

SPRING OFFENSIVE No. 35



A postal Diplomacy zine, available every five weeks or so from:
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SPRING OFFENSIVE



ISSUE 35 (July 1995)

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Editorial

I suppose some of you think this issue is late. Well, you're wrong. The deadline was early! Unfortunately, last issue had two deadlines on it - the one on the front cover said 24th June (which was the deadline I was aiming at), but when the zine got delayed I put it back to 1st July to preserve your diploming time, which was duly noted on the back page. Unfortunately I forgot to correct the cover (which was printed in advance) which meant that half of you submitted orders a week early. Well, at least that makes a change! With luck this issue should be back to normal turnaround of 5 days or so from deadline to post (not quite up to TIM or TCP standards, I know, but remember, I'm pushing middle age).

One clear indication of getting old is the fact that now that I am faced with three choices: (1) stay up for another hour and make do with 5 hours sleep; or (2) delay the zine by two days; or (3) leave the maps blank and get you lazy buggers to fill them in yourselves, I have decided to opt for No.3. When I was 19 I could cope with essay crises at college, now, at 34, I'm just too old for that sort of thing anymore...

John Miller has announced the results of the 1994 Gladys Awards and Spring Offensive has been duly honoured by being voted Best Zine, Best Zine for Diplomacy and Variants, Best Zine for Hobby News and Best Lettercolumn. WOW! I am of course thrilled - my only question is that now Spring Offensive has been voted Best Zine for three years in a row, do I get to keep it? Many thanks to all who voted and thanks to John for running it, despite having a host of other troubles to contend with.

Other winners were On The Game - Best Zine for Other Games, SNOT - Best new Zine; Cut & Thrust - Best looking Zine; Smodnoc - Most regretted Fold; Toby Harris - Best GM. Well done all.

I know this has nothing to do with postal games etc. but when I was driving to Swindon this morning I heard the news that this Government has released Lee Clegg. Am I the only person in the country who thinks this is an utter disgrace? What other convicted murderer is released after only 4 years? His supporters claim he is innocent - but so did the supporters of the Guildford Four or the Birmingham Six. There are many celebrated miscarriages of justice which have not been righted, and yet they release Clegg after a media campaign of a couple of months!

And what's all this about him being 100% innocent? The media has almost completely overlooked the fact that three of Clegg's comrades were found guilty of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice over the cover-up which was organised. For those of you who have forgot, as soon as the soldiers realised they'd gone over the top, they tried to concoct a defence of self-defence, even injuring one of their own number so they could allege the injury was caused by the joyriders. Unfortunately the members of the RUC who witnessed the event told the truth. Is this the action of innocents??

The final straw was the revelation from the Secretary of State for Defence that he may be allowed to go back to his old Regiment, as he wants. This on the same day as another of the news stories is the continuance of the ban on gays in the armed forces! That means that a closet gay can't serve in the army, but a convicted murderer can! This is a crazy society indeed.

I should be at ManorCon, though at the time of writing this I haven't booked! Can I make a late plea for players to make up a Spring Offensive team for the Diplomacy contest - at least 4 needed, so far there's just me, Stewart Cross and Steve Cox. Telephone me if you're going to be there and you're interested.

Chris Palm mentioned the idea of some zines getting together and agreeing to guarantee each others games - a kind of an ABTA Scheme for postal Diplomacy. I think there is much merit in the idea, as it would not only lead to more efficient ways of dealing with zines that go AWOL (anyone seen Nothing to Declare?), but it may also give us a handle to use in promoting the hobby. I really don't think that there is anything to lose by considering the idea seriously. Any comments?

Well, I'm just finishing off the zine now, filling in the odd space here and there, cutting out the odd letter or article to make the zine take up an exact even number of pages, and on the radio all there're talking about is John Major. You've got to admit that the Tory Party was in an impossible situation - John Major can probably hold the party together by being wimpish and conceding things

to the Right, but his government since the last election has been a complete disaster, especially given the bunch of incompetents in the cabinet. A charismatic leader such as Michael Heseltine would probably do better at the Polls, but would split the Party as the Portillo freaks would go bananas. the same in reverse also applies, save that I refuse to concede that Michael Portillo could ever be described as charismatic. In the end they've opted for the least worst choice, and Tony Blair will be laughing all the way to No.10 Downing Street.

Even as a Labour Party member of 18 years standing, I have to be a little alarmed by the rush of New Labour to embrace the values of "Middle England" (whatever that is). I feel torn. My head tells me that that is the right thing to do, that some Tory policies have worked after a fashion (e.g. privatising BT, TU ballots - though the later was actually stolen from In Place of Strife) and it is better for the country for Labour to come in and make a better job of running the country. However, my heart is still wedded to The Red Flag, Clause IV and the re-distribution of wealth. The problem is the Working Classes seem to prefer buying Council Houses and the smack of a handbag round their ears. No doubt Tony will only be too glad to oblige. Oh well, I do firmly believe he will make a better Social Democrat PM than any member of the Gang of Four (remember them?).

One advantage of a multi-media PC is that you can use the CD Rom drive to play CD's while you work. One disadvantage with having all the CD's downstairs is that you can never be bothered to change what you're listening to. I shudder to think how many times I've listened to Elvis Costello's Kojak Variety (which I don't rate that highly), Tom Robinson's Living in a Boom Time or (dare I admit it) Don McLean's American Pie. It must be 10 times each. Here it goes again... *A long, long time ago, I can still remember how that music used to make me smile. And I knew if I had my chance, that I could make those people dance, and maybe they'd be happy for a while...*

Forthcoming Cons

MANORCON XIII

21 - 24 July 1995 at Lake Hall, Birmingham University. £12 convention fee, £20 per single room per night, details from Peter Sullivan, 55 Brunton Street, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL1 4EN.

MidCon 95

10 - 12 November 1995 at the Royal Angus Thistle Hotel, Birmingham. Details to be announced. Contact Brian Williams, 30 Rydding Lane, Millfields Estate, West Bromwich, West Midlands, B71 2HA.

MASTERCON III

Shaun Derrick writes...

23-25 February 1996. MasterCon will return to the Kings Head in Cirencester for one more year. Rooms will be £26.00 per single and £23.80 per person in a shared room. This will include VAT & breakfast. Registration fee is only £8.00. More information will follow, but there will be a 3 round Diplomacy tournament, an Intimate Diplomacy tournament and Skittles tournament.

ZINES /// ZINES /// ZINES /// ZINES /// ZINES

One Man's Rubbish is a spanking brand new zine from Mark Stretch of 2 Over Mill Drive, Selly Park, Birmingham, B29 7JL. Issue 1 is free and future issues will be £1 per issue. A4 photocopied. With the recent appearance of **TIM** and now the emergence of **OMR** (both zines being produced by ex-**Springboarders**) things are indeed looking up on the Diplomacy scene. After a dearth of new zines for some considerable time, we now have two zines launched within 3 months of each other which have all the hallmarks of future success stamped upon them. Mark is not a newcomer to this hobby, he's been around for several years, playing games, attending cons, and notably running the Oxford University Diplomacy and Board Games Society. So he knows what he's letting himself in for. Issue 1 has many of the things you'd expect - House Rules etc., but points of note include a review of **Ausgebremst** (Formula One racing game), Railway rivals tactics article, some Diplomacy analysis, a reprint of a hobby scam and (would you believe) a history of Motorsport 1894-1906 (!). Still all good zines need one eccentricity or another. Mark has put together a Diplomacy gamestart for his first issue (always a good idea if you are starting a zine) and he has lists open for Diplomacy, United, Railway Rivals, Breaking Away and is open minded on the question of Dip variants. Get in at the beginning and ask Mark for a free copy of issue one today.

Well, **The Mag With No Name** isn't exactly new, given that the issue I have in front of me has "No.11" on it, but it's newish with regard to the mainstream Diplomacy hobby and as Ian Willey has been kind enough to send me a sample it deserves a mention. This issue is A5 booklet photocopy, cost 25p + postage (which is very cheap), frequency 6-weekly. The zine describes itself as "wargaming + role-playing + play by mail" so it may not be everyone's cup of tea, but it does at least provide a welcome alternative to the other zines around which carry Diplomacy games. That said, it does appear that Ian is being sucked into the Diplomacy scene as this issue has reviews of **TIM** and **Megalomania**, and even a mini-article on Diplomacy opening theory from Martin Burroughs (which appears to be in response to an article in the previous issue). Role-playing is represented by *How to win at Cthulhu*, some live role-playing rules and games such as *Day of the Triffids* and *RVDIS* (a gladiatorial combat game). Not much mention of wargaming this issue, but apparently issue 10 was mainly wargaming and no fantasy. The Diplomacy games were being GM'd by James Brown, but they've now been taken over by Ian - at present there is 1 regular games in progress and almost a list full for the second, together with a couple of minor map change variants. If you're interested in the mix of topics that Ian seeks to cover, write to him at 15 Metro Avenue, Newton, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE55 5UF and enclose two 25p stamps for a sample.

Although a little late and by Mick Haytack's own admission a little disjointed, there were a couple of entertaining pieces in **Bloodstock** No.87. I enjoyed Mick's profile of Maxwell Woosnam (Olympic Gold & Silver, Wimbledon

Champion, captain of the England football team, captain of the British Davis Cup team). If only his career had been in the 1980's instead of the early 1920's he would have been a very rich man indeed. The other piece to strike a chord was Mick's description of his recent gardening exploits which just made me break out in a cold sweat. I can imagine little worse than gardening (save perhaps for vigorous and prolonged physical exercise) but I can just about live with experiencing it vicariously. Mick Haytack, 43 Swanmore Road, Littleover, Derby, DE23 7SD

Issue IV of **The Ides of March** came out dead on time - how does Chris manage to get it copied and posted by the Monday after the deadline. I suspect it has to be a **Smodnoc** solution, i.e. photocopying at work at weekends, but maybe I'm wrong. Anyway, this issue is pretty much up to the standards of the last - lots of letters, a bit more from Richard Sharp's book, some history articles (Bannockburn, Roman Diplomacy) and a debate on smoking. The numbers of games are creeping up (9 already). Difficult to criticise this zine - it's very readable (especially if you like the history article and the Debating Club device) and deservedly popular. The hobby needs people like Chris, whatever Danny Collman may say. Chris Palm, 45 Cecil Avenue, Ardeleigh green, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2NA.

A Little Original Sin continues to impress, and issue 32 was no exception. Any zine which says that people who don't subscribe to **Spring Offensive** would be "missing out" has to be OK in my book. Like the last **Spring Offensive** this issue of **ALOS** was a little late (due to accountancy things called revenue reports, statutory accounts and nominal ledgers, not to mention wild partying), but what the hell, we all have to live a little. In the letter column the resident John Redwood clone in the **ALOS** subscriber list (a.k.a. Alan Frost) speaks his mind as usual ("*Intelligent women are now so busy with their careers that they are delaying their families or not even bothering. meanwhile, their less capable sisters are living at home with the unemployed thickos they marries (who've been put out of work by clever women) and breeding like rabbits. Result: the average intelligence of the population drops through the floor...*") and even Vick himself confesses to visiting a women's loo for a "small multicultural / sexual congregation of six in a cubicle for a speedy snogging session." Why do I never get invited to parties like that? Honourable mention must also be made of Peter Haslehurst's **The Dissecting Room** sub-zine which is already up to issue 16 and as yet there is no sign of it becoming a zine in its own right. Pity. Vick Hall, 115a Offord Road, Islington, London, N1 1PQ (and Vick hates it if you forget the postcode).

Realpolitik is not a zine which has been mentioned much in these pages, as Guy Thomas has been winding it down for some time. Indeed, with the recent arrival of issue 100 Guy has announced a fold. However, **Realpolitik** cannot be allowed to pass away without a mention for an excellent final issue, or without recording the thanks of the entire postal Di-

plomacy community for Guy's efforts and support over the past ten and a bit years. **Realpolitik** won the Zine Poll in 1988 (the first year it had achieved sufficient votes to qualify) and so is a member of a very small select club indeed. Issue 100 is some 50 pages long and mainly consists of photocopied extracts of Guy's editorials throughout the history of the zine - together they tell an absorbing story of the varied experiences of life, the highs and the lows. Congratulations Guy, may you enjoy your much-earned retirement. And come back soon.

Another hobby leading light who's retiring this month is Fred C Davis Jr., the renowned US variant designer and zine publisher. Fred joined the postal Diplomacy hobby back in 1968, starting publication of his variant-only zine **Bushwacker** in 1972 which continued regular production up to 1991 and issue 234. Fred founded **Diplomag** (the newsletter for the US Mensa Diplomacy SIG) in 1974, passing it on to others from 1981-85, and publishing it himself again for the past ten years. Issue 124 of **Diplomag** is Fred's last, and so ends 23 years of continuous Diplomacy zine production. Fred's contribution to postal Diplomacy on the variants side has been massive - far too much to detail here (maybe I could persuade Fred into writing an article on the variants scene over the years) - and we can't let this opportunity slip by without saying a big Thank You for all that Fred has achieved. Thanks, Fred.

The fact that Pete Birks includes a news clipping on the front of **Greatest Hits** No.193 on the subject of "road rage" brings to mind the TV programme on the same subject that I watched last night. Most of the film consisted of interviews with drivers who have been the "victims" of such incidents, but as the BBC cleverly conducted all the interviews while the interviewees were in the process of driving, we were able to see first hand how these people reacted to others on the road themselves. The protestations of some drivers about how badly they had been treated looked a little hollow when they were effing and Blinding at other road users themselves. It made you wonder if there wasn't two sides to some of the stories. That is not to say that some of the incidents weren't truly horrifying - indeed, in Portsmouth recently one driver was almost killed when another driver attacked him with an axe. What is it about driving which brings out mindless violence in some people, and why has it got worse recently? I bet it's all Margaret Thatcher's fault.

Anyway, back to **GH**. Lots of letters this issue, including interesting contributions from Neil Rowlands, Jonathan Palfrey and even Peter Northcott (editor of the long defunct **Last Stand**). The letter from Geoff Challenger was most revealing in that he confesses that he contemplated starting to run another Diplomacy zine. Go for it Geoff! Don't let the Diplomacy put you off - I can adjudicate 17 games in an evening thanks to Stewart Cross's program - and the new one which will be available at ManorCon (plug) is written for windows and automatically produces maps in BMP format.

ZINES /// ZINES /// ZINES /// ZINES /// ZINES

Stewart will only be taking a few copies, so ring him to reserve one (0171-359-0107). Don't know the price yet - probably £10-£15 to allow Stewart to recover his costs. The disc will also include the most up to date version for DOS as well. Pete Birks, 181 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London, SE22 0BD.

Per Wrestling sent me a copy of issue 36 of Lepanto 4-Ever, a Swedish zine written predominantly in English. A while ago L4E was the premier Swedish zine, with a strong international following, but standards have slipped of late, Per only managing 3 issue in the past year. However, in a spark of enthusiasm Per has decided to get out of the doldrums and put the zine back on its feet. I'm now trading with Per so I'll let you know how things develop. Per Wrestling, Ostanvagen 10, S-61135, Nykoping, Sweden. Email pow@lysator.liu.se.

As TCP No.30 only arrived this morning, it would be a shame not to mention it. Neil expresses amazement that Ian Harris can allow Borealis to take so long to turn around, saying that he'd go up the wall if TCP wasn't done by the Wednesday after the deadline. Well, I used to feel that way - guilt would drive me to keep typing away until 3.30am, despite having to get up and go to work, just to get the zine to the printers by Tuesday. But after 3 years of publishing and with a baby daughter who gets more and more fun to play with every day, well it just doesn't seem THAT urgent anymore and the guilt is all a little less. The 5 week deadlines for the moment are probably a good thing because it means if the zine takes a week to get out, then the games don't suffer. Chris Palm seems to be similarly affected to Neil - so far TIM has been in the post on the Monday following the deadline (though that doesn't beat Smodnoc's deadline Friday, in the post on Saturday). It's fine being a guilt-tripping speed freak, but I reckon that sooner or later you have to learn to pace yourself or you run out of puff. That said, if Spoff was ever 3 weeks late (as some zines seem to be practically every issue), then I think I'd consider it folded.

Mopsy No.111 was a little thin and I only mention it to say that Bryan needs a bit of cheering up on the zine front. Recent issues have been a bit empty of content and enthusiasm - so why not write to Bryan and ask for a sample and let's get Mopsy re-invigorated. I fear that unless Bryan gets some new blood and new energy then Mopsy may be in a terminal decline. Bryan Betts, 5 St. Francis Road, Denham Green, Middlesex, UB9 5JS.

I for one approve of the change in the format of U-Bend to A5. Haz's been using photo-reduction for 4 or 5 issues now and it manages to make his sense of layout look almost coherent. Certainly one of the more light-hearted and fun zines around, the absence of Joy Hibbert takes some of the over-seriousness and pretentiousness out of it. Haz spends less time posing and more time being himself, which is good. I particularly enjoyed Haz's review of the jackets he has in his wardrobe - the PVC jacket sounds particularly interesting... Haz Bond, Longfield, Watling Street, Gailey, Stafford, ST19 5PR.

For the record, Edoardo Mattei has sent me Turn Around No.2, which is the zine of the Italian Variants Bank, written in English. There are only 60 or so variants in the Italian Bank, but I may do some swapping with Eduardo to get the ones I don't recognise. Eddy also publishes Compendio Ars Diplomatica in both Italian and English. Edoardo Mattei, Viale Sartorio 95, I-00147, Roma, Italy.

Continuing this international theme, Making Love In A Canoe is the only zine I see from Canada. The density of the words on the pages with absolutely minimal margins would make Alan Parr proud. Brent McKee's article on terrorism in the USA in the wake of the Oklahoma bombing was thought provoking. I have never understood why the USA gets away so lightly when it comes to urban terrorism - that society seems to breed lone nutters who take their AK-47 to McDonalds, but not (until now) violent and organised political extremists. Maybe such atrocities will enable the US to better understand the attitude that the British Government has towards the IRA. There's always a lot to read in MALOC so if you want to see a Canadian perspective on life contact Brent McKee at 901 Avenue T North, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, S7L 3B9.

Some months it seems I see more foreign zines than UK ones. Perelandra is probably the most successful zine in the US hobby. Not for the first time, issue No.129 has one of those so ridiculously right-wing Letter column contributors that you would only get in the US. Christ, they can make Alan Frost look like a woolly liberal. Pete is far more even-tempered with these Newt Gringich clones than I would be. Pete Gaughan, 1236 Detroit Avenue #7, Concord, CA 94520-3651, USA.

Another substantial US zine is Doug Kent's Maniac's Paradise. Doug is a bit of a Superman, he does far too much for the US postal Diplomacy hobby for his own good, especially as he is now editor of Diplomacy World, but MP is as reliable as ever. I've lost track of all the subzines in MP so I won't try and list them all, but they are an eclectic bunch held together with Doug's wit and wisdom. Doug does a Zine Recap every issue which does at least give the reader a (very brief) oversight into the US hobby and that, coupled with the free comix with most issues, make MP a must have for international Diplomacy freaks. Doug Kent, 6151 Royatton Drive, Dallas, TX 75230, USA.

Another US zine is The Abyssinian Prince from Jim Burgess. In issue 160 Jim reviews Spring Offensive which is the first review of SpOff I think I've ever seen in a US zine. All in all a very favourable review - Jim is obviously a big Steve Cox fan - Steve take a bow! The only misunderstanding worth correcting is that Jim thinks I'm having a feud with Andy bate over the Walkerdine Zine Archive. That's not true. How is it possible to have a feud with someone who hasn't produced an issue of his zine for over two years and isn't really a member of the hobby anymore anyway. I just wish he'd passed the Zine Archive on to someone else before he went back into hibernation. Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02908-4327, USA.

Time for some UK zines for a change. Out-break of Heresy NO. 9 was entertaining and informative as usual. Nick's appreciation of Dinosaurs of the Lost World was certainly a labour of love. Steve Jones gets a letter printed in which he claims that Steve Thomas libelled him last issue. All good stuff. Nick Kinzett, 11 Daleway Road, Green Lane, Coventry, CV3 6JF.

Although it is not becoming a by-word for efficiency and fast-turnaround, Where Is My Mind? is certainly establishing a reputation for being a good all-round chattering classes loo read. And issue 6 is no exception. This is THE place in the Hobby to discuss Pulp Fiction (a brilliant film - Esme and I laughed a lot), Mini Coopers, the Bible, Lesbianism, Cannabis, World War II and fox hunting. Sounds a bit like the Grauniad doesn't it (apart from the Mini Coopers that is). An amusing zine which reads like Haz Bond on one of his mellow days. David Oya, 24 Kingsway, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 9NY.

Dave Tant sent me issue 27 of Sopwith Stats as he has kindly volunteered to take over the Sopwith games that Kris Morris was running. Players see the attached sheet for details. I've now sent all the orders I have on file to Dave and I will pass on the next adjudication direct to the players. As I have a copy of Sopwith I feel quite enthusiastic about running games in Spring Offensive - hence, I have reprinted the postal rules inside. Tom Tweedy has offered to GM games for us, and I certainly want to play. Let me know and I'll email Tom when we get six players. Dave Tant, 32 Nursery Avenue, bexleyheath, kent, DA7 4JZ.

Obsidian No.71 was a surprisingly chunky issue, after a spell of leanness. Flicking through my copy (avoiding the baby vomit on the cover) Alex's predict the Zine Poll results contest was won by Kim Head (which must bode well for Mission from God's future). Interestingly, two non-Spring Offensive subscribers predicted that Spring Offensive would win - thanks lads, if I knew where you lived I'd send you a sample. Obsidian came top among subscribers-only in the Zine Poll, write to Alex Richardson, 8 Kershaws Hill, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9AQ to see if you would agree.

Another chunky issue arrived in the shape of Borealis No.25. Another editor who attended the Alan Parr School of Layout, but I enjoy it despite the eyestrain. The game of postal Sorcerer's Cave is a hoot, and if I had more time I'd run a game here. If you want to play Jon Lovibond's 1000 AD at a relaxed pace then contact Ian Harris, 3 Abbotside Close, Urpeth Grange, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham, DH2 1TQ.

No space left. On The Game, Dipsomania, Back to the dark Ages, Megalomania, Springboard, Odarodte, LiES, Box frenzy and others will have to wait. Damn, not enough room left to mention Dolchstoß No.198. Life can be so unfair...

But February made me shiver, with every paper I'd deliver. Bad news on the doorstep, I couldn't take one more step...

THE UK ZINE POLL RESULTS (1973 - 1994)

Year	Pollster	Winner	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eight	Ninth	Tenth	Vote/s
1973 ¹	RJW	Ethil the Frog	Mad Policy	Dolchstoß	1901 a.a.i.	War Bulletin	Grafati	Frigate	Our Envy	Son of Bellicus	Hannibal	14
1974	RJW	Dolchstoß	Mad Policy	Orion	1901 a.a.i.	Frigate	Fifth Column	= Comet & Hannibal		War Bulletin	Court Circular	34
1975	RJW	Dolchstoß	Mad Policy	1901 a.a.i.	Fifth Column	Hyperion	=Greatest Hits & War Bulletin		Relief	Lemming Express	Frigate	54
1976	RJW	Chimaera	1901 a.a.i.	Jigsaw	jigsaw	Trojan Horse	Ad Nauseam	Bumm	He's Dead Jim	Rocinante	Dolchstoß	69
1977	RJW	Chimaera	1901 a.a.i.	Dolchstoß	Dolchstoß	Rats live on no evil star	Mad Policy	Greatest Hits	Ad Nauseam	Trojan Horse	Puppet Theatre News	111
1978 ²	MB	Dolchstoß	Ethil the Frog	Chimaera	Lemming Express	New Statsman	Tinamou	Jigsaw	1901 a.a.i.	Puppet Theatre News	Greatest Hits	151
1979 ³	MB	Greatest Hits	Puppet Theatre News	Chimaera	Mr Gladgrind	Pigmy	Fall of Eagles	Megalomania	Filibuster	Tinamou	Gallimaufry	133
1980	MB	Greatest Hits	Fall of Eagles	Puppet Theatre News	NMR!	Putty Riff	Chimaera	Pyrrhic Victory	Megalomania	Tinamou	Filibuster	69
1981	RJW	Greatest Hits	Puppet Theatre News	NMR!	= Chimaera & Fall of Eagles	Perspiring Dreams		Ripping Yarns	Putty Riff	Ode	Pyrrhic Victory	101
1982	RJW	Ode	Greatest Hits	Fall of Eagles	The Acolyte	NMR!	Watch Your Back	Dib Dib Dib	Home of the Brave	Chantecler	Chimaera	101
1983	RJW	Greatest Hits	Mad Policy	The Acolyte	NMR!	Denver Glont	Hopscotch	Ode	Home of the Brave	Lokasenna	20 Years On	224
1984	RJW	Hopscotch	NMR!	Mad Policy	Die Poppel-Revue	Dolchstoß	Cut & Thrust	The Acolyte	The Church Mouse	Mach Die Spuhl	Take That You Fiend	258
1985 ⁴	RJW	Mad Policy	Dolchstoß	Home of the Brave	Hopscotch	Zine to be Believed	Denver Glont	Greatest Hits	War & Peace	Ode	Cut & Thrust	248
1986	JP	Home of the Brave	Dolchstoß	The Thing on the Mat	Take That You Fiend	Denver Glont	Zine to be Believed	Mad Policy	Vienna	Prisoners of War	Dib Dib Dib	194
1987	JP	War and Peace	Zine to be Believed	Cut & Thrust	Denver Glont	Prisoners of War	Vienna	Scorpio	Take That You Fiend	NMR!	Dolchstoß	339
1988	JP	Realpolitik	Zine to be Believed	Vienna	Cut & Thrust	Take That You Fiend	NMR!	Prisoners of War	Denver Glont	Ode	Dolchstoß	235
1989	IDB	NERTZ	Electric Monk	Realpolitik	Home of the Brave	Zine to be Believed	C'est Magnifique	Y Ddraig Goch	Dolchstoß	A Step Further Out	Take That You Fiend	197
1990	IDB	Electric Monk	Y Ddraig Goch	A Step Further Out	Realpolitik	Home of the Brave	Cut & Thrust	Dolchstoß	C'est Magnifique	Take That You Fiend	Ode	145
1991	IDB	Dolchstoß	Electric Monk	Greatest Hits	Arle Barfle Gloop	Realpolitik	A Step Further Out	C'est Magnifique	S.F.C.P.	Cut & Thrust	Bloodstock	142
1992	IDB	Dolchstoß	Y Ddraig Goch	NERTZ	Spring Offensive	Take That You Fiend	C'est Magnifique	Age of Reason	Bloodstock	A Little Original Sin	Electric Monk	196
1993	IDB	Spring Offensive	Smodnoc	Cut & Thrust	Dolchstoß	A Little Original Sin	Y Ddraig Goch	The Cunning Plan	Up Around The Bend	Take That You Fiend	Age of Reason	136
1994	RD	Spring Offensive = Spring Offensive & Take That You Fiend		Dolchstoß	Greatest Hits	The Cunning Plan	Back to the Dark Ages	Smodnoc	Cut & Thrust	Hopscotch	LIES	132

Save where noted below, the Zine Poll was calculated on a straight average vote calculation from 1974-1977, on the basis of a Preference Matrix from 1980-1983 and on a 75% Preference Matrix, 25% average vote from 1985 onwards.

¹ This Poll was run on a Positional System with every voter having to vote for 5 zines (no more, no less).

² These results were Mick Bullock's Positional System, not the average votes previously used.

³ In 1979 Mick Bullock did not issue any definitive results - here the average votes have been used as this system had more support among the general hobby at the time.

⁴ This time a Positional System was used, 1st position = 10 points, 10th = 1 point. Highest total of points wins.

THE OGRE'S DILEMMA

or

HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND FOLD THE ZINE

by Geoff Challenger

The fold of Electric Monk has not been without its moments and misconceptions. But such is the way with folding a zine. No one sees it clearly or objectively at the time and that definitely includes the editor doing the folding.

As far as I'm concerned the deranged mental condition here is that of an editor going about his daily business of running a zine. The natural human behaviour pattern would be to avoid such an unnecessary and apparently masochistic business. The fact is, that for editors of games/Diplomacy magazines, the enjoyment that they obtain from running their zines exceeds the suffering which they have to undergo to get them into the public domain.

Let's face it the mere typing alone of a zine is a long task let alone the effort that has to be put in to come up with something remotely intelligible. GMing games and the effort of dealing with miscellaneous games and zine admin just add to the hassles. of course these days for most people the work pauses there whilst some kind person prints the zine for them. Work resumes on collation (sometimes), address labels and stamps and physically getting the zine out of the door.

The easing of the printing burden is one of the things which enables the zine to ever make it out of the door for a lot of editors and it's certainly one of the things which enable the large number of zines to reach issue 100 and beyond. Nothing is more soul-destroying and hence more fold-inducing than a mis-behaving duplicator. It just adds impotence to injury in that it buggers up your schedule and you are powerless to do anything about it.

So why do editors do it? For the same reason as train-spotters or aerobics-junkies or stamp-collectors do it. What keeps a person committed to a bizarre and pointless pursuit is that the pleasure they obtain, by, in the case of an editor, (a) being able to pontificate to others and/or (b) providing entertainment for others, outweighs the hassles which they have to go through and the time they have to put in.

A fold happens when that premise no longer holds, when an editor is simply not getting enough enjoyment out of running their magazine, or is getting enjoyment elsewhere or has an attack of modesty and no longer wishes to preach to the world (as if). Whatever the cause I have to see it as a return to sanity from a psychotic state rather than a going off the rails. Running a zine is just a phase you go through. The perfect solution for an editor on the way out is the controlled one, born of self-knowledge. Realising that it's never going to work for you again, you simply run off a copy of a recent address list and credit records and send it to the OGRE along with a cheque.

This flies in the face of human nature as far as I have ever experienced it -that's not to say there are not controlled folds but that they are not the norm. I guess we are all born feeling guilty. Can you imagine what it's like to be a Jewish/ Catholic working mother? Fortunately for the hobby, not many such are running zines, but we all have our share. For it's guilt which comes number 1 on the list of impediments to a decent fold. The outgoing editor wants to:

- get the credit list up to date because he's been neglecting the admin that has all gone pear-shaped in the last 6 months and no one else will understand it.
- get that Railway Rivals game sorted out because there was an error in turn 2 and it's now turn 6 and the racing will go wrong if it's not seen to.
- write notes for all the people who've supported him in the past
- ensure that the games go to good homes instead of being parcelled out in a way he would dislike.

Someone who feels guilty about their apparent inability to achieve these aims, will be finding it harder to achieve these ends because of that very guilt. The only way to purge this is to actually do it and the aim should be get the editor to do that of his own volition. Pressure to do the right thing increases guilt and reduces the chance that this will happen. Plus you have to recognise that editing a zine reinforces any element of cussedness in an editor. You spend your first 50 issues asserting your opinions through the pages of your magazine. When people start to voice criticism (however justified it might be) the knee-jerk reaction is "well, screw you".

Then there is the disturbing lack of self-knowledge which there is about. How deep is the malaise which one feels while grinding out a 'wall' issue? Is it temporary? If you are finding it hard to get around to sorting out that credit mess from 2 issues ago, is it because your heart is no longer in it? The only person who can know this is the editor himself and usually then only with hindsight.

What do the rest of us do about it? Well, what are the most important things to bear in mind in a fold?

- Keeping the games in motion with an enthusiastic and reliable GM.
- Keeping the interest of the ex-GM who may one day return to the hobby.
- Finding a compatible home for non-playing subscribers
- Getting credits returned to their rightful owners
- Blaming people.

I have folded more zines than most people have had vegetarian meals so can claim some expertise here. In most instances, the only one way that a zine can be rescued and at least the first 3 aims achieved is the help and on-hand assistance of a friend of the editor who is still within the hobby. When you're saddled with the guilt of being in the thick of a fold you don't want letters suggesting you sort things out. Phone calls are many times better, but you have to be wary of the personalities involved. Some people can cause mortal offence on the phone whilst ordering a Chinese, let alone put the case that the recalcitrant editor should stop being such a dick-head and hand over the reins now.

Some people can be teased out of their shell by post but your chances are much greater in person, or on the phone, where you can convince, cajole and above all, get the editor to accept self-imposed deadlines, along the lines of 'can I act unilaterally if the zine isn't out by the end of the month?' You can also re-assure the editors of the very important facts that the games are pre-eminent and sorting out money comes a long way down the list.

This might seem hard to accept, but even at the elevated prices which zines charge these days, any editor who gets into double figures has given good overall service, even if he then folds and nicks the subs. Editors do not make a profit and have to put their time and effort in for free. If at the end of their time as an editor they are unable to fully reimburse the credits, they will usually have given sufficiently of their time for this not to be a problem, overall. That's not to say they shouldn't be reimbursing people, but that problems of getting credits repaid should not stand in the way of a smooth hand-over. Of course this is only looking at the generality and some people will be shafted more than others and dearly, a fiver's credit can mean more to a struggling student than it does to some fat rich git of an accountant or solicitor.

In the case of 95% of all folds things work out in the end. A new home is found, the money is returned and life goes on. But the pursuit of folding editors, intended to ensure that things don't go disastrously wrong, ends up delaying things instead of solving problems.

ENDGAME REPORTS

TREBIA

Regular Diplomacy. Zine: **Spring Offensive**. GM: Stephen Agar. Started: July 1993. Finished: November 1994.

	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
AUSTRIA (Billy Stephen)	3	4	4	1	1	0			
ENGLAND (Richard Newby)	3	4	5	4	5	5	3	1	0
FRANCE Andrew Feather)	3	5	5	6	8	10	13	15	18
GERMANY (Dave Allen)	3	4	4	3	1	1	0		
ITALY (Jonathan Grose)	3	4	5	6	5	7	8	10	12
RUSSIA (Tony Hastings)	4	6	6	8	7	3	2	2	0
TURKEY (David Rowbotham) dropped out A07	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	6	4

Andrew Feather (France) - Winner

At the beginning of this game I was lucky in that both England and Italy both approached me with friendly guarantees of neutrality. From this I was able to suggest a 3-way pact which would sweep east, which was warmly welcomed by both England and Italy.

At first, I was very co-operative, putting the interests of my allies above my own, e.g. by supporting Italy into Mun and allowing England a temporary loan of Bre to give him an extra build (which he failed to order!). This was very risky but it allowed me to see the playing styles and personalities of my allies. While both England and Italy are both loyal players, England was weaker in that he failed to order crucial retreats and builds.

By 1904-5 the central powers of Germany and Austria were out, squeezed by the E/F/I alliance in the west and Russia and Turkey (who never co-operated together). At this stage Russia had over-expanded and was very thin in depth. I managed to woo Turkey into the E/F/I alliance and we all hit Russia for a build each.

By this time England was deeply committed against Russia in the north and I gambled that the last thing he'd expect would be a stab. As a very risky move I grabbed NTH in the spring which had the effect of isolating half his forces in Scandinavia. At this stage England and Russia should have negotiated a peace, but as happens quite often, England was tempted by the easy gains to be made from Russia and took Moscow, thus digging his hole deeper. By this stage I was vulnerable to an attack from Italy had he wanted to do it, but again luck stuck. Turkey went into anarchy, tempting Italy with easy gains in the east, rather than against me.

In summary, I won this game by knowing my opposition and assessing their styles. It helped that the eastern board was negligible in asserting its domination when it had it, which enabled it to become a "soft" target as the focus of all the attention.

Finally, I have to say this: both Tony and Richard gained a lot of my respect for the way they stayed with the game, sending orders in to the end. Not many would have done that. By doing so they probably delayed a French victory by a year or two - who knows?

GM (Stephen Agar):

Congratulations to Andrew on an impressive victory. I was slightly surprised that Richard didn't see the stab coming, but by the time it did there was very little he could do about it. I kept hoping that Italy would challenge France, but Jonathan left it too late. Turkey's disappearance did not so much as imbalance the game, as hasten a result which was looking increasingly inevitable. Getting to 18 centres in 16 moves is pretty impressive, given that Andrew didn't have a drop out to make things easy for him. Well done.

YARMUK

Regular Diplomacy. Zine: **Spring Offensive**. GM: Stephen Agar. Started: November 1993. Finished: April 1995.

	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07
AUSTRIA Allan Stagg	3	4	3	3	1	1	0	
ENGLAND Dave Horton	3	5	7	8	10	10	11	12
FRANCE Ian Rose	3	5	3	2	0			
GERMANY Nigel Quinn	3	5	6	6	7	6	4	4
ITALY Chris Brann	3	4	6	7	9	10	11	10
RUSSIA Tony Hyland	4	5	4	3	3	3	3	2
TURKEY Edward Board	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	6

Victory was conceded to England after Autumn 1907.

Dave Horton (England) - Winner

This was my first attempt at England and I very much enjoyed it. At first I decided I'd prefer if possible to ally with Germany than France, and Nigel seemed very amenable. 1901 went extremely well as after getting into ENG I managed to second-guess Ian and got into Brest, so France was already on the ropes. In fact Ian never wrote again after 1901, which was a shame.

Nigel had irritated Tony in Russia by denying him Sweden, and Tony moved an army to Sil. This really seemed to throw Nigel. Perhaps too he was concerned about my progress, but while I wanted an all-out swift destruction of France, he decided to backtrack. This isn't my style at all and it bugged me, along with his penchant for changing orders at the last minute. Mind, he later told me I do the same thing; it's funny how you notice others' faults! When in Autumn he made what I suspected to be a deliberate misorder (he later admitted it) it appeared the alliance wasn't worth continuing.

In the South Tony and Allan (Austria) had very close addresses, so most jumped to the conclusion that they would be allies (which they vehemently and ineffectually denied.) Therefore Nigel and I encouraged the alliance of Turkey and Italy, so that there would be an even balance there while we carved up France. Unfortunately even though Edward (Turkey) forgot to build in 1901, Italy (Chris) played masterfully and by skillful diplomacy tricked Russia into turning on Austria. Neither ever recovered, while Italy bloomed.

Therefore by 1903 I had decided to turn on Germany but a front-runner had also emerged in Italy. France was stubbornly defending while to my chagrin he allowed Chris to waltz into his centres unopposed. My stab on Germany wasn't great as he sussed me out and this was the low point of the game for England. When I decided Italy's growth had to be curbed whatever the cost and stole Spain, I was at war with every one of my neighbours. Yikes!

Fortunately it was possible to drive back Germany into Russia in 1904/1905 and finish off France, while in choosing to retake Spain Chris lost his opportunity to break through into MAO, which could have been devastating. Thus I managed to blockade the entrance to the Atlantic and persevered against Nigel. But the crux was Turkey. He was Italy's loyal ally, but while Chris had destroyed Austria and advanced West, by 1905 Edward still had only four centres to Chris' nine. This I think was Chris' fatal mistake; you can't be too greedy with an ally, can you? In order to have a chance I had to get Edward to change camps. This was done to my joy, but by extremely devious means, for which I apologise to Edward for misleading him and to Chris for slandering him. To set the matter straight, to my knowledge Italy did not really intend to attack you, Edward! He probably would have eventually, mind! Nor as far as I know did he think you were an imbecile...oo-er. Anyway, to my elation Turkey changed sides, and after quite a shock in Spring 1906 when he "appeared" to go haywire when he hadn't actually sent orders in, I persuaded him to re-

scind a long-standing agreement (he'd forgotten about) with Italy and proxy his units to me. Russia also gave control to me due to personal circumstances so I was able to mount effective resistance to Italy in the East while still expanding as England in the West. From there it was relatively plain sailing.

Thanks to all for the game. Allan and Nigel particularly were prolific writers and I always enjoyed their letters. Chris played a tremendous game, particularly early on. He will get revenge no doubt in future. Edward and Tony - I did my best with your units, thanks for the trust. Good luck to all and special thanks to the understanding GM, Steve. This was my first game outside Springboard and I have found Spring Offensive a brilliant magazine to play in. Long may it continue.

Nigel Quinn (Germany)

The game started well with plenty of correspondence and the initial diplomacy encouraged me to opt for an alliance with Dave (England) against Ian (France). Through incisive play and good guesswork Dave soon achieved the upper hand against France in an offensive in which Germany's role proved to be both limited and counterproductive.

This arose from the poor state of German/Russian relations which saw Tony (Russia) opening to Livonia (prompting a standoff in Swe) and then invading Germany in autumn 1901. The continued Russian threat to Ber/Mun prevented me from concentrating on France, to England's great benefit, until finally in frustration I switched my forces eastwards to drive Russia back. With hindsight this would have been better before France had been fatally weakened. (Russia's other neighbours were quick to take advantage of Tony's persistence with an attack that was too weak to do more than act as a major irritant).

I had mistakenly hoped that Dave would delay stabbing me to avoid an early German-Italian alliance before Germany was fully engaged in the east. Chris(Italy) had emerged dominant from the Balkan battles despite a determined defence by Allan (Austria) and looked to have the potential for a decisive breakthrough into the Atlantic. Italy's position was undermined however first by a failure to seize MAO and then by Dave's success in reactivating Edward's (Turkey) hostility to Italy helped by his apparent control of the remaining Russian units.

As the fall of Germany was inevitable I had maintained my units in existence by occupying northern Russia from where they could cooperate towards the achievement of the hoped for stalemate against England. When this proved a nonstarter my aim was reduced to survival hence my agreement to the endgame proposal.

This was my first game for some time and it proved enjoyable although the eventual lack of interest in stopping England made for a tame ending. Congratulations to Dave on a well deserved win which reflects his overall superiority in terms of both diplomacy and tactical play. Thanks to Chris for the support and encouragement, to Allan for being philosophical about nonexistent German help (!) and to all who corresponded and helped to make this a worthwhile game. Not forgetting our GM - thanks Stephen for the service.

Allan Stagg (Austria)

Given that Tony and I were near neighbours, there was always the likelihood that the other countries (especially Turkey and Italy) would assume that a close Austro-Russian alliance would develop. Turkey's declaration of hostilities made this assumption self-fulfilling. I must admit that I was totally outplayed by Chris in the early stages, and after Tony's ineffectual stab I was always doomed. It was just a question of how long I could hold on for; as it turned out it was longer than I expected, but not long enough to matter. Congratulations to Dave for his win, and my respects to Chris, who was a tricky opponent.

GM (Stephen Agar)

This game saw some brilliant play and some, ahem, er... how shall we say... less than inspiring play. Without doubt, Dave put the most effort into it, but Chris was a formidable opponent who impressed me greatly. Half the fun as the GM was waiting to see who was going to order the Turkish units next. The English stab on Germany, when it finally came, really decided the game, as Chris neighbours were putting up just a little too much resistance for him to make progress fast enough.

No dropouts in this game, a fact which is always rather pleasing.

Rebalancing Axis & Allies

by D. Albert Harrell

Is the game imbalanced?

Yes. The clear advantage is to the Allies. This was the first parameter of the environment which had to be adjusted in order to achieve equal starting polarity between the two sides. This is a complex issue because the Allies start with less material, but get one extra move per round.

This puts pressure on the Axis to win quickly. Unfortunately for the Axis, A&A is not a game in which either side can reliably force a quick win. My experience has been that the only way the Axis would win under the first rule version was when they got dice-lucky and/or met with a novice at the eastern front. The force of this perpetual additional move is very difficult to overcome. The second versions of the rules was indecisive, and offered inadequate compensation for the severe imbalance.

Indeed, the offer to suspend all factory installations is clearly of more benefit to the Allies; since the English can easily develop an effective alternative to an Asian/African presence; in contrast to slim Japanese opportunities; the Imperial forces are clearly crippled without the ability to crank out armour and/or personnel on the mainland.

To restore equality I eventually discovered a most elegant adjustment "valve". Indeed, these alterations would seem to more closely parallel the true picture of world forces in the spring of 1942.

The "Boats Valve Fix" (BVF)

To begin the contest with parity, make the following three permanent non-optional definite rule changes.

1. No attack by Russia on the first round. (This was the only bold, correct, and historically parallel change offered by the Rules version 2 Gamemaster) (Additionally you must "turn" the "boats valve")
2. Increase the number of German submarines in the Atlantic Ocean (Western Europe) from 1 to 4.
3. Increase the number of Japanese transports in the Philippines from 1 to 4.

Many persons will think this too severe. They are probably underestimating the value of an "extra move" per round. A good Allied commander need only hold out until this snowball is of sufficient mass to roll over the Germans from three directions during one round. The Japanese can only look on from a distance in horror, as the 3rd Reich is overwhelmed by the inevitable triple-national invasion of Europe. This reduces the gaming event from a contest of skill, to one of patience.

I would be pleased to hear from A&A players all over the board.

D. Albert Harrell (DAHarrell@aol.com)



The Spring Offensive Anagram Challenge - The Answers

Zines

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Arch giddy-go. | = Y Ddraig Goch |
| 2. Snobbish Yank battled rectum. | = Backstabbers United Monthly |
| 3. Message mega gems. | = Games Games Games |
| 4. Ammonia gale. | = Megalomania |
| 5. Okay, the daft unite. | = Take That You Fiend |
| 6. Girlie installation. | = A Little Original Sin |
| 7. Parallel bog offer. | = Arfle Barfle Gloop |
| 8. Oh! Redundant pube! | = Up Around The Bend |
| 9. God! Hadn't he huge urinal! | = The Laughing Roundhead |
| 10. Piss off! Even grin? | = Spring Offensive |
| 11. Christ! He foamed. | = The Ides of March |
| 12. Drab pong, sir! | = Springboard |
| 13. Killer patio. | = Realpolitik |
| 14. Ego anthem. | = On The Game |
| 15. Dopy claim. | = Mad Policy |
| 16. Lemon cricket. | = Electric Monk |
| 17. Hogs attacked baker. | = Back To The Dark Ages |
| 18. Tighter asset. | = Greatest Hits |
| 19. Channel punting. | = The Cunning Plan |
| 20. Scold hosts. | = Dolchstoss |

Editors

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 15. I wino bean. | = Iain Bowen |
| 10. Miracle on mollusc. | = Malcolm Cornelius |
| 17. Pulsated carnal heaven, OK? | = Paul Evans and Theo Clarke |
| 16. Charming shirt. | = Chris Tringham |
| 18. Ha! Now an invading northern jerk. | = Kavin Warne and John Harrington |
| 3. Torch villa. | = Vic Hall |
| 6. Mirror skis. | = Kris Morris |
| 2. Drab horny. | = Harry Bond |
| 5. Damn anus cad! | = Duncan Adams |
| 20. Negate Sharp! | = Stephen Agar |
| 14. March lips. | = Chris Palm |
| 11. Mad lynch talk and anon. | = Danny and Kath Collman |
| 8. Mushy toga. | = Guy Thomas |
| 7. Yuck! Opal acne! | = Paul Cockayne |
| 9. Lice drink hardware. | = Richard Walkerdine |
| 1. Any day damned kid! | = Andy and Maddi Key |
| 4. Sandwich order. | = Richard Downes |
| 13. Skip beret. | = Pete Birks |
| 12. I candle nun. | = Neil Duncan |
| 19. Harsh card rip. | = Richard Sharp |

Full marks go to: James Hardy, Keith Loveys, Haz Bond, Neil Duncan, and Patrick Finglass.

Tie-breaker

Please complete in less than 16 words and in the best possible taste...

"I think Andy Bate is wonderful because my Froggy sub is well in the red and I don't feel a bit guilty."

"I think Andy Bate is wonderful because he winds up that smug git Agar."

"I think Andy Bate is wonderful because he hops into and hops out of the hobby in such a very tasteful way."

but the winner is... "I think Andy Bate is wonderful because I have had my brains removed and don't know any better, what's your excuse."

First prize to Neil Duncan, with suitable runners-up prizes to all the others.

DIPLOMACY - THE WORST GAME EVER?

Chris Kessel

Well, this one is sure to stir debate, but Diplomacy gets my vote as one of the worst games. Talk about a game where your mental wits mean nothing at all. Everything is determined entirely by your ability to negotiate.

Yea, yea, I know, that's why it's called Diplomacy, but I always end up asking myself: Why not just pick a subject and argue? You'll get just as much interaction as Diplomacy, if not more, and it'll take just as much game playing skill (i.e. none). Just my opinion of course.

Alan Kwan

Seconded. I usually consider "mental wits" in a game as the (abstract) mathematical reasoning process through which a player derives an optimal strategy (or, more precisely, a tractable, heuristic strategy that approaches the optimal strategy). In Diplomacy, very little of this can be done. The game does next to nothing but creates a n-person, "zero-sum" conflict situation, in which there is no true "optimal strategy" or "equilibrium" in the strictest sense.

In my not so humble opinion, any game where a player (or a subset of players) can use a strategy that some players consider "unethical", yet can generate favourable payoff (as defined in the game) to the offending party, is a broken game design. Here, I'm referring to previous discussions concerning players who form "unbreakable alliances" in Diplomacy, and some players' view that such strategy is "unethical". Another situation is when players make offers which, explicitly or otherwise, involve future games other than the one being played.

A "good" game, would be difficult to design a closed-form algorithmic strategy for. Cases will come up when the player has to make analysis and decisions on the fly. There are general rules or strategies, but exceptions come up from time to time. The human player will be able to adapt,

because he knows why the general rules are useful, and hence will be able to spot it when it shouldn't apply. On the other hand, it would be difficult to program /all/ the exceptions into the computer using conditional statements and evaluation functions. The process of developing a heuristic strategy by a human should be an ongoing process, for a game to maintain the player's long-term interest. Most "good" computer games ("good" referring to the game design, not the AI) have got lousy AI with them, because the problem of writing a "good" AI for the game is near intractable.

Why I don't like Diplomacy? Well, "good" games have intractable strategies, as opposed to some games (either very simple ones, or games not designed for the sake of playability) which have not-to-complex near-perfect heuristics. In Diplomacy, the problem of deriving a "good" strategy is, in my opinion, not even well-defined (as opposed to being a well-defined but computationally complex problem), so the game is (flame-proof suit on) more or less a bunch of players just messing around with pointless arguments.

Andrew Thomas Krog

Hear! Hear! However, let's not pull punches. Everything is determined by your ability to LIE THROUGH YOUR TEETH! I have found negotiation and skilful crafting of treaties with convenient loopholes to have been largely disregarded in favour of the full-toothed-smile bald-faced lie. If you are good at lying to your friends (or perfect strangers), then you will more likely than not be successful at Diplomacy. If, however, you have a natural aversion to lying to your friends (or strangers) then you will either hate playing or not lie and get crushed by the liars.

Diplomacy, therefore, is only best played with enemies. The trick is getting all your enemies to sit down at a table with you for a few hours.

DIPLOMACY

THE MOST POPULAR OPENINGS

This has taken ages, so I hope you find it interesting. What follows is a summary from various issues of The Numbers Game published by Richard Sharp of Norton House, Whielden Street, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 0HU. The basic criteria is that I've included all openings with an overall frequency of $\geq 1\%$. The figures for the 70's, 80's and 90's are just the average for the percentages for the individual years. Note that these figures are not completely up to date, so the figures for the early 90's are based on small samples of data and that by the 1970's I really mean 1972-79 as the data samples for 1970-71 are too small to be useful. The overall figure includes the 11 games from 1969-71.

AUSTRIA

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Tri	29.61%	20.54%	24.16%	23.25%	Balkan Gambit, Trieste Variation
F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Gal	15.94%	18.52%	25.2%	17.67%	Balkan Gambit, Galicia Variation
F(Tri)-Ven, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Gal	5.81%	24.29%	20.17%	17.47%	Southern Hedgehog
F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Bud	14.23%	5.67%	10.40%	8.65%	Balkan Gambit, Budapest Variation
F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Tyr	4.72%	2.77%	1.10%	3.70%	Balkan Gambit, Tyrolian Variation
F(Tri)Std., A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Gal	1.71%	4.18%	2.37%	3.18%	Southern Hedgehog, Houseboat Variation
F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)Std.	3.66%	2.00%	0.00%	2.45%	Balkan Gambit, Vienna Variation
F(Tri)-Ven, A(Bud)-Rum, A(Vie)-Gal	1.68%	1.43%	0.53%	1.72%	Hedgehog
F(Tri)Std., A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Bud	1.13%	2.52%	0.00%	1.67%	Hungarian Roadhog
F(Tri)-Ven, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Bud	1.16%	1.69%	0.00%	1.51%	Hungarian Hedgehog
F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Gal, A(Vie)-Tri	0.77%	1.53%	4.00%	1.41%	Squashed Hedgehog
F(Tri)-Ven, A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Tyr	1.21%	1.08%	0.73%	1.25%	Italian Attack
Total %	81.63%	86.22%	88.66%	83.93%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,016	120	1918	

ENGLAND

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
F(Edi)-NWG, F(Lon)-NTH, A(Lpl)-Yor	35.62%	41.76%	52.6%	39.89%	Northern Opening, Yorkshire Variation
F(Edi)-NTH, F(Lon)-ENG, A(Lpl)-Yor	21.60%	27.04%	16.8%	24.27%	Southern Opening, Yorkshire Variation
F(Edi)-NWG, F(Lon)-NTH, A(Lpl)-Edi	30.51%	19.93%	17.05%	22.47%	Northern Opening, Edinburgh Variation
F(Edi)-NTH, F(Lon)-ENG, A(Lpl)-Wal	7.21%	6.34%	9.90%	7.02%	French Attack
F(Edi)-NTH, F(Lon)-ENG, A(Lpl)-Edi	1.07%	1.49%	0.00%	1.29%	Southern Opening, Edinburgh Variation
Total %	96.01%	96.56%	96.35%	95.03%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,008	65	1855	

FRANCE

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar) S A(Par)-Bur	21.94%	15.91%	20.65%	18.95%	Maginot Opening
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Bur	12.06%	17.56%	14.35%	15.34%	Burgundy Opening
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Pic	13.29%	10.24%	14.45%	11.48%	Picardy Opening
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Bur, A(Par)-Pic	5.40%	7.67%	10.45%	7.27%	Belgian Gambit
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Bur, A(Par)-Gas	2.04%	5.99%	5.18%	4.56%	Vineyard
F(Bre)-ENG, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Pic	5.94%	3.98%	2.85%	4.51%	English Attack
F(Bre)-ENG, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Gas	3.78%	3.50%	5.13%	3.91%	English Defence, Gascony variation
F(Bre)-ENG, A(Mar) S A(Par)-Bur	3.30%	3.97%	2.33%	3.91%	English Maginot
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Gas	3.13%	3.35%	5.85%	3.36%	Gascony Opening
F(Bre)-ENG, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Bur	2.43%	3.42%	1.93%	2.91%	English Defence, Burgundy variation
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)Std., A(Par)-Pic	2.97%	2.75%	1.05%	2.66%	Picardy Opening, Marseilles Variation
F(Bre)-Pic, A(Mar) S A(Par)-Bur	2.58%	2.42%	1.45%	2.51%	Maginot Opening, Picardy Variation
F(Bre)-ENG, A(Mar)-Bur, A(Par)-Pic	1.19%	2.82%	2.05%	2.26%	Northern Dash
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Pie., A(Par)-Bur	0.90%	1.99%	0.00%	1.50%	Burgundy Opening, Piedmont Variation
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)Std., A(Par)-Bur	0.97%	1.18%	2.53%	1.35%	Burgundy Opening, Marseilles Variation
F(Bre)-MAO, A(Mar)-Gas., A(Par)-Pic	1.31%	1.11%	0.85%	1.25%	Picardy Opening, Gascony Variation
F(Bre)-Pic, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Bur	1.20%	1.05%	0.85%	1.10%	Burgundy Opening, Picardy Variation
Total %	84.43%	88.91%	91.95%	88.83%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,021	192	1,995	

GERMANY

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Ruh	43.21%	31.67%	38.20%	34.85%	Blitzkrieg, Danish Variation
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Bur	10.11%	25.12%	19.70%	19.31%	Anschluß, Danish Variation
F(Kie)-Hol, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Ruh	18.44%	11.46%	15.40%	15.04%	Blitzkrieg, Holland Variation
F(Kie)-Hol, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Bur	11.36%	5.34%	3.90%	7.71%	Anschluß, Holland Variation
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Tyr	2.34%	6.04%	2.75%	4.77%	Anschluß, Tyrolian Variation
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Std.	2.26%	6.09%	5.55%	4.44%	Anschluß
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Mun, A(Mun)-Ruh	1.22%	4.30%	5.00%	3.11%	Anschluß, Ruhr Variation
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Sil, A(Mun)-Ruh	0.77%	1.70%	0.00%	1.33%	Polish Blitzkrieg*
F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Kie, A(Mun)-Sil	0.87%	1.06%	2.75%	1.11%	Anschluß, Silesian Variation
Total %	90.58%	92.78%	93.25%	91.67%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,010	75	1,867	

ITALY

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Tyr	23.08%	21.88%	21.03%	22.31%	Tyrolian Attack
A(Rom)-Apu, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Std.	15.34%	15.42%	16.40%	15.11%	Lepanto
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Pie	13.69%	11.30%	7.43%	11.64%	Alpine Chicken
A(Rom)-Apu, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Tri	6.33%	14.25%	15.07%	11.38%	Key Lepanto
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Tri	9.26%	4.26%	8.33%	6.69%	Stab Lepanto
A(Rom)-Apu, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Tyr	3.40%	2.72%	1.80%	3.06%	Lepanto System, Tyrolian Variation
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-TYS, A(Ven)-Pie	2.31%	3.13%	2.47%	2.86%	French Attack, Venice Variation
A(Rom)-Apu, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Pie	1.54%	3.22%	2.47%	2.65%	Lepanto System, Piedmont variation
A(Rom)-Nap, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Std.	3.89%	2.18%	2.10%	2.50%	Napolitan Lepanto*
A(Rom)-Tus, F(Nap)-TYS, A(Ven)-Pie	2.85%	2.39%	2.10%	2.45%	French Attack, Tuscany Variation
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Apu	0.93%	2.33%	2.47%	1.89%	Lepanto System, Venice Variation
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-TYS, A(Ven)-Tyr	2.29%	1.39%	1.90%	1.74%	Tyrolian Attack, Tyrrhenian Variation
A(Rom)-Tus, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Std.	0.99%	1.47%	1.90%	1.33%	Tuscan Folly*
A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-TYS, A(Ven)-Tri	0.65%	1.63%	0.07%	1.17%	Stab Lepanto, Tyrrhenian Variation
A(Rom)-Std., F(Nap)-TYS, A(Ven)-Pie	0.86%	0.87%	2.47%	1.02%	French Attack, Rome Variation
A(Rom)-Nap, F(Nap)-ION, A(Ven)-Tri	0.24%	1.45%	1.77%	1.02%	Stab Lepanto, Napolitan Variation
Total %	87.65%	89.89%	89.78%	88.82%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,020	157	1959	

RUSSIA

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
A(Mos)-Ukr, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-BLA	20.84%	36.42%	36.65%	30.10%	Southern Defence
A(Mos)-Ukr, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-Rum	13.47%	7.90%	4.2%	10.55%	Austrian Attack
A(Mos)-StP, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-BLA	6.31%	9.30%	6.45%	8.37%	Squid
A(Mos)-StP, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-BLA	2.13%	9.31%	1.00%	6.15%	Octopus
A(Mos)-Sev, A(War)-Ukr, F(Sev)-BLA	5.03%	4.63%	5.55%	5.14%	Turkish Attack
A(Mos)-Sev, A(War)-Ukr, F(Sev)-Rum	5.86%	3.90%	4.30%	4.88%	Rumanian Opening
A(Mos)-StP, A(War)-Ukr, F(Sev)-Rum	3.80%	3.46%	6.60%	4.35%	Northern System, Ukraine Variation
A(Mos)-StP, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-Rum	3.63%	1.58%	1.00%	2.44%	Northern System, Galician Variation
A(Mos)-Ukr, A(War)-Sil, F(Sev)-BLA	1.60%	2.16%	2.25%	2.12%	Ukraine System, Silesian Variation
A(Mos)-Sev, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-Rum	1.78%	1.20%	1.15%	1.43%	Rumanian Opening, Galician Variation
A(Mos)-Ukr, A(War)-Std., F(Sev)-BLA	1.03%	1.35%	3.25%	1.27%	Warsaw System, Ukraine Variation
A(Mos)-Ukr, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-Std.	1.22%	0.86%	1.15%	1.01%	Ukraine System, Southern Houseboat Variation
Total %	66.70%	82.07%	73.55%	77.81%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,056	93	1,887	

TURKEY

	70's	80's	Early 90's	Overall	
A(Con)-Bul, F(Ank)-BLA, A(Smy)-Con	31.64%	52.62%	61.83%	45.01%	Russian Defence
A(Con)-Bul, F(Ank)-BLA, A(Smy)-Arm	26.17%	22.02%	18.33%	24.73%	Russian Attack
A(Con)-Bul, F(Ank)-Con, A(Smy)-Ank	14.95%	9.96%	10%	11.24%	Bosphorous Opening, Ankara Variation
A(Con)-Bul, F(Ank)-Con, A(Smy)-Std.	10.18%	4.93%	6.10%	7.53%	Bosphorous Opening, Smyrna Variation
A(Con)-Bul, F(Ank)-Con, A(Smy)-Arm	0.54%	2.68%	2.97%	1.99%	Bosphorous Opening, Armenian Variation
A(Con)-Bul, F(Ank)-Std., A(Smy)-Con	3.37%	1.30%	0.73%	1.99%	Houseboat Opening, Constantinople Variation
Total %	86.85%	93.51%	99.96%	92.49%	
Total No. of Games	768	1,016	115	1,913	

Maybe some of you might be inspired by all this information to contribute a Diplomacy tactics article to **Spring Offensive**? Go on, stranger things have happened.

BALKAN WARS IV

A DIPLOMACY VARIANT by FRED C. DAVIS Jnr, 1987

BALKAN WARS I was designed by Charles N. Reinsel in 1974. BALKAN WARS II, a five-players game, has vanished without a trace. BALKAN WARS III was Fred Davis' first modification of Reinsel's game, to improve the map and rules, in 1986.

Introduction

BALKAN WARS is set in the period immediately prior to the outbreak of the Great War, when several local conflicts involved the newly-independent Balkan states and the waning Ottoman Turkish Empire (Turkey in both DIPLOMACY and this variant), as they fought over territories like Thrace and Macedonia (which is disputed by Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria and Macedonian nationalists - who want an independent Macedonia today). Italy became involved as a mediator, and picked up the Dodecanese Islands for themselves (presented here by the province of Rhodes).

For playability, certain liberties have been taken with the Balkan map (after all, Montenegro is missing on the standard mapboard). For example, Rumania owned Bessarabia between the two World Wars. In Reinsel's original version, there were just 21 land spaces - all home supply centres. This led to a hopelessly clogged board. In the third version of the variant, several ordinary provinces, such as Croatia, Macedonia and Transylvania were added, but there were still no neutral supply centres. In the fourth version, five such centres have been added: just enough to make things interesting without greatly increasing the size of the game. A lot of negotiation will be needed to settle the distribution of such centres.

All three Greek centres are now located on the mainland, which gives Greece a better chance of survival. In some cases, more modern names have been used for provinces in both the third and fourth versions - such as "Skopje" for Uskub - to make them easier to identify. A few names have even been invented. "Arda" is the name of a river near Adrianople, and an irresistible pun (the old NAVB publication was called ARDA). "Mt. Jara" is the abbreviated name of the tallest mountain on the Albanian-Serbian border.

Finally, note that Albania and Montenegro are played as a single power.

Rules

1. The standard rules of DIPLOMACY apply unless otherwise specified.

2. The seven powers and their starting units are as follows:

ALBANIA:	<u>F(Tirana)</u> ; A(Montenegro); A(Valona) <i>but see Rule 6</i>
BULGARIA:	<u>A(Sofia)</u> ; F(Varna); Choice of A(Plovdiv) or F(Plovdiv)
GREECE:	Choice of <u>A(Athens)</u> or <u>F(Athens)</u> *; A(Salonika); F(Patras)
ITALY:	<u>F(Rome)</u> ; F(Sicily); A(Trieste) or F(Trieste)
RUMANIA:	<u>A(Bucharest)</u> ; A(Galati); F(Constantsa)
SERBIA:	<u>A(Belgrade)</u> ; A.(Nish); A.(Skopje)
TURKEY:	<u>A(Constantinople)</u> ; F(Izmit); F(Smyrna)

* Athens has only one coast due to the Corinth Canal - as with Kiel.

3. There are 26 supply centres (21 home and 5 neutral). The victory conditions are EITHER ownership of 14 supply centres OR a majority of units on the board at any time (there are only six inland supply centres unreachable by fleets).

4. A power may build new units in any unoccupied supply centre s/he owns. Fleets must be built in coastal supply centres. In addition, SERBIA may build fleets in Croatia when s/he owns that space, as Serbia does not have a sea-coast.

5. The first turn is Spring 1911.

6. Optional Albanian starting places allow for Albania to start its initial fleet from ANY of its home supply centres, with armies in the other two.

7. Fleets in Bessarabia or Constantsa may move or support, via the Danube river, into Galati and vice versa. Fleets may be built in Galati. The Danube is not a space. Fleets remain in the regular provinces.

8. Winter builds are made secretly - neither the location nor type of unit(s) built are revealed. In postal play, the Winter and Spring seasons are played together. However, if a player NMRs on an Autumn turn, the GM may call for a separate Winter season while obtaining a standby player.

9. Unordered retreats after the Spring move will be handled by Just's Right-Hand Rule (the GM retreats the unit to the first vacant province, starting with the space immediately to the right of the province from which the attack came, then the first to the left, etc.). Retreats following Autumn moves will be handled with Winter orders. Retreats take precedence over builds. Players may write potential retreat orders with their orders to avoid the application of the Right-Hand Rule.

10. There are several Direct Passages across narrow bodies of water which may be used by both armies and fleets, without interfering with the passage of fleets between adjacent sea spaces. Fleets may also "jump" between the Ionian and South Adriatic Seas, and between the Central Mediterranean and Cyclades, but may not convoy armies directly between those two sea spaces.

Notes

There is a rule of thumb in the design of DIPLOMACY variants that not more than 50% of the spaces should be supply centres, and preferably less. In BALKAN WARS III there were 21 centres and 23 non-centre provinces. In BALKAN WARS IV I've added five new neutral centres, two new ordinary spaces, and two new sea spaces (Cyclades and the Eastern Med.), so there are now 26 centres and 26 non-centres. This was the best I could do in a very restricted area, which could not be expanded either without totally getting away from the concept that this is supposed to be a Balkan scenario.

It is hoped that the newly added spaces will provide enough manoeuvring room for a good game, while preserving a balance between the various powers. Note that Bessarabia now borders Cluj and Transylvania

It bothered me that Serbia is land-locked. Eventually, Serbia could build fleets in captured centres, but I wanted another option. By allowing the player to build fleets in Croatia (which is not a supply centre), I have allowed Serbia to build a fleet without first having to over-run Greece or Albania. This makes an alliance between them possible. The GM will have to keep a note about who owns Bosnia.

With Galati accessible to fleets via the Danube, fleets can now reach all but six of the centres (5 home and 1 neutral). Therefore, nearly every power will have a use for fleets.

With such a tight board, this is going to be a deadly game. One error or NMR could ruin a player, and much diplomacy will be needed to enable powers to work together for success - no one will get very far on his or her own. At least by raising the victory criteria from 11, the possibility of a sudden quick win is less likely, and most players will get to handle a few more units than was possible in BALKAN WARS III.

Incidentally, between 1919 and 1945 Italy owned the entire Istrian Peninsula, as shown here in the Trieste space, so Italy really was a Balkan power in those days.