

Ethil the frog

ETHIL THE FROG 1 is the first issue of Britain's fourth postal Diplomacy fanzine, edited by John Piggott, Jesus College, Cambridge, CB5 8BL. Subscriptions are 5p per copy, 10/50p, 20/£1 inland. We trade with anything we like the look of. Today is January 31, 1972.

We're off!

Seven people have declared their willingness to play, and it is with great pleasure that we announce the draw for the first game. The players are as follows:

- AUSTRIA - Peter Robertson / 82 Luddenham Close / Ashford / Kent.
- ENGLAND - Phil Jones / McNair Hall / Elmswood Rd / Mossley Hill / Liverpool 18.
- FRANCE - David Christianson / 9 College Drive / Bebington / Cheshire.
- GERMANY - Andy Davidson / Jesus College / Cambridge / CB5 8BL.
- ITALY - Ian Maule / 59 Windsor Tce / South Gosforth / Newcastle-on-Tyne.
- RUSSIA - Graham Jeffery / 8 Rusholme Road / London S.W.15.
- TURKEY - Kevin Feintuck / 16 Argyle Road / Liverpool / L4 2RS.

A majority of people put England or Turkey first, as I'd expected; something that surprised me a great deal was that everybody seemed to hate Italy, and by the luck of the draw it was Ian who lost out and got it. Ian put Italy next to bottom in his list of preferences...

The game will be called ETHIL THE FROG 'A' game, to avoid confusion if we start a second game before Rod Walker assigns a Boardman Number... please, Rod.

Deadline for Spring 1901 moves is Saturday, February 19, 1972. All orders must be received by that date, please.

Now for some incredibly bureaucratic HOUSE RULES...

1. The normal rules of Diplomacy (1971) will be in operation, unless otherwise specified. Note that we're using the new Rulebook, which differs from the old 1962 version in two main points:

- (a) The victory criterion is now the possession of 18 supply centres.
- (b) At the discretion of the player concerned, a dislodged unit may be annihilated instead of retreating, even when a retreat space is available.

2. The gamesmaster will set a deadline for each move. Players must submit orders for each of his units, be received by the gamesmaster at or before the deadline. If a player submits more than one set of orders for a particular move, those with the latest postmark (or, lacking legible postmarks, those last received) will be followed. No player may submit 'final' - i.e. non-contravertible orders.

You are advised to sign your name on all orders to minimise the risk of deception. Joint orders from more than one country may be submitted; in this case, the orders must be signed by all the relevant players to be valid.

You may abbreviate the names of provinces in your orders. Game reports in ETHIL THE FROG will use the system outlined below:

- Lpl - Liverpool; Lvn - Livonia; StP - St.Petersburg; Nwy - Norway;
- Nrg - Norwegian Sea; Nth - North Sea; Naf - North Africa; NAO - North Atlantic; MAO - Mid Atlantic; GoB - Gulf of Bothnis; GoL - Gulf of Lyons;
- ENC - English Channel; TyS - Tyrrhenian Sea; EMS/WMS - Eastern/western Mediterranean; all other provinces - first three letters of name;
- S - supports; C- convoys.

Illegal, illegible or ambiguous orders will not be followed. Unordered units will stand unsupported.

3. The gamesmaster's decision in all matters pertaining to the game must be

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regarded as final, except where an obvious and demonstrable error has been made. Errors which are not brought to the gamesmaster's attention by the end of the following move must be allowed to stand.

4. Propaganda may be submitted by any player, to be published with the game reports in ETHIL THE FROG. I warn you, however, that I shall be playing at Editors and may censor all or some of any player's contribution on grounds of length, bad taste, or indeed anything else.
5. Deception of the gamesmaster is not tolerated under any circumstances. Discovery will inevitably lead to punishments beyond the power of the human mind to contemplate; in extreme cases, removal from the game will result.
6. If you want to leave the game for any reason, please inform the powers-that-be as soon as possible so that replacement players may be found with the minimum of trouble. Please do not just drop out without telling anybody since it spoils the game for everybody else.
7. Responsibility for notifying the other players of changes of residence, temporary addresses etc. lies with each individual player, including the gamesmaster. Change of address notices will always be published in the first possible issue of ETHIL THE FROG.
8. These rules are, of course, open to discussion - please don't hesitate to comment on any aspect of them if you feel there's something you want to say. Amendments to the rules may be published from time to time.

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Variant games

I don't intend to limit ETHIL's scope to just regular Diplomacy. Over there in that largish island off the Statue of Liberty several types of variant games are being played. These include games with the same rules but altered map set in places ranging from mere slight alterations of the standard Diplomacy board to situations in Outer Space of Middle-Earth... then there are variants with altered rules but using the standard Dippy Board, such as Colin Hemming's MYOPIA variant (see below); and, of course, games in which both the rules and the map are changed. Such a game is Abstraction, a variant invented by Fred Davis. It is our intention to start up a game of Abstraction in the near future; so far Andy Davidson, Graham Jeffrey, and Kevin Feintuck have expressed interest. I hope to be producing details of the rules and board for this and other variants in the reasonably near future... that is, if there's enough interest to make it worthwhile.

Our Freindly rivals...

Several other magazines of interest to wargamers are being produced by various people...

WAR BULLETIN (Hartley Patterson, Finches, 7 Cambridge Rd, Beaconsfield, Bucks) is at present running two regular Dippy games and one game of Diadokhi, a variant set in 220 B.C. with such added attractions as barbarian supply bases which revert to their original owners if left unoccupied! Sub is 5/20p, with a game fee of 25p.

ALBION (Don Turnbull, Flat 13, Gilmerton Court, Trumpington Rd, Cambridge) runs eight regular and one Abstraction game in its subzine COURIER. Don's just changed his job and is having to cut down on his gaming activities, so there's likely to be a long wait for the next COURIER game. ALBION itself is well worth getting, and costs 20p per issue + postage now.

XL (Colin Hemming, 20 Hilltop Court, Wilmslow Rd, Manchester M14 6LH) has just started a game of DIPLOMYOPIA, in which players only know what's going on in the provinces adjacent to the ones they occupy! I don't know whether Colin's got any other games up his sleeve, but it might be worth writing to see.

Ethil's Move Schedule

At present, I'd like to allow two to three weeks per move. Builds and retreats, where applicable, should be submitted along with the previous move. This has an inherent disadvantage in that you have to anticipate the results of your orders and predict other people's moves before they make them;

however, it does ensure that no diplomacy takes place before retreats or builds are carried out -- which is, after all, what it says in the Rulebook! In cases where several outcomes of a move are possible, it would be as well if players tabulated their build and retreat requirements for each possibility.

If a unit is dislodged, but is not covered by a retreat order, the unit will be annihilated. If, during the Winter resupplying, a player must remove a unit, but has not specified which one, the gamesmaster will remove first the unit which is farthest away from that player's home supply bases. The fleet will be removed before the army.

If a player is entitled to build extra units, but has not asked for them, he won't get them...

These rules seem to work all right in WAR BULLETIN's games, and they have the advantage of providing a reasonably fast-moving game. Unless there's a wild outcry to the contrary, I'd like to use them.

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What Happens Now?

Only three of our 'A' game players have any significant experience with postal diplomacy, and three of them have no such experience at all. (No, I won't say which ones; some of you will know anyway, and the rest of you will be able to find out without too much trouble.) However, it might be an idea to mention that we're not limited to diploming by letter; phone calls are obviously a good idea, and ETHIL THE FROG will publish any phone numbers if asked to do so. (But don't get busted for making obscene calls.) You don't actually have to do any diploming at all, of course; the amount is quite up to you. However, there is a sad lack in British postal diplomacy of players from different countries co-operating with one another; the average game (so far as I've seen) seems pretty anarchic, with players double-crossing each other just about every move. Needless to say, it ends up with nobody trusting anyone, which takes away a lot of the point of having postal diplomacy games at all. And the more diploming you do, the more you will get out of the game.

I'd just like to stress again some items in the House Rules. Propaganda statements from players in postal games are important because they interest people who aren't playing but might if they like the look of the stuff they see (and new players are always welcome); and, more important, it gives the gamesmaster a bit of interest, because he doesn't play and so misses out on all the diploming.

Also, I cannot emphasise too highly how annoying it is when a player drops out from a game without telling anyone. So if exams, pregnancy, etc. are calling you please tell the gamesmaster! When we get a few more people interested I'd like to start up a system of standby players, whereby a player who leaves a game is replaced by another player taken from a waiting list compiled for that purpose. Standby players will receive ETHIL THE FROG free while they are playing in a game to replace an absent player... but of course, you can't be a standby player in your own game. So no applications from 'A' game players, please!

And if there's anything you'd like to say about the rules, please don't hesitate to tell. It would be nice if you'd send me any comments you have as soon as possible, so that I can make a decent job of editing any lettercolumn this might spawn.

The Moneygrubber

Aha, here is where we find out who are our real friends... So far I have not asked anybody to pay any money, reasoning that if the thing never got started it would be a waste of time demanding money from people and then having to give it back later. But I can't go on producing this thing and not have anything coming in, and from now on this magazine will cost real money, and all players (and anyone else who might be interested in reading it) are asked to send me a sum of money before the deadline for moves. I suggest 50p or £1. You may pay in the most convenient way you wish; cheques, postal orders, cash or unused postage stamps of 3p denomination or less. Anyone who doesn't pay up won't receive the next issue! (Blackmail...)

Better also mention that anyone may play in more than one game; however, the second and each subsequent game will cost you 25p. extra over and above the subscription you pay.

*** Don't forget the deadline -- SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1972.

Good luck, and I hope you enjoy the game.

Peace, as always