



DIPLOMAG

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This is the bimonthly newsletter of the Postal Diplomacy SIG of American Mensa, bringing hobby and SIG news to Mensans interested in postal Diplomacy. The SIG arranges postal Diplomacy games for its members; for SIG game openings, make inquiries to the Chairman. Membership dues are \$3.00 per year. Diplomacy is a copyrighted board game produced in the USA by Avalon Hill Game Co., Baltimore, MD. Any opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of American Mensa, Limited.

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SIG CHANGES HANDS

As you may have noticed above, Fred Davis is now the Chairman and coordinator for our SIG. As your outgoing (that is, going out of office) Chairman, I promised Fred that I would produce one last issue of Diplomag, before dumping all of the SIG's records and assorted materials on him.

Unfortunately, this is running a little late. For some months now, I've only been able to do about 3 weeks worth of work in the course of a month. To the SIG's members, I apologize for the times when I have been slow to respond. At the moment, two close relatives are hospitalized, and so things are a little screwed up around our house.

For those of you who have sent SIG member biographies, do not despair. As I am quite a pack rat, Fred will receive all of them. (I'm not kidding--I still have correspondence dating back to when I was playing in Mensa #11.)

As I've said before, there is no doubt in my mind that the SIG is in good hands with Fred taking over. He's got the time, the energy, and the ability to carry this group on to bigger and better things.

SIG GAME NEWS

Mensa #21, my own game, has played through one season. Since that's not much time to get going, I'm going to pass up the chance to comment on it except to say that one player, citing the demands of his business, has asked me to help look for a replacement player. To get in at the next opportunity (and no fee of any kind) write to me and I'll send all of the relevant details of the position.

MENSA #17 ENDS--RON BROWN GETS RULEBOOK VICTORY

This issue of Diplomag has his endgame statement, but the statistics will have to wait for the next time if they're available then.

THE REST will have to wait for Fred's first issue, which I presume will be more-or-less on time. (I'm leaving him all the dirty work.)

1983 #W (Mensa 17)

Germany

Endgame Statement

It was not my intention to play in this game, so I was rather surprised to get a standby call in 1901 and then to get the position. I was very overworked at the time, both within the hobby and in that other world, so I didn't put near the effort I usually put into games into this one right from the beginning. I had never played Germany before, but the principles of playing any country are the same: fight one other country at a time.

France, for some reason, decided ~~right at the beginning~~ to ignore England and Germany and go after Italy. That made my task all the easier, as it meant one neighbour I didn't have to worry about. And Dave Lincoln, playing Russia, had problems with Turkey right from the beginning, so that left one obvious choice for who I was going to pick on first. I was also curious to see how Germany played as a sea power, as I much prefer sea battles to land ones. So, I began building fleets every opportunity I had. England convoyed an army to St. Petersburg, then moved it up behind my lines. If he had help from France that might have made sense, but I could afford to ignore that army, even when it took Berlin, as I had builds coming from poorly defended British home centres. Russia twice moved in my direction, at England's urging I suppose, but it was easy to convince him to pull back both times, especially as he did not have the strength to carry through against me with Turks sitting in his southern regions.

Once England was hopelessly crippled it was a simple matter of grabbing all of France, who was still battling Italy and ignoring his own home country. At that point I counted dots and picked the remaining centres I needed for the win. It looked for a while as though Turkey were going to give me a battle, but it never materialized. I attacked Galicia a few times to prevent, or slow, Turkey's taking of it, and was astounded when I kept ending up there. Even more amazing is that Turkey never attempted to annihilate that unit and hold Galicia for himself.

All in all, a strange game. I don't understand why France chose to leave his home country wide open. We never had any deal or understanding. Or why Turkey didn't defend against my win. There were a few times he could have punched through and caused me problems. For a while I thought a two-way German-Turkey draw would be the likely outcome. Well never look a gift horse, etc., or, count your blessings... I was given the win by the other players. All I had to do was decide each year what centres to take.

Thanks to both Steve and Bruce who did a fine job of GMing despite the constant frustration of NMRs and drops. I'd have no hesitation about signing up for other games with either one, though I think I'll need to get Bruce to explain his supply centre charts again. I wasn't sure what I owned the last few seasons, though I must have gotten the count right. And thanks to all those who stuck it out to the end. I'm sure some of the standbys must have been as baffled by this game as I was, but, there you have it. Thanks guys!

Copies to Steve Hutton and Bruce McIntyre (Gms), Bruce Poppe (SIG Co-ordinator), and Fred Davis (SIG Co-ordinator-Elect).

HEADING NORTH or my trip to the Canadian AG, continued

At the end of our last installment, I was stranded by the side of Interstate 81 in upper New York state. I had stopped for diesel fuel at an exit, trusting soul that I am, expecting to be able to get right back on the expressway and cruise on into southern Ontario. What happened?

Well, there just wasn't any entrance ramp, that's what. Once in a while, a person will see a sign that says there's no entrance ramp to get back on. But usually, it happens just like this time. And you're trapped. So you spend a couple of minutes like I did, looking for the sign that says "To I-81 North," then following a succession of these signs through the nearest little town for about 5 miles until one finally comes through to the real I-81 North. Could it be that the merchants in these towns convince the highway planners to put together these interchanges, then to leave off the warning signs, so that a few extra unsuspecting travelers will be forced through their towns, replete with both specialty shops and speed traps?

In fairness, the little town did have a nice view of a very scenic stretch of river. But I had already gotten my diesel fuel and had had lunch, so they didn't get any money off of this guy.

Ah, back on the road. Hit the Canadian border at 2PM. (Bet you thought I'd never get there, right?) Answered 20 questions at the border, which was quite a few more than what I've encountered before, including a trip 2 years ago with the same destination of Ottawa. It is my considered opinion that customs officials have less to do during the middle of a weekday, and have to find something to do. Now, if he really wanted to just pass the time, he could have said so, and would have been happy to tell my opinions on the US's foreign policy or god knows what else. I guess he was too busy protecting from drug smugglers and mother stabbers and father rapers and Arlo Guthrie.

Around 4PM I got settled into a campsite at Murphys Point Provincial Park. And proceeded to discover that my US dollars were pretty good, in fact, real good. The campground's administrators had posted the exchange rate, which was 35¢ on the dollar. In other words, my US dollars were worth \$1.35 CDN. All that and nice looking young ladies running the campground. In heaven.

At 6PM, I discovered that the mosquitoes considered this place heaven, too. Lots of them did. Maybe they got worse when the wind seemed to let up. I went hiking anyway, because the park is considered a "natural environment" park and was very nicely developed in that regard. I hiked about 2km on a trail, although there were more trails, preferring instead to drink in the natural beauty of the beach that I then arrived at, accessible only from that trail. I thought of going for a quick swim, but decided the water was probably too cold, and besides, it wouldn't do to be arrested for indecent exposure while a foreign visitor.

So it was on to bed early and rest up for the next installment. (No, don't panic, now. It's on the next page, OK?)

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Heading North, continued from page 3

So Friday finally got here, I did the cold cereal routine for breakfast, and got into the VW and set out to finish the journey up to Ottawa. Drove through Perth (Ontario, not Australia, but definitely had a certain Victorian feel to it). Got to Ottawa, parked the car and discovered that the AG's activities wouldn't be starting up for a few more hours and decided to spend the time looking around in Ottawa. Learned that the Rideau Canal was built in the early 1800's due to military threat by the US to cut off the St. Lawrence River during hostilities with Great Britain. Learned a lot about how the canal was constructed, and about construction techniques of 150 years ago, in what was basically wilderness in eastern Ontario. Read a book in a bookstore about the American Loyalists, people loyal to the British crown during the American revolution, and how they were said to be (and probable were) mistreated by the victorious rebels. I suppose that's the way it normally works during a violent revolution--anybody got any counter examples?

Wandered back over to the hotel where the AG was located. Was greeted in the elevator by the Local Secretary of the Ottawa area group, who noticed my Mensa T-shirt. After that I went to meet the people with whom I was staying (SIG member Ron Brown and his wife Ann Fothergill-Brown, who is also an M).

The Canadian AG was the same sort of feeling as the much larger American one, the same sort of extended family feeling, but on a smaller, more personable level. It's hard to put into words that kind of feeling, but it's definitely a nice one. The two highlights of the AG in terms of meetings were 1) a tour of Parliament Hill directed by a Member of Parliament, and 2) a presentation given by a Mensan who educates the deaf, with the presentation given using no spoken words at all.

The trip back? Just boring, 552.8 miles in 10:05:30, with lots of construction zones, and a traffic jam on the Baltimore beltway just to welcome me home.