

DIPLOMACY DIGEST 9

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BERCH GOES CENTER STAPLE!! UPS ZINE SIZE!! CUTS SUB RATES!! CROWDS ROAR!!

The page you're looking at right now is just an ordinary 8 x 11 typed page. Two of them are placed side by side and shrunk 30% in each direction, so that the result takes up only half (i.e. 0.7 x 0.7) the combined space. Its called photo-reduction, its the way such zines as Diplomacy World and Ethel the Frog are printed, and if all works out well, DIPLOMACY DIGEST will appear this way too. There are a number of advantages to this for both of us. As opposed to the nine pages you've been getting so far, I can easily give you 12 (or 11, if one is used as an address page). And this can be done on six sides of paper, which should cut the printing costs. I say "should" because just today (3/30) I found out that my printer seems to have gone kaput, so I'll have to find another. I know that I won't be able to find one as cheap (I've already tried), so all my savings may be eaten up by having to go to another printer; I'll see. One disadvantage is that some marginal stuff I may not be able to use directly without retyping.

So much for the present, on to the past. I must confess to a first-class goof with the last issue, 7/8. 21½ pages of tirades was just too much, without some relief. I had humorous denunciations, and some there's-too-much-denouncing-going-on material which I should have leavened the issue with. Sorry about that. I only had one person write to say that an annual villifications issue was a poor idea, so I think I'll do another in 1979. It may, however, only be a single issue, and I hope not to contribute to it myself.

I have had by now quite a bit of feedback on the question I posed in the first issue: Which do you prefer: the potpourri issues or the theme issues. Altho people have come down on both sides of the issue, the clear preference is for the theme issues. They have generated much greater response than the potpourri issues. I have been running the zine at a theme/potpourri ratio of 2:1 and will likely raise this later in the year. Two people have suggested that I do only theme issues. This I can't do because some articles are just too miscellaneous to fit into a theme, and because some people do prefer the potpourri issues.

The next issue will be on a subject that when I stated the zine I was sure I'd never do one on: Stalemates. I have had at least five specific requests for a theme issue on this, more than any other subject. This will be a reference issue. Along with a compilation of the various stalemate line, I will reprint various articles by Vagts, Verheiden, Boyer and others on the uses and implications of these lines. I seek additional material as well, such as game-end statements in which the making or breaking of stalemate lines (or threats of same) affected the diplomacy of the game. For original material I pay \$2/page, in sub credit. I have too much already for a single issue, but not enuf for a double, so I may toss in some thing else. But now, on with the show.....

For those who came in late, the previous issue of DIPLOMACY DIGEST had a strongly worded article written by me condemning the GMing of Tony Watson, publisher of Ruritania. It was based on a series of disputes that we had, and also on GMing in other games during the time that I subbed. In it I labeled Watson as "an unprincipled GM" and stated that "he exhibits a carelessness in GMing which, in my opinion, borders on contempt for the interests of the players". That triggered the following exchange of letters:

Tony Watson
201 Minnesota
Las Vegas, Nevada
89107

March 2nd

Dear Mark;

I was a bit surprised to receive Diplomacy Digest 7-8. My first impression (before removing the staples) was that you were willing to forget our differences of the past and were sending this as a sample in order to induce me to subscribe. A glance at the inside dispelled this notion pretty quickly.

Your article was pretty thorough; I think you managed to mention just about every negative thing about me that you could. I think many of these items were peripheral to your argument, but if you felt they supported your position, so be it. It's unfortunate, at least to my way of thinking (which I find is substantially different than your's) that you are so interested in carrying on this "grudge".

If you are looking for me to dispute your comments point by point, I will have to disappoint you. Though it is true that I do not agree with your interpretation of much that appeared in this article, I'm not really interested much in arguing about it. We disagreed about many of these things when they first occurred and I'm afraid that I'm not inclined to go through the whole thing again, whatever the provocation.

I can't say that I am very appreciative of your admonition to other publishers concerning plugging me. Perhaps it was not your intention, but it appears you were doing your best to torpedo Ruritania. This is certainly your right, I guess, though I don't see how it is particularly appropriate. I'm not going to reply in kind; once again I'm not interested in trying to get people not to subscribe to Diplomacy Digest or making any attempt at a running feud or similar nonsense.

Throughout your piece you have called me unprincipled. This is a fairly harsh personal attack. You can say whatever you wish; Diplomacy Digest is your 'zine and you are entitled to have your say. As long as you print it and your subscribers read it, it's OK. I don't consider myself unprincipled, but then I didn't at the times in question, either. I imagine that all the publishers and players that are involved with me will make a judgement on this question. Maybe they will all cease trading/subbing and your tirade as you call it, will be vindicated.

I don't see that there is a whole lot more to say on this matter. You are welcome to reprint this letter, though if you do I request that you print it in its entirety.

I think it is unfortunate that things came to this. I can see now that you and I have some very real and fundamental differences in the philosophy behind the production of a Dipzine. I am sorry you came away from events in question in the spirit you did.

3/15/78

Dear Tony,

I, too, was a bit surprised at your letter. In place of what might have been, I get a letter with a number of things I can agree with, a misunderstanding I can clear up ---along with the irreconcilable differences.

You start off by calling the article "pretty thorough"; I'll take that as a compliment. As for items being "peripheral", this is a matter of opinion. While some things are obviously more important than others, the article concerned your GMing, so I felt that anything pertaining to that was relevant.

My trying to "~~torpedo~~ Ruritania" is another matter entirely. This was absolutely NOT my intention, and I think it extremely unlikely it could have that effect. I have no quarrel with the zine; its your GMing that stinks. The article contains virtually no criticism of the zine per se. Even the "admonition" concerned "advertising Watson's game openings", not "advertising Ruritania". Further, there's only one person who can torpedo Ruritania: You. If you produce a zine that a sufficient number of people are willing to subscribe to, then it won't matter what I say. And I know you are capable of putting out a first class zine. I have seen issues like #17, chock full of good reading. If issues like that came out frequently, I'd want to sub myself. Your "Spacelanes" I have always found entertaining even tho I have not the slightest interest in playing these types of games. But in the last year or so there have been too many issues with practically nothing but games. I hope that this changes, because games are not your strong point. I heard recently that Tom Mirti will be the guest GM for 1977Y, and that you may have more games guest-GMed. That's an excellent idea. It should give you more time for what you're better at and get the games GMed better.

With regard to "unprincipled", of course you don't consider yourself unprincipled. Its just that our principles are so diametrically opposed. But when it comes to using the term, I'm obviously going to use my standards, not yours. Also, when I said that you were an "unprincipled GM" I was referring to your GMing, and not stating that Tony Watson is an unprincipled person. While that may appear to be a rather fine distinction, its a real distinction to me. I intended an attack on your GMing, not a "personal attack" and I apologise for not making this distinction as clear as I should have.

Finally, I am also not interested in a running feud, grudge, etc. I have not publicly discussed the specifics of my many disputes with you outside my own zine and I will not do so in the future either. With the airing of my grievances in DIPLOMACY DIGEST 7-8 and this exchange of letters I now consider this affair part of my past and I think it unlikely that the matter will be publicly raised by me again.

((Without further ado, this is by Dave Lebling, from Erehwon 67 (4/10/72))

DIPLOMACY GEOPOLITICS

There are really two Diplomacy boards on each larger one. They overlap slightly, but usually by 1902 at the latest the overlap has gone away, to be replaced by two separate games/boards that persist at least until 1905. The first of these boards comprises England, France, Germany, and sometimes Scandinavia, Russia's north and west, and Italy. The second board comprises Turkey, Austria and the Balkans, southern Russia, and sometimes Italy and the remainder of Russia. The word "sometimes" obscures the fact that the two major centers of conflict in 95% of all Diplomacy games are on a line from Norway to the Low Countries to the Mid Atlantic, and second, in the Balkans and Austria.

What this means is that early in the game there is generally a drift away from the famous "barren line" of supply center-less provinces running from Livonia to Piedmont, and toward two other areas located closer to the edge of the board. This movement separates the game into two games. The general structure of the first game, which involves (usually) England, France, and Germany, can take two forms, a two-on-one fight or a three

can alliance. The second can evolve in several ways, most commonly two on two. That is to say, except on rare occasions, the barren line is not crossed until later in the game. There are obvious exceptions to this rule (such as German or English war with Russia, or a Franco-Italian conflict), and I will discuss these later. Keep in mind that the general result after about five years is going to be two winners on one side of the line, and two on the other. After that five years, they will end up fighting, which means it's time to cross the border. That means that the sidewich sorts out its area first is going to cross that line first, and the side that crosses that line first in strength is going to win the game. I say this because, as experience shows, the barren line is where defenses can be set up which, if they are not impregnable, are certainly close to it.

Summarizing, in most Diplomacy games, the winner, or the winning side, is going to be that side which is able to cross the line of defense first, and that side is going to be the side which first sorts out its area of the board.

Consequently, play should be with an eye toward preventing the line from being set up. There are two ways of going about this. The first is to form alliances that will cause your side of the board to be sorted out rapidly. One of these alliances is R-T; another is E-F. The second method is to form alliances that will boost the chances of the line being crossed in force before anyone starts to set up a defense along it; to eliminate the line's importance, as it were. England-Italy, or Germany-Italy, or Russia-Germany are types of these alliances.

There are problems with both of these approaches. The first suffers from the fact that the "speed" alliances, while usually successful, do not always keep sight of the problem at hand. An example is the R-T alliance, probably the single most powerful on the board, which tends also to be the first to bog down. A few fleets in the Med can stop it cold, sometimes before Italy falls. And in the north Russian control of Scandinavia is never certain, as it cannot be held against an English attack. In fact, the classic game of speed alliances is E-F vs R-T, where the barren line always ends up the demarcation, given reasonably competent players.

The second approach, which I tend to call the "unorthodox alliance" approach, suffers from violation of one of the first laws of the game: Don't ally with someone to move toward each other. The second law of Diplomacy also admonishes: Don't invite someone to surround you. Most of the alliances which break across the barren line violate one of the two preceding laws. This is not to say they can never succeed, but only that they are extremely dangerous.

With one exception, all the "unorthodox alliance" approaches involve alliances between corner powers and center powers, which are always dangerous for the center power no matter what the circumstances. The one exception is an I-A alliance, which is one reason why I believe that Calhamer makes it a "special pair". An I-A alliance has a reasonable chance to break across the line early, and with some good subsidiary alliances, of doing well against Russia/Turkey. In addition, and I believe this is another reason it's a "special pair", Italy/Austria avoid the single most ruinous thing they can do with each other: fight. Early in the game, for Austria and Italy to fight is utter madness, just as it is mad for Germany to attack Austria early in the game. I would say that I-A is a special pair by default, as the two powers doom themselves if they fight early.

It is my opinion that the "two smaller games" model, and the ways of getting around it, provide a useful framework for studying Diplomacy alliance patterns. I would also say that if combined with the "center-corner" model of describing the powers, it is very powerful indeed.

Finally, let me say that the foregoing is not intended to be an absolute description of what can happen in a Diplomacy game, but simply a description of the general tendencies. One thing it assumes rather blithely is that all the players are of roughly equal ability, an assumption that obviously breaks down in the real world. It also tends to assume rather good communication between the players and is thus more a "Diplomacy" than a "Postal Diplomacy" model.

((Prologue is from Seitenstetten #1, 1 Nov 1972 by Conrad von Metzke))

In 1963, John Boardman started Graustark and the first postal Diplomacy game, right? 1963, a five-man game, right?

WRONG! A postal Diplomacy game began in the summer of 1962 in a newsletter since named, but not then called, Mongo. This is to be confused with a newsletter called Mongo issued by the present editor for a while last year and since incorporated into Costaguana; the more recent edition (of Mongo, presumably) was Volume II.

Volume I - as it has since been dubbed by those who know - ran for five issues. Actually, they were not issues, except the last two, and they were in no real sense Dipzines as we understand the term.

What happened was this. In 1961-2 a group of people including the the present writer engaged in a number of in-person Dip games both on and off the campus of San Diego State College (now California State University, San Diego). At the close of the school term in 1962 the group fanned out widely, and for lack of 7 to play inperson I organized a postal game. The first "issue" of Mongo was a carbon-copy letter asking the proposed players if they were still interested in playing. "Issue" 2 was another carbon-copy letter stating the countries, players and addresses, and setting a deadline. "Issue" 3 was carbon-copy but was not in letter form; instead it was a listing of Spring 1901 moves, following the format of the sample game in the rulebook, and an announcement of the Fall 1901 deadline. (Press in those days was in the form of Treaties, Resolutions, Proclamations, etc., sent by each player individually to whomever he liked; none was printed in the "magazine".) Issue 4 was on ditto copy and listed the Fall 1901 moves and a deadline for builds; Issue Five was also ditto and announced the termination of the game for lack of interest (two had resigned, two missed builds, one asked to cancel, and that did it).

For years these precious items were presumed long lost. However, about 2 years ago Rod Walker ran into an old friend who had been a player in the game, and said friend just happened to have damn near everything he had ever owned in his life - the packrat type, you dig? - including the so-called Mongo issues. (Lacking the first, the are-you-interested? letter, which has truly gone from the earth.) Rod conned the guy out of them, and he and I have been planning to reissue them ever since. We never did, and now Rod has gone inactive. So, while I cannot talk him out of parting with the actual physical evidence, I can use it for reference to bring you

Game 1962-A1

The original players were:...(he lists them and the country assignments)

Who are these people? Well, von Metzke and Walker you know. Garland has been active in postal Dip until last year, no longer has any interest in the game, but still lives about a mile from me in San Diego - he's a professional student. Satchell is now an attorney in N.H. Perry is an Episcopal Priest, no idea where. Sutherland is.... assistant professor of history back where it all began - CSU San Diego. And Kelley is ... at Wright-Patterson Air Base. None of the last four has ever been diplomacy-minded since the collapse of this first ever-game, and except for Kelley I haven't seen them since 1962.

In other words, the only player still active and interested is your humble servant.

In those days the concept of a Gamesmaster had not occurred to us. I "Adjudicated" and printed the moves principally because I had the easiest access to a duplicator, and also because it was my idea. But in common with the old Diplomat games of Eric Just and Bob Foster, I played in my own gamesmastering affair.

The Proposition now:

How about we finish up this game? It's almost like a new game, considering that only the S/F 1901 is in the bag and the builds remain to be made - after ten years! It will be conducted by its original Gamesmaster, who - in keeping with modern policy - will not play. Therefore we need 7 players. There will be no fees.

((At this point, Conrad switches to the mechanics of this, suggesting that the game be

run in the modern style, with a non-playing GM, the traditional press format (i.e. aired in the zine) and the 1971 rulebook. He also suggested that they might want to run it in the old style if they wanted. He then followed with the Spring and Fall moves already played. There were clashes in Bla and E.C. but the rest of the spring moves are deducible from the fall moves, so I'll just list them))

A: a tri h, a ser s a Tri, f alb - gre G: a kie-den, f hol-bel, a ruh s a hol-bel
E: f lon-E.C., a yor h, f nth-nwy T: a bul h, a smy h, f ank-bia
F: a spa-por, a gas-spa, f bre-E.C. I: a tyo-tri, a ven s a tyo-tri, f ion-tum
R: a gal-rum, f sev-bia, a stp-mos, f fin-swe

Austria, Peance, Germany and Russia each build two. Engnd, Italy and Turkey each bild one.

The only freaky thing about the moves was an item which I changed in the rehash above. The Asutrian army tri was actually ordered "a tri-ven". In those days we had misread the rulebook and believed that a unit ordered to move could still be supported defensively if it failed to make its move. I amnot going to "correct" the "error" because the intent was obviously to hold trieste (Ishould know; I made the move). However, in the continuation of the game the rules will be read correctly....(the San Diego dip players continued to play by this misreading og the rules until 1965, when "mainstream" postal Dippy arrived in town and we found out the truth)

((Conrad concluded with a call for players, a promise to reprint those issues 2-5, and a promise to write some material on Diplomacy in the San Diego area around 1962))

((Seitenstetten #2 arrived 22 Nov 1972 with the country assignments: Len Scensny(T), John Boyer(R), Robert Ward(I), Charles Reinsel(G), Harold Naus(F), Richard Holcomb(E), and Conrad playing Austria as he had before, with round robin gamesmastering. A Winter Ol deadline was set.. He acknowledged with pleasure several inquires about the origin of the name of the zine, saying he was pleased that someone cared, and explained.....))

The Hoax: Von Metske tells all. SEITENSTETTEN, or - to be precise - Game 1962-A, was originally designed to be presented as a hoax. There was once a plot afoot, designed by Rod Walker and me, to completely overshadow the acheivement of John Boardman by foisting off on the public a well-developed, magazine-format, perfectly ordinary Diplomacy game called 1962-A. In this vein, we created several years worth of phony moves, two or three phony players, a phony title for a phony magazine, and even a few phony ditto masters to be used to produce phony issues.

I hadn't known about it until last week, but it seems that Rod went one step beyond. He created some phony publicity. Walt Buchanan tells me that the complete publishing history of "MONGO" was written up a year or so ago in great, excruciating, utterly false detail.

Well, Rod is gone, and the hoax has seemed ever more pointless over the months anyway. So when I finally sat down to do the 1962-A hoax, I droppedthe hoax part. The backround of this game as given in SEITENSTETTEN #1 is substantially correct, insofar as my memory serves me; in any case the prime facts are right. Rod's old "MONGO bibliography" and any information based thereon is, except where conjunct with SEITENSTETTEN #1, a pack of lies.....

((That's a good place to end our quotes from Seitenstetten because that's exactly what those two issues consisted of. A pack of lies. A hoax, designed for the purpose getting John Boardman's goat, and presumably, entertaining themselves and others. A Very succesful one, too. I have seen numerous references to 1962-A, especially in the 1974-5 time in various zines, generally assuming that the game was real, if somewhat irregular. Thus for example, in Diman #3 editor Brad Hessel, innocently relying on the Publisher's listing Diplomacy World vol 1 #5, called Conrad the first dippublisher. This precipitated a volley of letters from John Boardman in Diman #4 (Aug 1975) including the following...))

I havethe general impression, based on what's been published recently in DW and elsewhere, that while Allan Calhamer invented Diplomacy, and John Boardman invented postal Diplomacy, Rod walker invented the idea that Conrad invented postal Diplomacy.

((That was a pretty accurate description, for in the same month there appeared in Peter Berggren's Turnabout #13 the following article by Rod Walker, in his own style))

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

Or, Yellow Journalism Strikes the Von Metzke Ploy; or, Half a hoax is better than No fruit in you Cereal; or Walker Puts the cat in the bag so's he can let it out again; or You won't believe this, but....; or We'll Get started when Peter Gets tired of Typing all These Stupid Titles; or The popcorn...er, Envelope please!

When Diplomacy came to San Diego, back in 1961, it was because Conrad von Metzke espied an ad in Saturday Review and I had the money to buy one. I still have the original "copyright 1959 by Allan B. Calhmer" board, but that's another story. Any, we quickly developed a coterie of avid Dippy nuts, and we gathered in arcane places like Chula Vista and Kensington to play the game. We developed startling techniques of hiding orders in bowls of popcorn, elaborately forged orders for other players, and flying Dutchman (there were frequently 35 or 36 units on a San Diego board until we all took to counting before the orders were read.)

As all bad things must, our little group came to an end in the summer of 1962 when many of us left out our respective ivy-covered halls. The one die-hard in the group was Conrad. He proposed to play the game by mail! How impractical can you get?

Now, Conrad will tell you that he actually started such a game and played several seasons. The situation is thus created analogous to the modern notion that while Columbus discovered America, Ericson was here first. Analogously, we often hold that Boardman invented the Postal hobby but Von Metzke organized the first Postal game. Boardman will of course tell you that this is a hoax, just like the notion that CVM is really Haydn in a beard and stilts. (This last is actually a vicious rumor. Conrad started it himself. He is actually the former pet gopher of Bangs Leslie Tapscott.)

Well, here comes the expose, folks. It is a hoax. Sort of. But not exactly. Prithee hang loose whilst I elucidate.

The game, "1962" was itself an elaborate...or protoelaborate...hoax. We actually planned to type up and run off move-sheets and a sort of pseudo-magazine for it (Conrad and I = "we"). I never had the time for it, but Conrad went ahead with the hoax by "reviving" the "first game". We told Walt Buchanan what was going on since, in his capacity as hobby Archivist, he would not be any more confused than necessary and so he would not burn his copy of Graustark #1 in a fit of melancholia. We even projected into the game Bob Ward, who was part of our original playing group, whom we proposed to hogtie under a dripping bottle of Ms. Butterworth's Liberated Treacle until he swore to the authenticity of various documents and signed a pledge in blood that he had seen certain gold tablets...but that's another story.

Anyhow, 1962A was a hoax. Or was it? How do you suppose we got the idea for this anyway? Well, as it happens, back in 1971 I was rummaging around in my old records and I found a dittoed form letter. It was from Conrad, dated in July 1962 asking me if I wanted to play a game of Diplomacy by mail! Well, naturally I would never do anything as silly as that, so I declined. The game never got organized.

So, you see, it was only half a hoax after all. The truth is Columbus and Ericson all over again. John Boardman really did invent postal Diplomacy. But Conrad von Metzke thought of it first. One of those things that makes you think of angels dancing on a pin isn't it? Now, for my next miracle.....

((Wordy isn't he? I was tempted to trim out some of those tidbits about the San Diego scene, since they weren't directly about 1962A, but they give some clues as to how and why people do these silly things. The Columbus/Ericson analogy seems totally off to me. Ericson didn't just think of sailing here, he (supposedly) did sail. Its just that not-thing came of his trip. Still, there are some loose ends. For example, in Diman #5, Rod writes that "Walt Buchanan knew about it, as did Doug Beyerlein when he became BNC." However, in Diman #6 Beyerlein states "I did not know of the hoax until Bob Ward told me in December 1973. I do not believe that Walt Buchanan knew until recently" Accordingly, Doug did not list the game as a hoax when he reported its conclusion in Everything #22, (tho he did express skepticism) an action which doubtless furthered the hoax. Walt tells

me on the phone that he knew about it from the start, and planted the phony information in DW 1, #5 to further the hoax, not because he was duped by it. Finally, in Diman #6 John Boyer writes that he "...asked him bluntly whether the 1962A designation was false or not....He didn't come out straight and say it was false but.... I have the unforgettable distinct impression that it was false...The game started with positions all horrible - not one country had made the logical opening moves ((not so)) Conrad attributed this to the "poor experience" of the players in those days....Clearly this tipped me off to a "Conrad hoax"...The players chosen to play were Conrads...It was clearly set up by Conrad for a purpose of his own"))

DEFLECTING THE KNIFE: A REALISTIC LOOK AT ALLIANCES

From Impassable
#56 (5-31-76)

by Eric Verheiden

John Kador recently wrote a rather interesting article on the usefulness (or lack thereof) of stabbing. After a lengthy preamble about how the game would be much better off without stabs, we have the passage, "The most delicate possibility is when one ally is prosperous but the other is stagnating...The alliance is effectively negated."

Here then is the rub. This in fact is the most typical situation in a successful alliance. One player gets a few more centers, a little better position or simply a little more greedy than his about-to-become-ex-ally. Under such circumstances, one should not leave the back door open and then be surprised by uninvited guests.

What then is to be done?

My feeling is that neither the completely trusting nor the utterly paranoid approach is the best answer. Instead, on the defensive side, the idea is to make the potential stab as unprofitable as possible and to use your diplomatic skills to get that point across to your ally. It will not always work; some players substitute emotions for intelligence with predictable results (how many games have you seen Allan Calhmer do well in recently?). However, if you play your cards right, more often it will work.

The first thing to do is to leave a defensive unit or two near exposed positions. For instance, a French owner of England allied with Germany might well have an army in Edinburgh and a fleet in, say, Wales. This might not be enough to stop an invasion in its tracks, but it might slow it down long enough to bring up rearward units and renegotiate alliances. In practice, this should not slow the alliance up significantly. Exposed positions are usually near to home centers, where new units have to be built anyway. If, as frequently happens, building of new units outruns capability of bring them to the front lines, you lose essentially nothing. Finally, crumbling of the opposition tends to be an irreversible process. Once the breakthrough is made, a relatively modest investment in forces is enough to keep it going.

On the diplomatic front, without being overly insolent about it, it should be made clear to your ally that:

- (1) you will not drop out whatever happens,
- (2) if stabbed, you will drop everything else and use all means at your disposal to respond to the attack.

Such statements, to remain credible, must be backed up when necessary of course. Some means which might be reserved for such occasions include xeroxing of incriminating documents, etc.

For your own part, you should keep your eyes and as many options open as possible. If your ally is sowing discord behind your back, perhaps you need a new ally. If your ally is moving into a predominant position where you become more of a rival or--worse yet--a target of opportunity, than a comrade-in-arms, perhaps a pre-emptive strike is in order.

A few other hints:

Don't volunteer information. If you need to coordinate with your ally on something, fine. But otherwise, such information only serves to encourage your ally to move now rather than later.

Try to be a little unpredictable. Any little doubt you can put in your ally's mind as to whether that space will really be open or not will discourage him from trying anything.

Don't hold grudges (though "once burned, twice shy" is something else again). If your ex-ally seems like a sensible person and there is good reason to do so, don't hesitate to re-ally. This business about never allying with someone who attacked you is more suitable for grade school than the Diplomacy board and should remain there.

In 7/8, I featured a rather strongly worded tirade against Charles Reinsel. Here with the proverbial "opposing point of view" is Hal Naus, publisher of ADAG (1011 Barrett Avenue, Chula Vista, Calif 92011). ADAG has been published for nearly 12 years, without significant break. The zine very rarely runs articles, and despite the closing sentence this article was pretty much a one-of-a-kind. It is not designed as a rebuttal to criticism of Charles, but rather another view of him and his contributions to the hobby. This is from #108 (3-27-76).

Charles Norbert Reinsel

Editor and Publisher of Big Brother a much maligned personality in the World of Postal Diplomacy, Charlie as I call him (he would prefer people call him Norb) have been on somewhat friendly terms since I started playing and publishing way back in 1966. My first win was in Charlie's magazine. Charlie's rules at times are somewhat strange ((for example "If all the moves come in ahead of the deadline, they will be typed up ahead of the deadline and no further changes will be allowed" ---this from a front page denunciation of Reinsel's Rules in Lonely Mountain #43 (8-10-68) by Charles Wells, who noted that that rule interacted disastrously with his 13 day deadlines)) but I have always maintained that a Publisher has a right to do what ever he wants with his magazine. Big Brother #1 was first published on 22 February 1966. The first Diplomacy Rating system was invented in 1964 by Mr. Reinsel. Big Brother has run 39 Postal Diplomacy games to date. Some of the biggest names in Postal Diplomacy have played in Big Brother, and as Charlie states "Big Brother" has the distinction of never defaulting on a game nor of ever missing an issue. It is the best gamesmastered zine in the hobby. When he is not residing in Florida to escape the cold, and travelling around the country visiting people he is usually found in Leeper Pa. Charlie is a retired school teacher, who once ran for the state assembly in Penna. Every once in a while Charlie gets the urge and comes out to Calif; to visit and stay with me, we usually drag out new variant games and test them until they are perfect. And so ADAG in its first of a series of a History of its players and Traders tips its Hat to Charles Norbert Reinsel the ombudsman of Postal Diplomacy.

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Does everything always have to be done the same way its always been done? No, says Francis McIlvaine, in Impassable #48 (3-23-75).

A NEW APPROACH?

Everybody knows how games start in Diplomacy, you send in money and then you get surprised at game time to find out what countries and opponents you have. There is nothing wrong with this system, but must it be the only system? There are demonstration games where you send your money in and the gamesmaster decides if you are one of the top people in a game, and if you are -- you're in! Those demonstration games have top notch people and therefore are really good games to play in.

What happens if you don't happen to be considered (by anyone but yourself and your wife/mother/little brother) as a top notch player. Well then you are back to the old routine once again. Not that the old routine is bad, no, for the majority of games you should enter it is ((sic, as?)) a great way to meet new people and therefore one way to expand your pleasure in the game. But you as an average, or bagging, player have no opportunity to play in a hand picked demonstration game. You know that any gamesmaster won't pick you and yet you want to get into a game with all good players as much as any of the top notch players. Good players can be defined in almost any way, from someone who plays at about your skill level, communicates, writes good press, etc. to almost any other type of criterion. Say in a certain game you had an enemy who was really dogged, stubborn, never say die, and really enjoyable to play against. You would love to play in another game with him just to get a chance to be with him now that the circumstances have changed. Well, how do you do it? Start your own picked game.

Now I have no idea if this idea hasn't been going on from day 1 in Diplomacy, but, if it has, it has been kept a secret from me. I have talked to a former ally from a game

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Variants for less than Seven Players

((Of the published variants which use an ordinary Diplomacy board (there's a fine collection in the 1977 Diplomacy Handbook, still (I assume) available from Greg Costikyan, P.O.#865, Brown University, Providence, R.I. 02912) virtually all makes some significant change in the rules for play. The significant exception is the Rulebook itself, which lists ways of setting up games with less than seven players. While there's nothing wrong with these, and indeed they are a big improvement over what appeared in an earlier Rule book, they have a significant limitation. They are all opening game variants. Further, if you are forced to use these frequently in FTF play, its nice to see a different scenario. What follows is an alternative approach, written by Edi Birsan. It first appeared in Arena #37 , 10-25-73.))

All of us have experienced that feeling of wanting to get a good game of Diplomacy going but we don't have the needed seven players. Previously, major efforts were made to take the seven countries and make the game work by giving the countries to different players based on their strength and knocking out certain countries and their supply centers. These attempts for the most part were a total bomb. About a year ago The Arena began to experiment with different less-than-7 situations that departed from the traditional approach by not taking a 1901 situation as the only viable one. Furthermore, balance from the beginning was not considered of the greatest importance nor even sides ((??)). Added to this was the hope to create possible tactical/strategic situations that a player could work on that would improve his play as the problem would be typical of an actual end or middle game situation in a normal 7 man game. The following are several "problems" or situations which players can experiment with when they have less than seven.

6 Players

England: owns home, Nwy, Bel, has F Cly, F Lon, F Nth, F Nwy, A Bel
France : owns home, Spa, Por, Tun has F Bre, F Por, F Wes, F Tun, A Par, A Mar
Germany: owns home, Den, Hol, Vie has F Den, A Vie, A Mun, F Kie, A Hol ((A Boh?))
Italy : owns home, Tri, Bud, Ser has F Tyn, F Ion, F Nap, A Ven, A Bud, A Ser
Russia : owns home, Swe, Rum, has F Swe, F Sev, A War, A Rum, A Ukr, F StPnc
Turkey : owns home, Bul, Gre, has F Gre, F Aeg, F Ank, A Bul, A Smy
Play as a normal game, or with a 1906 limit..most centers by 06 wins ((Birsan left out the sixth German unit; A Boh is my suggestion)).

5 Players

England: owns home, Nwy, Den, Kie, Hol has F Nwy, F Nth, F Lon, F Nat, A Kie, A Hol((FDen))
France : owns home, Por, Bel, Spa, Mun has F Mid, F Lyo, A Bur, A Bel, A Mun, F Bre, F Spasc
Italy : owns home, Bud, Vie, Tri, Tun has F Wes, F Tyr, F Pap, A Tus, A Vie, A Bud, A Tri
Russia : owns home, Swe, Ber, Rum has F Swe, A Ber, A Rum, F Sev, A Rum, F Sev, F StPnc
Turkey : owns home, Gre, Ser, Bul has F Gre, F Ank, F Smy, A Ser, A Bul, A Con
Play as normal or until 5 game years have gone by ((I again suggest the missing unit))

4 Players

England: owns home, Nwy, Den, Kie, Hol, Bel has F Nwy, F Nth, F Lon, F Nat, F Ska
F Edi, A Kie, A Den
France : owns home, Spa, Por, Tun, Rom, Ven, Mun has F Mid, F Wes, F Tun, A Par, A Ruh
A Mun, A Ven, A Rom, F Spasc
Russia : owns home, Bud, Vie, Ber, Swe, Rum has F Swe, F Bal, F Sev, A Ber, A Boh
A Vie, A Bud, A Ukr, S StPnc
Turkey : owns home, Bul, Gre, Ser, Nap, Tri has F Adr, F Nap, F Ion, F Ank, A Bul
A Smy, A Ser, A Tri
Play as a normal game or until 5 game years have gone by

3 Players

England: owns home, Bre, Par, Nwy, Bel, Hol, Mun, Kie, Den
has F Nwy, F Nwg, F Ska, F Kie, A Mun, A Wal, F Bre, F Nat, F Eng, A Den((+??))
Italy : owns home, Por, Tun, Mar, Spa, Tri, Ser, Gre, Smy, Bul
has F Mid, F Por, F Wes, F Smy, S Aeg, F Ion, A Mar, A Spa, A Tri, A Bul, A Tyo
A Ser

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The Unwanted, Unnecessary, Convoy Puzzle: Some GMs Speak, and a Further Puzzle
By Mark L Berch

For those of you who came in late, in DIPLOMACY DIGEST 6, a convoy puzzle was re-printed from Tau Cet1. Stripped to the essentials, France orders A Bel-Hol, a move which is unopposed. No convoy is needed for this, but enemy England chips in with F Nth C A Bel-Hol, and a co-conspirator obligingly dislodges the fleet, which disrupts the convoy. To turn the knife in the wound, England claims the right to retreat to Hol! GMs were invited to send in their rulings.

I received a split response on this issue, with the majority stating that the French move fails. Thus John Leeder, Cal White and Roy Smith all ruled that it fails with no exception. There is, after all Rule XII, para 3 "If a fleet ordered to convoy is dislodged during the move, the army remains in its original province". Pretty unambiguous, huh? Not so. Consider Rule VII, para 1: "An army may move to any adjacent province unless this move causes it to conflict with another unit, under the rule that no two units may occupy the same space at the same time". There's no conflicting unit here (the dislodged fleet makes it move in a later season). The two quoted rules are in conflict, but are both absolute, and nothing in the Rulebook specifically states which is to prevail. Thus, it is my opinion that either decision by the GM is correct, and cannot be challenged by the player on account of being contrary to the rulebook. The ideal solution is a House Rule. Lacking that, the players should lobby the GM for their point of view when the situation arises.

In this regard, both John Leeder and Roy Smith believe that Rule XII, para 4 can be used to determine which of the above rules prevails: "Ambiguous Convoy Routes. IF the orders as written permit more than one route by which the convoyed army could proceed from its source to its destination, that order is not void on account of this ambiguity; but if any of the possible routes are destroyed by dislodgement of a fleet, the army may not move" Leeder states "This rule does not specify that all of the alternative routes must be convoy routes" No, it doesn't specify this, but any other interpretation is just too strained. The big tip-off is the title of the rule "...Convoy Routes". In the present puzzle, there is only one convoy route, so the rule cannot apply, if read literally. Further, as there is only one convoy route, it cannot be ambiguous. What's more, the term "route" in the Rulebook is only used in the context of convoys. Note also the phrase "route by which the convoyed army" (emphasis added), not "route by which the army ordered to move", further indication that only convoyed armies are being considered. Lastly, the example is just drawn to pure convoy routes.

Randolf Smyth takes a different approach. While the massive Fol Si Fie houserules do not cover this contingency, he writes: "...the French move does fail, but if he specifically rejects the convoy it would succeed". While this is an interesting compromise, it flies in the face of the Rulebook and Diplomacy tradition. There is no provision in the Rulebook for "rejecting" anything. If this reasoning were accepted, then people could also "reject" support. However, it has long been accepted that a self-standoff can be disrupted by unwanted support for one of the two moves by an enemy.

Since the article in DIPLOMACY DIGEST 6 came out, two GMs have amended their HR's. John Michalski, after reversing himself several times, came out in favor of the move succeeding, as did Don Horton, who added the following to the Claw & Fang HRs: "11. An army able to execute its ordered move shall do so any ordered convoy not withstanding." While these two GMs are to be commended for removing all ambiguity, I'm not so sure that they've made the better of the two choices. I have created the following puzzle, so pay close attention, and remember you read it here first:

England: A Cld-Edi, F NAO, F Iri, F Eng, and F Nth all C A Ciy-Edi
France : F Nwg C A Ciy-Edi
Russia : F Bar-Nwg, F Nwy S F Bar-Nwg

FLASH! Cliff MANN
is back on track. Copies
of Everything #34 available!

What we have here is three ways for the army to procede. One overland, one disrupted convoy, and one non-disrupted one. We still have the same XII, 3 vs VII,1 conflict, but this time XII, 4 is squarely involved. The use of Horton's Rule 11 will override two rules, i.e. XII,3 and 4, whereas the reverse rule would override only one. There is a second reason why I personally would prefer to see the army not move. The rulebook makes it clear that an opponent can foul up your plans by lending a "helping hand". The two examples of these are of course Rule XII, 4 (in which an unwanted convoy can foil a sucessful one) and unwanted support, which can foil a self-standoff. It seems a pity to go against the tradition and deny the resourceful opponents yet another way to foil the oppositions plans.

I urge all GMs to amend their houserules one way or the other, so that the players will know just where they stand. My own preference for HR or better still for revision of the Rule book would be: "In case of conflict between Rule XII, 3 and Rule VII, 1, the former shall prevail"

that we were playing in and we decided to try to get together such a game. We passed around a community letter to everyone that we were "inviting" and asked them to suggest gamesmasters, preferred starting time, preferred deadlines, and other things. We have gotten quite a bit of enthusiasm about this matter, and as this is written, I have every expectation that this game will get off the ground. The beauty of this plan is that you, or you and a friend or two, can select for those things you enjoy most as a player. If you are press freaks there you go, or extreme letter writers, or just extremely reliable people. Whatever you think is the most important aspect in a player, you can select for. These set up games need not only be only one player's friends; in this game we have asked people that know one another. Another good way to do it would be that three people suggest one person apiece. The idea that one person would be a natural ally and ruin the game is garbage. If you pick people thay is true, you have picked the wrong person. Diplomacy makes for strange bedfellows as they say.

The main problem that I see about this whole plan is finding a gamesmaster for it. Now I haven't asked around forever on this but it would seem that the typical zine publisher doesn't want to take on a game already formed, but I may be pleasantly surprised when we try to place our game.....

((The rest of it is a bit dated, as Frank offers to GM such a game. However, with the conclusion of all of his Dorsai games, Frank is no longer publishing. I do not think that such a preformed game would have trouble finding a publisher. If readers here form such a game, I will undertake to find a GM. You should inform me of the preferred deadlines, and what size game-fee you're willing to pay)).

Russia : owns home, Swe, Rum, Ber, Vie, Bud, Con, Ank
has F Con, F Swe, F Bai, A Bud, A Ank, F Bla, A Ber, A Vie, A Rum, A Gal, F StPnc
Victory by 18 centers or most centers after 1905.
Option 1: treat as a normal game
Option 2: no player is allowed to support another enemy piece against the odd fellow out.

2 Players

Inside : owns Ber, Mun, Kie, Vie, Tri, Bud
Outside: owns Par, Mar, Bre, War, StP, Mos, Sev
All units set up as in seven man ((woman?)) game. All other countries holding in civil disorder. Above centers are the home centers and the inside((and outside, presumably)) may build in any of their home centers((no victory criterion was listed. You might consider the game ending when the first home center falls)).

Greg, 1/1/84 his name. All the popular