If A = Z Then This Must Be Dippy

PBEM PROGRESS REPORT

1983CD (SOURCE#1) ended Oct83 in a FRA/ITA/RUS 1912 draw.

1983CE (COMPUSERVE#1) has ended in a German win (see below).

1983CX (SOURCE#2) has finished Spring 1906. France and Russia are all but out. England is threating to become the frontrunner; however the game has a lot of balance.

1983CY (COMPUSERVE#2) has finished Spring 1906 with Turkey (played by the winner of 1983CD, Bill Oxner) in the clear lead. A coalition is trying to form against him.

1983IH (COMPUSERVE#3) has finished Fall 1903. Turkey and Italy have removed Austria. England looks good. Chip Charnley is the GM.

#Pend. (SOURCE #3) Don Patrick of Austin Texas has started THE ELECTRONIC CANNONBALL to run his PBEM game on The Source. The game has just completed Spring 1901.

#Pend. (COMPUSERVE #4) has just begun, Spring 1901 negotiations underway. See below for more info.

#Pend. (COMPUSERVE #5) Country assignments will be made in next issue of TAD. Novice Game.

There is also the anonomous game that Wes Ives is planning on running. I do not know the status of this game.

1983CE ENDS IN GERMAN WIN

We have our first TAD PBEM winner in Bill Oxner who piloted Germany to 18 centers in 1983CE. (TAD's first PBEM game ended in a 3-way draw). Here is the report that will be made to Kathy Byrne. The game was played on COMPUSERVE with two week deadlines.

1983CE THE ARMCHAIR DIPLOMAT (SIPE)
-A:Al Stewart (outF04)
-E:Henry Rapoport (outF04)
-F:Robert Butland (res S08)
   Johnny Wilson (surF10)
-G:Bill Oxner (winF10)
-I:Kirk Robinson (surF10)
-R:Michael Burleson (surF10)
-T:Chip Charnley (outF06)

Center Count:
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
A:	4	5	1	0						
E:	4	3	2	0						
F:	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	2	2	1
G:	6	7	9	10	10	11	12	14	16	18
I:	4	5	6	7	8	7	6	3	2	1
R:	6	6	8	10	11	11	12	15	14	14
T:	4	3	3	3	1	0				

GERMAN WIN F10

TWO NEW GAMES STARTING ON COMPUSERVE

I am especially excited about the two new CIS (Compuserve Information Service) games that are getting underway. C4 which I have affectionately entitled "The George Orwell Semi-Invitational Classic" is semi-invitational only in that I invited two PBEM outsiders to join us. Doug Beyerlein (England) and Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo Co. (Turkey) are going to have a go at this one.

Says Doug, "My last Diplomacy game start was in 1976. I hope that I still know where the units start." Says Rick, "It's been so long, what are some good strategies for Turkey?" Sure guys. C4 has fairly experienced players in it (average experience is five years).

On the other hand, I am just as excited about C5, our first novice game. PBEM is really starting to catch on. C5 was the easiest game yet to put together. The original TAD PBEM game (S1) took over four months to form. Recent games have taken about 5 weeks to put together. The novice game was filled less than 3 weeks after game openings were announced! Here is the new blood that PBM needs. I just hope that the question of "irregular" status is solved in a fashion that will permit TAD and other PBEM zines-to-come to funnel these people into the overall PBM hobby. And that brings us to...

THE PBEM DEBATE

Debate over the status of PBEM games continues. Several items have arrived since the last issue of A=Z. Let's get to it.

   Letter from Kathy Byrne

((The following letter from Kathy Byrne, dated 11-28-83, responds to A=Z #2. My comments are numbered and appear at the end of the letter))

Dear Russ,

   Thanks for sending me your latest issue of A=Z, and a very special thanks for explaining to Wes what I have been having so much trouble doing.

   You are absolutely correct in yourexplanation, and the reason I never questioned "Rasputin" was that I had a name and address for the player and it was published. If he wants

to call himself "Twinkle Toes" in the game reports, I don't care! Hopefully Wes understands now, and there won't be any more confusion. I have absolutely no qualms about giving computer or electronic mail games a number, as long as the GM complies with the same requirements for their game as postal GMs do. And all that means is I must get the same info from you that I require from them. Wes should remember if you want to be equal, it goes both ways! ((1))

Next up, Bill Quinn's letter ((2)). I don't feel that I'm ignoring your games and players. ((3)) I am willing to help get them rated and Keith Sherwood (a ratings master) and I are writing back and forth on the subject. It is not hopeless, personally Keith and I are both starting to become much more favorable towards it.((4)) I honestly don't think that it is necessary to list them seperately and I definitely don't think that we need another number custodian ((5)). All your games do fall under one of two catagories, BN or MN The problem is getting them rated, and I really feel that is being resolved right now.....................
.....................................KATHY BYRNE....
((1)) Uh, gee Wes! What have you gotten me in the middle of? Hehehe. Kathy, your point is well taken.
((2)) Reprinted in A=Z #2.
((3)) I never intended to suggest that. In my letter to Bill I said that those to whom I had spoken seemed supportive of PBEM, and you are, of course, one of those to whom I was refering.
((4)) It appears that Keith did not reach a postive conclusion, as I am told that he has chosen note to rate our games. I do hope that he will send me a letter explaining why.
((5)) Aw gee, and I already told my wife that I was going to be famous for The Sipe Numbers, hehehe.
((Thanks for the letter and the support. By the way, you may begin to feel a bit overwhelmed when we start getting Dip games run by the new MCI electronic mail system and the Post Office's E-Com system (it's coming someday).))

Everything #58
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E #58 contained 1983CD which was not listed seperately (as Bill Quinn was suggesting might be done); this is good. However it had a note which read: #NOTE:COMPUTER NETWORK GAME - SOURCE. Now I agree that such a note is a good idea, this way people know that the game was played by PBEM and therefore they would not be surprized to see a game completed in under a year. However, I am disturbed by the "#" sign preceeding the note. If this is the infamous "irregular" symbol, then we have a problem. See my response below to Kathy Byrne's "Irregular" article in DD#36.
In E#58 Bill responds to my questions in A=Z #2. I will respond by listing my original <Q>uestion, his <A>nswer, and my <R>ebuttal.
<Q>: Who in the postal hobby will not accept these games as regular? <A>: I do not know. As far as I can see THESE GAMES DO INDEED SEEM REGULAR IN THAT THEY ARE PLAY((ED)) IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE PBM FORMAT ((emphasis Sipe)). <R>: I agree. In all respects these games are played consistant with PBM formats.
<Q>: Why should PBEM games not be considered equal to PBM

games? <A>: It is quite clear to me that the games aren't equal due to the mode of transmission of negotiations. Indeed the computer mode is far superior to the USPS and that is exactly the point. PBEM players are not subject to the long weeks of inaction, negotiations can be carried out in a day or two rather than in weeks and the occasional mail screw up does not occur. Furthermore the mode is not available to the vast majority of players. The hardware and software limits the number of players who can participate. Thus the PBEM players are a select few who are segregated by their mode ((of?)) negotiation from the main body of the hobby. <R>: As to the last point about the fact that PBEM is not available to all PBM players, I refer you to Mark Berch's comments in DIPLOMACY DIGEST #76/77 which see below. As to the rest of this answer, Boy, did you do a turn around. In the first answer you said "These games do indeed seem regular" then you turn around and say they are not equal, due to the means of transmission. Ok, so we have established that, in your mind at least, the games are regular in terms of how they are run and how they are played. What you object to is how they go about negotiations. How is PBEM played? By written negotiations. How is PBEM played? By written negotiations. One is displayed on paper the other is displayed on a computer screen and then usually printed out on paper. As Mark argues in DD 76/77 PBEM is certainly much more like PBM than games that permit phone negotiations. When it comes to strictly following some kind of tradition that only USPS games can be regular, let him who is without sin (ie. GMs who remove any player who uses the telephone for negotiations etc.) cast the first stone, and in this regard (to again borrow from Scripture) all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.
As to your point that PBEMers are not subject to long delays and the whims of the Postal Service, my players got a real kick out of that one. Do you believe PBEMers sit around their computers all day waiting for messages to come in so that they can respond immediately? Of course you don't. So think about it a minute. If negotiations are done in only a day or two you wouldn't get much done would you? It may take 2 or 3 days to get an answer from a letter if the recipient of the message only gets "online" every 2 or 3 days. This means that to wait until the last day or two to negotiate can mean disaster. But your really funny comment is about how PBEMers are not subject to occasional mail screw up. I will at some point put out an article on the screw-ups that occur in electronic mail, and believe me, they are more frequent than genuine USPS screw-ups. When one of my players read your comment in TAD and also saw that one of his orders had not been included in the adjudication of his game, (due as we latter found out that the system had dropped a line while I was uploading TAD), he did not know whether to laugh or cry.
<Q>:What is the purpose of the segregated listing of PBEM games which you suggest? <A>: The reason I suggested a segregated listing was simply to demonstrate my willingness to accomodate the PBEM aspect of the hobby. If you are happy with the current system of notation for computer network games then it will be continued. <R>: Everything about the listing of 1983CD in E #58 was great except the "#" sign, if

that indicates an irregular game. 1976EP and 1978I each had notes of explination without the # symbol. This is what I would like to see for PBEM games. Yes, make note that they are played via electronic mail, and list which system, but don't list them as irregular. Then if a ratingsmaster chooses not to rate the game, the burden will be upon his/her shoulders as to why it is excluded. Note to Kathy: in this way the ratingsmaster could not say, "But the Boardman Number Custodian has called it irregular" thus throwing the controversy back onto your shoulders (as we say in California,"You don't need that kind of pressure"; hehe).

Diplomacy Digest #76/77

((Mark Berch has written on PBEM in the current double issue of DIPLOMACY DIGEST (#76-77; Nov-Dec). After a quick summary of PBEM Mark makes reference to the Bill Quinn letter which he read in A=Z #2. Noting that Bill "cannot see the postal hobby accepting PBEM games alongside postal games" Berch responds by defending PBEM and pointing out that what differences do exit are insignificant. The following is excerpted from his article...))

Lets have a look at ((the differences between PBM and PBEM)):
1. "PBEM games have shorter deadlines, typically 1-2 weeks." Big Deal. Zines such as GREATEST WAR IN MODERN HISTORY, LIBERTERREAN, and BRUTUS BULLETIN have run games with deadlines of 2 weeks or less, and no one cared.
2. "Only certain people can get into these games." Again, so what? There have been plenty of restricted games in the hobby. Invitational or Demo games, all-women games, novice games, games-for-new-subbers-only all limit who can enter.
3. "PBEM uses electronic mail, Postal uses USP"S". But why whould that make any difference? A postal game that I'm in now, 1983X, has three players communicating to me primarily or exclusively via the telephone. So we have *voice* over the telephone lines. In PBEM we have *written* messages over the telephone line. If anything, PBEM sounds more like postal. After all, written PBEM messages, like ordinary postal, lack any tone-of-voice considerations, and leave a written message that you can examine (and prepare) with care, and do not force you to "think on your feet"--all in contrast to the phone calls that appear to be completely acceptable in an ordinary postal game. Really, the difference between using electronic mail and USP"S" is much smaller than the difference between phone and USP"S", yet the latter does not bother us.

Rather than erecting barriers, we should be doing our best to integrate these newcomers, and show them what we have to offer in the way of an extended community. They have things to offer us too, and questions to pose, and changes to bring, and possibilities to explore.

((I am glad someone in the PBM hobby has finally said it. Excluding PBEM will hurt both PBEM *AND* PBM in the long run. Society is changing and Dippy is played by people who exist in that society. To segregate PBEM is to ignore the future. I *can't* understand why some people can't see it the way we do. When steam trains first came on the scene in the 1830's horse carriages had the right of way. When both

approached a crossing, the train had to stop for the carriage! Things sure have changed since then. Right now PBEM is like those early steam engines. Many see their potential but others see no reason to adjust to these "new fangled things."

((Unfortunately, Keith Sherwood, who I am told is a ratingsmaster has announced that he does not intend to rate our games. You will be hearing more from me on this when I am able to contact Mr. Sherwood.))

((Elsewhere in the article Mark describes the mechanics of TAD on Compuserve and the mechanics of Wes Ive's Wordworks games. I offer here further clarification. TAD is published weekly. Except when an occasional deadline extension occurs, the games are spaced out so that 2 games are reported on each week. This weekly frequency coupled with the ablility to post public messages all through the week makes TAD, like WordWorks, very fluid. When an adjudication error occurs (rarely now that APAP adjudicates the games on which see A=Z #2) it can be corrected rapidly. Deadline extensions, when needed, need not take into account mail delays.

((As to PBEM adding sparkle to games, yes it does. Some of our players leave open "public stance" messages for other players in addition to regular press.

((An aside: In my copy of DD 76/77 Berch makes reference to The Armchair Diplomat, but the letter "c" has all but dropped out in the printing. So my copy says that "Sipe runs his games in "The Arm hair Diplomat". Gee, when I think of the possiblities there... .

((I am very pleased that such a noted hobby person as Mark Berch has joined the likes of Rod Walker and Doug Beyerlein in support of PBEM as a regular expression of Diplomacy.))

Diplomacy World #36

Two articles of interest to PBEMers appear in the current issue of DW (#36). "MORE PBEM" was written by Wes Ives and Rod Walker and does a good job of explaining just how electronic mail works. To put Wes's system in perspective with Compuserve and The Source we can say that Wes's home computer bulletin board system performs the same function, on a somewhat reduced scale, as the mainframe computers at CIS (Columbus OH) and The Source (Washington DC). On CIS and The Source, the user's ID number is used by the "mail attendant" to route messages to where they belong. In addition to a user ID number each system user has a private password which prevents illegal access to his/her account. When a message is sent, the user's ID is automatically attached to the top of the message so that it is not possible to fake a message.

Wes indicates that players will often exchange 5 or 6 proposals between moves that are never more than 2 weeks apart. My feeling is that 2-3 communications during the two week period is more the norm in TAD games but since negotiations are private I cannot be sure.

In Rod's editorial reply to Wes's article he says: "Here we have another apspect of the ongoing problem of figuring out whether E-Mail games are (in all significant respects) equivalent to US Mail games. The *only* "reason" for regarding them as not equivalent which I have thus far

heard, is the simplistic and irrelevant statement that E-Mail isn't the same as the Post Office. The fact is that most so-called "postal" games involve many different sorts of communication, including phone and telegram, and also FTF negotiations if players happen to get together during a Con. So long as the secrecy and privacy of communicaions are preserved (and this is the hallmark of PBM Diplomacy as opposed to FTF), I would say that there is no factor involved in E-Mail games which would *significantly* affect play as opposed to normal PBM. At least,nobody has yet named such a factor, much less discussed it, that I am aware of."

The key term for both Walker and Berch (see above) is "significant". What differences there are are minor. I also have yet to hear an argument that points out a SIGNIFICANT difference between the two that should make PBEM games "Irregular" by PBM standards.

The other article of interest to PBEM in DW#36 is Kathy Byrne's article "Irregular ... Stigma?". The good thing about the article is that she annouces the formation of a committee "which will take a look at anything submitted on computer and electronic mail games...". The committee is made up of herself, Don Ditter, Lee Kendter, and Doug Beyerlein. She says "It will be the job of those who want to change the rules to educate us and convince us that certain games should be rated."

I will comment on this before getting into her discussion of the Irregular label. The very raison d'etat of A=Z is to help educate PBM people about PBEM and present PBEM as a regular expression of PBM Diplomacy. So I ask those members of this committee, if what I am providing you in A=Z is not adequate to help you make a informed judgement as regards PBEM games, please indicate where I am failing. Ask what questions you will, in order to resolve this question.

Now on to a more disturbing part of Kathy's article. She says:

"'Irregular' seems to be the 'Scarlet Word' of postal Diplomacy. In my opinion, it's a totally overrated word. No single term should cause as much consternation as 'irregular' does when attached to a game. it's really just a word which means that a particular game is different from the usual postal Diplomacy game. Nothing more, nothing less.

"Irregularity is not a disease, it is not contagious, and it is certainly not lethal. Yet many see the word as the end of the world; but it is only a signal for ratingsmasters to nte that a game may not be rateable under the traditional standards by which we rate other postal games".

Byrne then goes on to discuss other aspects of the rules concerning Irregularity (rules, by the way, which I have never seen). We will pause here to respond to Kathy's thoughts.

I disagree that "irregular" signifys no more ~~(go beyond it)~~ ~~(less beyond it)~~ than the fact that "a particular game is *different* (emph. Sipe) from the usual postal Diplomacy game." When I go to a discount clothing store and see the label "Irregular" I look over the garment to see *what is wrong* with it; in what way is it not *normal*?. When my excretory system gets fouled up and I experience "irregularity" I do not say "well, my system is just being 'different' today". Rather I take medicine for the *problem* so that my body can be restored to *normal*

functioning. Kathy, you seem to be willing to support PBEM and seem only to fear what changing tradition will mean. I appreciate your open mind, but please don't tell us that there is nothing of a negative connotation in labeling a game as 'Irregular'.

Kathy goes on to indicate that the 'irregular' label "is only a signal for ratingsmasters to note that a game may not be rateable under the traditional standards by which we rate other postal games." Why not do as I suggest elsewhere in this issue and simply put the "Note" line indicating that the game has been played by a computer network without labeling it as irregular? Kathy says that the ratingsmasters will follow the BNC's recommendations on all games. Thus we have it in a nutshell. Kathy has indicated here and elsewhere that she has a postive attitude toward PBEM games but that she is unsure about challenging tradition. I will close with this observation: In the city of Washington D.C. there is a city ordinance against flying kites (no kidding). It seems that in the latter half of the 19th century kites were seen as a danger to the overhead electrical wires in the city. Needless to say the ordinance has been outgrown. (I suggest we send Mark Berch up to D.C. to launch a kite and test out this ordinance. Perhaps we can get John Boardman to come down for the event and alert a policeman when Mark gets his kite up. How about it Mark?). The point is that, like this ordinance, some traditions need to change in light of new technology.

A NOTE FOR POSTERITY

As a general rule I don't like to toot my own horn as I tend to bristle when others toot theirs. However, due to the fact that I believe the development of PBEM will prove to be a very important event in the history of PBM Dippy, I want to take this opportunity to go on record about a couple of things.

First, to my knowledge, THE ARMCHAIR DIPLOMAT is the hobby's first PBEM Diplomacy magazine. Although some games were played via electronic mail prior to TAD, there did not develop an online magazine on Diplomacy as such. Whatever form the game reports took, there was not a zine as such that has left any historical impact on the hobby.

Second, to my knowledge I was the first person to use the phrase PLAY-BY-ELECTRONIC-MAIL and it's associated acrostic PBEM. When I started my first PBEM game on The Source I called it Play-By-Source. When I added CIS, I began to refer to the games as Play-By-Videotex or Play-By-Computer. However the former term was too vague and the latter term presented possible misunderstandings after Avalon Hill announced that they were going to release a computer version of Diplomacy. When Rod Walker asked me to do an article on our games in Diplomacy World and the question of the status of the games came up, I decided that Play-By-Electronic-Mail was the ideal title, as it emphasised that these games are PBM in nature, the only difference is that the mail is E type mail. Perhaps Mark Berch will include PBEM and TAD in his next Lexicon. Any evidence to the contrary is welcomed.

((One of my CIS Dippy players has prepared two articles to help new and/or potential PBEMers. Brad Chase (aka Shadowfax) of Raymond, NH (CIS ID# 71046,1674) is the author of these two very helpful articles. Remember that the home computer marketplace is anything but stable. No doubt the information on systems and prices will be dated in a few short months. Even so, "Getting Started" is an excellent primer on getting into the home computer and PBEM field.

((Another good looking system is Coleco's ADAM computer. The main system looks great at the price (about $700 I believe, and that includes a letter quality printer!). There is a modem available but I do not know the details.

((The "Diplomacy Roadmap" may seem hard to understand if you are not actually on CIS, but believe me, it will be of great help to you if you DO get online. One very helpful command that Brad overlooked is the "I" command which, when entered at the "function:" prompt gives you helpful Gamesig information. Thanks for the articles Brad!

((Note: anyone playing in a PBEM Diplomacy game is expected to own a copy of Diplomacy from Avalon Hill Game Company.))

GETTING STARTED IN PBEM DIPLOMACY

The popularity of PBEM (Play By Electronic Mail) Diplomacy is growing steadily. The advantages of PBEM play are readily apparent: more rapid communication between players, allowing more intense diplomacy, and less time between turns for a faster moving game. Many people feel that they cannot afford to get involved in PBEM. This is not necessarily true. This article is intended to provide interested players an idea of what it will cost them to join and play PBEM Diplomacy.

PBEM Diplomacy is played by using the electronic mail features of national computer networks such as the SOURCE and COMPUSERVE. To access these networks, it is necessary to have a computer terminal or a computer with communication software, and a modem (MOdulator-DEModulator). Because home computers are more flexible than terminals, as well as cheaper, this article will focus on home computers for use in communications through electronic mail.

Okay, so what is required? Well, as stated above, to communicate with a computer network (and access electronic mail) requires a home computer, a modem, and communications software. You will also require a data cassette recorder for storing programs on. Most people have some idea what home computers do, so it need not be discussed here. Communications software makes your computer act like a computer terminal. "So why do I get the computer instead of the terminal?" The first reason (mentioned above) is that the computer is cheaper. Another good reason is that then you still have a computer that can do all the things a computer does (and a terminal does not). There erhaps the best reason is that with a computer you can record the EMAIL you receive for later reading, and prepare the EMAIL you want to send in advance. Both these features can save you money in the lons run. Lastly, the modem is used to connect the computer to your phone, so you can communicate with the network.

As anyone not cut off from the world entirely knows, there are a LARGE number of computers available today. Selecting the right one for you involves thinking about what you want. If all you want to do is get involved in PBEM Diplomacy, than you probably want the cheapest set-up available. However, there is more to life than PBEM Diplomacy (though some might not admit it), and it pays to consider other uses (like word processing) for a home computer before buying one.

Don't be afraid of computers. They don't bite. Home computers are built so that they are very difficult to break. You will have to work long and hard to break it. Many people worry about ruining the programs or data. This is a little easier, but as long as you follow directions (which include making spare copies of your programs), you won't do any serious damage. You can run a computer. It takes far more coordination to drive a car than to run a computer, and most programs these days are easier to use than a road map. If you have trouble, there are lots of people who will help (you can get help through Compuserve for example), and many books too. If you have the intelligence to play Diplomacy, you have the intelligence to handle a computer.

How much will it cost? In one sense, the answer is, "As much as you want to spend." This answer is not particularly helpful however. To give you some idea of what it costs to get started in PBEM Diplomacy, three sample systems are listed below, along with some brief notes on their relative advantages and disadvantages.

SYSTEM I

Commodore VIC-20	$80
Commodore Dasette (recorder)	$50
VIC-modem (inlc. software and Compuserve)	$55
TOTAL = $181	

The VIC-20 is the cheapest route into PBEM Diplomacy. As noted, the VIC-modem includes both the basic communication software you will need, and a membership with Compuserve. As with all computers discussed in this article, the VIC-20 connects to your TV set. The main disadvantage to the VIC-20 is that in the standard configuration, each line on your TV set will contain only 22 characters (letters). This can be a bit awkward to read, and it is strongly suggested that you see this and decide if you can live with it before buying the VIC-20. This problem can be corrected by adding a "40/80 column board" to the VIC-20. This board costs $90. The other problem with the VIC-20 is limited memory. This can be corrected (again) by adding some money. The memory limitation will only be a problem if you intend to do larger programs or word processing. All prices are discount prices, not list.

SYSTEM II

Radio Shack Colour Computer II (standard BASIC)	$160
Cassette for program storage	$60
Anchor Automation Volksmoden (w. cable)	$65
Radio Shack Vidtex Software (incl. Compuserve)	$30
TOTAL = $315	

This system has more memory than the VIC-20, and is, overall, a more complete system. The 16K memory is fine for most home applications, and this system does include some external interfaces the others do not, as well as a 40 column screen. The main disadvantage to this system is in "bang for the buck". While the prices above are list price, that is what Radio Shack likes to sell them at. I have seen 20% discounts advertised in magazines, and Radio Shack does run relatively frequent specials on computers, so you can probably get the price down to about $260. The Anchor Volksmodem was chosen for two reasons: 1) While Radio Shack may try and tell you different, it will plug right in to the Colour Computer II (with the proper cable), and is somewhat cheaper and sleeker than Radio Shacks $100 job, and 2) if you order the Volksmodem from AB Computers (look in almost any computer magazine for an ad), you can get a subscription offer to the Source with it.

SYSTEM III

Commodore 64	$200
Datasette	$50
VIC-Modem (with software and Compuserve)	$55
TOTAL = $305	

This is probably the best buy going in starting systems. The 64 has 64K of memory which is more than you are likely to use ever. There are 40 characters per line when the C64 is connected to you TV, tought they are a little fuzzy (the only real disadvantage to this system). The screen problem can be corrected with a few dollars in parts and no special tools (see the November 1983 Compute!). My own personal preference would be to get the system with a disk drive instead of the datasette (see below). The problem with this is that the software included with the VIC-modem is on casette, but you could probably get the store to move it to disk for you.

A few tips about buying computers. First, you can expect to pay a few dollars more for manuals and such. While the information included with the computer will tell you how to run it, it probably will not tell you how to program it. Second, while you can get the best prices from mail order houses, it may be a good idea to buy your computer (though not necessarily the attachments) from a local computer store (not a Bradlee's type store either). The main reason for this is that the computer store will be able to help you when you have problems, while typically mail order and discount stores forget you after you have paid them. Third, there are a lot of different computers out there. While I recommend you stay with a name brand (Atari, Apple, Commodore, etc.), that still leaves quite a few choices.

You should try the computers out before you buy them (another reason to buy from a computer store). The systems presented above are ones I am familiar with, not necessarily the best for you. Let the salesman do his demo, then get him to set you up with a program or two to run by yourself, and try them. A good salesman will be happy to do this, and will stay around for you to ask questions of if he is not busy. Once you have narrowed down your possible choices, give each a good test of the types of things you want to do (again, the salesman will help). Keep track of the things you like, and the things you do not. Overall, buying a computer can be treated a lot like buying a car.

Well, now that you have some idea of what the system costs, what about the networks and electronic mail? As Compuserve's GAMSIG has developed as the home of PBEM Diplomacy, Compuserve is the network to join. All the systems above include a Compuserve subscription (saving you $20 - $30, though you will probably want to buy Compuserve's manuals for about $10). Compuserve costs $6 an hour (for 300 baud - the data rate - which the above modems use). If you budget your time, you should be able to play a typical PBEM game with about an hour and a half time per month. That's $9 for two moves (most games in PBEM Diplomacy run two moves per month). Currently, PBEM Diplomacy referees charge no fees, and you won't be paying postage, so it's not that much more expensive per move.

This $9 does not include the phone call to connect to Compuserve. For most cities, this is a local call. If some areas, you may have to connect through a local call to Tymnet or Telenet (basically data carriers), which will cost $2 an hour extra. In some areas, a long distance call is required. Rarely will the total connection cost be over $10 an hour.

Finally, a few words are in order about the extras you can add to your system. Some of these extras can make your computer a lot more enjoyable and useful. The cost and availability of extras that you might want is something to keep in mind when you select a computer.
1) Disk Drives. Disk drives (and disks) are another way of storing programs and information (instead of cassettes). Disks are MUCH faster than casettes. Many programs are available only on disks. Disk drives for Commodore systems run about $200 each, and about $400 for the Radio Shack Colour Computer.
2) Better Communiction Software. The communication software you receive with the VIC-modem is very rudimentary. All it does is send characters from the keyboard to the modem and from the modem to the screen. I do not know the capabilities of the Radio Shack software. Much more powerful communications software is available. These packages allow you to save what you receive from the network on disk or in memory, or send it to a printer. This allows you to review it later, rather than take notes as you receive it. Most also allow you to type the text you want to send to the network in advance, and send it after you have connected to the network. This can save a great deal of connect time (= money) and frustration. Many packages also allow you to send and receive programs, so you can exchange programs you and your friends write. Commercial communications packages range from $30 to $200 depending on what is included, and to some extent the whim of the company. Some very good communication software (as well as other programs) are in the "public domain". Public domain programs are basically free (you may have to pay a nomial fee for handling and/or disks and cassettes), and are available through a number of outfits. One program in particular to look for is the communications program "XMODEM", which is excellent.
3) High speed modem. The modems presented above transmit at 300 baud, which is a slow rate (about 30 characters a second), though still faster than most people can type. There are modems available that operate at 1200 baud, or four times faster. (There are even faster modems, but they are for special use.) 1200 baud modems run from $300 to $600. My personal "best-buy" choice is the Anchor Automation Mark XII at $300 (discount), which offers all the features of much more expensive modems. Again, choose what is best for you. I do recommend that you get a modem that operates at both 300 and 1200 baud (the Anchor does), and has at least some command functions (the Anchor has a full set). Many advanced communications programs can access these special modem functions to make you life easier. Using a 1200 baud modem and good communications sofware, you can cut your connect time by 60% or more. While Compuserve charges more for 1200 baud connections (the Source does not anymore), you can still save money.
4) A printer. With a printer, you can get printouts of the EMAIL messages you receive. A printer is also a must for word processing, and is important if you plan on doing any serious programming. There are two major types of printers: dot-matrix, and formed character. Dot-matrix printers are generally faster and cheaper, and will do nice graphics, while formed-character printers (also called daisy-wheel or spinwriter printers) generate better looking characters but are limited in their graphics capabilities. The better quality dot-matrix printers are rapidly approaching formed-character printers in print quality. You can get a 40-column dot-matrix printer starting at $100, and 80-columns starting at about $200. I would recommend getting a better quality, brand name (Okidata or Epson for example), 80-column dot-matrix printer, starting at about $325. For your extra money, you get more speed, better print quality, and better reliability. I recommend 80-columns because that is what you will want for word-processing as well as many other applications. Starting at $450, you can get some really good dot-matrix printers with very high quality characters and/or programmable fonts. If print quality is a must, look at the formed-character printers, which start at about $400. One thing in favour of the formed character printers is that you can get some that are also typewriters (or typewriters that can double as printers). If you need a type-writer anyway, this may be the route for you.

In conclusion, you can get started in PBEM Diplomacy for $200 to $300. This will give you the basics. If you decide you don't like it, chances are you can recoup most of your investment. Computers are a pretty good second-hand item (you might even keep this in mind when buying) because solid-state electronics typically fail in the first few hours of use, or not for a long time. While PBEM Diplomacy does cost more than PBM, the difference is not great on a month by month basis, and the excitement level can be much higher. It is worth noting that once a person owns a computer, they generally find more things to do with it than they ever thought possible. And then, there is the fun of being one of the first involved in this growing segment of Diplomacy gaming.

PBEM DIPLOMACY ROADMAP

PBEM Diplomacy is headquartered in Compuserve's GameSIG. Available through GameSIG (SIG stands for Special Interest Group) are the electronic mail facilities used to play PBEM Diplomacy, the PBEM House Rules, and the on-line magazine "The Armchair Diplomat" (TAD), which is the flagship magazine of PBEM Diplomacy. Also available in GameSIG are an electronic bulliten board, and a multi-user real time conferencing facility. This article is intended to provide players new to PBEM diplomacy enough information to get involved.

Before discussing the commands necessary to play PBEM Diplomacy, a few comments on using Compuserve in general are necessary. Compuserve does not care what case (upper or lower) your commands are in. It will recognize any mixture of upper and lower case. If your equipment is capable of displying lower case, it is recommended that you set your Compuserve terminal parameters to lower case (page CIS-4) for readability. You will also want to set the number of characters per line to your page width. Another good thing to know is that at most prompts you can get help. To do this, type either "h" or "help" followed by a return. If you type in something Compuserve doesn't recognize, it will generally tell you how to get help.

Compuserve recognizes a number of "control" characters for special purposes. A control character is generated by pressing the CONTROL key (perhaps marked CNTL or ALT) on your terminal simultaneously with a letter key (like a SHIFTed letter). The most useful control characters are (briefly, full explanations are available on the system):

    control-S: to temporarily stop output (so you can read it)
    control-Q: to restart output after a control-S
    control-O: to stop all output and go to a prompt
    control-P: acts like a control-O in GameSIG
    control-V: to see what the computer thinks the line you are typing looks like (especially useful in conference)
    control-U: to delete the entire line you are typing
    control-H: to delete the last character you typed (backspace)

GETTING TO GAMESIG

Having covered the basics, the first thing to do is get to GameSIG. You can step through the menus, but the quick way is to type "go hom-143" at any "!" prompt. (Like all Compuserve commands, this one must be followed by a return.) You should see a message that says "Request Recorded, One Moment Please". After a brief interval you should see "Welcome to GameSIG..." If this is not what you see, do not panic. If there is some problem, Compuserve will tell you what to do. If you typed in the wrong page ID ("hom-143" is the page ID), and got some other part of Compuserve, just type "go hom-143", and you should get there.

If you are not a member of GameSIG, you will be asked if you want to join. Since GameSIG costs nothing above normal connect time, go ahead and do it now. Among other things, the sign-on procedure will give you some information on how to use the GameSIG, and tell you where to find more. Eventually, you will see a menu. Pick "User options" from the menu (by entering the appropriate number). Select "command mode" and "brief mode". While you are here, you should set the line length to whatever is appropriate for your equipment. Lastly, make the options permanent, and return to the function level.

At this point, you should see a prompt which says "Function:". Congratulations! Now GameSIG is your abject grovelling slave, ready to act on your slightest whim! Let's begin.

READING THE ARMCHAIR DIPLOMAT

To find out what is going on in PBEM Diplomacy, read The Armchair Diplomat. TAD is kept in what is called the "Access database". To get there, type "xa5" at the "Function:" prompt. (Note that there are a number of access areas, designated by numbers. Area 5 is PBEM Diplomacy's.) You will see a prompt that says "XA5:". Since you do not know what the latest issue of TAD is, type the command, "bro". "Bro" stands for browse, and will list the files present in xa5, starting with the most recent. Each file is listed singly with a breif description of it's contents. After this, a prompt reading "(R D T):" will be displayed. If you want to read this file, use the "R" command. If you want to skip this file, and go to the next, just hit the return key once, and the next file will be shown. If you are done browsing, use "T" which will take you back to the "XA5:" prompt. ("D" stands for download, which does not concern us.) Chances are good that the first file displayed will be an issue of The Armchair Diplomat. If so, use the "r" command, and read it. If not, skip through the files until you find an issue, and read it.

If you know the number of the TAD issue you want to read, you can access it directly from the "XA5:" prompt. All issues of TAD are stored with file names in the form "tad##.dip", where ## is the issue number. For example, TAD#57 would have a filename of "tad57.dip". To read a file directly from the "XA5:" prompt, type in "r" followed by a space, and then the filename and then the return. For example, to read tad57.dip, type in the command "r tad57.dip". Simple.

GETTING THE HOUSE RULES

Now that you know how to use the access data base, this is a good time to read the PBEM Diplomacy house rules. The house rules are in xa5 also, under the name "format.dip". So, to read this file, you type in the command "r format.dip" at the "XA5:" prompt. Another PBEM Diplomact information file is "intro.dip" in xa5. If you know the rules to Diplomacy, this file will not be of much interest to you, but if you are new to Diplomacy, and want to find out what is going on without buying the game, you should read the file.

USING ELECTRONIC MAIL AND THE BULLITEN BOARD

The GameSIG electronic mail facility is actually part of it's bulliten board system, so we will learn to use both at the same time. Note that Compuserve does have a separate electronic mail facility on page EMA. The facilities in EMA are completely different from those in GameSIG. Documentation on EMA is available from Compuserve.

If there are any messages waiting specifically for you, you would have been told when you got into GameSIG. The default procedure is that GameSIG marks messages waiting for you when you log on. You will be told that you have messages waiting, and the subject matter and sender for each will be displayed. If you prefer that GameSIG type out your waiting messages for you automatically, you can specify this in the user option section we visited earlier.

All messages in GameSIG are part of the bulliten board. There are two types of messages, public and private. Private messages will be marked with a "(P)" after the message number. While public messages can be read by all, private messages can be read by only the sender and the recipient. Messages on the bulliten board are also divided into categories, or sections. The section for PBEM Diplomacy is section 5 ("other games"), which is shared with some other games.

To read a message on the board, use the "r" (read) command at the "Function:" prompt. There are several varieties of the "r" command which allow you to read different groups of messages. We will discuss three types: "rm" (read marked messages), "rn" (read new messages), and "ri" (read individual messages). No matter which command is used to read messages, the messages appear in the same format. First comes a header giving the message number, the section, the subject, the sender, and the addressee. Note that if the adressee field of the header is followed by a "(X)", this means that the addressee has read the message. The header is followed by the text of the message. If there are any replies to this message, these will be listed by number following the text of the message.

At the end of the message the prompt "(C RE T):" will appear. This prompt is asking you what to do next. The "c" command will continue with reading messages (in whatever mode you specified with the previous "r" command). If you want to reply to the message, use the "re" command. The "t" command is for Top, and will get you back to the function prompt. If the message was addressed for you, you will see "(D = delete)" included with the "(C RE T):" prompt. Use the "d" command to delete the message from the bulliten board. You will only see the "(D = delete)" prompt on messages addressed to you. This is because you are allowed to delete only messages which are addressed to you, or messages which you sent. (No "D =..." prompt will appear after messages you sent when you read them.)

Now, to return the the read command, the "ra" command will fetch all messages marked for you to read (remember, we discussed marked messages above). The "ri" command will fetch individual messages for you to read. If you use the "ri" command, GameSIG will prompt you to enter a message number to read, and will keep doing so after each message read until you tell it to stop by entering a message number of zero (or just a return). The "ri" command is useful for reviewing specific messages that you read before, or for reading messages that are referred to elsewhere (such as replies to a message you read). The "rn" command fetches messages left on the bulliten board since the last time you visited GameSIG. Since you do not want to read ALL the messages on the bulliten board, but only those in the PBEM Diplomacy section, you must select the section you wish to read from. This is done by using the "ss#" command at the "Function:" prompt. Since PBEM Diplomacy is section five, you should use the "ss5" command. When you have selected a section in this manner, GameSIG will keep reminding you by printing "Section # -" followed by the section name before each "Function:" prompt, where # is the section number. You should see the following when you have selected section 5:

Section 5 - Other Games
Function:

Most, if not all, of the PBEM Diplomacy messages of direct interest to you will be addressed to you, so it is not necessary to 'scan' the bulliten board using the "rn" command. The "rn" command is useful for seeing what is general might be going on in PBEM Diplomacy on GameSIG. Remember, if you don't want to finish reading a message after you have started it, type in one control-P. This will get you to the "(C RE T):" prompt at the end of the message.

Now that you can read messages, you need to know how to send them. There are two ways. The first is to REply to a message at the "(C RE T):" prompt. The second is to use the "l" (leave) command at the function prompt. If you use the "l" command, GameSIG will ask you for the adressee and the subject. If you use the "re" option, GameSIG will skip directly to entering the message, which is done the same way as for the "l" command, as described below.

After entering a "l" command at the "Function:" prompt, GameSIG will prompt you for an addressee with a "To:". You should enter either the User ID of the person you wish to send the message to, or "all" is you want post a message for everyone. (A User ID, also called a PPN, is like an address. For example, Machiavelli's (editor of TAD) User ID is 74325,1434.) You may enter the name of the recipient also, but the User ID is the important thing. After entering the address, GameSIG will prompt for the subject with a "Subject:" prompt. Enter a brief description of the subject matter. It is a good idea to use the word "DIP" as part of the subject.

After you have supplied the addressee and subject, or when replying to another message using "re", GameSIG will begin prompting you for the text. GameSIG will prompt for one line at a time with something that looks like this: "1:   ". End each line with a return, just like a typewriter. When you have finished the message, hit a return after a blank line (i.e. type nothing on the line before the return). GameSIG will ask you what you what to do with the message with the prompt "Leave option:". After this prompt, type "s" for store, followed by a "p" is you want your message to be private, followed by the section number you what to store the message in; 5 for PBEM Diplomacy. So, to leave a public message, you would enter "s5" followed by a return. A private message would be left by typing "sp5" and then return. Simple, huh?

There are some other things you can do at the "Leave option:" prompt. These include editing funtions (in case you made a mistake in your message), and an abandon option if you change you mind about sending the message. Remember, entering a return on ANY blank line will end the message and get you to the "Leave option:" prompt.

There are a couple of things you should know about what GameSIG will do with what you type in. Unless you tell GameSIG otherwise, it will merge all the lines you typed in into one long paragraph when the message is viewed. You can force a paragraph break by putting a space at the begining of a new line.

CONFERENCING
The final useful tool in PBEM Diplomacy is COnferencing. Conferencing is when two or more users get together and "talk" to each other through Compuserve's computers. This can be useful for planning last minute strategy among other things. The GameSIG conference facility is the same as Compuserve's general CB, and while we will breifly cover how to conference, it will be worth your time to investigate the full range of conference commands once you are familiar with the basics.

To enter conferencing, type "co" at the "Function:" prompt. GameSIG will give you a welcome message, and tell you how many people are tuned into each channel. You will be assigned a channel to start with. All conference commands begin with a "/". This is because when you are conferencing, everything you type, except lines beginning with a "/", is 'broadcast' to everyone on your channel.

To select a channel, type in "/tun " followed by the channel number you want (and the usual return). To exit conferencing and get back to a "Function:" prompt, type "/exi" return. If you what to see another list of the people on other channels, use the "/sta" command. You may set up a 'private' conference by using the "/scr" command (which stands for scramble). To do this type in "/scr " and the password you want to use. Everyone who types in the same password with a "/scr " command will be able to 'hear' and 'talk'. Everyone else will see random characters on their display. WARNING: The scramble password is case sensitive. I recommend that you ALWAYS use capital letters when making up and entering a password. Finally, if you need it, there is "/help".

LAST WORDS
There are a few "Function:" prompt commands that have slipped through the cracks so far. The first of these is the "ust" command. "Ust" will tell you who is in GameSIG (by User ID). This way you can see if someone you know is on. To contact someone you see using the "ust", there is a "sen" command. After the "Function:" prompt, type "sen " followed by the 'Job #' that appears next to their user ID when the results of the "ust" command print. Following this, type in a breif message (one line) and hit a return. This way you can set up spontanteous conferences, or pass quick notes. Finally, when you are all done, there are three ways out of GameSIG. They are all commands at the "Function:" prompt. The first is to use a "go...." similar to the one used to enter GameSIG quickly, to go to another page. The "exit" command will take you back to the SIG menu (and a Compuserve "!" prompt). The "off" command will log you off Compuserve.

These commands should be enough to enable you to quickly and efficiently get involved in PBEM Diplomacy. Almost all of the basic commands have been covered here. While this may seem overwhelming at first, there are still more. Once you are comfortable with the basics, investigate some of the advance functions, as some of them are really useful. If you get stuck with some problem, leave a messaeg on the board, and someone (if not many someones) will help you. Most of all - Enjoy!

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Recently I polled my players on a variety of questions that I thot potential PBEMers might find interesting. Here are the results of the poll as reported in TAD #59:

4. Computer

Respondents listed the following computers: Apple II; IBMpc; Kaypro; Vic-20; TRS-80; Zenith Z100; Victor 9000; Seequa Chameleon; Franklin Ace 1000; Commodore 64.

Quite a mix here. I was a bit surprized at the range of machines. TAD is produced on an Apple II+ and is transmitted via a Hayes Micromodem II using Ascii Express "Professional Version".

5. Dippy Connect Time Per Week

The mean average connect time related to Dippy came out to 1.02 hours per week. If players are spending this much time online each week on Dippy, where are the negotiations (some players indicate that negotiation traffic is pretty light). And where is the press? What are they doing during this 2 hours per season of connect time? [Note to non-players: there are two weeks between each season].

6. Terminal Packages

82% of the respondents use a terminal software package that permits downloading and uploading of files.

7. Connect Time Saved By Terminal Software

Respondents that use terminal software indicate that they save .90 hours per week by using the package. In other words, You cut your connect time roughly in half by using terminal software with downloading and uploading.

8. Dippy Experience (By Games)

27% of our respondants have played 3 or less games of Diplomacy. 45% have played more than 10 games. Almost half are veteran players while over a fourth are novices. This is a good mix. It should promote growth of the PBEM hobby. On the one hand, PBEM boasts experienced players while on the other hand, it develops beginners.

9. Dippy Experience (By Time)

45% of our players have been playing for a year or less and 55% have been playing for more than three years. Again, a nice mix of veterans and journeymen.

10. PBM Experience Outside PBEM

36% indicated that they have played in a PBM game (outside of PBEM). This is higher than I expected. After checking over the results and re-reading the question, I find that I may have not made it clear that by PBM, I meant a PBM DIPLOMACY game, not one of the other many PBM games available. I feel some did not understand my meaning and thus these percentages are most likely invalid.

11. Tournament Experience

My suspicions about #10 are reinforced by the fact that only 19% of our respondants have played in a Face-to-Face Dippy Tournament.

Summary

So what is the meaning of these numbers? They tell us that most players spend about an hour a week online related to Dippy. That is half the time they would spend if they did not have terminal software. PBEM boasts a good cross section of Dippy experience and can proudly tell the PBM Dippy world that our games are (1) quality; and (2) proving to be vehicles to bring new people into the PBM hobby.

LATE BREAKING NEWS

‡ Chip Charnley, GM of 1983IH (one of TADs PBEM games) has decided to run PBEM's first Dippy variant game. He is seeking Compuserve players for either GUSHER or 1885II.

‡ Doug Beyerlein in an electronic letter to me this date (send over Compuserve) states: "I see PBEM to be the future of the Diplomacy hobby".

‡ Two possible future subjects to discuss: (1)An online database of all Dippy games results which could be downloaded by anyone with the appropriate software and statistically analyzed. Compuserve can accomodate the data, anyone want to upload it? (2) A regular Dippy network for real time discussions. How about a live connection between Dippy players around the country and the DipCon Society Meeting? How about a discussion network in real time for the hobby custodians? All of this is no problem if and when more of you get your computers and modems.