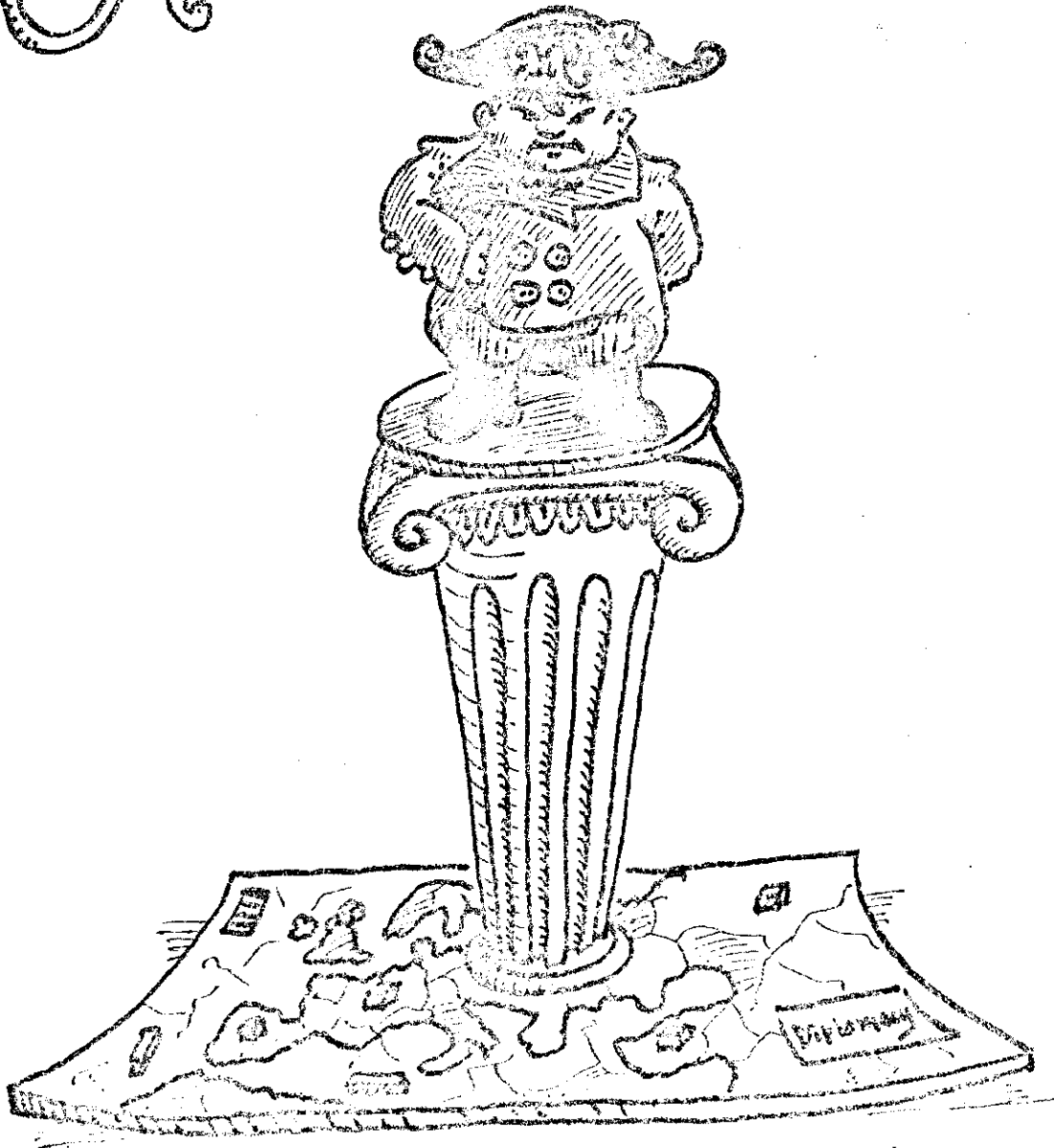


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 INTO THE ARCHIVES NO. 4

For the more observant of you Diplonauts out there, you will notice that the title of this series is slightly different this time, ie, "Into the Archives" vice "Out of the Archives." This is because in this issue Hoosier Archives is proud to present another "original," our best so far. In honor of this occasion, henceforth original articles will appear under the "Into the Archives" designation while reprints will appear under the old "Out of the Archives" designation. The article below by Rod Walker is believed to be the best of its kind. For those of you out there that find victory illusive, take heart. Diplomacy has something for you!

MINORITY/SURVIVAL IN DIPLOMACY

by Rod Walker

A lot is written these days about how to win at Diplomacy. Winning is very nice, of course, but it isn't everything. I know that Charlie Brown fans may suggest that losing isn't anything, but in Diplomacy, which has more than the simple-minded two sides of most military games, nothing could be further from the truth.

In two-sided games, loss implies victory. But in Diplomacy, loss (elimination) implies nothing. There may be no eliminations in a game by the time it is won (very rare) and there may be as many as five. There is always at least one survivor other than the victor.

Let us look at the matter statistically. In a 7-player game, your chances of victory are about 14%. But your chances of survival are well over 50%. Current statistics, compiled from 236 postal games which had been completed or deactivated by 1 August 1971, reveal that only one country (Austria) has been eliminated more than 50% of the time (121/236), which is probably more the fault of Austrian players than of Austria. Turkey, on the other hand, was eliminated in only about 25% (63/236) of the cases reported. Even a supposedly weak state, Italy, was eliminated no more often than Russia (92/236 each).

The point here is that if you are playing the game at all, you will probably survive it. Many, many eliminations come about because players miss crucial moves or drop out altogether. Those who play and play consistently will usually be around at the end of the game.

This is important. The purpose of playing Diplomacy, as in any game, is to play it. Winning is a side issue, a bonus for playing well (or with luck), but the play is the thing. Does that sound like your High School coach giving you a pep talk? Think back...compare your emotional reaction of disappointment when you were eliminated and sat around watching the others play to your reaction to the end of the game in which somebody else won, but you were still around at the end. Playing the game was probably more important to you than winning. (I will grant that there are people to whom winning is more important than playing. Such people should see a shrink.)

Now, you can't play Diplomacy if you're eliminated. So you must survive. Survival means you still have something to do in the game. Perhaps it will be something important.

Many times a player with only a few units has been able to determine the outcome of a game, to throw the result one way or another, or stalemate it. It is almost as nice as winning to be able to say, "you could not have won without me" or, better yet, "you could have won except for me." Heeee-ow!

"I am OZ, the Great and Powerful!" says the Wizard in Frank Baum's immortal children's classic. He'll survive, all right.

"I am Dorothy, the small and meek," Dorothy replies. How is she going to survive? That is the subject of this article. Surviving when you are great and powerful is not usually a problem, but what do you do when you are a pygmy among giants, three units to the wind and surrounded by greedy enemies.

In an old ARMAGEDDONIA, there is a Ken Fletcher cartoon. It shows a rat all trussed up, and three greedy cats hovering over, ready to feast. The cats are eyeing each other as the rat says, "Yeah, us rats always divide best into two pieces." That's a good ploy. If two or three enemies are cutting you up, one at least will not get much out of the deal. Fomenting jealousy, promising one a better deal if he allies with you and helps you stay alive, and so on, may break up the solid front against you. You may need to sacrifice a great deal in order to stay alive this way, and you must be willing to sacrifice: unless you subscribe to "better dead than red (or any other color)" idiocy, in which case, why are you playing Diplomacy?

Being between two giant superpowers, a position in which many small survivors find themselves, is often advantageous. The danger of being ground to dust by the combination is always present, but you incurred that danger when you entered the game, so why worry? Most alliances between large Powers are unstable. There are a few alliances which will stay together and eliminate everybody else, in the end either drawing or fighting it out for victory, but such stability is rare. You will usually make money by offering one or both Superpowers an alliance in which you become essentially a wing of his victorious army. In return for survival, you offer allegiance. You may be further advanced toward his intended victims than he is, thus forming a useful vanguard (as in Italy helping France against Turkey or vice versa). Or you may have units he needs, either because of their location (Russian units in the Atlantic helping Turkey, e.g.) or type (French fleets helping a fleetless Germany, e.g.). The kinds of advantages which could be offered are numerous; you will have to use your imagination. Every positive selling point will help.

Implicit, or perhaps even directly stated, in such offers of help are a couple of threats. One, that you will join the other side if refused. Two, that you may throw all your force against the other guy and let his ally (and potential enemy) take all your centers. Threats are fine; however, the more understated they are, the better. People react negatively to threats, especially if they know the threatened actions cannot be carried out --so make no idle threats. In any event, concentrate on and emphasize the positive contribution you can make. That old saying about flies and honey and vinegar applies especially in Diplomacy.

There are two hallmarks which characterize successful survival diplomacy. One is persistence. Do not expect to sell your proposal the first time you make it. Keep after the guy you want to sell. If he replies, even if he is completely negative, he is really interested in what you have and, in rejecting you, is asking for a new offer. You may need to come up with better terms or more persuasive presentation. You have to show your would-be protector that he will benefit more from helping you than gobbling up your centers. Do not be discouraged by failure to reply or by negative replies. Keep arguing, keep up diplomatic pressure, until your last unit is gone. You have nothing to lose. Be friendly, considerate, and pleasant. Don't switch from honey to vinegar in mid-stream. Keep talking and keep making offers.

The second hallmark is constancy. Once you contract a survival alliance, keep it. Stabbing your protector is probably going to be disaster. There are circumstances under which you may wish to do this, but be sure that you will benefit more from the stab than from loyalty. If you gain a new protector and a better position, or if you can regain your independence and restore your status as a major Power, fine. But be positive. Remember that if you gain a reputation for stabbing the hand that feeds you, it will become more and more difficult to get survival alliances. One of your best selling points is loyalty, "my armies are your armies." Lose that and you have lost 90% of your ability to sell yourself.

Constancy also means constant communication. Coordinate moves with your protector. If

you see moves which may help him, even on another front, share your ideas. Remember, his good fortune is yours. If he makes fantastic gains elsewhere, he may be more willing to help you grow bigger. If your ideas clash, do as he says if he insists. If his judgment was wrong, he will soon learn to trust yours. You may actually be a better player than he is. Being King-maker is not as nice as being King, but there is a certain satisfaction in it. If necessary, play roles for your protector. You may be required to act as a double agent for a while, or do other things. You may even wish to suggest such plans if they appear feasible to you. Just consider what you would do for someone who saved your life in the real world and then, within the limits of the game of course, do the same for the one who spares you in the Diplomacy game.

Minority/survival positions require a lot of shrewdness and clever playing to bring off. They are often as difficult as victory to achieve. They require practice to be played well.

There is a good way to get that practice. Many Gamesmasters need stand-by/replacement players for their games. Such positions require at most a subscription and may require no money at all. Many abandoned positions are minority positions in trouble. Picking these up will give you a lot of insight into the game. Inquire with various GMs about openings in stand-by lists. GMs who run many games at once (Hal Naus, Conrad von Metzke, John Boardman, John Mensinger, Lee Childs, Don Miller, Len Lakofka, Bob Johnson, Andrew Phillips, Larry Peery, myself, and others) often need s/b players for various games. It is best to inquire, if you are interested.

Note: This article is not the same as, and was written independently from, my article "How to Survive," soon to appear in STRATEGY & TACTICS.

ARCHIVES LISTING: The archives listing will not be printed this time for a very novel reason! Instead of not having significant acquisitions to add, quite the contrary is true. I went to San Diego 3 days before DIPCON IV and spent that time rifling the Dippy collections of Rod Walker, Larry Peery, and Hal Haus. I got many needed zines, ie, a completed set of Armageddonia. Larry Peery, eat your heart out! Anyway, arriving back to Indiana with a 2-weeks backlog of mail, the fall semester of night law school already under way, and last but not least, work, I'm completely snowed under and haven't had a chance to bring the listing up to date. I hope my correspondents and all you bibliophiles out there will bear with me. The next few days will be rather hectic, to say the least!

DIPCON IV: As mentioned above, I attended DIPCON IV and quite an event it was! Besides finding out that guys like Larry Peery, Rod Walker, Hal Naus, (I still claim title to the tallest player in Dippy until Conrad von Metzke comes out of the woodwork!) Doug Beyerlein, Ted Holcombe, Bob Strayer, Jerry White, Arnie Vagts, and Ben Zablocki were real (Pete Weber, who also attended, stopped by Indiana this summer and was the first to see the Hallowed Halls of Hoosier Archives!), I even got to play 7-man FTF Diplomacy for the first time in my life. Considering my bumbling play, I thought myself quite lucky to come in second twice and be headed for victory (right, Hal?!) when the 3 games I played in ended. However, the biggest bonus of the convention was getting Dan Brannan (of Wild 'n Woolly fame), Dan Alderson, King of the LASFS collectors, Phil Castora (OK, all you Dippy historians, who was he?!) to return from the dead. No doubt you will hear more of all of this when Rod Walker spins his yarn and no doubt embellishes on the long-winded talks he, Larry Peery, and I gave on the big night of the convention. Larry deserves particular praise for bringing about what is, as nearly as I can tell, the most successful DIPCON in history.

OUR COVER: The original for this issue's cover was drawn at DIPCON IV by a very talented newcomer to postal Diplomacy, George Harter. George is from San Diego and entertained all of us at the DIPCON by drawing caricatures of everyone. Gad, you should have seen me! Anyway, it is hoped that George will do more covers for Hoosier Archives in the future. Remember, we let you survive in the first game, George!