

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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It probably doesn't say August on your calendar anymore but never mind, this is your August issue. #2 deals exclusively with Italy --- even down to the fillers. There are some experiments in this issue, too. We start out with two articles on openings, one conventional (the Western Lepanto) and one decidedly unconventional (the Key Opening). Articles on openings are usually all theory and no practice. Oh, the author will occasionally refer you by Boardman number and zine to a game with the opening, but for the average player the odds are against him getting that zine. Further, the game may only be in its infancy, so that the reader must wait many months to see how, for example, the opening prepares the country for mid-game. This is particularly a problem with little used openings such as the Key, since the reader will probably not be able to locate such a game by flipping through his back copies.

Accordingly, I've written an article describing two games with the Key opening, so the reader can see two cases of how it actually worked out. One has a stellar cast of British players; the other, really a variant on the Key, had Jeff Key playing Italy.

Next, there's a look at an Italo-Turkish alliance, viewed from the perspective of the "victory" statements (the game drew 17-17) and the GM. This type of article, to my knowledge, is never reprinted, presumably on the theory that it would be of interest only to those who have followed the game. It is also an experiment in the sense that it was "reduced" in its original publication; I hope it xeroxes well. Rounding out the issue is Ver Ploeg's point-blank "Why I hate Italy" and Steve McLendon's lighthearted look at the rise and fall of an Italian empire.

Next issue will be a potpourri issue, like #1, and will likely contain no articles written by me. If you like the zine, please let others know. Copies of #1 are still available for a SASE. I am very interested in reader reaction to the zine, especially to the experiments in #2. If you wish to present commentary or rebuttal to any articles (such as I have done in #1 and #2) please feel free to do so. This can be serious or humorous, and if it is of substantial length, I will pay in sub extensions. If it is to an article which I have not printed, it would be best to include a photocopy of the article.

I'd like to welcome aboard subscribers Clyde Hayman, Dennis Klein, John McElvaney, David Mueth, Robert Stimmel, Walt Buchanan, John Sokel, Robert Correll, Mike Recamora, Bruce Degi, Lawrence Savino, Michael Gray, Phillip Jurgens, Francis McIlvaine, John Leeder, Charles Hansen, Andrew Tomcufcik, Fred C Davis, Randolph Smyth, Brenton Ver Ploeg, Elliot Bold, Eric Kirchner, Carlton Hommel, Steve McLendon, Doug Beyerlein, Bob Gable, Charles Hallmark, and Greg Gallagher.

I'd also like to thank the editors of The Mixmaxu Gazette, Bushwacker, Dragon and the Lamb, Dippy, Fal Si Fie, Rebus Sic Stanibus, Valinor, Beaucouillon, Runestone, Electra Glide Blue, Libertarian, Diplomacy World, Podunk News, Speculum, Pacific Diplodeur-Origins West, Gettsnews (in French!) and The Watergate for their kind words on my behalf.

We'll start out with two articles on openings. In this and all other reprints see in DIPLOMACY DIGEST, material that I have added will appear in double parentheses. The first one comes from The Arena, and was written by its editor, Edi Birsan.

### The Western Lepanto

The Lepanto opening, in which Italy uses a convoy of an army into Tunis on the Fall 1901 in order to prepare for an invasion of Turkey is well known by now. In fact, I think it is one of the most widely reprinted and read articles in Diplomacy History!

There is ((sic)) now a few people experimenting with the Western version of this opening in which Italy uses the convoy to gain a jump on the French. The set up goes something like this:

Diplomatically: Austria must be a strong ally willing to go east with east against the odd man while Italy goes off on his own against France with the help of England and/or Germany. England should be willing to play to the channel in the spring and ideally Germany should be willing to deny France Belgium and come in on him two-three armies in the 1902 period. You can never count on Germany gaining Burgundy in 1901 but if possible and the German is willing to settle for two builds it is an ideal spot

Tactically: The Italians open with: Spring 1901 A Rome to Tuscany, A Venice to Piedmont, F Naples to Tyn Sea. This allows Italy to threaten Marseilles, and perform the vital convoy to Tunis in the fall with army Tuscany or toss out an adventuresome and suicidal Austrian Fleet in Venice ((Maybe! If Austria has gotten wind of your opening he may go F Tri-Ven and back it up with A Vie-Tri. If he takes this all-or-nothing approach, then Ven cannot be retaken in the fall, unless you can get help from Ger A Ty)).

In the fall the Italians make the convoy to Tunis and then have to decide what to do with A Piedmont. With the alpine army they can attack Marseilles, hold or let the Frenchman go wild if you are able to pull off a support of his army Spain against Marseilles. This last move, the supporting of a French Army from Spain to Marseilles is used only when you suspect that the French will try for a self standoff ((using either A Gas or A Bur. Of course, if you can arraigne a Sp Ol clash in Bur, France won't have this option)) in order to get room in Marseilles to build a fleet and to deny Italy the taking of the important town.

In the winter the Italians build Fleet Naples and prepare to play F Tyn - Lyo, F Nap - Tyn in the Spring of 1902. This is the whole point of the opening for it allows the Italians to get into the Gulf of Lyon ((provided of course that France has not raised F Mars. This is why it is so important for Italy to either take Mar or make sure it isn't open for a winter build. Similarly, if France has gone F Mid - Spa(sc) you could also be blocked out of Lyo)) in the Spring of 1902 thus allowing for a supported attack against Marseilles or an attack on Spain via convoy in the Fall of 1902. Alone such an opening is weak, but in combination with an English and German attack it is capable of keeping the Italians abreast of the explosive potential of England or Germany when they hit France that is also under attack from the south.

### ##### THE ITALIAN FILLERS

1. "An early attack by Italy on Austria only cuts Italy's own throat". So said Edi Birsan in En Passant #16, 1971. Of course, this doesn't apply to Edi. In 1976 BG, the Hossier Archives demo game, Edi took Trieste, Vienna and Tunis in Fall 01. With three builds, no one else cut Edi's throat either, and he went on to win in 1909.

2. Believe it or not, that was not the worst knifing ever performed on Austria by Italy in 1901. That honor goes to William Ameling, in 1976DX(Graustark). In Fall 01 he held Trieste, supported Russian Army Galacia to Vienna AND stood Austria out of Greece. The hapless Austrian player (who did not NMR) thus had one center at winter 01, possibly the first time this has ever been done to a non-NMRing Austria.

Key opening for Italy is probably Italy's most ambitious and potentially  
opening. Unlike most others, it tends to put Italy in the driver's seat,  
than a position of reacting to the actions of others. This next article is by  
and first appeared in The Voice, Vol 5, #2. As I do not have that issue, I am  
the version which appeared in Arena #35 (9-18-73)

### The Key Opening for Italy

At the time of its conception, the tactic received the name "The di'Chiave Opening"  
in honor of our Italian alter-ego, Ghiandaia Conigliera, Ele Conte di Chiave. It has also  
been called the "Lampiguerra Opening" and from Edi Birsan "The Key Opening". We continue  
to favor the original name ((In fact it is now nearly always referred to as the Key Opening)).

This strategy is not suggested for the inexperienced Diplomacy players. The first and  
most necessary element is a strong and constant effort at diplomacy...and, this effort must  
bear fruit. The initial effort is eastward at either Austria-Hungary or Turkey, but which-  
ever target you have chosen, the Spring 1901 moves are the same and the most critical in  
the entire first half of the game.

First, Austria-Hungary must be convinced to go to war against Turkey. And he must be  
either trusting or gullible, for it is he who must take the greatest risks. But, surprisingly,  
we have had little difficulty in convincing the Austrian to go along time after time ((Alas,  
I myself have had no such luck. I have broached this opening to Austria in all three of  
my postal games as Italy. In two cases, the Austrian never responded and NMRed in Sp 01.  
In the third, ~~he~~ agreed -- only to block my spring 01 moves)). Austria's first moves should  
be the traditional A Vienna to Budapest, A Budapest to Serbia and F Trieste to Albania.

Every effort should be made to aim Turkey at Russia and or Austria. The important thing  
is that the Turkish fleet be retained within the Balck Sea Basin if Turkey is not Italy's  
long range ally.

Italy's initial decision concerning an ally is between Austria and Turkey. In either  
case, the opening is the same: Arome to Venice, A Venice to Trieste, and F Naples to Ionian.  
This is, to all outward appearances, an immediate invasion of Austria. Diplomatically, a  
strong non-agression pact with France is a necessity. Hopefully ((cringe!)) England, France  
and Germany have been talked into a conflict in which the two less experienced players have  
been talked into attacking the strongest of the three. This is so they will become embroiled  
and neutralized for as long as possible.

Fall 1901 is the moment of truth for Italy. If he has chosen to ally with Austria  
against Turkey, then they should move as follows: Italy A Ven - Apu, A Tri - Ser, F Ion -  
Aeg or Eas; Austria A Ser - Gre A Bud S It A Tri - Ser, F Alb - Ion. Turkey is hopefully  
((sigh)) maneuvering against Russia, Rumania or Serbia ((but not Greece)) through having  
been so convinced by Austria and Italy. Austria and Italy each get one quiet build and few  
, except for Turkey take notice of events in the Medit ((Actually, its hard to imagine such  
strange goings-on as It F Aeg or Eas and Aus F Ion not being noticed)). However, Italy is  
now set for a Spring 02 convoy to Smyrna or Syria and the allies have armies in Greece,  
Serbia, Budapest and Vienna ready for 1902's offensive.

If, however, Italy has chosen the more flamboyant alliance with Turkey, they should  
move as follows: Italy: A Ven-Tri, A Tri-Vie, and F Ion-Gre; Turkey: A Bul either support  
Ital F Ion-Gre or move to Serbia with ACon following to Bul; and Austria still thinking  
that the anti Turkish option is being used moves as above. The end results are four builds  
for the allies (either 3 for Italy and 1 for Turkey or 2 each and one removal for Austria.  
((Actually, this is somewhat garbled. Neither of the two Turkish options will produce 2  
builds for Turkey in 1901. A Bul-Ser will be blocked when Aus A Ser is stood out of Greece  
by Ital F Ion. It won't help for Italy to support Tur A Bul-Gre because that support will  
be cut by Aus F Alb-Ion. Turkey can get 2 builds if Italy does either F Ion H (postponing  
the taking of Tun but avoiding the nuisance of Aus F Ion) or does F Ion-Tun, which actually  
provides five builds for the allies. As for the I-3, T-1 option, it may not be so easy to  
persuade Turkey of the wisdom of that (Russian military pressure will help). Turkey will be

creating a monster that he cannot control. Bud and Tun will fall in 1902, while Italy will get Ser only with help (all this assuming that Austria disbands his fleet). This game Italy 8, Turkey 5. If Turkey has attacked Russia this may net him a center in 1902, then Italy will probably have any ally against Turkey)) 1902 will see the complete dissolution of the Dual Monarchy.

Note that in either option, Tunis remains unoccupied in 1901 yet is easily occupied by Italy for an additional build in 1902.

Using this second opening at DipCon in Chicago 1972 Italy gained three units in 1901 and again in 1902 and went to a win after first securing a firm alliance with Turkey (through diplomacy and old fashion military pressure) and then breaking up an anti-Italian alliance formed by France, England, Germany and Russia. Flamboyant openings tend to cause such alliances, so be forewarned!

It is never wise to divulge all of one's strategies or ideas in matters such as these ((because a future intended victim may have read the article)). Therefore, we shall not do so now and shall bring this article to a close by providing a glimpse into the middle game. Remember, at the moment that Austria or Turkey collapses, as this strategy is applied, is the best moment for Italy to attack its ally (or vice versa!). For this reason, Italy should always bear in mind the genuine possibility of turning to Russia as an ally at this point while Austria or Turkey should be dealing actively with Russia or France.

So, there it is -- a framework for lightning warfare, Italian style! If you feel you have experience (or moxie, now that we have published this) to give it a try, be our guests. All we ask is that you let us know how you did -- and why. New ideas are always welcome at the Warrenhof.

A. Look at two "Key Opening" Games  
by Mark L Berch

I am going to pick up on that final suggestion, in a slightly different form, and report on two games in which Key (or Key-like) openings were employed.

The first of these is 1974 DX, also referred to as BDC 77, and "The Committee Game". It was labeled at its start as a "semi-demo" game. In fact, it had one of the most illustrious collections of players ever assembled for a British game. Italy was played by Richard Walkerdine, publisher of Mad Policy, Austria by Mick Bullock, publisher of 1901 and all that...... It should be noted that these two were firmly allied as England and Germany respectively in 1973 DR in the same zine. Also playing were Richard Sharp, editor of Dolchstoss (the game had a guest EM) as Russia; Les Pimley, editor of The Black Spot as France; Tony Ball, the National Games Commission Treasurer, was Turkey. Rounding out the field were Richard Scott as England, and Nicky Palmer as Germany, both well known players. The game began in Dolchstoss #23, 8Sept 1974.

Fall 01 found the Key opening in full swing, with Italy in Apulia, Serbia and the Aegean; and Austria in Greece, the Ionian and (varying things a bit) in Rumania (taken unopposed!). The only curiosity in the area was German A Gal. In the north, all manner of Odd Things had happened, including a French F in the N.A.O., a Russian army in Nwy, a successful British convoy to Belgium, with a standoff in Denmark, and two impossible moves. The zine with the Fall 01 moves also included a commentary by Russia, who explicitly labeled the Balkan situation as the Key opening (the spring commentary by Colin Patch had made no mention of an Italian "sTab"0. Russia also did a bit of bragging about how he took Nwy, which supposedly included both Russia and Germany sending forged letters to Italy. But I digress. Russia also landed up with an army in Ukr and F Sev, with Turkey having A Bul, A Arm and F Con. The Turks had in fact supported Aus A Bud -Rum so it is possible he was fooled by the Italian spring 01 moves, or perhaps was trying to wean Austria's affections away.

Winter 01, armies appeared in Bud, Vie, War, Mos, with fleets in Ank and Naples. In the north, it was only fleets: Berlin, Brest and London.

Spring 02, Turkey bowed to the inevitable, supporting F Con to Smy and A Bul to Con (the latter move opposed). Russia continued to aid Turkey by not entering the Black but rather supporting himself (unsuccessfully) into Rum. Italy moved into Bul from Servia with plenty of support, and moved his new fleet out to take Tun in the fall. Austria cut the German support for the Russian move to Rum by A Vie-Gal, whilst taking the Eas-Med. In the north, England moved decisively on Germany as France entered Liverpool but stayed out of the channel, and Russia took Denmark.

In Fall 02, things bogged down in the southeast. Turkey defended Smy successfully, pulled his army to Syr where it could be more useful and in the winter scuttled F Ank, which never should have built in the first place. Italy declined the convoy, taking Tun with his fleet while moving A Apu to Ven, and built a third fleet in Naples. This time the attack on Rum came from Ger A Gal, so it succeeded, since the Russian supports could not be cut. Russia befriended the German in the north, too, supporting him into the North Sea. Russia by this point held all of Scandinavia, a remarkable achievement for 1902 and the high point of his game. He built A Mos. England swept Hol and Kiel, but lost Bel (and, of course Lvl) to France. France built two fleets and an army and at this point had no effective opposition.

The game was then delayed for several months as a squabble developed over the German removal, F Nth. The issues raised in this dispute will be covered in a later issue of DIPLOMACY DIGEST.

Spring 03 saw the I-A alliance roll on, as Italy supported himself A Bul - Con, with the Aus F cutting the Smy support, Tur retreating to Ank. Opting against an immediate opening of a second front, Italy contented himself with F Nap-Tyn, but F Tun H and A Ven-Tyo. Austria moved into Bul and again clashed with Russia over Gal. Germany stabbed his Russian ally, supporting England into Denmark. Russia finally entered the Black Sea.

Fall 03 saw Russia lose two more S.C.'s to the E-G alliance and Sev to the Germans, all in the game's first NMR. Italy took Mun(!) and supported A Con-Smy (thus not taking Con in 1903 but wiping out the last Turkish fleet). Austria retook Rum with A Bul so that Italy gained Smy and Mun. Meanwhile, the F-I war broke out at last, with Italy entering the Wes and France convoying to Naf. France eschewed Edi but went for the Norwegian Sea, and prepared to bring F Bel south by moving it into the E.C. Austria finally took Gal. Thus 1903 was a year of major changes for the I-A alliance. The success of the E-G alliance in the north, plus German moves in the south, plus the Russian NMR had removed Russia as an effective counterforce to Austria. Turkey was down to Ank and Con. Italy had gone to war with France (building F Nap and F Rom for this purpose, giving a winter 03 Italy with 5 fleets, a most unusual situation).

Beginning in 1904, it is really no longer the story of the Key opening anymore, but of an I-A alliance. Fall 04 saw Con and Spa taken by the Italians, who lost Mun and turned over Bul to the Austrians. Austria made no progress against the outnumbered German-Russian alliance in the south, and Italy became stalled in the Western Mediter. area. By fall 05, Turkey was out, and Russia down to one, with England(StP), Austria (Sev, from the Germans, actually) and Italy(War -- remember A Apu in Fall 01? Well, it took War by way of Ven, Tyo, Mun, Ber, Pru and Liv) all moving on Russian centers.

Alas, this is all I have of the game. When the game is reported in Everything (or if I can get a bid of some later issues of Dolchstoss) I'll let you know how it all turned out.

The other game I want to present is 1972 DE, which featured Jeff Key himself playing Italy, in a game which was running at the time that the above article appeared in Arena. The other players were: Austria, Childers; England, Tansley (replaced in Winter 01 by John Leeder); France, Hendry; Germany, Just; Russia, Klein and Turkey, Brackman.

The game began in Costaguana Vol 6, #5. In Spring 1901, Austria and Italy began attack with Italy attempting some camouflage with anti-Austrian Press. Turkey and both moved on Russia, as armies entered Pru, Sil and Arm and fleets clashed in the B Sea. This anti-Russian stance by Turkey may have persuaded Italy to stick with Austria.

In the fall, the allies decided to vary things a bit, as the Austrian took both Serbia and Greece; Italy, Bud. This is thus the Key opening, but with armies in Ser and Bud reversed. Italy also entered the Eas Med and Apulia. Russia chose to use A Ukr to defend War, so that the German attack failed. As a result, there was no support for F Sev-Rum, which was stood off by A Bul, as Turkey took the Black sea. Turkey had been successfully targeted away from his real enemies.

In the North, things were totally confused. Russia didn't bother with Sweden but sailed directly into the Baltic, so that Germany stumbled into Sweden. France took Mun. Neutral moves were again used for England, who just took Nwy. Thus Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Tunis and Rumania were all open. With France declining one of his builds, Winter 01 found only 28 pieces on the board, a rather bizarre situation, considering that there were no NBR's. In the South, fleets appeared in Nap and Smy and an army in, of all places, Trieste!

In Spring 02, Austria entered the Aegean (again reversing the situation from 1974 DX, where it was Aus F Eas and Ital F Aeg) and supported his A Gre into Bul and, obscurely, moved A Tri-Tyo. Italy moved A Apu-Ven, put his new fleet in the Tyr and managed to pick up Russian support for A Bud-Rum, which move was foiled by Turkey.

Fall 02 found Austria convoying ABul-Syr, with A Ser moving in to Bul and Turkey taking a purely defensive stance. Because of such shenanigans, Italy had no support for A Bud-Rum, which was foiled this time by the Russians, as the R-T alliance formed at last. This dearth of armies in the Balkans was due not only to the convoy to Syr but also two wasted armies moving Aus A Tyo-Boh and Ital A Ven-Tyo, with no apparent purpose. Meanwhile, Russia finally gained an English ally and took Kiel for his very first build. Winter 02 saw (in the south) the building of A Vie, F Nap and the disbanding of A Arm.

Spring 03 saw the fall of Smy to the Austrians, who also moved into Galacia, an unopposed move supported by pointless A Tyo. But Turkey punched back, supporting himself A Con-Bul (thus providing a vacant Con for the dislodged F Smy to retreat to). Italy did absolutely nothing useful. Fleets moved aimlessly to Apu and Tyr, the Army Bud, still lacking support, failed to take Rum. A Tyo supported A Boh, which no one was interested in dislodging anyway. If one of the Italian fleets had gone to the Ionian, the loss of Bul would not have been so serious, as this fleet could have covered Greece. As it was, the dislodged Aus A had to retreat to Greece, leaving Ser open. Thus in the fall, when support would finally be available for A Bud-Rum, A Bud was needed to cover Serbia.

Fall 03 saw the fall of Con, as Turkey opted to use the fleet to support Rus F Sev-Rum, and Italy picked up Smy and Russia took Rum. But the need to cover Ser meant that Italy took Serbia, so that Aus had to withdraw A Gal-Bud and A Boh-Tyo, as Italy pulled back A Tyo-Pie (Got all that?? There may be a quiz later).

Thus winter 03 found Italy with Armies in Pie, and Ser, Fleets in Ion, Tyn and Smy and one build coming. Austria had armies in Tyo, Bud, Gre and Con, with F Aeg and no builds. This provides a much weaker position for the allies than in 1974 DX. The I-A alliance had put virtually no pressure on Russia, who had grown to 6 centers and had finally thrown off the German pests. In the west, France was strong (7) and totally unengaged. A-I was boxed in.

Winter 03 saw armies appear in Ven and Sev (and Edi. England at this point had 5 armies to only 2 fleets. Strange!). 1904 saw Turkey down to just Ankara, but little else done. The big break was the English stab of Russia. In 1905, A-I moved west setting up a stalemate line cornering on Tunis and Tyrr, while England moved into Northern Russia. In 1906 Russia joined the Austrian-Italian alliance to stalemate the game as a RIAEF draw.

**Game 1972 GB ended in a 17-17 draw between Italy and Turkey. Two way draws with Italy are actually quite uncommon, Below. The drawers and the GM tell how it was done. This is from Dolchstoss #27 (Jan 1975).**

**Victory Statements**

**MICK BULLOCK** I'd have liked to start off as nearly all other victory statements start, 'this was my first postal game...' but I can't because it was my second. Still, it's the first game I've played in that has finished so that adds a little to the satisfaction of the win (oh, all right then, half win).

The game started with a flurry of correspondence, most of it from Austria, who was keen on a campaign against Turkey. I was willing to go along with this, but a lull in his correspondence made me suspicious and I decided to stand in Venice instead of moving from there to Apulia as planned. This gave me the whip hand over Austria as I, humbly apologetic, laid the blame at his feet for his lack of communication. He seemed to accept that the situation was his fault, and so, having convinced him that I'd vacate Venice in Autumn '01, I did - into Trieste.

To make the stab complete I tipped off Russia that Austria would leave Vienna empty - he did too, and Russia took advantage of it. At this time I was more concerned with weakening what promised to be a very angry Austria than I was about Russia's strength.

Turkey and Russia were clearly not getting on too well; I had the confidence of Russia, having given him Vienna on a plate in '01, so negotiations with Turkey were opened (not until Winter '01 though, blame inexperience) and a game-long alliance was forged.

Austria dropped out in '02, though it didn't make much difference - he'd have gone quickly anyway - and it was left to Turkey and myself to start the long battle against Russia and the rest, Colin not quite expecting the attack, I think, following my early help.

That's it basically as far as the southern sector was concerned - the game-long alliance with 100% trust on both sides once again proving unbeatable. Oh, there were plenty of problems and incidents before the end: the swarming of Austria who invented the F-C-A-A league, complete with forged signatures (Russia got a copy from the T-G-B-A league), had me worried for a while; the unfortunate but completely necessary stab, or breaking of a non-aggro pact at last, against France (especially as I'd just got a 1901... sub from her!) - Italy's eternal problem again, Richard; the short but sweet alliance with Germany to help get rid of France quickly before the long homeward slog to VICTORY!

Thank you, Richard, for saving your GMing mistakes for other games; thank you, 5 eliminees and no standbys, for a sporting battle; and especially thank you and congratulations to a fine ally, Alan Humphrey. We'll do the same again one day, what? Statistics of a 2-way draw: letters sent, 56, received 55. Approximately 2 1/2 per season (though more early on and less towards the end), almost exactly half of which were too and fro between Italy and Turkey.

**ALAN HUMPHREY** When the game opened I received letters from Austria (Tim Magley) and Russia (Colin Bennett) offering alliances against each other, and I plumped for attacking Austria. After the first moves I smelt a rat and guessed there was a 3-way alliance against me in the form of Italy, Austria and Russia. I called Italy's bluff, which worked and resulted in the annihilation of Austria in Autumn '02. Meanwhile in the North France and Germany were heading for England. My new 3-way alliance with Russia and Italy had to give way. To ally with Russia would have meant I was next for the chop so it had to be the long haul with Italy. Our attack coincided with Germany's attack on northern Russia, which helped immensely. We were then at 1904. The following year was difficult with only Italy making headway against France while I gained a positional advantage over Russia. By the end of 1906 it was clearly a 3-horse race, and Germany wrote to me for the first time, seeking an alliance. I played along for one season, hoping that Italy and I could gain an advantage. For the next six years it was a long battle with Italy against Germany, particularly in the north, trying to break out of St Petersburg. I missed my big opportunity when John Carlyle missed a deadline, and I had resigned myself to standing until help arrived

in the form of Italian fleets. Anyway, the help did arrive, and we won a hard-earned victory. It has been a particularly pleasing game for my first postal game (although I've already finished 2nd in BDC 16, where I played Austria as a standby). Finally, thank you, everyone, for making the game so enjoyable, particularly Mick Bullcock, and thanks also to Richard for his gamesmastering efforts.

**GM** This was one of those games where the last half-dozen years needn't really have been played. John Carlyle as Germany resisted to the last gasp, but there is nothing one can do against a steadfast double alliance, and once Turkey and Italy had made up their minds not to stab one another the result was a formality.

England never had a chance: Chris Buckley turned to defend himself against an early attack from France, allowing Russia to gobble up Norway; thus weakened, England had no answer when Germany switched his attack to the North Sea in Spring 1903. At the end of 1903 the position looked very flexible, with 5 countries on the 6-7 mark and Italy and Turkey beginning to make headway against Russian Austria and Russia proper. At this point I felt John Carlyle made a decisive error of judgement by attacking Russia in the north; personally I would have used the idle southern German armies to enter Austria and try to shore up the tottering Colin Bennett. As it was Russia was crushed by the loss of 4 centres out of 7 in 1904, and Germany led the field, but the writing was on the wall.

France suffered from fatal indecision during this period: she trusted her pact of non-aggression with Italy, couldn't risk taking on the superior force of Germany, and so had nowhere to go after the collapse of England. She was extremely suspicious of Germany, and so the French armies milled around rather aimlessly, waiting to be attacked. More foresight would surely have suggested that the attack would come from Italy - it was clear that the Italo-Turkish alliance could only be broken by a French stab on Italy, which Turkey would have been helpless to prevent, so might well have joined. In Spring 1905 France's policy against Germany reached its most aggressive, and Italy struck with perfect timing, aided by curiously passive French defence. Even now I felt Germany might have saved a draw by rallying to the defence of France and what was left of Russia, but he elected to play for parity with the major powers by grabbing centres off France, thus accelerating the Italian success in the south. By Autumn '06 Russia was out and only a 3-way draw could prevent the inevitable, but at no stage was there even a hint of mistrust in the Grand Alliance. That, to all intents and purposes, was the end of the game.

This hasn't been one of my favourite games: I make no secret of the fact that I prefer the treacherous game-long free-for-all to the massive fixed alliance. Still, there is no getting away from the fact that this is a classic of its type; Mick and Alan played it with absolute confidence and ruthlessness. I have no figures available, but suspect Turkey-Italy is an unusual combination for a joint win - it is so difficult for them to cobble effectively except in the opening against Austria and at the end when the Italian fleets meet the Turkish armies in the north. It says much for Mick's handling of the tactical situation that a Turkish stab (the natural ending of such an alliance?) was never really on.

In summary I would say that Turkey and Italy thoroughly earned their success by their superior strategic awareness. Russia, like England, was helpless to resist alone, but France and Germany should have capitalized on their good start to set up the stalemate line that is always on in a 2-2 situation across the diagonal axis of the board. After 1903, I thought that a draw was certain, with Turkey figuring in it somewhere - either 2-way with Germany or 3-way with Germany and France. Wrong again.

Congratulations are due to the winners for their impeccable handling of the game, and an extra bouquet to Mick for the best performance yet with Italy in an MGC game. John Carlyle resisted splendidly when many would have given up; Barbi played the opening well but lacked inspiration thereafter. Colin and Chris did all they could in lost positions. The only weak link was Tim Magley, a classic dropout case: work hard at the game in 1901, then throw in the towel when things go wrong. In fact his dropping made no difference whatever, though it might have done if the western powers had united early on. Well played, the other six - and how nice to see a game using only 7 players!

**We'll close with a quote from Len Lakofka (LD #53): "An I-T alliance vs. R is highly unworkable and the least likely 2 way alliance to emerge from the Austrian defeat"**

This overview of Italy comes from Hoosier Archives #20 (5 June 1971) and was written by one of the most successful and highly rated Diplomacy players of all time.

WHY I HATE ITALY  
by Brenton Ver Ploeg

Italy is doubtless the worst country to play in Diplomacy and there are several reasons for that. Italy has nowhere to go. Defensively, she is wide open to attack from one side when she leans far out to attack in another, and that's inherent in Italy's position. Other powers can gain centers in one front, and THEN move to a major attack while still leaving some pieces to guard against and therefore hopefully discourage a sTab. Pity poor Italy, however, because in order to GET those extra pieces, she has to lean in the first place.

Offensively, it's just as bad. Assume she moves against Austria, which is about the only way to make headway early in the game. After Austria collapses, only expert Diplomacy will save Italy from a Russo-Turkish alliance, and often even that is not enough. Players of equal ability in Turkey will almost always take the Russian alliance. Russia is the best hope, but is not really a hope at all if she is pushed in the center or north, as is often the case. All too often, Russia is MORE than willing to withdraw troops from the south to use against Germany or England. That obviously limits the diplomatic offensive capability.

For this reason, players with experience for Italy often bide their time. The better players often go so far as to SUPPORT Austria, if Austria is under attack. But, that's no game to play. If a player sits back and waits to see what develops too long, he will generally find that it's a big attack--against HIM.

So, that's a tactical and a diplomatic reason. There remains one more tactical reason, which is always a factor if the previous two points go by the board, and we find Italy as a major moving power, say with eight or nine pieces--she has less ability to bring new units to the front than any other power by a very considerable margin. This may well be what constitutes the biggest Italian weakness. Often good players will set up the alliance structure with such skill that they pass the first hurdle and make Italy into a fighting power. But the sad part about Italy as a contending power is that she has to contend and that usually is the end of her. An army, in order to get out of Italy, has to pass a tortuous route. If there are two builds, and Italy needs armies, where are they to go? Venice is one but western armies get blocked. But if there is a second build, it's at ROME. I don't even have to mention that disadvantage. It takes a year and a half of play to even get an army out of Italy from Rome! Of course, you can hold back fleets to convoy, but is that better? It will always take two, maybe three fleets, contrasted with the single fleet in the North Sea for England, and even when the armies are landed, they do not have a great deal of mobility. England, to go back to the example, can throw armies over a vast territory through only the North Sea.

Enough? Italy, which is sometimes fun to play, is nevertheless the worst country on the board. She is surrounded by enemies and has few advantages. Good play for Italy probably involves a very good "special pair" (Calhmer's wording) with Austria, and a move against France in conjunction with both Germany and England--PROVIDED that you know that you can trust one of them to attack the other after France has fallen. It seems clear, to me at least, that a given player will have to work much harder for success in Italy than anywhere else.

3. Italy in fact rarely goes for Greece in 1901. It is even rarer for Italy to attempt a convoy, because the attack on Greece is usually just to deny Austria the build, which means that the armies should be busy elsewhere. But in 1977FL, not only was there a convoy, but it was supported by TWO countries, as both Austria and Turkey vied for approval from the Italian (Clyde Hayman, one of our subbers, in Dragon and the Lamb).

4. Of course, not all Italys (Italies? Italees?) fare so well. In the same zine, the Italian player in 1977CQ, despite strenuous efforts, was unable to move a single piece during all of 1901 and 1902.

5. Another slow Italy was 1972 DP (sTab), who did not take Tunis until Fall 1904!

6. Lastly, consider the Italian player in 1975S (Liaisons Dangereuses) who had 4 centers at the end of 1901. Pretty average, you say? That player was dead last. All other players had 5.



Last item was written by Steve McLendon, and appeared in his zine, The Dragon  
#7 July, 1977 (Box 57066, Webster Texas 77598). Steve features colored maps  
spring and fall positions, to facilitate spectator play. There are no openings.

A Mittish Musing  
by  
D.B. Platypus

Well, another game has started. Let's see what I drew this time.....Italy! Oh, no! Why do I all the sudden feel three inches shorter, just because I don't know how to play this stupid country?

Shall I go into Tyrolia and hit Austria or march into Piedmont to hassle France. Gee, I don't know either of those guys. Wait....a letter from Russia. Glad to see that somebody knows I'm alive. OK, I'll go along.

Now one from Austria. (Sorry chump, but my hand is already won). Yes, France, I'll stay out.....

Fantastic! I'm now in Tyrolia and Austria is being smashed. Things agoing alright!

Ahai Trieste is mine! Two builds! Now we're really rolling. Watch France....no, no fleet in Marseilles. Yessir, now we're really gonna... Turkey! What's he gonna do with that fleet! I'll have to teach him a lesson... hey, Russia ol' buddy, how about....

Wow! Nine units in 1904! Who said this country was tuff to play? Guess it was never played by a player of my caliber before. I guess I'd better start moving west now. They are almost through with England. But what....a letter from Germany. Hmmm. Yes, you have a point. The Russian is ripe for a stab. But he has been my game-long ally. Well, true conquerors must be ruthless at times. Yes, I agree, you owe France nothing. Very well. Let us join forces and sweep the swine from the board!

Ya-hah! Boy I really nailed that Russian good. He never knew what hit him. Tough luck, chum, but I gotta world to conquer. Hold it. Yes...Germany is sitting there in Burgandy pretty as you please. Now that man's got class. Attabéy! We is roi-i-in' now!

Let's see. That stupid Russian will lose 3 to me and 2 to the German....yeah, he's out of it now. France can still fight but he's not long for this game either. I'll give him time to pull back his forces to use against the German, then Whammo! I'll let him have it.

At last! The GM is a week late, but now....WHAT! How could France afford to take Tunis, he has to protect against....NO! Germany withdraws from Burgandy!...moves into Tyrolia and Bohemia!....takes Galicia with Russia sup...RUSSIAN SUPPORT? How could he ...  
A PUP-P-P-E-T-T!!

OK, creeps. I've got 13 units. Try to pull a fast one on me, huh? Well, ya'll just bit off a little more than you can chew.....don't know who you're up against. Yessir! I'll teach all three of 'em.....

OK, they got two centers from me but that's just because they guessed lucky. I can still deliver a knockout to one and then they'll all.....

They got four more that time. The GM must be giving them my moves! Why that cheap....! Well, I won't give the Russian the satisfaction of seeing me....HE'S OUT? GERMANY...TOOK ...HIS...LAST...CENTER!.....Wa-a-ah-hi

.....Down to 2 lousy centers. Hey guys, what say we call this a 3-way draw? After all, I don't even know how to play this stupid country and.....