

## **Contretemps II**

By Tom Swider

This is a variant which combines Robert Sacks' Active Neutrals variant with 1914 (Brazil's version of Diplomacy).

- 1) North Africa becomes a 35th supply center. Victory criterion becomes 19 supply centers.
- 2) All supply centers are treated as separate countries at the start of the game. They are controlled by the following major powers:
  - Austria: A Belgium, F Norway
  - England: A Greece, F North Africa
  - France: A Rumania, A Sweden
  - Germany: A Bulgaria, F Tunis
  - Italy: A Holland, F Portugal
  - Russia: A Serbia
  - Turkey: A Denmark, A Spain
- 3) Neutrals claim supply centers for themselves and may build if entitled to build. In the unlikely event that an active neutral wins the game or shares in a draw, credit goes to the player controlling the neutral.

### Commentary:

Very much like Colonia, the distribution of pieces at the beginning of the game requires players to negotiate with everybody, as there are more opportunities for cooperation or conflict. Players may cut deals to kill their neutrals for each other's benefits. For example, Italy sacrifices Holland to Germany, and in return Germany sacrifices Tunis. Italy on the other hand may not be so keen on giving up Portugal without a fight, as that is a fleet beyond his side of the stalemate line.

All players begin with 5 supply centers, which makes it more democratic than the standard game. Russia only gets one extra unit, but it is in the Balkans and a little more useful initially. As Russia usually has more two front concerns than any other power, it seems fair to give him the fourth Balkan dot.

I saw the original version of CONTRETEMPS on Genie (a game that Bill Highfield is offering in THE MODERN PATRIOT which is now an online xyn) and the differences are: (1) they ignored Robert's rule for neutrals being allowed to grow (any supply centers captured would be built in the controlling player's home centers), and (2) Active Neutrals originally had AUS F Por and ITA F Nwy. The switch is minor, but benefits both Austria and Italy. Austria can have a stronger retaliation against Russia in case of attack, and Italy's interests are weighted more towards the west, with units on that side to boot.