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ARCHIVES!

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11 December 1971

AWK!
ALBATROSS
COMICS
GROUP

THIS ISSUE

BUCHANAN V. THE WORLD!



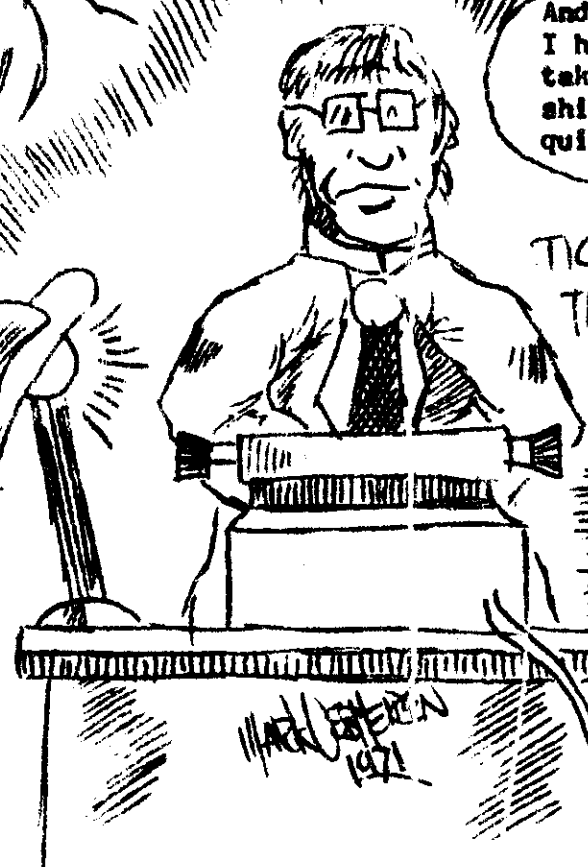
DIE!!



And so, with this move I have won the game and taken the world championship at diplomacy. I am quite happy, as you might think, I enjoyed beating the

Verhel dens...

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HARK JENSEN
1971

ANOTHER
QUALITY
ALBATROSS
PUB.
GOSH
GULLY!

AND WITH THE
CRY-"DIE"
THE BROTHERS V.
TAKE OVER!

11 December 1971

Hoosier Archives is a periodic listing of the Diplomacy archives of Walter Buchanan, 200 S. Lebanon, Indiana 46052, telephone (317) 482-2824; Archives Director, H3/61005; a Director of The Diplomacy Association; and a member of LMA. Since the archives is virtually complete in at least xerox form back to 1966, the archives listing will only appear quarterly, the last being in issue #35, or as further substantial additions are acquired. However, additions to the archives are solicited, either through originals, which are preferred, or a loan to permit xeroxing. Also, postage fees will be paid for duplicates so that they can be made available to others. Many original spares are now available. The main purpose of Hoosier Archives is to make available information from the archives, such as Diplomacy articles, game news, etc., as well as to serve as a medium for original articles, which are solicited. To subscribe to Hoosier Archives, send one stamped, self-addressed business size envelope per issue. For back issues, only a stamp per issue is necessary. Ask for issue #40 to get a list of all articles through issue #32. This is Allatross Press publication #52.

INFO THE ARCHIVES: NO. 15

After an absence of ten issues, it is nice to have Dick Brooks back again. This time he goes into an interesting discussion of the different Diplomacy variants. Maybe next time he should tell how to get the cost supply centers in a single game year? Did you see in Diplomaholia in 1970AD where he took eight of them as Austria in 1909?

DIPLOMACY AS I SEE IT

by Dick Brooks
The Variants

I started playing Diplomacy late in 1965. I had joined the LMA about April '65 through my science fiction interests and drifted into the Games Bureau. I wish I could remember how I became interested in Diplomacy, but I did order a set and messed around with it a bit. I naturally wanted to try a game, with most of the players in the Games Bureau being in the Washington Science Fiction Association, a face-to-face game was out of the question.

I was enrolled in CI-1905-0 (1965) and my early talents asserted themselves as I had to be talked into alliances with Turkey (Lanks Helene) and England (Alexis Gilliland) since I planned to go it alone. Also, I missed both fall 1961 and fall 1962 moves with an excuse from the GIB. Turkey and I drew while Alexis withdrew over G. Chalker's ruling on the Gilliland situation. (Such is the fickleness of fame. Think of how much typing "The Russian Situation" could have saved commentators.)

Up until 1971, I played in the Games Bureau with two exceptions, LMA (Grotick's year-long-time variant) and Rod Walker's 1966L, only my third regular game as opposed to 17 variants. When I got on top of 3 enough to try another game, CI-1906-0 was open. This was the Chalker nine-man game where the tertiary Coast and Scandinavia were the extra countries. I won this one eventually by first allying with England (Lanks Helene) and Turkey (Alan Huff), then allying with Italy (Margaret Cesignani). This was the game where France (Don Miller) ended up with an army in Persia.

The tactic of Russia allying with both Turkey and England and taking a lesser share of the spoils on each front while gaining on both had proved to elevate me to a perfect record. If I'd quit then, I could have been a Diplomacy legend and an elder statesman commenting from my exalted peak. But I was hooked and gratted onto as many games as I could handle, if not more.

From here, I tried almost every variant that I could. (I dislike economic Diplomacy.) At this time, Don Miller ran about every variant that he could find players for and postulated and collected ones even wilder. I have always been more interested in learning a game and playing it enough to grasp its potential than I have been in playing one for extended periods of time.

Don Miller has set up a classification system for variants which I understand that Rod Walker will issue numbers on from the on L. Pandin, in TERMINUS, is doing a valuable service

is standing over a situation on all regular board games. I'd like to see the board game variants.

Games can be split basically into two groups, those with the regular board and those without. I would be tempted to group those with a European board, such as the game of Diplomacy, those with a strengthened Germany into a subgroup of the first (yep, I'm a chauvinist), or variants of the board as opposed to variant boards.

The regular board has allowed for some good variants. GAA, the Game of Anarchy, started out with 36 players which really put the emphasis on diplomacy. I started with several and Alan Payne Hohenzollern managed to set up an alliance between Spain, Portugal, Versailles, London, and Paris. Paris and Lrest were to go after Belgium while Spain and I would deal after that, and Portugal would take the Mid-Atlantic and guard our flank. Unfortunately, American alliances are unstable especially when one realizes that all five start little games of limiting the game. Our "allies" wiped out Spain and we in two years. A later version narrowed the players down to 17, but with widely separated centers such as Versailles and London. In both, when any player reached five centers, he had to declare himself as a center and could only build in that after that.

GAJ (A. J. J.), the Game of Jingo, has been the only game that I ever dropped out of. It gave an over-developed sense of obligation, but there are limits.) These games consisted of every player writing up orders for all seven countries, then the G would read the orders and that would be used. Germany (Alan Huff) had a burst of luck and got up to 11 by luck moves as having 10 (Lithuania) (U) & Russia to it. Later the rest of us "played" against him and put him back down. Three or four of us had a loose alliance together, with me making leading the move sets. Turkey with one unit had as much chance of getting his orders drawn as Germany with eleven. So we brought him in and worked against Germany, Austria and Russia. I quit the game as the results were too uncertain and the game looked as if it would see-saw indefinitely. I wish I had noticed how it came out. There was a large turnover of players in that game and most of my allies had dropped before I did.

GAJ was the Lebling variant with all neutrals armed and it went slower than a regular game. GAA was a Game of Anonymity where the players were unknown to each other and hopefully tactics would shine. GAA was the year-at-a-time variant of Tretick's where a player wrote up orders (non-conditional, of course) for a whole year and hoped that you hadn't overlooked anything. GAE was the Balharver Napoleonic rulebook variant with Germany and Italy in standing disorder.

GAJ was a 3G3 with Wild Card Player featuring the RAIs and the RIEs with a strengthened Germany between. This had the weakness of any three-man that two gang up on one. The team captain was only allowed to submit the three players' moves which didn't allow for defections. Other variants have concerned smaller changes, such as the spring raid which allowed possession of supply centers only occupied on a spring move, or allowing the game to start with winter 1900 builds by each player after negotiating.

My first face-to-face gaming started at Tri-state College in January of 1971. I started two seven-man games with a game year played out every week, but one fellow dropped after missing a few moves. Most of our face-to-face games were three, four, and five man as our schedules didn't allow all of us to get together at once. The original rulebook three man with England, France, and Germany usually started with Germany getting a fast lead. Then England and France at least informally allied and tended to deadlock over the corpse of Germany.

The rulebook four man seems weighted in Italy's favor as Italy can concentrate on picking up Trieste and Vienna while Germany is surrounded by an embarrassment of riches. Germany doesn't dare go full out over Trieste and Vienna with Holland, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden open. If Germany does go after Italy, he usually gets gutted by France and England. If he allies with Italy, he bears the brunt of the English-French attack. If he allies with England or France against the other, Italy usually picks up the pieces. A three-man alliance against Italy doesn't tend to hold together as Germany gains the lion's share of the spoils and France and England tend to tackle Germany as soon as Italy is on the ropes.

We developed an interesting three-man game in which Austria, Germany, and Russia face each other. All of England, France, and Turkey were off limits. We first tried making Norway a non-supply center space with Venice the only Italian center, but it made Austria too powerful, so all of Italy was off-limits. Tunis and Bulgaria (the Black Sea was connected to the Aegean Sea) as well as Belgium were omitted. The North Sea connected to the Ionian and formed the limits of the playing area.

Next quarter, we will be down to three players and have to try a variant with Italy, Austria, and Germany will face a board with all other supply centers gone. Another variant, Italy would be either Russia or Turkey along with Italy and England with the other center armed. We'll probably try only two or more soon to take up the same time at the same time.

Three and four-man games deadlock so much that we came to the conclusion that 5-man would have at least five players. Seven seems to be about the best and nine would be best with a such revised board, as putting two weak countries on the fringes of the board would seem to do much. Eleven could be interesting, but I know of no variant along that line. I would like another go at the 17 or 30-man games, though.

Some of the variant boards can lead to interesting games. VII, VIII, and IX were all variants using the same board based on Tolkien's Middle-earth with the last two being done on the world with Gondor greatly strengthened over the first game. VII was based on Tolkien's Second Age and used a board quite different from the others.

XII (Cythocracy) used a totally synthetic board drawn up and modified in four sessions by the Washington group. It played a pretty decent game. The board was split by a roughly C-shaped sea in the middle and had three continents and two islands. One power had control on two continents while another had the smallest continent to itself.

XIII (Scottocracy) had England the most powerful country with the clans of Scotland next by their centers intermingled. England (banks Helene) and the Stewarts (myself), which had all but one of five centers in southern Scotland, got together and nopped up the board.

CAA (Indianocracy) had a board of North America and featured the Indian war. I played the Iroquois and was fortunate enough to have a relatively isolated power so that I needed no working alliance all game. This did away with all need for diplomacy and I enjoyed myself. I ran down to the wire facing the Shoshoni (Don Miller). Amusingly enough, Letting had fallen GLOCK and Miller was G2 by now. I knew his style well enough so that there was no friction. However, in both games, once I'd worked matters to a one-on-one, I'm ashamed to admit that I lost them both.

Don Miller also G'ed a regular rap variant where each player could at the end of his moves link or separate two pairs of provinces. These would hold until another player changed them. There was also a two-earth game played on two raps where Paris I was linked to Paris II as well as its surrounding centers on Europe I.

XIV (The Foundation Game) was based on Isaac Asimov's Foundation Series (winner of the science fiction Hugo award for best all-time series). The board was strictly synthetic since the foundation series covered most of our galaxy from rim (Terminus, incidentally) to center. Rita Culhauser developed the board, but I'm indebted to banks Helene for giving me a copy that he drew up. The board (don't panic) is formed of three-dimensional polyhedra with two and three factor supply centers and spaces at the vertices. The board uses two-dimensional Schlegel diagrams to represent the five interconnected polyhedra. Each of the six players could write two hyperspace linkage orders with spring and fall moves that could only be used by the person who wrote them up and only last through the next movement season. The only units were fleets.

This has been the most tactically complex variant that I've played in and I liked it the best despite losing it on the last move (I was young and trusting). I am definitely hoping for another game when Don Miller gets around to it. It has been the only game that I regretted its being over and wanted to play in longer. With most, it's a relief to get them over with.

The tactical possibilities of Diplomacy are too limited. Lee Henderson and I are working on a game (actually four at the moment, but with similar rules) that will combine the strategic and tactical advantages of an Avalon Hill type board and unit, with the multi-player, lack of dice flipping, and simultaneous moves advantages of Diplomacy. Instead of having specified areas of control, I favor a parameter game where all players come on from off the board. This way, the number of players can change without modifying the board. This is, to my way of thinking, a way of providing a better balance of diplomacy and strategy.

It's time the variants stopped being the poor relations of Diplomacy. I have a great deal of respect for Allan Calhiser's designing ability but I seriously doubt that his concepts can't be improved upon. The weakness of Italy, the defensive strength of Turkey, the expansive potential of Russia, the convoying strength of England, the vulnerability of Austria are all imbalances. Probably all imbalances will be impossible to remove without a cloying symmetry that would leave one country in exactly the same position as another. Improvement is possible. Let's get on with it.

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