

Well, the more discerning among you will have noticed that the issue date this time is April 10 and not March 15. They will note also that we are still publishing using the fumes from old vodka bottles. The typing will also indicate that we are publishing at the still as well as still publishing. So much for the promises of gamesmasters.

It is only fair to point out that this is deliberate; we wanted to wait an extra few days (26?) in case we could fill the game list. Nice dream, but it worked, which is less of an accomplishment than it seems when you consider that three of them were committed before we started this mag. However WE HAVE A WINNER. Andy Swenson quickly jumped in with a guess as to the derivation of MARSOVIA. Quite correct, Andy, it is the country in which 'The Merry Widow' takes place, but it wasn't really necessary to send your guess air-mail from Walnut Creek.

For those unfamiliar with California geography, Walnut Creek is about 60 miles from here, and we have no air service for it. It probably took a day longer to ship in the carrier pigeon than it would have to send the letter by Wells Fargo. I really appreciate your interest, though, Andy.

With that exception the response has been, in the words of Dorothy Parker, "truly underwhelming". I would like to save some postage, though, and tell Messrs. Smythe, Koning, McCallum, et al., the exchanges are fine. I even hope for a lively argument with Boardman over his anti-war toy campaign...though right now I am too busy to write about it. Your editor has a job! Boy, that really shows full employment! So I have little time for reads any more.

Nevertheless, on to bigger and better things. One of our players, Art Canfil, sent a sketch with his entry which I am publishing. Any others will be printed too, so don't mention anything you don't want known.

"I have no idea where the name Marsovia came from, though it sounds like an eastern-European commie country. Probably where Comrade Con Metzke originated. I have (just in case it makes a difference) no favorite country which to play. Will you be the first person on your block (and planet) to send me a copy of the official rules? I really still know damned little about this game. ((No, Art, I won't, because I lost my only copy last summer)) ((No he didn't lose 'em; I stole 'em - von Metzke))) ((If anyone else wants to send him a copy you may get a fine ally from the deal. I suppose I shouldn't admit I have no rule book, you perverts are really going to jump on my decisions now))

"Sketch (17) - Other than being a pacifist I'm an average sillion-type. The only group of people on earth that I really can't stand is cat fanciers. Disgusting! Pro-Hobbit sympathies. Frodo Baggins' Chinese name is 'Sei No Tsai' (honorable young man with four eyes). Personally reject hypocrisy, except sometimes in Diplomacy. Expert phrenologist and physiognomist. Noted liar."

((I can add to Art's sketch that he attended high school with Conrad and me. Helped to make me the only Diplomacy editor to attend as a delegate both the Young Republicans and Young Democrats conventions in one year. He appointed me a delegate from his club to the I.D. slugfest. I double-crossed him there too.))

Having exposed Art, let's expose the other players' names and addresses, and let you slavering, greedy hate-mongers get started.

MARSOVIA (MPO): The entire 7-man contingent of the Marsovian National Guard was ordered to the National Institute for the Psychically Imbalanced when a group therapy session turned into a near-riot. The riot broke out, apparently, when all seven members of the session claimed to be European rulers (a common harmless pastime of many inmates) who were soon going to dispose of the other six and rule the world (a new twist which destroyed many friendships).

Unfortunately all seven inmates escaped in the confusion. They are believed headed to their respective countries. Ambassadors have already been supplied with the names and destinations, which are:

ENGLAND Conrad Friesner von Metzke
P.O. Box 192
Janel, Calif. 92035

(This list was provided
by the Chief Therapist:

FRANCE Dan Berrows
5808 Strenview Dr., Apt. 2
San Diego, Calif. 92105

Robert J. Ward
5716 'J' Street

GERMANY Roland Tzudiker
310 Garrison Street
Denver, Colorado 80226

Sacramento, Calif.
95819.)

ITALY Andy Swenson
145 Bonderosa Lane
Walnut Creek, Calif. 94598

AUSTRIA Arthur J. Canfil, SN
U.S.S. Aludra, AF-55
c/o T.P.O.
San Francisco, California

RUSSIA James Latimer III
4011 Silver Hill Road
Washington, D.C. 20023

TURKEY Charles G. Brennan
324 S. Lincoln, Apt. 34
Spokane, Washington 99204

These inmates have been known to change countries in mid-therapy, but this list is official as of now. If no further report is issued it will be assumed that all have reached their homelands and are ready to conquer the world.

First order due MAY 12, 1966. Must be received by that date.

Strategic Position and Diplomatic Negotiation: Countervailing or Reinforcing Powers: some thoughts....

There is no question that some powers on the Diplomacy board are better-placed than others. While theoretically all powers have an equal chance to win, Italy and Austria are generally regarded as weak powers, while England and France are considered strong.

The novice player would conclude from this that since these powers are strategically stronger, they have an advantage in the game and must be favoured to win. Strategy is the important element of the game and, other things being equal, this early advantage will translate itself into an inordinate number of victories.

The more sophisticated, though still inexperienced, player would reply that all things are not equal. Recognising the strategic plus of a position, the other players would convert it into a diplomatic minus; they would ally in such a way as to nullify this early advantage (countervailing power). This restores the game to its original theoretical balance and all may win.

The long-term, more expert, player recognises that the novice is right, but for the wrong reason. In fact, the strategic position is translated into a diplomatic plus, not a minus. An examination of early alliances in postal games thus far will bear this out.

France has a strong strategic position. Italy cannot make any headway early in the game against southern France. England usually tries for Norway, diverting units which might challenge France's control of Belgium. France is left alone to take care of Germany. This strategic consideration makes France a valuable ally, since it is virtually certain that France will have the units to spare to help the alliance. The early strategic advantage is reinforced as other powers attempt to convert it to their advantage as well, through alliance.

Italy has a weak strategic position. It cannot expand either to the east or west without allies. But France is safe, since even with allies Italy cannot go west early in the game with any success. Austria will usually be safe because the two potential Italian allies, Russia and Turkey, are fighting each other. Italy does not have enough to offer, strategically, to be in a strong position diplomatically. The minuses are reinforced.

Returning to the original question, it is apparent that the strategic position is a reinforcing power of the diplomatic position, and not a countervailing one. From the standpoint of pure theory the game is not equal, and in fact it is not true that each country will win 1/7 of the time. The victory of a weak country is generally the sign of better playing, more positively than the victory of a strong country, though this is importantly modified by alliances that form later in the game where these early conditions may not exist. But that is another article.

11. How can you win these games? (Hint: play one yourself!)