

Passchendaele

September 21, 1973

Been vassir. it's me again. And it's you again that will read this. Lotsa stuff this: the games letters pamphlets an article from Tommi Kissner on rating systems my reply to that article and an article from Ron Killen on Italian strategy and much more.

PASSCHENDAELLE is a zine related to Diplomacy, a game invented by good ole' Al Calhamer and copyrighted by Avalon-Hill. But don't let me fool ya--it's marketed in Canada by House of Games Inc. Ltd., so, indirectly, you can blame them for this product. PASSCHENDAELLE is published by Francois Guerrier, 2210-160 Chapel St., Ottawa, Ont. K1M 8P5. (Tel. 1-613-236-1351) This very famous and illustrious person (or notorius?) is also the GM for all games herein and in Antwerp, that is: 1975A, 19760X, 1977A7, 1977A7, 1977AZ, 19780, 1978P, 1978S, 1979A0, 1979A0, Eyle Foreknowledge Variants, Chess games and 2 Russian Campaign games.

Friedland does NOT start this. What a relief. I tell ya. In my case the waiting list includes as of September 21, Robert Acheson, Kirk G. MacDougall, Ron Killen and that's it, I believe. If you want on or off tell me. The gamefee is \$1.50.

Of course, noone has signed-up for the prize game. PUNCH OF COWARDS ve letter to lack home to your ears before I whip you.

As for the "reputed player" game only Randolph Smyth has registered. I guess I'll just have to reduce the criteria for admission to 3 wins/3 draws/concessions/wins-as-a-standby. For the lowest I'll ever go is 2; there's no use having a "reputed player" game without reputed players in it.

The standby list currently includes Frank Haika (1977AZ), John Lipscomb (1976A), Robert Acheson (1977AZ), Jerry C. Sichel (1), Steve Colonic (19780), John Kelley (19790), Blair Cusack (1978S), Jan Jensen (1977A7), Bruce Schneider, Steve Perrigan (1), Steve Hutton and Mike Carroll. When your name is followed by a boardman number, it means that you won't be employed as a standby till your name comes at the top of the list for the second time. For instance, Frank Haika is now at the top of the list but will be switched to the end of the list next time (unless again his name is at the top of the list, he'll be out, though). So the-top-of-the-list-principle is the important principle to grasp here. If you want to be on or off (whether you are at the top, middle or bottom of the list), just tell me. If you don't understand this paragraph (and I'm trying very hard to mix you up), don't bother.

Well, I might as well start with some of the games, no?

1979A0. Fall 1972. A VERY INTERESTING SEASON. IF I MAY SAY SO!

Austria (Bob Acheson): A Vie-Gal; A Dub S; A Vie-Gal; A Boh-Sil; F Gre-Lo; A Ser S; TURKISH; A Rum.

England (Bruce Schneider): F Par-Nwv; F Wth S; F Par-Nwv; A SUP-Mos; F Skn-Lo.

France (Steve Perrigan): A Pol-Pic; A Por-Gas; A Spa S; F Mar; F Mar S; F Lvo S; F Mid-Wes; F Mid-Wes.

Germany (Roy Norton): A Kie-Mun; A Ruh S; A Kie-Mun; A Per S; A Kie-Mun; F Den S; ENGLISH; F Skn-Eng.

Italy (Dan MacLellan): F Wes-WAR; F Fyn-War; F Ion-Tun; A Fie-Tus; A Hun H (ret-Fur); Fvo; Boh; ONIT.

Russia (Ron Kelley): F Sev-Arm (annihilated?); F Swe-Lal; A Ukr S; A Gal; A Mos-War; A Cal; H.

Turkey (John Lipscomb): F Fla S; A Arm-Sev; A Rum S; A Arm-Sev; A Arm-Sev; F Con-Aer.

The deadline for Winter 1902 and Spring 1903 is October 19, 1972.

1902 SC Chart:

- Austria: Home, Ser, Cre. (5) Even.
- England: Home, Nwy, Spa, Mos. (6) Build 2.
- France: Home, Spa, Par, Bel. (6) Even.
- Germany: Home (re-conquered Mun), Hol, Den. (5) Build 1.
- Italy: Home, Tun, Mid. (4) Remove 1.
- Russia: StP, ~~Spa~~, ~~Mos~~, War, ~~Spa~~. (2) Annihilation, remove 2.
- Turkey: Home, Bul, Rum, Sev. (6) Build 1.

Press:

Budapest-Rome: I cut the support as we couldn't hold Munich and wanted a better position for the long-run.

Budapest-Rome: Where do you want the F Ion?

GM Comments:

In the past year, we've seen something that seldom happens: a Western triple vs. an eastern triple. As a result, it is no surprise indeed to see Russia on the brink of annihilation, as everyone is his enemy.

This year, although tactically an FG success, has seen the tide move more and more to AI's side. FG is essentially in poor shape in the Med/Mid area--they have to cover Mid (as Italian ownership of Mid can only prepare for the destruction of France whenever England chooses to attack...) but if they do, they risk to see F Wes annihilated. (F Wes-Mid, F Naf-Mid, F Tun-Wes & By F Tyn.) If this happens, then Mid will be captured in Fall 1903, which just delays the high risk mentioned above, but doesn't eliminate it. Also, if Italy retreats A Mun-Bar, France will be in deeper trouble yet. Of course, F Mar will still protect Marseilles, and A Gas-Par, A Pic-Par, will protect Pic/Par/Gas. But what about Bel? Then, Germany will have to do A Ruh-Bel, in the hope that Italy does A Bar-Bel. If Italy doesn't, then Germany captures Bel, which FG probably do not want. And even then, A Bar remains a pain in the neck--FG would probably prefer to use the unit elsewhere, but they just can't eliminate the problem. If they dislodge A Bar, then it can retreat into Paris. If F does A Pic or A Gas-Par in the Spring, then A Bar can ret-Pic or Gas (according to the case) in the Fall, when it is dislodged. And these spots are sensible: an Italian army in Gascony can menace France seriously if Italy captures the Mid, and so can an army in Picardy. And the situation will become intenable should England attack.

England will become harder and harder to keep under control for FG. After all, England can now finish off Russia while opening a second front with her builds. Of course, there is the possibility that she will accept to sit in her corner, and wait until all FG units are as far as possible before stabbing, but again, this only delays the problem; of course, there are other possibilities--FE may ally against G, or EG may ally against F, but in all these cases, the western alliance loses ground to the eastern alliance. (An EG attack of F will automatically give Iberia/Mar to Italy; an EF attack of G will also mean a weakening of the F southern front; or, if E attacks G alone, it'll mean that Austria/Italy make some kind of gain in Germany, perhaps so much as Mun and Bar, which is a stalemate line if enough units are used.)

Although AI have a much better position, they do have some problems too: Turkey. Turkey may be convinced to continue concentrating on Russia for this year, but there's tomorrow, where the problem will still exist. However, AI seem to be in better shape to resist the third partner: Austria, with A Bud, A Ser, and F Ion can do the job.

Of course, FG have some advantages too--should Italy remove A Tun then Germany can take Tyo (unless A does A Vix-Tyo, but then it risks R & Cal-V a

PASSCHENDAELE#13, September 21, 1979.

and then manoeuvre into Italy, or menace Vie/Tri. There's quite a possibility to take centres for FG there. But then, Italy can remove something else (perhaps a fleet) but then, FG will feel much more comfortable in France, or a loophole will be created for Turkey to slip into/through.

There's another possibility yet? England and Turkey can be persuaded to fight each other in Russia? However, it is not a probability. Or they can be persuaded to stay in their corner, and watch the fight--but that's only delaying the problem, not solving it.

In conclusion, this is a game full of possibilities and rich in double-cross potential--it may turn out to be PASSCHENDAELE's most interesting game! If I can risk a prediction, I'd say that Turkey and England (England a little bit more than Turkey) share the Seat of Power in this game. Although they don't have the greatest part of the strenght, they do have the greatest part of potential.

Oh boy, come to think of it, I'm sure everyone is going to ask for a Winter separation in this game...

Eylan is delayed on request. Take another month guys. Spring 1901 is due on October 19, 1979.

1978 and 1978S are delayed as it appears that a couple of guys didn't receive PASSCHENDAELE#13. That mystifies me, but then it may just be that I'm too naïf--the CPS is probably the last thing one should trust...

Oh, yeah, again, I forgot to include something very important at the very beginning--the COAs:

1. Jan Jensen, 5972 Spring Garden Rd. #8, Halifax, NS. B3H 1Y7.
2. Ron Killeen, 50LA Princess St., Kingston, Ont. K7L 1C3.

FLASH! FLASH! ATTORNEY-GENERAL MORTON CHARGES CAPTURAL SMYTH FOR FELONY!
Tethausaurus Agency, Ottawa, 15 Sept. 79: "In a press release today, Ralph Morton, captain in the Canadian Armed Forces, Attorney-General, etc. charged Randolph Smyth the Terrible with felony. Said he, "Just looking at the fake, it's obvious that Randolph did it. Feel free to quote this in your zine, Francois. And don't be scared--I happen to command a company in the army, and if bad boy (that's Randolph) sends his platoon to intimidate ya, I'll take care of it and fix him. So there!"

So that's how I can say, in all honesty: (and with 12 machine guns and 250 rifles pointed at my chest) "I'll write to my lawyers and see what can be done to send this guy to jail."

Now that's that. Moving on, here's a LETTER from Mark L. Berch:
Dear Francois:

I read with interest Ron Killeen's review of the DipCon '79 tournament. I don't know his source of figures, but in the first round we had 16 boards, not 21. In the second round there were 13, not much of a drop-off. In the third, 7 boards.

Ron says that in a game with a winner "...the other six players would be stuck at the bottom with zero points and no chance of winning the tournament." This is not true. The winner, Ben Zablocki, was in fact wiped out in one of his games, yet he won the tournament.

Ron says "people played their games in the hope for a draw; no person dared to try to go for a victory." Again, not true. Plenty of people tried for victory and quite a few succeeded: we had 7 wins in the first 2 rounds (24%). 7 was a very nice number, as it provided for the opportunity to have a "top board" of all winners. Ron says that all wins came as a result of "freak chance" or a suicide. I challenge him to prove this

statement. I do not see how he came to learn about all 8 wins in the tournament.

Next, Ron says "The ludicrous thing about this system was that an 11 center power that had come in second would receive 0 points (actually, 0.11) yet a one center in 4th place would receive 15 points because a draw was voted or it was NO7." I disagree. You may not like that scoring, but it is NOT ludicrous. It is based on a very simple philosophy:

1. Them that wins, wins. That that draws share in the win. Them that allow other(s) to win, lose.
2. In order to encourage winning, and discourage losing, points are given for winning but not for losing.

The scoring system is based directly on that philosophy. It may not be yours but it is a sensible, not ludicrous, philosophy. I play my post 1 games in much the same way. In most circumstances, as an original player I will prefer any draw to coming in second, regardless of the # of SC's involved. I view SC's as a means toward an end, not an end in and of themselves. However, for those who think that SC's, not winning/drawing are the measure of success, we had 7 trophies for best country.

Ron complains about features like suicides, "paranoid style of play" gauging upon the leader when he nears victory. I do not know how long he has been playing postal Diplomacy, but I assure him these things happen all the time. If you can persuade someone to suicide on your behalf then fine, you are a master diplomat. As Richard Sharp so drolly put it, "find yourself an ally who is even willing to die for you and see to it he dies exactly that!" Gauging upon the leader is very common. As I approached the victory criterion in 1976IP, everyone united against me and I was halved 2 centers short of victory. As for paranoia, well, this is a paranoid game because people do betray each other. This is especially true in tournament play, which should be very competitive, and tends to be a game with strangers not friends.

Finally, Ron suggests that the organizers did not want people to play "the system". This is absolutely unavoidable. So long as the players know the scoring system, or think they do, they will play the system, regardless of the nature of the system. If Ron disagrees, I challenge him to produce a system which the players cannot play. If he can come up with such a system, I will drop all efforts on behalf of my system, urge Cal White and others to adopt his, and give him a free 1 year sub to my Mine.

Incidentally, the BTRB will be significantly modified before presentation for next year's DIPCOM. However, it will still reflect the philosophy stated above. It will provide better spacing between the larger draws, and between the win and draws. And those who are in the draw will not all share equally.

I did appreciate Ron's recounting of the TDA/NA meeting: I've not seen that elsewhere.

Moving on, if you are going to have a prize game, the prize ought to be larger than \$1,000. Reasonably, I think both F and FBF belonged in the Leader "Top 10". By that logic, I suppose I should indicate 2 that should not have made it, they're both also Canadian.

Now then, Randolph, the median does not throw out the freak votes "anomaly". It just balances them. I do not agree that the average is more understandable than the median. I think it's the other way around. The median is the "middle vote". Can you give me as easily understood a definition of "average" as that? No more than 2 words, please.

No, having some standards does not mean that when you publish it, you are saying "I believe this tirade," and I don't think people will view it that way either. I just don't think a publisher should publish a tirade that he knows to be inaccurate unless he includes some disclaimer.

Eccentric? I thought everyone understood. Eccentric means that you are

odder than I am. If you are less odd, then you are dull. If you are a better player than I am, then you are too dangerous to be allowed on the map and must be wiped out. If you are not as good as me then you are fit only to be my puppet. You want more? Good Press is the press that I write. Sensible letters are the ones that agree with me. Silly letters are, well, if you can't figure that one out, then start the paragraph over again... (Mark L. Berch.)

HIGH COMMAND: Geez, everything was so beautiful until that last paragraph the hurricane was raging over my head, and I couldn't care less, protected by my umbrella. Obviously, all the letter is mainly thrust at Ron Killam and I'll let him reply. The median/tirade matters concern Randolph Smyth. But these last lines...tsk, tsk, ya bum. Always so sarcastic? Well, you trip me again. Yes, that discussion was rather fruitless, right? And, come to think of it, it all started back in good ole P#10, in a very tiny paragraph. Believe me, till you start pubbing, you never really know what "The pen is mightier than any sharp knife" means, eh?

I'll try not to blush too much as I come back with a couple of CMES:
 1977AB Spring 1907 errors.

The Turkish move A Smy-Con should be underlined. The Russian orders A Bud S TURKISH A Bud-Tri and A Vie S TURKISH A Bud-Tri should be underlined and followed by the mentions: "Impossible (A Bud is Russian) and no such unit (there is no Turkish A Bud) and no such order." (The Turkish order was A Ser-Tri.) Of course, then, both Turkish orders: A Ser-Tri and A Bul-Ser should also be underlined. As for the Italians, A Tri is NOT, repeat, NOT dislodged. Since this was a "cloaked error", and that all of Italy, Russia, and Turkey didn't notice it, there will have to be a one-month delay... (sob) The deadline for Fall 1907 is October 19, 1979. Thanks go to Barry C. Hickey for pointing out the errors. Trevor, I know that you probably meant to support A Ser-Tri, but I can't be sure, and am not allowed to interpret your moves...in any case, a xerox of your 307 moves will be included, if I don't forget...

To sum up:

France (Barry C. Hickey): Has F Wes, A Pie, F Lyo, A Bur, A Bel, A Pic.

Germany (Jan Jensen): Has A Mun, F Den, A Ruh, A Hol, A Kie.

Italy (Bob Acheson): Has A Tri, A Tus, F Tyn, F Adr, A Ven.

Russia (Trevor Baillie): Has F Lpi, F Lon, A Swe, F Hel, A Ber, A Sil, F Sev, A Bud, A Vie, A Gal, A Ukr.

Turkey (Dan MacLellan): Has A Ser, A Smy, F Ion, F Aeg, F Con, F Rom, A Bul. I have orders on file from everyone, 306 as I said above already.

Trevor, Dan, and Bob better review their orders if they know what's best for them, if you know what I mean...Please note Jan Jensen's COA, page 3.

1977AB Fall 1906. Lastish, another error, but mild; this one (one per game, right?): the Russian A Swe-Den should be underlined, and this 1906, not 1907. Russia got: A Bul-Rom.

France (Steve Colombo): F Mid-Spa(sc); A Mar S F Mid-Spa(sc); F Eng-Mid; F Nrg S GERMAN F Yor-Ed (no such order); F Ska S GERMAN F DEN-Swe (no such order); A Hol S A Ruh; A Ruh H; A Eur S A Mar.

Germany (Chris George): A Tri-Ven; A Tyo S A Tri-Ven; A Boh S A Mun; A Mun S A Tyo; A Kie-Dan; F Den-Hel; F Yor-Nth.

Italy (Jan Jensen): F Wes-Spa(sc); F Lyo S F Wes-Spa(sc); A Pie-Mar; A Ven H (retreat-Apu, Rom, Tus, OTB)

Russia (David Steele): F Est S GERMAN F Yor-Nth; F Lon S GERMAN F Yor-Nth; F Nwy S A Swe; F Bla-Con; F Con-Smy; A Swe S F Nwy; A Sil-Ber; A War-Sil; A Bud-Ser; A Rum-Bul; A Gre S A Rum-Bul; A Ark S F Con-Smy.

Turkey (Philip Jurgens): A Bur-Con; A Smy S A Bul-Con; F Aeg S A Smy.

TURKISH A BUL IS ANNHILATED.

The deadline for Winter 1906/Spring 1907 is October 13, 1979. Please note Jan Jensen's COA, page 3.

1905 SC Chart:

- France: Home, Spa, Por, ~~Lon~~, Lpl, Bel. (6) Remove 2.
- Germany: Rio, Mun, ~~Bay~~, Hol, Den, Vie, Tri, ~~Van~~. (7) Even.
- Italy: ~~Yah~~, Rom, Nap, Tun, Spalsci. (4) Even, or build 2 depending on the retreat.
- Russia: Home, Sve, Nwy, Edl, Lon, ~~Bar~~, Bud, Ser, ~~Gre~~, Bul, Rum, ~~Con~~. (15) Build 4.
- Turkey: ~~Gr~~, ~~Yah~~, Smy. (1) 1 annihilation, Remove 1.

1977AT Press.

- St. Petersburg-Paris: Even more daring than announcing my intention of attacking Germany in 1907, is attacking it in 1906. So there!
- Paris-Moscow: Geez, some guys get a few armies and it goes right to their vocal chords.
- Sagras: From the trenches the Turkish troops can see the Russian horde. Outnumbered 2 to 1, they continue to hark it out. For what? So that France, Germany, and Italy can fight their mindless wars. Go ahead. After Turkey is defeated the Bear needs one or two centers to win. Wake-up now, or you're all finished!
- Sagras-Naples: Take a look around to discover who your real enemies are.

This place is as good as any to include the lines of interest of the month!

DIPLOMACY WORLD#22 (Rec'd at the end of August) (articles): Jerry Jones 1354 Wagner St., Pasadena, CA91107.

VOLKERWANDERUNG#1 (Specimen, Convention report): K. Arnett, 1500 Waterway Circle, Chesapeake, VA23320.

FOE SE FAE#116?? (Letters and discussion on hobby aspects): Randolph Smith, #314, 275 3rd St. SE, Medicine Hat, Alta. T1A 6L4.

As explained earlier (in #102, yessirrah!), these are the zines containing reading material of "special" interest this month. The editors of the brackets explain what is so "special", and then the same are done by the editor follows. One more thing. If the "plug" contains a "1", then it means that this particular zine, according to my tastes (we operate solely on this around here!) have it head and shoulders above the others, whereas that if it is followed by an "r", then it means I had to do a lot of re-reading and re-reading before including it. Comprehend!

Oh yeah while I'm at it, I might as well tell you that the following zines have passed or (I) are just about to:

SAINTE-GEORGE AND THE DRAGON (see "La Jette, my dear friends, is what Bob Sergeant just told me."

LIFE, DECEIT, AND WEPAROUS SCHEMES
NON SEQUITUR

BROUHABA. Humma... with the disappearing of these zines (plus BRUTUS BULLETIN folded some time ago, although it'll continue to operate this year) and the em... makes it such that PASSCHENDAELE now is the 12th most "exciting" most popular zine of North America. OK, now, Mark Bach and Randolph Smith, I take that back before ya all jump at my throat - I'm 17th, and remain 17th (even if the 16 first zines folded) no matter what for the rest of the year, right?

It appears that Bob Francis, 11 Forest Dr., Danvers, MASS 01923 will start pubbing VERRATSPIEL shortly. Of course, I can't recommend it before I've seen a copy, but the game-free are \$1.00 only, and sub is \$3/issue.

And now, Tethysaurus Fraissen (aka. owners of PASSCHENDAELE) have the honour of presenting: (tatat)

THE PERVERSION OF CORN FLAKES KELLOGG

Humm...write now I can tell something is wrong. On yeah? That's my topic for an essay, not for PASSCHENDAELE! Well, give it another try.

The Misrating of Diplomacy
by Tom Klisner

This article is being written in response to the growing acceptance of ratings systems in Diplomacy. With the growing stress on ratings systems in the hobby, much of the fun is being taken out of the game. One might even go so far as to say that the purpose behind Diplomacy is being lost because of the increased stress on what are usually grossly inaccurate ratings systems. Indeed, I have yet to see a system that does not have more holes in it than Swiss cheese. Nonetheless, the vast majority of people are probably guided in their choice of countries, playing styles, etc. by the general standing of the countries in the ratings systems. In other words, people are more likely to choose England or France than Italy or Austria. But what is the purpose of Diplomacy--is it solely to try your damnest to win or is it rather to see how well you can play each individual country? (And what ever happened to the old saying "It's not whether you win or lose but how you play the game"? It's probably true that someone who constantly plays England and France is going to place a lot higher in the standings than someone who constantly chooses to play the Central Powers. This hardly proves that one player is better than another--all it does is prove that some countries are better than others.

Quite often analogies are drawn between chess ratings systems and those in Diplomacy. These simply do not hold water. In chess the difference between the black and white positions is, at most, negligible. Indeed, aside from the grandmaster class, the difference is probably non-existent. Thus the players start on an equal basis. The same cannot be said of Diplomacy. Besides the inherently diverse strategic position between the seven major powers, as soon as seven personalities are introduced into one game no one can say that the seven players start on an equal footing.

There is also the question of the resources available to each player. Take, for instance, the use of the telephone. Obviously, the availability of a telephone facilitates negotiating immensely (and proportionately adds to your phone bill, may I say!). Equally obvious is the fact that not everyone has the same opportunities. A good example of this is the job that I'm working at right now. While I'm at work I can phone anywhere in the province of Quebec at no cost to myself (the unfortunate part is that there is no one here in Quebec I'd like to phone but that's another matter!). Undoubtedly, there are other players who can phone much further at no cost to themselves or to whom money is no object. These people are thus able to engage in lengthy, blow-by-blow discussions of their games with no great difficulty. Not everyone is so fortunate. The facility of communication thus can upset any equality which might have otherwise existed among the players.

But even aside from the use of the phone, there's the question of geographical location. The first game that I ever played in was in a zine in southern California. I was living in Ottawa at the time, another player lived in Hawai, and the five others were all from southern California. Regardless of the country assignments, the players from California had an obvious advantage over us other two.

And then there's the eternal question of replacement player actions. This is probably the biggest stumbling block in any ratings system: the classic case of a player taking over a 16 or 17 unit position for a guaranteed but totally undeserved win. Or the case of a player who operates under various aliases, resigning in favor of himself when the game is going well, and leaving the position under the alias if the game is going poorly. The number of totally unmerited wins must surely be large enough to render meaningless most ratings systems.

While personality conflicts are what make Diplomacy interesting for me, they also make it impossible to effectively measure the ability of a player. For example, if I enter a game as England and happen to have the French player "from away back", he's going to be shafted right from the start. The ratings systems mean nothing to me and thus I attack him regardless of what he says or does and burn all of my centers over to Russia and Germany. No matter how good the French player may be or how bad the German and Russian players may be, France is most likely going to be eliminated while Germany and Russia clean up.

There are some people who will probably say that since such "senseless" attacks occur so rarely they won't drastically affect anyone's rating. Such, however, is not the case. In many ratings systems one need only have played in two (that's right, "2") games to be rated. Obviously, an attack of the nature mentioned above is going to have a tremendous bearing on a player's standing. Before any ratings system can even be considered for accuracy everyone rated should have played, not just the game twice, but every country twice! Given the time constraints involved, however, this situation is not likely to arise for most players. Indeed, one could probably count on one hand the number of players who have played (start to finish) each country twice. Any semblance of credibility is thus lacking from every ratings system that I've ever seen.

In any case, we now come to the crux of the whole matter: what exactly is the purpose or goal of Diplomacy? This is the sort of question which, if you asked five different players, you would get a dozen different answers. I'm sure, though, that most players will agree with me that the point is to do as well as one can win to certain limits, i.e. it's not too wise to establish a game-long ally at 17/17 if one ever again plans to play Diplomacy in that "back of the woods". In my humble opinion the whole purpose of Diplomacy is to see how you might have handled things in 1914 had you been one of the Big Power leaders. Obviously anyone who does his damnest to avoid playing a certain country which he doesn't like for the reason or another can never consider his Diplomatic experience to be complete. It would be interesting to see exactly which countries the so-called poor players play most general cover-I dare say that, for the most part, they play the more powerful cover-powers than those states in the middle of the board. It could well be true that the highly-rated players are simply those who have been the most fortunate in the country assignment at the start of the game. For all of those laid out there who like stats this could well be worth looking into.

Anyway, it's time to break off this article before its length gets too out of hand. Thus will I end on a dramatic, emotional note: cease on players, screw the ratings systems! Insist on playing every country equally often. Insist on attacking those players who have the misguided notion that ratings systems are really useful and accurate (this brand of senseless, unmovable attack really can be fun-behavioral). Ratings systems should be eliminated if only because they are totally (if useless and meaningless) not to mention that they take much of the fun out of the game. Nor would we be willing to let Diplomacy World away with inflicting a grossly incomplete ratings system on us every second issue (are they that desperate for material?). The thing that makes Diplomacy such a good

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game is the element of the unexpected and the fact that, no matter how good or bad one may be, fate can always intervene to turn things around.

HIGH COMMAND: Your point of view may, of course, be defensible, but if we're going to have a complete discussion of rating systems, I must present at least one of the opposite views, mine.

Your first statement concerns the pleasure taken away from games by rating systems. From my experience (and I certainly don't claim to represent the majority, or even a significant portion of the Diplomacy players) rating systems have never stopped me from picking any country. Indeed, of the last 3 games I've started over the summer, I picked Italy twice and Austria once as my first choices. I tend to believe that players who stay for any long length of time in the hobby, will pick Austria and Italy a few times as well. (The perfect example may be Bob Acheson--he doesn't have any preference, and therefore doesn't care if he gets "stuck" with Austria or Italy!) I'll grant you that most players try as much as they can to stay away from Italy and Austria--but it's rather because of their prejudice, and not because of a systematic study of rating systems. Should they take a look at ratings that Austria would suddenly become fairly popular...

Actually, FTF players do exactly the same thing, and yet, there is NO rating system! Who, among FTF players you know, would relish playing either Italy or Austria? According to my experience, noone--actually, I'm too dumb to detect these countries.

Of course, no rating system is PERFECT. Nothing is. Look, the baseball players' rating system is not perfect, yet noone has asked for its demise! In baseball, the opportunities vary too: a batter will see his rating rise and rise if he's lucky enough to be pit against a lower than average pitcher. The stadium (equivalent to the country in Diplomacy) in which he plays will often affect his standing in a particular game, thus affecting his overall rating. Finally, a guy having connections may obtain that he not be used when his team is facing a clearly superior team, and that he be allowed to play as much as possible when his team is sure to smother 30-0 the opposite team! This, of course, will favourably alter his standing...but yet, ratings in baseball are considered to be vital.

Of course, some players may be able to communicate more easily or effectively than others. But Diplomacy is somewhat based on communication--a player can "design" a superior communications system, good for him! Yes, there is the element of luck here, sometimes, (e.g. the telephone is available at no costs), but yet the player should get a certain, however small, amount of credit for having the basic logic and intelligence to channel that to his profit! The players, if they get wind of it, must adapt to the situation--that is the founding rule of Diplomacy: them who adapt best to a given situation, wins.

I agree that replacement players and CHEATERS are a BIG problem--but you should keep in mind that they aren't the RULE, only the EXCEPTION. One must try to solve the problem, and that is quite a challenge, true, but eradicating the rating systems just won't eliminate such guys! (And, therefore, the problem remains, as we're dealing with cheaters and replacement players here, not about rating systems, which only duplicate the GM's error, who let such people slip into his game...)(that last sentence was concerned with cheaters, of course!) A good analogy could be the French-Canadians' problem in Canada--what, the federal system has not been capable of forestalling such a problem, so your solution would be to simply eliminate federalism?

Now, to discuss the cross-game feud you described. In all due respect,

you might have your simplified here. (It creates a theoretical effect perhaps?) The English player's policy can be fairly simple. It is not because he attacks France that Germany will necessarily be his ally - quite to the opposite! And giving away his center so Germany may not work as well as you put it, either. France will likely get at LEAST Liverpool before Germany, if all other factors are equal, whereas Russia will probably jump in in time to snatch Norway before Germany...so Germany can leave with a 2 center lead only if he has Belgium, and a 1-center lead if he doesn't...[oops! Actually no lead at all...] But you're probably correct as far as the main idea is concerned. But this is strictly unavoidable. Even in the absence of rating systems, this will still happen. Besides, if the French player is not able to convince you not to attack, or to convince Germany to be his ally, then, I'm sorry to say, he may have been defeated diplomatically. Remember, the founding rule of Diplomacy is to adapt the best you can to each and every situation - and this is the case right here. This, of course, doesn't mean I condone cross-gene feuding - much on the contrary, and there's not much anybody can do about it, except to be leaders of a revolt! And the one, this is not the case at all.

Moving on, yes, some can have a timely complete diplomatic baggage before playing every country at least once. But, that's their pretext. Yes, it could be a good idea to check and see what countries are played the most frequently by the good players. However, would you believe it if I told you that, out of 545 historical

England won 121 games, Germany won 83, Austria won 76, France won 71, England won 73, Turkey won 73, and Italy won 54?? (DIPLOMACY WORLD #17, "Nobligous Rating List". I preferred this one to the one printed in D&D, as the sample is larger. I'm sure that these statistics, even if fairly old, would shed some new light on the issue - Austria was much more often than one can imagine! The prejudice with Austria also probably explains its spectacular eliminations when it doesn't win - not because it doesn't win often.

And, finally, as you put it so well, to the best of my ability, I like to think that the rating system performs much more than that of rating players and providing... I'm in both contact and... help make the game fairer, and more ethical.

- Just take the D&D which uses widespread criteria:
1. A game will not be rated if it uses a variant of the Diplomacy board has less than 7 players; or has a gross variation of the rulebook;
 2. A game will not be rated if one or more full game years are played F&F.
 3. A game will not be rated if the game is played in a way that is not in line with the game itself.
 4. A game will not be rated if the GM is also a player in that game.
 5. A game will not be rated if one player has played 2 or more countries in that game and he played more than one game year at each position.
 6. A game will not be rated if it is concluded because of a time limit.
 7. A game will not be rated if there's a voted draw before 1911.
 8. A game will not be rated if there is a voted win at a player with less than 11 centers.
 9. A game will not be rated if the GM enacts substitutes for countries with 1 or less centers but lets another country with 1 or more centers go into it without calling for standby.
 10. A game will not be rated if a player wins gives a win to a player with fewer centers than any survivor. (DIPLOMACY WORLD #22, "Strongest Rating System".)

All these rules ensure that a GM WHO OPENS HIS GAMES FAIRLY will run his game better - for instance, it'll prevent the GM from winning through a GM player at the expense of others. Just look at rule 9 - it's crazy.

a GM from favouring player A playing Russia by having 3-center France, England's enemy, which in turn is Russia's enemy, from going into ed so that England will not expand as fast, while letting Austria (6 centers) go into ed so that Russia can pick quickly easy centers...my personal suggestion is that anyone considering playing under a given GM's rulings should enquire first to see whether his games are ratable. It is a good safety against GM abuses. That advantage, I think, outweighs many of the disadvantages.

FLASH FLASH FALSH FSAIH FHSAL HSAIF SALFH ALFSH LFSHA FLASH FLAHH FLASH

OK. You're a novice, you haven't seen many games yet, you haven't seen many strategy articles in your short career. You'd like to know more. Then, this concerns you.

OK. You're a veteran, you have played every country, you know most of the ins and outs of the game, and you've read many articles. However you're still interested in reading articles, and would like to read some you have never read. Or, you'd like to build-up archives. Well, this concerns you too.

You see, I'll be forced to rent a second apartment if I don't get rid of a lot of zines I'm no longer interested in. Actually, I plan to just throw them out, unless someone else wants them. That's all. Of course, economics get into the question--I will prefer to throw them away rather than go in the hole with the postage. Therefore, to reach the indifference level, one who wants the zines must offer to pay at least the postage costs. And, while I'm at it, I'll take a shot at making money--anyone with the highest bid for the collection (plus postage) will get them. Fair enough?

Of course, it is only fair to let you "take a look" at the "merchandise". Here's what I have.

- ORF DORFAL #43/44, 41, 42.; VORTIRGERN#53-58; TORONTO TELEGRAM#3-5;
- FILIBUSTER#28-31; SAINT GEORGE AND THE DRAGON (defunct)#IV8-V3;
- CHANTECLER#2-5; THE BEHOLDER#2; UTOPIA LTD#1,2; CAMELEON A BINOCULAIRES (defunct) #1-5; THE WARMONGER#36-37; ZEPPELIN (defunct?) #64;
- NUTS#1-6; DIPPY#IV6-IX27; CW/PD#5-9; BRUTUS BULLETION (defunct) #26-28;
- RUNESTONE#115-215 (with a few exceptions!); BATOCHÉ#15-40 (with one or two exceptions!); AGAINST THE ODDS#16-20; RURITANIA#50-54;
- LIES, DECEIT, AND NEPARIOSUS SCHEMES#27-32;(defunct) BROUHARA#28-35 (defunct); CUM CRANO SALIS#7 (defunct); NON SEQUITUR (defunct) 5-9;
- SONYOG#14-31, ARRAKIS (defunct) #84-94.

This is a rather small amount, I'll admit, but it's a beginning, especially for a novice. You will notice that ELECTRA GLIDE BLUE, DIPLOMACY DIGEST, DIPLOMACY WORLD, and FOLSIFIE are retained--POL SI VIE for lining my bird cage, DD and DV for their articles, and EGB for a sentimental value--it was the first gameszine I subbed to, and I played postally there for the first time. There, that covers it! (whoops, forgotta mention that I'm retaining EVERYTHING as well, for statistical reasons...)

This looks like it is another "contributions" issue...
THE ITALIAN SITUATION, by Ron Killeen.

With few exceptions, Italy is the least welcome country to receive on the Diplomacy board. The reasons for this are not hard to find; Italy is a difficult position from the start and it is a rare occasion when the Italian player wins the game. Many Dippy players will agree that the only safe bet in this unpredictable game is that Italy will gain four supply centers after the first year (Actually, I think he

means that Italy will have 4 centers. In Winter 1941... will never rise to greater than six supply centres and will be one of the first countries to go down the tubes.

Italy is in a tougher position than the other countries but its position is not as bad as its track record would tend to suggest. Italy's poor record is not so much her difficult position but rather the attitude which that player takes. Some players do not want to take the extra effort required to win as Italy. Also, you have heard the moans and groans when somebody draws Italy. It seems as if the player has resigned to losing even before the game has started. How do you expect to win with that attitude? Thus, I shall attempt to bring new hope to the Italian player, the key to Italian victory.

This key to Italian success concerns dealing with a country that some players do not even consider talking to. That country is Germany. Most importantly, Italy must convince Germany not to ally with France, therefore talking her into an Italian-German alliance or more realistically, an Anglo-German alliance with Italy helping. A Franco-German alliance spells death for Italy because France will always attack Italy in such a situation. This will put Italy in the difficult position where she must defend against France yet has nowhere to expand unless she chooses a two front war and attacks Austria, which is simply suicide.

One must prevent this Franco-German alliance at all costs. In such an alliance, France has no choice but to hit Italy because she has nowhere else to go. Often, such an alliance becomes a three way Anglo-Franco-German alliance simply because England would require a lot of effort to attack with little gain and that these three powers can find separate ways to go anyway. Eventually, such an alliance would collapse; it always has in past games, but not until Italy has suffered much and indeed, may be already destroyed. Even if Germany and France decide to attack England, France has five or six units after 1901 and some of those units will be used to harass Italy. Thus, Italy must convince Germany to attack and eliminate France so that Italy has the best chance of survival. To do this, Italy must show Germany that France will be difficult to take with Italian and/or English assistance and that the rewards will be great. The Italian player then, should not get too greedy in this bargaining--don't be afraid to offer Germany a larger portion of France, Italy's chance for supply centres will come later.

I have not mentioned about communications with France yet. It does not seem to attempt to ally with France but it seems to me that the French moves are predetermined by its relations with Germany. In talking with France, the only acceptable program that France could do would be to attack Germany with assistance from England (France would not likely engage in war with Italy at the same time because of Germany's stronger position); however, this has many disadvantages over Germany attacking France with English assistance or at least neutrality. First, Italy can only deal with one course of action with France while she can offer Germany many; secondly, France would have little or no use for Italy when attacking Germany, and last, but most important, consider that France would not attack Germany unless England allied with him. Hence, the arrangement would be that England gets the northern parts of Germany, France, the south. Thus, the next logical move for France would be to attack the next most convenient country, Italy. Therefore, Italy would not be terminating an enemy but rather delaying the attack of a new powerful France. I recognize that Germany or England may attempt to attack Italy once they have subdued France but that is not as probable as France attacking Italy and neither power is in as dangerous a position as France is in respect to Italy. I am not saying that Italy should not talk to France, I am suggesting that Italy try to strike its best bargain with Germany and if that fails, then bargain with France. France provides a less attractive alliance but then you never know what may happen in this game.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you beg Germany and France will still form an alliance.

do not give up all hope yet for you can always use your diplomatic skills to end the alliance. One good trick is to convince Germany that he deserves full share in 1901 (after all, why should France get three builds and Germany only 2 in 1901?)--this could cause a lot of friction between the two powers if Germany agrees with Italy. After 1901, England has taken Norway and has a decision of where to go next. It does not hurt to show England the advantages of attacking France instead of Russia. With England on your side it may be easier to change Germany's mind. If these and any other tricks you may think of fail, then the best you can do is weather the attacks and hope for a quick backstab. In this situation, as well as any other, never let back and just hope for the backstab to happen, you can try to make it happen yourself with a little thinking and foresight. Consider the unpleasant situation where the Franco-German alliance was formed and you could not break it. The French attack is inevitable; so it can only be to the Italian benefit to take the initiative. One example is to move Army Venice to Piedmont on the first turn; then, in the Fall, support the French Army Spain to Marseilles. The probable French move to prevent Italy from gaining Marseille, yet keeping Spain, is A Spa-Mar, and hope that Italy does A Pic-Mar. This prevents France from gaining Spain in 1901 as well as preventing him from building in Marseilles. France is in a weaker position, thus this will put Italy in a better position as England and Germany may take Italy more seriously as an ally.

So far, I have ignored Austria-Hungary because usually it is too busy in the initial years fooling around with Russia and Turkey to be any threat to Italy. However, if Italy prevents the Franco-German alliance, then Austria may be considered as an ally or enemy. With Germany allied with England and/or Italy, the Italian player has many choices. He can aid Germany in attacking France or he can attack Austria, or he can pull the old Lepanto in which Italy and Austria ally to attack Turkey. Italy, in that situation, would build fleets but that's what it should do anyway. The choices are numerous and depend on your preferences as well as the situation on the board.

What I have presented to you is what I consider a useful strategy for the most difficult country on the board. Most likely the Diplomacy veterans have a strategy similar to mine or one that is equally effective (if not more so), but I hope that this article has provided some insight towards playing Italy for the bippy rookie.

HIGH COMMAND: My first comment is that it is very difficult to write such specific strategy articles, as one has to make initial assumptions that do not always hold true, as no game, and hence, no diplomatic situation, are identical. Here, for instance, one such assumption is that Austria will leave Italy alone. Not always true. In 1977AE, Austria attacked Italy in 1902. Italy was warring against France, and at the same time, Austria occupied the Ionian, Turkey the Aegean. In the Fall of 1902, Austria was taking Venice, while Turkey landed an army in Apulia via convoy from F Ion (Aus.) and F Aeg., while Italy was desperately sending its units back east, having accomplished nothing in the west.

The main idea in this article is that Germany and France must not be allowed to form an alliance, and that the ideal situation is to have EG attack F. I disagree. An EG alliance will all too often destroy F, and then attack I, one by land, one by sea. As a matter of fact, EF tends to be the best split --once G is eliminated, EF can hardly go separate ways, whereas EG and FG can. E can be expected to stab F once G is no longer a problem. E really has nowhere else to go! But, again, it all depends on the diplomatic situation.

Also, it'll be very hard for Italy to get ANYTHING from France, when allied with EG, without automatically creating enemies and welding the EG alliance together. Mar. will usually be desired by G (which wants Bel/Mar/Par) while Spa and Per will go to England (Bre/Spa/Per), no? As I said often above, it all depends on the diplomatic situation...

Also, depending on the diplomatic situation, IG could well be an ideal situation (for Italy) as a PRIMARY alliance. GF attack E and destroy it fairly quickly (it is a fact that GF can destroy E in a quicker fashion (while probably gaining 2 centers each) than EG vs. F, or EF vs. G, all other factors being equal--but they never are!), only for F to find out that the PRIMARY alliance is GI, and that she has been stabbed on two fronts at once! But IG must be a primary alliance, and F only G's initial ally. A great advantage for Italy is that this type of alliance allows her to mess into the eastern situation till 1903/4, which usually gives her enough time to seize one or two additional centers...till it's time to stab F in the West.

One last, rather minor, disagreement with Ron--FG doesn't always mean that F will attack I soon; in fact, FG usually means that I will be left alone in 1902. If F would attack I in such a situation, I'm tempted to ask: "Will what?" France will presumably get 2/3 builds in 1901, and she can only build 2 fleets. Now, we know that she's allied with G--surely, this means that F Bre and F Por/Sps will be used against England, as one fleet cannot really be expected to do wonders and then retreat so quickly, soon, and with nothing in 1902 before England can do anything to defend her western coast (and Liverpool, plus sometimes London, but that's usually in 1903.) All France has left with is F Mar, and her armies. (One of which can be expected to guard the FG border, and the other to be convoyed into England--if F got 2 builds, she has only 1 fleet to attack I with, if she got 3, then, big deal, and her 1 army too.) No, I tend to believe that, in such a case, a F attack is likely to occur in 1903 at the earliest...unless she has an eastern ally, which is RARE so early in the game...no, France will usually prefer to either send F Mar west, to be eventually used against England, or to temporize. Usually, F will usually attack I in 1902 only when it is strongly allied with Berlin (such a case, F doesn't want to aggravate E with her fleet, and then has to send it south-bound. In such a case, F usually builds F Mar, and sends her 2 fleets plus one army against Italy. But, even then, the EF alliance must be really strong.

But, I certainly don't claim to obtain the monopoly of Truth and Right. Ron's strategy will work in a given diplomatic situation. Also, Ron's main point, that Italy must keep a close watch on the western situation and try to use it to its advantage, so as to delay as long as possible an invasion of the Mediterranean, is also very valid. Other points that I'd like to stress are:

1. an attack on Austria doesn't always pay--in fact, an attack on Austria may prove to be suicide, if RT have a strong alliance. Once A is gone, I will be left alone to face the RT alliance, while potential western trouble is growing. That is the main situation to avoid for Italy: how to keep a dual eastern alliance as well as a dual western alliance?
2. Italy needs more fleets than armies. Actually, to face F, I needs only one army, but needs 2 fleets if it wants to have a full-proof defence. (Preferably, A Pie, Pa Iyo, Wad, NAD, or, alternatively, A Pie, F Tus, F Iyo, F Tus.)

I'll cut it short here. The above was meant as comments, and not as an article in itself.

Thanks go to Ron Killeen and Tom Klesner for their contributions--they provoked quite a bit of discussion, which is good. "More!" More! roars among the crowds. And all of a sudden, a rush to the hot dog and moonshine stands. In case you don't know what moonshine is, don't worry--that's the problem with

me--you never know whether one of my words is "real" until you look into a dictionary...)

A lot of stuff to include in a little bit of space...geez. Well, first of all, the results for the chess/variant games will not be printed in this issue--not enough space. Rather, I'll send the results (handwritten) to Curt, and continue as though nothing happened. Then, nextish, everything will be printed along with next month's results.

It looks like the Russian Campaign games with Robert Paquin are dying... some months ago (one or two), I returned his orders as they had errors. No answer...ah, I'll give him till Christmas (along with writing him a reminder) before declaring them stale. But I'm sure he's dropped out of the hobby. We'll see...I can wait as long as Randolph Smyth can wait. (Randolph has been waiting since March 79 for my own Russian Campaign orders....)

Moving on, here's Andy Lischett's questions on the fake PASSCHENDAELE#8 under a more complete and detailed form. (Yes, I forgot some of them last issue...geez...and I'm still asking myself why you said I'm disorganized, Andy... (innocent look on my face...))

1. Does anyone remember receiving the fake before or after the genuine #8, and how long before or after?
2. What kind of stamp was on the fake's envelope and how much did it cost?
3. Does anybody's copy have a postmark, with city or date?
4. Did anyone besides Mark Berch who should have received the fake, not receive it?
5. Can anyone remember having seen Jan Jensen's name spelt Jenssen in correspondence or another zine?
6. nothing, forg-y-et it, OK?

Any help, however small it may seem, will really be appreciated. Please write direct to me at: Andy Lischett, 3025 N Davlin Ct., Chicago, IL60618. Add.: please, answer these questions, will ya? I'm expecting at least 5 or 6 persons to write back to Andy with their answers...

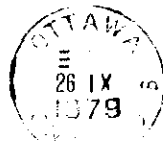
OK, there's just a wee little bit of space, so I might as well put it to use, right? Ah, yes, a filler: PASSCHENDAELE#14 will contain the usual ramblings and news, letters (if there are some!), the games, results of BATTLESHIP and SINK THE BISMARCK, a game that Hugh Polley and Trevor Baillie have been playing for quite a bit of time now, the rules for SINK THE BISMARCK, (a variant of BATTLESHIP, that Hugh Polley designed and seems to be pretty good...) the Chess results (and I hope to hear from Randolph Smyth and Oded Klinger on how their game is going at present), the WWI Foreknowledge Variants results, and, finally, an article I had originally scheduled for PASSCHENDAELE#11, and more! (Even if it goes overweight, I'll cram all this stuff into PASSCHENDAELE#14, as there's even more stuff yet in my files from Cecil Nurse, to be printed in PASSCHENDAELE#15) There. That does it. I've filled the issue. Of course, page 15 is free, as usual. Well, until October...

FINE JIG-A-DOO!

(Well, that's an expression that some people dislike, that hasn't been used around here for some time, and that has been mimicked by R. Smyth...)

Francois.

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