

ARMISTICE DAY No.5

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EDITORIAL

I'm afraid that this issue is a little thin. I'm off to Sorrento for a Postal Economics conference in a couple of days, so I am just going to have to print the zine as it is – no matter how short. It's either that or delay things another week, which isn't what I want to do. Part of the problem is that I never seem to get all the orders in until 4-5 days after the deadline! Now, this is a bit of a pain in the ass, especially when I'm trying to be a relatively efficient editor. Therefore, I am introducing three changes: (1) all players with email will get a deadline reminder two days before the deadline, (2) I'll move the deadline to Saturday and (3) I probably won't wait if orders are late in future (though I reserve the discretion to do so).

I don't normally talk much about myself in my Diplomacy zines, but this issue is going to be an exception. I haven't made many big decisions in my life (other than the usual – getting married and having kids), but a couple of weeks ago I made a decision that may well affect the rest of my working life. For as long as I can remember I have wanted to be a lawyer – I think it all comes down to watching too much "Crown Court" on afternoon TV during the early 70's. I did a law degree, then a law postgraduate degree, qualified as a Barrister, and then ended up as an in-house lawyer (first in the Government Legal Service, and then in industry).

I began work for the Post Office back in January 1991, as a run of the mill "Senior Lawyer". Over the years one thing led to another and I ended up as Head of Company & Commercial Law, running five teams of about five lawyers each – that's quite a lot of commercial lawyers. However, I've been there ten years and then chance of further promotion is non-existent as my boss won't be retiring for 9-10 years (and she's been with the Post Office since she qualified). I've been looking in the various job columns for a few months, thinking that it would be nice to be Head of Legal in my own right for some other company, but nothing has caught my eye. However, about six weeks ago I got a phone call which asked if I would allow my name to be put forward for a job in the mainstream business – i.e. as a manager rather than as a lawyer. On the basis that you loose nothing by exploring possibilities I agreed.

The job in question was Business Strategy Director for the Business & Consumer Markets Division of Consignia plc (this part of Consignia would be more familiar to you as Royal Mail inland letters). An informal chat with my potential new boss (who had only been with the Post Office a few months), an interview later – and I was offered the job! Hmmm – a big step. Should I stay with my lawyers in the relatively protected environment of Legal Services, or should I go out into the big wide world outside? I quite fancied the new job (only two steps away from the main board), but I was happy not to move as well. Therefore I decided to set my

own terms, and if they met them (more or less) I'd take the job – and if they didn't I would say no. I was gambling that they wouldn't want to change their mind for the sake of a few thousand pounds. Anyway, after a protracted haggle over pay and conditions, I ended up taking the job and I start at the beginning of July. So instead of putting together legal advice I have to come up with a competitive strategy for UK letters as we enter the brave new world of Regulation and Competition. How different this will be from providing the legal input into strategy remains to be seen – but at least instead of criticising the silly decisions of others I know get to make some silly decisions of my very own. About 30 staff comes with the job – mainly various research and policy staff – which all makes it feel rather daunting. My experience is that lawyers don't actually need much managing – whereas I am expecting this job to require far more of my time managing staff, as well as making space for my *deep strategic thinking* time. No doubt all my time spent playing Diplomacy will come in very handy.

There are real risks for me in making this leap – just as it is an opportunity to succeed and progress, it is an opportunity to fail on a rather spectacular scale. As de-regulation and e-substitution bites the Post Office may well make managers redundant – though you always need lawyers even when things are going badly. If I was made redundant in a few years time, I am not sure how easy it would be to get another job after such a career switch. On the other hand, you only get one life, and this is a chance to make a real change of direction (and potentially further my career) from within an organisation that is still a better employer than many.

One real down side is that the job is based in the centre of London, so I will have to commute from Brighton to London every day. I've already decided to pay the extra for a 1st class season ticket (which at least more or less guarantees you a seat) so I can travel in a bit of comfort – but it will add a couple of hours to my work day. Of course, this will all impact on my family life – but Esme is supportive and there is the possibility to work at home occasionally.

One thing that I have to confess I didn't think about until after I'd decided to go for the new job, is the knock-on effect on *Armistice Day*. At the moment I photocopy the zine at work, using my own paper, with the agreement of the office manager. This isn't practical anymore – even if I were to photocopy it in London, I don't fancy carrying it back to Brighton on the train. So I will have to think of something else. Favourite at the moment is just printing it myself on my laser printer – having control of the process would be nice – but the real downside (apart from cost) is that it will take ages and ages. To lessen the burden on myself from next issue the zine will be available for immediate downloading from the web for free – so if you want to subscribe or play you can do so for free, simply by joining the Armistice Day

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Mailing List. If anyone wants to join the Mailing List at <http://www.armisticeday.com> and have their subscription returned let me know. I won't actually mail out the issue (too big) – but I will email out the link from which it can be downloaded from the web.

Being a materialist of the first order, I have indulged in quite a lot of shopping therapy since last issue. My new job requires quite a bit of commuting and it occurred to me that one way to make the commuting a little less horrible is to acquire a Archos Jukebox 6000 – which is basically a 6 Gig Hard Disk about the size of a normal walkman – but it can hold up to 150 CDs in MP3 format. At least it gives you plenty of choice! First impressions are very favourable, the only obvious drawback is that it appears just a little quiet for the background noise generated by Connex South East, but there are ways around that.

Purchase No.2 was a new VCR – our old one had developed an intermittent fault which means that sometimes when you tried to record things all you got was sound – I think the SCART socket had a loose fixing. I opted for a Samsung which is a VCR and a DVD. Works brilliantly as well – Esme would never have agreed to a DVD for its own sake, but buying a combo unit swayed her. Thinking about it there is very little I actually want to buy on DVD – though I did treat myself to “Waterloo” (the 1970 film) – an odd choice, I know, but I remember my father taking me to see it when I was ten and I always loved the battle scenes.

Then Esme had the commendable idea of giving our redundant PC to Freddie's school – and they were quite keen. However, it seemed mean not to let them have a colour inkjet to go with it – so Esme donated her printer, she got mine, and I purchased a Epson Photo 890 which is a wonderful little machine. The quality and speed of digital photo reproduction has to be seen to be believed.

Last and least (in terms of cost) was “Fruit Tree” - a boxed set of Nick Drake's three studio albums, plus a CD of unreleased stuff and a detailed booklet. I didn't have any of his albums, and really didn't know what his music was like – so forking out £30 was a bit of a gamble. However, all the good reports I had heard were justified, and I have played these CDs many times. If you are curious I particularly recommend “Pink Moon” – the last album he recorded before his untimely death at the age of 26. A depressive, who probably died as a result of an accidental overdose, his final album is very sparse – recorded in 2 days, with just voice, guitar and the occasional piano. The sound engineer assumed they were demo tracks at first – but that was what he wanted them to sound like. This album really is quite brilliant – and I really don't use that word lightly. Dark and haunting. Quite a short album, but it is so intense I reckon it is long enough as it is.

STOP PRESS: Another purchase worthy of mention. *Rainmaker* by Wellington Womble! I now have all the Wombles singles! Oh, happy day!

ZINES SEEN

Well, I haven't left enough room to do as much as last tie, so let's concentrate on zines that I missed in issue 4 (and there's not even enough room for all of them). Well, there's the new *Psychopath* available as a PDF download from www.psychozine.co.uk Well issue 17 (issue 16 was produced in 1984 in a previous life) is a pretty almost professional magazine layout with lots of colour (it takes an age to print out even on my new printer – and as I wasn't prepared to use expensive paper on it I had to do it single-sided as the ink is so heavy in places it bleeds through). Interviews with John Hegley and Jo Brand (novel for a games zine, but good fun), observations on life and being a vegan (something I could never be – I will eat anything provided I don't know its name), and lots of rules for the games Mike hopes to run. My ego was boosted at seeing Game of the Clans II – probably the best Dip variant map I ever designed. Definitely a big plus for the online games hobby – my only criticism is that for such a polished product the pop-up adverts on the web site are a bit naff.

*Dolchstoß*¹ 266 was the same as ever from Richard Sharp. Down to six games of Diplomacy now (and two of them are externally adjudicated), *Dolchstoß* really needs some new blood to get some more games going – but I don't expect Richard will be going on a recruitment drive. Very reliable, an idiosyncratic editor and regular contributors to the letter column make it a nice to see zine, but not the star it once was.

You don't see many mentions of *Strangitude*² around, so issue 23 is worth a quick mention. Basically *Strangitude* has picked up where *Quartz* left off, so it has quite a few games running even now. Not the quickest of zines, but not the slowest either – I get the impression that the circulation is fairly static but not insubstantial. A fair mix of Diplomacy and other games, a few reprinted articles and a long contribution from Duncan Proffitt (the disappearing ex-editor of *Garbage In Garbage Out*). A zine which exudes solidness. Lists open fro Dip, Stab, WWI Dip, Colonial, London Nights, RR, Speed Circuit, 6 Nimm! And Gunfighter.

Not as amazingly efficient as it used to be, but *GAME*³ is still a Diplomacy zine to be reckoned with. Up to issue 44, again the number of Dip games is declining, but Nic's general willingness to chat combined with the inclusion of *Turbo* from Nick Parish, means that there is a bit of chat to keep the casual reader entertained. A few too many fonts for an A3 zine for my liking, but that's just being picky. Lists for Dip, Breaking Away, Primary Colours, Acquire and RR.

Zines still not covered include, *The White Cat*, *Obsidian*, *SMEG*, *Hopscotch*, *Mango* and *Geneva*. Hopefully next time.

¹ Richard Sharp, Norton House, Whielden Street, Amersham, HP7 0HU.

² Paul Sands, Flat 2, 432 Birmingham Road, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B72 1YL.

³ Nic Chilton, 21 Nowell Street, Harehills, Leeds, LS9 6HS.

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DIPLOMACY CROQUET

BY STEPHEN AGAR



While I have been playing Diplomacy for 25 years now, my interest in croquet must be some 20 years old. I played a lot of croquet at college (to a very mediocre standard – though I did improve when I started to wear glasses), but it was only when I was completing a recent email Diplomacy game that I realised how similar the two games are in some respects. Indeed, I think there are a couple of things that Diplomacy players could learn from basic croquet strategy. Let me explain.

Apologies to fans of croquet for the explanation of the game that follows, but I need to simplify it quite a bit. The aim of croquet is to get your two balls through 12 hoops (well, six hoops but once from each direction) in a certain order and then “peg-out” (hit the centre peg) before your opponent does. Each turn a player can choose which of his balls to play with and he plays with that particular ball until the end of the turn (the balls are different colours for easy identification). In other words, like Diplomacy it is a race – though to 26 (24 hoops, two peg-outs), not 18. The basic mechanism of croquet differs from a game such as golf in that a player can effectively get an extra two shots by hitting another ball (as opposed to going through a hoop). Although you can only claim your extra shots once for every other ball (therefore a maximum of six extra shots), once you go through a hoop this entitlement is reset.

It follows that a good player will get his balls around the course by using the other balls to claim extra shots, get through a hoop, use the other balls again, get through the next hoop etc. Tactically this is done by making sure that you not only get your ball through a hoop, but that you leave the other balls in positions where you can make most use of them once you get through the hoop. This is done by thinking ahead and positioning one of the other balls adjacent to the next hoop but one – or even the next hoop but two. Thus, to get a big break you have to think beyond the short-term goal of the next hoop and plan for which ball you are going to use to help you go through the hoops beyond.

The same is true for Diplomacy. A great deal of forward planning is required to win a game against serious opposition. You need to have an idea from quite early on where your 17th and 18th centres are going to come from. Indeed, it may be that you have to try and secure some of the more distant centres earlier in order to prevent a stalemate line being formed. Furthermore, just as in croquet you use the other players balls to run hoops, in Diplomacy you usually need an ally to make quick gains. However, there will come a time when you have done all

you usefully can with that particular ally/ball – in which case you need to have positioned another prospective ally/ball in the correct place to be able to keep going.

For example, in my recent game I was playing Austria and had sworn a game long alliance with Italy. The alliance prospered – though I prospered more than my ally did – and soon Turkey was eliminated and Russia reduced to a lone unit in StP. The time had obviously come to stab my ally. However, in the meantime England had been eliminated and a Franco-German alliance was emerging to keep me back from winning the game. Therefore, for a couple of seasons before I stabbed my ally I had to work hard on France to ensure that when the stab did come, I had positioned France as my new prospective ally in order to keep expanding. Sometimes you have to make the time and put in considerable effort to line an ally for use in the future – rather than (for example) me just stabbing Italy and then saying to France “how about it?” Thus planning ahead means not only knowing where you are going, but who is going to help you get there and when – and then making sure it happens.

The other lesson I take from croquet is what you do when your momentum stalls and you can’t make any immediate advance. In croquet the tactic is to position the other players balls on the field as far apart from each other as possible and also as far away from your own balls as possible, while keeping your balls close to each other. Divide and rule. If you don’t have the ally/ball to keep going forward put your energies into denying others the position to get momentum and start to go forward themselves. Obviously this means trying to undermine alliances – but it also means that you make sure that when the board leader needs to move on to his next ally, that no such alliance is forthcoming. Try to engineer a diplomatic position where the leader cannot keep momentum by stabbing one ally and taking up with the next. Make sure you get an ally you need to deny to someone else on-side now, before they need them (and hopefully before they are aware that they need them).

My personal view is that in a hard-fought game without serious dropouts it is usually impossible to win outright without the assistance of at least two (and maybe three) of the other players. Occasionally you may be able to do it with a single ally by stabbing them right at the end of the game, but this is rare as they will usually see it coming. Given that, I think you could do well to line your balls/allies up well in advance so that they are correctly positioned (or in the right frame of mind) to help you where you need it (and have planned for it) at the right time.

In the game I referred to above, I ended up on 17 centres after 1909 – which is when the game ended (as it was a time limited game in a tournament). Lining up my allies and keeping the other players apart served me well in that game – but if only I could have kept the French and German balls further apart I am sure I could have reached 18. Well, you know what I mean...

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WALL OF ICE DIPLOMACY

BY DAVID E. COHEN

This is somewhat similar to the Deluge and Sahara variants. As time passes, the world gets colder, and the map changes, consistent with the premise.

1. At the beginning of the game, the map is standard.
2. Each year, certain provinces lose Supply Centre status, while others gain it. This would be done by the GM from a list, but would be somewhat randomised, per the table which follows. The change in status would occur after fall retreats of the year indicated, so that units located on a province that gains Supply Centre status would earn that power a build.
3. Certain water provinces become impassable to fleets, due to icebergs. This would also occur after fall retreats (but before adjustments) and would also be randomised per the table. Fleets located in bodies of water that are designated impassable are disbanded.

4. Fleets may be converted to armies during adjustment turns.

5. Builds may be made in any owned Supply Centre.

6. Winner is the owner of Tun and NAF. The only non-win possibility is a two-way draw, as you will be able to figure out from the table below.

7. The game can be played either with the slight randomness or without. IF you do not like the idea of a random element, use the table below but assume the changes occur when a 75% chance of conversion is indicated on the table below.

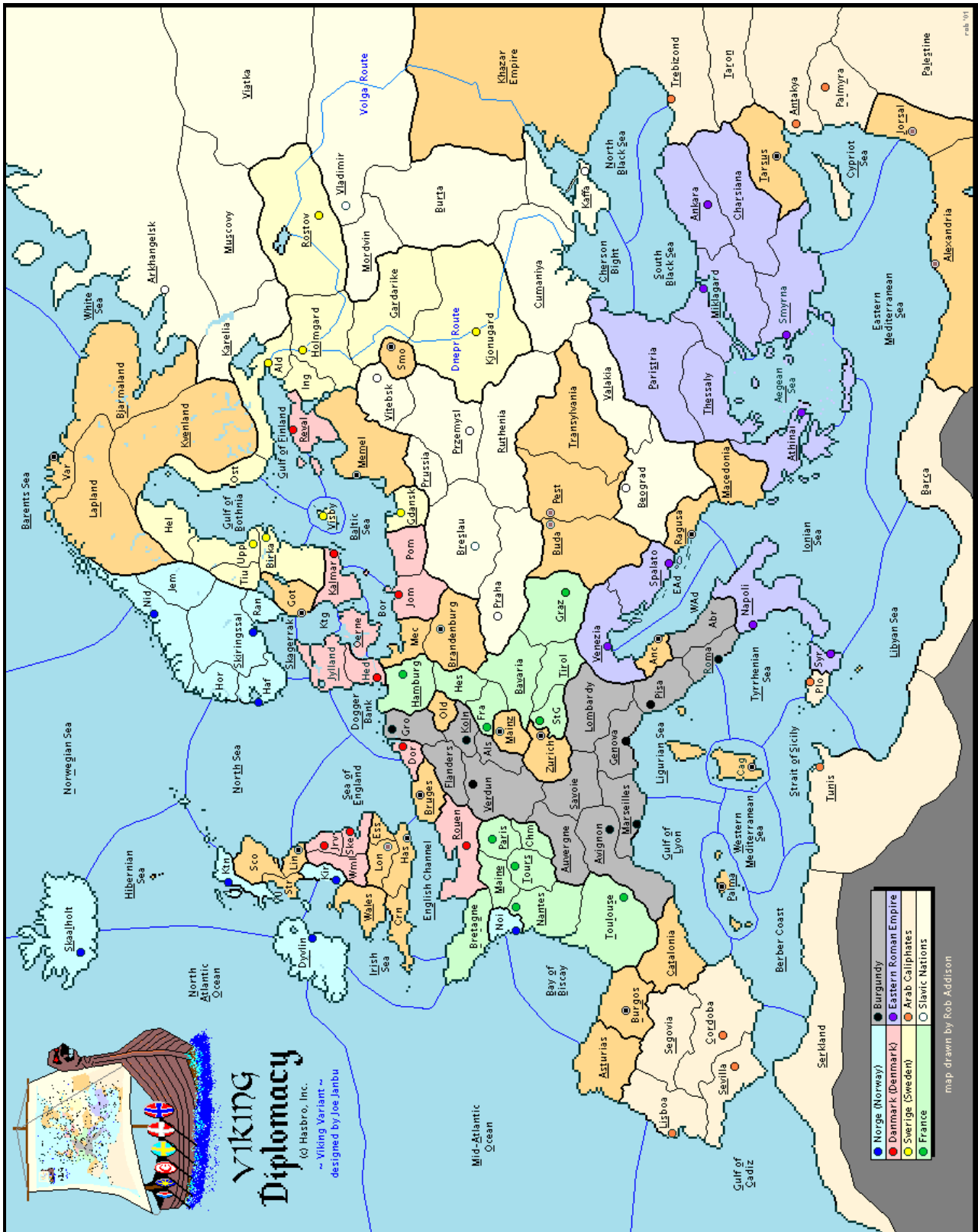


PROVINCE STATUS CHANGES	1905	1907	1909
1902	Alb: Gains SC status 100% Apu: Gains SC status 25% Arm: Gains SC status 100% Bal: Becomes impassable 75% Ber: Loses SC status 25% Den: Loses SC status 100% ECh: Becomes impassable 25% Edi: Loses SC status 100% Gas: Gains SC status 100% GoB: Becomes impassable 100% Hel: Becomes impassable 75% Hol: Loses SC status 25% Iri: Becomes impassable 75% Kie: Loses SC status 25% Lon: Loses SC status 25% Lvr: Loses SC Status 75% Mos: Loses SC status 100% NAF: Gains SC status 25% NAO: Becomes impassable 100% NtS: Becomes impassable 100% Ska: Becomes impassable 100% Syr: Gains SC status 25% Tus: Gains SC status 100% War: Loses SC status 25%	Apu: Gains SC status 100% Arm: Loses SC status 25% Bel: Loses SC status 75% Ber: Loses SC status 100% Bre: Loses SC status 75% Bud: Loses SC status 75% Bul: Loses SC status 25% ECh: Becomes impassable 100% Hol: Loses SC status 100% Kie: Loses SC status 100% Lon: Loses SC status 100% MAO: Becomes impassable 75% Mar: Loses SC status 25% Mun: Loses SC status 75% Par: Loses SC status 75% Rum: Loses SC status 75% Ser: Loses SC status 25% Sev: Loses SC status 75 % Syr: Gains SC status 100% Tri: Loses SC status 25% Ven: Loses SC status 25% War: Loses SC status 100%	Adr: Becomes impassable 75% Aeg: Becomes impassable 25% Alb: Loses SC status 75% Ank: Loses SC status 75% Arm: Loses SC status 100% Bla: Becomes impassable 75% Bul: Loses SC status 100% Con: Loses SC status 75% EMS: Becomes impassable 25% GoL: Becomes impassable 75% Gre: Loses SC status 25% Mar: Loses SC status 100% Nap: Loses SC status 25% Por: Loses SC status 75% Spa: Loses SC status 75% Rom: Loses SC status 75% Ser: Loses SC status 100% Smy: Loses SC status 25% Syr: Loses SC status 25% Tri: Loses SC status 100% Ven: Loses SC status 100%
1903	Alb: Gains SC status 25% Arm: Gains SC status 25% Bar: Becomes impassable 75% Den: Loses SC status 25% Edi: Loses SC status 25% Gas: Gains SC status 25% GoB: Becomes impassable 25% Mos: Loses SC status 25% NAO: Becomes impassable 25% NtS: Becomes impassable 25% Nwg: Becomes impassable 75% Nwy: Loses SC status 75% Ska: Becomes impassable 25% StP: Loses SC status 75% Swe: Loses SC status 75% Tus: Gains SC status 25%	1906	1910
1904	Alb: Gains SC status 75% Arm: Gains SC status 75% Bal: Becomes impassable 25% Bar: Becomes impassable 100% Den: Loses SC status 75% Edi: Loses SC status 75% Gas: Gains SC status 75% GoB: Becomes impassable 75% Hel: Becomes impassable 25% Iri: Becomes impassable 25% Lvr: Loses SC Status 25% Mos: Loses SC status 75% NAO: Becomes impassable 75% NtS: Becomes impassable 75% Nwg: Becomes impassable 100% Nwy: Loses SC status 100% Ska: Becomes impassable 75% StP: Loses SC status 100% Swe: Loses SC status 100% Tus: Gains SC status 75%	Adr: Becomes impassable 25% Alb: Loses SC status 25% Ank: Loses SC status 25% Arm: Loses SC status 75% Bel: Loses SC status 100% Bla: Becomes impassable 25% Bre: Loses SC status 100% Bud: Loses SC status 100% Bul: Loses SC status 75% Con: Loses SC status 25% GoL: Becomes impassable 25% MAO: Becomes impassable 100% Mar: Loses SC status 75% Mun: Loses SC status 100% Par: Loses SC status 100% Por: Loses SC status 25% Spa: Loses SC status 25% Rom: Loses SC status 25% Rum: Loses SC status 100% Ser: Loses SC status 75% Sev: Loses SC status 100 % Tri: Loses SC status 75% Ven: Loses SC status 75%	1911
			Aeg: Becomes impassable 100% EMS: Becomes impassable 100% Gre: Loses SC status 100% Nap: Loses SC status 100% Smy: Loses SC status 100% Syr: Loses SC status 100%

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VIKING DIPLOMACY (IV)

BY ERLEND "JOE" JANBU



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VIKING DIPLOMACY (IV)

Very special thanks to Rob Addison for very good help and advice on the design, and for making the map so beautiful. Also thanks to Cristiano Corte Restitutti for lots of input on the Dark Age aera. Let me also thank Benjamin Hester, William Simonitis, Ian Cowburn and Frank Johansen for their input.

Rules

1. Hedeby is a channel province, just like Kiel in standard.

Oerne(and Kalmar) is a channel too, and armies can move to Kalmar, Jylland and Hedeby without convoy.

2. Fleets may use the waterways labelled "Volga route" and "Dnepr route" and may convoy armies while in these spaces in the normal fashion. However, in this case armies can only be convoyed along the waterway, not across the river (e.g. a fleet in Gardarike may convoy an army from Kjonugard to Holmgard, but not from Smolensk to Mordvin).

3. Some neutrals have resident standing armies. These neutrals are Buda, Pest, London, Jorsal and Alexandria. They order: A Lon H, A Bud s A Pes, A Pes s A Bud, A Jrs s A Ale, A Ale s A Jrs. If dislodged, they retreat off the board. They will only do the support if they unit they support is a holding neutral as well. If a holding neutral is dislodged in spring, but the invader vacates in fall, a new holding neutral army will be rebuilt.

4. Victory conditions are 26 centers. If two or more players occupy 26 centers or more during the same year, any one of those may choose to declare the game a draw between the players who owns more than 25 centers. Until any player does this, the game goes on until only one player owns 26 centers or more.

A note about the powers: Largely, the variant reflects the situation around 950 AD. However, a few liberties has been taken, to provide the map with 8 playable great powers. West and East Francia was adjoined to "France", and Lothringen, Burgundy and Lombardia has been adjoined in one power. The Arab Caliphates were in control of Egypt and modern Israel, but I found it would be interesting to have a self-defending neutral there. The Slavic Nations were not united, but to give the Swedish Vikings opposition in the east, their unification is necessary. I believe Normandie (the Rouen territory) is at its largest state, but on Great Britain, the areas marked light blue and red were the primary settlements, while larger areas has been held in periods. Another clear liberty is marking Dorestad as the territory of western Netherlands, as if it was to be represented accurately, probably it would have the size of the dot. I doubt you would want to try to place units on that territory, though! The same goes for the neutral Gothenburg. The interior parts of the province belonged to Sweden, the coast north of the city to Norway and the coast south of the city to Denmark. Merely the city was invaded and bought back and forth. Still, there is no room for a unit on a 2 pixel radius territory.

BIG PUSH DIPLOMACY

BY JAMES YAGLEY

This game is played with the standard board and rules.

There is one rule change. Each player gets two uses of a special move, to be used any time during the game. The special move is the "big push". The big push allows any individual unit to act with the force of two units for that turn!

For example: in a standard game, England opens with F London to English channel while France sends F Brest to the channel: they bump. In this variant, England sends F London to the channel with the "big push". Even though F London has no support, it takes the channel.

Note: the big push affects only an individual unit. It lasts for one turn (spring 1901, for example).

Note: the big push can be used to move/attack or to hold. It cannot be used to support. (basically, this rule is intended to simplify the adjudication process).

Each player gets 2 big pushes to be used any time during the game. If a player is eliminated without using his/her allotted pushes, then they are lost. They cannot be transferred.

Writing orders: simply add "big push" or "BP" at the end of the line. Thus, A Paris to Burgundy (BP); A Marseilles supports A Paris to Burgundy (so it will take three units to oppose France's attack)

Ideas behind the variant

I thought up the variant to deal with two frequent problems in standard game play.

1. One or more players get eliminated very early (especially players in weak countries). This tends to slow down the "diplomacy" aspect of the game. For in-person games, these players sit around for hours, bored, while their friends play on.

Solution: by using the big push, players can stay around longer. E.g. if the Austrian player is facing sudden elimination, he can use his big pushes to hold or advance. But his enemies, playing for the long-term, will be reluctant to use their big pushes up early in the game. Advantage: Austria.

By keeping seven or six players in the game longer, the chances for diplomacy and multiple alliances is greater than it is with five or four players.

2. During the mid-game and end-game, the lines become stagnant as no side is able to gain an advantage. The game gets "boring"; players NMR.

Solution: instead of having gridlock year after year, a strategically-placed big push will enable one side to open up a hole along a front and turn the game into a war of manoeuvre. But the big push needs to be planned out; an unsupported offensive could quickly become grid locked again.

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Thoughts on gameplay

I also wanted a variant rule that was simple to administer and that didn't change the nature of a standard game too much. By giving each player 2 pushes, the total number is 14 over the course of a game. This amount seems like a good one to me.

Players who want more can easily make it 3 per player. This is still an easy number to track. But 21 pushes over the course of the game may have too much of an impact for standard fans.

For players who want to use a lot of pushes, another option is to allow each player one per turn. Not only do you get a lot, but there's no book-keeping necessary - it's a simple one per turn.

But note, the more pushes given to a player, the less likely he will conserve them. With a limited amount, players will try to hold on to their pushes. It's a great threat to stop a backstab (of course, it can also make a good stab even more deadly). But smaller powers who face elimination will be willing to use their pushes right away. So a limited number of pushes can help balance big vs. Small powers, at least in the opening and mid-game.

Stephen Agar: *Big Push Diplomacy II*? An interesting variation on this idea would be to allow every power to order one "Big Push" every move. That would certainly get rid of most stalemates, and make a more significant change to the way the game plays. In fact, I am so taken by this idea I think I'll open a waiting list! ☺

LETTERS

BRUCE EDWARDS

Regarding your question on new recruits, surely the target must be university students. It was after I left college and the "chess & wargames soc" - D&D and Dip Soc really - that I started looking for a "fix" of games. Possibly a copy or two of some zines to a students union or six?

SA: *Perhaps - and a kind soul has sent me some addresses I can use in that way. I still think most will be into online games though.*

Once again we see a postal strike on the horizon. I don't know what's going on, except the CWU seem to be the only union left who walks out on strike at the slightest provocation. Especially when the problem is at Watford, but postal workers at Chester and Cardiff are "out in sympathy". How long will the mail be a monopoly??

SA: *Let me express some purely personal views (nothing to do with my employer). The CWU within the postal business is a dinosaur, desperate to stop progress. The readiness of a minority to come out on strike - and the degree of intimidation to get the silent majority to follow them - is a scandal. Although Royal Mail accounts for over one half of all days lost through strikes in the country - there is rarely ever a ballot as prescribed by*

law. This means the balloting laws can be disregarded and the union is immune from civil action itself (though all unofficial strikes seem to be organised by union officials). However, any deal agreed nationally by Royal Mail and the Union is disregarded at a local level anyway. Thus, any attempt to modernise Royal Mail will result in a national strike. The question is, will Royal Mail management get the support of the politicians and the public? If Royal Mail is not modernised, then the whole enterprise is doomed, as competition enters the market place and mail volumes decline due to e-substitution.

One thing you should bare in mind - if you want true competition it is impossible to sustain a uniform tariff for the whole country - you can't have both.

NICK GLADSTONE

I was interested to read Brent McKee's letter, as I came to this hobby via Avalon Hill, SPI and similar games, and probably have about eighty stuffed in the attic, with copies of magazines such as *The General*, *Strategy & Tactics* and *Phoenix* going back to the early seventies.

SA: *There were quite a few Diplomacy articles published in The General.*

Since finding opponents was always a problem, I played many of them solitaire, including SPI's monster *War in Europe*, which was played on a map eight feet square and would have taken thousands of hours to play to a finish.

After a period playing *Russian Front* and *Advanced Squad Leader* postally through AHIKS I concentrated on genuine solitaire games such as west end games' *RAF* and omega games' *Eastern Front Solitaire*, both of which present a worthwhile challenge although they would both benefit from a redrawn map.

The first wargame I owned was Tri-Tactics, which was bought in the early sixties, at a guess. The card pieces stand erect so the opponent can only see the backs, and there is a nice scissors-paper-stone quality about the combat results, so no piece is invulnerable and small teams of pieces are the key to success. The realism is pretty low with heavy artillery and aircraft being indistinguishable from the back, and both provided with the same one-square-per-turn movement factor, but the game is a lot of fun.

SA: *There were quite a series of these games based on the same basic mechanism - Dover Patrol, Aviation, L'Attaque and Tri-Tactics. My favourite was always Aviation - but I played them all as a boy.*

Has anyone encountered *Warlord*? I think it was invented by a chap called Mike Hayes who made and marketed it from his home in Sheffield in the late sixties. I found it in the small ads in the magazine private eye and played it all through college. After twenty-five years on the shelf, I have recently introduced it to a new generation. It was for a while sold under the name *Apocalypse* and usually involves considerable nuclear devastation - very poor taste.

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SA: I haven't – anyone else?

MIKE DOMMETT

Heligoland - don't know where you get your stuff from, but New Zealand and Invincible are battlecruisers - Invincible from the first class of battlecruiser, and New Zealand from the follow up class - it's a great pity that the Brits wasted the dominions money on two such rubbishy ships - (that's including Australia). The first class of three, ok, but the defects were obvious then, by a simple comparison with the Von de Tann, and they ought to have made a better design for the second group.

SA: Well, I don't claim to be an expert...

Yes please send me a copy of Kirsty MacColl b sides and deduct from the sub. Anybody know what happened to the twonk who ran her over with his boat?

SA: I believe the inquest is due this month.

Foot and mouth - someone who knows more than I do - who are the agribusines? Obviously not the hill farmers. Can't be the barley barons this time, barley doesn't get foot and mouth. Who benefits from the livestock - so that farmers say they get £1 a sheep, while I notice no drop in prices at my butcher, or at the supermarket. Someone does, because we have to kill everything, rather than let it get better. We also seem to export about as much meat as we import - why not stop doing this - I know hauliers will lose out, but one of the hauliers problems is that it is a low cost entry business, like construction. How about just paying all farmers £12,000 a year - that's a little better than benefits, and then let them grow and feed animals. See what they can get for them. In textiles, steel, cars, coal, we let the free market rule - but not farmers. Why?

SA: All historical – a combination of an obsession with agriculture in the days after WWII, coupled with the dubious benefit of the Common Agricultural Policy once we joined the EEC (as it was then).

Shortage of doctors - there are posters up about it where I work - yet when I was younger it took six years to go through university as a doctor, so to avoid a shortfall now someone needed to have started training more six years ago. Don't remember anyone doing that then, so this is inevitable. Or maybe it's a crisis that suddenly blew up. Suddenly we needed 10% more doctors. No I don't remember the crisis happening either.

SA: I believe it takes seven years to train a doctor. The problem seems to be a combination of (a) a large number of doctors retiring, (b) growth in demand as the population ages, (c) reducing the hours of junior doctors and (d) Labour finally attempting to expand some clinical care. We are going to see lots of labour shortages in the public sector because unemployment is low and public sector wages are crap and insufficient to cover housing costs in the South East (where all the shortages are the worst).

Looking at your play list, have you tried the Oyster Band?

*SA: Not really – though I do have **Ballad of a Spycatcher**, which is the single they did with Billy Bragg about the Peter Wright affair. Bought it on ebay for 75p.*

ALLAN STAGG

Thanks for AD 4. I liked the front cover - what sort of alliance does it represent? I enjoyed the articles and the zine reviews - definitely keep those going Stephen - but in many ways the most enjoyable part of the zine was the letter column. Presumably as time passes the game reports will occupy a greater percentage of the zine, which will alter the balance of heavy reading to "glance-at-the-page-and-move-on".

SA: It is so difficult to get games going these days I expect the current balance will continue for some time to come.

RICHARD SMITH

Thanks for *AD* 4. Regarding your zines round up, I have to say I'm impressed that you managed to find so much to write. I say this because I've always assumed the main reason why there aren't many zine plugs these days is because bugger all is happening. You can't really blame editors for not writing about other zines if they themselves see nothing that's newsworthy - e.g. I got issue #69 of *Anne Widdicombe's Chainmail Bikini* yesterday and it was exactly the same as issue #68 - and I mean *exactly* the same - its editor Fred Bigwinkle decided to reprint the same issue to see if anyone noticed, or cared.

*SA: Perhaps you are right – but then there should be reviews around which say that **Anne Widdicombe's Chainmail Bikini** is a boring pile of doggy do-do's, which might have the effect of making Mr Bigwinkle get his hands out of his pockets...*

On to multi-games zines. I think the best thing that's happened in them in recent years is the number of original games invented. Chris Dickson, Tony Reeves, Allan Stagg, Alex Bardy, John Walker, myself and lots of others have all had our creative juices flowing. However I agree that the worst thing is the lack of chat. In some cases the editor has declared that his zine is "just games" and in other cases he's willing to print and respond to what's sent in but can't get the snowball rolling, so to speak.

SA: I will happily trade with games-only zines, but they are as boring as hell. As for getting feedback – well, you need to supply something that readers can react to. I have very rarely had a letter where a subscriber initiated a totally new topic of conversation. I used to get feedback by slagging off other zines – but I am a reformed character and anyway, it would be too easy nowadays.

And finally, for some strange reason best known to the inner recesses of my befuddled brain, your descriptions made me think of comparing zines to cars. For example *For Whom The Die Rolls* is an Audi a4. Superbly designed, ultra-efficient, but a bit boring. I see *Smeg* as

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an old xr3i with furry dice, a nodding dog and carlos fandango wheels. *Armistice Day* makes me think of a chrysler pt cruiser.

SA: Is that good or bad?

CHRIS MARTIN

I got my issue today! Very nice - smallish, but very readable. I am enjoying watching the progress of the other games. Hearing Toby boast is always a pleasure, especially knowing I can take him 3 games out of 5. (heheh. Drop out of play, will you?) Like he says, its one thing to con numpties out of centres, but against quality opposition, well. Still, against any opposition, Toby's one of the best, or was one of the best I should say. We will remember him fondly. Perhaps some of his greatness will be passed along to my son, as Toby's aura might have rubbed off when he hosted my wife and I on our way to WDC in Belgium. (where Jesse, 17 months old, was conceived)

SA: You let your wife sleep under the same roof as Toby? A brave decision.

I find that I am enjoying the postal experience, though the diplomacy seems very lacksadical. Perhaps that is me, being in the States and all, but I just started an Academy game, and I have 193 messages in that folder with f1902 approaching, and 22 messages in my Tannenburg folder, in w01. Makes for less work, but less communication. I am hoping to liven that up. There was a thread on rec.games.diplomacy lately about postal dip's intensity, and Jim Burgess (among others) said that most turns some diplomacy is conducted over the phone. That puts me at a disadvantage here, no question!

SA: I don't think postal Dip is more intense - I just think it is more cuddly as at least you feel part of a community.

MARK STRETCH

Thanks for the zine. I notice from the back page that you've listed *Welcome to the Beautiful South* amongst your play list for the issue. You've gone up in my estimation!

SA: Well, I do have all their CD singles (even the rather rare Song for Whoever) and all their albums...

You also mention starting a regular page on interesting games websites. Where do you start? There are an awful lot out there. There are hundreds of dip sites even before you look at anything else. A surprising number also allow you to play various games online - dip, acquire, settlers, medici, modern art, take it easy etc. Of course you probably realise that already.

SA: Yes. In fact there's so much out there I can't bring myself to do it yet.

PETER BERLIN

You cheeky bugger, sticking me down for the first game available. I thought I was filling in a questionnaire: "what sort of baked beans do you like?" and, bang, I take delivery of 500 cans of the stuff. I only noticed when I

was leafing through the zine on the loo the other morning (having got bored with the newspaper or New Yorker or whatever other a-list reading material I have on top of the washer-drier. Another observation about the postal diplomacy players/male menopause thing you have going: we all spend much longer on the loo in the morning than we used to.)

SA: I think you will have to speak for yourself on that one, Peter.

I also rather think I asked for an all e-mail game and indicated that my various e-mail accounts are in some disarray at the moment. The office e-mail system has been on the point of collapse for some time, something to do with us being "spammed" or being used by outside commercial interests to send junk e-mail. This isn't what i thought "spammed" meant, plus it doesn't seem to make any sense for people trying to sell things (porn mostly) to want to make it impossible to reach them. The solution, as always, is to buy new hardware and new software which, coincidently, will make the computer dept. happy.

The work account loses both incoming and outgoing messages randomly and without a trace, although when enough people ask, the Computer Dept. will acknowledge that it's happening (I have to add that as Comp. Depts. go they are unusually helpful and friendly. But that's damning with faint praise.) My office account also only forwards e-mails to my personal accounts once a week instead of every few hours. On the other hand, my two personal accounts are hotmail.com, which is a nightmare to use, and attglobal.net, which I cannot access from my new cable connection.

Oh and another thing, I like the variants but the dippy strategy articles, the one of little stabs this time is a good example, only reveal what a shallow and limited game dippy really is. And the whither the hobby stuff is tedious in the extreme.

SA: Damn there goes my next 26 editorials.

The idea of constructing my own computer fills me with terror. I am contemplating a new one that I will use to play games, write, surf the net and listen to music (my CD player, all but 3 of my 400 CDs and half my 400 cassettes were stolen last year, so Napster, or what's left of it, appeals). I don't want to scan photos, make videos or do page layout. What should I get? (nb: I will probably buy from Gateway because that way I can get english-language software pre-installed.)

SA: Anything around £1,200 will be fine. A 1.3 Athomn or a 1.4 Pentium IV.

TOBY HARRIS

Cheers for another *Armistice Day*. I guess that having a grand pile of spare issues has you in the hope that young hobbyfolk might happen across a copy of the zine at some con or other and then beg you enthusiastically for some back copies. Ego boost that it is, it's not something that happens often, if at all.

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I might be tempted to play a 5-italies game but it would be with the pre-requisite of the other players having an email address. Past experience has shown me to be way too unreliable by post. That said, I understand there's nothing worse than every reader saying they would play x game and having 50 or so waiting lists open with just the one name on.

Stephen, you never change do you? "add 3 or 4 variants and mark will be carrying as many games as Spring Offensive at it's peak". Hope you don't mind me going down on my knees one more time and paying homage to the greatness of spring offensive at it's peak.

*SA: Well, it beat **Smodnoc** at its peak... 😊 I of course meant **SpOff** at its peak in the sense of when it was running more games than at any other time – which was probably a year or so after its peak – if you see what I mean. Surely you of all people can't accuse me of being big-headed?!*

It may interest you to hear that the post-game chat from the wm99 finals is rather heated, what with some players coming out with all the usual "you only won because..." stuff. The two years of the game I played proved rather heated and it seems that there were plenty of things within the game to upset some players. Eg, Lee Simpson (who took over from my England in 1902 and went on to get an outright and win the tournament) came from the same dip club as Italy and so it was suggested he only won as a result of Italy throwing him the game etc. At the end of the day it is only the result that will be remembered years from now so I don't know what all the fuss is about. All said and done I think it's better to look at what good the tournament achieved. 553 players is by far the largest dip tournament in history and I reckon it to be a real breakthrough for the game. Just a shame I don't think I can take part again - dropping out of the final was a real pisser but you have to put your career before a hobby.

SA: Perhaps – but the poor GMing (and I have heard lots of complaints) and inconsistency of decisions has put a great many of Dip Tournaments as well.

Just realised (again !) That I owe you a few squid for the zine. Reckon I'll have to pop into ManorCon to pass you the sub. Would like to meet Jim Burgess too ... Any ally that can allow a Turkey get to 18 by 1906 has to be worth meeting in the flesh 😊 poor guy - he took some serious stick for that game. To be honest I wouldn't mind playing another FtF game but somehow don't see it happening.

SA: Hope to see you there – maybe we could grab Jim and go out for dinner on the Saturday night?

SIMON SZYKMAN

I noticed the article on rock paper diplomacy in issue #4. I'm not sure whether it's an old article or not, but since you are usually pretty good about giving a citation for reprinted articles, I assume it's a new one.

As it happens, in a 1997 issue of the *Pouch* zine I wrote up a variant I "came up with" called Arpiesse diplomacy:

<http://www.diplom.org/zine/f1997m/szykman/arpiesse.html>). Arpiesse is a word derived from the sounds of the letters r-p-s... Rock-paper-scissors.

The basic principle of Steve Williams' rock paper diplomacy is the same as that of Arpiesse, but Williams' article stops short of providing a complete enough description to actually try it out. The Arpiesse article includes additional detail on how to handle support, cutting of support, and resolution of attacks and defences involving combinations of the various flavours of units.

It sounded like a good idea when I wrote it, but thinking about it further later on, I think I decided that it might turn out that the game might turn out to be a bit too unstable. The basic idea is that with the rock-paper-scissors concept, some units get advantages over others even in instances that in the standard game would be attacks/defences of equal strength. However, the benefit of those advantages is not equally distributed among all parties. In the standard game, the defender "wins" in the case of a tie (i.e. An attack of one unit on one unit does not succeed, and thus the battle is "won" by the defender). In cases when the attacker has an advantage over the defender due to the flavour of one of its units (for example a 1-on-1 attack), the attacker will win, and is therefore better off than in the standard game.

In cases where the defender has a flavour advantage, the defender is not better off than in the standard game because the defender would win on a tie anyway in the standard game. Thus, the attacker gains much more than the defender from the rule changes made in this variant. I think it may turn out to be too hard to "design" a good defensive line, and I suspect that if the game were actually tried out, it would simply be an all-out to attack as much as possible as quickly as possible without devoting resources to a defensive line, because it would be require too many units to construct a line that could be defended against attacking units (if it were even possible to do so).

In retrospect, I don't think it would work all that well as a variant. This conclusion was just a result of playing out various situations in my head. I hasn't been confirmed, since nobody every actually tried out the variant as far as I know.

SA: You could be right – but it would be the same for everybody. Your letter made me imagine a variant with only one small rule change – where the attacker and the defender have equal value, the attacker wins. Now that would be an interesting game!

ALEX BARDY

AD #4 has been and gone (so to speak), and I couldn't help feeling it had a little less depth than previous issues, although the zine reviews were appreciated.

SA: Didn't think the first three issues had any depth myself!

Toby's letter and comments struck me both as shallow and (obviously enough) arrogant? I thought the world had moved on from the "I'm better than you" stage, and

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couldn't help thinking he was deliberately trying to pander to the masses in order to get some kind of reaction from people like myself. Still, it'll probably work (well, it has done with me), and thus I'm fully expecting you to receive a number of letters from rabid diplomacy fans who will undoubtedly be waving their arms about and cursing furiously! Of course, if you don't get any responses to Toby's comments (other than my own), I'd respectfully ask you to consider this paragraph nfp ☺ 'cos it'll merely show me up to be the shallow, insecure, sad bastard that I really am! Seriously though, I can respect the fact that Toby is no doubt one of the finest diplomacy players in the world, so why not just leave it at that? Give him his kudos, the relevant trophies and reward/recognition that he deserves, and that's it? It's already in the history books so we don't really need to hear him (or anyone else) bleating on about it.

SA: Well, both you and Chris Martin mentioned Toby's letter, so you don't get out of it that easily. Toby is undoubtedly an egotistical arrogant bugger (using that last term pejoratively rather than as a comment on his sexuality). But that's why we all know him and love him. It's all down to his insecurity really.

I'm not sure who wrote it, but I recall reading something recently (it might have been Pete Birks or Nick Parish) in which the author basically said how totally pointless and ineffectual all this "travelling the world to play diplomacy" lark was. While I would support the travelling aspect, going specifically to play diplomacy or partake in diplomacy tournaments does strike me as pretty damn high on ye olde get a life, you sad bugger scale...

SA: Oh, I don't know. Some people dress up as Roman soldiers or ACW veterans – others go birdwatching or collect train numbers – more still play games on the Internet. We're all sad really (or so my wife says).

Following my previous missive, I have finally ventured onto the ebay database 'proper' and even made my first purchase? A new copy of adobe acrobat v4.0 (boxed and sealed) for £126.00. This, combined with the £88.00 I spent on the acrobat v5.0 upgrade, makes my total purchase price for a full, registered copy of adobe acrobat a whopping £214.00? £4.00 more than it would have cost me (excl. postage) if I'd bought it new in the first instance, without trying to be a smartass (see **Mango** #24 editorial for full gory details). A costly lesson, but nonetheless a worthy one.

SA: You won't like me for this but I meant to tell you I had a copy of v4.05 I could lend you...

I'm just biding my time now until I can lose the shades that indicate I'm a newbie to ebay? Maybe I'll grab a few things over the next 1-2 months, but ultimately I've got plenty to sell, including a full-size 3d model (6 ft+ !!) Of Darth Maul from star wars: episode one? It's the one pizza hut used to launch their range of episode one toys as part of our kid's meal range. It comes complete with a plastic double light sabre and a gold plate on the base identifying it as a genuine Lucasfilm PR figure. That

should bring some money in, especially when I consider how much room the damn thing takes up ? It'll have to be a case of buyer collects however, and if I tell you it cost me just £ 50... Well, there should be a tidy profit in it at least! We'll see, but thanks for helping to open my eyes up to ebay in the first place by mentioning it in AD #3's editorial...

SA: Just don't put too much on to sell at the same time – it is an organisational hell.

To continue my previous letter? I wasn't quite organised enough to feature said reader survey last issue, but will definitely get it sorted in the next 1-2 months. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to complete tasks "in the next 1-2 months"? Ditto my PC building activities then! And irony of ironies, I have a swipe at toby re. His 'mine is better than yours' tirade, and behold, you and I indulge in it ourselves when we talk about how big and powerful our respective penises (sorry, pcs) are... Still on the subject of pcs, I would have to disagree with you regards the relative costs of buying a package deal and building your own? While I'm almost certain you've done all the necessary research on the relative merits of each path to PC nirvana, I can't help feeling that the satisfaction and beaming pride to be gained from building your own must be priceless! Gimme a few months and I'll let you know if this is really the case or not. Oh, and warranty schmarranty? Most such policies are simply not worth the paper they're printed on when it comes to PCs, because the mere act of opening the case usually invalidates it! Ne'er ye mind, I'm sure we'll all hear more about this in the coming months...

SA: Good luck and stay earthed. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Looking forward to seeing your games-related website features in future issues, and 'twas nice to see Bruce Edwards mention my flagship articles. These were pitched at the "correct audience" but still weren't considered a huge success. And as if to stick a nail in the coffin, Bruce doesn't even subscribe to my own zine, aarrggghhhhh!

TONY DICKINSON

Hello there! I know an actual live letter must come as a shock, almost as big as a shock as I find myself writing one these days! Please count me in on your most kind offer of a copy of your Kirsty MacColl tribute thingie – don't worry for £1 I am not expecting a jewel case.

*SA: I have been surprised at the number of people interested in my Kirsty "B" sides compilation – in double figures. They will have to wait another week until I get back from Sorrento – I'll send out the CD plus jewel case with inserts etc. I have lots of CD cases lying around from old PC mags anyway (I throw the mags out but keep the CD cases). I think I will offer a CD of the **Desperate Character** album too (never been released on CD and deleted for over 15 years) – more news next time.*

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Hey! And what's wrong with teenage punks?! Many a good band started out that way – Siouxsie and the Banshees, new Model Army, The Cure, etc. etc.

SA: I liked Siouxsie's The Scream and Join Hands, never got into NMA or the Cure. I quite liked early Wire though. But my favourite group of that era was The Freshies.

STEPHEN RUSSELL

I was interested to read your feature in issue one of *AD*, reminiscing about Aifix HO-OO figures. I also have fond memories of collecting and playing with these figures, and by the amount of response you've had relating to this topic, so do many of your readers. I guess we all started into the hobby with Affix. In fact I still collect them, and wargame with them.

Recently Airfix has started to re-release some of these figures, mostly W.W.II items. At the moment German infantry, British Paratroops, U.S Marines, and Japanese Infantry. But soon to follow are Russian Infantry, 8th Army, Afrika Korps. They're also doing French Napoleonic Infantry, British Napoleonic Infantry.

Your readers might be interested to know that other old Airfix figures are available from a company called Hät Industrie, I think at the moment they are doing WWII Italian infantry, WWI British infantry, WWI RH Artillery, WWI German infantry, WWI French Infantry, WWI U.S Infantry, Robin Hood, Sheriff of Nottingham, French Foreign Legion, Arabs, And soon the old Tarzan set. They also do their own ranges that fit very well with Airfix. A huge Napoleonic Range and Huge Punic wars ranges. Reader should really check out their Web site at www.hat.com - it gives a full list of all the old Airfix Ranges plus full details on the boxes and figures, It really is well worth a look. Plus soon to follow in the Hät ranges are WWI Russian Infantry, WWI Austrian Infantry, WWI Turkish Infantry, WWI ANZAC Infantry. As a collector I cannot wait for these items. I hope some of your readers find something interesting here. And if any one wishes to sell there old collections of Airfix, please contact me by email spr1@talk21.com Prices for the Hät boxes are about £4.00 a box, not bad for 48 figures.

*SA: I have always been very keen on the Second Punic War – I have reasonably large 15mm Roman and Carthaginian armies – though I gave up painting them when I started **Spring Offensive** in 1992. One day I'll go back to them. Don't fancy painting bendy plastic figures though – do they cast them in hard plastic these days?*

GARYTH WRIGHT

Many thanks for the latest copy of *Armistice Day*. I enjoyed the Diplomacy articles tremendously, especially the one concerning Brazilian Diplomacy. It's an interesting twist to give Italy two fleets at the start. This makes Italy amore attractive country to play and it must make anyone playing France think twice. It also gives Austria more of a chance from the start as he is not worried about two Italian armies.

SA: Quite a few "F Rome" games have been played over the years – basically it strengthens Austria and weakens France. Don't think Italy usually does much better though.

I almost forgot, your review of other zines was excellent and I feel sure that when I return home from holiday I will subscribe to some of them.

SA: Hope you do – make sure you tell them I sent you!

ALLAN GORDON

I gather you're indulging in a Second Coming (or is it 'Third'? 'Fourth'?) Anyway, it's bloody good news as the standard of zines currently available is pretty shitty.

SA: This is my sixth zine title in 24 years.

Is *Armistice Day* something like "Son of SpOff" with subber Dip games? In which case, count me in, if you will, because you may remember I'm a player first and subber after. Let me know and if all's well, I'll send along some bread. Good to see you back.

SA: Yeah – I suppose this is Son of SpOff, save that I am trying hard not to start feuds all over the place. I'm even being nice about Mark Wightman ☺

SIMON IVES

Thanks for another stimulating issue (ooh er missus!) and the plug for *Jack Duckworth's Alternate Universe*. I have to say that, although I have played Dip by post many years ago, I really don't have the time to spend on it at present. I find your zine highly entertaining anyway — it is well produced with a fine balance of zine reviews, hobby news and letters as well as plenty of other bits and bobs (e.g. Kirsty MacColl piece) to keep me interested, despite not playing in any of the games.

Re. your playlist — do you intend writing reviews? I'd be interested to hear your opinions of the second *Mermaid Avenue* and also *Brand New Boots & Panties*.

SA: Not space for much of a review but MA2 is very similar to MA1, with a bit less Billy Bragg. Brand New Boots & Panties is a bit of a curate's egg – Ian Drury wrote such vernacular lyrics that some of the performers sound ill at ease. Quite a fun record though, but not one I will play often. I mean, Paul McCartney signing Ian Drury?!

JOHN WILMAN

I have only been listening to Kirsty MacColl for a couple of years, but I would love to have a copy of your B sides CD. *Tropical Brainstorm*, her last album, strikes me as not just more sexually charged than the early ones, but darker, more in the style of Tori Amos who I also like.

SA: My favourite Kirsty album (and probably her darkest) is Titanic Days which was recorded just after her marriage had broken up – sadly now deleted. Of Kirsty's five albums you can still get Kite, Electric Landlady and Tropical Brainstorm – the two former being available as budget reissues. I too like Tori Amos – especially Little Earthquakes, but found her more recent albums a little disappointing.

THE BEST OF BUSHWACKER

I carried an advert for this last issue, and as Fred was kind enough to send me a copy I thought I'd put together a quick review. First impressions are that it is long – approx. 170 pages – but unbound. Fortunately we have some nice binding machines at work so my copy is now safely in one piece. Fred has gone through all the issues of *Bushwacker* (1972-1991) and extracted pages he thought warranted inclusion and then just copied them on masse. This makes for some disjointed reading at times – but it does give you a good history of the US hobby over the whole period.

Some of Fred's editorials make interesting reading a quarter of a century later. For example in December 1972 he wrote:

"This is being written during the course of the Apollo 17 Moon mission. We find it somewhat incredible that this is being billed as "the last landing of an American on the Moon in this century." If this be true, we may have signed the death warrant of our civilization. We find it somewhat incredible to believe that our Government intends to defer the exploration and development of the Endless Frontier in exchange for the mess of porridge of somehow "helping the poor" "

Well, it was indeed the last lunar mission – shame they never got around to helping the poor either.

Although Fred doesn't include many variant designs in his selection (one exception is Strip Dip - *SHUDDER* – the idea of getting your average Diplomacy player to remove their clothing is too horrible to contemplate) the hobby history insights are very interesting. I found the obituary for the great Don Miller (who died 19 years ago this month) to be quite moving even though I never met or corresponded with him.

Given what has happened to the postal Diplomacy hobby since, it is amusing to see Fred (back in 1987) speculating on the bad news that for the first time since 1970 there had been fewer than 100 postal games of Diplomacy started in the US. I doubt if more than five games will start in 2001.

The overwhelming impression from looking through the Best of *Bushwacker* is how personal it is – stories of what Fred and Inge were up to etc., with plenty of comment on issues of the day that Fred found interesting (particularly outer space and politics). I thought it would be nice to do a short reprint as a tribute to Fred and toyed with including his personal history of *Bushwacker* – however, I think the following piece is more pertinent. I have tried to instil a World War One theme to this zine, and this sort piece helps to bring some of that history to life.

The price for the Best of *Bushwacker* is \$4.00 in the US, \$6 elsewhere. Please send your orders to: Fred C. Davis, Jr., 3210-K, Wheaton Way, Ellicott City, MD 21043, USA.

WORLD WAR ONE, SECOND-HAND MEMORIES⁴

BY FRED C. DAVIS JR.

My Dad, Fred C. Davis Sr., would have been 100 on June 30, 1989. He started out in life crossing the Great American Desert in Utah and Idaho in a covered wagon, and lived to fly the Atlantic in jet planes. On his last trip to Paris, at age 82, he still had enough pep to visit the Follies Bergere.

Dad was very much involved in World War I, the war upon which our Diplomacy game is ostensibly based, so I grew up hearing a lot of war stories. This made that war very, very real to me. At the start of the war, Dad was serving in the British merchant marine. His ships played tag with German raiders and U-Boats in both the North and South Atlantic. Once, off the coast of Brazil, they thought they'd been spotted by the *Emden*, but it turned out to be a British cruiser. He helped ferry Canadian troops to Europe. And transport other troops to Gallipoli, where he saw first-hand the frightful mess the top brass had made of that operation. While disembarking troops, his ship lay between the battleship *Queen Elizabeth* and the Turkish positions. He heard and saw the *Queen* firing her *15"* guns directly over his ship into the Turks.

After having seen the ships immediately in front of him and behind him sunk by U-Boats, Dad decided to come ashore in 1916. When the U.S. entered the war the following April, he tried to enlist in the Navy. They turned him down. "You couldn't be a sailor," they said, "You don't have enough teeth!" "Then what the hell was I doing out there in the submarine zone?" Dad asked. But, they were adamant, and he had to wait until the Army decided you didn't need teeth to be a soldier, before returning to the fray.

When Dad arrived in France in August 1918, he was assigned to the Air Corps Gunnery School near St. Nazaire. He had had some aviation experience, having been a mechanic with the first flying circus to tour Texas and Oklahoma, with John B. Moissant, around 1910. I still have a photo of him working on one of the little planes they flew. He soon became the school's Supply Sergeant, which made him a rather popular person on the base, especially among people in "need" of extra equipment. So, he got to meet some of the men who later went on to be fighter pilots.

So, Dad knew what they meant when they sang about "Mademoiselle from Armentiers." He used to sing this to me when I was three and four, while my mother held her breath for fear that he'd sing some of the verses they *didn't* play on the radio. He and a friend used a motorcycle and sidecar to "tour" the various bistros and establishments. In later years, he remembered what happened on Armistice day, when everything was being given away for free. Um, *everything*.

⁴ Reprinted from *Bushwacker*, July 1989.

ARMISTICE DAY 5

So, I always found the First War very interesting, although most people seem to have forgotten about it. It was certainly the great watershed of our era, in how it affected the way people thought and behaved. It brought an end to the myth of the glory and excitement of war, and it foreshadowed the end of all of the European overseas empires, although it took the Second War to drive the final nail in the coffin. In America and anyplace else outside of the Soviet orbit, it had a much more profound effect on society than did the Second War. So, if you hear me humming about “Armentiers” or “Tipperary” this month, that’s the reason.

MARNE

REGULAR DIPLOMACY – AMENDED GAMESTART

AUSTRIA: Howard Bishop, 43 Guinions Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 7NT. latics@globalnet.co.uk

ENGLAND: Garyth Wright, 54 Greenfield Road, Dentons Green, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA10 6SL

FRANCE: Tim Deacon, 7 Ivanhoe Avenue, Nuneaton, Warks. CV11 4RW gamesmaster@mr-gm.demon.co.uk

GERMANY: Neil Hopkins, 18 Burncross Grove, Chapelton, Sheffield, S35 1RB.
Neil.Hopkins@hotmail.com

ITALY: Jeremy Tullett, 7 Midland Place Derby, DE1 2RR Jeremy.D.Tullett@btinternet.com

RUSSIA: Mike Dean, 21 Wynbury Drive, HIGH WYCOMBE, Buckinghamshire, HP13 7QB
mike.dean@bigfoot.com

TURKEY: Ellis Simpson, 4 Langtree Avenue, Whitecraigs, Glasgow, G46 7LW. ellis@golds.co.uk

Versailles: This game has not started out very well! I have orders on file from R/A/G/T. England wrote me a long letter (in which he mentioned he was going on holiday) and sent no orders! France (Peter Berlin) only wants to play if everyone has email (and England doesn't). I have heard nothing at all from Italy (John Thompson) (and email to his email address is bouncing). Therefore I am replacing Peter Berlin with Tim Deacon and John Thompson with Jeremy Tullett (see above). I am not replacing England as I have every confidence that he intends to play (please don't let me down Garyth!)



MONS (SPRING 1902)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Steve Ade) steve@hollowlane.co.uk
A(Vie) s F(Tri); F(Tri) s A(Vie) (MISORDER); A(Ser)* s A(Bud) (CUT, DISLODGED); A(Bud) s A(Ser) (CUT)

ENGLAND (Dave Clark) daveclarkdiplomacy@ic24.net
A(Nwy) - Fin; F(NTH) - Nwy; F(Lon) - NTH; F(ENG) - Wal

FRANCE (Jimmy Cowie) J.Cowie@icscotland.co.uk
F(MAO) c A(Por) - Gas; F(Mar) - Spa sc; F(Bre) Stands; A(Bel) Stands; A(Por) - Gas

GERMANY (Richard Scholefield)
A(Hol) - Bel (FAILED); F(Den) s ENGLISH A(Nwy) - Swe (MISORDER); A(Ber) - Sil; A(Kie) - Ruh; A(Mun) - Bur

ITALY (Nick Parish) nick.parish@bankofengland.co.uk
A(Ven) s A(Tyr) - Tri; A(Tyr) - Tri (FAILED); F(Nap) - Apu; F(Tun) - ION

RUSSIA (Bruce Edwards) Kactusjak@tinyworld.co.uk
F(Sev) s A(Rum); A(Rum) s TURKISH A(Bul) - Ser; A(Gal) - Bud (FAILED); A(Mos) - StP; F(GoB) - Swe

TURKEY (Tim Deacon) gamesmaster@mr-gm.demon.co.uk
A(Bul) - Ser; A(Con) - Bul; F(BLA) s A(Con) - Bul; F(Smy) - AEG

PRESS

England-Germany: I was not sure if you were as clever as I am told you are? I will explain in my next letter.

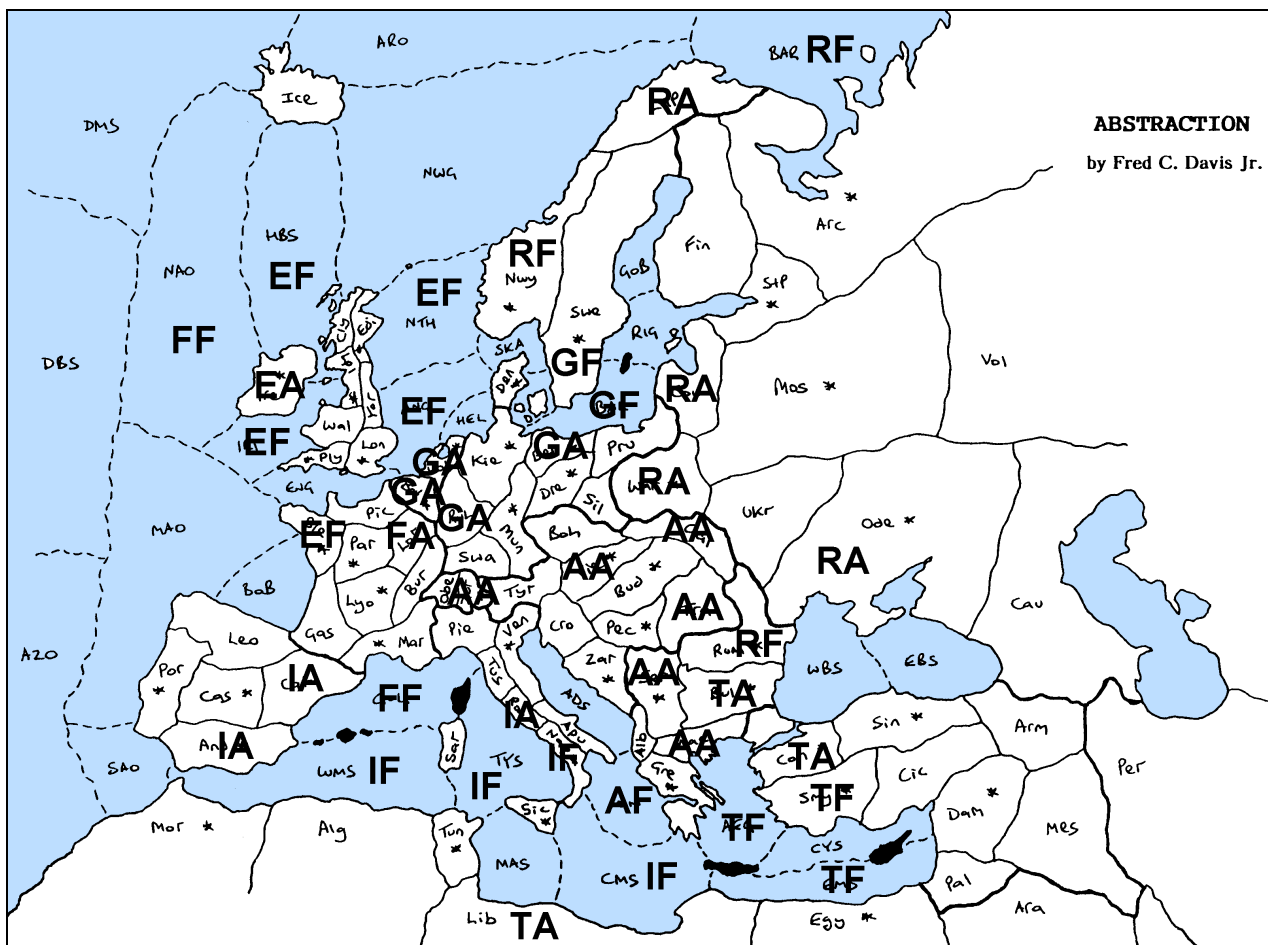
Germany-All: That's gone and done it!!

WILLIE & TIM CAPTURE THE KAISER!



Weary Willie and Tired Tim win a salute from Sir Douglas Haig. *Chips*, November 10, 1917.

ARMISTICE DAY 5



ABSTRACTION
by Fred C. Davis Jr.

TANNENBURG ABSTRACTION II - OCTOBER 1914

AUSTRIA John Colledge, Dunroch, 24 Brunstane Bank, Edinburgh, EH15 2NR

(dunroch@pop.dial.pipex.com):

A(Zur) Std.; A(Ser) S A(Gre)-Mac; F(ION) S ITALIAN
F(Sic)-CMS; A(Bud)-Gal; A(Vie) S A(Bud)-Gal;
A(Pec)-Tra

ENGLAND Chris Martin, 444 w49th #1AG, New York, NY 10019, USA (tremewanc@earthlink.net):

F(Nwy)* [DISLODGED - Retreats to NTH] S F(Lon)-ANG;
F(Bre)-MAO; A(IRI)-Ire; F(IRI) S F(Lpl)-HBS,
F(Lon)-ANG

FRANCE John Boocock, 25 Melrose Drive, Peterborough, PE2 9DN (JohnandDiana@tesco.net):

F(And)-GoL; A(Lor)-Bre; F(NAO)-MAO

GERMANY Dave Clark, 74B Chester Road, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, B36 9BU

(daveclarkdiplomacy@ic24.net):

A(Hol) S A(Ruh)-Bel; A(Mun)-Ruh; F(Den)-Swe;
A(Ruh)-Bel; F(Kie)-BAL; A(Ber) Std.

ITALY Bruce Edwards, 29 Aeron Close, Barry, South Glam, CF62 7PX (Kactusjak@tinyworld.co.uk):

F(WMS) S A(Mor)-And; F(Tun)-TYS; A(Mar)-Cat;
F(Nap) S F(Sic)-CMS, A(Ven)-Rom

RUSSIA Bob Pitman, 19 Honeysuckle Close, Locksheath, Southampton, Hants. SO31 6WF

(bob@pltman.demon.co.uk):

A(Mos)-Cou; A(Ode) S F(Rum) S AUSTRIAN A(Ser)-Bul;
A(Lap) S F(Swe)-Nwy; A(War) Std.; F(Arc)-BAR

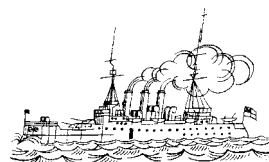
TURKEY Nick Gladstone, 1 Rosemary Terrace, St. Agnes, TR5 OUF (ngladstone@cornwall.gov.uk):

A(Bul) S AUSTRIAN A(Ser)-Rum; F(AEG) S F(EMS)-CMS,
A(Egy)-Lib; A(Con)-Mac; F(Smy)-Con

PRESS

Paris-Ger: My fence appears to be broken, all of a sudden, please help me to mend it

Rules Reminder: Frozen Regions. During the period January-April inclusive, the Arctic Ocean, Barents Sea, Archangel, Lapland and Iceland are frozen and any fleets in these spaces must stand. Frozen fleets may not support, convoy nor be dislodged. Armies in Lapland or Archangel may not be dislodged when the spaces are frozen, though armies in Lapland or Archangel may move out of these spaces overland (though not by convoy). Russia may build either fleets or armies in Archangel in March.



ARMISTICE DAY 5



HELIGOLAND (AUTUMN 1901)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Emperor Franz Josef)
F(Tri) Stands; A(Vie) s F(Tri); A(Ser) Stands

ENGLAND (Caveat)
F(ENG) c A(Wal) - Bel; F(NTH) s A(Wal) - Bel;
A(Wal) - Bel

FRANCE (Petit Chou)
F(MAO) - Por; A(Gas) - Spa; A(Bur) - Bel (FAILED)

GERMANY (Visigoth)
A(Ruh) - Hol; A(Mun) - Bur (FAILED); F(Den) - Swe
(FAILED)

ITALY (Greenslade)
A(Tyr) - Boh; A(Ven) - Tyr; F(TYS) - Tun

RUSSIA (Agar)
F(Fin) - Swe (FAILED); F(Sev) - Rum; A(Ukr) s
A(War) - Gal; A(War) - Gal

TURKEY (The Great Panjandrum)
F(Ank) - BLA; A(Bul) - Gre; A(Con) - Bul

Autumn 1901 Adjustments:

A: Tri, Vie, +Ser, Bud = 4; Gains 1. Builds A(Bud).
E: +Bel, Edi, Lon, Lpl = 4; Gains 1. Builds A(Lon).
F: +Por, +Spa, Bre, Mar, Par = 5; Gains 2. Builds
F(Bre), A(Par).
G: +Hol, Mun, +Den, Ber, Kie = 5; Gains 2. Builds
A(Kie), A(Ber).
I: +Tun, Nap, Rom, Ven = 4; Gains 1. Builds A(Ven).
R: +Rum, Mos, Sev, StP, War = 5; Gains 1. Builds
F(Sev).
T: +Gre, +Bul, Ank, Con, Smy = 5; Gains 2. Builds
F(Smy), A(Con).

PRESS

t-a: Wot abaht doin in da wop?

Petit Chou to his Imperial Majesty, King and

Emperor: Between us lie two countries. I suspect that
you need to survive the early buffets, whilst I too need to
repel boarders. Bonne Chance!

England to Germany: I say Mein Herr, fancy some
snails for brekker?

StP-Vie: If Turkey has occupied Gre and Bul you need
to use Bud to support Ser. I promise I will not interfere
with that support.

Italy - Germany, Austria and Russia: I saw Sandra
Bond do this in a postal game last century, and it looked
worth trying for aesthetic reasons (you do colour your
maps, don't you?).

Austria-Italy: Please GO AWAY now! and I will not
hold a grudge and as I previously promised, I will your
units whenever and wherever I can.

Petit Chou to Greenslade: is this Wallace to whom Je
suis talking. maintenant, monsieur, votre future est dans
les balkans, et moi, je vais au nord.

StP-All: Sorry everybody about no press last season,
that cad the REAL Agar told me earnestly it was a no-
press game, and I quote "Yes - traditional no-press
gunboat."

Versailles: Apologies – that's what comes of immersing
myself in Internet Diplomacy where "press" =
"negotiations".

Rome - the world: Italian peacekeeping troops have
taken up position between those traditional enemies,
Germany and Austria. A no-fly zone has been
established in the Southern Alps, and Italian special
forces are searching for the notorious von Trapp family.

StP-Real Agar: Are there reserved press names?

Versailles: This is my (Stephen Agar) reserved name –
the only other reserved names are the country and/or
capital names followed by "(Govt.)"

Austria-Turkey: Please feel free to take GRE with my
blessings.

Petit Chou to Agar: And I thought this was a game of
gunboat. Is this a throwback to woodrow wilson? Build
an army in st petersburg for effect next season

StP-England: Thank you for the friendly opening, I
hope we can continue at peace, good luck in your
campaigns.

Austria-Russia: Please feel free to take RUM with my
blessings.

StP-Ank: There, I haven't gone to BLA! Please make
good on your promise to leave quietly. Let's have some
fun.

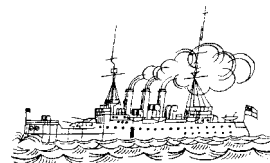
Austria-All: I love you all, go in peace my brothers or
the WORM WILL TURN!!! As allways I come in
peace my friends. "Shoot to kill men".

StP-Rom: I am your friend.

Petit Chou to Visigoth: Your future lies in sacking
Rome - recognise the rhine as the frontier: Don't let them
into Sweden, and let England into Belgium

StP-Ber: I like your style with Mun/Ruh very much
indeed! Monsieur caveat, why not interest yourself in
Belgium - I will support you there - Petit Chou

Petit Chou to Ank: The Black sea is historically
Turkish - sell you a dreadnought or two?



ARMISTICE DAY 5

FORTHCOMING UK CONS

ManorCon XIX

20th –23rd July 2001 at Chamberlain Hall, Birmingham University. One Day Registration - £6 before 31st May, or £8 from 1st June Full Weekend Registration - £12 before 31st May, or £20 from 1st June. Accommodation - £21.50 per night for a single room. £20 per person per night for a twin room £28 per night for a single en-suite room. To book, please return this form to Neil Duncan, MANORCON, 25 Sarum Hill, Basingstoke, Hants RG21 8SS UK. Cheques should be made payable to "The Universities Diplomacy Tournament".

Mind Sports Olympiad 2001

The Mind Sports Olympiad 2001 will be held on August 18-27, at Alexandra Place in London. It will feature tournaments for many mental games, including old favourites such as chess, bridge, go, scrabble and the like. Following, on from the hobby events run there last year there will be many tournaments for hobby games in 2001. **Diplomacy:** This popular Machiavelian game was first played at the Olympiad in 1999, with Peter Hawkins emerging as the winner. Despite worries before hand that cash prizes might distort the tournament, this did not happen on the day. Dave Horton won the 2000 tournament. The 2001 tournament will be run by myself and Nick Parish on Sunday 19 August, starting at 10am. Following the main event is an *Intimate Diplomacy* tournament that evening.

FurryCon 2001

10-14 August 2001 in Brighton. I don't have any more details than that at them moment, but you can write to SFC Press, 11 Greyfriars, Bedford MK40 1HJ or email: jane@sfcpc.co.uk.

MidCon 2001

2-4 November 2001 in Birmingham. Similarly, a bit sparse on details. Registration is **£15** (£18 after 1 September 2001 and £20 after 19 October 2001). The venue is the Thistle Hotel Birmingham and room rates are £38 per person per night for a single room and £29 per person per night sharing a twin/double room. Send registration fee and details of accommodation needed to SFC Press, 11 Greyfriars, Bedford MK40 1HJ.

WAITING LISTS

4 week Deadlines

Regular Diplomacy with Email Addresses: Peter Berlin, Jimmy Cowie

Big Push Diplomacy II: See pages 7-8 inside. 7 needed.

Five Italies: Toby Harris, 4 wanted. Rules on request or check out <http://www.diplomacy-archive.com/resources/variants/rules/5italies.htm>

Viking Diplomacy IV: Eight wanted – maybe a gunboat game to see if we can get one going?

Abstraction II and *Ancient Mediterranean* closed due to lack of interest. ☹

Playlist for this issue: If I was going to be completely honest I would have to confess to having played the entire *Hitchikers Guide to the Galaxy* (a nice little 6 CD boxed set, which usually only comes out when decorating) – but as Mark Wightman has said he will fold if he ever finds himself listening to the same CD as me, I won't mention that one. Very sad about Douglas Adams though – I think he would have appreciated the irony of killing himself through exercising. What else? Well, *Five Leaves Left*, *Bryter Layter* and *Pink Moon* by Nick Drake have been mentioned elsewhere. Other CDs littering my desk include *Pulling Rabbits Out Of A Hat* by Sparks, the eponymous *Peter Gabriel*, *Because We Love You* by Stephen Duffy (now that's a rare CD these days), *Miss America* by Mary Margaret O'Hara, *John Wesley Harding* by Bob Dylan and *Spike* by Elvis Costello. I was going to include *Steptacular* by Steps, as I did listen to it when recording it onto cassette for my daughter (aged 6 – from her CD) – but thought I'd better not as you lot would only take the piss.

A Diplomacy zine from Stephen Agar, 47 Preston Drove, BRIGHTON, BN1 6LA.

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Each issue costs 80p (UK) or £1.50 (US\$2.25) (overseas) per issue.

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DEADLINE

SATURDAY 30TH JUNE 2001