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ARCHIVES LISTING

Archives Listing No. 12 will not appear until Hoosier Archives #15 so that the last article in Eugene Prosnitz's three-article series can appear complete in this issue.

OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

In this issue, the third article of Eugene Prosnitz's three-article series appears with his permission. This series is also reprinted with the permission of John Boardman, who first published the series in Graustark #128-130, beginning on 15 May 1967.

CORRESPONDENCE IN POSTAL PLAY
by Eugene Prosnitz

As a veteran of over-the-board play who has just recently "discovered" the postal game, I have found that the vast differences in communication create a tremendous disparity between the two games, not so much in the tactical area, but in the sphere of negotiations and alliances.

In our original over-the-board group (unfortunately relatively unactive at present) there was constant negotiation and jockeying for a new and better deal. Alliances frequently shifted in order to maintain the balance of power, and people who did not have good allies, or any allies, were constantly negotiating in an effort to break alliances, and frequently succeeding. By contrast, the postal game much more often results in two allies crushing a third country, with no realignments, and little negotiation (except on the question of joint tactical maneuvers) until the enemy is completely obliterated.

Of course, if you wish to play an "honest" game, or at least have people think you are trustworthy, it is more difficult to change sides in the postal game. At least in over-the-board play you can do so openly, i.e., the other players see whom you are talking with.

My principal criticism of existing postal Diplomacy strategy is the feeling that most players are not "busy" enough--are not doing enough negotiating. To my way of thinking this is a shame, as to me the best part of the game is the diplomatic element; this is the additional element which distinguishes Diplomacy from other war games. The diplomatic element should be especially important in postal play, where tactical skill counts for less, because with two weeks to plan a set of moves (as contrasted with ten minutes) there are fewer tactical blunders (or at least there should be) and the factor of tactical skill tends to level off.

Another point: In a game where I'm Italy, England is being crushed by France and Germany. In another game, where I'm Germany, Austria is being attacked by both Russia and Turkey. In neither game have I received a call for help from these countries. Not that I would have been likely to double-cross my allies or friendly neutrals, but the point is, you lose nothing by issuing a call for help. There are other examples besides the two I've cited here.

One of my biggest gripes is when I make a request of an ally or neutral, and he complies with the request but doesn't let me know if he'll do so. Many players say, "Why do I have to answer his letter; my moves will speak for themselves." However, this often creates quite a problem for the maker of the offer, a problem which can best be analyzed by dividing these situations into two categories.

The first category consists of situations in which the offerer's moves are doubtful, and may vary depending on the offeree's response. For example, as Italy I had an army in Piedmont when a new government took over France. This development, occurring simultaneously with a sneak attack from Austria, made an Italian-French alliance desirable. I write France, offering to retreat from Piedmont in return for a non-aggression pact, with other terms in detail. France accepted, but did not do so until after the moves were in. At the same time, he left Marseilles undefended. My point is, having not heard from France by the move deadline, I feel it would have been fully justified, and not to be considered a double-cross, for me to have taken Marseilles. (Of course it would have been unwise, and perhaps France, a good player, realized I knew this and felt a reply was unnecessary.)

The other category involves situations where the offerer's moves are unaffected by the other party's responses. For example, as Germany I moved F Kie-Hol and A Ber-Kie in "Spring 1901." Then I wrote England, with whom relations were in a state of flux, saying that an English attack on Denmark would be considered an act of war. In this case I didn't need a reply, as it was completely obvious that I was going to move A Kie-Den in "Fall 1901", irrespective of England's plans.

Even here, however, I feel it is desirable to answer, as the person who does not receive an answer may interpret silence for hostility (especially if the alliance has not yet been solidly established) and may devise an alternate strategy, including a planned attack on the country to whom he made the original offer.

Along these lines, it is often advisable to tell a friendly neutral what your next moves will be, if it is simply a matter of reassuring him by telling him that you are moving in another direction. (For example, France tells Italy he's moving F Spa (s.c.)-Mid. However, beware of informing other players of the moves of pieces actually engaged in battle unless your allies need the information to plan their own moves; why risk that someone will double-cross you and tip your moves to the enemy.

As for correspondence at the beginning of the game, the subject of the recent Calhmer article in Graustark #100: I disagree with Calhmer's multi-power alliance, unless it is an alliance with a specific objective such as a three-way attack on one power, like Russia, Turkey, and Italy against Austria. I prefer separate dealings with each power, within a consistent framework. (I'm not talking about making mutually inconsistent deals and then double-crossing someone.)

Let us consider Calhmer's example: Suppose that I'm playing Germany and I decide to attack France. First, I'd invite Italy to join me. Then I'd make a non-aggression pact with Austria, and also try to persuade Austria to go east or south, and not disturb Italy. I would offer England alterna-

tives, suggesting that I'd prefer an Anglo-German attack on France, but that it's also OK with me if England remains neutral as long as I'm not attacked. I would suggest to Russia a non-aggression pact, with the added offer of help against England if England attacks me, and similarly offer England help against Russia if Russia attacks me.

Naturally, I would want the countries which are actively helping me, like Italy, to be as strong as possible. However, when you have, not an offensive alliance, but merely a non-aggression pact with a neighbor, you're better off if that neighbor is as weak as possible. If I had non-aggression pacts with both Austria and Russia I'd just as soon have them fighting each other rather than see both of them get strong and eventually attack me. Similarly, unless I need England's aid against France, I'd just as soon see England and Russia fight in Scandinavia, and stay neutral, with a standing offer to help either if the other attacks me.

Note that, following the above suggestions, you are writing to four other powers at the same time, proposing alternative courses of action depending upon the decisions of third parties, yet remaining completely honest and above-board in your dealings.

Now for a touchy subject: What about making use of photostatic copies of letters? I feel this is somewhat an extreme measure, and should be used sparingly. However, if an "ally" double-crosses you, he deserves whatever you can do to him. For example: Suppose you are France, and you form an alliance with Germany against England. At the same time Germany also allies with England against you, and double-crosses you. It might be an idea for France to contact England and say, "Look, we've both been completely honest with each other and not offered any false promises, yet Germany has engaged in double-dealing to his advantage. He's obviously untrustworthy (and I'm enclosing photostatic proof). If he lied to me he can lie to you; Let's get together and smash him." It might work.

The only time I've tried this it worked in a rather unusual way. Russia and Italy (myself) were fighting Austria and Turkey. Austria made an alliance with Russia and Italy and double-crossed both of us on the first move! I sent Turkey proof of Austria's treachery, including some vociferous anti-Turkish prose in the distinctive handwriting of the Austrian player. This didn't stop Turkey from fighting me, but he did make a non-aggression pact with Russia, with the result that Russia and Italy were able to smash Austria. (I don't really know if there was any causal connection between the letter and the result.)

The use of photostatic copies of letters can lead to interesting negative interferences. In one game where I've stumbled into a four-way alliance in spite of what I said earlier, an unfriendly power write and falsely suggested that one of my allies had already defected, and that I should do the same. I wrote back that I found this information quite interesting and would be most appreciative if he could furnish documentary proof of same. That was five months ago; I'm still waiting.

I close with a plea for more frequent and more varied techniques of negotiation, which I feel is the heart of the game. For those who are too busy I think it is better to play in fewer games than to miss moves or fail to carry on adequate negotiations.