

# SPOFF 57

Thursday 27 November, 1997

Brecon and Radnor Express

## College teacher with a passion for Diplomacy

By Suzanne Stevenson

A TEACHER from Christ College in Brecon with an unusual hobby has been chosen to appear in the last series of the S4C magazine programme *Hel Sraeon*.

Welsh-speaking Tony Reeves, who teaches maths and physics at the school, has an obsessive enthusiasm for the board game 'Diplomacy' which he has been playing on and off since he was a university student.

"It's basically a 'no luck' game for adults," he said. "There are seven players who take the part of the major powers in Europe. You have to manoeuvre pieces on the board which represent army and naval forces to establish supremacy. It's an abstract battle which depends on what the movements of others. You can't get very far on your own."

The long and often protracted nature of Diplomacy - any one game can last up to three years - means that the the Internet is the most practical means of playing the game.

Tony recently participated in the National Diplomacy Championships in



Christ College teacher Tony Reeves and S4C presenter Ms Catrin Beard

Birmingham where he had the opportunity to meet his competitors face to face and managed to qualify to the finals.

He insists that Diplomacy

is not a game for 'anoraks'.

"You don't have to be science-oriented, more interested in history really," he said. "There's quite a mix of people that play it. At the convention there were accountants and lawyers. It's not just for those who work with computers."

Programme director Ms

Helen Williams-Ellis said: "It's a brilliant game and the players have a complete obsession about it. We thought it was great that someone local got through to the championships. During the interview Tony said something really nice. He said that when he was young he was ill and his mother gave him a magazine called Games and Puzzles and he said he was just delighted that adults could play games too."

Diplomacy was developed in the US in the early 1960s as the ultimate board game from which all element of chance is removed. Success at the game depends not only on a player's strategic skills but also on his ability to negotiate, bluff and lie.

Tony has set up a Diplomacy society at Christ College and would like to establish a similar group for Brecon itself.

"I always get beaten by my pupils because they gang up on me," he laughed. "When I was in Birmingham I noticed a few names from Powys so the interest is there."

Anyone interested in joining a Diplomacy society should contact Tony on 01874 624618.

*Hel Sraeon* will be shown on S4C on Saturday (November 29) at 9.20pm. Subtitles in English will be available.

The official publication of the UK Postal Diplomacy Hobby Archives, Spring Offensive is a monthly Diplomacy zine available from Stephen Agar, 47 Preston Drive, BRIGHTON, BN1 6LA. Tel. 01273-562430. Email [stephen@spoff.demon.co.uk](mailto:stephen@spoff.demon.co.uk); Web Page: [www.spoff.demon.co.uk](http://www.spoff.demon.co.uk); Cost = 75p per issue UK (50p reduced, £1.20 international).

### Editorial

Well, it's not often we get any kind of real publicity for this hobby, so I thought I may as well make a feature of Tony's publicity coup. In an ideal world this is the sort of thing we'd do a lot more of - there must be lots of copy hungry local journalists out there. Is there a *Liverpool Evening Echo* to run the story "LOCAL BOY WINS ZINE POLL" or an *Islington Weekly Post* to cover "AWARD WINNING LOCAL ZINE TO FOLD"? Don't laugh - I'm not necessarily joking...

I trust you all had a relatively happy and peaceful Christmas. We spent our holidays coming to terms with the novelty of having a kitchen again, after 3 months of using a draining board as our one and only work surface. Maybe someday soon we'll have a flat and covered floor as well. The next big project should be the bathroom, but as the roof is now demonstrating a tendency to leak when the wind is in the wrong direction, we may have to see to that first.

DEADLINE

FRIDAY 6<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 1998

This issue is devoted to looking back 25 years to 1972, the year the postal Diplomacy hobby in the UK came of age. On the hobby history side there is a review of the year written by Hartley Patterson back in January 1973, together with my own observations, and some early variants and strategy articles, all from the same year. You should remember that back in 1972 the hobby was still being invented, so that much of what we take for granted now, was still up for grabs then. Hell, there's no point being the custodian of the UK Diplomacy Hobby Archives if you don't dip in to them from time to time! The idea of themed issues appeals to me as I am gradually cataloguing all the articles that have ever appeared in UK Diplomacy zines that are in the archives. One advantage of such a catalogue is that I can classify the content of the articles and then produce lists of articles on certain subjects, which can provide the source material for a themed issue. Any ideas for themes would be gratefully received – so, is there anything in particular which interests you? It goes without saying that all publishers are welcome to a copy of my list of articles and I will supply copies of any material requested for reprinting.

As this catalogue will probably be the one and only ever attempted, I would appreciate comments on my classification system which appears below. Are there any significant omissions or commissions?

## **DIPLOMACY MATERIAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

**A = AUSTRIA**

**C = CONS**

f = foreign cons

h = housecons

n = national

**E = ENGLAND**

**F = FRANCE**

**G = GERMANY**

**H = HOBBY HISTORY & POLITICS**

a = anecdote / controversies

f = feuds and scandals

h = hobby history

o = organisations

p = misc. polls

s = state of the hobby

z = Zine Poll

**I = ITALY**

**M = MISCELLANEOUS (Non-Dip)**

f = fiction

h = humour

n = non-fiction

**N = RULES & STATISTICS**

d = Diplomacy rules discussion

g = general postal stats

p = mechanics of postal play / house rules

r = postal rating systems

t = tournament / FtF rating systems

w = who's where

**O = OTHER GAMES**

a = articles

f = football games

n = new design

p = postal rules

r = reviews

**R = RUSSIA**

**S = STRATEGY & TACTICS**

a = alliances

e = endgame statements

d = specific Dip games / demo games

p = postal tactics (general)

q = Dip quizzes

t = theory (general)

s = stalemates

**T = TURKEY**

**V = VARIANTS**

a = articles on variants generally

b = variant banks

d = description and/or reviews

e = variant endgames

g = game end reports

i = variant idea

r = rules

s = articles on specific variants

v = variant design

**Z = ZINES & PUBLISHING**

c = columnists

e = editing / folding

f = Dip fiction

h = Dip humour

p = press releases

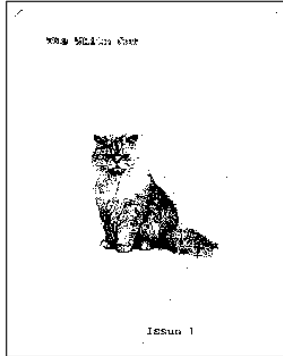
r = full reviews

s = zine stats

m = mini-reviews

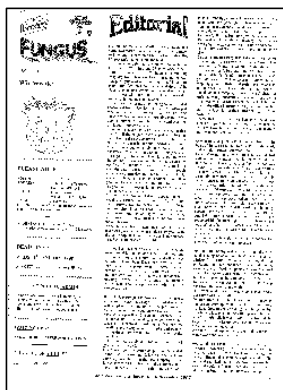
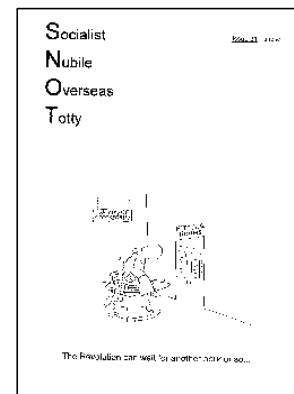
z = zine histories

# H:BY NEWS



The surprise of the month for me wasn't the fake fold of **SNOT** with James Hardy pretending to fold into **TCP** (pull the other one, James), it was the arrival of **The White Cat** from the Dylan Thomas of British postal Diplomacy, John Wilman. As a few of you will remember, John edited a successful Dip zine in the early 80's called **Watch Your Back** and in the intervening years since **WYB** folded he has remained an interested and interesting contributor to many Dip zines (including this one). Yes, **The White Cat** caught me completely by surprise. As befits the man, **TWC** is not a traditional Dip zine, but a more personal vehicle for John's thoughts and interests which will be published approx. quarterly and although John hopes to run some Dip games, these will be carried in the main on flyers. To give you a flavour of the thing, issue 1 has discussion on philosophy, chess, Herman Goering, classical music, book reviews, poetry, MidCon review, rules for the **Fog of War** variant, a piece on two of John's current Dip games and a review of **LRP**. If all this sounds like your cup of tea, write to John at 2 Keillor Cottages, Kettins, by Blairgowrie, Perthshire, Scotland, PH13 9JT. Cost = £1 per issue. Lists open for Diplomacy (3 season per year), and Gunboat.

People react quite differently when they win the Zine Poll. Some, like Derek Caws, wound down to a fold. Others, like Richard Sharp, barely notice. A few even try to win it, such as Geoff Challinger and myself, but having won it wonder what all the fuss was about. Occasionally someone is just really thrilled, as I remember Alan Parr was. As yet it is difficult to fathom James Hardy's reaction as it appears to have been a bit spoilt for him by his perception that as (a) some editors were lobbying for votes at MidCon, and as (b) he went on to win it, then some people must think (c) that it was indeed him who was "cheating" (to use James' words). However, this is only his perception and not one shared (as far as I know) by anyone else. As I said last time, **SNOT** thoroughly deserved to win and would have been top of my list had I voted. Although **SNOT** 31 rather downplays James' triumph, because James is by nature a modest man, it makes a stark contrast with the bitter tone of the apparent, but really not at all credible, fold of **SNOT** into **TCP** in the shape of **The SNOTlet**. Obviously this is partly an excuse to introduce gratuitous swearing into **TCP** while proving that he is enough of a man to fill Dave Horton's trousers (ooh, err, missus), but I suspect that it is partly written from the heart, which is a shame. Show your faith in **SNOT**'s future by sending some pennies to James Hardy at 21 Gourley Road, Liverpool, L13 4AY.



Issue 10 of **The Freaky Fungus** appears to be remarkably sober (both in terms of the attitude of the publication and the alcohol content of the editor), Toby displaying his kind, caring side which is so often concealed beneath his façade of competitive evil. **TFF** must be the best read for hobby gossip (especially now that Gihan's subzine in **ALOS** is no more), and it is always a vicarious pleasure to read of Toby's hedonistic lifestyle from the security and comfort of my armchair and slippers. Although the Great Man missed MdCon this year, there was a nicely edited con report put together by splicing various letters on the subject, which I thought worked quite well. Toby's review of the Zine Poll results was fairly magnanimous and his praise of **SNOT** and **ALOS** both generous and genuine. Indeed, the only thing I can find to take issue with Toby this time is his suggestion that John Colledge should win the Bob Kendrick Shield when the title should so obviously go to Dave Horton. The only waiting lists are for games GM'd by Shaun Derrick,

Toby's games having been banished to flyers. If he'll let you sub the address is 73 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AT and it costs £1 per issue.

As there isn't much space left in this issue (unless I do an extra two pages and sacrifice a decent night's sleep), there's only just room to say how impressed I have been with the couple of issues of **The Sprouts of Wrath** that I have seen so far. **Sprout** seems to have it all good mix of games, good presentation, witty editor,

enthusiasm, etc. etc. I particularly liked the idea of a postal Balloon Debate, Mark's article on the significance of the number 23 and an excellent Louise Woodward joke. On the down side, as a fan of crap 70's pop music I will obviously have to disagree with Mark's less than favourable review of the delights of *Racey* (it goes without saying I have all their singles and their one and only album). The excellent single *Some Girls Will* was of course and excellent send-up of post-modernist feminism and a precursor to the laddish humour which has been promoted by the likes of *Men Behaving Badly*, which was merely disguised as mindless, tuneless, drivel in order to subvert the power of the message. So now you know. *Spout* is also taking on Vick Hall as a subzine editor with the fold of *A Little Original Sin*. *ALOS* didn't do much for me at first, but the post-Amsterdam *ALOS* has gone from strength to strength and I will miss it a lot. No doubt Vick will not be lost to us entirely (and I for one will predict that we have not seen the end of *ALOS*). Contact Mark Wightman at 52 Park Road West, Bedford, MK41 7SL. Another zine at £1 per issue.

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## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

### **OxCon - 31st Jan - 1st Feb98- Garden Quad Auditorium, St John's College, Oxford**

The sixth Oxford Diplomacy tournament is held on the Saturday (starts 11am). It's likely to feature five or six boards made up of some of the country's top players. Sunday will include a Settlers tournament. Entrance is £3 for the Dip, £2 for the settlers or £4 for both. Further info form - General & Accommodation - Dan Lester - St John's College, St Giles, Oxford, ; Diplomacy - Mark Stretch -90, Colwell Rd, Berinstield, Oxfordshire, OX10 7NU (01865-341433)

### **RamsdenCon - 13th - 16th February 98 - Ramsden School, Bilericay, Essex.**

By all accounts an excellent all round games convention organised by a certifiable lunatic. Cost is a mere £30 for a residential weekend, problem is you have to book early to get a bed but there are apparently a number of sofas available. Details from - Annie Shillabeer, 134 Ballards Walk, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex. SSI5 SW

### **The Annual Manchester Board War/Gamers Auction – 7<sup>th</sup> March 1988, Stockport.**

Times - 12:00 Start - 17:00 Finish (people selling must arrive between 10:30 - 11:30 to register); Venue - Sea Scouts Hut, Romily, Stockport. This auction has been run every year for about 10 years and each year has been more successful than the last. Last year over 400 games were sold, some rare and some not so rare and over 50 people turned up to buy and sell. Every year there has been a huge variety of games up for auction, from fairly trivial family games to the monster of all monster games SPI's Campaign for North Africa. This year is expected to be as good as ever with at least two collectors being issued with orders to sell some of their vast hoard of games. If anyone wants more specific details of the event please feel free to contact David Brown (0161 491 3623) or email "thirts@aol.com".

### **MasterCon V - 20th - 22nd March, The Moat House Hotel, Bedford**

This year the convention is hosting the 6th European Diplomacy Championships. Rates are £30 per single room per night; £27.50 for a double. Registration fee £10. Contact - Shaun Derrick -313, Woodway Lane, Walsgrave, Coventry, CV2 2AP

### **BAYCON XII - 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> April, Exeter.**

BAYCON 1998 will be held at the Exeter Court Hotel, Kennford over the weekend of 16th~19th April 1998. The Exeter Court is 5 miles south of Exeter on the main A38, offering access to the MS within a few minutes. Now in its 12<sup>th</sup> successful year, Baycon has established a reputation as a friendly convention. The main games hall is Non-Smoking, although games may also be played only a few yards away in the refurbished (smoking) bar area. Bed & Breakfast accommodation remains unchanged at £46 per night in a shared room and £35 per night in a single room. All rooms have en suite bathroom and colour TV. There is a convention fee of £10 per person, which is payable in advance (£5 for children under 16; children under 5 free).

The main event of the weekend is The Victor Ludorum tournament to find the UK National Board Games Champion. An account is kept of all games played throughout the convention and the player with the best overall score receives the Victor Ludorum Trophy in addition to prizes for the top players. Gibsons Games will once again be sponsoring a competition based on their own catalogue of games. The winner will receive the Gibsons Trophy and a prize presented by Gibsons Games. We also hope to have Just Games in their regular corner shop spot again with a wide selection of the latest releases and old favourites.

Send you registration fee and accommodation requirements to: Clive Palmer, 36 Ravensfield, Barstable East, Basildon, Essex. SSI4 IUG. (cheques made payable to BAYCON). Accommodation should be paid for at the hotel upon departure.

# LETTERS



## Tony Reeves

This has been a year of gaming firsts for me. Having subscribed to Mike Siggins' **SUMO** for about 4 years I was intrigued about the amateur PBM hobby, specifically the chance to play *Breaking Away* and *Fireside Football* and/or *United*. Mike put me in touch with John Harrington who sent me a copy of **Mission from God**. Next step was the Novice Package from which my original copy of **Spring Offensive** came. After some 21 years of FtF gaming (my interest having been intensified by the discovery of **Games & Puzzles** magazine I had finally made the leap to the Postal Hobby. I currently subscribe to about 6 zines but will only be playing 2 games of Dip at any one time. I decided to go the whole hog and save up sufficient Brownie points on the domestic front to attend my first Con :- MidCon 97. I originally persuaded 2 like-minded souls to join me with the intention of having a Welsh Wizards team in the quizzes, sharing petrol, etc. Unfortunately one suffered a work crisis (solicitor) and the wife of no.2 discovered that she was pregnant and rescinded his leave papers.

In the meantime I had mentioned MidCon in passing to my sister-in-law who is a presenter on a Welsh medium weekly T.V. magazine programme. Her producer liked the idea of doing an item on the event (or at least my part in it) and thus it was that the T.V. crew came to be at MidCon (having cleared everything with Paul Evans of SFCP first). In the event I drew Italy with a larger than life character from Scotland playing Austria. Indeed he wound up a number of people so much that on the Saturday (playing Austria again) he was eliminated in 1902. England dominated the game and we were obliged to concede 16 centres to him before demonstrating a stalemate line. Russia was eliminated early and I was left clutching joint 5th on I centre.

The TV crew came to do a follow-up on me teaching in school and sitting at the computer writing orders and correspondence for Berthier. The item was cut from some 6 hours of film down to a 5 minute slot for transmission. I believe that the TV audience amounted to about 50,000 so I've been almost famous for 5 minutes still a way to go to achieve the Andy Warhol quota. The local newspaper got wind of the story and I enclose a clipping for your edification and entertainment. The request for interested Dip players resulted in 2 requests to join our regular group which meet about once every 2 months in the labyrinthine rooms of a local Psychiatric Hospital. "I've taken over Europe!" "Of course you have, now just come along quietly and

wear this nice jacket".

For the record I allowed myself to be talked into playing Dip again on the Saturday to make up the numbers. I found myself in some fairly esteemed company including Jeremy Tullett the Tournament Director and Neil Duncan of **TCP** fame. I drew Italy (again!) and dithered agonisingly thereby allowing France and Turkey to do rather well for themselves and condemning myself to play the entire game on 4 supply centres. I hope that I have learned something from my experiences, I certainly enjoyed my first taste of the cut and thrust of Tournament Diplomacy. I even spent a few hours in a very respectable 20th position on the Leader Board until I became the victim of an unwarranted inter-game stab when a scoring error was pointed out to JT and sent me crashing to a more realistic 35th or so. I was still ahead of Gihan Bandaranaike which was good enough for me. I had to leave early on the Sunday (Brownie point deficit becoming too large) to make the 4 hour train journey back to real life. I've recently received my appearance fee through the post - £60 for playing Diplomacy. Does this violate my amateur status?

*SA No, but as I found out when **G&P** paid me £30, it certainly complicates your tax return ☺*

## James Hardy

After reading **Spring Offensive** and **OTG** it appears a theme is forming regards the Zine Poll results i.e. some editors "cheated" in order to do well in them.

*SA I did no such thing, I'm not even sure that lobbying would be cheating, anyway (unless an editor got people to vote for him who didn't see his zine). I wasn't at MidCon and only repeated what had been said in **OTG** (which arrived the day I wrote my piece for **SpOff**). If what Paul said is inaccurate, then I apologise. I certainly didn't have you in my mind's eye when I wrote it (though I must confess there are those in the top ten who I would expect to have some lobbying done on their behalf). Anyway, unlike that wretch Harris, I am not afraid to say sorry. So, sorry. That said, Vick's canvassing has been widely reported.*

*I also said "I wouldn't quarrel with the results too much" and that I would have put **SNOT** top if I had voted (which I didn't). So you can hardly accuse me of thinking that the wrong zine won. I don't think I've voted for 2-3 years. I do think that allowing votes at MidCon is not a brilliant idea though - unless the only motivation is to get people to vote at all costs.*

Both zines imply that the only reason the zines that did well did well (i.e. **SNOT** & **ALOS**) was because of vote touting at MidCon - this may well be the case, but I resent the way it is implied that I, as one of those well doing Zines, was part of it. For the record, I asked one person during the whole weekend whether she had voted, to which the answer was no. By the time she'd left the convention she STILL hadn't voted - so much for me rigging the ballot boxes.

*SA I didn't accuse you of anything and if you think that's what I meant then I apologise. As I said quite clearly I think **SNOT** deserved to win. I think I did once lobby Veronica Conboy to vote for **SpOff** 3 years ago - but it was in jest and I don't think she voted anyway. Interesting that the only lobbying either of us has done was with a female - I think that says something about the real subtext of the conversation, don't you...*

While you may have a point that whoever gets the most votes wins (I said this years ago when **Spring Offensive** had 10,000 subbers, though it was merely an observation rather than a complaint) that is not the fault of the editors who benefit from it. In fact it shows that their subscribers, whether sat at home or sat at a game of Britannia in the Britannia, have those zines at the forefront of their mind, which must count for something towards their popularity.

*SA Agreed. Though it is amusing that **Spring Offensive** won in the very year when there was an organised campaign to vote it down. Maybe it was my high circulation that helped to foil the dastardly plot. If you want to know the details, ask Vick.*

I don't really care about (nor pretend to understand) any of the scoring systems for the Zine Poll.

*SA I have come to the conclusion that the current system is the worst of both worlds, rather than the best. Either it should be a popularity contest, or it should make an attempt to compare unlike with unlike by using a preference matrix. By allowing everyone 5 votes (is that right, I forget) zines with a large subscriber base will always do very well, because being third on a list of three zines received by a subscriber is better than being 10th on a list of 30. At least in a true popularity contest you only get one vote. Having said all that, save for **GAME**'s low placing and possibly **SpOff** being too high (on recent performance), I would not dispute the Top 10 at all - just the size of the gaps between them.*

But if you really want to complain about vote rigging I suggest you start with all those that voted their own zines top of their ballot forms with a 10. Ok I can understand that some might vote this way simply because "every other editor will so it evens itself out" which is of course rubbish as you get idiots like me that don't, so why the hell allow it?

*SA I never voted for **SpOff** either, er, I think (not*

*sure about 1993... - don't think so).*

Apart from anything else it lessens the amount of zines the majority of big point awarders (i.e. editors) get to vote for by one. I never have and presume never will vote for **SNOT** in any ballot of any kind - I really don't see the point as the whole idea of any Poll is to gauge what your zine is thought of by the readers, not it's creator.

*SA I wasn't aware that editors could vote for their own zine. Iain made that illegal - does Ryk allow it?*

As for the surprise of **SNOT** doing well in the "Other Games" Poll, I do run other games but don't include them within the zine itself - any other British zines out there running Silverton and Tutankhamun because I don't know of any... However the main point about this is that personally I think having two Polls is a bit pointless really - I know my votes for both Polls were the same, the only difference being if **GH** makes it into my Other Games top 10.

*SA Quality will out, I suppose. I only said I was "slightly surprised". I would have expected the General Zine Poll to have **OTG**, **OMR**, **LRP**, **FWTDR**, **C&T**, **BUM**, **Hopscotch**, and **Pigbutton** in high positions - but the two sets of results were so very similar. What happened to all the football zines? If the two polls are going to be so similar, is there any point in having two polls anymore? So I guess I agree with you.*

Finally, I don't believe **SNOT** won the Zine Poll on the strength of the zine itself; the turnrounds were sloppy and I don't think it's "humour", especially in the lettercol, has been up to scratch of late. I can only presume therefore that I won on the strength of my general popularity with the voting public - You're shocked?! Maybe Ryk should initiate an Editor Personality Poll too - another one isn't going to hurt...

*SA **SNOT** won because of consistency over a period of time - well run games and enough non-games material to engage editors, coupled with having a nice guy for an editor. In the days of the preference matrix that was the only formula that could ever win. Don't be defensive - you deserved to win.*

*The more polls the merrier - polls ONLY exist to fill editorials and letter columns. If that is your motivation then please feel free to print any of the above if you are so motivated.*

#### **Pete Duxon**

I'm never certain what the polls prove. Personally, I like Ryk's voting system since it stops any silly grudge voting. Editors who see lots of zines have an undo influence and editors trade with stuff they wouldn't sub to.

At the Angus last year Ryk told me that a small band of voters decided the Zine Poll the year before. I guess I was one of them, given the number I see.

Anyway, what is the point of it? A subber quite often wants a different thing from a trader. Ryk published separate editor/subber results one year, I seem to recall.

*SA Yes – that has been done many times before – and usually the same zine wins both polls, because you only win the Zine Poll by catering for both markets.*

To be fair, the top 10 this year are a reasonable reflection of the best zines around, although **GAME** and **Springboard** under performed. It isn't the size of your readership that matters, but how active it is. **SNOT** always gets a big turnout – though a lot of that is due to the personality of the editor.

I don't know if it would work, but do you think the occasional reprint of a classic zine would be worth doing? Just a thought, but I for one would be interested to see a "classic" **Dolchstoß** or **Ethil the Frog**.

*SA I did reprint issues 1 of **Dolchstoß**, **Mad Policy** and **Greatest Hits** for recent MidCon programmes, but issue 1 is rarely a "classic". What might be more feasible is a "Best of..." theme for some issues of **Spring Offensive**.*

The postal Diplomacy hobby has aged. I don't think this is a surprise, most school kids would be much more interested in the spread of email (I still prefer receiving a letter or a zine. The ripping open of the envelope to see if it's "gone OK"). The hobby needs to get at an older generation perhaps, but where do you get hold of them?

Toby is only partly right. The FtF hobby does look healthy, but I'm not so convinced that the postal hobby is. As Richard Sharp rightly commented, the two are different.

Have you seen the Australian zine **FIST** yet? Hardy is peeved that I didn't alert him to it.

*SA Yes, James seems to be generally peeved at the moment. No I haven't seen **FIST**. Should I make the effort?*

#### Dave Horton

Enjoyed today's **Spring Offensive** - even if nowadays there is somewhat less to read than in days of yore. It is good news that you are putting the zine onto the Internet, and not only because I'm buying a modem today. Whilst as you know I'm not a fan of your impressions of that Scottish guy from Dad's Army regarding the state of the Hobby ("We're doomed, we're doomed" etc.) and personally I haven't discussed nappies or interest rates all year (though I confess getting stuck at two No. 1 singles), it's a great idea to keep up with modem technology and in the process allow me to get my zine for the price of a phone call! And as my tutor at college used to say, "Is that a single sentence??"

*SA Well, the automatic grammar checker in MSWord has its doubts.*

You really must be slipping, Stephen - like in that Tennyson poem, "Though we have not the wits which in old days amused heaven and earth." Fancy missing an opportunity like that at the bottom of page 3, regarding John Colledge. "Good job I don't have a sharp tongue." Surely the old St. Stephen would have capitalised the "S"?

*SA Like it.*

**Cry Havoc** - aaah. Or should that be aaargh. Well, Manuel, let me explain. But first, kindly rescind the comment, "apparent appearance in **ALOS**" lest you be cursed forever and damned along with the likes of Chris Dickson and John Marsden. Please leave the capital letters as I am happy for the whole world to note their shame as belonging to that sub-class of homo sapiens who did not spot within the duration of the most insignificant movement of a lamb's tail that the evil spawn appearing in **ALOS** was in fact a miserable and unconvincing SPOOF. As Vick himself acknowledged on the back of my copy, "Sorry I didn't have time to do it justice." Fellow, verily thou speakst the right.

*SA No, I wasn't fooled. I did use the word "apparent" in the same sense that **SNOT** is now apparently a subzine of **TCP**...*

As it was, there were a combination of factors which led to the fold. As I hinted in **TCP**, the main factor is that in 1997 we started a new business venture which has gone well but would benefit tremendously from some extra dedication. Also, there was a certain amount of fairly gratuitous mud-slinging going on regarding **Cry Havoc**, which I accept comes with the territory but just at present seemed rather tiresome - and, regrettably, mud sticks. Finally, there was a slightly uneven yoking between myself and Neil - **TCP**'s strength is the rapid turnaround, and promptness has never been a virtue of mine; consequently there was bound to be a degree of strain which seemed undesirable between friends. Ah, my unburden'd soul.

*SA You should have tried becoming a sub-zine in the more relaxed **Spring Offensive**.*

Shall we then see more Horton rubbish spewing forth at a later date? Quite possibly. There have been a number of supportive comments (you'd never believe me if I told you who from - here's a clue - Shakespeare, Hamlet, famous quote, "BLANK or not BLANK, that is the question") and as I belong to your group, "The editor as frequent visitor to the Ego Masseur." then it's quite possible some scum may bloop to the surface during 1998.

*SA Ah, but in private Toby is nice to everyone. It's what he says in public you that have to watch out for. Speaking of the devil...*

### Toby Harris

**Spring Offensive** certainly appears more active than has been the case earlier in the year. No doubt it will make its usual large impact on the hobby next year. Actually I'm quite looking forward to next year where the hobby is concerned. Aside from the zine scene looking quite rosy, our hosting EDC is something that should be well represented. Have to do some more plugging in Stockholm next month.

### Mark Wightman

Old "Slugger" Harris just can't keep a secret (although it's hardly a secret anymore). What he is trying not to mention, if you aren't already aware, is that Vick intends to fold **ALOS** after the next issue. The current plan is for the Diplomacy games (with the exception of the one I'm in) to move into the **Sprout** and for me to take over the adjudication of the games. Vick's football will also transfer over and I will GM it too. Vick intends to see out the Agarton pub game, the stock game and the NABIS dip game in a subzine within the **Sprout**. He hasn't revealed the name of the subzine yet. Although if the story I have heard is true then you will already know it because it's an anagram of A Little Original Sin which you suggested. What happens to Colin Hobbs bit is still undecided. The only thing I'm sure of is that I won't be taking it on as I'm playing in it.

*SA I doubt it was me. I'm not clever enough to make up anagrams.*

Vick made up his mind to fold after MidCon some time ago but the decision to move the games to 'The Sprouts of Wrath' is quite recent. Obviously Vick didn't want the news to leak out before the zine poll but it leaked out very quickly afterwards.

Middle Earth II - At last a Middle Earth variant that isn't saddled with hundreds of useless extra rules.

*SA Yes, there is a real attraction in simple map change variants. I think I will print more of them.*

### Fred Davis

Did you receive a copy of the final Runestone Report on U.S. zines? The response was so poor that Eric Brosius has decided to end the poll. Only 14 zines made the main list. **Diplomacy World** finished 2<sup>nd</sup>! Something called **S.O.S.**, which I haven't seen, finished 1st. The three best American GM's were Doug Kent, Andy Lischett, and Conrad von Metzke. Melinda Holley and I intend to continue the Hobby Awards for at least one more year. In 1997, Doug Kent won the Don Miller Award for hobby services, Mark Fazio won the Rod Walker Literary Award, Mike Gonsalves won the John Koning Award as Best Player, and Andy Lischett was declared Best GM.

*SA Yes, the days of the US postal Diplomacy hobby are clearly numbered. I suppose the migration on to the Internet has been faster in the US because (let's*

*be honest) US zines have usually had less non-games material and general chat to keep the zine format alive. If all that is on offer is a warehouse zine, then you're just as well off with email. It's strange to think that the US used to be the Big brother in years gone by, but now the UK hobby is noticeably healthier.*

I won't get to the WorldCon VIII in Chapel Hill, N.C. We have to go to a wedding in Buffalo the same weekend. My son, Kevin, will be getting married in Coatesville, Pa., on 1<sup>st</sup> August. They're going to Jamaica for their honeymoon. Jamaica has become a very popular spot for American tourists.

The Mensa Diplomacy SIG will fold on Dec. 27th, unless someone steps forth to rescue it. Andy York is too busy to continue, and I'll be darned if I'll take it over again. I ran the SIC. for 21 years (minus 2 years in the middle), and that's enough for anyone. The Mensa games will continue under their respective GM's.

*SA That's a shame, but a sure sign of the times.*

### Pete Birks

I hope that you had a nice Christmas. Kate must be old enough to properly appreciate it now and be going through that "magical" time. I had a quiet time and go back to work on the 2nd, although I may try and do some stuff at home before then, since my deadline is the 5th. I seem to have a stinking cold at the moment, which is not nice.

*SA Christmas is the time for being ill. Freddie has had both chickenpox and an ear infection. Yes, Kate was thrilled by Christmas, from putting up the Christmas tree, to finding that Father Christmas had left her lots of presents in her bedroom while she slept. Though if I have to watch that Snow White & the Seven Dwarves video again I'll scream.*

My filing system is much less efficient than it used to be, so I can't write the full history of the Horton/Hall/Agar/Gihan/Harris affair. A pity, I think that it would be quite entertaining.

*SA Affair? My involvement in the above has been purely platonic...*

### John Wilman

There's no shame in agreeing with someone you generally don't agree with, and if that was Richard attempting irony, his hand is as heavy as ever. Problems that need to be addressed (and are being addressed by the new committee) over the national Diplomacy Championships go far deeper than the choice of hotel. I don't have the answers, but here are two provocative questions.

(1) Why so few Diplomacy players?

I couldn't even get a game on Friday evening. Thanks to a late Virgin train and a wallet lost/stolen at New Street Station I turned up an hour later than



I'd planned. Three boards were already up and running by 6.00pm. Only Susie Horton and I were down for a fourth, Two hours later, with only two more intrepid souls ready to do battle we had to abandon the idea.

There were only 4 boards in the Finals as well. Some of the qualifying events were better supported! I hadn't qualified at all, which makes a mockery out of Neil Kendrick's excellent idea. On the day, everyone who turns up can play (quite a few didn't bother). I tried to play in the right spirit and enjoyed my game, but I was hopelessly outclassed. Some of these players get a dozen or more FtF games a year: they are seriously good.

*SA Well, three boards on Friday evening is not too bad for MidCon – but only 4 boards in the Finals is poor. I think the qualifying idea is something that has had its day and should be abandoned. Despite all you say, MidCon has had far fewer boards than ManorCon for years, but the consensus used to be that the standard is far higher at MidCon, because of the absence of dead wood nagged into playing in the team event.*

#### (2) Why Birmingham?

It's a horrible place. Easy to get to? Not if you have to travel by train – it would have been far easier for me to get to London. You might just as well pick Manchester (and why not? It's not much further up the M6 than Birmingham and has an airport, stations, conference hotels etc.). Much of the success of MasterCon, apart from the hard work put in by Shaun Derrick & Co. may be due to the fact that it is held in a more civilised environment. I don't think it would be elitist to agree with Sharp (R) that no one in their right mind actually enjoys weekends in Birmingham hotels. If it hadn't been for the Dip finals, I'd have chosen MasterCon in preference to MidCon, and probably will next year.

*SA I think the best location would be Rugby myself – on the junction of the M6 and the M1, could rail connections both north and south. Of course, you haven't asked the most provocative question of all...*

#### (3) Is it time to take the NDC from MidCon and transfer it to ManorCon?

*I think the question is at least open – ManorCon is far better attended and gets more Diplomacy players. Other than a plea to history, isn't it time for a more dramatic change? Anyone any views?*

#### Paul Barker

So another year draws to a close. We are off to Scotland for Christmas to get away from the usual Christmas. There might even be time for some games playing.

You mentioned the lack of young players coming in to the hobby at the bottom of last issue's page two. I

think you are right, although there do seem to be some younger players around in the online world.

*SA Yes, we may pick up more people from email, though they are not necessarily going to be that young. For example...*

#### Nick Marshall

I greatly enjoyed reading Spring Offensive 56 on the Internet. I have been looking for a place in which to play a second game of Diplomacy for some time, and am delighted to find that (as my university supplies Internet access) I can do so for free in SpOff (a small town in mid-Wales).

A few words to introduce myself: I am a mature PhD student of exercise physiology at South Bank University and live with my significant other, Judith, in an average sort of house in Greenwich (the cheap end of Greenwich, but we do at least have a park over our back garden wall). I worked until 1994 in computing in the administration of London University, a job which was well paid but in which my intellect and spirit were being steadily eaten away... until I volunteered for redundancy and came to South Bank as an undergraduate in Sports Science. When I graduated, the last thing I wanted was to return to the world of work, so I just kept turning up here until my presence was eventually made official.

*SA If I won the Lottery (unlikely, as I have never bought a ticket), I would give up work and go back to college. Just think, all those 19 year old girls...*

I first played postal Diplomacy when I was in my teens (back in the early 70s) via something called Shenandoah Services. I've recently rediscovered the game through Nic Chilton's GAME, and am enjoying my one current postal game - but most of the players are pretty uncommunicative (to me, at least) so that it only results in one or two hits on the doormat most months. Although the life of a postgraduate student is a hard one, I reckon that I can cope with a second game, especially if played via e-mail. What else do I do? I used to be a voracious reader, mainly of fiction and travel books, until most of my spare time evaporated... I enjoy playing the pianola, and have enough CDs of music I like (Debussy, Liszt, and anybody who makes exciting noises with an orchestra) to keep me happy when I'm too worn out to pedal.

*SA Ah, Shenandoah Services – now that was a controversial zine, which ill-fitted the Diplomacy scene at the time. I think I have most back issues of SS, though some of that details of the Diplomacy games have been lost as many were sent out on flyers. Do you still have any old issues?*

*Cycling is, of course, an anathema to me, as it resembles exercise.*

**Geoff Norwood**

I had a look at your web page the other day and its very good. About the first page I've visited which I didn't get bored waiting for the start page to open! Then it was easy to find my way around.

*SA Reaction has generally been favourable. Thanks for the feedback.*

Since I seem unable to put pen to paper these days I have been looking for PBEM but the diplomacy user group seems impenetrable.

*SA It is worth checking out the FAQ. The Internet also means that some real old-timers surface from time to time – such as...*

**Graeme Levin**

Just a brief note to thank you for mentioning me in your comprehensive coverage of the growth of Postal Diplomacy. I thought everyone had forgotten me.

*SA Not at all. You were more responsible for most for this hobby reaching the critical mass that it needed to sustain itself for the past 25 years. It's good to hear from you. Tell us, why on earth did you form the BDC in the first place?*

**Paul Reeves**

My wife, Anita, and I are expecting a baby in march, so we have been busy looking at prams and things. After Christmas we are going to finish decorating the nursery.

*SA Good luck and let us all know whether it's a little girl or a boy. Having one of each, I am amazed how much of the differences between the sexes seems to be hard-coded into their little bodies, even at an early age. There are many unanswered questions – such as why do all little 3 year old girls like pink?*

**Nicholas Whyte**

I've been working since January for the US-based National Democratic Institute as one of their field representatives in Bosnia. In early February I moved to Banja Luka, the largest town in the Bosnian Serb Republic, opened an office here and began working with the opposition political parties. The opposition scored 20% in the 1996 elections before I arrived; this increased to 30% in last September's municipal elections and then to 40% in last month's parliamentary elections. This is probably not only due to my seminars on door-knocking for wrinkly ex-Communists, but I'd like to feel I'm making some impression.

How to describe Bosnia? Banja Luka escaped bombardment during the civil war (except from the Americans) and could be any other economically depressed city under a dodgy regime. But half an hour's drive west used to be the town of Kozarac, once a mainly Muslim area completely depopulated by neighbouring Serbs in 1992. And an hour's drive

north of here used to be Western Slavonia, where the Serbs were kicked out by the Croats in 1995. The physical scars of war are absent from Banja Luka, but you can see the damage if you know where to look. And things have improved even more since Anne and Bridget moved out here in October. (We drove all the way here from Belfast; taking it gently, we did 1600 miles in a week.)

Our postal address (via British Forces Post Office) is Nicholas, Anne and Bridget Whyte, c/o NDI, c/o SFOR House Banja Luka, G5 MND SW, BFPO 553. More reliable is my email: ndi@eunet.yu.

*SA Well, that was more of a Christmas letter sent out to a few people, but I thought everyone would be interested in what Nicholas has been up to. Best wishes to Anne and baby Bridget.*

**Tony Elbourn**

I'd like to ask for your help please. I have a new tactical/battlefield variant ready for use, called The Age of Battles, which I would like to try out. It's a 6-player game (2 teams of 3 independent commanders each) and the first scenarios are Marston Moor 1644 and Trafalgar 1805. I intend to start my own zine sometime next year to run these games, but until then what is the best way to publicise them? Is it to run them via a "covering" zine? If so, can you recommend any (yourself maybe)?

*SA Essentially there are two options. One is to run a mini-zine, the other to find a friendly zine and become a sub-zine within it. The former is to be recommended if you have ambitions to go independent, as it gives you the opportunity to learn all the admin which goes with running a zine – though only problem is recruiting the players. The latter is the more common course of action. As to which sort of zine to approach, it depends to an extent on what sort of players you are after, and how you could fit in with the editor's requirements as to submitting copy. Are your games Diplomacy variants, or more like wargames?*

**Roland Cooke**

I have found it interesting to compare the Web (Judged) games rather than plain e-mail/postal games as an outsider. From my very limited viewpoint, the Judged games seem to have everything that one would want from the ideal Diplomacy games in terms of unified communications, speedy, inexpensive turnaround etc. Yet it just doesn't seem to deliver on all its promise. I dunno, maybe it's just too clinical for me....

*SA There's no real "fandom" about the way Diplomacy is played on the Net. It's the personalities within the hobby and how they interact which amuses me, and that is lacking in sterile game reports.*

I am impressed to see that Richard Sharp is still alive and well ☺, let alone still a bigwig in the hobby. His

little book was regularly purloined from the library when I was a nipper more than one decade ago, so naturally I worship the very ground he walks on. Then again, the instruction he gave has yet to pay off. I blame the teachers, me.

I'm glad to see the bickering that filled my first few editions of **SpOff** has dried up a bit. I give it six months ☺. Or possibly less if the Louise Woodward can you opened contains a great number of worms...

My own viewpoint on it is this. The discussion over the defence's decision to have only two verdicts is really a side issue, which can be argued forever from both sides. It was a reasoned gamble that didn't come off. End of story.

Certainly the viewpoint that an angelic au pair would be incapable of such acts is naive in the extreme: the Jamie Bulger case demonstrated that only too well. To that extent I agree with you that a great deal of the British reaction was badly misplaced - as it often is when British people are accused of committing crimes abroad. Showing support for your countrymen is not the same as trying to override other countries' systems of justice.

The scientific evidence in the LW case clearly showed that *something* had happened. But it did not clearly show that Louise was solely and directly responsible. The fact that it was *likely* Louise had contributed partly or fully to the terminal brain trauma the baby suffered is not the same as proving it beyond reasonable doubt. The jury, like OJ's, were put in an awkward position. The LW jury effectively handed the problem onto the judge - to whom it was clear that a murder verdict would have been a miscarriage of justice. His subsequent decision to release her - still guilty of manslaughter, don't forget - is still under hot dispute.

The US and British system of justice is a simple one - we prefer to inevitably let some guilty people off the hook, than risk sending any innocent ones to jail. In this case, one child's life is already over. Let us always be real sure before we end anyone elses.

*SA In my opinion she deserved at least seven years, out after four. Surely a bay's life is worth that.*

#### Allan Gordon

I'd like to come back on your comments regarding Louise Woodward. Your revulsion at the 'pro' reaction of the Brits (and some misguided Yanks) was right on the money and I agree totally with what you say. The surmise that this girl did lose her temper and accidentally slay the child is 'overwhelming' - but the evidence was not. You're a legal eagle and probably know better than I, but surely no matter what we feel instinctively or emotionally - the case has to be judged disregarding these factors and based upon the evidence alone. And the evidence presented by the prosecution in this case

was paper thin. There were no eye-witnesses and no-one could possibly know exactly what happened in that room. All the references as to how long the baby was shaken and how it was 'thrown down' was pure conjecture based upon very iffy medical opinion that was very strongly challenged by other experts anyway.

*SA Believe me, I've done personal injury trials. You can always get experts to say anything you like. The overwhelming consensus of medical opinion was with the prosecution witnesses. Just because the defence can find the odd doctor to give a bizarre opinion, doesn't mean that there is really any real doubt. I am sure I could find "experts" who would state that (a) smoking doesn't cause cancer, (b) RSI doesn't exist and (c) HIV doesn't lead to AIDS etc. etc. The general public (especially a public seeing edited highlights of a trial) often doesn't have the opportunity to apply common sense. The prosecution case rested on very strong circumstantial evidence, it was not "paper thin". Of course, there is rarely a witness to child abuse - but circumstantial evidence can be compelling (as the jury thought in this case).*

That Woodward was probably responsible for the child's death, there can be little doubt - but that is not the point. We're not supposed to condemn people on probability. The guilt must be proved, and this the prosecution failed utterly to do. Therefore, the 'guilty' verdict was insane and the result of a knee-jerk reaction from an irrational jury appallingly directed by the judge. There is not the slightest doubt that had this trial taken place in a British court, such a verdict could never have been brought in, based upon the evidence submitted. The American system sucks to high heaven (could you believe that ghastly TV coverage with all the participants acting their socks off?!), and though the girl deserves to be serving a long stretch for manslaughter, there is no way in the world she could have been convicted of murder and I suggest this may have been partly responsible for the reaction that you (and I) found so repellent.

*SA The jury heard al the evidence and saw the witnesses - I assume you did not, therefore how you can second-guess their judgement amazes me. I was not aware there was any suggestion of a misdirection by the judge and anyway I would not be in a position to comment. Of course, in the UK Woodward would undoubtedly have been charged with manslaughter and not murder, but maybe that merely reflects different cultural values. Neither am I sure that it is as easy do deduce that the parents were "acting their socks off" - if they had been English parents then that might be a fair assumption, but they were US parents and Americans express themselves differently to our eyes. What I found repellent was the automatic assumption of innocence because she was British.*

## 1972 - A Year in Diplomacy

by Hartley Patterson

Reprinted from *War Bulletin* No. 41 (Jan 1973)

1972 started with only four active European Diplomacy zines in operation. **Albion** had been first into the field in 1969; originally a Diplomacy zine, it had moved into board wargaming and adult games in general, Diplomacy games being relegated to a subzine **Courier**. **War Bulletin**, after some nine months with Dave Berg as editor, had fallen into my hands in the summer of 1971. It struggled on as a two pager carrying only one game (1971BU, recently concluded), but by Jan 1972 a comeback was being staged with 1971DS and the renowned, 1971Uct, the Hannibal game. In Belgium, Michel Feron was in the process of reactivating **Moeshoeshoe**, which after running one game had ceased publication. Michel Liesnard's **On Les Aura!** with its Youngstown Variant game was soon to disappear, the game being transferred to **Moeshoeshoe**.

Looking back at **WB** 25, the January issue, I find the first signs of what was to come. "**Ethil the Frog** (Piggott & Haven) reportedly is about to start a game." For this was to be the boom year in British Diplomacy, the year when it all happened! As it turned out the only influence Will Haven had on **Ethil** was in suggesting the name, John Piggott deciding to publish on his own. **Ethil** was soon recruiting players outside the **WB** / **Albion** circles, and with Ian Maule duplicating in coloured foolscap from Newcastle the zine was soon establishing its independence.

In **WB** 26 (Feb), apart from the scandal of the missing Russian build, I see I was announcing the first edition of **Niflheim**<sup>1</sup> and wondering whether some kind of Diplomacy Organisation would be welcomed. **XL**, the zine covering Colin Hemming's game of Diplomyopia, was at last starting publication: renowned for its covers portraying well known cartoon characters. **XL** later started the first game of Liesnard & Macedoni's air force variant **LIMA**, and recently acquired a **Monochrome Supplement**<sup>2</sup> with Jeff Oliver, another of the Manchester FTF group, GMing regular games. **WB** 27 noted the start of **Les Dossiers De L'Hyene Harra**, Michel Liesnard's genzine which printed out the map and rules for a number of variants. Dick Vedder was giving advice on how to play **Diadochi**, and in the small print on the back Hannibal made his first appearance.

**WB** 29 (April) produced a bombshell in the form of the British Diplomacy Club, which had just been announced in **Albion**. The original advert in **Albion** contained some unfortunate phrases ("co-ordinating all Diplomacy games in the UK" or some such) which led **WB** intrepid editor to descend on the BDC's organiser, one Graeme Levin, to investigate. Mr Levin was found in the throes of launching his glossy magazine **Games & Puzzles** on an unsuspecting public, and the BDC was to tie up with this. Don Tumbull of **Albion** was writing a Diplomacy series in the magazine and was to GM games sponsored by the BDC for its members, Levin would publicise the BDC in **G&P** and produce a regular newsletter. Existing Postal players were generously offered free membership for the first year, though most in fact ignored the whole affair. John Piggott later advanced his own criticisms of the BDC in **Ethil**, which were received with similar disinterest, so the subject was dropped by the fanzines.

**WB** 31 (May) announced the next new zine, Graham Jeffery's **Der Krieg**, with the usual regular / variant mixture. A standard pattern for zines was appearing: subscription + small game fee, "winter" adjustments taken with autumn moves, etc. though iconoclasts like Hemming & Turnbull continued to offer alternatives to this.

**WB** 31 also had the ChessmanCon photos of course, with my Instamatic capturing some of the Masters of European Diplomacy for posterity. 4000AD was by now under discussion in **WB** - a game eventually started in **WB** 34 and the inventor of the game turned up in **WB** 38. Other games were being tried postally - Origins of WWII in **Courier** and Strategy 1 in Will Haven's zine **Bellicus** - but all seemed likely to remain of minority interest.

In July Science Fiction fans convened in Trieste for the first European SF Congress. With Feron, Liesnard and myself present some Diplomacy activity was inevitable, and an evening was spend attempting to teach fans of various nationalities the rudiments of the game. Feron was collecting names and addresses and later sent a special issue of **Moeshoeshoe** to all concerned. In August I was up in Manchester visiting Colin Hemming, and in September Bilbo Baggins' Birthday and the descent of various Tolkien fans on "Finches" was a good excuse for throwing a Diplomacy party as well. The result exceeded my wildest nightmares - Scots arriving by mini-bus; Belgians by aircraft, and a 36 hour event in which eight GMs and a number of players participated.

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<sup>1</sup> The first ever UK novice introduction package / zine.

<sup>2</sup> The first true sub-zine in the UK.

**WB** 35 noted the forthcoming appearance of Richard Walkerdine's **Mad Policy**, while a BDC game was just starting: Don Turnbull was GMing all the rest, and BDC membership was over the 100. Hannibal had stolen a Tardis and was in communication with a game of "Third Age" in **Ethil** - he had also started making guest appearances in various other zines. In **WB** 39 a regular London games meeting was announced which, after a shaky start, soon gained a regular clientele of games addicts, with several Diplomacy games every Sunday in the basement room of a hotel. This was another branch of the **G&P** complex, which also issued a weekly newsheet.

The list of zines received (**WB** 39) shows that trading with the USA had begun to increase beyond the standard few - this is true of most UK zines. Such international contacts are naturally to be welcomed; though what influence they will have remains to be seen - I would guess though that Europeans will continue to influence each other far more. Brian Yare's **Grafeti**, the newest Dippyazine which squeezed in its first two issues before the end of the year, seems set to follow the now established pattern, Brian did however promise some novelties - reports of FtF games were to be a regular feature.

All in all, it was an excellent year for Diplomacy, and next year will be even better, providing everyone accepts that as this fandom expands it will change, and change brings problems.

## 1972 – The Hobby Finds Its Feet

by Stephen Agar

Zine	Editor	Started	No. Seasons per game year <sup>3</sup>	Standbys or Anarchy?	Conditional Moves System) <sup>4</sup>
<i>Albion / Courier</i>	Don Turnbull	Aug 69	3	A <sup>5</sup>	n/a
<i>War Bulletin</i>	Dave Berg / Hartley Patterson	July 70	2	S	UK
<i>XL</i>	Colin Hemming	Jan 72	2	A	UK
<i>Ethil the Frog</i>	John Piggott	Jan 72	2	S	UK
<i>Bellicus</i> <sup>6</sup>	Will Haven	Mar 72	2	S <sup>7</sup>	UK
<i>BDC Journal</i>	Don Turnbull	June 72	3	A	n/a
<i>Der Krieg</i>	Graham Jeffrey	June 72	2	S	UK
<i>Mad Policy</i>	Richard Walkerdine	Aug 72	2	S	UK
<i>Dolchstoß</i>	Richard Sharp	Oct 72	3	S <sup>8</sup>	n/a
<i>1901 and all that</i>	Mick Bullock	Nov 72	3	A	n/a
<i>Grafeti</i>	Brian Yare	Dec 72	2	S	UK

In January 1972 Colin Hemming started **XL** while John Piggott founded the historic zine **Ethil the Frog**, which were both closely followed by Will Haven's **Bellicus** in March. Meanwhile the BDC initially ran games using Don Turnbull as GM, but later branched out by getting other new editors to run zines under its wing. One such zine was **Dolchstoß** which Richard Sharp (who had been introduced to the hobby via **Games & Puzzles** in June) began in October 1972 to run BDC games once Don Turnbull felt he was running enough. Of course in the very early days zines were very skimpy things indeed - **Mad Policy** did not reach the dizzy heights of 12 pages until issue 16, and 12 pages was quite long by the standards of the early 70s. In terms of numbers it was **Dolchstoß** which really took off in a big way thanks to the influx of people through the BDC who entered the hobby as a result of the flyer. After only five issues **Dolchstoß** was running 8 games (though only 4 pages long), whereas **Mad Policy** could only manage five games after 10 issues. Even at this early stage there was a degree of friction growing between the BDC zines and the "independents" (Eg. **Mad Policy** and **Ethil the Frog**) who regarded the BDC and later the

<sup>3</sup> Some zines favoured a 3-season year, (1) spring, (2) autumn, (3) retreats and adjustments (though sometimes the deadline for (3) was shortened).

<sup>4</sup> The "UK" system is to have the builds conditional on the Autumn moves (first developed in **War Bulletin** by Dave Berg). Conversely, the "US" system is to have the spring moves conditional on builds, a distinction which survives to the present day.

<sup>5</sup> Originally Don said he would use standbys, but never actually did.

<sup>6</sup> Actually **Bellicus** didn't open a Diplomacy waiting list until issue 7 (Jan 1973).

<sup>7</sup> A couple of years later changed to Anarchy

<sup>8</sup> Later changed to Anarchy

NGC as far too insular (Levin even told Sharp off for just daring to mention **Ethil the Frog** in issue 5 of **Dolchstoß**). Many years later Richard Sharp was to admit that the criticisms of the Independents were "largely justified" and that **Dolchstoß** would not have survived six years if it had been independent.

Arguably BritDipCon which was held at Hartley Patterson's house in September 1972 and attended by every UK publisher at the time apart from Don Turnbull was the first real Diplomacy con, although it had originally been planned as the annual meeting of the Tolkien Society. By the end of 1972 Graeme Levin was metamorphosing the BDC into the NGC (National Games Club) which took over the former's postal games by February 1973. During 1972 active Diplomacy zines had grown from 3 to 12 and the ground rules for the UK postal Diplomacy hobby were being developed.

As can be seen from the table above, in the early years there was little consensus as to how postal Diplomacy should be played, but the influence of **War Bulletin** was considerable. **Albion / Courier** started postal Diplomacy in the UK in 1969 with a 3-season game year, which was adopted for BDC games and probably explains why **Dolchstoß** (as a BDC organ) started off with 3 season years. The following year **War Bulletin** developed a 2-season conditional build system as a way of keeping the games moving faster, and it is this system which was copied by everyone else, apart from Mick Bullock. On the other hand Don Turnbull instigated a system of anarchy for dropouts, but only two other GMs followed suit (and one of those only GM'd variants) as everyone else copied **War Bulletin** and went for standbys. The use of standbys didn't go out of fashion until the late 70's.

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## The Start of Ethil the Frog

By John Piggott

*(culled from **Ethil the Frog** Nos. 12 and 16 – Aug/Oct 1972)*

I expect a significant number of you may be asking yourselves who this upstart is, who publishes such a creation as **Ethil** and who pontificates about such things as the BDC. I don't guarantee that this little piece will in any way answer your queries, but it may serve to tell of one person's introduction to postal Diplomacy.

I spent most of my teens at a boarding school, which I found to be a fairly unsatisfactory environment. During my final year I wandered by accident into science-fiction fandom, and through this was introduced to postal Diplomacy. I entered during the first boom of British Dippy. **War Bulletin**, edited by Dave Berg, had just started and was gathering players like mad. I was assigned Italy in WB 'B' game, and did fairly badly at the start. This was, in fact, the first Diplomacy game I had ever played - I didn't play it FtF till I arrived at Cambridge last September - but during the first period of play I had an alliance with and much useful advice from Austria. By the time he double-crossed me the other players (including him) had started dropping out left, right and centre. Germany had inexplicably fallen in love with my letters, and assigned me control of her country, and thus at the end I was able to snap up supply centres more quickly than Turkey. The game ended in 1907 with a victory for Germany/Italy.

By this time control of **WB** had passed into Hartley Patterson's hands, Dave Berg having become disillusioned about the time of the great Postal Strike, and for a period it was almost static in size and number of players. For a time it seemed that **Albion** was the only hope for British Diplomacy; then over two years old, it showed no sign (and to this day, it doesn't) of faltering. But then Will Haven asked Hartley to run an Abstraction game. He refused, intimating that it was Don Turnbull's province. Well, Don didn't appear likely to start a second Abstraction game, so the only alternative was to start another zine. I wrote to Will saying this. From such small beginnings do **Ethils** grow.

Now it came to pass that, when I wrote to Will suggesting we start a Dippy zine expressly for the purpose of running the Abstraction variant, Will waxed exceeding enthusiastic, and came up with several ingenious suggestions. "What shall we call it?" said Will, giving a long list of possible names... **Report**, **Mordor Morning Herald**, **Ethil the Frog**, **The Diplomatic Backstabber**, etc. I pounced on **Ethil the Frog**, and with the title chosen things began to take a more concrete appearance. Plans were laid to run fliers in **Albion**, and sometime about the middle of November I devised a wording for the first advertising flier for **Ethil the Frog**. Needless to say, the flier did not eventually appear, but about the end of the month letters were sent to certain selected people telling them of the new venture. We would, it was decided, run both regular and Abstraction games, and take turns to be the GM. (The intricate arrangements of this sort of policy still have not been investigated). Gradually, people began to express interest.

During the Christmas holidays, communications between Will and myself slackened off a little. But requests still trickled in with monotonous regularity. Finally, by the middle of January this year, enough people had signed up for "interest" and it looked as though a game might be filled.

In the absence of any communication from Haven, I decided to start on my own. **Ethil** started to kick at about four in the morning on Saturday, 15 January, 1972. I had been playing Diplomacy face-to-face into the small hours that night, and thanks to the coffee which I'd imbibed I couldn't sleep, so rather than stay tossing and turning in bed, I got up and wrote letters to everyone who'd expressed interest, giving details of subscription rates, frequency, and general policy. The next week saw the start of the influx of sticky dimes and postal orders. It still hasn't stopped.

The first game took sixteen days to fill. On 31<sup>st</sup> January, I was ready. A new era was about to be ushered in as I typed out the first issue and had it xeroxed. Yet even then there were clouds on the horizon. That very morning I received the first issue of a new Diplomacy fanzine, **XL**.

Colin Hemming had beaten me by one day.

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## DIPLOMYOPIA

### A Diplomacy variant by Colin Hemming

*First published in **XL** No.1 (January 1972) with minor modifications over the next few issues*

1. The rules of DIPLOMACY apply with the following exceptions.
2. At the end of each season, a player is able to see who is occupying only those provinces to which he has a unit adjacent (see also Rule 4, below). A fleet in a coastal province can see inland, and an army in a coastal province can see out to sea. **EXAMPLE:** F. (Bul)sc can see into the Black Sea.
3. During movement and combat, the vision of a unit is dependent upon the move being made.
  - i) A unit Holding is able to see what happens in all adjacent provinces.

**EXAMPLE:** France - A.(Bur) Holds; England - F.(Spa)sc -Mar, A.(Gas) Holds; Italy - F.(Pie) - Mar. *The French player is informed that A(Bur) sees the English Army remain in Gas, and a conflict in Mar resulting in a stand-off between an English and an Italian fleet. Had A(Gas) been ordered unsuccessfully to Spain, the French player would have received no different information. He is only informed the unit remains-not that it is ordered to Hold.*

A unit ordered to Hold is told of any attack on itself, and where the attack comes from.

ii) if a unit order to move moves unopposed, the player is merely told it succeeded ( the player is not told, for example, if another unit just vacated that province); if the move results in a stand-off, and the destination province stays empty, the unit "sees" where the opposition is coming from, including supports, though he is not told which units are moving and which supporting (**EXAMPLE:** A.(Mar)-Bur S by A(Mun) FAILS, stood off by FA(Pic) and EA(Par) ); if the move is stood off at the border by a unit in the neighbouring province, the player is told who his opponents are, but not where).

**EXAMPLE:** A.(Mar)-Bur S by A(Mun) FAILS stood off by 3 French Armies ); if the move is opposed but successful, the moving unit and those supporting it deemed to enter the province whether or not it was occupied, and the results are the same as if the province had been unoccupied; in none of these cases is an attacking unit told of an attack upon itself unless it is dislodged.

If the support which any unit is giving is not needed, that unit is to be considered as having received an order to "Hold", and treated as such (NOTE - Presumably this applies ONLY to supports given to units which move unopposed, NOT where a unit receives multiple supports and needs some, but not all of them). This rule also applies to a unit supporting a move by another player which is not ordered by that player. On the other hand, if a support is needed, the supporting unit sees exactly the same as the attacking unit - this is particularly important when one player supports another player's move.

A fleet conveying an attacking Army is deemed to have the same vision as the Army in the event of conflict (again, this is immaterial unless one player convoys another's unit). In the case of a multiple convoy, if the "chain" is disrupted before a particular fleet is reached by the Army, that Fleet treated as if ordered to "Hold".

4. GARRISONS: Once a province is left unoccupied, it is deemed to be garrisoned by a small, non-combatant body of men. When the province is taken by an enemy at least one member of the garrison is assumed to escape to report the capture (e.g. "Piedmont captured by a French army"). Thus, in addition to being told who occupies adjacent provinces at the end of a turn, a player is told of any unoccupied provinces he has lost, and to whom they have fallen.

5. CHANGE OF CONTROL OF SCs: Since the garrison is non-combatant and (apart from escapers) considered destroyed, then if the province is taken in a Spring move, it changes hands even if the captor moves out in Autumn. Thus it is quite possible for a game of DIPLOMYOPIA to end on a Spring move.

*SA: Diplomypia was the first hidden movement variant played in the UK, indeed the zine XL was founded just to run a postal game of it, though it never really caught on, principally due to the amount of work involved for the GM in preparing separate reports for each player. Andy Evan's Stab! was a reaction to Diplomypia in that it tried to ensure that what little information was revealed to the players was done in a public game report and therefore got round the need for the GM to give different information to each player.*

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## THE GAME OF LiMa

**Colin Hemming, Michel Liesnard & Jean-Paul Macedoni – Version 1b, 1972**

*Adapted from the French by Georreen and Colin Hemming*

1. Normal Diplomacy rules (ed. 1971) apply, with the exception of the following.

2. In addition to its normal units each great power has at the start of the game one air squadron (S). The initial deployment is as follows:

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: A Bud, A Clu, F Tri, S Vie

ENGLAND: A Edi, F Lon, F Sca, S Bri

FRANCE: A Mar, A Nan, F Bre, S Par

GERMANY: A Mun, A Poz, F Kie, S Ber

ITALY: A Rom, A Ven, F Sic, S Nap

RUSSIA: A Kis, A War, F Sev, F StP(s.c.), S Mos

TURKEY: A Con, A Smy, F Ank, S Usk

3. Air squadrons have a maximum range of 2 provinces (land or sea). They may receive the following orders:

(a) Stand

(b) Support (or provide air cover)

(c) Bombing.

(d) Invasion.

4. "Stand"

This corresponds exactly to the order "stand" given to an army or fleet. If a squadron that is ordered to stand is forced to retreat, it may move to any unoccupied land province within a two province radius of that which it was forced to leave. A squadron can fly over a sea province while retreating.

5. "Support"

This is the equivalent to support given by armies and fleets but carries further (2 provinces). A squadron which is supporting over a distance of two provinces from its place of departure must be given an itinerary.

E.g. S Vie (S) A Gre-Ser VIA Tri must be distinguished from S Vie (S) A Gre-Ser VIA Bud.

The support is cut if the province of departure of the squadron is attacked, but not if the province over which it is flying to achieve its objective is attacked. Thus, if S Vie (S) A Rum-Kis VIA Gal, the support would be cut by A Tri-Vie but not by A Clu-Cal.

6. "Bombing"

This move will cut a support or prevent an attack; it does not destroy the bombed unit. If the squadron is attacked at his place of departure the bombing raid will fail, even if the squadron is not dislodged.



E.g. RUSSIA: A War-Ukr; A Kis (S) A War-Ukr  
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: A Gal-Ukr; S Vie (B) A Kis via Gal

If the squadron in Vienna had been ordered to bomb Warsaw, this would not have stepped A War-Ukr but would, for example, have prevented A Lvn-War.

7. "Invasion":

This move, corresponding to an attack by an army or fleet, can be made only:

- (a) against a neutral country not conquered by an enemy;
- (b) against an enemy province which is not a supply centre, and against Naf or Alb;
- (c) against a supply centre previously held by an army or fleet of the same nationality as the squadron.

8. A squadron which is supporting or bombing does not change its place on the board; it makes a round-trip in one move.

9. Switzerland is impassable to air squadrons.

10. The province of departure of a squadron which is supporting or bombing can be supported by another unit. This last support blocks a double attack on the province but does not prevent the cutting of the support given by the squadron or the failure of his bombing mission.

11. If a squadron's starting province is taken while it is supporting, bombing or unsuccessfully attempting invasion, the squadron will retreat as follows:

- (a) If the squadron's objective was adjacent to its base, it retreats into a province adjacent to its objective.
- (b) If the squadron's objective was two spaces from its base, it retreats to a province one or two spaces from its objective.

If all retreat is impossible, the squadron must be annihilated.

12. Although capture of any supply centre permits the building of a squadron, a player may build a squadron only on his home air base (which is the SC upon which his initial squadron starts the game), although that SC may nonetheless be used for building an army or fleet.

13. If two squadrons meet over the same province they return to their starting positions, not having accomplished their missions. Two squadrons whose destination is the same but which follow different routes do not cross.

14. A unit may pass directly from Constantinople to Uskudar (or vice versa, but AEG and BLA are not adjacent; to travel from one to the other a fleet must pass through Con or Usk).

15. Scapa Flow may be occupied only by a squadron or a fleet, not by an army.

[16. Optional Rule – LiMa 2b: A squadron may not move to a foreign-owned supply centre when retreating.]

#### Abbreviations

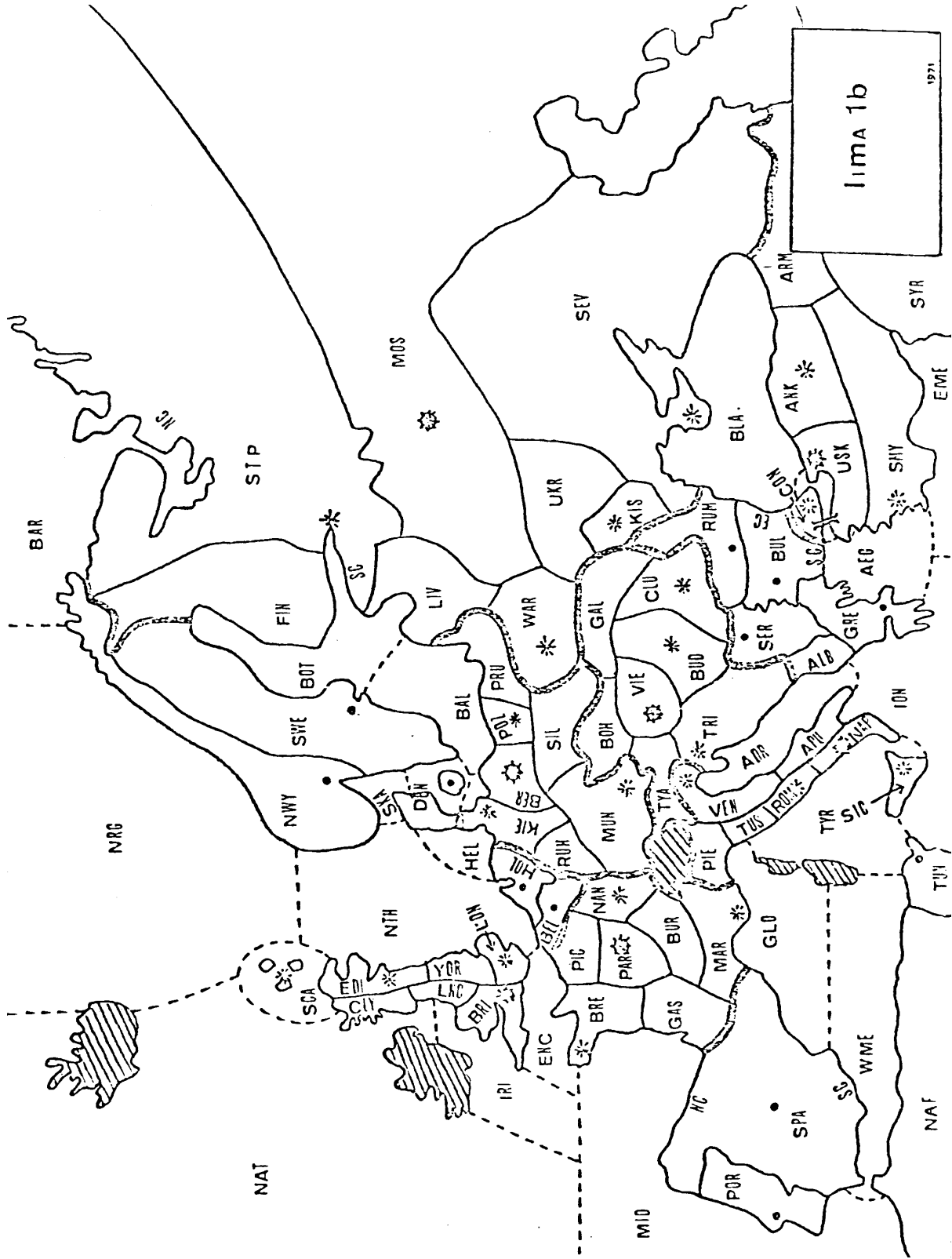
Bri = Bristol; Clu = Cluj; Kis = Kishinev; Lnc = Lancashire; Nan = Nancy; Poz = Poznan; Sca = Scapa Flow; Sic = Sicily; Usk = Uskudar.

*SA Out of interest, this game is called LiMa because that is the first two letters of Michel Liesnard & Jean-Paul Macedoni's surnames. Subtle, eh?*

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## WANTED SPACEFILLERS

Every zine editor will tell you that there is nothing more irritating than discovering at the last minute that you have an awkward little space you'd like to fill. Therefore, if there is anything that you would like to share with the readers of this organ which you think would be appropriate to be used as a space-filler, send it in now. Possible suggestions include lewd jokes, gratuitous insults aimed at Toby Harris, or even gratuitous lewd jokes involving Toby Harris ☺ All contributions gratefully received (and may be published anonymously to protect the guilty).



# NASTY TACTICS IN DIPLOMACY

by John Piggott

(published in *Ethil the Frog* No.14 – September 1972)

A few misguided souls still believe that Diplomacy is an honourable and genteel game. Oh, they may recognise that the only way to play is to stab, cheat and lie, but they will do this according to the diplomatic equivalent of the Marquis of Queensbury's rules.

We know that the basic purpose of participating in a game of postal Diplomacy is to gain pleasure from actually playing - the act of winning and the ego-boo gained thereby is merely a secondary consideration (players who believe otherwise should see a psychiatrist). However, once in a while it's a good thing to really beat the hell out of the other guys by any way possible, and it is to cater for this eventuality that this handy guide to tactics is compiled. Here will be found no lengthy treatises on tactics, no lists of reasons why Austro-Turkish alliances are not viable - just a catalogue of basic nasty tactics for the nasty player to familiarise himself with. Some of them - perhaps even a majority - have actually been used or attempted at one time or another; all, given the correct conditions, are theoretically feasible.

## 1. How To Interfere With The Post

On the surface, writing a diplomatic letter is a simple affair. You shove down on a scrap of paper what you wish the addressee to read, stick a stamp on and hope the GPO will deliver it in time. We all have our stories of postal mess-ups; but it can sometimes be convenient to aid the process with a few subtle tactics of one's own.

Do you remember Agatha Christie's *The ABC Murders*? In it, the murderer sent Hercule Poirot a letter giving details of the latest murder he was about to commit, but wrongly addressed the letter deliberately. Thus, the missive was delayed and Poirot did not receive it till the crime had been done. How simple to apply the tactic to postal Diplomacy! Imagine you are about to double-cross an erstwhile ally, but wish to remain in his good books for one more turn. You have received details of his enemy's plans, and the day before the deadline you send these to your "ally", just in time for him to amend his orders to take account of this new information. But suppose, in your haste to address the envelope and get it posted in time, you put "Monument Rd" for "Monmouth Rd". Quite a natural slip, one would think. But the delay this mistake causes is enough to ensure that the information does not reach its destination until its usefulness is ended, and you have at once fulfilled your obligations to both your allies - or appeared to. And that's all that matters to you.

Another way of achieving the same effect is to "forget" to stick a stamp on your envelope. The Post Office invariably give unstamped letters second-class treatment; often, indeed, they will take three or four days to arrive. Of course, once the recipient complains, you can be profuse in your apologies, even to the extent of refunding his 5p if you think it's worth it... but the damage is done by that stage.

Another valuable tactic is what Arthur Clarke has termed the "random noise" letter. This is simply a hand-written epistle in which certain key words are written so badly as to be unintelligible. Again, this tactic is best used close to a deadline date, so that the addressee has no time to query the doubtful words. When, in due course, he rounds on you and demands to know what you mean by moving to X instead of Y, you can plead that you did tell him you would do it...

Writing one of these letters takes some practise, and its organisation demands at least a rudimentary filing system, to keep track of what was said and how. Quite the opposite circumstance can be simulated by the simple stratagem of placing one player's letter in another's envelope. We have all done this (or nearly done it) at some time or another, I'm sure; and it would be quite useful sometimes to be able to do this deliberately. Care is necessary to ensure that the fake letter seems genuine. It should not be overwritten (a tendency fatally easy to fall into) nor should it appear too loyal to its real or fake recipients to ring true.

Anonymous letters are fairly "old hat" in postal Diplomacy now. I suspect that generally they are regarded in the same way as press releases; that is, they can be a bit of a laugh on occasions, but they must be taken with a big pinch of salt. More effective, if done well, might be forgeries of other players' letters, but a lot of care is needed. Forgery of hand-writing is not the easiest of tasks. The commonest error committed by amateur forgers is to take too much time in the formation of each character. This results in a jerky appearance to the work, and it's a dead give-away. If the player you're trying to forge normally types his letters, access to his machine is an essential before you can even consider taking the plan further<sup>9</sup>. Once mastery of the physical side is achieved,

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<sup>9</sup> SA: Not any more, given the preponderance of TrueType fonts.

consideration must be given to writing the letter in the correct style: does the person you're trying to forge know a lot about English grammar? If he does, a clutch of split infinitives would again give the game away. Lastly, the correct stationary must be used, and the letter must be posted in the right place. Wouldn't you feel suspicious if you got a letter postmarked "Sale, Cheshire" which appeared to come from me?

I could ramble on for longer, but I think my point has been made: namely, that decent forgery of another player's letters is too complex a task to be really feasible. For this reason, I am sometimes surprised to find some players taking the idea of forgery fairly seriously, devising separate forms of address for each player they write to and letting the secrets out to nobody. I consider this a waste of time, since, as I've just outlined, only a real madman would even attempt a successful forgery. Though I should note that perpetrating an unsuccessful forgery could sometimes lead to entertaining consequences, which I think I'll leave to your imaginations.

I'll just lightly, and facetiously, mention one other way one can interfere with the mails. It's only applicable in towns with quite a few Dippy players present, but application for a job as a post office sorter in such a centre would lead to possibilities which are at once interesting, limitless... and illegal.

## 2. How To Hoodwink The GM And Use His Zine To Further Your Own Ends

Many GMs view the possibility of being deceived by one of the players with a sort of dull horror. To minimise the risk of such a thing happening, many sets of house rules impose the Dippy equivalent of a death sentence as a punishment for this offence. Deception of the GM is not tolerated under any circumstances," they cry. "Discovery will lead to instant removal of the offender from all games."

I don't like people who try to deceive me very much, either, though I wouldn't go so far as some in my attempts to eradicate the canker from the entire universe. The main objection to a player's submitting false orders for another country, as far as I can see, is that it causes a monstrous fuss and delay to the game. As soon as the game report is issued, the player whose orders have been forged is sure to raise an outcry and the GM will have no choice but to suspend operations till the fuss is cleared up, and then to order a replay of the previous move. Viewed from this point, at least, the act of forging someone else's orders is indefensible.

Yet I don't crack down on offenders as hard as most. Why not? Because in my opinion, if the deception is successful the player who brings it off must have worked bloody hard at it. You see, I flatter myself that I'm fairly wide-awake, and that if anyone wants to deceive me they'll have to get up jolly early if they want to succeed.

So I keep the ultimate penalty in reserve, as a last resort to use on persistent offenders. So far I haven't received any forged orders (touch wood), but then it isn't a very common occurrence in any case. To minimise the risk, I advise players to sign their orders (though I don't insist on the precaution; I can't be bothered with bureaucracy over and above that which is barely necessary), and in cases where a forged order is submitted for the same deadline as a genuine set, I like to think I'd be able to tell them apart.

An interesting problem, however, arises for cases where the genuine player for some reason has sent in no orders, whilst a forged set has appeared. This dilemma is, to say the least, unlikely to occur, but unless I had definite proof (not mere suspicion) that the forged set was forged, I think I'd be forced to accept the forged set as genuine. That sounds a weird admission to make, I confess; but I see no other way out of it.

We have come to the surprising conclusion, therefore, that forging orders is perhaps too nasty a tactic, more dastardly than even Liesnard or myself dare contemplate. Needless to say, there exist less nasty manoeuvres involving the GM and his magazine. Indeed, the first of these I will mention could scarcely be termed nasty at all - the use of press releases.

As has been said above, press releases, whilst adding flavour and humour to the game (at least, they do this if well done), are not taken seriously as regards policy statements. It is possible they can be used, however, to further one's plans in the game, provided one has some notion of the particular psychology of the other players. For instance, if you received details of another player's plans, you could publish them either in an effort to thwart them or to assist their furtherance. This happened to me a couple of times recently, as readers of the "Ravioli Rave-Up" in the propaganda columns of Der Krieg will know. The effect it had on the success of my plans will probably remain unknown, but it is certain that it made me tend to clan up a bit in my communications to the offending player...

That's a fairly innocuous use of the magazine, of course. I'll skip over the notion of forging an issue of the magazine; though it would be a fantastic scheme to pull off, the technical problems involved are immense. Easier to organise is engineering oneself two countries in the same game, under different names. This has been successfully managed at least once, by John Boardman who took a second country in a Brobdingnag game under the pseudonym of "Eric Blake". The hoax was revealed when the game had ended, but regrettably I don't know what positions Boardman and Blake finished in.

Clearly, this tactic must be brought about without the GM's knowledge, but it wouldn't be too difficult to manage if you were dedicated. The address problem could be solved by renting a box number for ten pounds a year, I believe, and letters could be made to appear different for the two different players by using separate typewriters and stationary.

The last nasty tactic I want to mention in this section involves the GM's mistakes. Oh, I know there shouldn't be any, but there often are. And it's a fact that mistakes are often discovered by only one or two of the seven players. I don't know why this is so - I should have thought that all players would set up the pieces in their games to see what the position is, and to check that the moves have been adjudicated correctly - but no. Often I have found that if I find a mistake in the adjudication but neglect to tell anyone about it for some reason, then I don't receive a postcard from the GM correcting the error, although I (and, I guess, all the other players) do receive confirmation of the error when I do send notification to the GM...

This sounds, unlikely, I admit. Nevertheless in my experience this is true. And from this stems an, obvious nasty tactic. If you discover an error, which affects your enemy, why bother to tell the GM about it until the last possible opportunity? In other words, why not send notification of the error just before the deadline, leaving your enemy to make moves according to the published adjudication and maybe make a mess of them?

Most GMs in this situation would unhesitatingly call a replay of the move, I suspect. But I think the logic behind this decision is questionable, for it is, after all, up to the individual, players to check the position. The GM does his best, obviously, but it is hardly realistic to expect him to spot mistakes that he has already let through once. And if he can't find them, it is surely up to the players...

### 3. Foul Words, Menaces And Downright Threats

And now we travel from the sublime straight down to the ridiculous, I fear, entering, as a sort of extra, grounds of very shaky legality in some parts. Undeterred, we press on, leaving the chicken-livered by the way.

But we can start with the most common, and, in some ways, one of the most innocuous of nasty tactics - carrying alliances and grudges from one game to another. Many players feel this is a bad idea, preferring to keep all their games separate. There's a lot to be said for this notion, I think; but unfortunately it isn't always possible. One's reputation will sometimes find one out, even when an effort is made to alter the character of one's play in different games. For instance, I have achieved the rather unenviable reputation of being an untrustworthy player, who would stab his own grandmother for an extra build. In most of the games I'm playing in, this is a perfectly true description, but it's annoying to an extreme when my reputation prevents the alliances I want to keep from working as well as I'd like. The trouble is that a reputation is damned difficult to get rid of once you're saddled with it, and there's no immediate cure.

This hardly qualifies at all as a truly nasty tactic; however, it is sometimes useful to play upon the reputations of one's opponents, in an effort to turn their allies against them. But the suitability of this tactic depends on what sort of reputations your opponents have got. It is unlikely to be successful if wielded by a player who himself has a bad record...

Instead of merely criticising the past Diplomacy record of your enemies, however, you might consider extending the criticism to wider areas, aiming at either turning his would-be allies against him or else demoralising him. Coincidentally, Graeme Levin and myself are playing in the same game in **Courier** (game 1971EA) and a couple of people have asked me whether my attack on the BDC in recent **Ethils** stemmed from the fact that Levin, playing Germany, stabbed me (England) in this game. In fact, this is not the case; I'm happy to say that the Anglo-French alliance seems to be taking care of Germany quite well at the moment, without any need to resort to mundane influences; but the thought is there, nonetheless. A player with access to independent publishing sources might achieve a good deal by passing scurrilous attacks about his opponents around. The likeliest method of success would be to anger one's opponents so much that they attempt to take revenge on you in the game and launch an ill-conceived and suicidal attack. Care would be necessary in the selection of one's subjects for this tactic; many players, probably a majority, would simply shrug off such attacks and ignore them; a few would merely invoke the libel laws if the criticism were too extreme. All considered, I think this tactic would best be left in the theory books, and not brought into practise.

An interesting possibility for defeated players to consider is to sign up as a standby player for the game one has been eliminated from. Then, later, one could enter the game for a second time and get revenge on the cur who caused your defeat the first time round. This idea has so much scope for nasty and treacherous tactics that I suspect many GMs will forbid this in their house rules - but I think it may be worth a try anyway. In a way, it's a rather ghoulish trick: "If you kill me, I'll come back and haunt you."

#### 4. How To Mess About With Other Peoples' Moves

Do you like to make your opponents' moves fail? Of course you do. And there are more ways of bringing this happy circumstance about than merely force of arms and luck.

The main method of influencing the other players' orders and affecting their outcome is a judicious use of the support order. As we all know, any player may support the moves of another player, provided that the positions of the units in question are such that support is legal. In addition to giving us the obvious possibilities for two countries to constructively co-operate, also opens the road to some rather nastier tactics.

You do not require the other player's permission in order to support one of his moves or pieces. This is especially useful in cases where you want to thwart self stand-offs.

For instance, suppose France has A Spa, A Bur, and Italy has A Pie. It is Autumn 1901 and Italy wishes to prevent France from building a fleet in Marseilles next Winter. France will protect Marseilles by ordering A Spa-Mar, A Bur-Mar; if Italy orders A Pie-Mar or A Pie stands, Marseilles remains open and France builds his fleet. If Italy orders A Pie S A Spa-Mar, France loses not only the chance to build his fleet where he wants it, but also loses Spain into the bargain.

This is a reasonably obvious stratagem. Less obvious, but still fairly useful in certain circumstances, is the tactic of telling your "allies" you will support their moves, or perform certain manoeuvres, and then either "forgetting" to send in orders or else writing the relevant parts of your orders in a format which will not be accepted by the GM. For instance, an order which reads "F Bar-Nor" is illegal, since it could refer either to Norway or to the Norwegian Sea. Confronted with irate allies, demanding to know what went wrong, you could simply plead that it was a mistake, even feigning annoyance that the GM didn't allow your moves, or that they didn't arrive in time. Who is to prove you wrong?

The third tactic regarding the support order I'll just mention briefly. In cases where one is confronted by two allied powers, but has not yet been attacked (this situation will often arise in a three-power alliance, just as the power under attack by all three is eliminated), to give support to a (non-existent) move of one ally against the other may sometimes be an aid to establishing dissent between them. By itself, of course, this tactic is insufficient.

Busy players like Davidson, who play in many games at once, are also open to trickery a little. People who play in lots of magazines may find it difficult to remember whose house rules apply to which games offhand, especially if they lack decent filing systems, and then in certain cases it would probably be a simple matter to play upon their confusion to cause them to make moves illegal under the house-rules for that game, though perfectly legal under other GMs. This used to have far more application than it has now; the advent of the new Rulebook<sup>10</sup> has smoothed out a good many of the individual differences between house rules. However, in this country at least, the new Rulebook has brought another factor into play. Despite its availability, many players, I am sure, have not yet got a copy, and plays on the ignorance of some people of some of the new rules are possible. It's risky, though - if you try it on a novice he may ask the GM to tell him what the real rule is...

So there you have it. An ample justification, I think, for those words in the old Rulebook: "During the Diplomacy period, nothing is sacred." There is, I think, only one thing left to say: if any of these tactics are tried on you, I ain't to blame.

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#### GAMESTART MIDDLE EARTH II

ARNOR: Pdraig Timmins, 67 Maisemore Gardens, Emsworth, Hampshire, PO10 7JX

GONDOR: Chris Latimer, 79 Chapel Street, Pelsall, Walsall, WS3 4LW

MORDOR: Mark Wightman, 52 Park Road West, Bedford, Beds, MK41 7SL

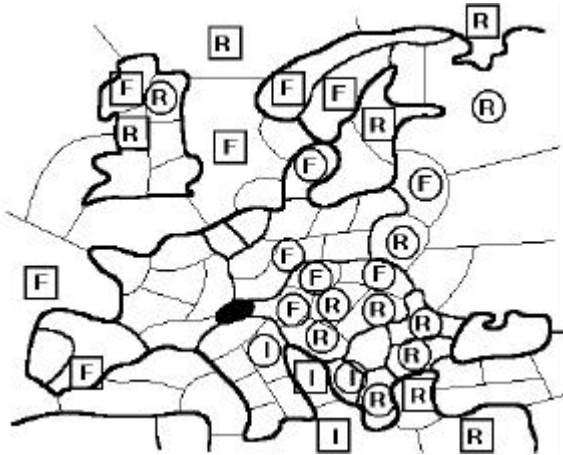
RHOVANION: Tony Elbourn, Bibury House, Priory Place, Cheltenham, GL52 6HG.

ROHAN: Roland Cooke, 143 Park Avenue, Widley, Portsmouth, Hants, PO7 5HQ

**Wilfred:** The optional rule putting a neutral SC in the Ash Mountains WILL be played – as it was recommended by the games designer after postal playtests. Please amend your maps accordingly. The game will commence next issue only if I receive five sets of orders. Anyone not sending in moves for the first move of the game is liable to be replaced without warning. Also note that I use standbys in variant games, so if anyone drops out they will be replaced.

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<sup>10</sup> 1971 edition



1995DS TRAPEZE (Spring 1910)

FRANCE (Roy Britash) A(Pie) - Tyr; A(Mun) - Boh; A(Ruh) - Mun; A(Sil) - Gal; A(Lvn) s F(BAR) - StP nc (CUT); F(BAR) - StP nc\* (FAILED, DISLODGED - DISBANDED NRP); A(Den) s F(BAL) - Swe; F(BAL) - Swe; F(NTH) - Nwy; F(Lon) - NTH; F(Mar) - Spa sc; F(Bre) - MAO; F(Lpl) Stands\* (DISLODGED TO Cly)

ITALY (Richard Scholefield) A(Tri) - Ser\* (FAILED, DISLODGED - DISBANDED NRP); A(Alb) s A(Tri) - Ser; F(Gre) - ION\* (FAILED, DISLODGED - DISBANDED NRP); F(ION) - AEG (FAILED); A(Ven) - Tri (FAILED); F(ADS) s F(Gre) - ION

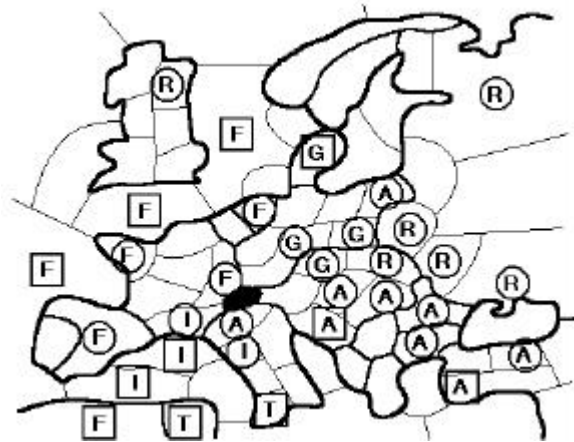
RUSSIA (Paul Reeves) F(StP) nc - BAR; F(NAO) - Lpl; F(Swe) - Den\* (FAILED, DISLODGED TO GoB); A(Edi) s F(NAO) - Lpl; A(Bud) s A(Rum) - Ser; F(NWG) s F(StP) nc - BAR; A(Mos) - StP; A(War) - Lvn (FAILED); A(Tyr) - Tri; A(Rum) - Ser (FAILED); A(Ser) - Gre; A(Bul) s A(Ser) - Gre; A(Vie) s A(Tyr) - Tri; F(AEG) s F(EMS) - ION; F(EMS) - ION (FAILED)

**Press:**

**Rome:** The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming! BUT have the French creeped round the back?

**UFO - GUNBOAT STAB!**

This game got a bit mislaid when **Carpe Diem** folded – mainly due to mass player apathy. However, I will make a brave attempt to restart the game. All players will find a copy of the last game report plus the positions of their units on a sheet enclosed with the zine. Assume I have no orders on file. Provided I have at least two sets of orders I will continue with the game – though I also propose a draw between all surviving players as an alternative (abstention = yes, unanimity required). If only one player wants to continue, they will be awarded the game in default.



1995EN WIZZARD (Autumn 1909)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Richard Scholefield) A(Ser) - Rum; A(Bul) s A(Ser) - Rum; A(Gal) - Ukr\* (FAILED, DISLODGED TO Vie); A(Bud) - Gal (FAILED); F(AEG) - Smy; A(Ank) - Arm (FAILED); A(Tyr) - Pie; A(War) - Lvn\* (FAILED, DISLODGED TO Pru)

FRANCE (Peter Dunnett) F(NTH) c A(Hol) - Bre; A(Spa) s A(Bur) - Mar; F(Naf) s TURKISH F(ION) - Tun; A(Bur) - Mar (FAILED); F(ENG) c A(Hol) - Bre; A(Ruh) - Hol; F(MAO) s A(Spa); A(Hol) - Bre

GERMANY (Steve Bibby) F(Den) - NTH (FAILED); A(Sil) s RUSSIAN A(Mos) - War; A(Kie) - Mun; A(Mun) - Boh

ITALY (Allan Stagg) A(Tus) - Rom (FAILED); F(GoL) s A(Mar); F(WMS) - Tun (FAILED); A(Mar) Stands

RUSSIA (Rob Walk) F(NWG) c A(Nwy) - Edi; A(StP) - Lvn (FAILED); A(Mos) - War; A(Rum) - Gal; A(Sev) - Arm (FAILED); A(Ukr) s A(Rum) - Gal; A(Nwy) - Edi

TURKEY (David Harris) F(Nap) - Rom (FAILED); F(ION) - Tun

**Autumn 1909 Adjustments:**

A: +Rum, Bul, Vie, Bud, +Smy, Ank, Ser, Con, Gre, Tri, -War = 10; Gains 1. Builds F(Tri). 1 Build centre short.

F: Spa, Hol, Bre, Por, Bel, Lpl, Lon, Par = 8; No change.

G: Den, Mun, Ber, Kie = 4; No change.

I: Mar, Rom, Ven, -Tun = 3; Loses 1. GM removes F(WMS).

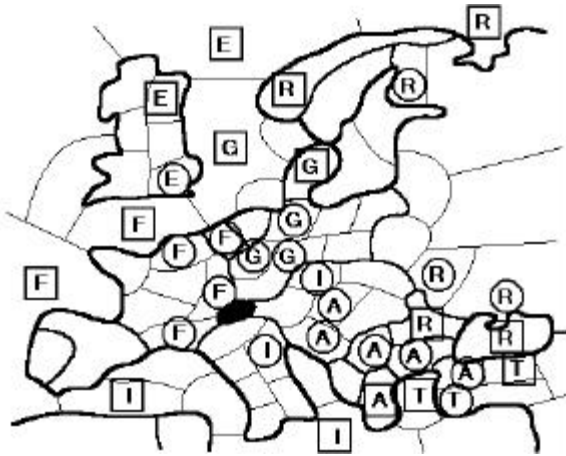
R: StP, +War, Sev, Edi, Nwy, Swe, Mos, -Rum = 7; No change.

T: Nap, +Tun, -Smy = 2; No change.

**Press:**

**Italy-Austria:** I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed in your last letter, especially the bit about the stupidity of forgetting to order a provisional retreat.

**Austria:** Well did I get Turkey for Christmas? Did I get Rum for Christmas?



97?? ANSON (Spring 1903)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Pete Duxon) A(Vie) s A(Tri) (CUT); A(Tri) s A(Vie) (CUT); A(Bud) - Ser; A(Ser) - Bul; A(Bul) - Con; F(Gre) - AEG (FAILED)

ENGLAND (Michael Goldthorpe - NMR!) F(NWG) Stands ; F(Edi) Stands ; A(Lon) Stands

FRANCE (Dave Newnham) A(Bur) s A(Bel); A(Mar) - Pic (MISORDER); F(ENG) s ENGLISH F(NWG) - NTH (MISORDER); A(Par) - Pic; F(Spa) sc - MAO; A(Bel) Stands

GERMANY (Paul Barker) A(Hol) - Ruh; A(Kie) s A(Mun); A(Mun) s AUSTRIAN A(Tri) - Tyr (MISORDER); F(Den) s F(NTH); F(NTH) s RUSSIAN F(Nwy) - NWG (MISORDER)

ITALY (John Wilman) A(Ven) - Tri (FAILED); A(Boh) - Vie (FAILED); F(ION) s TURKISH F(AEG) - Gre (MISORDER); F(WMS) s FRENCH F(Spa) sc - MAO

RUSSIA (Jimmy Cowie) A(Mos) - Sev; A(StP) - Fin; A(Ukr) s A(Mos) - Sev; F(BLA) s AUSTRIAN A(Bul) - Con; F(Nwy) - BAR; F(Rum) s AUSTRIAN A(Ser) - Bul; F(Swe) - Nwy

TURKEY (Allan Gordon) F(Con) - Ank; A(Arm) - Smy; F(AEG) - Con (FAILED)

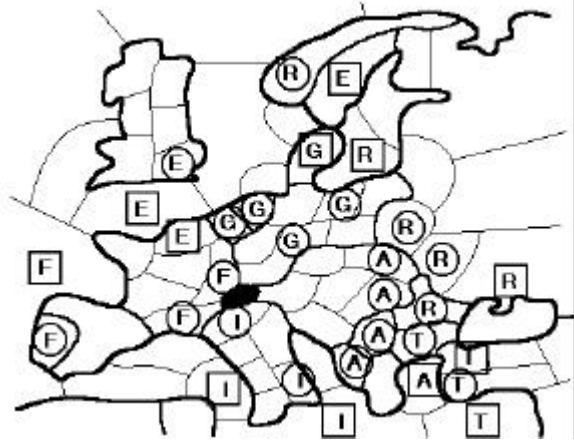
**Press:**

**El Thid:** "Wazir, thith perthon "Wilfwed" who doeth the War reports..... he keepth making a Horlickth of our bwilliant Pweth thatementh with hith cwappy tyboth. Doethn't the wretched fellow have a Thpell-checker?" "indeed, Wonderfulness..... but when dazbled by your highnesty's unique command of the language, he probably switches the thing off!"

**El Thud:** "Mather, mather, I said omnipotence, I thwear I did'th!"

**Berlin-Wilfred:** "...only three instances..." - I make it four. Con-Bul, MAO and Por-Spa and

building F(StP). Can I stake my claim for Pedant of the Year 1998?



BERTHIER (Spring 1902)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Keith Loveys) A(Tri) - Alb; F(Gre) - AEG; A(Bud) s A(Vie) - Gal; A(Ser) Stands; A(Vie) - Gal

ENGLAND (Roland Cooke) A(Yor) - Lon; F(ENG) - Pic; F(Lon) - ENG; F(Nwy) - Swe

FRANCE (Jason Asker) A(Bur) s ENGLISH F(ENG) - Bel (MISORDER); A(Spa) - Por; A(Mar) s A(Bur); F(Bre) - MAO

GERMANY (Alex Hankin) A(Hol) s A(Ruh) - Bel; A(Ruh) - Bel; A(Ber) s A(Mun); A(Mun) Stands; F(Den) Stands

ITALY (Tony Reeves) F(Nap) - TYS; F(ION) c A(Tun) - Apu; A(Tyr) - Pie; A(Tun) - Apu

RUSSIA (Nicholas Parish) F(Swe) - BAL; A(StP) - Nwy; A(War) - Gal (FAILED); A(Mos) - Ukr; A(Rum) Stands; F(Sev) s A(Rum)

TURKEY (Andy Bassett) F(BLA) - Con; A(Bul) s RUSSIAN A(Rum); A(Con) - Smy; F(Smy) - EMS

**Press:**

**Turkey to the Christian Alliance:** I thought this was meant to be a Christian time of year, peace and goodwill. Well not from where I'm sitting buddy. Oh no.

**Russia (Govt.)-All:** Apologies for the lack of letters - pressure of work, etc. I rejoin the real world on 17<sup>th</sup> January, when my exams finish. Stephen - no quick turnarounds, please!

**Post Office Box 18, Venice-All Applicants:** Due to the overwhelming response membership applications to the BJA are suffering processing delays. Please be patient - it's worth the wait.

**Bernard Matthews to All:** (A) Turkey's for Christmas, not for life. Get your slice while it's still fresh.



**ANSCHLUSS (Autumn 1905)**

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Gihan Bandaranaike) No units.

ENGLAND (Roy Burnett) F(NWG) - NAO (FAILED); F(NTH) - Lon; A(Nwy) - StP; F(Cly) s A(Wal) - Lpl; A(Wal) - Lpl

FRANCE (Emeric Miszti - NMR!) F(IRI) Stands ; A(Bel) Stands ; A(Bur) Stands ; A(Mun) Stands ; F(NAO) Stands ; F(ENG) Stands ; F(Spa) sc Stands

GERMANY (Ian Coleman) A(Ruh) s A(Den) - Kie; A(Den) - Kie (FAILED)

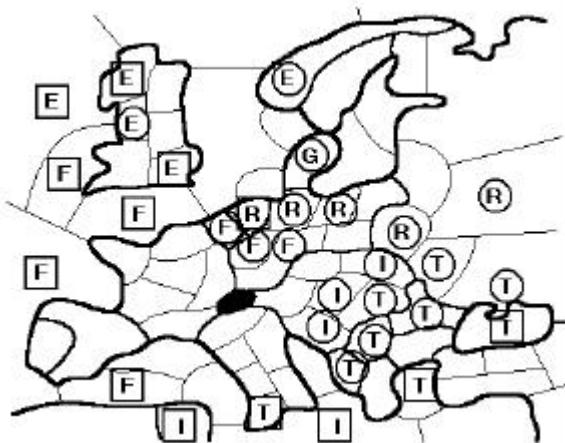
ITALY (Colin Smith - NMR!) F(Tun) Stands ; F(ION) Stands\* (DISLODGED - DISBANDED NRO); F(Alb) Stands ; A(Gal) Stands ; A(Tri) Stands ; A(Vie) Stands

RUSSIA (Pete Birks) F(Hol) s A(Kie); A(Kie) s F(Hol) (CUT); A(Mos) - Sev (FAILED); A(War) - Sil

TURKEY (Jeremy Tullett) F(BLA) s A(Arm) - Sev; A(Rum) s A(Bud); A(Gre) s A(Bul) - Ser; A(Bul) - Ser; F(AEG) s F(EMS) - ION; F(EMS) - ION; A(Arm) - Sev; A(Bud) Stands

**Autumn 1905 Adjustments:**

A: -Bud = 0; Loses 1. OUT!  
 E: Lon, StP, Lpl, Nwy, Edi = 5; No change.  
 F: Bel, Mun, Spa, Mar, Por, Bre, Par = 7; No change.  
 G: Den, Swe, -Kie = 2; Loses 1.  
 I: Tun, Tri, Vie, Ven, Nap, Rom = 6; No change.  
 NBO.  
 R: Hol, +Kie, Mos, Ber, War = 5; Gains 1. Builds A(War).  
 T: Rum, Gre, Ser, Sev, +Bud, Bul, Con, Ank, Smy = 9; Gains 1. Builds A(Con).



**ANSCHLUSS (Spring 1906)**

ENGLAND (Roy Burnett) A(StP) - Nwy; F(Lon) - ENG (FAILED); F(NWG) - NAO; F(Cly) s F(NWG) - NAO; A(Lpl) - Wal (FAILED)

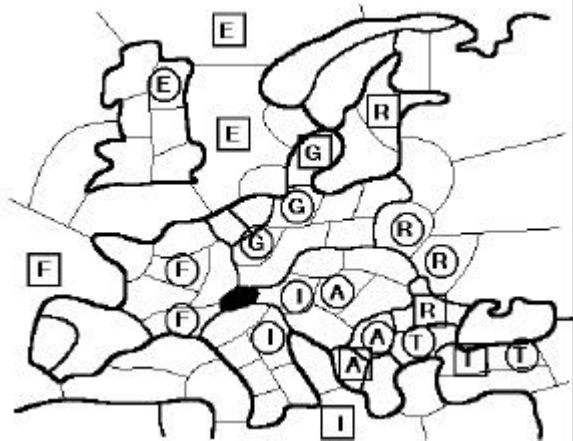
FRANCE (Emeric Miszti) F(IRI) - Wal (FAILED); A(Bel) s A(Bur) - Ruh; A(Mun) s A(Bur) - Ruh; F(NAO) - Lpl\* (FAILED, DISLODGED TO MAO); F(ENG) s F(IRI) - Wal (CUT); F(Spa) sc - WMS; A(Bur) - Ruh

GERMANY (Ian Coleman) A(Den) s A(Ruh) - Kie; A(Ruh) - Kie\* (FAILED, DISLODGED - DISBANDED NRP)

ITALY (Colin Smith) F(Tun) s F(Alb) - ION; A(Gal) - Bud (FAILED); A(Tri) s A(Gal) - Bud; A(Vie) s A(Gal) - Bud; F(Alb) - ION

RUSSIA (Pete Birks) A(Kie) s F(Hol) (CUT); A(Mos) s A(War); A(Sil) - Ber; A(War) Stands; F(Hol) s A(Kie)

TURKEY (Jeremy Tullett) F(ION) - Nap; F(AEG) - ION (FAILED); A(Bud) Stands; F(BLA) c A(Con) - Sev; A(Gre) - Alb; A(Rum) s A(Bud); A(Sev) - Ukr; A(Ser) s A(Bud); A(Con) - Sev



**98?? CORNWALLIS (Spring 1901)**

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Tony Elbourn) A(Bud) - Ser; A(Vie) - Gal (FAILED); F(Tri) - Alb

ENGLAND (Anthony Coogan) F(Edi) - NWG; A(Lpl) - Edi; F(Lon) - NTH

FRANCE (Brad Martin) A(Par) - Bur (FAILED); A(Mar) - Bur (FAILED); F(Bre) - MAO

GERMANY (John Miller) A(Mun) - Ruh; A(Ber) - Kie; F(Kie) - Den

ITALY (Paul Harrison) A(Ven) - Tyr; A(Rom) - Ven; F(Nap) - ION

RUSSIA (George Hornby) F(StP) sc - GoB; A(War) - Gal (FAILED); A(Mos) - Ukr; F(Sev) - Rum

TURKEY (Peter Berlin) A(Con) - Bul; A(Smy) - Ank; F(Ank) - Con



**ENDBIT**

Computer games are a real distraction. I have found myself hopelessly addicted to *Age of Empires* from Microsoft (who seem to have produced a good game for once). Basically it's a "God" game, set in the ancient world where you have to develop your civilisation in order to build various military units with which you can attack your neighbours. Some technologies are not available to some civilisations (e.g. the Greeks don't get Elephant archers, while the Persians don't get a Phalanx) and with 12 different civilisations to choose from there's plenty of variety. A particular strength of this game is the fearsome artificial intelligence possessed by the computer, who is a damned hard player to beat. As the only time I get to play computer games is when the rest of the family is in bed, I reckon this game has cost me 20 hours sleep over the Christmas period. Previously my all time favourite game was *Civilisation*, but I think *Age of Empires* beats it. It is so easy to see why games like Diplomacy have lost their attraction these days.

**COAs**

Tony Elbourn to Bibury House, Priory Place, Cheltenham, GL52 6HG.  
Toby Harris to 73 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AT.  
Roy Britash to 73 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AT.

**WAITING LISTS**

**Regular Diplomacy (1 wanted?):** Keith Smith (REFIAGT), Tony Elbourn, Allan Gordon (FEGRAIT), Douglas Massie (TRFEAGI), Dave Clark (?) (GI), Matt Kane (?) (RTGEFIA). "(?)" indicates no sub received as yet.

**Regular Diplomacy with Email Addresses (5 wanted):** Nick Marshall (TREGAFI); Geoff Norwood (EFT)

**LiMA (7 wanted):** Rules inside. Or is it too complicated for you lot?

**YOUR SUBSCRIPTION**

It is a condition of subscription to *Spring Offensive* that you consent to subscription information being maintained on a computer database and that you consent to me releasing address information to others in the Diplomacy hobby. If you object, let me know. The precise amount of your existing credit is shown after your name on the address label (so retrieve the envelope from the bin now!). By way of an additional warning:

**A top up would be nice...**

**Personally, I can't see you getting the next issue...**

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DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 58:

**FRIDAY 6<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 1998**

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