece in the Autumn for the plan to fail and Austria lose Trieste with a net gain of zero). ((I suspect he has overlooked the support, viz, F Alb S A Ser-Gre. In the most aggressive form, however, Austria does F Alb-Ion instead)) Or else he surprises Austria in SOL and then persuades him to leave Vie open too in the Autumn,

because Italy really loves Austria, you see, it was just to fool Turkey, huh. If Austria agrees to either of these approaches, he isn't a "trusting or gullible fellow", as Jeff writes, he's a ruddy lunatic.

Edi Birsan: Jeff Key used this opening against Walt Buchanan's Austria in the Dip Con tournament of 1972 and won as Italy after taking Vie and Tri in F01. Buchanan has just set the record of winning his first 5 postal Diplomacy games in a row, and a sixth in the wings ((which he won)). In a Costaguana game he used this opening with Mike Childer's Austria and cleaned out Turkey and now both are on their way to a solid game. Childers is no fool, he taught his wife how to play, and she won the trophy in the DipCon III at Oklahoma city ((Hmm? I had thought that Joyce Singer's win at DipCon 1983 was the first woman's win, but I guess that wasn't true!)) In a recent Jastrzab game, Jeff played to Tyo and Ven ((not a Key opening)) and then took Tri and Vie from Austria as he stood by watching. So I guess you could say he is something of a hypnotist. He is also a fairly well-like player and everybody really got upset when I stabbed the living day-lights out of him in the Grudge Game ((the first HA demo game)), so you see it is logical for him to develop an opening because he is generally

considered to be one of the more trusting players in the hobby and thus can ask for and expect it from another player.

((What amazes me is how Edi can put his finger on some much diverse activity all at once. There were fewer games in those days!))

((One of the advantages of being trusting (or more precisely, having the reputation of being trusting) is that people then assume that you are yourself trustworthy. There's no particular reason why these two characteristics should go hand in hand, but many people assume that they do. Thus, the next time you hear a player ruefully describe incidents in which he was stabbed, he may be trying to set you up into thinking that he's an awfully trusting (and hence, awfully trustworthy) fellow.))

((I do not agree, however, that only a lunatic Austria will agree to this opening. Suppose you, as Austria, learn that R-T have formed a solid alliance. You plead for a countervailing I-A. But Italy is cool to the idea of a Lepanto (F Ion-Eas, F Nap-Ion in S02) --- after all, a strong R-T will likely feature F Ank-Con-Aeg in 1901, so a Lepanto would be doomed. Instead he insists on a more aggressive plan: The Key opening. By letting Italy have Ser in F01, he can bypass Fun, and move F Ion-Eas/Aeg in F01. What do you do? Sure, accepting the Key is risky, but if you don't have an alliance with Italy, yer doomed))



((Our next item is from Harry Drews in Paroxysm #25, March 21, 1976))

ITALY & RUSSIA

The Italo-Russian pairing is one of my favorites. Russia is the most powerful country on the board, and many people have given up on Italy as being a hopeless cause. The apparent mismatch is a very formidable alliance when handled properly. Let us go thru the potential advantages. Italy can often secure allies on the basis that it is so harmless that it is not worth the effort to attack in the early going. Rather than allies I should have said, "Friends". Italy can, therefore, play a superficially innocuous but potentially dangerous role in the southern half of

the board. Italy has an excellent strategic position. France, Turkey, and Austria are within quick striking range. A vital flexibility is present in the capacity to mobilize either a sea or land force. And, while it is true that a small Italy is very susceptible to invasion, it follows that Italy can just as easily mount a good attack. The chief point to keep in mind with Italy is that this country more than any other cannot go it alone. True wins by Italy (18 centers) are rare and can only be achieved by taking advantage of a long-standing ally. If you are willing to draw with another player, then Italy can be a rewarding country to play.

Russia has the greatest flexibility, manoeuvrability, and raw potential of any of the starting powers. The trick is to be able to make friends so that you can focus on one enemy or on one front long enough for the killing blow. An IR alliance makes good sense. Most important, they can combine their attacks in repeated hard strikes at a common enemy, either Turkey or Austria. There will be plenty of spoils for each. The initial attacks can be camouflaged beautifully. Italy can pretend to ally with England and Russia with Turkey until too late to be prevented by the others.

The use of numbers in your favor is a cardinal principle of making war. Either A or T can be used as a temporary unwitting partner to the rapid slaughter of the fourth member in the southeast. The order of elimination need not be dealt with here. Personalities will probably decide. All this is contingent on the neutralization of the west... When Russia and Italy gang up in the east, A and T can be gone by 1905 with no sweat. ((This strikes me as unduly optimistic, unless the 4th country quickly joins IR in the attack. Even then, if its Aus who goes first, and the Turkish player has insisted on control of the Bla and is generally a decent tactician, 1905 will probably find him down to his home centers, and not out)). Even before this time, the builds can be directed towards the west to penetrate before any opposition can coalesce. Speed is the critical factor, and it is speed which is the most available in this alliance.

There is a certain danger that Russia could decide to attack Italy rather than Germany/England. With the proper balance on the board of centers captured and builds made any such intention can be telegraphed ahead of time. Also, precautions can be taken to neutralize the borders. More important than practical considerations, tho, is the proper psychological conditioning of your ally. Build a dependence within him/her to keep the friendship going. Make it more fun to settle for an amiable draw rather than a bitter, unpleasant fight after a stab. Know your partner; if he is a legal-Lakofka, who wants precise, written treaties then oblige him and keep a careful eye on him if he tries to wiggle out of it. If he is a person of your own heart who prefers a good clean game with the pleasure of cooperating to victory being supreme, then work on the friendship angle. What I am saying is to know what you want to do, and then stick by it thruout the game ((what follows are more comments on the general topic of cementing alliances))

I may be criticized here for being so terribly vague. I find it hard to get around this and I don't think specifics are necessary. A good player will play with his brains and use every resource available to manipulate ... use the ploys available and the R-T can waltz their way to a sweet finish....

((Thus, the above was more of a sales job than a blueprint))
((The first crucial decision is whether to go after A or T first. There

is an advantage for Italy to go after A first, simple because he is easier to get at. But there are two other questions to ask: Is Turkey more likely to go to the aid of Austria than vice versa? Is an RT alliance (after the fall of A) more likely than an AR alliance (after the fall of T)? These are hard to judge, but if the answer to either of them is Yes, then you need to weight that against the better accessibility to Austrian centers. It is important, however, that Italy make this choice. Italy, more acutely than other countries, faces the problem of Russian dominating the alliance if the alliance does well. Italy should start off by insisting that he chose the first victim. Russia should be very anxious to create an TR alliance, since it is a very valuable one to him, and so he may well go along with this. Italy may propose to Russia that he'll seal such an alliance provided that Russia opens A War-Gal and T Sev-Bla in SOL ---while mentioning to him that of course Russia is free to provide for arranged standoffs if he so desires. If Italy can get Russia to go along with that, his game is off to a good start. The reactions of RT and A to this should give him some clues. Standoffs in Gal and especially Bla are very much in Italy's best interests, tho of course, you sell them to R partly in terms of enhanced ability to take Rum))

((What is the best western alliance structure is a dicier questions. Certainly an EF war is best, but where would you prefer Germany? On the one hand, FG overrunning E means that at least for a while, French fleets will be steaming north, rather than English fleets moving south. But sooner or later, France will be strong enuf to open up a southern front. Also, this alliance structure normally means that Russia takes Nwy rather early --- 1903 or even 1902 --- and without much effort. FG in most cases is probably a better bet, since it poses a more serious problem to Russia than does EG. I would suggest as Italy that you stike a deal, whereby if the west gets unbalanced, the ally best positioned to intervene on behalf of the loser must do so. I strongly suggest that whenever possible, Italy make deals that specify the ends rather than the means. Such a deal

looks reasonable on paper, since the alliance doesn't want any resolution in the west. In practice, the obligation will fall more heavily on Russia, since he has slightly better access to the west, and has an extra unit --- at a minimum, his northern fleet. If you can get such a deal out of Russia (a reasonable challenge to any competent diplomat; there's no certanty you can get it), then you strongly favor FG vs F. In that case, Russia is barred from snatching Nwy up. You'll have to do something with France, but you should be able to spare an army to Pie if you are attacking Turkey, or a fleet Wes if you're attacking Austria. If the setup is the dreaded EF vs G, you'll want Russian intervention as early as possible to help Germany, to keep France from building as a result of German losses))

((Finally, the biggest problem with this alliance is the difficulty of winning without stabbing Russia. In most cases, such a task means taking 2 from the west end of the Nth sea: Lon, Edi and Bel. Getting there before Russia does is a very difficult task. The alternatives are settling for a draw, as Drews suggests, or stabbing Russia. In most cases, you'll need help for the latter, and your best placed ally is England. And that is an argument against a successful FG alliance, too.))

THE TAKERS OF 3

It is quite rare for Italy to take 3 centers in 1901, but it has happened. Lets have a look at a few of those games to see how it all turned out

Spring 1901 in 1976CL (Arrakis) got off to a fairly brisk start, considering that there were no standoffs. Turkey slid his fleet over to Con, Italy moved to Tyo and Ven, France supported himself to Bur, and Russia shot up to StP. Unconcerned with the Turkish moves, Italy pounced on Vie and Tri in FO1, making 6 with Tunis, as the hapless Austrian player moved to Tyo. Agressive moves abounded elsewhere, as standoffs occured in Mun and Den, Turkey continued to the Aeg, and Germany extended to Hol for his sole gain.

Winter 1901 saw fleets appear in Smy, Nap, Ven, Lon, Bre, and StP(nc) with few armies. But this appeared to be the Italian high point, since he had builds, but no apparent allies. SO2 saw A-I swap Bud for Tri, but RT ominously placed armies in Gal, Rum, and Gre. FO2 saw Austria wiped out --- with Italy getting nothing, as Russia seized Bud away from an Italy preoccupied with retaking Tri. 1903 saw more progress for RT, as they entered Vie, Alb, Boh, and placed a third fleet on the Ionian. 1904 saw the loss of Tri, Ion, Adr --- not to mention Russia taking Den and Ber for 11. Turkey managed to take Ven in 1905 for 8, but Russia, with Kie and Mun had 13. Turkey took the last two home centers and stabbed Russia in 1906, but by then once proud Italy was down to just Tunis. By 1906, I was actually 2 centers ahead of R. Italy was out in 1909, and Turkey (Tom Ripper) won in 1911. The moral? Without an ally, three builds in 1901 is all you'll get.

In 1971DQ (Xanadu), the Italian player (Len Lakofka) again swooped down on Vie, Tri, and Tun. But thats where the resemblance between the games ends, because this time between Russia and Italy there was alliance, not war. The Austrians had done A Ser S A Bud-Rum, wiping out the Russian Fleet there, and had sent the Fleet into the Ionian, letting the turks take Gre (F Bla-Sev) had out Rum's only support. Alas, at this point there is a gap in my holdings of Xanadu, and I am lacking 1902 and 1903. SO4 finds I-R gaining against Tukey (there is an impressive Ven-Syr convoy this season) as Austria is down to just Greece. Meanwhile, France, with considerable help from Russia, has dominated the west, with EG having only 5 units between them. FO5 shows the elimination of A and E, with Italy taking Smy and Ser, and Russia taking Berlin. Its now R-11, I-9, R-8, T-4, G-2.

IR both NMRed in SO5, and Russia again in FO5. By Fall, Gre and Smy were traded and France took Kie. After the SO6 orders there arose an odd dispute, somewhat reminiscent of Question #6 in my GMing Roundtable. The FO6 moves listed no new Russian player --- asked for volunteers.. Lakofka asked that the game be delayed so that he could negotiate with the new Russian ruler. When the SO6 orders were published, with Cariter's Russian moves used, Lakofka asked that the season be cancelled, as he hadn't been notified about Cartier. But the GM disallowed this, saying that he had notified the players, and that a time extension would be given if requested (none was). "Postal Foulup may have been involved" intoned the GM (Lakofka note getting the GM's announcement), but the protest was disallowed, and the game went on.

FO6 saw Russia largely pulling out of the south, losing StP, Ber, and Sve to the new FG alliance. Italy took Smy and Bul for 11. FO7 saw Italy finally attacking Russia. I was now down to just Sev. Despite France-Italy being 15-14, it was only in FO7 that the first hostilities there finally broke out: A Tus-Pie, A Ven-Tyo. The battle in 1906 was indecisive, tho the RI alliance was definitely reset, France moved to 16. At this point, France should have won the game. Lpl was essentially helpless, and the other two Russian centers, Mos and War were already under pressure, and there was still a pesky Turkish fleet to nail down. But then, fate intervened. The Turkish player misordered his retreat, thereby failing to take Ank, and self-destructing (and

lazy Lakofka failed to send in a provisional build, so he played one unit short). In SO2, neither France nor Italy got moves in --- probably postal problems. But Italy had previously sent in a set of tentative orders. No standby was set for France, and in FO9, France NMRed again, was put into CD, and Italy "won". In truth, tho, Italy failed to mop up the east fast enuf to keep pace with a France that he dared not attack, and who grew oh-so-rapidly in substantial measure because of help from that Italian ally, Russia.

Chris Side in 1975JG (Greatest Hits) did it differently: He took Vie, Tri and Greece. The latter move was supported by Turkey, who was also at war with Russia. Italy was greatly aided by a FO1 NMR by ~~ITALY~~ Austria, who dropped out and was not replaced. On the other hand, France moved F Mid-Wes, and built F Mar, so his luck was mixed. Along with the standard A Ven, F Nap, Italy built A Rom --- in Britian, WO1 builds are due along with FO1 orders, so unexpected moves often catch unwary players with the wrong builds. Germany sent in no builds at all (my impression is that in Britan, their NMR rate is a little lower than ours, but in winter, its distinctly higher). Anyhow, with no Italina fleet in the water, France convoyed A Spa-Tun in SO2, and held it in the fall. Italy gained Bud, while Trukey joined him at 7 by taking Ser, Sev, and Rum. Best news of all was England taking Den and Hol, then building F Lon, F Lpl for a powerful distraction against a France who hadn't yet had the chance to take Por. But that was the Italian highpoint: Turkey stabbed in FO3, taking Gre and Bud, and England decided to press against Russia and Germany (amazingly, Swe and Por were still neutral as of WO3!) Italy gained some breathing room as England switched sides (and gained Swe, Bel and Kie for 10) but still lost Tri to a Trukey with no serious troubles elsewhere. A Turkish NMR let Italy gain one in 1905, but it all collapsed, as Italy fell 3 to just 2 home centers in 1906 (and Portugal was finally taken in 1906 --- thats a record I think). Altho France never actually took anything from him, the threat was too distracting, and Turkey was too decisive.

And now? In a game just getting underway in Vortex (87HB), Melinda Holley swoops down on Vie, Tri and Tun, as the hapless Austrian supported a non-esitant A Tyo-Mun. Her work will be cut out for her, as Russia built A War, A Mos and A Sev, and already has A Rum. And Melinda built only one army. The beat goes on.....

((Now, lets top off those real life dramas about getting three with some fiction. This appeared in Ethil the Prog #34 (Sept 1973). Most of the essays in this series have been pretty solid, tho I think he got a little carried away with himself on this one. But you be the judge))

PLANNING THE OFFENSIVE

1 - ITALY

written by Len Lakofka

Each game of Diplomacy is unique. For this reason the normal stress, in articles on tactics specific to a major power, is upon openings and alternatives through the game year 1902. I would like to make some suppositions about the way a few games are going, and then discuss tactical objectives and strategy to carry your country forward. The principles that will be used can then be applied to otha situations with other countries. (This article will assume that you have a basic knowledge of openings in Diplomacy).

So to Italy. You have negotiated with all major powers and you have these agreements:

- a) France: neutrality in pie, gol, wms & naf through 1902.
- b) England: mutual defence vs France or Germany.
- c) Germany: neutrality - nothing specific.
- d) Russia: offensive versus Austria and then Turkey.

- e) Turkey: offensive versus Austria.
- f) Austria: neutrality of Adriatic and permission to enter Tyrolia.

On the day before the Spring 1901 deadline you request permission to go to Tyrolia, and play a ven-tyr, a rom-ven, f nap-ion. Let us assume that France, Germany and England open normally with a par-gas, a mar-bur!, f bre-mao; f lon-nth, f edi-nrg, a lpl-yor; a mun-ruh, a ber-kie, f kie-den. Austria takes an aggressive oine to the east with a vie-bud, a bud-ser, f tri-alb; while Turkey and Russia play a smy-con, a con-bul, f ank-bla; f sev-bla, a war-gal!, a mos-ukr, f stp-gob.

The die is cast for the first part of your plan, your opening, the destruction of Austria and the containment of Turkey. Note that the west is still fluid and you can interject yourself there later. We will assume some diplomatic expertise on your part vis-a-vis Austria, and that you have continued to stay friends with the western land powers. Fall 1901 should see a great warming of relations with Germany. In the Fall, you stab Austria brutally with a tyr-vie, a ven-tri, f ion-tun. Austria's rejoinder of a bud-rum s by a ser, f alb-gre is a dismal failure after f ank-bla, a bul-gre, a con-bul; a ukr-rum! s by f sev & a gal, f gob-swe. In the north, f mao-por, a gas-spa, a bur s (english) a yor-bel; f nrg-nwy, a yor-bel c by f nth; a kie-hol s by a ruh, f den holds. Builds are reasonably straightforward: England f edi, f lon; Germany a mun, f kie; France a par, f bre; Russia a war, a mos; Turkey a ank! Austria removes f alb. You build f ven, a rom, a nap!

What diplomatic cards do you play now? How do you want the players - all of them - to play? In the west, destruction of the corner giant England is best for you! Germany and France will have to commit forces west, away from the centre. In the east, Russia is still a good ally. Turkey has been set up perfectly for stage two of your plan; the build of a ank shows that he has bitten off far more than he can chew. He challenges the remnant of Austria, and Russia. Your play is straightforward: a vie s a tri, a tri s (russia) a gal-bud!, f ven-adr, a rom-ven, a nap-apu, f tun-ion. Turkey's likely move is a bul-gre, a con-bul s by f bla, a ank-arm. Russia will counter with f sev s a rum, a gal-bud s by a rum, a mos-stp!, a war-ukr, f swe-nwy! (Notice that you have talked Russia into a northern offensive in co-operation with Germany and France!)

England begins to fight with f lon-eng, f edi-nrg, a bel-hol s by f nth, f nwy-ska (a bel. annihilated). France and Germany team up with f por-mao, f bre-eng, a bur-bel, a par-pic, a spa-gas; f den-nth, f kie-hel, a hol-bel s by a ruh. Austria will best play a ser & a bud support each other; but a bud is also annihilated.

In the Fall of 1902 the Austrian army Serbia is a key piece! It is also very important at this stage not to let Russia get too strong. You are letting - or should I say leading - Russia to a powerful place in the world. This is a key move strategically! You want a semi-strong Russia so that no-one will notice you. But you can't have Russia get 9 pieces or she will be too hard to beat. Therefore, your negotiations seek to:

- 1) Keep Russia in place.
- 2) Diminish, but do not destroy, England.
- 3) Hold Turkey from gaining anything.
- 4) Get a build.

A solution to all of these objectives can be gained in co-operation with Germany and Russia. Germany is to play f den-swe, f hel-den, a hol & a ruh s a bel; France f mao-iri!, f bre-eng, a bur, a pic & a gas hold. England tries f ska-nwy s by f nrg & f nth, f lon-eng. Russia will play a ukr s f sev, f sev & a bud s a rum, a stp s f nwy. Turkey tries

a gre hold, a arm-sev, a bul-rum s by f bla. (Russian f nwy dislodged.)
You play a vie hold, a tri-ser!, a apu-alb c by f adr, a ven-tri,
fion s (austrian) a ser-gre!; Austria goes to Greece.

In Winter 1902 England has lost Belgium and stands pat. Russia gains
bud but loses swe, while not getting nwy, and stands pat. Turkey stands pat,
Germany builds two, France none and you one.

From this point on, the strategy is to diminish England to France's
gain. Diminish Russia second and Turkey first via a Lepanto. The logical
1903 tactic is to Lepanto into Turkey at the same time as you take Budapest!!
Your major ally has become Germany, and you check German growth with an
active France. The west is held in status-quo because of the Scandinavian
war and the slow destruction of England. By 1903 or 1904, the middle-game
should show these strengths: Germany, 7-9; France, 6-7; England, 2-3;
Russia, 4-5; Turkey, 2-3; Austria, gone; Italy, 8 or 9.

With Germany fanned out north into Scandinavia and west around Warsaw,
England is fighting off strong French sea forces and a French expeditionary
force. Turkey and Russia are both pushed back into the Black Sea area.
And Italy controls all of Austria and the Aegean!

Your goal is to branch your country out slowly. You must stab quickly
and with skill. You must set up secondary or primary powers, but be sure
that they are checked by other alliances.



((Some attention should be made to attacking France first. We begin
with Fall of Eagles #53, 2-3-81. Triple parens are the editor, Rich-
ard Hucknall. Following that is a discussion from #55))

ITALIAN OPENINGS

by John Marks

Many, including me, have bemoaned the relative weakness of Italy in an other-
wise well-balanced game. But now I see this as ignorance on my part. It is rather
like complaining of chess that the queen is disproportionately powerful or the
pawns too weak.

Players of Italy (and Germany and Austria also) would be well behoven to
acknowledge the relative strengths of France and Russia, the relative impregna-
bility of England and Turkey, and the high dropout rate of the countries in the
"Axis" of the board.

When playing Italy I make my first aim an Austrian alliance saying something
like..."Well I'm moving out of Venice away from you whatever you say. If you
attack me it'll be a war of attrition. I'll ally with Russia etc etc and we'll
both end up down the plug-hole, the usual Austro-Italian fate." "If you move
F(Tri)-Alb and make the armies useful elsewhere we'll both have a very different
and more interesting game". Austria will of course retort initially "You must
think I'm a fool..." but I think the same applies if I were Austria: "I'd
similarly evacuate Trieste. If Italy moves in, I'd pile into him and it's Russia
and Turkey who'd benefit. So as Italy I'll not pile in."

Won't Austria have too good a start? I hear you ask. Maybe, but my aim as
Italy is a strong Axis, andat the end.....Austria is BETWEEN Italy and
Germany.

If I'm friends with Austria, as well as being really nice and leaving him a
free hand in the Balkans, I'll attack France, cramping his otherwise good position
from the start. Open F(Nap)-ION, A(Rom)-Ven, A(Ven)-Pie. F(Nap) looks friendly

to him. Only the move to Pie looks overtly hostile. But it's only Spring 1901, the game's still fluid and this can be rationalised (fooling Austria, two units on Tyrolia, well F(Nap) has gone east, etc etc). Follow this with F(ION)-Tun, A(Ven)-Tus (can be delayed a season) and A(Pie S French A(Spa)-Mar (or Bur-Mar) and a build of F(Nap) sets you up for a 1902 attack on Marseilles and Spain. And if A(Ven)-Tus is delayed 'til spring 1902, things are still not too obvious. (The Autumn support is of course tactical, in that France is bound to defend Mar, so help him back in and stop the appearance of a French Med. fleet). An alliance with England against France is indicated and your German partner will benefit from this.

Likewise, in the east, a modus-vivendi with the Turks encouraging him against Russia and saying you'll beat up the Austrians should be tried ("eastern steam-rollers favour Russia - R.Sharp etc etc") - plus for good measure a verbal assurance to Russia that you're happy to help him duff up Turkey.

In short the 'Axis' should try and split the eastern and western steam-rollers. Italy's best course is to ally fast with Germany and Austria. I think this is as beneficial to these three powers as the traditional German-Austrian alliance is to those two.

((Thanks very much John. Please accept this issue free. Your views on Italian openings leave me with mixed feelings. As a confirmed 'Anti-Hedgehog' (the original objector in fact) I agree that Italy doesn't have to attack Austria as so many Italian players seem to think - but an attack is often successful and Austria is usually unable to wage a war of attrition. However, Russia usually does do better than Italy in these circumstances.

Yes, leave Austria alone by all means; but is France such a tempting target? The ploy to stop a French fleet build in Mar in A01 may well work, but where are Italy's 1902 and 03 builds to come from? Italy can't get two units on Mar until after A02, and to launch an attack on Spain will take just as long. Mar can be defended easily by the French and Spain requires a lot of guesswork and luck if Italy is going to take it in 03. I rather suspect Austria and/or Turkey will find a virtually undefended Italy a tempting target and both have much to gain. My view is that if Italy is not going to attack Austria (and he has no urgent necessity to do so) then he should move against Turkey with a Lepanto.

But this is the fascination of Diplomacy isn't it? We all have our own opinions of what is best. But it's reading the other players that counts most.))

JOHN MARKS : The axis is a long term strategy. Austria may well find me wide open in 1902-03 and try and make hay out of it. That would certainly be my end but I would devote all remaining efforts to ensure it was his end by suitable arrangements with Russia and Turkey as I went down. And that is the threat which ab initio preserves the Austro/Italian alliance. It's very similar to (if a little less obvious than) what holds the Austro/German alliance together. So the attack on France may take a couple of years. As to the wisdom of attacking France: he has natural initial advantage and is easily defended you say. Very good reasons for getting as many people as possible to attack him as early as possible.

IAIN FORSYTH : I'd be very surprised at any success accomplished by an Italy following John Marks' suggestions. In my opinion Italy must concentrate on the east, perhaps sailing one fleet west to help maintain a balance of power there. Attacking Austria with Russian assistance is probably best as long as Turkey can be persuaded to move north. While the Lepanto is interesting from a tactical point of view, I would imagine that Austria always does better than Italy through it. While the Italians are diligently trying to

land an army in Syria any Austria worth his salt will be mopping up the Balkans. And with Austria builds in winter 02 and Venice guarded by a solitary Italian army, Austria might well decide that Italian assistance is no longer required.

As for the Hedgehog - it is clearly aimed at Austrian players of little ability who have no wish to survive beyond A04. As a last resort it may be good defensively but any Austria who proposes to Italy and Russia that he opens to Gal and Ven deserves all he gets.

But then, why am I telling you all this since you know already?!

JOHN NORRIS : John Marks' ideas on Italian strategy are interesting, but I don't think the attack on France he advocates is as sound as he suggests. As it happens, I am playing France to John's Italy in the Armageddon club's Diplomacy 21 game. John has pursued his attack on France to the exclusion of anything else, and it really hasn't got him very far. To date, Italy's supply centre holdings have been:- 01/4, 02/3, 03/3, 04/4, 05/3, 06/3, 07/4

John took Tun in '01, but lost Ven in '02. Thereafter, he had to play as an Austrian puppet, under a dire threat of Austrian A(Ven) and F(ION), able to wipe him out in a season. With help from Germany and England, John managed to take Mar in '04, only to lose it in '05, to enter Spa in S06, only to be thrown out that Autumn, and finally to take Mar again in '07 after England took Spa.

John's anti-French strategy has affected other players of course. My own chances as France have disappeared, as England and Germany have naturally sought to benefit from Italy's single-minded attack. In the long run, England looks like getting most of the French and "French" neutral supply centres, although he has done relatively little of the work. The other big beneficiary is of course Austria, for his effective control of Italy has enabled Austria to prosper in the east, particularly at the expense of Russia.

My own conclusion from this is that France's defensive position is extremely strong, especially from Italy. From experience in other games I am inclined to think that Italy can prosper in the west, but only if an awful lot of things all go just right. First, Italy needs a solid alliance with Germany against France - that is a pre-requisite for launching the attack at all. Moreover, for Italy to do well out of it Germany's prospects in France must be restricted by England just sufficiently to make them still worth pursuing but largely unrealised in the end - a very delicate balance to maintain. Second, Italy has to persuade

Austria to leave the Italian home centres alone, even though they are completely exposed by the concentration in the west against France. Third, England has to be so enmeshed in Scandinavia and with Germany that he helps Italy to take French centres rather than committing enough English units to do so himself.

John might argue about this, but I would say that in our game more of that went John's way than he should have expected. His diplomacy succeeded in persuading players to do more for him than they should have on several occasions. Both England and Germany gave him help until 1905, if not every season, and England has continued to do so. Austria did take Venice, but then left the other Italian centres even though he could have had them in a season (two for Tunis) with no trouble and proved to need the units they represented. He pulled back, which was an amazing gift to John, and which unwise forbearance cost Austria his advantage over Germany and England.

Despite all that, Italy has got virtually nowhere by 1907. I do not suggest that failure is attributable to John's play in attack, or mine in defence. I believe it is simply a reflection of France's defensive strength against the Italian attack. It is the strategy itself which is wrong.

For several reasons, I believe Italy's traditional openings to the east are superior to a direct/attack on France such as John suggests. The direct attack on Austria is superior both strategically and tactically. It is usually much easier to get Russian and Turkish co-operation in an anti-Austrian strategy, for which the

requirements for effective co-operation are also less exacting, than English and German co-operation in the form needed to make a success of an anti-French strategy for Italy. It is also easier to get a non-aggression pact with France, enabling Italy to turn against Austria, than with Austria for the French attack. Tactically, two armies can be brought to bear against Austria, but only one against France. Taking all three initial units into account, three Austrian and three neutral supply centres are within two moves in the Austrian-attack, but only one French and two neutral centres within two moves in the French attack.

The superiority of the Lepanto over the direct attack on France is purely strategic. The Lepanto offers strategic flexibility, being convertible into an attack on Turkey, Austria, or France. Such flexibility pays a price tactically, but less than it may seem. Against France there is very little in it between direct and Lepanto attacks, especially if the latter is well handled, for only one army can pass through Pie at a time anyway. A Lepanto against Austria or Turkey via Gre is no worse than the direct attack on France, and possibly better. The convoy to Gre is similar to the move to Mar, but harder; the potential of A(Gre) with fleets is greater than that of A(Mar) with them, for the former can reach eight non-Italian centres within two moves, four with any unit, while the latter can manage only six and two respectively. The full anti-Turkish Lepanto, with the convoy to Syr or Smy, is harder to compare with the French attack, because of the difference in timing, but the two seem to come out about even.

If I don't mention it, I'm sure someone will point out that John Marks's proposed direct attack on France is strategically flexible because it begins with the "Alpine Chicken", which can turn into an attack on France or Austria. That is true, as far as it goes. But that is not far enough. The Alpine Chicken and Lepanto openings are comparable in that both theoretically offer strategic flexibility. The great difference is that while the Lepanto can be used against Turkey, Austria or France, it is only likely to worry Turkey and will probably please the other two, but the Alpine Chicken is likely to worry both its potential targets, Austria and France. Certainly, in my game with John Marks outlined above, his opening with the Alpine Chicken rang instant alarm bells in my mind and that of Austria; the former were responsible for my preparing effective defences immediately, and the latter for Austria deploying the defences he was later to use to take Ven and dominate Italy.

I have tried to dispose of the suggested direct attack on France, and have pointed out the weakness of the opening on which John Marks suggests such an attack should be based. However, I would emphasise that players of France should do all they can to prevent Italy adopting that attack. It does Italy no good, but it doesn't do France any good either. My game against John's attack has consisted of a dour defence, with few really interesting moments and no real long-term prospects of success. France's supply centre count has been: 01/5, 02/5, 03/5, 04/4, 05/4, 06/4, 07/3. It has declined steadily. Bel & Por were taken in '01, but the gain of Spa in '02 was offset by the loss to an Anglo-German combination of Bel. Mar was lost temporarily in '04, and its recovery in '05 was offset by England taking Bro. '07 has seen the decisive loss of Spa to England and Mar, partly offset by nipping back into Bel with German help. France's defence against Italy has been successful enough, but it has not been possible to keep England out of rear as well.

I believe that French players should offer Italy a genuine non-aggression pact, and stick to it scrupulously as long as they can. If Italy has to choose between that and a similar offer from Austria, there are plenty of reasons why he should chose the French one. Players of France should be prepared to take some trouble in pointing them out, before turning their attention to the England-France-German triangle. You will probably fail if John Marks is playing Italy, as I did, but not with most other players. I have four games as France, and the one with John is the only one in which Italy has attacked.

((Phew! I think we can call that an 'in depth' view of John Marks's Italian opening proposals. I tend towards John Norris's way of thinking but I am all for individual views of openings. If we have stereotype 'correct' openings then the game would surely be that little less enjoyable. Perhaps that is why Austria is my favourite country to play; the variations for S01 moves are quite numerous and require not a little diplomacy. Unless you play the Hedgehog of course..... A free issue to John Norris for that little contribution)))

((If you are going to attack France, you need two things. The first is an ally. Without one, there is just no point in attacking France right off --- you won't get anywhere. The only exception would be if you were quite sure that G or E would join the attack once your attack got underway. The second thing you need are some tactics a little more aggressive than those suggested by John Marks. I'm assuming that you feel you can trust Austria. If not, you have no business attacking France --- Ven will be too vulnerable to a S02 stab. If you are, why all this pussyfooting around A Rom-Ven, A Ven-Tus in the next season. A roundabout route, and for what? If you've decided not to attack Mar in F01 as Marks suggests (pretty conservative, but not unreasonable) what are you going to do with A Tus anyhow? I'd suggest you put the fleet into Tyh, and convoy to Tun in F01. This has two advantages, and one disadvantage over F Ion-Tun in so far as the attack on France is concerned. F Tyh can not only move to Wes as can F Tun, but it can also move to Lyo. If your plan of foiling a self-standoff in Mar works, and if your ally is England (meaning that there was either a standoff in Eng in S01, or the French fleet must guard Bre or Mid), France will not be able to oppose this move. That's a very powerful position to be in, Lyo, since it gives you support into Mar as well as threatening Spain. Second, the army can now cover Tun, leaving your navy free for more aggressive duties. The drawback is that if you do take Mar in S02, you won't have the backup of A Tus-Pie. However you may not need it: a) you might opt to continue with F Wes/Lyo S A Mar-Spa b) France may be too preoccupied with other concerns (dealing with F or G, or defending Spa) to try to retake c) you could build A Ven rather than a second fleet, and then move A Ven-Pie in S02. That last choice is very unorthodox, true, but if you're confident that F Tyh-Lyo will succeed AND France is in a fleet war with England, you should be able to get by without a W01 fleet build. The fall of Mar will give you a fleet build in W02. If he manages to swing a fleet into, say, Wes in F02, Tun is safe, and you can do F Lyo S new F Nap-Tyh in S03. The other drawback here is that if your S02 move for F Tyh fails, and if you have built a fleet, then your fleet will be pinned down at home. That's a lot of ifs, and if the standoff was in Lyo, well, at least F Tyh gave you the option of keeping him out of Lyo --- an option you obviously felt was more valuable than F Tyh-Wes. Also, if you are trying to promote AT vs R as John suggests, Turkey will feel much more at least if no fleet appears in Ion. The one exception to the idea of F Tyh (a plan sometimes called the Western Lepanto) is if you feel you can move to Pie in S01 without raising the ire of France. Such circumstances will arise rarely, but they could; there are ways of selling such a move. In that case, you plan a sneak attack on Mar, and you will need the protective coloration of F Nap-Ion and A Rom-Ven or even better, A Rom-Apu.))

If your name is Ron (Canada) Brown, just skip this paragraph. Francois Guerrier has resumed publication of Passchendaele (See, I told you to skip it, Ron). For me this is good news, as I've always considered him to be one of the most interesting and distinctive writers in the hobby. I should warn you that others have found him to be absolutely infuriating. His best writing tends to be in the play-of-the-game category, following a line of Canadian writers (Smyth, Drews) who wrote frequently on this topic. One unusual aspect of the new zine is a two part letter column. "The Mailbag" will actually pay 80¢/page (in non-refundable subu credits) and is subject to editing and editorial reply. "The Doghouse" will be unedited anything, not paid for (he also pays for spotting GMing errors and taking standby positions), tho I'm not sure how this squares with his policy of keeping a lid on the size of the zine. He also lists his many publications, his lists of money owed (either cash or in sub credits, to which he has added 75% interest!), a desire to take orphans, his views for what the zine should look like in terms of contents, etc. You always take a chance when a zine is restarted, but this one methinks is worth the risk. I've often commented on what I read in P in these pages and I'm glad to get that opportunity again. (2303 Eglinton Ave East #305 Scarborough, ONT M1K 2N6 Canada. Subs 10/\$7; game fee \$2 plus a \$4 deposit. But yer charged \$1 against the deposit per NMR).

Fred Davis (3210-K Wheaton Way Ellicott City, MD 21043) has published the North American Variant Bank Catalogue. In 36 laser-printed pages are listed 800 variants, with a small amount of information about each. If you are looking for some variation from "the usual" this is a good place to start. Perhaps a 5-playered game set in ancient times, or a Tolkein-based game, or whatever. Included is information on how to order the games as well. Price is \$4, but \$3 before Dec 21.

David Gorham 806 S. Euclid St Fullerton CA 92632 has openings in Gunboat Diplomacy (players names unidentified, no secret diplomacy possible). Meanwhile Melinda Holley also has openings, and is working on a Gunboat Rating system (P.O. Box 2793 Huntington WV 25727)

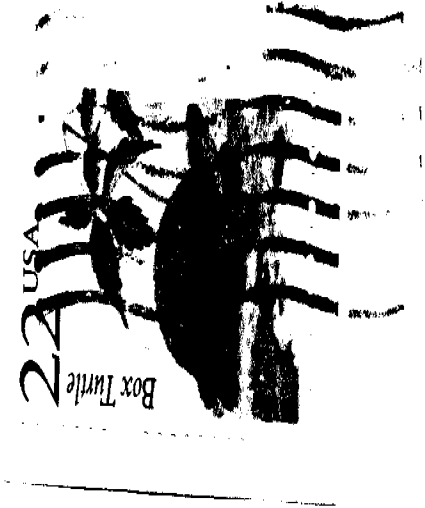
John Caruso and Simon Billenness are running another EDORA Auction. There is a catalogue of items which you can get for an SASE from John, listing dozens of items --- as usual, there is plenty of variety. Get those bids in by Feb 12, 1988. Proceeds go to support hobby services. Last time this raised several hundred dollars (Caruso, 29-10 164th st Flushing NY 11358)

A plug here for DW Anthology, Vol 4: Over 200 pages of the moves and commentary for the Hoosier Archives Demo Games. This also includes post game comments and maps. Most of the hobby's most celebrated players have participated in these. Especially for new players, this is a good way to get an overview of an entire game. You don't have to wait for years to see a process unfold (Larry Peery Box 2116 San Diego CA 92102 #12).


For those wanting to play in an international game, Prisoners of War (Doug Rowling 228 Kinnell Ave Cardonald, Glasgow G52 3RU Scotland) has games with 7 week deadlines for just that purpose...I understand, indirectly that Blunt Instruments has folded ... War and Peace has won the British zine Poll, followed by Zeeby, Cut and Thrust and DenverGlont and POWar...

Mark L. Berch
11713 Stonington Place
Silver spring, MD 20902

NOTE
COA



Larry - See page 23

Larry Peery 
Box 8416
San Diego CA92102