

WELCOME BACK TO:



3.14159 ; # 7 : California
Primary Day--
and here was
a vote for
George McGovern

JUNE 6, 1972

Welcome back to PLATYPUS PT PIE, a Journal of Postal Diplomacy. It carries the games of 1971EH (The Winner's Game) & 1972AR (The New-comer's Game), together with assorted trivia and pornography. House Rules are available from the editor upon request (and postage rendered).

THE EDITOR: Brenton Ver Ploeg, 520 Parker Avenue, # 202; San Francisco, CA 94118. Phone: (415) 668-9218, but I'm sometimes hard to reach. The gamesmaster, however, obligates himself to be here to answer phone calls from 6 to 10 pm PDT on the Monday evening before the deadline. Other than that, Monday and Tuesday evenings are usually the best time to call.

REPLACEMENT POSITIONS: These are open in PP, and I would like to get up to five in each game. For advantages inherent in being a replacement player, see my rambling and unedited comment on pages four through seven of this issue. Positions are free, but you must subscribe to the magazine. EH replacement players must have won at least one game, or have been specifically invited by the GM. AR replacement players may not have entered a game prior to 1971A.

COSTS: Games are not open, it seems, in PP. I have six registered for a new game (Key, Lipson, Rocamora, Osmanon, Soong, & McCallum) but have promised to keep the last position open until at least the next issue for someone that feels they will take it. If its still open at that time, the fee is \$5.50. Subscriptions are presently eight for a dollar, but on 1 August, they will go up to six for a dollar, 13 for \$2.00. HOWEVER, all present subscribers may continue to receive the magazine at the present rates, unless they allow their sub to lapse. Back issues (#s 3 & 5) are 20c.

MANY THANKS: While I suffered through a very dismal set of law finals in my second year, John McCallum was good enough to run my two games on a prompt and efficient basis in Camelopard Cake #s 1, 2, & 3. It is much appreciated, and if John would ever get around to telling me how much I owe him. . . .

ABJECT APOLOGIES: This issue will probably be kept to eight pages, if possible, in order to include a flyer sent to me by Len Lakofka for the Summer Game Convention in Chicago. This will be the first Summer in several years that I haven't taught during the month of July at Northwestern. However, I'm taking Anti-Trust this year in Summer School, and have to be around during the first couple months to work with the incoming members of the Law Journal. The key "feature" of this issue is a comment on how to deal successfully with rating systems which I typed up last night while a little high. One of the negative features of this magazine is that none of the writing which I do is ever edited in any way, shape, or form. You are at the mercy of whatever comes off of the typewriter in a single draft, and thats probably unfortunate. None of the other work I do could be this shoddy, but, then again--its only a hobby. We'll just have to let it go at that, I guess.

DEDICATION

I do not mean to be disrespectful, but I would like to lament the death of William Prosser, scion of Torts, and author of the tat problems which adorned past issues of PP. He died of a liver ailment, and the law has lost one of its brightest lights and greatest intellects, regardless of the field of endeavor. R.I.P.

STILL ANOTHER MAILING LIST

1. John Beshara; 155 W. 68th St, #1021; NY, NY 10023 (C)
2. Doug Beyerlein; 3934 S.W. Southern; Seattle, WA 98116 (S-10)
3. Edi Birsan; 48-20 39th Street; Long Island City, NY 11104 (EH)(T)
4. John Boardman; 234 E. 19th St., Brooklyn, NY 11226 (T)
5. Paul Bond; PO Box 6477; College Station, TX 77840 (S-9)
6. Ken Borecki; PO Box 255; Rockville Centre, NY 11571 (T)
7. John Boyer; 117 Garland Dr., Carlisle, PA 17013 (T)
8. Walter Buchanan; RR #3, Lebanon, IN 46052 (EH)(T)
9. Randy Bytwerk; 717 Collindale, NW; Grand Rapids, MI 49504 [home](EH)
10. Allan Calhamer; 501 N. Stone; La Grange Pk, IL 60525 (C)
11. James C. Hall; 1300 30th St., #B2-32; Boulder, CO 80302 (AR)
13. Tom Eller; 29 Winthrop St.; Charleston, MA 02129 (S-16)
12. John Hendry; 17 Price Rd., Peabody, MA 01960 (AR)+ 4
14. David G. Johnson; 3603 Rainbow Pl.; Nashville, TN 37204 (S-13)
15. Jeff Key; 7918 Alpha Road, #1153; Dallas, TX 75240 (G)
16. Burt Labelle; 146 Elm St., Saco, ME 04072 (1972 Ratings Issues)
17. Elliot Lipson; Racky Mt. Arsenal; Denver, CO 80240 (G)
18. John McCallum; PO Box 52; Ralston, Alberta, CANADA T0J 2N0 (T)(G)
19. Don Miller; 12315 Judson Rd., Wheaton, MD 20906 (T)
20. Lt. W.L. Norris; 16 Sea Gull Rd., Groton, CT 06340 (C)
21. Bro. Hugh O'Regan; St. Leo Abbey; St Leo, FL 33574 (AR)
22. William H. Osmanson; 1015 Union St., Morris, IL 60450 (G)
23. Bill Parsons; 510 S. Park St.; Streator, IL 61364 (AR)
24. Andrew Phillips; 128 Oliver St.; Daly City, CA 94104 (T)
25. Mike Rocamora; 127 N. Hinchman Ave.; Haddonfield, NJ 08033 (AR)(G)
26. George Schelz, Jr.; 9 Buffington Pl., Bronxville, NY 10708 (S-10)
27. Steven Soong; % Det. 3, 6003rd Spt. Sqdn.; APO San Fran 96346 (G)
28. Buddy Tretick; 11710 Coldstream Drive; Potomac, MD 20854 (EH)
29. John R. Trtek; 222 S. El Molino, #13; Pasadena, CA 91106 (S-13)
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31. Bob Van Anandel; 749 Thomas St., SE; Grand Rapids, MI 49503 (T)
32. Conrad von Metzke; PO Box 8342; San Diego, CA 92102 (T)
33. Eric Verheiden, Jr.; 3245 S.W. 185th; Aloha, OR 97005 (S-13)
34. Rod Walker; 4719 Felton St.; San Diego, CA 92102 (T)
35. Bob Ward; 8665 Florin Rd., #176; Sacramento, CA 95828 (EH)
36. Greg Warden; % Scavi Americani; Vescovado di Murlo, (Siena) ITALY(EH)
37. Tom S. Williams; 1305 Smalley Ave.; Muscatine, IA 52761 (AR)
38. Fred Winter; 2625 El Rancho Dr.; Brookfield, WI 53005 (AR)
39. Peter Weber; 138 Greenland Ave., Oconomowoc, WI 53066 (T)

DROPS: Since last issue, the following have been dropped, as they no longer publish magazines: Just, Pandin, & Power. In addition, Moot & Strayer have been removed. Moot probably could care less, but Strayer has transferred his game fee to Lipson. The first three names will receive this issue, in case they desire to negotiate something else. In general, however, I am constantly trying to cut down on the size of my mailing list.

ADDRESS CODES: T=Trade; C=Complimentary; S=Subscription, followed by the number of the last issue on the sub; G=Registered in a game, and thus receiving the magazine free until the game starts. If the game is followed by a number, that's the overlap in subscription copies. EH=A player in 1971EH, the Winner's Game. AR=A player in 1972AR, a newcomer's game.

In addition to the above, sample copies this issue are being sent to:
 Michael Bartnikowski, 943 Stewart; Lincoln Park, MI 48146
 Tom Williams, 1 East Blvd, East Rockaway, NY 11518
 James Massar, 127 N. Emmons St., Dannemora, NY 12929

ADD: 24a. Lew Pulsipher; 423 N. Main St., Bellevue, MI 49684

RUNNING FOR THE RATINGS--ho-HUM

Its been said before, and quite correctly, that the game of Diplomacy holds all things for all people. The whole point of the game is to enjoy the play, and the method you use to fulfill yourself in this regard is pretty much immaterial. Whether you care only for the press releases, or never read them. Whether you want to win or lose, with nothing else important, or would try for 2d in an otherwise desperate game. The variations are probably too numerous to list, but the effect is the same: Calhamer's game can allow you to pursue whatever you desire.

All-pervading the hobby, however, are the rating lists, a brief summary of which was given in PP #6. They place certain value limitations on the play of the game, in that they de-emphasize the individual game which you may enjoy, and stress the overall results in many games, some of which you may hate with good reason. As mentioned last issue, however, this is probably their only common characteristic, because they reward and penalize different aspects of success. (Of course, they universally reward a single-person win). A lot has been said about how to succeed in the individual game, and, of course, that's by far the best way to do well overall.

For the moment, then, lets assume arguendo that X player is interested in appearing to do well in the total number of games for which he is rated. Naturally, he would try to understand the strategy and tactics of individual games, and to do well in them. However, single games aren't the whole angle if the new player wants to become "highly rated." (Please remember throughout that I urge no-one to pursue such a desire, nor do I consider it necessarily worthwhile. But lets be frank--many new players DO have desires to do well overall, as well as in the game they they like the most). The point of this "article," thus, is to examine the approaches that the newcomer can take to the ratings themselves in order to profit from their idiosyncracies, and those of Diplomacy players in general.

What, then, can we characterise as the goal? In non-specific terms, lets say that its to reach one of the top two "boards" in the various rating lists, or as many of them as possible. Granted (once again) that doing well in individual games is a prerequisite, how might this goal be accomplished? It seems to me that there are several approaches that the new player might utilize: (1) He might make use of the characteristics of rating systems, and play almost entirely as a replacement player. (2) As soon as he becomes slightly more experienced, and knows what countries and players he would like to avoid, he can readily guard himself against those that he considers likely to do him harm. (3) As a general principle, a player who sees that he is likely to do well will be well advised to enter a great number of games simultaneously, in order to avoid the pitfalls of the people in Diplomacy who see evil in success, and try to treat it as one would a leper. Lets discuss these in greater detail:

Replacement Positions

A sensible, not to mention cheap, method of doing well on rating lists is to play solely or primarily as a replacement player. Many GMs, myself among them, will let you play for free as a replacement player if you but pay for a subscription to the magazine. Given the fact that most games don't see the original seven players complete the game, the chances of actually getting into a game are excellent.

According to some criteria, this is about all you need to

do in order to guarantee that you will not suffer at the hands of an irascible rater. For, some rating systems count only the original player for a country. If a player is to be counted for a position under the ODD or BROODINGNAG systems, and he or she is a replacement player, only a win (in the former) or a positive score (in the latter) will be totalled. An adverse result under these systems, ~~even if~~ even if engendered entirely by a replacement player, will count against the original player for a position which the replacement player has helped, hurt, or left unchanged. In short, you can't lose, and you might come out ahead.

A small problem in this area arises in the rating lists which I called "arbitrary" in the last issue (recall, please, that the word as used here has no negative connotation). These lists often count a replacement player as a player of record if he or she has completed three game years. In short, these lists are not "zero-sum" lists, as are the BROB & O.D.D. systems, devised by John Mc Callum. Numerous players can theoretically receive "credit" for a single country's position in X game, though of course this doesn't happen with great frequency. I know of no keeper of this sort of list, however, who elects to sit as a moral arbiter. Thus, they will not "credit" you with credit for a game if you drop out after two game years because you're getting creamed and don't want anyone to remember that you played in that game, even as a replacement. Intent seems immaterial. Therefore, it's possible to look good even on these systems by simply dropping out of games where your replacement position is neither profitable nor pleasurable.

Of course, this is pretty shoddy. Nobody that I know of has done it, at least consistently, and that sort of reputation might spread so quickly that it would be hard to get onto a replacement roster. After all, the whole reason a gamesmaster wants a new player is to see that the position is played out to the end, and a new player who in turn cops out hardly does him any good. What seems to be required is some slightly more sophisticated theory which will allow the same benefits without catching a lot of flack.

Naturally, you could pop in and out of games in this way, looking for good positions, in such a way that it wouldn't offend anyone. Some resignations are 100% reasonable and required, after all. I, for one, would always give someone the benefit of the doubt, and with anything like a widespread feeling of this sort (and I suspect that there is) three or four dropped games a year wouldn't even cause a ripple. Nor should it. I'm in no position to preach morality in any field, and my principles, such as they are, would never allow it. A player who does this hurts no-one, and, as far as I can see, has committed no harm. Provided that he or she is subtle about it, and resigns the positions rather than abandons them, perhaps there is nothing wrong with not wanting to fight a worthless position through to the end.

Of course, you could also stick with the REALLY bad positions, because they would result in elimination in less than three years. In effect, you could keep the very bad positions, and the positions which looked good for a win or a high placing, and quietly resign from those perhaps rare positions in which you would stand to be eliminated in four or five years.

Perhaps some degree of refinement could be added to the process of selecting the games in which you would offer to be a replacement player. Clearly, this could mean that you would try to get in games where you thought you could beat the players, but that might be a little less than fair. Another possible approach, with which

its hard to quarrel, is to try to arrange the order in which you would enter the game. That is--whether you were first, or sixth, on the replacement list. Ideally, this should be contingent on the players in the game. How many players are in the game who have a reputation for dropping out of games? Are there any players in the game who you know to be poor losers? Since in most cases both of these classes drop out when they are doing badly, it would be ideal if one could get a position, say 3d, which would take over only AFTER these players had resigned their losing positions. The ideal situation for the replacement player, naturally, is to take over a country with 10 or so units, or any country who is in a position to try for the win. Of course, there is only so much that you could possibly do as far as guessing is concerned. It might be best to be either first or somewhere in the middle, but lets face it--getting a really good position is be definition pure luck! Who could predict that a player with a good position would drop out of the game? The best that you can do is to try to get into a position where the possibility at least presents itself.

In summary, one of the first steps that a new player might want to undertake would be to enter a couple of original games and then embark on a fairly large-scale attempt to get replacement positions. In addition to being sound in the rating-list sense, this has financial advantages which can vary from pleasant to quite substantial. Let me remind you that PP usually has replacement positions open, and does now, as a matter of fact.

Self-Protection Devices

Its likely that these methods are used somewhat less than the above might be. For one thing, there is some doubt about the sportsmanship involved in exclusions of players or countries from one's realm of experience. PLATYPUS PIE does not allow player's to stipulate, for instance, the desire to enter a game subject to withdrawl if X player later enters. Nor can I condone a player following another around with persecution on his mind. But you needn't be so obvious about it that anyone has to know. You can wait until a game has almost found a full board, and then send in your game fee. Where country preference lists are allowed or required, you can place your least favorite at the very bottom. This last device is particularly useful as you start play, I think, because we all need some degree of confidence at the start. Later, an attempt can be made to get every country at least once, and to keep the positions approximately equal as between countries. Or, you could be like Conrad von Metzke, who likes one of the most difficult countries around--nobody would give a damn in that case.

Both of these "guards"--countries and players--have a degree of limited usefulness. However, if you start to use them a great deal, it won't be long before people know. Moreover, a game is much more of a challenge, and hence more entertaining, if a known enemy is on the board. Most players, in fact, find this sort of a confrontation to be a good thing. Might I be so obstreperous as to suggest that if you try it, you'll like it?

Don't let them Catch You, or,
Please don't Say that I'm a
Paranoid Simply Because You're
Trying to Kill me These Days.

Charles Wells, I believe, won something like his first four games of postal Diplomacy. People playing the delightful game of'

International Intrigue took a couple of looks, and promptly started to screw him. This suggests to me that the commonest theory of good players who are just starting the game is in error. That belief might be characterized in the belief: "Playing more than three or four games is foolishness, because then you don't have time to devote to the individual game."

Perhaps there is some justification to this claim. Certainly, playing 10 or 15 games at a high level of proficiency is something which you cannot seriously attempt to do if you are busy, or have something else to do with your time than play Diplomacy. But if you are on vacation, you might start a few, because the real time consumption is of course the initial Diplomacy, leading to the formation of most of the game's alliances. (In some games where the fun seems to be in seeing how much blood can be gotten off the knife, this doesn't apply. Moreover, nobody's exempt. I sadly admit that I once, as Austria, stabbed Italy, Russia, Germany, and Turkey (Twice). Its clear that this sort of thing is needed from time to time to relieve sexual tensions).

If you can manage it, I suggest that its far better to handle a large number of games at once. By then, you will probably have burned out the desire to play any more. On the other hand, if you haven't, you'll be in fine shape to continue.

All in All

It doesn't make any difference, I think, what you do, just so long as you enjoy the game in specie. Thats the way I started this comment, and thats what I want to remind you of here at the end. More importantly than that, however, I want to emphasize that I am NOT suggesting or condoning various actions which might be taken that are herein described. Most of its just common sense [even tho I despise that term] anyway. Nevertheless, as long as the rating lists exist, it seems to me that we may as well address ourselves to their presence. The fact is that some players of the game consider the single game as part of a greater whole. This is not necessarily good, nor even slightly better, than any other viewpoint. But its to that viewpoint that I direct this little four-page missive.

A final little reminder--if you have the \$\$, try bribery as a last resort.

ENMITY & ALL THAT NONSENSE

Arguments over Diplomacy Organizations are heating up somewhat, and I think that its unfortunate. I've had my contact with this sort of thing, and once went so far as to overstate myself to an extreme ~~xxxx~~ extent--even engaging in personal insults. I now apologise for them, and regret ever having said anything of the sort. I further deplore continuing personalized attacks, to whatever extent either party engages in them. Naturally, to the extent that the discussion involves specific issues which call for discussion (hell, there must be some), this distate would not apply.

But as is customary in discussions of this sort, both sides doubtless have some points. I have, since making some previous statements, met Mr. Beshara, and find myself embarrassed to have taken such an extreme position. Diplomacy organizations leave me cold, and they always will. But I see no reason why one should exist to the exclusion of another, nor why mere favorable mention of one such organization, such as in the Parade article of a few weeks ago, should signal any reaction other than thankfulness that the hobby in general was being promoted. This, thank you, is my last word on the subject.

[I would like to announce that this is the l-a-s-t page of ditto master that I have in stock. It is pretty marked up on the back, so I imagine that it will have some interesting configurations when finally in print. Look upon it as modern creation, and part of your education].

1972AR (continued):

STAND-BY PLAYER: Paul Bond. Others needed.

DEADLINE FOR WINTER 1901 BUILDS IS NOON TUESDAY, JUNE 27th, 1972. Phone calls, however, are due no later than midnight of the previous evening. Please try to send in moves far in advance of the deadline, and then revise them if need be.

THE PLAYERS: Note Mike Rocamora's change of address on page three. I have received phone numbers for Rocamora & Hendry & Williams now, and I believe that I have all of them except for Jim Hall's.

PRESS:

Ankara (F Ankara-Black-Sea): The Turkish People are united behind their Sultan in crushing the aggression of that dictator that squats on the throne of Russia. "The only thing imperial about that country is it's margarine."

Finland, Sept 15: Sweden and Finland have been liberated and Norway will be next. "Long live the Tczar!"

Melk, 6 June 1901: The Emperor Frans Joseph calls upon the responsible nations of the world to condemn the actions of Victor Emmanuel III in invading the demilitarized zone of Tyrolia. Austrian and allied forces are hereby put on alert.

Turkey: Reporters in Constantinople were told that the Great Sultan would be unavaliabile for comment until the Spring of 1902. The reason given for the great Sultan's absence was that he was off somewhere with a wandering band of Gypsies learning all there is to know about daggers and their use. GREAT PILES OF BEAR DUNG!!! What more earth-shaking news could one ask for? [How about news that one Archibald Finsenster of Podunk, Nebraska, has the gout?]

--A few players sent in conditional builds. These will stand unless corrected by the next deadline.

CONSPIRACY AND THE GOVERNMENT PROSECUTOR

A couple of days ago, Angela Davis was found not guilty of all three counts in a case which, according to the jury, wasn't even close. Not being privy to the trial's evidence, it is reasonable to believe that the jury was indeed correct in their finding that the Prosecution had not met its burden of proof.

One item that was highly predictable, however, was acquittal on the Conspiracy count. I don't have the figures on the number of indictments for conspiracy the government has managed to get against the "movement" people, but its probably somewhere between 20 & 50. There hasn't been ONE instance of conviction on this count, and you'd think we would hear no more of it.

While we are on the subject of contemporary events in the law, let me add a brief tidbit to my earlier comment on the Death Penalty in California. Bob Ward has suggested to me, and I have after a little research found, that the California Constitution DOES prohibit a "Cruel or unusual" punishment. The Federal Constitution, of course, says "and" instead. Thus, the US Supreme Court seems clearly within the scope of its rather conservative-trending power when it refuses to hear an appeal. (Regardless of whether the Cal SC would have ruled differently if the state Constitution DID say "and.").

-coitus interruptus-

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