FEB 1987
Double Issue

Wish you were here...

THE GOBETWEEN

Is a postal games magazine published approximately every six weeks. It's primary function is to cater for people who play games by mail. The Go Between seeks to fulfill this function by:

1. Running postal versions of boardgames like DIPLOMACY, KINGMAKER, STARFLEET BATTLES and other board games or encouraging such games to be played by mail.

2. Presenting articles, reviews, information on commercial play by mail games such as those offered by the Missing Tiger and other moderating services.

3. Providing information on the Play by Mail field in general.

4. To help bring information, people and products related to the PBM field together.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

A year's subscription costs $20 for approximately 8 issues. To subscribe make out a cheque or money order to Go Between Publications for $20

HOW TO PLAY POSTAL DIPLOMACY ETC?

To enrol into one of our postal games just write to us at Go Between Publications telling us that you would like to play in a game and we will place you in the next game of your choice that is starting.

If you are interested in other games such as Postal Go, chess or other boardgames not normally played within the ambit of this magazine turn to our NOTICE BOARD for details or write to us and ask us for information.

I WOULD LIKE INFORMATION ON....??

If you would like to know more about a particular game, activity or where to get things like articles, rules etc then send your request to us with a stamped self addressed envelope and another stamp (to help defray our costs) and we will try and provide you with that information or tell you where and how to get it.

We will try and give you a reply as soon as possible but this service is subject to the resource constraints of our other activities.

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EDITORIAL

Well the new year is well and truely here and so we commence Volume 5 of the TGB. I hope that the Christmas/New Year period was a happy time for you. I'm afraid I missed seeing in the start of 1987 as I was in hospital after the delayed arrival of Lance on the 30th December and Rick was still recovering after spending 24 hours in the labour ward with me.

The production of Vol 5 No 1 (and Vol 4 No.7) is really due to the efforts/articles and support given by subscribers and friends. I have found that adjusting to parenthood is a full time job. It is a fact that I never fully accepted, despite all the books and ante-natal classes, until after Lance's arrival. My only claim to this issue is the editorial and the drawing to update the noticeboard!

Having looked through the initial setup of this issue I am very pleased with how the Go Between is progressing. My one hope however is that this bumper issue is not going to diminish the number of articles available for magazines produced for the rest of the year!

Yes we have had a price incease. Hopefully you will agree that the standard of the Go Between has improved so as to help justify the increase. Since the last price rise we have increased the quantity and quality of the magazine while absorbing increases in costs such as postage. Due to Lance kicking his father out of his study we have to now expand the office downstairs which means John moving out from his bedsitter and the Go Between moving in.

Our primary purpose in raising the subscription rate now was to give us a bit of margin between costs and income to put back into the production of the magazine and associated services (such as sending out some of the game results slightly earlier to help keep the diplomacy games moving). A lot of magazines bear higher costs and as a last act of desperation raise their prices. We would rather use the extra income to improve the magazine.

Opposite the HONOUR ROLL (for all those who have made contributions to this double issue) is a plea for more contributors. For the first few issues of this year my time will be heavily devoted to Lance. Therefore Rick will need as much help as he can in ensuring that the Go Between stays ahead of the pack of other similar magazines. So if you can help in some way I would be most grateful.
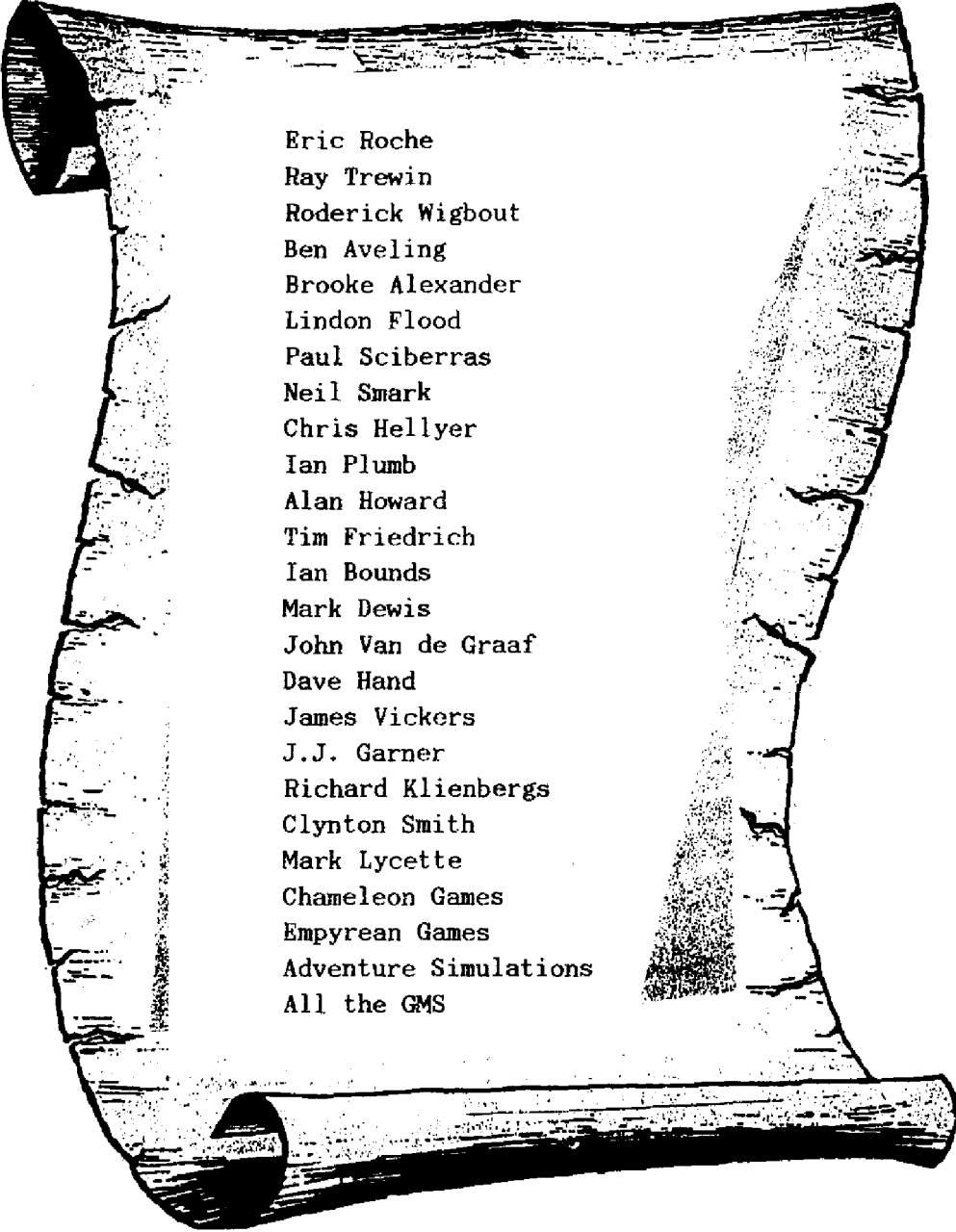
Esther

From Rick

Communication is vital in playing PBM games whether it be postal diplomacy or Final Days. All of us, including myself are often pressed by time or events and allow our efforts at comminicating go by the wayside. Yet one letter may be all that is needed to save the game for you or herald a change in fortunes. So keep writing or keeping in touch with each other. At the very least reply to all letters received even if it is only by a postcard bearing the words "Yes I agree" or "no" (Spartans would have enjoyed postcards).

We are also in desperate need for people to take on dropout positions in Diplomacy games. So volunteer.

Hönöur Röll:

Eric Roche
Ray Trewin
Roderick Wigbout
Ben Aveling
Brooke Alexander
Lindon Flood
Paul Sciberras
Neil Smark
Chris Hellyer
Ian Plumb
Alan Howard
Tim Friedrich
Ian Bounds
Mark Dewis
John Van de Graaf
Dave Hand
James Vickers
J.J. Garner
Richard Klienbergs
Clynton Smith
Mark Lycette
Chameleon Games
Empyrean Games
Adventure Simulations
All the GMS

The HONOUR ROLL is our small way of saying thanks to all those people who made some direct contribution to this issue.
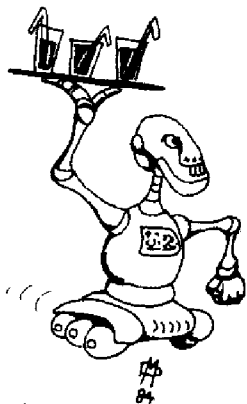
WANTED:

Standby Players

Writers

Artists

Gamemasters

LETTERS

Dear Tigers

So the GBT rates are rising again again. I can remember when the magazine was included as part of RFS (anyone else remember the Hunted Star?) I am increasing my subscription, but not without second thoughts. There were 7 issues of the GBT in 1985, and only 7 issues last year, at $20 a year that's a bit under $3.00 each.

I have no complaints about the contents of the GBT, only the time between issues, and increasingly the cost.

Trying to get value for money please enter me in as many Diplomacy games as possible (2 should do nicely).

Yours

Ben Aveling

Ed's Comments: Most of us do miss the Hunted Star. And as a reminder of that magazine we have placed the cover at the beginning of the Sirius Sector. As to cost, the last time subs were raised for the Gobetween was back in Jan 85. A fairly good effort at price restraint. The new sub price should help us make a similiar effort at holding costs.

Dear Rick

I've just received the magazine and congratulations on a job well done. Its starting to evolve into quite a varied magazine on play by mail in general. The articles are informative and not too heavy. I'm also glad that you are going alone (at least for the moment.)

Neil Smark

Dear Rick

Glad to hear from you. I received a copy of the Go Between a while back and it is very well produced. <u>Detente</u> is only a small zine, but this allows us yo maintain a reasonable standard of journalism. <u>Detente</u> is now in its fourth issue.

There are obviously many differences in our zines, mine is more concerned with journalism rather than millions of games. The *Go Between* is essentially apolitical, <u>Detente</u> is very political. My hope is that all players become part of a <u>Detente</u> family, all talking to each other on anything through the medium of the magazine.

Paul Sciberras *Editor of Detente*

ED notes;

I wish you all success with the magazine. However I would not describe the two magazines in the same terms as yours. I accept that the Go Between is apolitical (which may reflect the age of those producing it) I do not accept that the use of words like politics, communist or right wing etc turns a gaming magazine into a political magazine.

For anyone interested in a copy of Detente write to Paul c/ 132 Bundcock St Coogee NSW 2034

Issue 6 (Nov '86) of TGB was an interesting one. I certainly did not anticipate such passion to be roused by the Magic article of the previous issue. Chris' reply to me, a somewhat vociferous one I might add, attempted to demonstrate to me that the pricing system was fully justified, and that I was a fool for not being able to see that. Kevin's article says much the same, but also uses SA as a demonstration of his point.

The point is, my article stated twice that the pricing structure was justified. Apparently neither of them got that far when reading the article. I was trying to get the point across that the prices were rising because of the number of people involved in the game -- designer, owner, operators. Given this "command structure", I believe the prices are still too low. Postage of turns should be an additional charge. Anyway, what I don't think is justified, perhaps, is having three people trying to earn a reasonable amount from the one game -- that sounds like a good way of making a game go under.

Enough of Magic -- let it rest.   Ian Plumb.

Rick
        I think John Van De Graaf's (the designer of Feudal Lords) response covers all the points that we at Chameleon Games wanted to mention in relation to Ian Plumb's article about Feudal Lords.

        The only thing we would like to emphasis is that Ian is way out with his estimate of the dropout rate. By turn 10 the average number of dropouts is 5, of which 2 or 3 have been knocked by other players. By the end of the game another 2 or 3 will no longer be playing. As Ian has only played the one game of Feudal Lords it is a bit much to expect him to have a sound overall view of the game and how it is run.
                        All the best for 1987, Cheers Chameleon Games

        Rick's note:
        Ian supplies articles of his own choice. However I believe that it is possible to form a sound and objective view about a game after only one playing. I am not saying that Ian's impressions about Feudal Lords are correct (never having the opportunity to play the game) just that long term experience with a game is not always a prerequiste to analise its strengths and/or weaknesses.

National Diplomacy Ratings

In the last set of STAB ratings, we were pleased to announce that Gregory Calder had chartbusted with a bullet to number one in his first week with his hit entitled "I won Dip 6". We wondered whether he was a one hit wonder, or was capable of producing a decent follow up single, or even an album. To his credit, Greg has managed to hold fast to his position and is .770 clear on the charts. Games included in this issue:

The Envoy: 1 1909, 2 1909, 3 1907, 4 1909, 6 1909, C 1911, A 1916, B 1915, 15 1908 (all completed), D 1913, 12 1912, 17 1905, 18 1904, 19 1905, 20 1904, Kerenski 1903, Garibaldi 1903, Trotsky 1902, Three Bears 1908, Sleeping Beauty 1907, Rapunzel 1906, The Agg 1906, Princess 1905, Snow White 1904, Tom Thumb 1903, Maria Theresa 1902.

The Go-Between: AWHC 1912, 83-A 1908(end), 84-A 1910, 84-B 1909(end), 84-C 1907, 84-D 1906(end), 84-E 1908, 84-F 1908, 85-G 1905, 85-H 1905(?), 85-I 1905, 85-J 1904, 85-K 1904, 85-L 1904, 85-M 1903, 85-N 1903, 86-A 1902, 86-B 1902, 86-C 1902, 86-D 1901, 86-E 1901.

Place	Score	Name	Games	Title
1.	8.212	Gregory Calder	3	Slaysharp
2.	7.898	Darryl Davis	4	Derranged Daggers
3.	7.373	Duncan Sparrow	4	" "
4.	7.254	Craig Pullin	3	" "
5.	7.089	Neil Ashworth	2	" "
6.	6.797	Bill Brown	5	" "
7.	6.720	Paul Brooks	2	" "
8.	6.588	Rick Hopkins	3	" "
9.	6.582	Roland Maertens	2	" "
10.	6.581	Ian Castle	2	" "
11.	6.521	Cameron Thomas	2	" "
12.	6.515	David Monk	2	Delinquent Diplomats
13.	6.347	Simon Miles	3	" "
14.	6.341	Jon Mortenson	2	" "
15.	6.339	Michael Heath	2	" "
16.	6.321	Mathew Gibson	5	" "
17.	6.221	Rick Snell	2	" "
18.	6.168	Glen waring	2	" "
19.	6.082	Martin Kenesly	2	" "
20	6.043	Wojtek Czarnocki	2	" "
21.	5.913	Terry Bradley	3	" "
22.	5.866	Peter Cox	2	" "
23.	5.846	Graham Kidd	2	" "
24.	5.721	Andrew Champion	3	" "
25.	5.707	Paul Mellor	4	" "
26.	5.500	Peter Tavkoff	3	" "
27.	5.482	Tony Butcher	3	" "
28.	5.444	Greg Barnsley	2	" "
29.	5.376	Craig Sedgwick	1	" "
30.	5.332	Robert Wessels	3	" "
31	5.279	Daryl Kibble	5	" "
32.	5.155	Andre Swenson	4	" "
33.	5.154	James Marsh	2	" "
34.	5.133	David Worgan	2	" "
35.	5.066	Andrew Collister	2	" "
36.	4.933	Steve Rowe	2	" "
37.	4.860	Luther Weale	2	" "
38.	4.832	Peter Quail	2	" "
39.	4.613	Margaret Williams	2	" "
40.	4.611	Alex Geissman	2	" "
41.	4.498	Dirk Unewisse	2	" "
42.	4.401	Andrew England	5	" "
43.	4.371	David Cox	4	" "
44.	3.861	Royden Beam	2	" "
45.	3.647	Michael Hopton	2	" "
46.	3.115	Geoff Thomas	5	" "
47.	2.952	Kim Robin	2	" "
48.	2.882	Peter Ryan	3	" "
49.	2.862	Steven Clarkin	2	" "
50.	2.846	Duncan Baxter	4	" "
51.	2.841	Paul Vilarino	2	" "
52.	2.365	Michael Rothery	2	" "
53.	1.983	Mark Haughy	2	" "
54.	1.799	Chris Edwards	2	Tooth Fairy

Pocket Knives

Wayne Closter 7.998	Tony Wilkins 7.998	Tim Frederich 7.776
Paul Reulein 7.776	Richard Harding 7.665	George Smirnow 7.554
Robert Benton 7.465	Peter Szabo 7.443	Adam Griffiths 7.332
Daniel Hamilton 7.332	Marion Ashworth 7.165	Robb Oorlemans 7.065
Steven Clare 6.998	Chris Wade 6.998	Ray Griffiths 6.932
Steve Gould 6.670	David Cherry 6.665	Clifton Mak 6.665
David Walsh 6.665	Roger Woodward 6.665	Kevin Britton 6.221
Martin Francis 6.221	Paul Profilio 6.221	Andrew Schacht 6.120
Paul Brown 5.999	John Cain 5.999	Richard Howell 5.999
Eric Roche 5.999	David Simmons 5.999	Paul Champion 5.665
Victor Jurmusz 5.776	John Ford 5.556	John Ball 5.332
Geoff Barrow 5.332	Paul Brown 5.332	Peter Burton 5.332
Wayne Closter 5.332	Mark Prandolini 5.332	Paul Scibberes 5.332
Graeme Lockwood 5.294	Stephen White 5.153	Tim Crowe 5.110
Paul Castle 4.998	Jim Penman 4.666	Ian Whitchurch 4.666
Ray Selfe 4.475	Neil Garde 4.472	Grant Galloway 4.444
Mark Dewis 4.443	David Welsh 4.443	Steven Goldie 4.339
David Hallet 4.339	Geoff Wilson 4.294	Darren Cotten 4.221
Richard Morrisson 3.999	Chris Wilkins 3.999	Mark Plaizer 3.732
Steven Szabo 3.732	David Andrews 3.666	Brian Carr 3.666
Tony Davis 3.666	Ian Graham 3.666	Peter Hudson 3.466
Neil Smark 3.333	Danny Height 3.278	Chris Jose 3.175
Tom Gribble 3.166	Craig Clarke 3.110	Glen Northey 3.110
Carl Young 3.110	Kim Nagel 2.833	Anthony Staunton 2.779
Braddon Giles 2.666	Ritchie Holmes 2.666	Phillip Dorling 2.656
Michael Matthews 2.444	Julian Dell 2.333	Peter Williams 2.111
Rocco Weglarz 2.000	Ted Conner 1.196	Penlila 1.611
La Verne Height 1.429		

As some of you may have noticed, there are a lot of names missing from these lists and I'm not entirely sure that they're completely up-to-date. For example, in the last set of ratings there were 57 names on the ranked list. Considerably more should have been added to this one and yet the list has shrunk to 54. Michael can't even find his name on any of the lists and Wayne Closter has somehow gone from 10th on the ranked list to two separate Pocket Knives scores. Have patience everyone. Peter has only recently taken up the task and deserves a lot of tolerance. Please write directly to him with any of your queries. 3 Bowman Cres Enfield 5085.

NOTICE BOARD

FACE TO
FACE.

FACE. TO FACE.
Steven Bagshaw
09 - 342 9552
78 Sherington Rd
Greenwood 6024

Co-ordinator

PBM OPPONENT
FOR 'GO' & 'CHESS'
(vegie level please)
ANYONE WITH INFO
ON HOW TO PLAY
PBM AD&D.
GAVIN BEGBIE
15 BOAM BEES
PT. MACQUARE
NSW 2444

Rick

Co-ordinator
Contact
John Cain
78 Banool Rd
Balwyn 3103
03-8362285

WANTED PLAYERS IN SYDNEY
FOR
BATTLETECH
CAR WARS
N.A.T.O. vgames
& PANZER COMMAND vict.game
PAUL BRAUN 528-3778

WANTED ~ ALIVE
PBM opponent for
A.H.'s "Battle of the
Bulge"
Contact Dougal
4 Ivy St
Burwood 3.25
Dougal
McCulloch

Griffith Uni gaming
club
Brisbane.
Sunday 10am-5pm
at Uni. All welcome
50¢ a day $20
a year membership
role play, board games

PS. arrange
games at other
times contact
Malcolm Owen
3721434 · night
Mon, Wed, Thur

so it begins...
... FINAL DAYS 3

DIPLOMACY GAMES STARTING THIS ISSUE

Diplomacy
87 A

Diplomacy
87 B

FRANCE

Ben Aveling
17 Lonbourne Ave
Notting Hill Vic 3168

FRANCE

Chris Bolger
9 Fincham St
Zeehan Tas 7469

AUSTRIA

Jim Penman
20 Wolsenlen Court
Blackburn Vic 3130

AUSTRIA

Bob Howard
36 Gladstone Rd
Leeming WA 6155

ENGLAND

Gavin Begbie
15 Boambe St
Port Mcquarie NSW 2444

ENGLAND

Greg Cobcroft
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Wilberforce NSW 2756

TURKEY

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HOLGATE NSW 2250

ITALY

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Greenwood WA 6024

RUSSIA

Neil Smark
5 The Strand
Colonel Light Gardens
Adelaide SA 5041

RUSSIA

Warner Airey
14 Carramar Ave
Camberwell Vic 3127

GERMANY

Doug Cowling
PO Box 151
Northcote Vic 3070

GERMANY

George Smirnow
15 Aubrey St
Vermont Vic 3133

GAMEMASTER

Steven Bagshaw
78 Sherington Rd
Greenwood WA 6024
09 342 9552

GAME MASTER

Rick Snell
GPO Box 286 C
Hobart 7001 002 23 3926

87 C now filling.

Rick Snell, Adam Boyton, Gavin Begbie, Ben Aveling need three more opponents and a GM.

EMPIRE THEORY

The first article in this series focused on the patterns that emerged in the opening and middle positions of Italy in Australian Postal diplomacy games. The second article concentrates on the Austrian position.

The study is based around Allan B. Calhmer's thesis of Empire. That is each country in Diplomacy would tend to collect a group of supply centres that would form an empire. In forming this empire certain patterns would be likely to emerge.

Out of these game patterns may emerge some valuable lessons for Australian postal diplomacy players. Lessons such as noticable playing trends or repeated weaknesses in position across several games. As with any study of a small number of games the observations drawn must be accepted with a large degree of caution.

Map 1 shows a summary of the position of Austria at FALL 1902 in 27 Australian postal Diplomacy games.

SUPPLY CENTRES HELD BY AUSTRIA FALL 1902

① = NUMBER OF GAMES CENTRE HELD IN.

MAP 1

The most surprising pattern is the high incidence of the Austrian home supply centres being lost by FALL 1902. Austria could only managed to hold Budapest for 20 of the 27 games. This alarming situation must have great implications for the viability of Austria over a complete game. Home centres are vital for the production of new armies and fleets in Diplomacy.

Therefore it is not surprising to find Austria already eliminated in two of the games by Fall 1902. This is a very quick exit by Austria and must add to the concern all potential players.

Rod Walker points out in his *The Gamers Guide To DIPLOMACY"* that of all the countries Austria has the worst elimination record.

I have yet to discover a reasonable explanation for this frequent poor start by Austria. My comment, in the last article, re the potential damage to Austria by the marked tendency of Italian players to strike early at Trieste appears understated. The Italian attack at Trieste is potentially the very early death knell of Austria.

Other interesting observations: Austria has not been able to launch a successful attack against a German home supply centre, especially Munich. The very low success rate in capturing the Italian Centre of Venice (only 2 out of 27 games) can again be explained by Italy's tendency to attack Trieste very early in Australian postal play.

The one other factor to mention is the apparent anti-Russian tendency with Warsaw, Rumania and Sevastapol controlled by Austrian players.

For more Diplomacy Articles: DIPLOMACY WORLD.
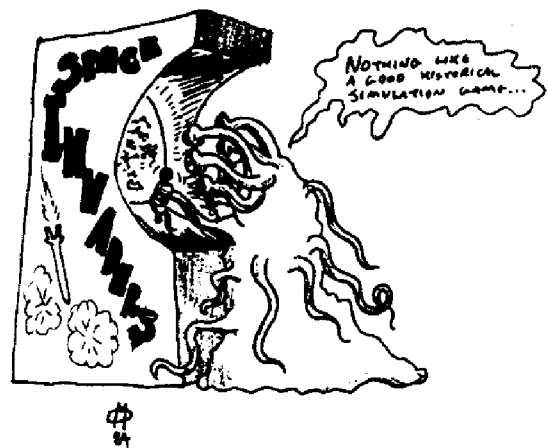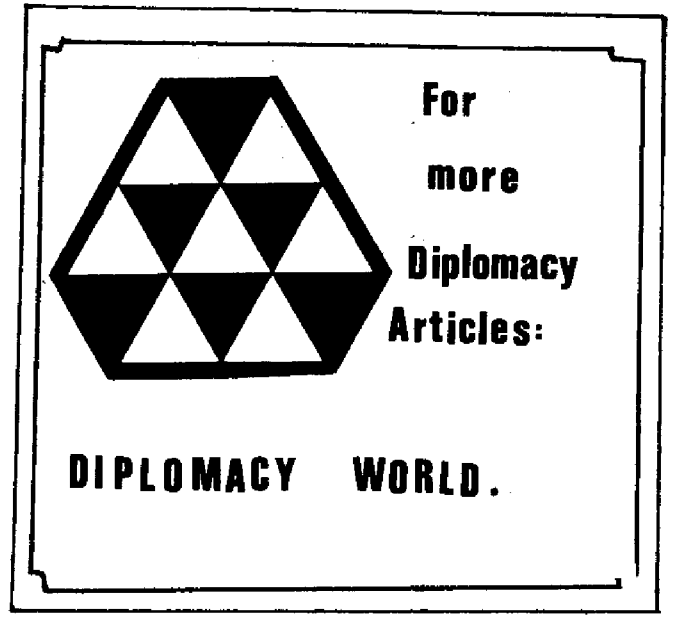
diplomacy
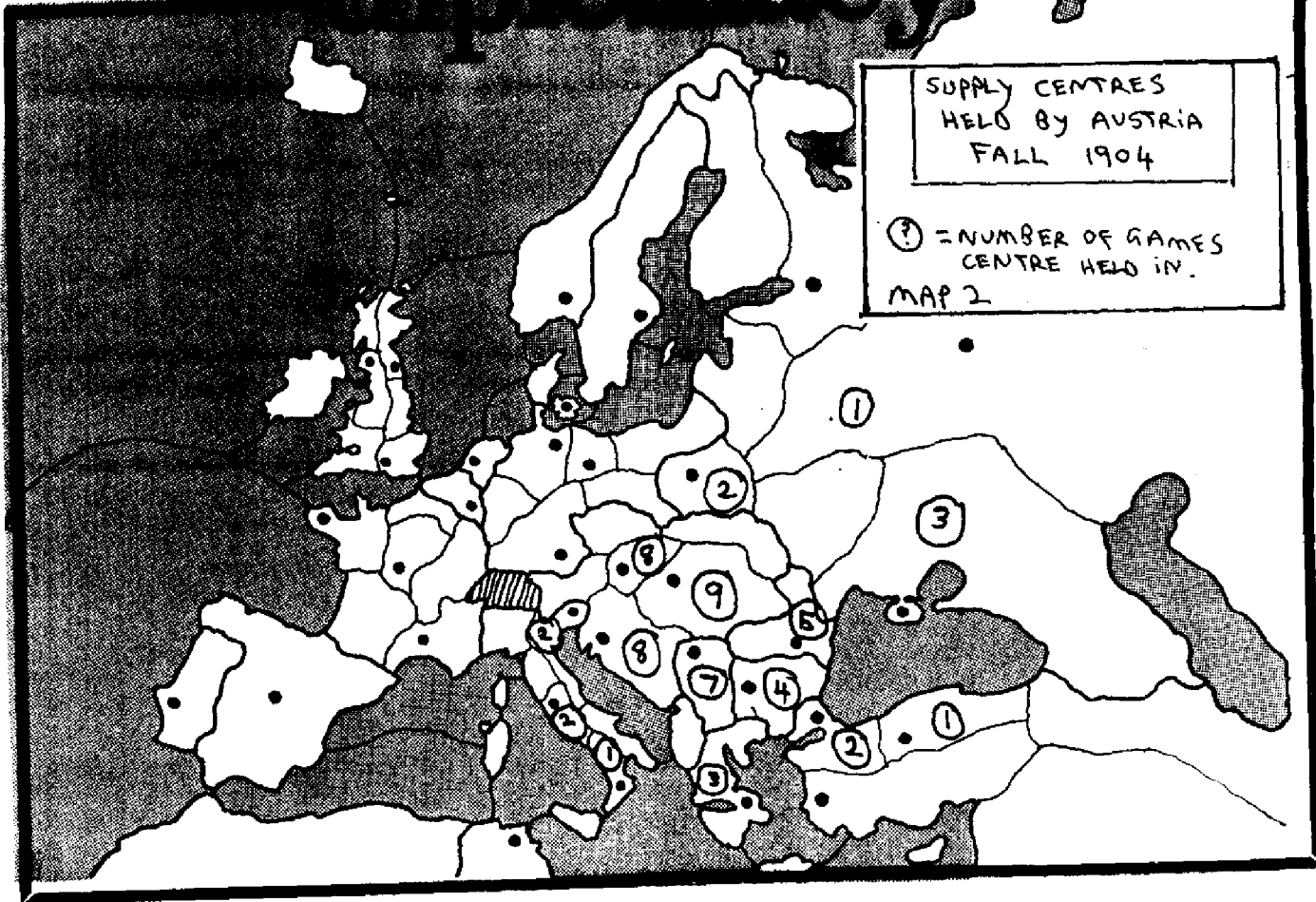
SUPPLY CENTRES HELD BY AUSTRIA FALL 1904

② = NUMBER OF GAMES CENTRE HELD IN.

MAP 2

FALL 1904
Wither Austria?

The most striking feature at this point of the game is the high elimination rate for Austria 9 games out of 19 ! A very poor track record.

So why? The first response is because of a very low success rate in gaining control or holding the nearest centres (within 2 spaces) of Austria namely Venice, Rome Munich, Warsaw Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania and Sevastapol. see MAP 2. The number of games where Austria controls Greece has dropped from 13 at Fall 1902 to 3 by Fall 1904 (in the space of four moves).

Again no successful attacks have been made against Germany.

There remains a heavy Russian bias rather than successful raids against Turkey or Italy.

SUPPLY CENTRES CAPTURED BY AUSTRIA
Table 1

Turkey

Con	Ank	Bul	Smy
2	1	4	-

Russia

Rum	Sev	Mos	War
5	3	1	2

Italy

Ven	Rom	Nap
2	2	1

So who is doing most of the successful attacks against Austria?

Table 2

	Vie	Bud	Tri	Ser	Gre	Total
Russia	5	6	-	-	-	11
Italy	4	3	7	4	3	24
Turkey	-	-	2	5	6	13

Mainly Italy and as surmised from the study of Italian play the two eastern sisters Turkey and Russia eagerly devour what is left. Basically in Australian postal play Austria becomes the "Poland" of Diplomacy.

Interestingly the majority of the Russian captures of Vienna and Budapest occur in Go Between games while Italy is more successful against these two supply centres in the Envoy (previously Rumple and Austral View) games.

FALL 1906
Condition Critical But Stable

Towards the mid game Austria has stopped the fatal bleeding with only one more elimination occurring but still very high at 10 games out of 18 studied.

Finally Austria has began to move against Munich with 3 successful captures (Map3). The position in the east remains almost stalemate from FALL 1904 but with gains against the Russian centres of Warsaw and Sevastapol. It appears as if Turkey acts as a strong barrier to Austria pushing it against Russia.

A quick glance at Table 3 confirms this:

Table 3
Russian Territorial centres

Rum	Sev	Mos	St.P	War
4	4	1	1	4

Turkey

Gre	Bul	Con	Ank	Smy
3	3	2	1	-

While Turkey holds Austria in check to the east Italy also seems to be a very difficult nut for Austrian players to crack with the position unchanged since FALL 1904.

Conclusion

It appears that the odds are stacked against Austria in Australian postal play. The tendency for Italian players to strike against Trieste early in the game delivers a crippling blow from which Austria rarely recovers.

The lesson is clear for all Austrian players "Peace and Co-operation with Italy At All Costs". The geography of Italy makes it very hard for Austria to successfully invade that country. Rod Walker in the *Gamer's Guide"* strongly advocates Austria not stabbing Italy or if necessary to wait until Austria gets to build at least 2 centres to Italy's nil. Which effectively means waiting to the middle or end game.

Two ways of achieving this co-operation is working together in a Lepanto Opening against Turkey or for Italy to expand west towards France and Spain while Austria heads east against Turkey or north-east against Russia.

It seems that Austria needs to devote heavy resources to its Italian diplomatic efforts.

Unless the general play of Austria improves it may earn the wooden title of being the "Poor Man " of the game rather than Italy.

diplomacy

MAP 3
SUPPLY CENTRES
HELD BY AUSTRIA
FALL 1906

② = NUMBER OF GAMES
CENTRE HELD IN.

At Last: *they have arrived;*

T~shirts boasting

The Missing Tiger logo.

This is a limited print so
order your t-shirt early.

*Good quality white t-shirts with black logo.
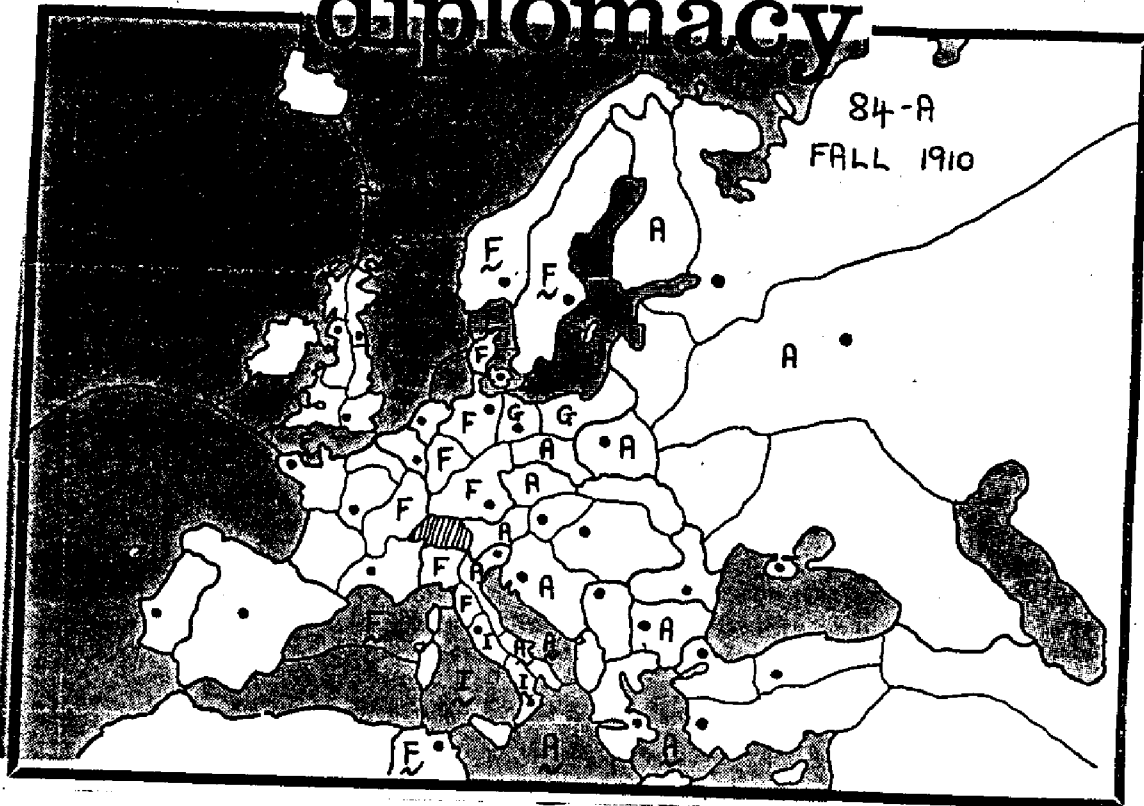
DIPLOMACY 84-A   FALL 1910

FRANCE (Brown)   AUSTRIA (Davis)
    F BAR - ST.P   A ST.P - MOS
    F NOR - SWE   A VIE - ST.P
    F SKA S F NOR - SWE   A MOS - WAR
    F NTH - NOR   A SIL S (GER) A BER
    F ENG hold   A TYR - PIE
    F LYO S A PIE   A BOH - MUN
    F TUN - ION   A VEN S A TYR - PIE
    A DEN S F NOR - SWE   A TRI S A VEN
    A KIE S A BUR - MUN   A CON - BUL
    A RUH S A BUR - MUN   F APU - NAP
    A MUN - TYR   F ION S F APU - NAP
    A BUR - MUN   F AEG S F ION
    A PIE S (ITA) A ROM - VEN   F ADR S A VEN
    A TUS S (ITA) A ROM - VEN

GERMANY (Hopkins)   NMR   ITALY (Smirnov)
    A PRU hold   A ROM - VEN
    A BER hold   F TYN S F NAP
    A SWE hold   DISBAND   F NAP S (FRE) F TUN - ION

KEY:
    ⬭ Failed Moves
    NMR No Moves Received

                SUPPLY CENTRES
FRANCE : (15) - 1 Build
              BRE   PAR   MAR   SPA   LIV   LON   EDI   BEL   HOL   KIE
              DEN   NOR   MUN   TUN   SWE
GERMANY : (1) - 1 Disband
              BER
ITALY : (3) - No Change
              ROM   POR   NAP
AUSTRIA : (15) - 2 Builds
              VIE   BUD   TRI   GER   BUL   SEV   RUM   CON   MOS   ST.P
              VEN   ANK   GRE   SMY   WAR

Public Statements :

    VENICE - "The Austrian liberators have decided to vacate southern
             Italy due to ill treatment by the Mafia influenced locals
             who were brandishing French arms. We shall not return!

                                    PAUL MELLOR

BOARDGAME? 👉

TRY:

diplomacy

DIP 85 H   FALL 1906   G.M. Terry Bradley.

AUSTRIA (Smirnoff) A Pie - Ven.; A Tri - Ser.; A Bul - Ser (Disband; no retreat available)
                   A Ser - Gre; A Nap H.; F Ven - Adr.

ENGLAND (E, R) F Lon - Nth.; ~~F Eng S F Lon - Nth~~; F Iri - Lpl; F NAO - Cly;
               A Kie S (Fr) A Bur - Mun.

FRANCE (Kenseky) F Tyrhh - Ion.; F W.Med - Tun.; F Spa - MAO; ~~A Bur - Mun~~; ~~F Bel - Eng~~;
                 A Ruh S A Bur - Mun.; F Por S F Spa - MAO; A Hol H; A Mar H.

RUSSIA (Cluttered-board) A Yor - Edi; F Nth - Den.; ~~F Nwg - Nth~~*; A Ber - Kie; A Mun S

* Failed because   ~~A Ber - Kie~~; A Sil S A Mun; A Con - Bul; F Bla S A Con - Bel; ~~F Aeg - Gre~~;
Russian 4th fleet
is in Norway, not   ~~A Rum - Ser~~; A Gal - Bud; ~~A Ukr - Rum~~; A Boh - Vie; ~~A Tyr - Tri~~.
Norwegian Sea.
                  EMPIRES! ENGLAND. Lose Edi, Den. Disb A Kie, F Den. -2 = 3

                          FRANCE Lose Nap. Disb F MAO   -1   = 8

                     AUSTRIA. Lose Bul, Gain Nap. No Change (or Room for Build) = 6

                  RUSSIA Gain Edi, Den, Bul - Build F Sev, F St-P(NC), A War +3 = 17 !!!

ANNOUNCEMENT. " The time for subtlety is past! Austria, England + France must now
act as one to stop the roll of Russia. France must lead with absolute support from
Austria and England. There is only one other way - suicide ".   SMIRNOFF.

ACROSS

1 Mail
3 Australian PBM magazine
8 British PBM magazine
9 Third planet from the sun
11 Popular board game
14 Abbreviation of 16 ac.
15 Information
16 Australian strategic science fiction
   PBM game
19 Where you are most likely to be
   stabbed
21 Australian PBM company
24 Vigilant
27 "----- QUEST" fantasy PBM game
28 Could this exist on other planets?
29 "------ Lords" PBM in Arthurian
   England
30 "Flying -------" US PBM company
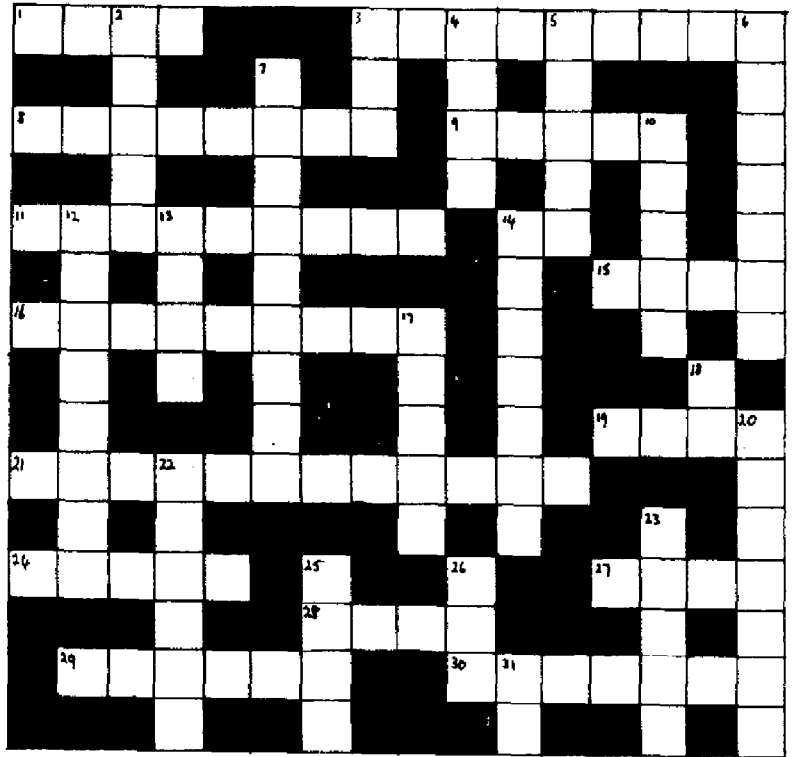
FINAL DAYS

   Eighteen rebel groups in disarray face the organised might
of computer controlled forces. You start this play by mail game
as the commander of a small rebel force. Somewhere nearby are
other similar groups, each too small to be a threat to the robot
army alone.
   In the game you face the dilemma of organising the defeat
of a powerful and deadly enemy whilst avoiding the treachery of
your allies'.
   NO OTHER GAME encourages so much cooperation
between players.
   NO OTHER GAME ties your fortunes so closely to
everyone else.
   The goal is the same for each player.
   Everyone needs help to get there,
   BUT only one rebel leader can claim victory!

FINAL DAYS FEATURES:

- A strategic and tactical warfare game completely
  computer moderated.
- A common foe, the robot forces are controlled by a
  real computer.
- 18 players per game.
- Graphical representation of terrain presented as
  hexagonal grid.
- Selection of 20 easy to write orders, including
  strafing, ambushing and mine laying.
- Regular voting for best leader.
- Clear and concise rulebook.
- The Missing Tiger guarantees that turn fees will
  not increase during the game.

For free information on this play-by-mail game, put your name
and address on the back of an envelope, enclose a stamp and post
it to;

The Missing Tiger
GPO Box 286C
Hobart, TASMANIA
AUSTRALIA, 7001

DOWN

2 Shows you've paid Australia Post
3 "Game of Princes" (abbrev)
4 "Keys of -----" British human moderated
   PBM game
5 Another name for 9 ac. and also a
   PBM game "------ II"
6 Atomic energy
7 "---------- Games" Aust. PBM company
10 Dominant lifeform on Earth
12 Pertaining to an empire
13 You can be one in Aquilonia
14 "------- & Sons" possibly the largest
   PBM Company in the world
17 Any sufficiently advanced technology
   is indistinguishable from this
18 Personal computer (abbrev)
20 New continuous turn-around game
   from the Australian Wizard
22 The Dog Star
23 "----- Days" postholocaust PBM game
25 A person most likely to betray you
26 "Star ---" first commercial PBM game
31 Universal Konstellations (abbrev)
   (AusWiz really spells it that way)

diplomacy

GM Eric Roche   New Address: 367 Argyle St, NORTH HOBART 7002.

France (Cherry):   F Tun - TYH , F Rom - Tus , F Nap - Rom , F GOL - Spa (sc),
A Par S A Bel - Bur , A Bur - Bel (NSU**).

Turkey (Mellor):   A Mar - Gas , F ADR S F AEG - ION, A Pie - Mar, A Tyr - Ven,
F Apu - Nap , F AEG - ION , A Con - Bul , F ION - TYH
A Bul - Ser.

Russia (Closter):   F StP(nc) - BAR , F Nwy holds, A Fin holds, A Swe S F Den,
F Den S A Mun - Kie , A Mun - Kie , A Boh - Mun, A Pru - Ber,
A Sil S A Pru - Ber , A Mos - War, F Sev holds.

Germany (absent):   A Ber disbands (NRP).

England (civ. disorder):   This country is now vacant. Anyone out there want it?
Has F NAO, F NTH, F HEL, A Hol, F ENG, A Bre.

Press: The journalists of Europe appear to have gone on holiday — GM.

diplomacy

Fall 1905.

TURKEY (D.Walsh)   : A Bul Hold; F Con S A Bul; F Smy Hold; F Tun Hold;
                          F Arm-Sev.
AUSTRIA (T.Friedrich)   : F Tri-Alb; A Ser S ITALIAN A Gre-Bul;
                          A Rum S ITALIAN A Gre-Bul; F Ion S ITALIAN F Tyr-
                          Tun; A Sev-Arm; A Mos-Sev; A Gal parachute to
                          Ank(turned back by squadron of flying carpets);
                          A War watch A Gal P Ank.
ENGLAND (A.Giessman)   : A Swe-Nwy; F Mid-Spa(sc); F Por S F Mid-Spain(sc);
                          F NAt-Mid; F Lon-Nth; F Edi-Nrg.
FRANCE (J.Ball)   : A Par S A Bre-Pic; A Mar-Spa; A Gas S A Mar-Spa;
                          A Bre-Pic; F Yor-Nth.
GERMANY (B.Aveling)   : A Pic S A Bur-Par; A Bur-Par; A Mun-Bur;
                          A Pie-Ven; F Bel-Eng; F Bal Hold(Gone Fishin').
ITALY (M.Dewis) NMR   : F Tyr; A Apu; A Gre; F Eas.

SUPPLY CENTRES at end of Fall 1905 move.

AUS:	Vie,	Bud,	Tri,	Ser,	Rum,	War,	Sev, Mos. = 0	(8)
GER:	Ber,	Kie,	Mun,	Den,	Hol,	Bel,	Ven = +1; A Ber.	(7)
ENG:	Lon,	Liv,	Edi,	Nwy,	St.P,	Swe,	Por. = +1; A Edi.	(7)
TUR:	Ank,	Con,	Smy,	Bul,	Tun. = 0.			(5)
FRA:	Par,	Mar,	Bre,	Spa,	Por. = -1; F Yor disbands.			(4)
ITA:	Rom,	Ven,	Nap,	Gre. = -1; F Eas disbands.				(3)

MESSAGES. 'Hello! Is anyone out there?', Kaiser Aveling
          'For Hire, two Austrian armies, do anything, anytime.
          Rates Neg..', Crown-Prince Friedrich. (also part-time postman)
          'Rumours have it that King Dewis of Italy has been forced to
          abdicate. The Military Junta that ousted him has itself been
          overthrown by the not so happy peasants because of the occup-
          ation of Venice by the nasty nazis. So, the not so happy
          peasants are looking for some nice megalomaniac to come and
          exploit them. Interested? Then apply to the GM. 1000 King Dewis
          WILL BE GIVEN PRIORITY.'
                          GM .

Dirty Tricks

Diplomacy is a great game. As a means of making new friends then turning these friends into bitter enemies, I have not seen better. Quixotic?

If you want to do this, turn friends into enemies, in Diplomacy there are several ways. These generally come under the headings of "Strategy and Tactics" and "Diplomacy".

Firstly diplomacy. We all know and love the "stab", where you cultivate an ally until he is in a hopeless position, and then you attack him. As a tried and true method, it still works wonderfully after all these years. Still, there is more ways to stab an ally than to attack him.

1. Information. A (relatively) painless way of hurting your loyal ally is to feed information to the person that he is currently attacking. This is easiest in postal games, as in a face-to-face game it is rather transparent when you and Austria head off into the corner of the room just after speaking to your ally Russia. By post it works very well. All you do is keep a spare typewriter, preferably the same model as Italy say, with which you send information anonymously to Austria. It helps that you post these letters from another suburb/town/state, the farther away the better, as the less gullible players tend to notice postmarks...

2. Friendly Enemies. It is a wonderful situation when you as England are allied to France, and poor France gets attacked by Italy. You, being heartless, say that you will support your friend France as much as possible, but alas, are not in a position to render aid. Meanwhile France slaves away in the south keeping your borders secure as you munch up all those nice Scandinavian countries. And lo! when you've finished, there is France still slaving away fully committed against the heathen, just ready and waiting for that stab from behind. (For further information on this technique - ask Neil Ashworth!).

3. Fake Orders. This works only in face-to-face games:- it would be <u>horribly</u> dangerous to try in a postal game. But you never know, there are some really gullible ones out there.

I saw a wonderful example of this at the Tin Soldier convention in Sydney, 1985. France and England were banging away at Germany (me) and weren't getting anywhere due to the occaisonal help of Austrian and Italian units, on loan to fight off the infidels. France, sick of this, offered to stab England in combination with Italy: France gets England and Italy gets Germany. But as part of this stab on England, France demanded that Italy support France into Munich, with the promise that he was going to move out next turn. OK says Italy, but I want to see the orders (he not being completely idiotic). And there they were: A Bur - Mun, A Bel - Hol, F MAO - NAO, F Spa(sc) MAO etc.

Italy put his orders in and they were read out. When the French orders were picked up, France says that there is a second set. So there was: A Bur - Mun (supported by Italy!), A Bel - Bur, A Mar - Pie, F Spa(sc) - GOL, F MAO - WMS. Not only did Italy get stabbed, but he simultaneously supported France to Munich, thus destroying the German defense. Result:- England 1st, France 2nd, Germany last, Italy 2nd last. It was beautiful!

4. False Misorders. This rightly is part of "tactics" but since it requires lots of fast talking (or letter writing) I will include it here. The aim of the game is to explain why you didn't support your ally, by "accidentally" misordering your units. An example of this could be that France wants you to support him to Holland from Belgium, but you who are secretly allied to Germany want it to fail, but you aren't quite ready to bring things into the open. So you write: F NTH S French A Ber - Hol. Next turn you are so sorry that your misorder stuffed things up for France, so sorry. While this is more likely to be accepted in a face-to-face game where, because of the time limit for orders, there are more mistakes made, it does work in postal games too. You need to be careful to let the GM know that it is an intentional "mistake", as otherwise the kind GM might correct the mistake for you in gratitude that you didn't NMR!

Strategy and Tactics. Under the tactics section there are several things you can do to make the life of your enemy hard:

1. The Pincers. This is a rather old move where you are wanting to defend 3 centres with only two armies. If you write A Vie - Bud, A Ser - Bud, this automatically stops a single army guessing right and getting a centre. However, if the enemy has two armies, he writes A Gal S Austrian A Ser - Bud, and A Rum - Ser. The move does see some use sometimes though despite this.

2. Retreat to Victory. As you know, when an enemy dislodges your unit from the province it was on, it has to retreat if possible to an adjacent province. This is usually bad:- you've lost a province! There is a way of using the retreat to your advantage though, and it works best with the help of an ally. Your ally attacks your unit with support, and you make sure that you don't support your unit. It then retreats where it wants to, preferably to the enemy's supply centre. For example: Russia and England are attacking Germany. Russia writes F Nwy S F SKA - NTH, and England writes F NTH stands (r. to Den, Hol, Bel, HEL) thus getting a German centre, that a normal attack requiring a "guess" would have failed to get.

3. Attack is the Best Defence. So many times you see a player under attack, and he defends by "A Vie S A Bud, A Bud stands". After the fortieth time that the defense happens this way, the attacker starts doing other things. When you are defending, it often pays to do it in new ways. Turkey is a good example of this: Turkey can hold 5 centres in and about the Black Sea ad nauseum, by attacking Sev, then Rum, Ser, Bul or whereever, round the circle. The best time to do this is when

you are in the Balkans or somewhere similar, where there are alot of nearby supply centres. This tactic also works when you have 2 units defending and there are three attacking: often by guessing right you can attack one of the enemy centres and take it, just as you are losing your own centre. You may have lost one centre, but you live to fight another day etc.

4. Fun and Games with Convoys. Regardless of what some people say, when your ally tries to stab you by sending the army he is convoying, to Armenia instead of to Rumania, it doesn´t work. However there are other things that you can do. If you are about to have a coastal army attacked, often you can dodge behind the attacker and pinch the centre he started from, for example Germany attacks with F HEL & A Ruh S A Hol - Bel. You as England with only A Bel and F NTH cannot defend the centre, and you don´t want to move F NTH - Hol, so you write F NTH C A Bel - Hol, which succeeds, giving him Belgium, but you get Holland and keep all your units.

Another thing to remember about convoys is that they can´t be cut by a single attacking piece the way that supports are cut. You can also support the fleet as it is convoying, while you can´t support a support. Also convoys are useful, as they are often unexpected and can reach around a defensive line.

Doing the unexpected brings us to strategy.

The individual countries at the start of the game have their own special strategies that are available for the trying. Italy is one, and France another. Italy has very little to lose, since rarely does the chance to win come along by regular play. One strategy that I have tried successfully is the German attack. The beauty of it is that it looks like you are attacking Austria, and this is what everyone believes. Once you take Munich, why stop? Berlin is easy, as is Warsaw and Moscow. Of course, once you get that far, things tend to get unstuck - but it was fun while it lasted! Another thing that Italy seems able to do is to push a fleet past the French when they aren´t looking. Portugal, Liverpool, and even Norway/StPetersburg are nice places to visit (I think that Terry Bradley is the one to see about this).

France has the opportunity to go the other direction. France is so secure that she can afford to have a spare army go wandering off without really causing problems defensively. A Mar - Pie is often a tempting move, to stand off the troublesome Italians, and if it works then A Pie - Tyr, which gives options on Munich, or farther: A Tyr - Boh, which gets you into the eastern scene. If you play it right you can auction the services of your army to the highest bidder, and if you should accidentally stab someone by mistake, well you are too far away for retribution!

For the other countries, such flights of fancy are not seen very often: Germany attacking Austria, Russia attacking Germany in Spring 1901, France attacking Italy straight away:- these are

usually a guaranteed way to lose. Now Germany attacking Italy, that is worth trying! I haven´t drawn Germany for a while...

One last thing, if you want to get places and you don´t have 2 other cousins in the game, communicate. Many a lost cause can be retrieved by writing lots of letters. So many players never write that those who do are more likely to trust someone who does answer those letters that they vainly send. And letters are better than phone calls: I for one find it easier to pull the wool over the eyes of a prospective target using mail instead of over the phone.

Happy hunting!

Eric Roche.

ALL PURPOSE DIPLOMACY LETTER

This fun form letter was designed to cope with a heavy schedule of games. I often put off writing until I have something important to say. This often prevents me from keeping in contact with allies and enemies. A postcard can often be an effective and easy way to keep diplomatic channels open.

*   *   *   *   *

Game: 19 _____

'Zine: _____

Date: _____

TO: A E F G I R T (circle one)

FROM: A E F G I R T (circle one)

Dear KING EMPEROR KAISER POPE SULTAN PRESIDENT
      ALLY FRIEND NEIGHBOUR ENEMY NURD PUPPET
      (circle one, and one only)

Welcome to the new ( ) game ( ) season. I am your
( ) northern ( ) southern ( ) eastern ( ) western
neighbour. I would like to propose that we
( ) ally with _____
( ) declare a truce with _____
( ) sign a non-aggression pact with _____
( ) fight with _____
( ) help _____
( ) lie to _____
( ) co-operate with _____
( ) cheat _____
( ) love _____
( ) spit upon _____
( ) stab _____
( ) _____ each other.
Please ( ) write ( ) drop dead ( ) NMR ( ) tell me
your plans ( ) move to _____ ( ) support
me to _____ ( ) convoy _____.
Pardon my style. I will try to be less personal
next time.

( ) Sincerely ( ) Respectfully ( ) Hardly ( ) Up
Yours

Signed _____

DIPLOMACY 85M

TO TURKEY
You gave no disband order.

TO ITALY
You made a small mistake. I corrected it
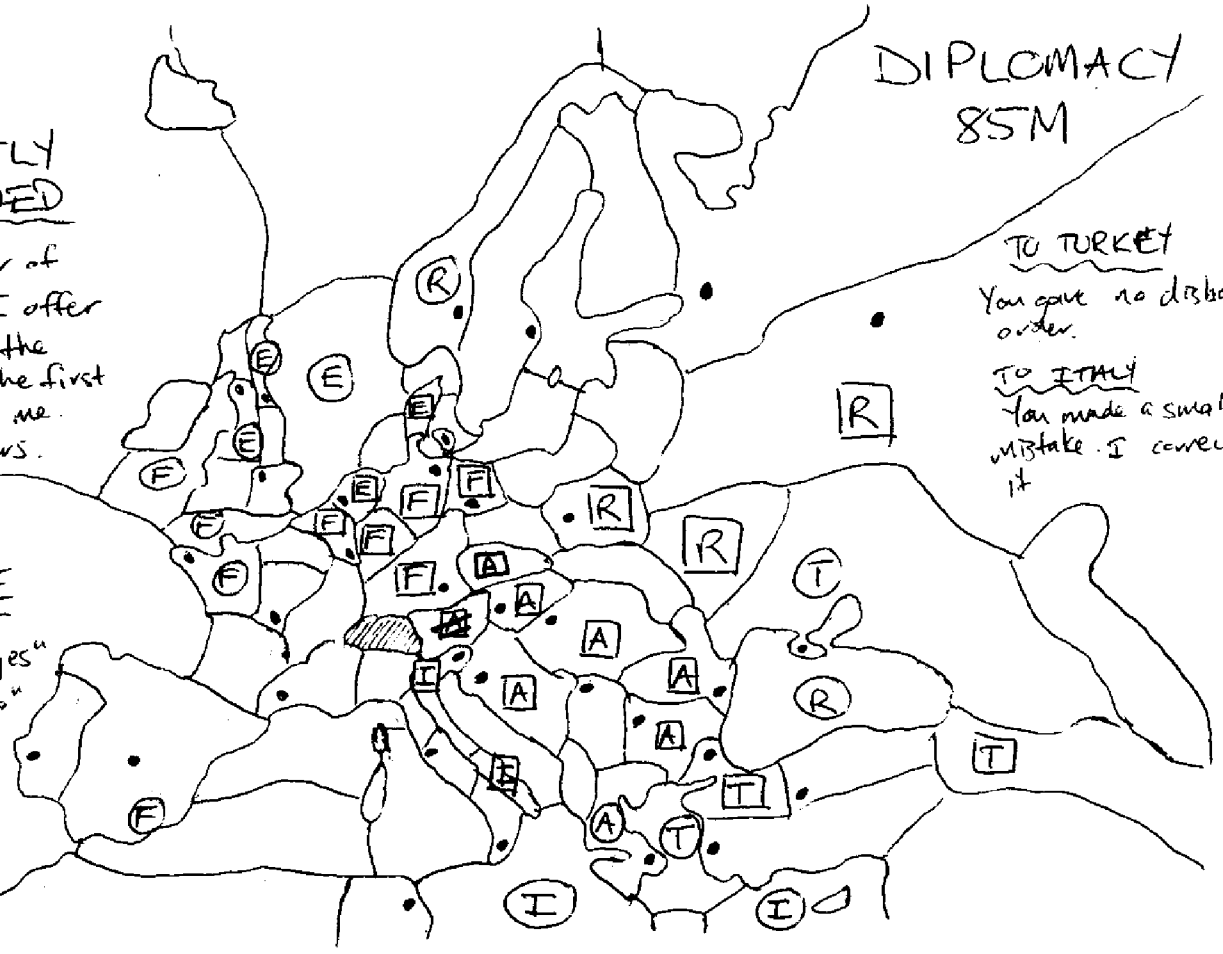
DIPLOMACY 85M   FALL, 1906   GM. STEVEN BAGSHAW

ENGLAND (DISORDER) - NMR   F Liv H, F Edi H, F Nth H, A Hol H, A Kie H (R→Den).

GERMANY (DISORDER) - NMR   A Pru H

RUSSIA (M. Haughey) -   F Nwy H, A Liv-War, A Mos-Sev, A Ukr S A Mos-Sev, F Bla-Rum

TURKEY (F. Roche) -   A Arm S F Sev H, F Ank-Bla, F Sev S F Ank-Bla, F Con-Aeg, A Bul S (Aust) A Rum H (R→Con)

AUSTRIA (T. Graham) -   A Ser-Bul, A Rum S A Ser-Bul, A Gre S A Ser-Bul, A Bud S A Rum H, A Tri H A Vie-Boh

ITALY (J. Penman) -   F Ion-EMS, F Tun-Ion, A Apu S A Ven H, A Ven H

FRANCE (G. Northey) -   A Mun-Kie, A Ber S A Mun-Kie, A Bel-Ruh, A Pic-Bel, A Bur-Mun, F Bre-Eng, F MAO-Iri, F Mar-Spa (sc)

BUILDS:

ENGLAND - Lon, Liv, Edi, Hol, Den	(5)	**GERMANY** -	(0) DISBAND A PRU
FRANCE - Par, Bre, Mar, Bel, Mun, Kie, Spa, Por, Ber	(9) BUILD F BRE		
RUSSIA - Mos, War, StP, Swe, Nwy	(5)	**TURKEY** - Con, Smy, Ank, Sev	(4) DSB F ANK
AUSTRIA - Vie, Bud, Tri, Ser, Gre, Rum, Bul	(7) BUILD A VIE		
ITALY - Ven, Rom, Nap, Tun	(4)		

Gamemaster: Eric Roche, 367 Argyle St, North Hobart, 7002.

France (Slasher Ashworth): F NTH - Lon, F Eng S F NTH - Lon, F NAO -
Cly, F MAO - IRI, A Par - Gas, A Bur - Bel, A Ruh S A Kie, A Kie
stands.
Turkey (Sultan Gould): A Mos S A Sev - Ukr, A Sev - Ukr, F BLA S A
Rum, A Rum S A Sev - Ukr, F Bul(sc) - AEG, A Con - Bul, F AEG - EMS.
Germany (Herr Absent): A Ber stands.
England (PM Smith): NMR you bad bad boy! Has F Wal, F Lon, F Den, F
HEL, F BAR, F BAL, A StP. F Lon disbanded (no retreat specified).
Italy (Alexander the Roman): NMR. Must have gone on a Roman holiday
(sorry about that). Has A Mun, A Tri, A Ven, F Rom, F Nap, F ION.
Austria ([Little] Kaiser Yovich): A Gal - Vie, A Bud S A Gal - Vie, A
War stands, A Ser S F Gre, F Gre stands.

Press: Paris - Rome: I'm moving, I'm moving. Paris - London: - Here
I come, ready or not. GM - France: Oh Neil, how I wish I could do
this to you in Princess. Sigh.

Change of address: Paul Yovich, now St George's College, Crawley,
W.A., 6009.

Just for fun, let's have a competition. The first person who picks the
two provinces where Turkey and England first face each other gets a
free issue. Go for it.

The end of the Universe

By Ian Plumb

The Universe is coming to an end. No, it's not the daleks, nor the klingons, nor any other infamous force of evil that is bringing about its end. This time, the culprit is turnaround time, and nobody can save us.

Universe II is a reasonably good introductory level PBM game, postboxed here in Australia by Chameleon Games, and run in America by Clemens and Assosciates. The game is one of rudimentary space exploration, ship development, trade and combat. The moderator, Jon Clemens, is an affable if tight lipped fellow, who has done his utmost to make Universe II a game playable from Australia.

When an Australian player begins his career as a starship captain in Universe II, the game is quite intriguing. You are informed that you know only about 20% of the rules. You know there are other players around, and that alien cultures exist. The boundaries of the game appear limitless. With a turnaround time of about 4 weeks, it takes a player about a year to explore the area around his starting point, to find the nearest alien civilised star system, and do a bit of trading. In that time, he'll have met a few other players, and perhaps encountered some interesting features of space.

In the second year of an Australian Universe II players career, the starship captain might increase the status of his ship (adding weaponry), establish a colony, and finish exploring his little nook of the universe. No doubt, the captain is well established in his alliance, and has several reliable friends. Everything looks good.....

At some stage in the second year, the player will realise that the boundaries of Universe II are not limitless. In fact, they are not even particularly large. A players turns soon become repetitive. No longer does each turn have the potential to be exciting. The player becomes bored.

Taking stock of his situation, the player sees that his ship now has 4 battlecruisers, 2 freighters, and 20 interceptors in its fleet. 5 torpedoes add to his complement of armaments. The thought forms in his mind -- combat is exciting. Then the player goes looking for a suitable target.

It is at this point that the player comes across the fundamental problem of Universe II, the one that will cause the death of this fine game. The turnaround time makes reliable combat almost impossible. The Universe II turn report has a section called the Communications Report. In this section, your ship will pick up the signal of any nearby player ships. It is this information which an aggressive player relies upon.

However, that information is, by its very nature, unreliable. The communications report is a snapshot view of how things stood in your sector three weeks ago. Three weeks ago! The likelihood of your potential opposition having sent in a turn since then is roughly 75%. As such, the likelihood of him having moved by the time you give the attack order is quite high. The number of turns wasted in attempted combat is very high.

There are alternatives to this. You can order your ship to blindly attack anyone you encounter. As you can imagine, this method is fraught with danger. You can attack allies and large opposition without meaning to. You can also spend your time looking for inactive ships -- the ships of dropout players. These don't move, which negates the problem to some extent. Or you can attack colonies. They don't move either. However, inactives and colonies are fairly rare, and hard to locate.

The problem with turnaround time is one inherent to a game moderated from America. Turnaround time affects combat in Universe II so drastically due to the design of the game. Both these factors are unchangeable, to a large extent. As the American version of Universe II must run on the same software as the Australian game, any change in the combat rules will greatly disturb the American players, who vastly outnumber the Australian players too. So Clemens won't change the combat software, in any fundamental way.

As I see it, there is only one solution -- and that is for Chameleon Games to run Universe II here in Australia. That would solve the turnaround problem, judging by their fine record with Feudal Lords. However, this would be expensive, and I am almost certain that the game doesn't attract enough players to warrant the expense.

And so, the Universe will come to an end, as experienced players drop out, and fewer and fewer players take on the challenge of starship captaincy.

UNIVERSE II

O, ⛵ = FLEET   □, 🏇 = ARMY.

ENGLAND: F Nwy Hold; F Edi-N At; F Lon-EngC; F Nor sup F Lon-EngC;

(Chilvers)   A Bel sup German A Ruh-Bur

FRANCE (Braun): A Por-Spa; F Spa(sc)-MAO; A Pic sup A Par-Bur; A Par-Bur;

F Bre-Eng C.

GERMANY(Greliz): A Ruh-Bur; A Hol-Ruh; A Kie-Mun;A Bersup A Kie-Mun;F Den-Swe.

ITALY   (Roché) : F Tun sup F Nap-Ion; A Tyr sup A Tri-Vie; F Nap-Ion; A Tri-Vie

; A Ven-Tri.

RUSSIA(Tolhurst): A StP-Nor; F Swe sup German F Den Hold; A Rum sup Turkish

A Bul-Ser; A Mos-Ukr; A War-Gal.

TURKEY(Bagshaw): A Bul-Ser;F Smy-Aeg; A Con-Smy; F Ank-Con.

AUSTRIA : NMR

REUTER PRESS: I would appreciate the return of my carrier pigeons with answering

correspondance. Kaiser Stool of Germay

Italy has moved!! It is now found at 367 Argyle St

North Hobart, 7002

Well that about wraps it up for this issue's move, my first. Hope there are no

mistakes. How about some more press releases to brighten up my job.

Wish you all a happy new year, all be it a month late, and a happy Fall.

Tim Friedrich.

P.S. I live in Box Hill South, Melbourne,Vic.

86 F
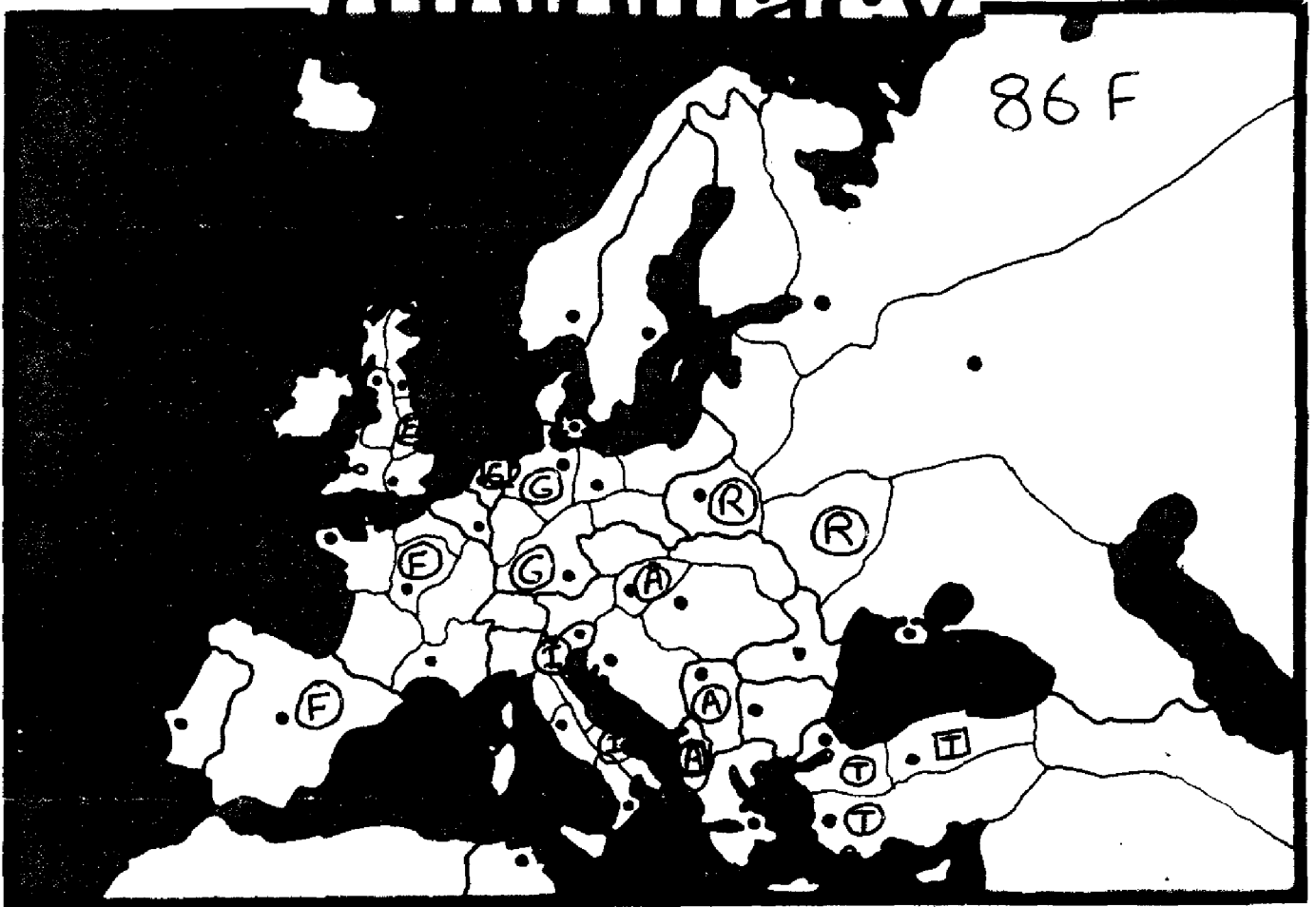
GAME 86F - SPRING 190♦

RUSSIA: (Jamieson) - F STP-BOT   F SEV-BLA
                     A MOS-UKR   <u>A WAR-GAL</u>

TURKEY: (Whitefriars Gamers) - N.M.R

FRANCE: (Freeman) - <u>A PAR-BUR</u> A MAR-SPA F BRE-MAO

ENGLAND: (Cross) - A LIV-YOR F EDI-NTH F LON-ENG

AUSTRIA: (Howard) - F TRI-ALB <u>A VIE-GAL</u> A BUD-SER

ITALY: (Brown) - A VEN-HOLDS A ROM-APU F NAP-ION

GERMANY: (Vickers) - <u>A MUN-BUR</u> A BER-KIE F KIE-HOL

diplomacy

86 - G
SPRING 1901

AUSTRIA :   A Bud → Ser
(G. Begbie)   A Vie → Tri
                 F Tri → Alb

ENGLAND :   A Liv → Yor
(G. Long)   F Edi → NHh
                 F Lon → Eng

FRANCE :   NMR

GERMANY :   A Mun → Ruh
(P. Kahlbaum)   A Ber → Kie
                 F Kie → Den

TURKEY (R. Wood) :

                 A Con → Bul

                 A Smy → Con

ITALY :   A Rom → Ven
(W. Webber)   A Ven → Tyr
                 F Nap → Ion

RUSSIA :   A Mos → Ukr
(P. Szabo)   A War → Gal
                 F St.P(sc) → Fin
                 F Sev → Rum

                 F Ank → Bla.

Press :   To England - Agreed , you take his northern half , I'll take his southern one , but I still think I should get Portugal (from Italy)

FROM THE GM :   Congratulations to Richard and Greg for getting moves in on time , the rest of you sharpen up your acts. The position of France is up for grabs : the first orders I receive will get the job , unless Mark Pollinger sends orders for Fall 1901.   MY.

PBM and the question of money.

By Ian Plumb

Does PBM represent good value for money? I have played in more than fifteen different PBM games in my time, and I tell you, the value for money varies widely from game to game. There are several games which, I believe, represent poor value for money. Yet, we Australian PBM'ers are often obliged to play in these games, due to the somewhat limited choice of PBM games available here in Australia.

Let's look at a game which represents poor value for money. Universe II,that ancient game of space exploration. We pay $OZ5 a turn to play this classic game. Americans pay $US3.50 for the same service. For that money, you will receive one page, perhaps two, of computer generated response. The GM will respond to any questions you might have, in as few words as is humanly possible. You then fill in your turn sheet, which will take anything up to two minutes. The turnaround time is 4 weeks, so you have plenty of time to contact your allies inbetween turns.

So, for $OZ5, you get two pages of printout, plus an average of fifteen minutes work to fill in your turn sheet and contact allies via the mail. All up, twenty minutes entertainment.

On the other hand, look at Magic. For $OZ5 you get around twenty pages of printout, it takes hours to organise your optimum move, and you can contact any of the sixty players each turn. All up four hours entertainment.

In my opinion, the game which represents the best possible value for money is Keys of Bled, by Spellbinder Games in the UK. It is human moderated, there are hundreds of players world wide, and the game is a remarkably complete simulation of life on another world. It is one of the few games where a four week turnaround is necessary. I would spend around ten hours on each turn in this game.

Have you ever played Terra II, and had the card reader misread your turn? Have you ever tried blind-turning in Universe II, and had the order of your turns stuffed up? Have you ever missed a turn deadline, and payed your turn fee for the privelidge of seeing your position sent into oblivion?

Some PBM companies have very poor policies on refunding money, whatever the cause. Clemens and Associates (Universe II, Terra II) have been the cause of many stuffed turns, and I have never seen a turn credited. In fact, you end up paying for another turn informing them of the fact that they stuffed up the last turn. Most, however, are more generous than that.

The question that I would like to raise is if a PBM company stuffs up your turn, should they do more than just fix up your

turn, once you inform them of the event? You, the player, have been inconvenienced by the company at fault. Is a simple refund of money good enough? How about a bonus turn, for the inconvenience they have caused? Such an action would show that the company cares about your patronage, and that they are keen to have your business. It would also give them an incentive to make certain that it doesn't happen too often.

Finally, I would like to raise the point that very few PBM games represent good value for money in the first five turns of the game. Usually, your options are less than in later stages of the game, and very little happens out of the ordinary. I would suggest that these turns should be half price. What do you think?

This list is solely based on personal experience, and is my opinion only. I am anxious to learn of other peoples experiences in PBM, so if you want to compile your own list, send it to TGB, and I'll compare them and come up with a list of best and worst games. One list is based on whether a game represents good value for money (expense versus entertainment), the other list represents the enjoyment gained from playing the game (who cares how much it costs when its fun!). Underlined games are no longer available, or temporarily unavailable. Games in bold letters are worth looking at twice before joining, as far as I'm concerned.

The PBM Games.

Value for Money

1. Keys of Bled
2. Demonsland
3. Shadow of the Hawk
4. Magic
5. Epic
6. Witch King
7. Return From Sirius
8. Feudal Lords
9. Final Days
10. Crasimoff's World
11. Cluster III
12. **Terra II**
13. **Capitol**
14. **Vorcon Wars**
15. **Universe II**
16. **StarWeb**

Playability

1. Demonsland
2. Keys of Bled
3. Shadow of the Hawk
4. Magic
5. Witch King
6. Epic
7. Final Days
8. Feudal Lords
9. Capitol
10. Vorcon Wars
11. Crasimoff's World
12. **Universe II**
13. **Return From Sirius**
14. **Cluster III**
15. **Terra II**
16. **StarWeb**

A Moderator's Reply To The Question Of Money
By Rick Snell

In his normal forthright style Ian Plumb has raised a number of fairly good points.

The first concerns PBM groups efforts at handling errors in turns and orders. No PBM group will be able to go through its working life without having to cope with errors. To err is human. Over the three years of being with the Missing Tiger I have seen or participated in a number of such errors ranging from mistyped orders; given the nature of the orders in RFS and accepting telephone moves this is a common event or account balances being incorrect etc.

I was once accused by Patrick Grace (Thor) who won Game 24, of being incapable of running a chook raffle smoothly. At the time his comment stung because to one degree or another the evidence wasn't in my favour. For me that was a low point in providing a good service to our players. One which I strived hard not to repeat.

The first objective for a good moderator is to ascertain what went wrong and how. The next is to find out how the situation can be corrected (if reasonable) or amended so that the player and moderator are happy. This can range from a free turn to replacing a destroyed unit back in the game to giving out an extra planet scan where it would be impossible to make any changes without affecting other players.

I agree with Ian that a bonus free turn is good incentive (or punishment) for a PBM group to avoid foul ups. However as a moderator I refuse to be restricted in my approach to solving problems by handing out bonus free turns left, right and center. Some problems are major. Some are not. Yet in some circumstances bonus turns are the least that a moderator should provide to one of his or her players.

Ian's point about the value for money in the first five (or two or three) turns of most PBM games on the market has also concerned me for a while. In your first encounter with a game like Universe 11, Sprial Arm, Return From Sirius, Capitol etc the learning of the rules and the unknown unfolding of the game is great. However on your third game of Final Days or Spiral Arm you while away the first few weeks waiting until you get to the more interesting bits of the game. Of course the first moves are vital but you generally have them down fairly pat.

Paradoxically in a *Missing Tiger* survey we found most players wanted games which involved building up an empire. This empire building implies limited beginnings (thus simple) like starting with a few ships and one world in Return From Sirius and Sprial Arm or from one hex in Final Days.

A few companies recognise this point (or cover it in their attempts to entice players to play their games) by giving out some number of free turns at the beginning of a game. However from my own viewpoint X part of each turn fee is the charge that moderators impose for providing services. Therefore a player is paying for the actual game (options presented to him, turn reports etc) and associated services; checking and correcting errors, passing on diplomatic messages, providing new rulebooks, ensuring players who travel on work or holidays have some chance of continuity in their games, answering letters and telephone calls etc. Thus the value for money evens out over a whole game if the moderators are doing a good job.

TIME IS THE SIMPLEST THING
By Lindon Flood

When designing a play-by-mail game of any complexity, some consideration must be given to the effects of time. There are two time-frames which must be examined, *real* and *game-time*. *Real time* is the period allowed for players to submit moves, *game time* is the period each move simulates in the game universe. Let's call these intervals the turn and the period respectively.

For the turn there are two options, either a fixed interval between them, usually a fortnight, or continuous processing, where moves are processed as they are received. The first is the simplest approach but has the drawback of penalising a player who gets his turn in late, possibly due to no fault of his own. The best that can then be done for him is to allow those moves which will not affect other players, this is the approach we take in RETURN FROM SIRIUS.

On the other hand, continuous processing allows players to submit orders at their own pace, but is likely to create anomalies if there is more than one player in the game. In UNIVERSE II, for example, it is possible to see an alien spaceship at the same planet you are on, but when you try to initiate combat or trade you find that it had actually departed some turns before.

Where you have players submitting moves at different rates you find that the slower players' turn sheets do not accurately reflect the state of play. One step which can be taken to rectify the situation is to send the slower player a new result printout when something happens that affects his position. The new Australian Wizard game KINGDOM takes this approach by sending out a rout turnsheet when an army is attacked by that of another player.

Of course you also find that the proximity of the players to the game moderator also has some effect, allowing players nearby to get more moves processed. This has also been considered in KINGDOM, where all orders must be submitted by the postal system, and no more than one turn will be processed per player per week.

Another alternative for continuous processing is to have only one player in each game, and therefore no interaction to foul things up. Solo fantasy adventures are a good example, the problem is that they are generally time consuming and uneconomical for the moderator.

Within the game itself, the period must be realistic when compared to what is being accomplished during the turn. In RFS a turn is deemed to be one year, and as noone really knows how long it takes to build a hyperdrive, or whatever, its as good a period as any other. In that particular game, the unit of time is irrelevant, as long as it is accepted by the players.

In FINAL DAYS no specific period is mentioned in the rules, nor is a scale given for the size of the terrain hexes. The design was actually done with a period of one hour and a scale of around five kilometres per hex, but players seem happy to treat the period as a day and the hex as 50 to 100 kilometres, giving roughly equivalent movement rates. The only problem that may arise due to the lack of a clear definition is the use of different terminology by players swapping information. Most players will refer to the unit of time as a turn anyway rather than as an hour, day, or year.

Within each period movement and activity takes place, but obviously some units move faster than others and some actions can be performed more quickly. In most of the early space games that use warping/hyperspace as the means of travel,eg STARWEB, SPACE EMPIRES, RFS, speed is of little consequence as it is assumed that it takes almost as long to make a short jump, as it does for a long jump. (Strangely enough most of these games rely on links between planets, and you can still be shot at by planetary defences while passing through. This would indicate that some time is spent at each planet and therefore a long jump should take more time, although not necessarily a significant amount more.)

Games that use more conventional modes of transport that wish to simulate different speeds would be unrealistic if they had the units suddenly appear at their destinations at the end of the turn. Instead they should simulate the units moving through the intervening terrain, and therefore they must run the risk of encountering other units along the way. Probably the easiest way of doing it is to break the period down into a number of smaller intervals, moving and testing the units for encounters according to their speed, eg FINAL DAYS. Some realism is still lost because of the artificial divisions, but several shorter intervals will normally give a more realistic result than a single homogeneous turn.

Activities may be handled in similar ways. In RFS a ship may load, unload, build cargo units and jump from planet to planet all in the same turn. All of these activities are assumed to comfortably fit into one period, there is no partial completion due to time running out. This approach assumes that most activities are performed at roughly the same time and do not interfere with each other.

FINAL DAYS allows only one command per unit, but because some actions take up relatively little time there may be more than one action involved in a command. For example a truck may elect to carry a squad, but because it takes the squad only a short time to climb aboard (action 1), the truck is also allowed to move (action 2) as part of the carry command, although not as far as its normal movement would allow. By breaking the period up into intervals we can have the squad embark in an early interval and the truck move in later intervals.

Another, more flexible method, for allowing a realistic number of actions in a turn, is to allow each unit to build a series of actions until the time taken to perform them is equal to the game period. Again the period would probably be divided into intervals, and each action would take a given number of intervals to perform. I believe RINGQUEST uses a complex system of phases along these lines.

The problem with using an interval system is that an event in an early interval may affect what happens in later intervals. In such a situation it would be nice for the player to be able to give his units instructions on how to act given each possible outcome from the earlier interval. A small number of outcomes from a given command and the provision of conditional orders could give the desired result, eg search north wall for door, if door go north else search west wall. The result would most likely be an overly complex game. The shortlived WITCHKING, although not really an interval type game, was able to use a limited number of conditional instructions, and although fairly complex, was at least understandable.

The number of actions permitted in a turn (real-time) appears to be a barrier to a detailed multi-player fantasy game, as such a game would require actions indoors and outdoors. A reasonable period for a turn outdoors would probably range from an hour to a day, while indoors it would probably be around 10 minutes.

Lets take an example, Boris the Barbarian takes 1 day to ride across a plain and fight some giant grasshoppers, Derick the Dwarf enters a castle and explores it for a day. Enter castle and explore isn't much of a command for a turn when every room is a possible adventure in itself. The reply from the GM could either contain a ridiculously large amount of information, or too little information for the player to get enjoyment from the situation. Boris on the other hand would probably be satisfied by a description of his ride across the plain, and a blow by blow description of his battle.

If however we did it the other way and used 10 minute periods Derick the Dwarf would get the sort of result he wanted, but Boris the Barbarian would get something like;

TURN 1 galloped for 10 minutes, saw lots of grass
TURN 2 trotted for 10 minutes, saw lots of grass
TURN 3 walked .... etc

Boris would not get very good value for money from his game.

Of course we could let them play at their own speeds, but remember that they are in the same universe. Therefore if Boris was riding across the plain to meet Derick when he came out of the castle we would find that at the end of turn 1 Boris had used up 24 hours but Derick still has 23 hours 50 minutes of time left in the castle, or 143 turns. That would mean writing to Boris and telling him that he would have to wait 3 years (real-time) before he could put in his next turn.

Production of a satisfactory multi-player PBM fantasy game similar to role playing games would therefore be quite difficult unless action was restricted to an outdoor or indoor environment, but not both. Possibly indoor activities could be abbreviated so that a whole day could be described adequately, or alternatively there could be some sort of magic that makes time run faster inside causing 10 minutes indoors to equal a day outdoors. Such solutions would appear artificial to the player.

I hope this article has given you some food for thought, certainly I think it poses more problems than it answers. Each aspect has only been covered briefly, and some deserve more discussion than they have been given here. At least you now have some idea of the ramifications of various time systems which you may consider using when next you set about designing a PBM game.

"Cosa Nostra" is a computer-moderated play-by-mail simulation game now being run by Nostromo Games. Players take the part of a Godfather in charge of an American "Mafia" family, and attempt to outwit and outfight rival Bosses.

The game is based upon research into the history of criminal empires and mob warfare in the United States and contains up to 12 players per game. Ample opportunity is provided for "diplomacy" outside the computer processes, by which the players may form alliances or carry out business deals.

The players begin in 1910 as owners of legitimate businesses, and proceed to develop nefarious enterprises and recruit "muscle" to defend their own and to take over other players territory. They may also develop a "sheet" of bribed officials and interest groups, and/or use muscle to get their way with these targets. The object of the game is to control the majority of criminal activity in the city and thus become "Capo di tutti Capi" - boss of all bosses.

The turnsheet faces the player with many options, which all have interacting consequences, e.g. bribes may affect the number of arrests & raids or the profit in certain kinds of business. Each type of business has a total available market which depends on the year, current events, etc. The actual profit for each establishment depends on the total number of competing outlets and their proximity. It is therefore in each players interest to eliminate the competition, especially in his own district.

Players may spy on each other, and must keep up morale in their "Family". The complexity of interrelated factors allows the game to be based entirely on skill (there are NO random elements used) without being predictable by the players.

Each turn represents a year, and the results of a players orders, profits, combat outcomes, etc are all given on the Turn Printout. There is a news report on the players' printout giving current events which affect the game, e.g. the declaration of prohibition in 1920. Costs and average income increase realistically as the game proceeds. Players announcements to the underworld generally are also printed.

Finally the printout may include a supplementary turnsheet involving additional questions for the players to answer. These mainly occur when the player gains control of a specific institution, and must decide how to use it.

The players rulebook also includes a short history of the U.S. mobs, not only for interest's sake, but because it contains many hints for effective play. It is available for $3.50. The game is $4.50 for signup and $4 per turn. A starting package of rulebook, signup + first turn may be obtained for $10. New players signing up should indicate what "Family" name they wish to use. Nostromo Games address is:

> P.O. Box 357,
> St Leonards,
> N.S.W. 2065.

J.J. Garner.

COSA NOSTRA

THE NEW COMPUTER-MODERATED PLAY-BY-MAIL SIMULATION GAME

Are you wily enough to be a successful Godfather? Pit your wits against 11 other Bosses in the struggle to become Capo di Tutti Capi. This game is based on extensive research into the U.S. underworld and is 100% SKILL - no random numbers are used. The turnsheet indicates how you wish to run your family, allocate your cash and muscle, etc. The printout shows the profits of the businesses you set up, combat results, arrests & raids, and who you have managed to bribe or standover. Rumours placed by players are printed, and a City News section showing what the Press is saying. You can fix races or elections, sell influence, spy on other 'families', or contact the other players to make deals or form syndicates. On some turns, you will receive a supplementary turnsheet asking you additional questions (unknown to the other players) based on special circumstances, e.g. when you take control of them. Game costs: $10 for signup, rulebook and first turn, then $4 per turn. Send $10 and the 'family' name you'd like to use, or write for further details to:

NOSTROMO GAMES
PO Box 357, St Leonards.
N.S.W. 2065.

To Ian Plumb's Feudal Lords Article

by John Van De Graaf

Like a knight of old, I am called upon to defend (or explain) some of
the game elements of Feudal Lords which Mr. Plumb takes umbrage at. Let
me preface my comments by pointing out that Feudal Lords evolved from a
role playing game into a strategic game of conquest and diplomacy. When
the computer program was first written, the computer's memory was a lavish
16K, which forced us to weed out anything that did not add something to
the game. When our computer memory was expanded to 48K, we were able to
add many new elements suggested by the playtesters.

The Champion. The champion is a holdover from the original game, in
which the champions could challenge and fight each other to determine the
battle winner. This was too complex, so we instead just had him ride
errant with a simple computer routine. I was going to eliminate him
entirely if the need for computer memory ever became acute. He was made
heir to the fief very late in the game design after a player's suggested
it. The champion would never stay home while the army was campaigning for
glory and plunder! When riding errant, the champion actually is more
likely to gain than to lose in the long run. You can lose him (1 K or 50
G), but you can gain several hundred gold, more peasants, or more
townsmen, plus increasing his ability. And the better he gets, the more
likely he will win the encounters.
    Historical accuracy? This is Arthurian LEGEND, not a simulation of
any actual medieval period. Did I miss that chapter in Mallory where
Lancelot bravely stays in Camelot while Arthur rode off to war? Besides,
when choosing between better game mechanics or more accurate historical
realism, I pick game mechanics. The champion requires nothing from you
and doesn't require the use of any valuable actions. He is simply an
extra, fun, random event with some usefulness as an heir. If you don't
want him to ride errant (or to improve), just do a campaign every turn
(even a Defend Fief will prevent him from riding out), or reduce your
number of Knights to 1. If losing 50 gold or 1 knight is vital to your
fief, you are in serious trouble regardless of the champion's presence.
The Champion is a pretty minor element of the game to even quibble about.

Missed moves. Good pbm players know that you should NEVER miss a
move. When I wrote Feudal Lords, in most pbm games (like Starweb) if you
missed a move, NOTHING happened, or awful things happened. For Feudal
Lords, I provided a set of general instructions to simply maintain the
fief and generate its current production. To do any more requires that we
presume what affirmative action a player would take. Sell Food? At what
price, and how many? These are really a player's decisions, not automatic
ones. Players would be pretty upset if they were saving up Food to sell
at a high price and we had the Seneschal sell it all at some mediocre
price just because he missed a turn. The solution for a player is simply
to not miss turns, particularly ones you feel are important. If you do
miss a turn, at least you KNOW what will and will not happen.

Dropouts? The number of dropouts in Feudal Lords seems normal to
that of other pbm games I have played. We have started 171 FL games in
the U.S.. On the average, a game with 15 players has about 10 players
left by the 10th turn. Two or three players have been eliminated and a

similar number have dropped. After that, very few players drop out, and most games end between turns 15 and 25. Individual games will vary from the average, depending on the players in the game, and Mr. Plumb may have been in a game with a higher than normal number of dropouts. I don't know of any way to force players not to drop out of a game, nor would I want to try.

The concept of a "hopeless" position in FL puzzles me, since with the right allies and favors, no position is hopeless. I have often seen players who get knocked out of their home fiefs manage to move into equivalent or better fiefs with some slick diplomacy. You don't even need a large army or a huge economy to win the game. An earl can become King by conquering a prince with a 400 campaign and a little luck.

Twelve actions. This is a major element of the game design itself. The concept is that a medieval lord had only a limited amount of time available to undertake major activities. Lacking a bureaucracy to carry out commands, something only gets accomplished if the lord himself oversees the activity. Once something gets built, however, it will maintain itself without further attention by the lord. 12 actions represents 12 months in the year, and this limitation has worked quite well in providing for steady economic and military growth.

The purpose of all limitations on activities in Feudal Lords was to force players to make difficult choices deciding which actions to do each turn. Apparently Mr. Plumb doesn't like to be faced with difficult choices, but wants to be able to do everything at once. Without the 12 action limit, and without the required limits on economic actions, a player could easily have a fully developed fief quite early in the game (by turn 4 or 5), which would make the rest of the game pretty dull. Note that a player can build his maximum 9 lumber mills in a single turn if he wants to by spending 9 of his 12 actions to do so. The intention of the game design is to permit a player to emphasize one economic area, but at the cost of ignoring other actions. The limits we impose were not set arbitrarily, but to further the game's intended design objectives after considerable playtesting.

Mr. Plumb earlier argued for historical accuracy, yet now wants to release all limits on medieval economic growth. As it is the economic simulation in FL is overproductive for the period represented, a time when there really was almost no agricultural improvement. I provided for agricultural improvements since it's a good game element despite its lack of historical accuracy. I do note that Mr. Plumb did not criticize agricultural research as being inaccurate, even though it is the most glaring historical inaccuracy in the game. Why not? Because it makes the game more enjoyable.

The main point is that EVERYONE faces the same limits and decisions. His statement that removing the limits "would not affect play balance drastically" is utterly wrong, and indicates that he does not understand the game. If these limits were removed, Mr. Plumb might like the game, but no one else would since all the challenge in economic development would be gone. If your enemy has a treasury of 70,000 gold, do you want him to be able to build his castle to quadruple its size in one easy action, or do you want him to have to spend 7 or 8 actions to do it? Oh, I forgot he would do away with the number of actions as well, so it would make little difference under such a game system.

If deciding upon 12 actions is too difficult, then Mr. Plumb should seek another game where there are no limits. Offhand though, I can't think of any games without some kind of limits on a player's actions. The limits imposed by any game are part of the game design. All the limits in

Feudal Lords were arrived at during the two year development of the game, and have stood the test of time in keeping the game interesting and enjoyable.

I do agree with Mr. Plumb that improvements can be made to the game; sadly, I think he missed them all. With much more memory available in today's computers, I intend to expand the game to include many more areas, perhaps more players, make the economic system and the combat system more detailed, bring back the royal offices, differentiate between troop types, make peasants more active (the peasants should make their displeasure at starvation known), and a lot more elements that had to be left out of Feudal Lords. This will obviously not be the quick, simple game that Feudal Lords is, but a large, complex simulation, and I think many players will still prefer the ease and simplicity of the current version of Feudal Lords.

/np

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A LESSON IN MERGING PBM MAGAZINES?
By
Rick Snell

When any two magazines merge there is a ground swell of hopes and enthusiaism for what will emerge. The merging of the Hunted Star and the Go Between produced this expectation and I hope achieved at least part of it. It is very hard to be very objective at such close quarters, so I have looked elsewhere to assess the impact of a merger in the world of Australian gaming magazines.

I believe that such an examination may help in bringing the subject magazine to a wider audience and also reveal a few pearls of experience for those tempted to establish a new commercial PBM magazine or merge two house magazines like the Australian Wizard's Grimoire and the Chameleon Game's Quarterly.

My chosen subject is the merging of AUSTRAL VIEW and RUMPLESTILKSIN to form the postal Diplomacy magazine the ENVOY. When the magazines merged early in 1986 the air was full of promise and hope

AUSTRAL VIEW

From its inception under the editorship of Richard Williams in 1981 Austral View rarely drifted from being a reporter on postal diplomacy and other games in progress. The quality of production certainly improved but rarely did strategy or tactics articles appear on a continuing basis.

From issue 60 onwards, under the stewardship of the Gibson brothers, Andrew England, Duncan Baxter and others, the magazine always carried with it an air of expectancy. The expectancy of becoming a profitable national magazine with subscribers and articles galore. But like many of us, with an eye for the future, the editorial team seemed to be withholding any effort in that direction until THE moment was right.

Until that day though the promise, like Australia II's keel, would be kept wrapped up and a holding operation put into place. So the magazine continued in its smooth role as a game reporter within a good looking cover but offering little for non play by mail board gamers.

RUMPLESTILKSIN

The Rumple in many ways was always a more impressive magazine. It was formed by Luke Clutterbuck a recent arrival from England in 1985 who thought that no Postal Diplomacy scene existed in Australia.

Maybe its impact was its heavy quota of whimsy, informative articles, a forum for idea generation [Rumple was first in publishing house rules and promoting face to face play] and Luke's encouragement and development of subscribers like Paul Sciberras (who now publishes his own magazine DETENTE) to contribute and write articles etc.

The magazine even carried with it a taste of magic mushrooms and thus the unorthodox (including rock and folk music quizzes). In other words it appeared to me as the quintessential English diplomacy magazine (although I have never seen a English Diplomacy magazine I would be pleasantly shocked if the Rumple was very different).

So the marrying of these two magazines appeared to herald a pregrancy of great potential. Two parents with different track records but both with a lot of promise in store for their seperate futures before the idea of merger had occurred. Two editorial bases, one in rambunctious Sydney and the other in the shadows of the Mt Lofty hills. The whimsy pom meets the up town uni lads of Adelaide flashing architectual,commercial and legal credentials. A heady combination.

Talks were held in late 1985 and early 1986 between myself and Austral View, and then with Luke at the Canberra con that discussed the possibility of the Go Between and one of the other magazines joining together.

The actual details of such a merger, the question about the commercial viability of a PBM boardgame based magazine, and the study requirements of the Austral View team delayed matters until the Envoy appeared.

THE ENVOY

I have seen seven issues since the merger. My basic impression of the new magazine is of AUSTRAL VIEW continuing under a new name with a few more letters and quizzes. There have been some rare exceptions where good articles have been printed. Issue 3 had two articles devoted to the more abstract but nevertheless very important aspects of diplomacy. From that issue on the magazine has seemed to revert back to a games reporter. I am not attacking or criticising this very important function. Given the study commitments of the main South Australian editors this reversion is understandable.

My sense of regret is the loss of the verve and life of RUMPLE. Under Luke's guiding hand that magazine was a bold innovator with fresh ideas. Given the usual high workload on any person trying to produce a magazine single handly (above all else you must admire someone like Larry Dunning who has produced *TauCeti et al* for nearly a decade singlehanded) it was reasonable to accept Luke wanting to shift most of the burden.

The ENVOY is a great magazine that probably caters better, at the moment, to the actual playing of postal board games by mail than the GO BETWEEN does. However it is a lesson well learnt by those advocating a merger within the current crop of house magazines for PBM groups (and I am one such advocate) about what can be lost in such an affair. This point was summed up for me by comments in a letter from Steven Bagshaw recently "Amateur mags have a nicer atmosphere about them, prompting more people to write..."etc. The merger has seen the atmosphere of RUMPLE disappear from the end product.

AN AGE OF MIRACLES.
Brooke Alexander

Due to circumstances that weren't unforseen but are nevertheless uncontrollable, you shall be spared having one of my "reviews" inflicted upon you this month. But before you all rush off to celebrate, be warned: Rick and Esther willing, An Age of Miracles will be back next issue. I have something a little.... different planned for you. Oh, I do love having a captive audience and lenient editors. Heh! Heh!

In lieu of an article, I've compiled a short list of current publications that seem, to me, to be valuable additions to that small elite of comics that aspire to be something other than throw-away, instantly forgotten entertainment.

Regular Titles

American Splendor (Harvey Pekar)
Albedo Amthropomorphics (Thoughts and Images)
Anything Goes ... Limited Series (Fantagraphics Books)
The Badger (First Comics)
Batman Nos. 404-407 "Batman: Year One" (DC Comics)
Cerebus (Aardvark- Vanaheim)
The Demon ... Limited Series (DC Comics)
Donald Duck (Gladstone Comics)
Elektra: Assassin ... Limited Series (Marvel Comics/Epic)
The Flash (DC Comics)
Fox Comics (Fox Comics- Australian)
Grendel (Comico)
Johnny Quest (Comico)
Love and Rockets (Fantagraphics Books)
'Mazing Man Special (DC Comics)
Mickey Mouse (Gladstone Comics)
Miracleman (Eclipse Comics)
The 'Nam (Marvel Comics)
Nexus (First Comics)
Prime Cuts (Fantagraphics Books)
The Question (DC Comics)
Raw (Raw Books and Graphics)
Scout (Eclipse Comics)
The Spirit (Kitchen Sink Press)
Swamp Thing (DC Comics)
Uncle Scrooge (Gladstone Comics)
Walt Disney's Comics and Stories (Gladstone Comics)
War Drums .... Limited Series (Fantagraphics Books)
Watchmen ... Limited Series (DC Comics)
Zooniverse (publisher- Eclipse Comics. Writer Artist- Fil Barlow. Produced by Minotaur Books of Melbourne.)
Zot! (Eclipse Comics)

Albums and Special Projects Currently Available:

American Splendor: The life and times of Harvey Pekar
(written by Harvey Pekar)
Co-to Maltese Vols. 1,2 and 3
(written and drawn by Hugo Pratt)
How to Commit Suicide in South Africa
(art: Sue Coe. Text: Holly Metz)
Maus: A Survivor's Tale
(written and drawn by Art Spielgelman)

Most of these comics cannot be found at newsagents or bookstores. To purchase them you have to visit a comics speciality shop. Fortunately there is at least one such in each State capital - simply check your local phone book ("Books - Retail") . For those of you who would like to sample what can at times be a fascinating medium, but are prevented either by distance or circumstance from visiting a specialty store, the following companies offer reasonable mail- order services write to them for a catalogue:

Minotaur Books Pty. Ltd.   Images-Images
251 Swanston Street   P.O. Box 45
Melbourne 3000   Mitcham 3132.

The PHANTOM: A Quick Glance
By Rick Snell

In our household the PHANTOM has been one of our main reading stays. Often on a pure analysis of plot, artwork and that undefinable quality "relevance", it could be said that it isn't a very good buy.

Yet I find the PHANTOM enjoyable, in much the same way that a favourite tv situation-comedy, author or singer is enjoyable. There is action, love, adventure all kept within the bounds of a repeated framework. When you open a PHANTOM comic you know the Phantom will be alive at the end of it after defeating the evil that this time threatens his world.

However occassionally the PHANTOM does reach that point where a piece of journeymanship becomes craft. Where the story line becomes deeper, the art work clearer and the supporting characters less cliched. Except in a few instances this level of excellence is found only within the covers of the Special Double Number issues that have been appearing about every three months recently. These have gloss covers and 68 pages contrasted to the normal 32 page Phantom comic.

In my opinion among the best of these stories are the ones where the Phantom meets the nemesis of his family ....pirates. Maybe a paradoxical liking for a person who earns most of his living from being a Tax Officer in contrast to spending most of my time running PBM games.

Included among these finer episodes are the ones where the Phantom tangles with the secret societies. *The Tiger From Rangoon* (Issue 763) is one such gem.

A Sub-Editor's Defence
By Rick Snell

Brooke Alexander has written a number of critical essays and reviews about comics over the last few issues including MIRACLEMAN, NEXUS and SWAMP THING.

I have found them both informative and thought provoking. Comics have always held a special place in my life. Due to low family income my early years were almost bookless .My family were also not the type to frequent libraries. So I didn't discover the wonderland of books and tales housed by such a beast until I discovered the school library and the POCO series of books in grade 4 and 5. I supplemented my early reading fare of Dick and Jane books with a vociferous appetite for comics. Comics were my learning fountain. I excelled at history in primary school because by grade six I had read every single war comic I could get my hands on. With their action ranging from Ancient Egypt to Vietnam such comics offered a lot of geographical and historical knowledge. I can remember navigating my way to a corner shop as a five year old with a copper coin tucked in my hand to buy my first ever (and coincidently the number 1 issue) of SMASH.

Comics were my baby sitter as well as reading instructor. So it has pleased me to give Brooke a free hand to bring his skills of critical analysis and scholary argument to the medium of comics. His suggestions as to interesting reading, and Christmas and birthday presents of Dutch and other non DC or Marvel comics have brought Esther, myself and the other visitors to our house/home and business a number of hours entertainment.

Yes some comics are extreme escapism like SPIDERMAN or THOR and god knows after reading newspapers or working in the Public Service such things are needed. Others like WATCHMEN and ELEKTRA:ASSASSIN with their combination of story,pictures and atmosphere are emotionally wrenching as few other literary forms have touched me. Some like SCOUT are intriguing and beautiful in their art.

While working on the word processor one day I stumbled across a completed article by Brooke analysing three recent attempts at reworking some of my old favourites MAN OF STEEL, DARK NIGHT and THE SHADOW. Reading through it I was impressed by the vigour and passion of his arguments and the strong critical case he had built. When I informed Brooke about the forgotten gem I had discovered he told me he felt it really wasn't worth publishing. Frankly I disagreed and I have reprinted it below. But any errors or lapses in Brooke's normal high standards of writing and analysis is purely the result of my crude editing.

In response to any argument about publishing the article from Brooke all I can say is that I prefered printing it now rather than killing him and then printing it! It is a well known event in the literary world that caches of stories, or the concluding chapter (Picnic At Hanging Rock) are discovered or released after a writer's death. Frankly I could not wait until my tall and immensely alive friend answered the reaper's call. So I would have had to terminate him, us ambitious ex-editors are like that.

SUPER HERO REDUCTIONISM
A Comic Genre In Fear Of Being Lost In The Storm

I suppose it had to happen. When you can't take a character or series any further, there is only one direction left. You turn...back. You rediscover roots. You look for the elemental, primal super-hero. And you try to tell your audience that this somehow represents an artistic break-through. Forgive me, but I'm not convinced.

1986 saw a veritable epidemic of super-hero reductionism. The chief exponent (or culprit) was DC Comics. Though this may be a brilliant marketing ploy, I believe that all this enthusiasm for archetypes will ultimately rebound on the company and the creators involved, because it shows more emphatically than ever before the essential poverty of the super-hero genre.

It is not surprising that DC should be leading the rush to rediscover the archetypal super-hero. For decades, their most popular characters were dimensionless, almost iconographical. Though provided with very little scope for real human drama, DC's comics were slightly more interactive than those of its chief competitor, Marvel. The reader was unconsciously encouraged to fill in the hero's emotional gaps. Of course this was changed irrevocably in the 1960's when Stan Lee introduced the one-dimensional character to comic books. The hero with a personality trait or a problem (usually only one, lest the readers' imaginations be taxed too far) which imparted at least the illusion of solidity. Ever since the advent of THE FANTASTIC FOUR and, a little later, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, the history of main-stream comics has principally been one of endless exemplification -- a never-ending, eternally expanding pulp universe of painfully shallow characters and banal plots. Often the only saving grace of many of these comics has been the artwork: the sheer power and vigour of a Jack Kirby, the grace and bravura virtuosity of an Alex Toth, the exotic psychedelia of a Steve Ditko or the angular precision of a Gill Kane. Tragically, even the original and singular vision of such craftsmen was eventually broken down into discrete components, homogenised (bastardised), and fed to their successors. Thus, the "House Style" was born.

And just where do the "new" icons fit in ? Basically, they are an amalgam of the old non-dimensional cypher and the one-dimensional caricature we are all so familiar with. The worst example of this synthesis must be John Byrne's MAN OF STEEL, the best disguised, Howard Chaykin's THE SHADOW. Only Frank Miller's DARK KNIGHT rises above the endemic banality. Though certainly neither unflawed nor a masterpiece, DARK KNIGHT does represent the work of a superior creator who has given thought to some of the implications of super-heroic vigilanteism. Of the three series, it is certainly the least cliched.

Perhaps you need to be convinced. Very well, let's look at MAN OF STEEL no. 1. According to John Byrne,"...*DC Comics has hired me to guide the reshaping of the Superman legend...To try to make Superman of today as exciting in his own right as was that primal Superman of yesterday. To try to recreate Superman as a character more in tune with the needs of the modern comic book audience.*" These are fine and laudable sentiments. Unfortunately. the result can only be described (and then charitably) as bland. It is appalling that the first issue of a series which is supposed to redefine "THE" legend should be so dull and sterile, devoid of real emotion and, in its latter-half, simply choked with down-home folksiness. And this is supposed to be "The Comics Event Of The Century". Byrne tries too hard to evoke the legend of Superman. The dialogue is stilted, the characterisation negligible, the story (what little there is of it) far too contrived, and the artwork pedestrian. A competent but unimaginative draughtsman, Byrne has reworked the same small repertoire of expressions and poses for far too long. This has given his recent work a tedious uniformity.

Like so many other creators in this field, John Byrne takes the concept of "Over-Man" for granted, ignoring its implications. This also true of Howard Chaykin. Anyone who has read Chaykin's AMERICAN FLAGG!, for instance, has been exposed to a highly polished, extremely commercial (and needless to say, more than slightly tongue-in-cheek) distillation of popular culture in general, and super-hero comics in particular. This is Chaykin's forte – he can take the hoariest of comic-book cliches and and invest them with tremendous verve and energy. Though not super-powered himself, ex-video porn star and Plexus Ranger Reuben Flagg most definitely belongs to the super-hero tradition.

Chaykin is refreshingly honest about his work. He is the first to admit that it is very commercial. This is not another way of saying that it is worthless – the first twelve issues of AMERICAN FLAGG! are as exciting and engrossing as any best-selling novel. The same can be said of THE SHADOW. Surface glitter and excessive, graphic violence help mask the banality of both plot and "hero". The Shadow is portrayed as brutal and chauvinistic, the antithesis of the tough-talking but kind-hearted private-eye who is now an ineradicable part of Western culture. Chaykin has described the series as "...a no-shit, kick-ass crime comic." To his credit, he leaves his audience with few illusions about this most famous of pulp vigilantes.

Visually, THE SHADOW is as vibrant as MAN OF STEEL is static. Chaykin's backgrounds are gorgeously detailed, and his starkly sketched figures are well suited to the violent, kinetic world they inhabit. However, it is distressing that Chaykin should use his undeniable artistic gifts to pander to the adolescent sexual fantasies of his predominantly male readers quite so vigorously. I don't mean to imply that comics should eschew sexuality, overt or otherwise. But I do believe that for a writer often praised for his employment of strong female characters, Chaykin is altogether too fond of placing them in humiliating or degrading situations. Many (most?) of the women who appeared in AMERICAN FLAGG! were depicted as sexually irresponsible bondage queens. This trait is just as evident in THE SHADOW – that the Shadow himself is shown to be a completely unreconstructed chauvinist is small compensation.

MAN OF STEEL is a thoroughly ordinary comic book. THE SHADOW is by turns compelling and repellant. Both are supposedly devoted to exploring the heart of their respective heroes. One is set in the daylight world of Smallville and Metropolis, the other in some darker place where the earnest pretensions of Superman never penetrate, a region governed by the code of Hamurabi. Yet neither examines the soul of the super-hero. Byrne cannot, for he has absorbed the cliches of the genre too thoroughly, while Chaykin probably doesn't see any need to do so. That task has been left to Frank Miller. His chosen vehicle is the Dark Knight, the Bat-man, the grim and mysterious midnight avenger. The hero obsessed and demon-driven.

The DARK KNIGHT series has been the most successful comic of the year. It has been favoured with largely laudatory media attention. Its creator has been hailed as a genius. It is truly a pity that as a work of art, it fails in so many ways. Miller does redefine the Bat-Man. Of the three series under discussion here, his comes closest to its goal, which makes its flaws all the more frustrating. I won't rehearse all of DARK KNIGHT's faults here, because the work deserves a more considered examination than space permits, suffice it to say that its impact is marred by a number of inconsistencies - some are rather odd lapses of logic, others spring from Miller's own aesthetic sense. However, what Miller has done well, even brilliantly, is to depict the Bat-Man as an obsessed psychotic. The Dark Knight isn't sane - rather he is the brooding, chilling figure of menace he was always meant to be.

DARK KNIGHT is a paean to insanity. The relationship between super-hero and villain is examined with brutal precision - the hatred that binds the Bat-Man and his arch-foe, the Joker is almost sexual in its intensity. Miller is trying to expose some of the consequences attendant upon the notion of "Super-Man". His exposition of the dilemma that would confront a super-being in a world of ordinary mortals is bleakly concise. In this future world, super-heroes are an endangered species. But this is not Chris Claremont's interminable anti-mutant hysteria. Times have indeed changed:

> "They'll kill us if they can, Bruce. Every year they grow
> smaller. Every year they hate us more. We must not remind them
> that giants walk the earth."

The author of these words is Superman, but not the cardboard cut-out John Byrne has tried to infuse with mythic status. Miller's Superman is awesome. He is also compromised, for he has become an agent of the American government. This Man of Steel is a weapon of war. He has lost his innocence.

Miller preaches. His story crashes and strains when it should be muted and under-stated. Nevertheless, it does grip the reader. The soul of the Bat-Man has been laid bare and shown to be a dark and haunted thing. Unfortunately, this kind of reductionism can only work once. I wonder, does DC realise this ? Certainly, origins can be retold, and each retelling could (and should) be different. How many times have Marvel Comics churned out the same tired Spiderman origin, with appropriate but weary fanfare ? This is not really harmful, at least not if you believe that your readership changes every 3 or 4 years (and if thats true, who is to blame ?). But DC is engaged in a rather more .delicate and hazardous experiment. Will it have any enduring impact ? Despite its shortcomings, DARK KNIGHT will at least be remembered with fondness. I suspect that THE SHADOW and MAN OF STEEL will prove rather less memorable, for unlike Miller, Byrne and Chaykin have not found their way back to that primal archetype from which all super-heroes are supposed (by those who love them better than I) to have sprung.

So where does all this fury and turmoil leave us ? With one near-success, one bright, noisy mediocrity and one genuine dud. Yet all three have been hailed as important, as mature, or as a new standard of excellence. Certainly, much of that acclaim was advertising hyperbole, but some of it was heartfelt. It is disheartening to watch the canonisation of works that in another medium would be dismissed as irrelevant. Even Miller's magnum opus would probably have been largely ignored if it had appeared as a novel, sans super-hero trappings. If comics are ever to be accepted as a legitimate art-form, the frantic self-congratulation which accompanies every new series must stop. These are not great works of art and literature. None of them are as innovative as A CONTRACT WITH GOD, HEARTBREAK SOUP, AMERICAN SPLENDOR, or even CEREBUS THE AARDVARK. They may be the best that the super-hero genre has to offer (though even this is debatable), but they are not the best that comics have to offer. Unfortunately, this message is in danger of being lost in the storm.
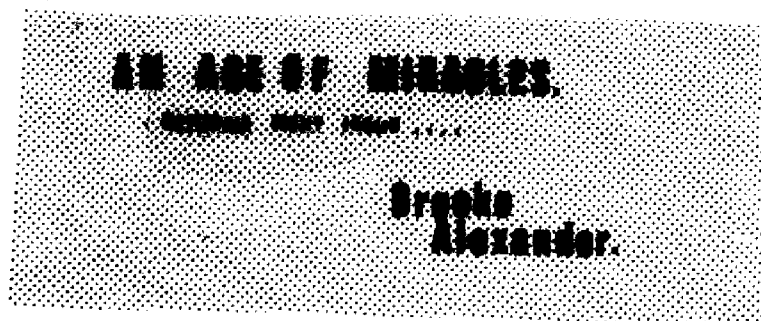
THE MORE THE MERRIER
PBM Groups In Australasia
By
Rick Snell

With the advent of MAGIC and more recently GAME OF PRINCES and
EMPYREAN GAMES with their titles "Fire In The Night Sky and Heroes of Conquest
and NOSTROMO GAMES with "Cosa Nostra" a lot of discussion has been generated.
Some of the discussion within pbm groups, and by players, concerns the
commercial viability of pbm in Australia and New Zealand and the capacity of
the market for games and their moderators. Most argue take that the population
of the two countries is only 18-19 million and thus the potential pbm
population only a 1,000 or so. Thus the market is in danger of being saturated
and many (or a few) good games disappearing due to their moderators going to
the wall.

I take an optimistic view. The above view need only be true if we
moderators are limited by our imaginations and fail to gain a strong
entrepreneurial spirit.

Australia alone could support 50 PBM companies with weekly turnovers of
$2,000 under the right conditions. Far fetched? A little. We all know that some
PBM games can be addictive it is just a matter of choosing the right customer.
I often wonder how different my life would have been if I had hooked Robert
Holmes A Court on DEMONSLAND rather than Ian Plumb.

The PBM groups are pitching at all the potential market. They keep
their prices in the $2.50 to $5 range because this is what the lowest
financially constrained student end of the market can reluctantly be relieved
of each fortnight. I remember sitting on an Ansett flight to the 1985 Canberra
Convention and have Ian Whitchurch (just about to start year 11) tell a hostess
in a pitiful voice that "I" was extorting $2.50 a fortnight from this poor
student.

Some of the best financial or business advisers will often charge a
fortune for the following advice; *find a niche in the market and make it yours
and you can often name your own price.*

Of course there are two little difficulties for you would be PBM gold
diggers. You first have to design a game that you can charge $10,$20 or even
$50 a turn for and then you have to find the punter who will pay your asking
price for the game. But as I said before you just need the right amount of
imagination and entrepreneurial skill to pull it off.

So why don't I do it? I am more cast in the mould of a pathfinder than
a person willing or able to harness my talents and put my back into some very
hard and risky work.

Remember that the PBM market does not need to be restricted to
Australia. China, Japan, Albania, Latin America are all waiting to play our
games we just have to bring this little known fact to their attention.

If commercial moderators have good games, give good service, have staying power, a will to compete tempered by a co-operative nature, have wild imaginations and a bit of financial sense and don't mind working hard then the number of PBM groups in Australia and New Zealand need not cause players or moderators any great degree of concern. Rather each new entrant should be greeted like a new addition to a strong and vigorous sporting competition.

There are the obvious advantages of any number of the existing groups getting together or merging, especially for the export market. However these advantages of market concentration do have some drawbacks to players and don't invalidate my earlier arguments for the case of the more the merrier.

In order to help new entrants to the market. I have gathered together the following advice. It is not meant to be holy script or comprehensive but rather the information I would impart to anyone who was contemplating starting up PBM moderation and had the sense to seek out a bit of advice.

Seek as much advice as you can before you start and then continue seeking it after you start. Write or phone all the existing moderators and ask their advice. Even though it is relatively new in Australia PBM moderation is not a brand new idea which has to be kept under wraps till the release date in case someone else jumps the gun. It is more like taking on a film processing franchise or teddy bear speciality shop. The ground work has been done by someone else and there is a lot of experience to be learnt from. So ask the people who are already trying to make a crust from the idea, they may save you hours/months of work and a small fortune. If you still feel you can't trust the existing moderators in Australia or New Zealand ask overseas moderators for advice.

Nicky Palmer (editor of FLAGSHIP magazine) has written a book that has several chapters on PBM games, designing such games and setting up a PBM business in the UK, as well as chapters on computer software gaming design and sale.

Don't stop at the people in the PBM field go and see your local State Small Business Office. Never be afraid that you are too insignificant for them to give you much help. Remember that advice to people like yourself is what they are being paid to do or more hopefully what they are good at doing. On the other hand find out how they like proposals put to them, what materials etc you should bring along to any meeting.

Outlay about $30 on a few of the booklets in the series "Managing the Small Business" available from the Australian Government Publishing Service and then spend a couple of days reading them and following up the information in them. Remember a few dollars and a few days or weeks of reading and following up information are very good investments if they help you avoid mistakes or give you a good starting platform.

Don't be afraid to discuss your ideas and plans with friends. They may spot a weakness or even be able to contribute towards your success.

If anyone is interested or contemplating or have just started up a PBM business write to me at the Missing Tiger or phone me on (002) 23 3926 to discuss any of the above or other things such as marketing etc.
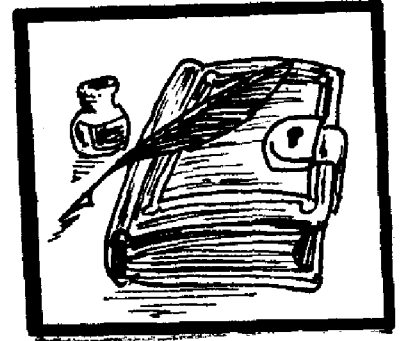
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the hunted star
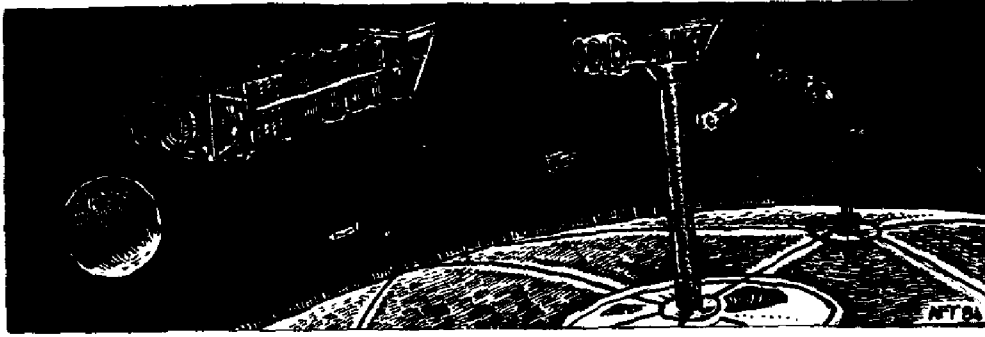
Return From Sirius Letters

I just wanted to make a few comments on the article by Glen Northey, about RFS scoring. I think the proposed scoring system as modified by John Campbell would be a very good addition to an already excellant game.

I am fairly much in agreement with the player ROAMER, who thinks EARTH trading has too much of an influence on the game.

I am currently in front in my game, and have no desire to sit on EARTH for 4 or 5 turns trading. However I'll probably be forced to, due to the fact that unless I do I will be left behind.

I would rather like more emphasis on the acquistion of planets as the main ingrediant of winning.

I don't think changing the order sequence as ROAMER suggested would be a good idea, as this would tip the scales very much against EARTH trading. EARTH would become out of bounds for Cargo ships and only Battleships etc being able to show their faces.

Prehaps just lowering the prices slightly, with the addition of the proposed scoring system, would make the games much closer and hard fought. With people being able to claw their way back into contention.

Anyway these are just my thoughts.

Ray Trewin.
Vic

The comments in the last issue of the Go Between about selling ore at earth being too effective. I totally agree with reducing the effect in some way or even not allowing selling. These changes would make Return From Sirius an even better game.

Roderick Wigbout
Wellington

A Reply to Two RFS Maps

Full marks to the two cretins for attempting to destroy a major part of Return From Sirius diplomacy - trading in maps/map structure! I have found that one of the best ways to initiate negotiations was to 'Gift' your intended ally a useful part of his map, such as where to find a possibly unclaimed Research Planet or two!

There are only two good things about the two articles; 1) the first map was basic and didn't give much away. 2) The second map is a confused and total mess and, in it's present structure, does little to help tie-in empire boundaries.

Finally, if I encounter anyone in my RFS games who has perpretrated such a map in the Go Between, watch out for my battleships!

Richard Kleinbergs

P.S. Cheers to all in RFS 26, thanks for the good game and thanks more for not being able to beat me!!!

P.P.S. John the new scoring formula looks good. Count me in for a playtest of Lindon's more savage version of "Final Days".

Rick's note:
We recently received a comprehensive map for RFS from Peter Campbell but have held off printing it due to space needed to print it (8 or so pages) and comments like Richard's. I make one point that no matter how much is published about something you will find that many players have not read it. New players sign up, issues of the Go Between fade into the past and we are regularly left with only the office copy. So Richard don't worry too much. Map trading will always be a viable diplomatic avenue.

Dear Rick

I have read the article on changes to the scoring system and here are some ideas:

1) When you use industry you lose 1 credit per point of industry used (local costs)

2) I think that you should include a running victory points score, on the players turnsheets as this will tell the player how he/she is doing.

3) The reduction of credits should be included when attacked (as cost - see point 1) for destroyed units.

4) Having studied John's formula -- as provided -- its got to be included but as a running total (see 2)

All of the above penalisues and benefits traders and gun runners forcing them to compete on more equal terms.

Clynton Smith

SUBSCRIBER/PLAYER ACCOUNTING SYSTEM
(or "whats this crap doing on my label")
Lindon Flood

The Missing Tiger has been given a basic computerised accounting system for Christmas. It replaces the old label production system and twenty to thirty pages of player payment records.

The most obvious change to you, the subscriber/player, is the extra information printed on the right-hand side of the sticky label. For GO-BETWEEN subscribers it shows the date to which your subscription is payed in year /month/day format, plus a code to help us bundle the magazine for Australia Post.

For Missing Tiger players the label shows the game, eg RFS 52 or FD 3, your player number in that game, your account balance, and any free turns owing to you. We have retained the old system where a player has an account for each game, rather than a central account that is debited each time a game is run for that player. When the account balance shows up as a negative value, the player owes us money for that game.

The benefits of the system are;

No more messy calculations late on Sunday nights so that we can put your account balance on your turn sheet.

Go-Between labels printed out in the order Australia Post requires (not straight postcode order).

We can look up a player's account balances for all the games he is in, almost at the touch of a button. We will also be able to print this information if you so require.

A single name and address record for each player/subscriber, as opposed to the old label system which had a separate entry for each game or subscription. This means we only have to get it right once, so if we have your name or address wrong, now is the time to get it fixed.

If you require all your mail to be sent to a different address for a while, just let us know the address and the latest date that you wish your mail to go there. We put it in the database, and your mail is sent there until the date specified.

On the negative side;

Your postie will know when you owe us money.

If you make a payment that arrives at the last moment before we run a game, the labels may have already been printed, so the account balance shown on the label will not show the payment.

The system is new so there may be some problems with either the programs, or the data. Please report any problems to us.

A HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO RESEARCH PLANETS
THE RESEARCH PLANET MANUAL REVISITED

What are these things called Research Planets? When you meet a RFS (Return From Sirius) player he or she is often deep in the throes of conjuring up something special from Research Planet 13. Hours are spent in the darkness wondering how the *Tigers* will judge their efforts.

The *Tigers* being a race of music lovers residing in the chilly climates of Antartica's first suburb wish to remove a little of the mystic over Research Planets (RP).

The central roles of the Research Planet are to allow players to partly rectify bad playing and or bad luck and to add a degree of flexibility to an otherwise firmly structured game. Research Planet requests are implemented by hand and thus can theoretically be unlimited. However the *tigers* have strong views as to their roles of moderators i.e., "keeping within due bounds, not extreme, not excessive".

So when deciding any Research Planet request the first response is "How will this affect this game", "Has it been done before? The results?". The second response is "How much work and thought has a player put into the request". Then, "How alien is this idea to the normal rules of Return From Sirius", "Is the player asking for a permanent or temporary benefit" and "what is the player sacrificing?" And finally, "can we implement this in the game or will the program be unable to take it?" We also have a fairly strong objection to a RP order which directly disadvantages only one other player.

If the request filters through these checks and balances it is implemented. If it is decided that the request should be rejected we try and implement any back up requests, i.e., "If that isn't allowed could I then have...".

To save time and be fairly consistent we have developed a Research Planet Manual which gives us general operating guidelines for many standard types of requests. Any new and strange requests go through the filtering process outlined above and are then usually placed in the manual.

There are some requests which we would be happy to implement but we can't because considerable reprogramming would be required. There is/was a game (Cluster) where you can ask the game moderator/master (GM) to reprogram the game to accomodate an equivalent of a research order, but he charges $20 per hour for it. A reasonable estimate of a minor change would be 3-4 hours and possible very much longer. We do not offer that service, largely because it would be prohibitively expensive for most players.

Players must always bear in mind that the Return From Sirius moderators always reserve the right to vary the result of research planet requests from game to game and within games to perserve game balance or to rectify anomolies that occur. However with that caveat in mind the following extract from the Research Planet Manual is a good guide to making a successful research planet request.

The following is a printed extract of the Research Planet Manual.

1. Creation of a permanent link
   * Player must own both planets. Neither planet may have 4 links
   Result.   Always done.

2. Building 4 Cargo units (CU) with fuel
   * Hull must be on the RP
   Result.   10% chance of total failure. 20% chance of only 1 C-unit.

3. Creation of industry on RP
   * No restrictions
   Result. 8% no industry 45% 1 industry 45% 2 industry 2% 3 or more industry.

4. Creation of a mine on RP
   * No restriction
   Result. as for industry plus 50% 2 turns production added.

5. Details of a planet
                         Treated as an extra planet scan. Same details. The use
   of extra research planets and sacrifices may gain more scans.

6. Transmutation of ore.
   * Ore must be on planet. Maximum 30 units split between ore types.
   Result. Ore is changed. No loss of ore. Greater amounts can be converted
   but loss of ore occurs in the process.

7. Random positioning of a ship.
   * Ship must belong to player. Not positioned on home planet.
   Result. Ship moved. To help with survival the ship will receive 4 extra
   cargo units and four more fighter units plus fuel and an extra planetary
   defence unit

8. Load one unit of fuel onto another player's ship.
   * Ship must be on RP.
   Result. Always works.

9. 50% increase in Fighter or Cargo units.
   * Ship must be on planet.
   Result 40 + d20 % increase in units.

10. Details of another player's ships.
    * No restrictions
    Result. Complete list of player's ships broken down into types.
    Occassionaly rough details of fighter and cargo units given.

11. Destruction of a hyper space link between planets.
    * Must own both planets and have battleship on each and 2 industry on one.
   Result. Link always destroyed along with both ind. 5% 1 ship, 10% 2 ships,
        20% all ore on the planet.

12. A bomb to destroy everything on a planet.
    * 50 units of any ore used up to make the bomb. Size of bomb 50 C-units.
    Result. Will destroy all mines and ind on a planet. Destroys ship if it
    encounters any unfriendly Planetary Defence units (PD).

13. Moving a Research Planet.
    * size 100 C-units. Ship must carry only 1 unit of fuel. Research
    Facilities must be unloaded next turn.
    Result. Facilities moved. Up to 5 industry on either planet destroyed or
    50% of all ore.

14. Allow another RP to act at a distance.
    *˙applicable to ship unit increasing and all other research planet
      requests.
    Result. Action is performed with smaller reduction in effect.

15. Building of PD on RP.
    * No restriction.
    Result. 10 PD built.

16. Controlled movement of a ship.
    For 90% success rate both planets must be owned by the same player.
    If the jump fails the ship will either remain on the Research planet 50% of
    times or land on a planet within two jumps of the destination planet.
    Each extra research planet used will increase the success rate by 3%.

    As research planet orders are executed first it would be theoretically
possible to move and fire at an unsuspecting player. Where both planets are
owned, the use of an extra research planet will give a 50% success rate in
jumping and attacking. Two research planets will increase this chance to 90%,
three research planets to 95%, four to a 100%.

    It is not possible to jump to a neutral or another player's planet
unless at least three research planets are used, with a 25% chance of jumping
and attacking in the same turn. Then extra research planet used will increase
this chance by 25%.

17. The prevention of another player's research planet request. If the number
    of the other player's Research Planet is known 95% chance of blocking
    the request otherwise 50%.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIAL REQUESTS

17. The NOTHINK PROJECT
    This project allows industry and mines to be moved from non homeworlds
during one turn. The project can only be used once a research planet turn. The
PROJECT involves the mass production of the drug NOTHINK which is administered
to the population of a planet. The drug dampens the normal absolute resistence
that planet populations show towards the removal of industry or mines from
their world.

    The project requires the use of 20 industry of a homeworld for one turn
and the expenditure of a minimum of 500 credits. A player can then remove any
mines or industry from any world he owns. The normal rules in regards to a
homeworld still apply. The industry and mines must be moved by that player's
ships.

A harmful side affect of this project is the 60% probability that between 1 to 5 industries on the homeworld will be wrecked beyond repair. The chances of minimising this damage by increase expenditure on the PROJECT is very high.

18. The SPY/SABOTEUR

A player can place a secret agent on any planet. To do so he nominates any planet (he does not have to be able to reach there with a normal ship) a minimum of two turns before the next research planet turn. The owner of the planet at that turn is informed of the arrival of the agent (but subsequent owners are only told if informed by the original owner or an act of sabotage occurs). Once nominated the player must use this request as his first research planet request. If on the forthcoming research planet turn he controls no research planets he loses 1,000 credits and the agent.

Each research planet turn a player can ask for a report from the agent from that planet. The quality and quantity of the report will be directly related to the amount of credits a player expends on the agent.

An agent can be instructed to destroy one mine, or its ore stocks, or 1 industry or from between 1-5 planetary defence units each research planet turn for the expenditure of 500 credits.

To help avoid the agent being killed etc by the local security force a player can expend credits on Security, each credit expended will increase the chance of avoiding the termination of the agent by 1% the base chance of avoiding such a fate is 5% if the owner of the planet initiates a search. Otherwise it is 100%.

The owner of a planet can attempt to neutralise an agent on one of their worlds once each research planet turn (but such an attempt does not count as a research planet request). Each credit expended improves the chance of neutralising the agent by 1% from a base of 95%. However as mentioned above the player controlling the agent can expend credits during a research planet turn to offset the chances of this occurring.

Each player can only operate one agent at a time.

AN INFORMATION REQUEST

Requests are often received for information, i.e., who scanned my world 256 last turn? Which player has the highest score? Who is the "anonymous" sender of those general messages?

All such requests will be handled on a case by case basis but as a general principle no direct answer will be given. Rather a cryptic answer or an answer that contains the information i.e., in relation to who scanned you may be given a choice of three possible players (including the correct one).

SACRIFICES TO IMPROVE OR HELP RESEARCH PLANET REQUESTS

ORE and POINTS

For each 50 units of ore or each 50 points of score used in the request chances of success are increased by .5 to 1% with a 10% chance that the total sacrifice of ores or points will have no influence on the research planet request. Where research planet requests do not involve % increases or chances of success the sacrifice of points or ores may lead to increase benefits i.e., a sacrifice of 200 units of ore may gain an extra planet scan or industry. However the increased benefit only relates to the original request i.e., if the player asked for an extra scan a sacrifice of ore could only be expected to help get another scan (not more industry or cargo units).

SHIPS

The destruction of a player's own ship (as long as it has at least a total of fifty fighter and/or cargo units) will either double the research planet request asked for or give the request a 99% chance of success.

PLANETS and MINES

Destruction of planets cannot contribute to research planet requests. Destruction of mines can only contribute if the planet where the mines are located has at the start of the turn at least 20 planetary defence units. Each dismantled mine will improve the chances of a research planet request by 2-5%.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Style and approach is also a factor in getting new and revolutionary Research Planet requests accepted. Remember we process hundreds of turns and it is refreshing to receive carefully thought out arguments presented like this:

From: Research World "Honduras Honey"
To: Research and Development Section
      Los Comercheros
      Santa Vila
Topic: Recent Lines Of Research

> *Our current project is the converting of type 7 ore (local name Fool's Delight) into crude mining equipment. Our scientists have made several breakthrough's in the refining and smeltering of Fool's Delight. Recent tests suggest that we can manufacture one lot of mining equipment for every 150 units of type 7 ore.*

From: Research and Development Section
To: Research World "Honduras Honey"

Topic: Fool's Delight

> *We have been directing our research along similar lines to those described in your recent letter. We have found that we can obtain one mining installation of any type with the loss on 150 units of Fool's Delight. We have also found that the new installation will operate even if there was no previously discovered deposits on the planet.*

If we get a RP order written in a role-playing style, we will generally respond in kind. Possibly the most extreme example of this type of thing is the orders submitted by Fabian Stretton, reaching 15 pages at times. These make entertaining reading and probably influence my decision about what options he gets. He also provides an example of a research planet order which was allowed once but which will not be allowed again. The order was a doubling of cargo units of some ships. The condition was that he did not attempt to increase the cargo units on those ships again. This will not be allowed again, largely because of the difficulty of ensuring that they are not used on a RP again.

Research Planets are a most unusual part of a game, but also a very rewarding part to moderate. Actually, they are the only part which is actually fun. The rest is simply typing in orders, but with RP orders, we get to roll dice.
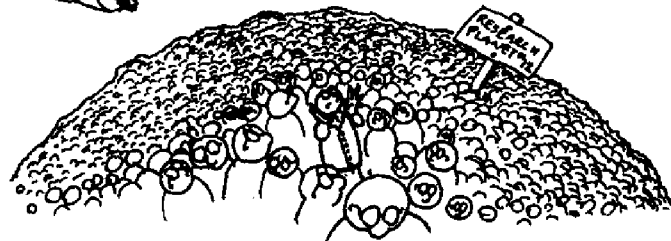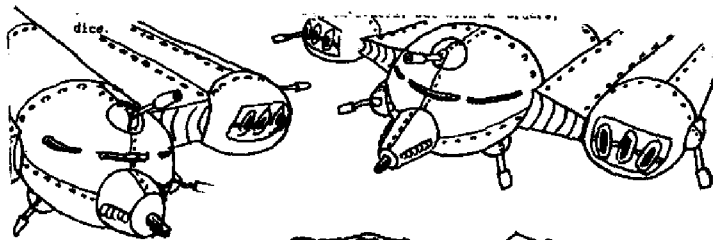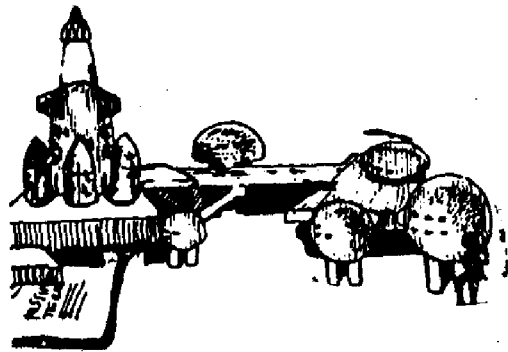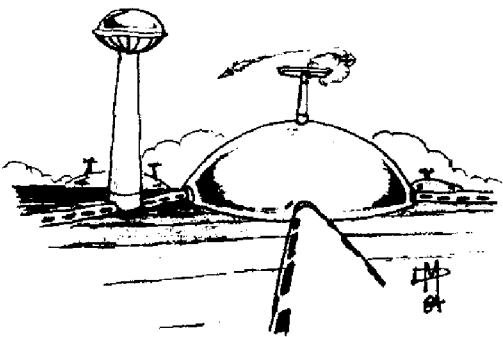
"QUICK· EVERYBODY PRETEND TO BE A RP UNIT!"

VICTORY!

*********************** GAME 26,33 AND 36 HAVE BEEN WON *****************

FINAL POSITIONS	TURN 21	SCORE	SHIPS	PLANETS	INDUSTRY
	TSARIST	16398	8	17	71
	GILGALAD	21830	9	24	85
	NAME3	18312	8	22	79
	MEGATRON	17314	11	18	72
	M POLO	18808	6	22	94
	HOSS	18023	8	30	85
WINNER	HELRIC	31319	8	39	79
	SKETCHA	16767	9	18	84
	SENDII	19079	16	16	88

GAME 33   TURN 23

		SCORE	SHIPS	PLANETS	INDUSTRY
WINNER	USF	31208	10	46	82
	MEGABUD	28129	7	32	92
	STUD	16342	7	10	72
	VAGADRA	22499	7	26	98
	NUBECCI	20444	10	18	93
	KZINTI	21770	8	21	75
	INTREKET	24476	9	30	100
	EMPIRE	14974	6	12	66
	NAPOLEON	30871	12	30	70

GAME 36   TURN 24

		SCORE	SHIPS	PLANETS	INDUSTRY
WINNER	OBERON	31325	13	30	72
	OBUECCI	15846	14	14	81
	ARGALATH	23189	3	17	73
	TERRAN	19281	15	12	70
	KAOS	24417	17	24	90
	ERESSEA	29025	8	39	103
	OM	27625	7	22	96
	PSYCHLOS	22099	9	21	80
	HERCULE	29715	5	24	87

WHY CREDIT VICTORIES IN THEIR PRESENT FORM
ARE BAD FOR RETURN FROM SIRIUS

By David Hand, alias Mackenzie Game 22

Of all the possible ways of winning Return from Sirius, by far the most common method of victory is the credit victory. Of all the ways of scoring the required credits, by far the most common winning method is a massive spending spree on Earth, usually capitalising on other players pushing the price of of types 0,1,2,3 to high levels.

Herein lies the major weakness of the game. There is only one winning strategy, other options being realistic only if no one sells out on Earth.

The mark of a classic game which will grow in popularity and stand the test of time is that there must be a number of equally promising strategies which are all capable of delivering victory. The obvious examples which come to mind are Chess and Diplomacy, where highly experienced players will argue the merits of various strategies, often inconclusively.

Though it is rare for games to reach a standard such as these, it seems to me that game designers should at least aim to include a range of strategies which are equally capable of delivering. If this was successful, then success or failure would depend more on how well the competitors reacted to each other's play, and less on an understanding of the rules with knowledge of what works and what doesn't.

Coming back to Return from Sirius, it seems to me that the buyers who rack the Earth prices up are trying to do what we all initially started playing for: the struggle to expand and control increasing areas of the galaxy and by skill of attack, defence and logistical support gain an advantage. Meanwhile, the old heads are accumulating stockpiles of the same ore, ready to capitalise once the price gets high enough and the score close enough to the target to make the break a winning one. Once this break is made, it is virtually impossible to counter it, except of course going on a selling spree ones self.

In the game I have just finished, when the selling started, I made a decision not to sell out on Earth but to expand as much as I could in the time left before the 3 sellers ended the game for us. My strategy was somewhat unsatisfying as I landed on undefended planet after planet with heaps of ore or new undiscovered planets. The odd defended planet caved in without a fight and no one ever attacked me in the entire course of the game.

In other words all the things I was playing for were not important in the winning of the game.

In my view, this should be changed if Return from Sirius is to get more popular. The no credit victory game I am now playing answers most of my objections, but as it could theoretically go on for ever, it probably wouldn't suit everyone.

The credit victory serves a useful purpose in providing a finite end to a game, freeing the players to start again and try different strategies. The following is my suggestions in bringing this about.

1. Using the rationale that Earth has great surpluses of everything, the selling price should be quoted, and the buying price should be much lower, say 5% of the selling price. This means that after the price of type 3 has reached 87 as it did in my game, a cargo ship loaded with 100 units of type 3 would gain the sum of only 435 credits, or 4.35 each.

2. Take Earth trading out of the credit scores altogether. Set up a new currency unit. Make Ships, PDU's and industry a cost on ones economy, with the way to generate revenue being trade with Earth.

In both these cases, credit victories would be generated where they should be: in the capture and control of as much of the galaxy as possible. Credit victories would be the compromise to end a stalemated or inconclusive struggle and adjudicate the winner.

While 1 unit of type 2 or 3 when sold on Earth is equal in value to 2 or 3 entire planets, the results in Return from Sirius will always be unsatisfying.

A. HOWARD
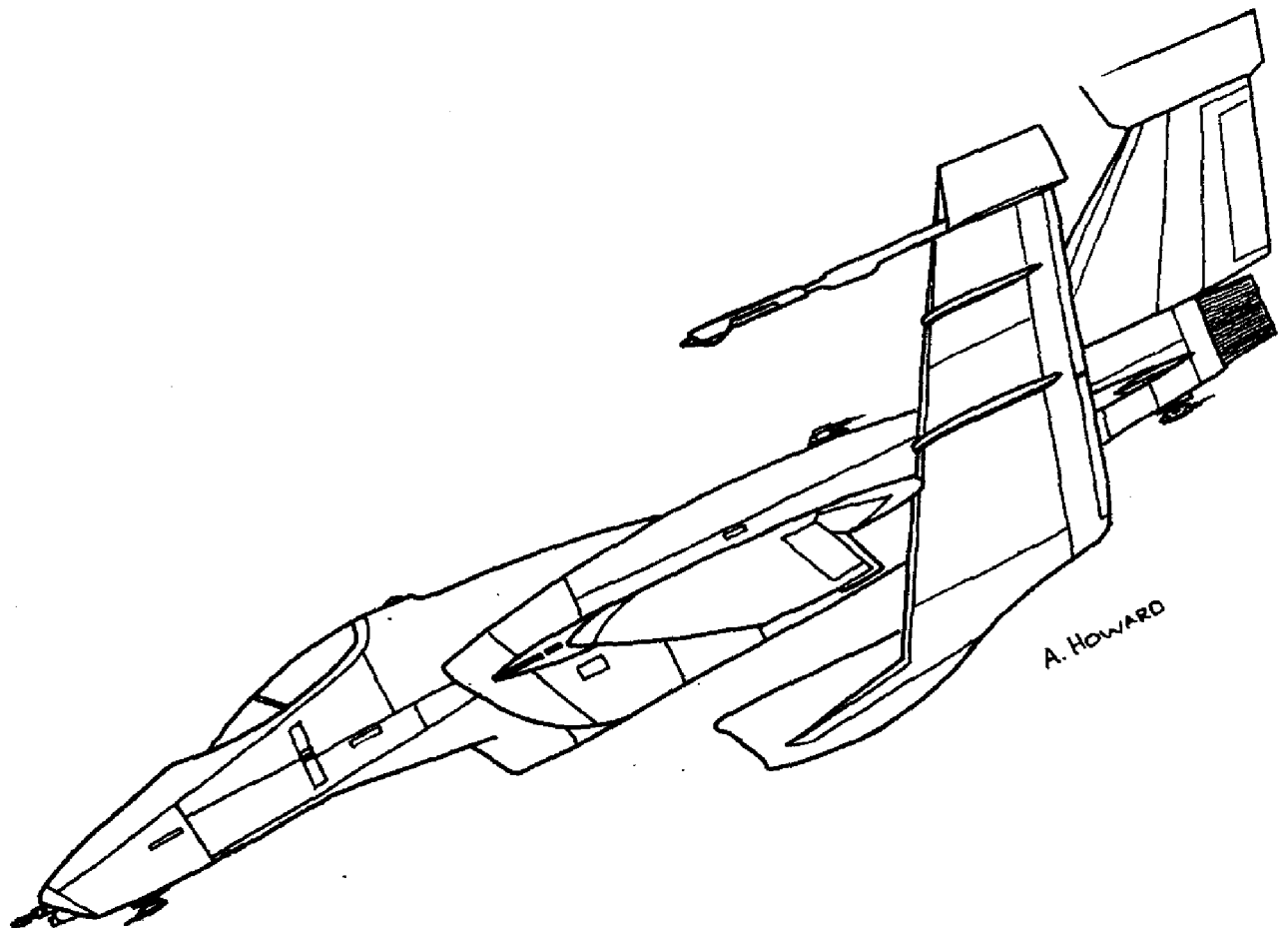
REPORT ON GAME 31

by Chris Hellyer (DAMUS)

My first game of RETURN FROM SIRIUS sees DAMUS enter the fray.
I decide early to capture as many planets and research planets as possible.
I intend to defend these planets adequately in order to convince other
players that there are easier targets, thereafter leaving me to my own
devices.

TURN 1

My ships jump out to the 4 adjacent planets. At home I build another
cargo ship.

TURN 2

I continue to jump out with 4 ships, the 5th returns home with ore
and to be refitted. My new ship is now a large cargo called "GYPSEY
FLUTE". At home I have built 2 mines of both types 1 and 3.

TURN 3

My ships have discovered 2 research planets. One, I now possess, the
other is still neutral because TOPANZ had arrived also. My medium cargo
"PEACE TRAIN" and his, "POOKY" rest uneasy over Research Planet 8 (RP8)
which has 1 IND and several mines of types 4 and 9. HMMM ! Perhaps my
initial build should have been a fighting ship. I decide to leave and
avoid a battle. I also send a diplomatic message to TOPANZ suggesting
a mutual arrangement. At this point TRYUS is at Earth with a large cargo.
Player 8 has moved to a sizeable lead, while I hold 3rd narrowly.

TURN 4

A message from TOPANZ. He also suggests we come to an arrangement.
TRYUS' ship is still at Earth. I have found another research planet (RP7)
with "LORD'S EMBLEM".Again it is neutral as JAGGED is there. This time
there is no IND nor type 4 ore. I decide to retreat again and send a
message. I have also found a route to Earth and met the SPACE PATROL.
Finally, my homeworld has enough ore to build a much needed battleship.
3 ships are now forced home to refuel. "GYPSEY FLUTE" leaves for Earth.

TURN 5

Messages are received from TOPANZ and JAGGED. My scan of (RP7)
reveals JAGGED's ship and the planet in his possession. TRYUS' ship at
Earth is now a medium ship. It has been joined by another of his ships,
a large cargo. He is buying large amounts of ore types 2 and 3. I send
a large cargo, "RAINBOW PRINCESS" and medium battle "ZAP DOOGLE" to (RP7).

TURN 6

Message from JAGGED. He anticipated my move. (RP7) has 3 PDU but
no enemy ships. "GYPSEY FLUTE" arrives at Earth along with TOPANZ'
"FUDGE" and ROYAUME aboard "RESIS-DESTROYER III", all large cargos. A
large cargo belonging to ICHWAN appears over my research planet "Eureka"
at the same time as "PEACE TRAIN" prepares to unload IND and PDU.
(A close shave!) I am now coming 7th. HMMM! Player 8 has over 700 points
lead on the player coming 2nd.

TURN 7
    I receive messages from TOPANZ, ROYAUME and ICHWAN.
TOPANZ' message reads:
    'Damus. I will make an effort to accomodate your demands by placing
more PDU's on the planet 121 (RP8).   Topanz.'
    At this point, I talk to ROYAUME at length on the phone. We decide
to form an alliance of non-aggression and mutual assisstance. We discuss
the map of the galaxy and discover links between ourselves. This proves
to be very usefull and an important development.
    "GYPSEY FLUTE" leaves Earth as does the other ships. My empire now
controls 16 planets. I have captured (RP7) from JAGGED. I have good ore
supplies, type 1 being spread around fairly evenly. One planet which
contains vast supplies of ore types 2 and 3 I endeavor to build
up to act as an outpost for my battleships. I find I am running low on
ore type 9 as I am building lots of IND to ship out and increase my
defensive capabillities.

TURNS 8 and 9
    The program of distributing PDU, IND and ore types 1 and 4 continues.
IND on my homeworld is running short of supply, as is the fuel supply.
The first research turn is drawing near and preparations must be made.

TURN 10
TRYUS has another large cargo at Earth. I arrive at planet 302, it
belongs to FTHROG. TOPANZ' ship "POOKY" is there, still a medium cargo.
Mine is a large ship, "AZZURE OMEN", with considerable fire power. HE HE
Perhaps a just reprisal. 302 has 4 IND, 4 PDU and sizeable income.
    My research orders for this turn are the creation of a link between
my battleship outpost and the route to Earth and I also increase the
fighter units on "ZAP DOOGLE".

TURN 11
    "POOKY" is now an empty ship temporarily belonging to FTHROG.
Research planet data shows that both TOPANZ and FTHROG have 4 research
planets. I have 2 and ROYAUME only 1.

TURN 12
    Planet 302 and "POOKY" are mine. I now have 8 ships and build
another this turn. I have discovered that FTHROG is player 8. He has
nearly 2000 points lead over TOPANZ his nearest rival. 3rd is ROYAUME
AND I am still only 6th.

TURN 13
    Several of my planets now have at least 1 IND, PDU and ore types
1 and 4. I have scanned another research planet, it will be my 3rd.

TURN 14
    An all player message indicates that ICHWAN is a new player.
Unfortunate for him as he is under attack from ROYAUME and myself.
I increase cargo units and build a new link with my research orders.

TURN 15
    My point score has passed that of ICHWAN, I have moved into 5th
position. My empire is the fastest growing, now having 26 planets. FTHROG
is still leading but 4 of us are pegging him back. Earth is very quiet.

TURN 16
    My ships now number 10. 5 cargo ships, 3 battleships and 2 ships.
The battleships are not very big, I don't think they need to be. The
ships are quite capable as fighters and are being sent into hazardous
regions.
    ROYAUME and I have long discussions. Earth is quiet, trade values
are high. We agree not to attack each other's planets, but at Earth
anything goes.

TURN 17
    ROYAUME lands 2 super cargos on Earth. ICHWAN also has one there.
I have taken several planets from ICHWAN and land at an undefended
research planet this turn. My 4th. ROYAUME has taken a research planet
from ICHWAN as well.

TURN 18
    ROYAUME is over 3,000 points clear of FTHROG. I am still 5th, but
not for long. My ship "GYPSEY FLUTE", now a super cargo, arrives at Earth
along with "ZAP DOOGLE". ICHWAN has another super cargo there as well.
I meet PHOENIX for the first time. His large ship "SIOUXE" overlaps with
an explorer of mine. I take his planet, mine was already well defended.
    As research orders, I increase cargo and fighter units on 2 ships,
build a new link and attempt a scan wich fails. "ZAP DOOGLE" attacks
ICHWAN's "HANAFI".

TURN 19
    My trade puts me 2nd behind ROYAUME. ICHWAN is 3rd. I have a large
cargo at Earth, along with "ZAP DOOGLE". ICHWAN's first super cargo has
returned. Called "HIEVEG", it is a very large ship. "ZAP DOOGLE" fires
once again.
    WHAT'S ROYAUME UP TO? If he jumps several ships to Earth he could
win.

TURN 20
    ROYAUME is still winning. He has 24,602 points and now a large cargo
"ALBORAK" and medium battle "MEANGER" at Earth. HARKAMAN is also there
aboard super cargo "PROTEUS". Both ROYAUME and ICHWAN have medium battles
over my planet "Empire's Gate" which adjoins Earth. An all player message
appears: "DAMUS watch your back ....ICHWAN".
    I send my fleet of cargo ships to Earth.
TURN 21
    I hit the front. ROYAUME bought expensive fuel at Earth, probably
to facilitate a large fleet movement this turn. All to no avail, as this
will be the last turn. I have 3 large cargos and 2 super cargos at Earth,
all full of goodies. ROYAUME is there with 2 super cargos as well as
large and medium battles. HARKAMAN IS also present with another super
cargo. It could be close. I have captured another research planet.
ROYAUME and ICHWAN shot at each other at "Empire's Gate". "ZAP DOOGLE"
and "MEANGER" are now empty ships. PHOENIX is coming 3rd with a reasonably
large empire.

TURN 22
    The game ends.
    Both ROYAUME and myself pass 30,000 points. I have 32,231 he has
30,689. "GYPSEY FLUTE" is an empty ship and "RAINBOW PRINCESS" has
suffered. ROYAUME arrives too late with another super cargo and 2 large.
I finish with 9 ships, 43 planets, 114 IND, and 5 research planets.
Most planets are well defended with at least 1 IND, 1 PDU and 1 ore type 4.

Flurgs mind, capable of directing only two actions at any one time, was set on plugging in his head set, this it did, ignoring the new visual stimulous.

' NORG! YOU FOOL, TURN RIGHT! '

Flurg spasmed in pain, his left leg kicking the control stick, as his commanders voice seemed to blast his ear drums apart.

His fighter went into a double helix spiral, 0.000371 seconds before the enemy fired his lasers.

(You didn't think I'd kill the hero now did you?)

Flurg was flattened into his seat by the centripetal force of the maneuver. (For thos interested Flurg was experiencing a force, F, of magnitude $(mv^*2)/r$. If we assume a newton, the basic unit of force, is aproximately like an orange in your palm Flurg was weighed down by aprox $\frac{5}{8}$ of a crate of navel oranges.)

Slowly, for reasons outlined above, Flurg untangled himself and regained control of his craft from his left foot. Levelling out he saw another enemy fighter below and ahead of him. It was tailing a fighter from ship 132. They were weaving in and out, the enemy never getting a chance to fire, but not being shaken off either.

' nodge, nodge, keep in formation! '

Flurg's tattered eardrums were only now begining to respond to sound.

He reached up to switch to transmission, he had to find the others.

XRTZTXRRZ, (The distinctive, unaltered sound of a laser hit.)

(You may remember the sound effects machine was damaged last week.)

Flurgs craft shuddered.

Twisting around to see his foe Flurg's finger, frustrated after not finding the transmission button, brushed another one. Flurgs lasers fired.

1093 kms away Trolb was flying staight in protest of his computers actions moments ago. Being a ' bad guy ' his fighter need only be grazed by a laser beam to be destroyed, this is what Flurgs fire did. BOOOM!

Aboard the enemies flagship the strategic computer whirled into action.

Enemy losses.... 0   Number of ours lost per enemy fighter=undefined.

Our losses...... 2   Number of theirs lost per our fighter=0

Total........... 2

Probable outcome..=defeat   Advised action...=withdraw

End of printout...Have a nice day.

Flurg saw the enemies lasers line up for a second shot, it turned away! The fighter turned away and is withdrawing! Looking around Flurg could see all the other defending craft retreating, wonder why.

" Admiral, the Council are linking through now. "

" Hello Admiral, hows our war going? "

" Rather well. Their ships have withdrawn and ship 135 is moving in to clear away the FD'S now. There was some trouble earlier on, our enemy seem to have brought the same, el cheapo brand, software for their fighters. It was like a computer playing chess against itself, a stalemate developed as no one could hit the other side. Luckily one of ours had a computer malfunction, the pilot went on to destroy two of their fighters. Faced with those odds their computer could only suggest a withdrawl. "

" Good show!; Here Here; I say well done!; Give him a medal; Give him two; Make it three; Four; Yes four of your best medals; Here Here "

" I'm afraid they will have to be posthumous, he died while landing his craft."

" I say, bad luck; Give him another medal!; Here Here! "

" Now Admiral about the research planet, we want ship 135 to have it's fighters improved by 50% okay."

" Link terminated. "

Flurg slowly turned left, bringing the ships hanger into view.

" Okay Flurg, easy now, nice and slow bring it down to 3.23. "

This was easy, especially after dodging enemy fighters, Flurg reduced speed and sat back.

" Bit more to your left, come down to 1.56. "

Flurg followed the commands, then set about testing the sound effect machine which he had hastily repaired. Put down landing gear, it should go Zzzzzzt, Click.

' Pop.'

" Flurg retract your gear and reduce to 2.02. "

" Everybody clear the flight deck, we have a damaged fighter coming in!" The ship tilted up as 1091 people rushed to the rear of the ship. Flurg went ridgid with terror, he was no longer looking at the hanger but the wall below it. In a panic he pulled up, too late.

" Sheeit! "

' Pop! ' His fighter flattened into the wall.

Down on the X.X. the following scene was taking place as repairmen scraped Flurgs fighter off the wall.

" Hey Bert, you seen this order from the latest mob? "

" Yeah, want 50% more fighters, or something like that. "

" Bloody incredible, we have the most advanced research labs in the universe, some of the best scientist's ever, and they ask for 50% more fighters. We could be investigating some of the fundamental philosophical

paradoxes, the very reason we are, the reason they are, and all they ask for is things that make bigger bangs. "

" It's not going to be easy filling in the order either, what with Bob and his lot striking over better pay, and Will boycotting all war like research. "

.

Tuesday, R.F.S. is due. Beauty there it is the old yellow envelope, wonder what happened. Rip.

Great, they withdrew from 129, that's three R.P.'s I've got now. Gee 135 is nearly a large battle now. With his ratio he could blow away any ship in the game.

I think I'll send them on and take 311, hope WHO ME? haven't got many defences down on it, maybe I should withdraw, maybe..........

RESERVED NAMES FOR *MISSING TIGER* PLAYERS.

Any player in any *Missing Tiger* may reserve their playing name providing that name has not already been reserved by another. You do not have to use this name in all your games. To reserve 'your name' pick a name of 8 characters or less for Return From Sirius and up to 24 characters for Final Days and pay a fee of $5.00 to *The Missing Tiger*. All winners of *Missing Tiger* games automatically have their game names reserved from the date they win the game.

This player name is reserved for all time, from date of payment, for all games run by The Missing Tiger.

NAMES THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED:

Che	Nogrog	Mjolnir
Fthrog	Monkey	Aivtares
Draco	Paf	Dylan
Cortez	Drfi	Drago
Trajan	Zarquon	Drako
Phoenix	Khougar	Dark Star
Robspier	Warlord	Zaphod
Dredd	Seldon	Thor
Wildstar	Metawar	Metapsyic Warriors
Empyrean	Empyrean Games	Jeldar
Damus	Dhorn	Warrior in Jet and Gold
Missing Tiger	Elarco	Helric
USF	Oberon	
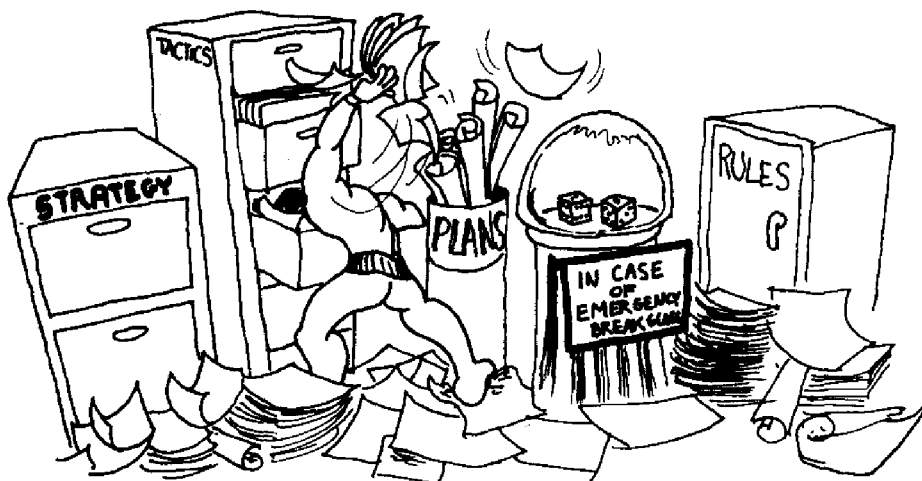
SPIRAL ARM 12 - UPDATE
By James Vickers

Its up to turn 8 and known to exist now are 3 large alliances presently operating in the game. There are 2 seperate Northern alliances that are apparently non-aggressive to each other and both seem to be doing very well. Less is known about the emerging East-West Alliance, which stretches across the map just below the core.

Northern Alliance [35] CLAN OF THE BLACK CATS, [36] VALDISS INTERSTELLAR, [42] DAEDALUS PARTY, [48] EMPIRE OF MAN and [23] PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

Northern Nexus Alliance [37] MOVELLANS, [28] REPUBLIC OF CAISSA, [30] COLONNIA, [33] FLY UNITED EMPIRE, [31] NECROMANCERS REALM

East-West Alliance [9] DOMAIN OF TRUTH, [10] PROTON, [16] ALPHOMEGA [18] AMBER [15] KALVAN 11

Rumour has it that the Northern alliances have destroyed a couple of non-aligned players (e.g. player [32] is no more). The East-West alliance has wiped out the Colmician Empire. Apparently they have formulated some sort of death list which is known to contain a couple of former (current?) allies as well as some empires of the core (yours truly among them according to my sources). The East-West Alliance contains no less than three players from Margate, Queensland (The Bettin brothers - the Spiral Arm version of the Mafia).

As it appears alliances are becoming the vogue it is now time to announce the existance of the " GREATER HUB FEDERATION ". Principally involved in this group are [49] CENTRAL POWER, [27] WILDSTAR,[45] TURDLINGS and [22] SILVER SPEAR. Other empires have expressed interest (4 players) and entrance to the federation is open at the moment.

We (principally Ray Trewin and myself) have decided to form this Federation purely as a defensive measure, not as an aggressive action towards existing alliances. A charter is available to prospective members (membership is conditional upon a 75% vote of existing members).

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

SA5: The Tiger is still licking his wounds in the corner.

SA6; XXXX Brotherhood is sinking fast , anyone who want's a chunk of NOZOTRONIUM, GRIMALKIN, BUG or ARKONIAN better get in fast!

SA10; The F'HARGHZ CONVENTION has grown too large and is undergoing fission in number of places! (the idea was good, but lacking in execution)

SA13: All Go Between subscribers in SA13 will be getting a listing of known players in the game.

Thanks to all those who contributed . Any info on any other SA games would be greatly welcomed.

N.B. A particular Missing Tiger employee and friends/associates will be joining up in the new version of SA soon. Please contact me c/o The Missing Tiger if you are interested in joining up in the same game.

...FINAL D☠YS

Turn 3

My three jeeps gunned their motors and in they went against the Heavy Tank, its CPU banner fluttering in the light breeze. The jeeps roared pass the robot all weapons primed against the more deadly tank.

Eagerly I grabbed for the battle reports to read of my glorious victory. The paper dropped from my numb hands.

UNIT 648   FAILED TO REPORT IN
UNIT 649   FAILED TO REPORT IN
UNIT 650   FAILED TO REPORT IN

Oh hell three sets of jeeps destroyed. My mobile strike force smouldering wrecks. The charge of the light brigade all over. I'm so embrassed. what a foolish idea. I had the books on guerilla strategies and tactics so why did I try and stand toe to toe in a slug fest with the cpu forces!

The picture at the ruins is as depressing. My sole remaing jeep, unit 974 faces a heavy tank and a robot. Elsewhere on the battlefield I have executed Jagdpanzer's scout unit for his massacre of my reinforcement unit.
I know we are supposed to be united and fighting the computer forces but that player (17) seems like a rabid human killer. Not many flyers in my area.

TURN 4

My scout unit 653 is destroyed by the robot unit 109 at hex 6,10. I have deserted the ruins and taking up battle position around them. Jadgpanzer has moved three crack squads into hex 5,13, just nor-east of the ruins. I have 3 units in the same hex, two of them sappers. I am positive he will slaughter them. My trucks will head back to the HQ.

TURN 5

I was right. That idiot [player 17] has murdered my two sappers and attacked my squad while I offered him the olive branch. I plead to all players to help me rid the game of this CPU supporter. He is a mad dog that must be put down for all our sakes. My unit 974, a jeep, has polished off another maintenance robot. In my present state such victories are rare and very pleasing.

I have dropped drastically out of the frontrunner ranks in the game. My current total is only 110 a massive 105 points behind the leader. In the voting I ran dead last.

IMPORTANT ADDRESSES,

Please note new GMs/addresses to whom your moves should be sent.

GAME MASTERS:

84A
Paul Mellor
149 Hurstville Rd
Oatley NSW 2223

84C
Duncan Baxter
48 Johnson Pde
Blackwood
SA 5051

84E
Darryl Davis
RMB 5403
Manor Hill Close
Holgate NSW 2250

84F
William Brown
F4/35 Caroline St
East Hawthorn VIC 3124

85G
Andrew Schacht
5 Pentland Ave
Punchbowl NSW 2196

85H
Terry Bradley
18 Cook St
Satur via Scone 2337

85I
Eric Roche
c/- GPO Box 286C
Hobart 7001

85 J @ 86 A
Mark Dewis
31 Mary St
East Launceston 7250

85K
Wayne Closter
358 Burwood Hwy
Burwood Vic 3125

85L
Rick Snell
c/- GPO Box 286C
Hobart 7001

85 M
Steven Bagshaw
78 Sherington Rd
Greenwood WA 6024

85N
Eric Roche
c/- Gpo Box 286C
Hobart 7001

86 B
Tony Graham
90 Green Point Rd
Oyster Bay NSW 2225

AWHC Diplomacy
Mark Haughey
8 Goodenia St
Rivett NSW 2611

86 C
Andrew England
91 College Rd
Somerton Park SA 5044

86 E
Tim Friedrich
6 Richardson
Box Hill SA 3128

86 D
Bill McKinley
18 Wonderlost Outlook
Awnerley QLD 4103

86 F
Dougal Mcculloch
4 Ivy St
Burwood 3125

86 G
Paul Yovich
19 Denmark Way
Warwick WA 6024

NEXT TURN DEADLINES FOR ALL GAMES: 20
All moves to the GMs by: FRIDAY   MARCH 1987
GMs results to TGb: FRIDAY 27   MARCH 1987.

NOTES.

MAD MAK'S VIEW
ON FINAL DAYS!

$ FINANCE?!

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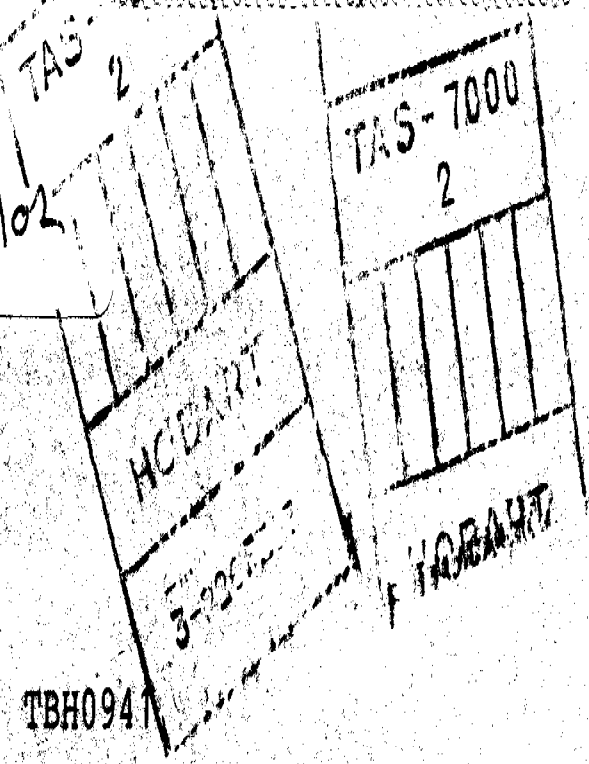GPO Box 286 C Hobart 7001

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