

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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I'd like to start off by thanking several subbers for their complimentary remarks about the all-Italy Issue #2, and to thank Rich Kovalcik for his detailed look at #1 in Tetracuspis #24. For those of you who like the zine well enuf to recommend it to others I have an offer to make: I will add one issue to the length (I haven't time to fool with silent g's) of your sub for each new subscriber you "bring in". All that need be done is for the new subber to mention your name when he sends in his cheque. There is no limit to how many issues you can add to your sub in this manner (until I withdraw the offer, of course), and I may even add a bonus to the person bringing in the largest number. If the new subber mentions more than one name I will arbitrarily select the first name on the list, so if you want to trick me you'll have to come up with something better than that.

For those of you who may be interested, there is a description of how I go about assembling materials for DIPLOMACY DIGEST in the current issue (#72) of The Mixumaxu Gazette (Robert Lipton, 556 Green Place, Woodmere, N.Y. 11598, subs 9/\$2). TMG is along with Runestone and Diplomacy World one of my three favorite "reads" of the zines I get. Its especially interesting if you're into Science Fiction, as there is usually something in each issue on that. #72 goes into such matters as how to buy SF books (I myself favor garage sales and flea markets for paperbacks). As a place to play, TMG is absolutely without peer. The publisher is super-reliable (he's been at it 4 years) and despite a brisk 3-week scheduld significant delays putting out the zine are pretty much unknown. Errors in adjudicating or printing the moves are quite rare (the last six issues, averaging about 10 games per issue) had no errors. Reproduction is always clear and pleasant to read. He appears to have a good stable of replacement players because significant positions are never CD'd. And to top it off, neither game fee nor deposit are required, and there are always openings. I don't see how you could ask for more!

This issue is a potpourri of articles, with an emphasis on the year 1973. The next issue, #4/5, will be (if present plans hold up) a double issue, 17-19 pages long, devoted to the subject of Gamesmaster-player relations. I plan to include such materials as the Von Metzke-Lakofka debate on GM fairness&rigidity, a look at who "owns" a postal game, GM involvement in draw votes, specific GM-player disputes and how they were handled, a joint order controversy, etc. I plan to include a poll and contests. Anyone who wants to submit original material on this topic is urged to do so, getting it to me by Nov 7, 1977. I pay a 3 issue sub extension for each (single spaced) page of material. The issue will go out around Mid November by third class mail.

Our new subscribers are Tom Butcher (in Japan!), Michael Lariton, Tom Kissner, Tom Mirti (sure are a lot of Toms), John Michalski and Richard Kovalcik, Jr.

Unfinished business from #1: In the intro to "A modest Proposal" I said that the article was amended "in an unspecified manner" by Rod Walker. Rod writes me that the sole change was replacing "Paul Harvey" with "Conrad von Metzke" in the last line. This was done because Paul was unknown by 1972. Conrad was chosen not because the sentence applied to him, but because it would be "funny enough" (and you thought pubbers were highminded and honest!).

Starting things off will be "A Brief look at the history of Variants" by Dick Vedder and comes from Hoosier Archives #116 (30 June 1973)

Variant Diplomacy has been around for a long time. Ever since 1965, in fact, when the first postal section (1965Aa, a three-vs-three team game, with Turkey omitted) ((for you newcomers, prior to 1971 the rulebook suggested dropping Turkey and Bulgaria for a six man game)) was played.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the variant Branch of the hobby has come a long way. As of March 4, 1973, 89 Variant Diplomacy games have received formal recognition via the Miller numbers, 225 variant sections have been started, and 88 sections thus far completed (39%). In this article, we shall take a brief look at the history of Variant Diplomacy.

In 1966, Don Miller decided to formulate a number system for keeping track of the rising tide of variant games, a tide which had its origins in the 1965Aa game played in Graustark. ((which zine no longer runs variants)). The resulting system has come to be known as the "the Miller Numbers." Each section played of a variant Diplomacy game receives a Miller Number. This number consists of the year in which the section opened, one or more capital letters which indicate the relationship of the section to all other Diplomacy sections opened in that year, and one or more lower case letters. Each Variant Diplomacy game has its own particular lower case designation, which serves to distinguish it from all other Variant Diplomacy games. Thus 1972Abu is the Miller Number for the first section to have opened in 1972; "bu" signifies that the particular variant game played was the Youngstown Variant. 1972Zbu designates the 26th variant section to open in 1972, again a section of the Youngstown Variant. The 27th section to open was 1972Aadc, "dc" signifying in this case the 9-power variant of original Diplomacy designed by Fred Winter. And so it goes, with each year starting again with the capital letter "A" (ex. 1973Adi) and moving down the alphabet from there.

With the Miller numbers to keep track of variant games and their sections, it is possible to assemble a number of interesting statistics on the history of Variant Diplomacy. For instance, the following figures indicate the number of variant sections which have opened each year since 1965 (as of March 4, 1973).

|          |          |          |          |         |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| 1965: 4  | 1967: 43 | 1969: 30 | 1971: 23 | 1973: 6 |
| 1966: 46 | 1968: 29 | 1970: 7  | 1972: 36 |         |

It can be seen that 1966 has the honor of being the year in which the most variant sections opened, with 1967 close behind. The sudden drop in 1970 is inexplicable; it may have been due to the business recession which affected the nation at the time, or may have simply been due to lack of player interest ((There was also a drop in the number of Boardman Numbers assigned, tho not nearly so drastic)). In any event, 1971 saw a sharp improvement, with 23 sections started, and if present trends continue, 1973 should see as many new starts as the previous year.

The most popular variant<sup>2</sup> as determined by the number of sections thus far opened is the Youngstown, with 22 games started ((There have even been articles on strategy published for the Youngstown)). Two of these have already finished (Aug 1972). Next come all of the variants based on the Lord of the Rings trilogy of J.R.R. Tolkein (19). Third are the 13 sections of Calhauer five-man "Napoleonic" Diplomacy (identical to the five man game in the rulebook, and hence a source of controversy as to whether it deserves to be given a Miller Number). Finally, with 7 sections started are all the variants which are based on modifications of the regular board so as to produce 9 powers instead of 7.

If we examine the variants by region, we find that 59 variants are based in Europe. The next most popular region is the world of Fantasy and Myth; Middle Earth and the world of Asimov's Foundations are example of this category, which contains 18 games. Third is the United States, with 3 sections opened

According to time periods (insofar as it pertains to historically based variants), 1700 to date is the most popular, with 48 sections. Ancient (pre-500 A.D.) and Medieval (500-1500) are tied for second, with 6 sections each. The least popular time is 1500-1700, with only 3 sections ((Of course, that's a pretty short time period too)).

If the Calhamer five-man games are not considered, the publisher who has GM'd more variants than anyone else is Don Miller, who has started 36 sections and completed 32, for an 89% success rate. Second is Rod Walker, who started 32 games and was able to see 9 to completion' (28%). However, if Calhamer games are considered, then Rod jumps into the lead, with 40 sections started and 15 completed (37.5%). But as far as success rates go, Don remains in undisputed first place. Buddy Tretick comes in third, having begun 14 variant sections with 6 completions (42.8%). Fourth is Larry Peery, with eight starts and 7 finishes (87.5%). Of the 89 variants thus far receiving Miller Numbers, 24 were designed by Don Miller. Rod Walker is again second, with 11 games.

Attempts have been made to rate variant players. The first effort was made by Don Miller in Diplomania #29, but was unsuccessful. The first working system was described by the author in 1972, and is presently ((Used to be)) carried in El Dorado. This system, called VEGA (Variant Equasion Games Analysis), basically consists of awarding points to each player on the basis of his/her place-finish. The winner in addition receives an extra point for every position eliminated in the course of the game. Penalties in the form of minus points are assessed to players who drop out of games without notice, or who are removed by the GM for failure to submit Game Fee, cheating, etc. VEGA not only rates players, but also provides complete statistical data on their performances (such as number of draws, joint victories, wins, place-finishes, drops, resignations, eliminations, survivals, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, it might be useful to recommend two zines which I feel are the minimum for anyone at all interested in variants. The first is Blood & Iron, published by Lew Pulsipher (the present caretaker of the Miller numbers) ((Lew is not publishing at the moment. The present Miller Number Custodian and (by his own description)"Devil Incarnate pro tem" is Robert Sacks)). BI not only publishes new Miller Numbers, but also lists game openings, places/persons from which/whom ((this guy really likes slashes)) one can obtain variant maps & rules, commentary on variants, etc. The second is El Dorado which in addition gives ((gave)) ((inadditon to VEGA)) complete game summaries of Variant sections, as well as lists of all Miller Numbers assigned and of where each variant section was played with the result. ((Two of our subscribers run variants: Fred C. Davis, Jr. 1427 Clairidge Road, Baltimore, Md 21207 has published Bushwacker since 1972 and John Leeder 1211 5th St. NW Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2M 3B6 has published Runestone since 1972. More information on variant publishers can be found in Diplomacy World #16)) Anyone who has in their possession both BI and ELD can discover which dippyazines carry (or carried) their favorite variants, and how to subscribe to them.

<sup>1</sup>There may have been a postal section played by carbon copy in 1963, but this has yet to be confirmed.

<sup>2</sup>In compiling these figures, I have considered as a whole all editions (original and revised) of a variant, if this was the case. ((These days, the term "Youngstown" is used to describe an entire family of related games)).

<sup>3</sup>It must be noted that no ratings system is perfect, being at best able to give only an approximation of any player's ability ((and inevitably includes the subjective opinion of the rater as to how various outcomes should be ranked)).

\*oops! No longer True

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Next is "A Tribute to John McCallum" by Douglas Beyerlein, from Washington Reports #4 (1973)

I would like to think that it is not true, but from all indications it appears that John McCallum has left the postal Diplomacy hobby. This is not only a severe loss from the field of rating systems but also to the whole hobby in general. Jon was regarded by everyone as always maintaining a sense of fair play, honesty, and non-partisanship in an era of the game when these qualities were almost unheard of. This fact was duly recorded for history when John was given the task of monitoring and checking the vote counts for the first IDA elections last year.

John McCallum has done far too much for the hobby for me to pretend that I can mention all of his accomplishments in this brief article. Therefore I am going to concentrate

CONTINUED ON THE BOTTOM OF THE NEXT PAGE

This next one is by one "Enchis Fondoo", the "guest author" in En Passant #36(5-19-73). Perhaps it was written by the editor of that zine, Greg Warden.

### THE GRUYERE OPENING

Many articles have been written on Diplomacy tactics and a large number of them have concerned themselves with opening moves for the respective countries. No one however has written an article on the most difficult, yes even the most subtle, of the Postal Diplomacy countries, Switzerland.

Switzerland is difficult to play for many reasons. Firstly, it is surrounded by four major powers (tacticians who have bemoaned the centrality of Austria and Germany have obviously not given much thought, or sympathy for that matter, Switzerland's unfortunate plight). Even more difficult to overcome is the handicap of not having any armies or fleets. An experienced player, however, can with some difficulty overcome these tactical deficiencies. Diplomacy is the answer, and after all that's the name of the game/Did I actually write that last sentence?/ ((Yes, I'm afraid you did. I only retype these things.)).

I've played Switzerland many times. As a matter of fact, I think that I may have even won a game once while playing Switzerland... I'm not sure though, but that's the great thing about Switzerland - you can never be certain of anything. That's the charm of it all; no one knows you're playing ((they do now, tho, don't they? You should have thought of that before you went and wrote this article)) so that you can use surprise as your main weapon (it's also cheaper, since the gamesmaster also doesn't know that you're playing and therefore cannot charge you a game fee).

Before discussing the tactics, however, we must understand the vital statistics. After all, as we have found out in numerous tactical articles, tactics without statistics are just not the thing these days. So be sure to remember that Switzerland is c. 2 in. long and approximately 1 inch wide. Its relation to the other great powers (square inch/square inch) is:

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| England - 1.8456-2x   | Turkey- 2-4x(y(g))     |
| France- 1.7456-3.57x  | Austria- 1-(-(-3xg(y)) |
| Germany- 1-(x)y   | Italy- 5x(s(-y))       |
| Russia- statistics unknown due to gravy and water damage on my gameboard. |                        |

((Well, I think that you can see that this article is starting to go downhill, so, brutal butcher that I am, I'm going to cut it off here. The writer did suggest however, that you should "never betray yourself too early and you'll have more time to betray yourself later on." And he closes by pointing out that "...you can play by your own rules - no need to mess around with nit picking gamemasters. It is hard to win, however. But, after all, if you're playing Switzerland, you probably won't care."))

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(Tribute to John McCallum, Continued from the previous page)  
on his enormous contribution to the subject of ratings systems.

John entered postal Diplomacy in the Spring of 1964 and a year and a half later took over the publication of BROBDINGNAG from Dick Schultz, the previous editor. When I entered the hobby in the late summer of 1966 I immediately began correspondence with John and subscribed to his zine. In september John published BROB #43 and the BROB rating system was born. The first rating list had the results of only eight games, but John Smythe was firmly in first place with 12 points with John Koning in second with nine. This was the beginning of an association with rating systems that has led to many great things.

The second BROB listing appeared in #45 and included games in progress which made it a more accurate rating system (time-wise at least) than any other rating system since invented. Once again, Smyth headed the listing.

From 1966 to 1969 (when Mc Callum transferred ownership of BROBDINGNAB to Ed Halle) his zine was THE PLACE to discuss rating systems. I find, in fact, that these old editions are still good reading today.

ARTICLE CONCLUDES (AT LAST) ON THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 6

Some perspective on play-of-the-game articles is provided by this "Ruminations I: On the Philosophy of Articles" by Randolph Smyth (249 First Avenue Ottawa, Ontario K1S 2G5 Canada) Editor of Fol Si Fie, from #27 (1975). Subs are available at the very reasonable price of 1¢ per two sided page plus postage

### Ruminations I: On the Philosophy of Articles

Do the articles on good play which are a regular feature of many zines really improve the general standard of play for the average Dippy freak? It may instead be argued that the prevalent discussion of "How to Win" may actually be a negative experience, particularly for beginners. A disclaimer may be made (and noted by the reader) that the strategies outlined are only possibilities, dependent for success on the overall diplomatic situation. However, the basic philosophy of angling for methods of winning outright, beginning with Spring 1901 or before, may contribute to the overaggressive attitude that many of us have noted as a common characteristic of most novices. They are told, "Read a few articles: they have good advice on how the game should be played." They are cautioned to take the general advice with a grain of salt depending on the reputation of the author; but rarely is the seed of aggression nipped in the bud.

Of course, the Rulebook itself says: "Object of the Game: To control eighteen centers," etc. Yet, perhaps this statement alone is enough to provide the necessary competitive spirit. Is it realistic even to think about 18 before a minimum of, say, 10 have been acquired? Two staunch allies beginning a game may expect to take 9-10 centers between them as a basic share of the total, and have more potential for attacks on friendless neighbours. Even here, discussion of a two-way draw is perhaps premature in 1901, unless the players consider themselves sufficiently superior to their opponents in experience and ability. There may, then, be a need for lower-key articles, emphasizing the merits of doing the best one can from season to season within the existing system. This doesn't mean losing sight of long-term goals, but to look at every position with an eye to an eventual win is being optimistic.

Those with plenty of experience may not derive much benefit from articles not suited to their personal style; if they adapt themselves to the author's opinions, they may be led astray, however "right" the author is. Consider the case of standbys. The wariness felt by long-term allies, and the new hope of established enemies as one enters the game is not entirely due to the unfamiliarity of the standby with his new position, or a difference in ability, or a new bias due to interpersonal conflicts (although all these may be major factors in given situations). The new player will often take his country off in a direction different from that envisaged by the departed one. There will not always be general agreement on whether the change is for "better" or "worse" as far as the country's outlook is concerned. Assuming the players are of equal ability (an impossibility?), it can only be described as "different". One course will probably meet with more success, but this depends only on the unpredictable details of the future moves of the other players, and no criticism of either course can be levelled in advance.

To blindly follow the general advice given in another player's articles is a poor policy, even with the diplomatic climate favourable, if the resulting position doesn't feel "right" for you. The closest parallel that comes to mind is the case of a chessplayer following a "book" opening which involves hair-raising tactical exchanges in the middle game. Unfortunately, the poor guy is far better at maneuvering patiently and making positional calculations from locked structures. He obtains a perfectly sound, if unclear, position after 15 moves, leaves the "book", and loses in five moves because he doesn't really feel comfortable proceeding on his own.

If you like Diplomacy, you'll probably affirm that each game has a character all its own (otherwise, why play more than one, ever?). Some

situations call for more aggressive attitudes than others if the potential is to be fully exploited. We all know the difference between "fast" and "slow" games: a functional definition is that "fast" ones usually require separate Winter seasons due to rapid shifts in the balance of power. Aggressive players usually excel here--not aggressive in the sense of being obnoxious and unrealistic in the specific demands made on their fellow players, but of approaching the position with the spirit of the buccaneer rather than the Pope. Of course, the Pope will do better in other situations.

Even the best tactical/strategic/diplomatic articles, then, are only useful as "how to" guides, once you've decided on your own that the goal outlined is the one for you. What factors should enter into the preliminary all-important choice? Can the most successful players set out the methods which they have found to work so well for them? (Are they willing to?) Do they know themselves what influences their calculations in this sphere, or is it just a vague "feeling"? (Or, am I all wet?)

It is this capability of approaching the individual game in its own way that may make the "giants" of the hobby what they are, whether they realize it or not. An inflexible player may score several spectacular successes with his "method" (probably convincing him of its validity and making him more inflexible than ever), yet bomb out elsewhere for no apparent reason. Better players adjust their thinking in ways more subtle than simple consideration of the nature of their opponents, the strength of their present position, and other "surface" qualities. Perhaps the major advantage of "philosophical flexibility" is that articles with a wider range of viewpoints (more total articles/ideas) can be used to good effect by a player who can adapt to the thinking of the writers, leaving him with the maximum possible benefit in any position. As outlined above, however, woe to the less flexible player who attempts the same approach!

Many questions, expressed and implied; few answers. To analyse the game theories used by better players than oneself is probably impossible. One person is incompetent to compare the very thought processes of different players. One bit of solid advice: if you're not succeeding with a given philosophy, change it if you can. If you are doing well, stick with your approach (or, change it to see how flexible you are--but be prepared for the possible consequences!). And, like all articles, don't take this one as gospel--in common with most, this author is, alas, all too fallible.

Future articles (!) will address themselves to various theoretical aspects of positions (heavy, man) in an effort to make the choice of goals mentioned above an easier task. After all, a "Ruminations" series has to consist of more than one article! Titles under consideration include: How Honest?, Power vs. Strength, The Aggressive Attitude, Advance Methods, Fleets vs. Armies, Zonal Goals, and Balance of Power. Stay tuned to...

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(Tribute to John McCallum, Continued from page 4)

In Brob #88, (Sept 1968) In reply to a letter from Alan Calhamer John invented the Calhamer Point Count Listing (CPCL). Walt Buchanan now runs that listing in HOOSIER ARCHIVES.

John's greatest contribution to the subject of ratings systems was the Organisation de Diplomatie (ODD) rating system. It was first published in PFENNIG-HALBPENNIG #4 in January of 1972. This is the advanced system to date ((it has since been modified to ODDMOD)), and it is my belief that it will some day be the official ((whatever that means)) listing for all of organized Postal Diplomacy.

Thus, I hope that one thing will never be forgotten: above all, John A. McCallum has always been a friend to all who knew him--this is his greatest contribution of all.

We don't ignore the meat & potatoes of Diplomacy here. This one is " Move analysis and Tactics" by Lenard Lakofka, from Liaisons Dangereuses #37 (644 W. Briar Pl. Chicago, Ill 60657) of 10-29-72 and originally appeared in The International Wargamer Vol 3 #8, 1970.

In last month's column we took up the topic of 'secotra'; and briefly demonstrated one analysis. The topic of analysis of moves, and its relation to game tactics, is the next point of discussion. Tactics involve themselves with good play in the actual move portions of the game, both when hostilities open and when they are in progress.

Too many players make the "obvious" moves when better tactical moves are available, and thus they defeat the purpose of the move portion of each year. While the EVENTUAL goal is control of supply centers, the IMMEDIATE goal is securing territory already under your domain and extending your sphere of influence, while maintaining a good defensive posture. It is far better to take two years to gain one supply center than to take two centers in one year, IF the consequences of this more rapid expansion is that three players attack you! Greed is a sin that is rarely forgiven in Diplomacy. You can be assured that the most competent players are just waiting for a good and valid excuse to attack; one that will be condoned by the other players. Poor play and greed are the best two excuses for such an attack!

A move can have three goals; to develop, to attack, and to gain position. Each goal is different and the means of attaining each must become part of your moving repertory.

The positional and developmental moves differ in the reaction provoked by each. A positional move has the advantage of not provoking hostilities (in most cases) but gives a firm base to launch a SURPRISE attack or to make a sound defense without invoking undue suspicion by an opponent. A developmental move gives an EVENTUAL advantage in a later attack. I shall explain all three by example.

FALL MOVE, SITUATION

GERMANY: A KIEL, F BALTIC, A BURG plus a sure build in the winter. Russia; A MOS, A UKR, A FIN build status is the same. (In this, and all other examples any other pieces and countries will just not be considered.)

If you play A kiel-BER, a bur-MUN, f bal-BOTH, then B A KIEL you have thrown surprise away! Russia can counter build in WAR or STP and likely stalemate you very easily.

If, however, F Bal H, A Kiel H, A bur-Mun then A ber, you have made no aggressive moves toward Russia. Your build is Berlin because it was the only center open.

Very likely, Russia will not make the best counter-build or even suspect an all out attack. If he makes a good counter-build you have not already stumbled into a war by moving into his domain. You still have freedom to go in another direction and bide your time. If, however, all goes well, in the spring move: a ber-PRU, a mun-SIL, F BAL (C) a kiel-LIO will surprise the hell out of Russia!

Now let us contrast development vs. attack.

SPRING SITUATION:

ITALY, F APU, F ADR, A VEN

AUSTRIA: A TRI A SER

Goal; capture of Tri by the fall move.

Your obvious attack is F ADR(S) a ven-TRI or A TRI(S) f adr-TRI with F APU filling in behind the moving piece.

But A TRI H supported by A SER stops this cold. The THREAT of the attack is the key to Italy's move. Austria can ill afford to second guess Italy and lose. Thus you have two excellent developmental openings. a ven-TYO, F ADR (S) F apu-VEN or F apu-VEN F ADR (C) a ven-ALB. Austria is lost if either move succeeds. Thus you have a 'three point mix' to capture Tri. By this I mean 3 ways to take Tri in the fall move, or before. If Austria counters the Tyr move you can repeat or try another 'point'. In a fall move the Austrian has to defend Tri with support, the threat of the loss of a supply center

is too great. If he counters the convoy the same is true.

If you get in the habit of neglecting the 'mix' potential in a spring move for constant attacks, your opponent will have no trouble in beating you. e.g.; RUSSIA: FBLA, A SEV, A UKR, A MOS (ANK is Russian)  
AUSTRIA: F CON, F SMY, A BUL, A RUM, A SER

Austria has no good attacks because BUL and SMY are not in effective play. Russia has the threat of a 3:1 attack on Rumania which Austria can't let pass by. The key is Ankara. Should Russia defend it? An obvious attack is F Con-Ank and Russia can't discount it. Austria can afford some sloppiness because of one fact. F Bla can not effect inland provinces. Thus: A rum-GAL, A SER(S) a bul-RUM, F con-BLA, F smy-CON. If Russia takes Rumania it can only be with F Bla because F con-Bla cuts support chances for the Black Sea Fleet. F Rum can be dislodged easily and DESTROYED with a gal-RUM supported by BUL, SER & BLACK. F con-BULE. If Russia takes Bulgaria with F Bla he again gets annihilated with F Con-Bulec with F Bla dn A Rum, A GAL and A Ser S A Rum.

If Russia attempts to take Rumania with an army it bounces and you can maintain Rumania by supporting A Ser to Rum with A Gal and A Bul while F con-ANK f smy-CON. The army in Gal, next year, will guarantee degeneration of the area by employing a '4 point mix'

If Russia moves to Ank to counter your potential move, he is already doomed as f bla-Ank supported by F con wins Ank for Austria, plus the threat of F Bla-Sev with A Rum, a gal-ukr is no laughing matter either.

Thus note another important tactic, never fear losing one of your own centers, if a sure recapture and/or annihilation of the piece taking the center usually outweighs its temporary loss! Piece annihilation, in this example is even stronger than the capture of the supply center in Ankara!

Finally, let me discuss a bit more on style and mix. A player's 'style' is the way he handles the 'mix' available to him. A good player who consistently favors one type of 'point' is the 'mix' is easily spotted and countered. A good player will use and vary the 'mix', in accord with the 'style' of the other players and his own sense of good play and originality.

A player may be very conservative, moderate, bold, brash or stupid! A Conservative player will always defend centers already captured from just about every possible aggressive move from a potential enemy. (He is a Bill Buckley type if he defends against his Allies in addition to his enemies.) He becomes a moderate if he gives major attention to defense, but will attack when he sees an opponent that is very likely to defend himself. The bold player favors strong positional developmental and attacking moves and will make only the necessary defensive moves. The brash players makes development moves, but favors strong attacking with only a modicum of defensive moves. A stupid player charges like a bull in a China shop, attacking blindly into the fray.

Analysis of a player's past games are a good and valid guide to his 'style' of play and also tells you if he is reliable or not. Just because you note that a player has made an error in a move in a past game must always be looked at with the concepts of mix and style in mind. A player should never be faulted for a bold move!

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Mine is not the only Diplomacy zine coming out of Alexandria, Va. Suicide is by Andy Cook, 807 Crescent Drive, Alexandria, Va 22302, subs 10/\$3. Issue #2 (7-19-77) included some zine reviews with the following: "These of you who were just plugged might ask, why didn't he tell my rates, well the reason is simple. I don't like to talk about money in Suicide unless it is my money. I hope that clears things up."



What more fitting conclusion for #3 than Howard Mahler's "Predicting the End" from Impassable #18 (3-17-73). You can judge the accuracy of his predictions for yourself.

I'm sure most of you have wondered at one time or another when a particular game of postal Diplomacy will end. This article will try to give you the means to make an educated guess. Aside from any possible "practical value," I think it's fun to make such predictions. For example, as a preview, I predict Game 1972AZ (I'm France) will be over by Winter 1907. If you want to know why, read on and try to bear with a minimum of math.

First for those of you who live in the real world, 6 years in Diplomacy time equals about 1 year real time (using Impassable's deadline system). The basic idea will be to measure the "imbalance of power." We will take the seven numbers which represent how many supply centers each country owns. Then, we'll combine these numbers according to a formula which will be given. We will end up with one number, which hopefully will tell us how far along the game is.

There is a quantity called the standard deviation which measures the "spread" of a set of data points. In our case, one would calculate it as follows:

1. Find the average number of supply centers held by taking the total (usually 34 except near the beginning of the game) and dividing by 7.

2. Get each country's "deviation from the mean" by subtracting the country's number of centers from the average.

3. Square each country's deviation.

4. Add the results of step #3. **((for each country))**

5. Divide the result of step #3 by 7.

6. Take the square root of the result of step #5

The result of step #6 is the standard deviation (s.d.).

The s.d. would then in some sense represent the imbalance of the present situation. For example, in Game 1972AZ, Winter '04, s.d. = 3.72 while in CK, Winter '03, s.d. = 1.24. I believe most people would agree the latter is the more balanced game.

For the beginning position, the s.d. = .350. This also happens to be the s.d. of the most balanced position that can occur when all the centers are controlled (one player has 4 and everyone else has 5).

Another quantity of interest is the minimum s.d. that can occur when the game ends. This minimum value will occur when the distribution is 18,3,3,3,3,2,2. Then s.d. = 5.38. On the other hand, the maximum s.d. one can have without the game being over is 17,17,0,0,0,0,0. Then, s.d. = 7.67.

With the results of the last two paragraphs in mind, one could introduce a new parameter M which would be zero at the start of the game and roughly 100% when it was over. To do this, one defines M to be equal to the s.d. minus .35 (the initial s.d.) all divided by 6.

So, M would represent roughly the percentage of the game that had elapsed. For instance, AZ had M = 56% at the end of 1904 (see accompanying table). Therefore, one might predict that Game 1972AZ will be over at about the end of '07. On the other hand, CK has M = 5% after two years. Therefore, one might predict it would take 40 game years to complete. (Actually, I don't think this is so, but it is a very balanced game at this point.)

I'm aware that other factors besides the number of supply centers enter into how balanced a situation is, i.e., alliance structure, tactical position, skill of the players involved, etc. The M number does not take these factors into account. Also, the M number doesn't march like the Roman Legions, straight to its goal of 100%. It can stand still due to a deadlock, or even decrease when people gang up on the front runner (see BW '02 and '03).

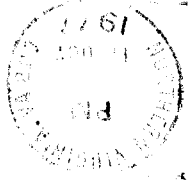
However, one can't escape the fact that for someone to win, M has to be greater than 83% and conversely, M can never be greater than 122% without someone winning.

To quote Mr. Boyer, "Accuracy will be the big problem. Human nature is quite unpredictable." However, it will be hoped that this article will give the means to make an educated guess.

In any case, I hope you'll get a laugh or two out of what the accompanying table has to say about your games.

((Howard then made predictions for all of the Impassable games, using his technique. In what follows, the year before the Boardman # is the last year for which Howard had data, then comes his predicted game-length figure, and finally the actual length: 1905/1970BJ: 9, 23!; 1904/1972AZ: 7, 12; 1904/1972BG: 10, 15; 1904/1972BW: 12, 25 or more; 1903/1972CD: 20, 10; 1903/1972CJ: 7, 10; 1903/1972CK: 20, 10; 1903/1972DD: 9, 9!; 1902/1972DF: 7, 9.)) (The formula above was inserted by the editor of Impassable, John Boyer.)

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