

£1.75
\$3.00

THE MAGAZINE OF POSTAL GAMING

FLAGSHIP



ISSUE
3

THE WEAPON



THE WEAPON is the exciting new computer moderated, multi-player PBM game of space exploration, combat and diplomacy. Innovative fill-in-the-blank turn sheets make order writing the easiest yet. Custom design starships from small scout vessels to super-dreadnaughts containing THE WEAPON, the most awesome force in the universe. Game includes designing planetary defenses, conducting trade, invasions of worlds and ship to ship combat. THE WEAPON is easy to learn, yet satisfyingly complex in the fast, unpredictable nature of multi-player gaming. THE WEAPON has been thoroughly play-tested and starting positions are available NOW!

Send \$2.00 U.S. for the rules and more information.

4 SIGHT

P.O. Box 1903, Indianapolis, Indiana U.S.A. 46206

GATHERING SPEED

THANKS to a sizable leap in advertising and a steady stream of new subscriptions, we are able to go up another four pages this issue, reaching our 'target' of 36 pages – and if the current trends continue, 40 pages should be only an issue or two away. This means that we can have more of everything, but rather than automatically increase every section we've been taking a careful look at the feedback on each, and making changes, some of which will be apparent in this issue.

Professional Secrets and Explorer's Findings are the two most popular sections, with analysis and reviews of current games. However, the balance of popularity seems to be towards analysis, with a capsule review of the rules for the uninitiated: a good analysis conveys the 'feel' of the game while providing a useful tool if you decide to play it, whereas a straightforward review is not much use once you start to play. True, for very new games there may not be much one can say on strategy but we prefer not to publish even preliminary reviews before the player has had the chance to become familiar with the game. It may mean waiting a little longer, but a snap impression after two or three turns is not usually worth very much, and later on you should be able to discuss strategy too. So expect more deep-going Professional Secrets like the Feudal Lords feature in this issue.

Ghost in the Machine is less relevant to everyday play, and mainly of interest to players who are interested in why games were designed as they were, perhaps with a view to doing their own. Readers who are interested in this section seem fairly satisfied with its current balance, and no major changes of emphasis are planned.

The Spokesmen Speak is now attracting tons of press releases, and we are being increasingly ruthless in our selection, concentrating on new releases and significant developments in familiar games, at the expense of announcements of the 'we are doing better than ever' type. This is one section that we don't want to increase beyond its present size, though when hard news is available we will always try to find room for it.

The Mighty Pen is not yet as mighty as we'd like: we should welcome longer and more detailed letters from readers about their views on how the hobby is developing. Most of the letters we get are of the 'I liked the last issue a lot' kind, which are very nice (don't let me discourage you!) but not very publishable. We're also surprised how few players are using the free advert service to contact their opponents, especially in the big games with 100-plus players, most of which seem to have dozens of FLAGSHIP readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Travellers' Tales is normally one story per issue: this seems to be the consensus preference, though as expected tastes differ violently on what makes good game-related fiction.

Galactic View, finally, is likely to undergo major revision around issue 5, following a survey which we are planning of every moderator in the field.

Some things, however, don't change. We are committed to our international outlook; to building bridges between professional and amateur hobbies; to independent coverage of every aspect of PBM, and *only* of PBM; to maintaining professional standards both in writing and physical presentation – to earning, in short, our brash self-styled label as The Flagship of Postal Gaming.

NICKY PALMER

PS Apologies to GALACTIC CONQUEST fans for the delay in the promised article – the authors are still arguing over the fine points! It'll be there next issue.

★ **UK readers: note change of address
for subscriptions and advertising** ★



No. 3

Summer 1984

Editor: Dr. Nicholas Palmer

Consultant editor: David Pritchard

Cover art: Peter Bartle

Artwork: Jean Anderson, Ian Bolton, Megan Evans, Andrew Stewart, Ivan Wilding

Editorial correspondence to:
7 Delahay House, 15 Chelsea Embankment,
London SW3 4LA, England

US subscriptions to:
Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467
Scottsdale, AZ 85252-1467

*UK and other countries subscriptions and
advertising to:*

FLAGSHIP, P.O. Box 12, Aldridge,, Walsall,
West Midlands WS9 0TJ

Typeset by Guildford Graphics Limited,
Guildford, Surrey, England

Produced by Eagl Print

© Copyright Astro-Sprint Ltd

CONTENTS

Report from the Bridge	3
Professional Secrets	
Feudal Lords	4
The Art of Power Gaming	9
Tales of the AMAX Alliance	10
How to fail at Zorphwar	14
Eight Paths to Warboird Victory	18
Explorer's Findings	
Struggle for the Globe	21
Ghost in the Machine	
PBM Game Design	22
Starting your own PBM game	22
Let the buyer beware	24
Travellers' Tales	
It was the only thing he could do . . .	26
Gamestart Alpha Victory (Part II)	28
THE SPOKESMEN SPEAK	30
THE MIGHTY PEN	32
GALACTIC VIEW	34

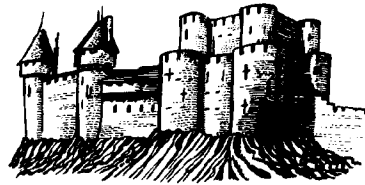
Subscriptions – p. 16

NOTE: Many games referred to in this magazine are copyright. References to the games without individual acknowledgement of this fact should not be construed as a challenge to the copyright. Copyright holders for most PBM games are listed in the GALACTIC VIEW section. Copyright holder for Diplomacy is Avalon Hill.



Park the spaceships. Hang up the zapper blaster. Journey into the past with NICKY PALMER in . . .

FEUDAL LORDS



FEUDAL LORDS is a surprising game in two ways. The first is that it provides an impressively precise and apparently well-researched picture of the problems of running a medieval English fiefdom. The second is that its simple and compact exterior conceals considerable strategic and tactical subtlety.

After years of reviewing wargames which put London south of the Thames and turned Redhill into Red Hill (famous for its Russian moles?), I approached Feudal Lords with some skepticism, rather expecting feudalism to be modelled on the movie of *Camelot*. Not a bit of it. True, the scenario postulates an England of 800 AD after the death of the possibly mythical King Arthur, and there is in fact a Camelot fief, but both geography and feudal simulation seem to have been drawn up with meticulous care: even Camelot is placed where the real Arthur is said to have had his mini-kingdom, between Wessex and Salisbury. Only one fief (Durham) seems misplaced.

More important for most games players is that the design neatly slots together military campaigning with the demands of managing the feudal fief, an interesting mixture of a rural barter system with an urban cash economy. The twelve-order limit, which I originally felt to be a crude device to help the moderator process more turns per hour and make bigger profit, turns out to enhance the game; it gives you conflicting priorities over which to agonise, and a real sense that you *are* the feudal lord, with only a certain time available to do your tasks, and no competent administrative staff to do them for you.

This article assumes that you have read the rules summary (box) and are planning to start a game: how should you go about achieving the Throne? In several places I am drawing on Bob McLain's excellent

analysis in issue 1 of *PBM Universal* (now *Games Universal*), our splendid rival magazine to which serious PBM players should also subscribe.

For the first four turns (= years) of the game you are safe from conquest by other players, and it is vital not to use this time in bullying hapless non-player fiefs. This period of peace is the only chance you will get to devote all your efforts to constructing a sound economy, and you should grab it with both hands.

The absolute priority at the start is increasing food production. At the start, you have enough food for the population with a little left over for sale at market, but one bad harvest will push you into deficit, with two effects: (a) you won't be able to feed all your peasants and knights and (b) the price of food will go through the roof, and your townsmen will run out of money to buy it. Town incomes vary between 25 and 35, and the price of food can go as high as 36: combine that with the low end of the urban income range and you get mass emigration to fiefs where they care about their townspeople more than you do. Conversely, the swings of the food price will give you a handsome profit once you produce substantially more than you need.

Initially, townsmen are on average more profitable than peasants, with an average tax yield of 20% of 30=6 versus an average peasant food surplus of ½ a food point at 10=5 gold pieces. However, once agricultural research reaches its maximum level, the peasants will be churning out 1.4 surplus food for an average profit per peasant of 14 gold, whereas investment in urban markets will only have boosted

FEUDAL LORDS RULES SUMMARY

10-15 player game. You are a medieval lord of one of 46 fiefs in England, 800 AD. By persuading other fiefs (who may or may not be players) to swear loyalty to you you rise in rank till winning the game by acquiring 23 such 'vassals'; players may do this voluntarily, but non-player fiefs must be conquered. They may also be bribed to give you 'favours': one favour will allow you to march through and two will enable you to use their forces on a campaign.

You have knights, peasants (who grow food and can be trained to become knights), and townsmen (who can be taxed from 0 to 50%): your income is derived from food sales, taxation, and various investments discussed in the article. Mercenaries can be hired each turn to supplement your standing army.

You can attack only one fief per turn, which must either be adjacent to your home or accessible by right of passage through vassal fiefs or fiefs owing favours, or by sea. Attacks can be raids to get money, field battles to gain experience, or sieges to compel submission and if you wish to displace other players: players forced out of their home fiefs can, however, take refuge in one of their vassals.

Up to 12 coded orders are made each turn; the game is 100% computer-moderated.



‘... the absolute priority at the start is increasing food production ...’

town tax revenue by 2.4 gold to 8.4 per townsman. In the very long run, things will change again as you reach the limit of available farmland and national food prices come down (due to all that mass production in player fiefs), but in the very long run there will probably be a winner already, so don't worry about it. Rule 1, then, is to spend the maximum that you can afford on agricultural research as often as you can afford it (although the rules do not say so, you can order several doses of research every turn till you reach the maximum).

Rule 2 is to play the food market for all it's worth. Since stockpiled food deteriorates and livestock multiplies, food surpluses in low-price years should be converted into cattle up to the limit of your available orders. In high-price years, convert the herds back into food (to use the euphemism of the game) and make your killing. By turn 6 or 7 you should have more gold than you know what to do with. By comparison, all the other things you can do to boost income – build lumber mills, create fishing fleets, explore for mineral deposits – produce quite minimal gains, and should be left till you have your maximum agricultural bonus.

Rule 3 is trickier, and depends very much on the state of the game: this is to manipulate your population to keep the knight component as low as you dare. Bob suggests disbanding half your initial 200 on turn 1, but for just the same reasons you might as well reduce them to 2: put bluntly, they are a lot of armoured layabouts, sponging off your treasury and food reserves in the critical early stages when you need every sheaf of wheat and raspberry bush that you can lay your hands on. Having precisely two knights gives you the amusing option of offering campaign support to your neighbours: if they accept, you can keep one of the fellows at home and send the other off into battle, and your friend will duly get the report 'THINE

ARMY WAS SUPPORTED BY ...', neatly omitting to mention the number of knights which you hurled into the fray. You can then claim to have taken massive casualties ('only two knights left, dammit!') and ask for recompense from your grateful ally (who ideally should not be a FLAGSHIP reader).

The primary benefit of this butter-before-lances approach is the saving of 5 gold and 1 food (= 10 gold on average) per knight per turn; in addition, the vast majority of them will discard their helmets and settle down as townsmen, giving you 6 gold income. Saving 198 knights therefore generates around 20 x 198 gold – nearly 4000 – extra every turn, which in the first few turns is just what you need to fuel your agricultural drive and send the economy roaring into the 9th century. One day you will need to retrain them, and this will cost 20 gold (the rules say '20 gold plus 1 food', but this is misleading since the food unit is the same one that you would have fed him as a peasant if he had stayed untrained) i.e. 4000 to restore the establishment of 200, but those early turns of extra income are worth their – well, their weight in gold, if you'll excuse the metaphor.

There is a counter-argument (apart from the unimportant one that raids by other fiefs may steal a few hundred gold off you from time to time): this is that the really crucial long-term asset is not gold but peasant manpower, since it is the peasantry that generates both food surpluses and recruits for the army. Losses in battle can only be replaced from the peasants (not the townsmen, who regard such sports as beneath them), and if you use up all your peasants you will not get any more. This brings us to the next stage: what to do with all that money.

The answer, in years when the food price is not too extortionate, is to buy food with which to force-feed the peasantry. In

one of the few implausibilities of the game, the reproductive urge is apparently stimulated by eating vast six-course dinners, and the more food you throw at your devoted subjects the faster they will multiply (perhaps this simulates, rather, the arrival of more peasants from outlying areas, attracted by your munificence). My greatest effort so far was to give 1600 food to 964 peasants: this resulted in a population leap of 16% as opposed to the normal 5%. In an average year, an effort on this scale will cost you less than 7000 gold, which in the *middle*-game you will think of as chicken-feed, and increase the population by more than 100 extra peasants. By this means you can rapidly rebuild your population of knight potential to make up for the early reduction.

So, a preliminary timetable:

801–804: Use the immunity from siege conquest to save on knights, build your agricultural research to .9, and multiply your treasury to say 20000.

805–807: Use your food surplus in bad harvest years to multiply your treasury, and use your treasury in good harvest years to multiply your food and feed it to the peasants.

When should you rebuild your army? When rival players force you to, or around 807 if you can wait as late as that. Unfortunately, the mock-fealty trick (see below) will make any fief within two of your own a danger unless you are convinced that they are either friendly or non-readers of both FLAGSHIP and PBM UNIVERSAL. Accordingly, you will probably need to tell your neighbours that you are rebuilding to a decent level on turn 805: whether you actually do so depends on how assiduously you think they are spying on you, but it's probably safest to go up to 150–200 knights just in case.

This timetable should secure your
please turn over

FEUDAL LORDS

continued from previous page

economy, but to win the game you will need assiduous diplomacy: in certain circumstances, in fact, you will need to deploy your negotiating skills more effectively than in any other multi-player game that I know of (including Diplomacy itself, and the arch-diplomat's game Starweb). This is because, in the last resort, you may have to persuade players to yield the Throne to you *voluntarily*.

Bob's article makes a good deal of this: it is, he believes, impossible to win without lining up allies to swear fealty to you at the appropriate moment, and he cites US game number 5, in which an aggressive lone wolf with massive economic and military strength was defeated by an enterprising opponent who persuaded most of the other players to make him King instead. The rules explicitly encourage this approach, by making the King the 'grand winner' and his vassals (i.e. the supporters who put him on the throne) 'winners' as well, in order of their rank. The argument which you deploy is therefore:

'Look, Fred, realistically you aren't going to win outright, but if we don't do something you will be knocked out of the game altogether by X as he tries to get 23 vassals over our dead bodies. Sign up on my side and I'll see that you are at least a subsidiary winner.'

Quite convincing. But suppose X is not a lone wolf type, but an equally aggressive player with a plausible side-line in chat. *His* letter will read thus:

'If you ally with him you won't win instantly, because he needs a few turns to line up all his support [this may or may not be true, but never mind], and I will obviously need to concentrate all my efforts at knocking out his supporters. If you swear fealty to me you're on to a much surer thing, since you can see that nobody can stand up to my army at its current level. Why trade a certainty for a gamble?'

If Fred signs up with X, so much the better, but X really only needs his neutrality while he stamps on the potential rival king as fast as he can. If you are much better at diplomacy than X you *may* be able to pull off an alliance of say eight players to stop him, but X's case for their support is really a lot stronger than yours, and most diplomatic games have a few players who will sell out to the leader in exchange for survival and a place on the winning team.

Accordingly, while I agree that it is potentially fatal to lose touch with any of the other players (or to make a habit of the light-hearted double-dealing of the two-knight trick - you need some *genuine* alliances!), it is equally important to try to build up military superiority (or at least equality with the strongest) by 810 or so. What's more, your early efforts should not be directed at the soft targets of the non-player fiefs (who will be real pushovers when you later get round to them) but at

For the Fiefdom of UXWORTH

To: Lord NICKY PALMER, Baron of UXWORTH

Thy Seneschal carried out thine orders as follows:

UXWORTH began 805 with:	Gold	Food	Peasant	Townmen	Knights
	17815	2466	1132	445	2
Convert 39 livestock to food	+0	+39	+0	+0	+0
Maintaineth 2 Knights	-10	-2	+0	+0	+0
Traineth 48 new Knights	-960	-48	-48	+0	+48
Selleth 926 food at market	+30249	-926	+0	+0	+0
Giveth 445 food to townsmen					
They paid 32 gold per food	+14240	-445	+0	+0	+0
Giveth 1084 food to peasants	+0	-1084	+0	+0	+0
Agricultural research succeedeth	-2084	+0	+0	+0	+0
Foreign trade - 1 ship sails.	-1000	+0	+0	+0	+0
Spy on ALBANY	-100	+0	+0	+0	+0
Buildeth castle up by 2	-2000	+0	+0	+0	+0
Buildeth 1 Fishing Fleet	-300	+0	-10	+0	+0
Bribeth lord of ESSEX succeedeth	-500	+0	+0	+0	+0
Bribeth lord of ESSEX succeedeth	-500	+0	+0	+0	+0

Thy Chancellor reporteth the following revenues:

Tax & population growth/decline	+0	+0	+67	+120	+0
An excellent harvest (2.35)	+0	+2681	+0	+0	+0
(Average harvest was 1.35)					
Fishing	+0	+34	+0	+0	+0
Lumber mills	+260	+0	+0	+0	+0
Foreign trade: 0 ships lost	+2100	+0	+0	+0	+0

Thy Sheriff reporteth other events in thy fief:

Foreign investment createth 1 new market.

Thy Chamberlain reporteth:

DORCHESTER sweareth fealty to SALISBURY.

Thy Marshal reporteth the following military activity:

- * In AVALON: EXETER lost a 4:1 siege against AVALON.
- * In CAIR GAI: GWYNNED won a 4.2:1 siege against CAIR GAI. CAIR GAI is now the vassal of GWYNNED.
- * In CAIRLEON: GLAMORGAN lost a 1.2:1 siege against CAIRLEON.
- * In CARDIGAN: CAIR GAI won a 4:1 raid against CARDIGAN.
- * In NORTHUMBER: PLEWRE lost a 1.3:1 siege against NORTHUMBER.
- * In WESSEX: CAMELOT won a 1.4:1 siege against WESSEX. WESSEX is now the vassal of CAMELOT.

Thy champion rode errant into the woods and defeated a dragon, gains 27 townsmen.

END OF YEAR 805

The butter-before-lances strategy in action

the less friendly of your fellow-players: by 810 they will mostly be well-established with several subsidiary fiefs and extensive diplomatic exchanges, whereas around 807-9 you should be able to make a major increase in knight strength, hire mercenaries and bribe non-players to help, and knock out the more dangerous or isolated of your rivals. In the meantime, you should make genuine promises of aid and non-aggression to the weaker fiefs, to prevent the sort of coalition described above from forming against you. How far you push aggression as against peaceful wooing depends very much on your assessment of your rivals - another good reason to talk to everyone early on.

A useful early form of cooperation is the exchange of spy reports: ideally you should be exchanging two or three reports a turn with up to a quarter of the players, in

order to get coverage of most player fiefs and a few key non-player ones. If a rival player starts to look particularly threatening, you can give some thought to the ultimate weapon of total militarization. This involves accumulating enough gold to turn your *entire* peasantry into knights, and hiring mercenaries to match. That gives you a couple of thousand troops in the field, which is almost certainly enough (perhaps with a few non-player armies thrown in) to defeat the most successful of players, if he isn't following the same unbalanced strategy. The price, of course, is that you kill your food production, but for the first turn you do it this doesn't matter (and perhaps you'll have enough gold to buy food for one more turn if necessary). You then lay siege to the enemy, evict him from his fief, and transfer yourself to it, leaving the old, ludicrously over-militarised

fief to collapse behind you and giving you your rival's thriving home as your new base. The vassals which you previously held continue their allegiance to you, though all favours will be cancelled.

Handling of non-player fiefs is another area replete with tactical devices. The Double-Fief Whammy (suggested by Bob) involves two players A and B with adjacent non-player fiefs X and Y. A bribes X to help him attack Y, while B bribes Y to help him attack X. Consequently, half of the defending forces of both X and Y are off aiding the assault on the other, and both fiefs will be pushovers.

Jolly though this is, it is all too readily convertible into the Double Fief Whammy Sucker Ploy, in which A and B agree as above but B instead takes his troops to attack A, possibly using troops from Y. If he uses Y's troops, then it's A's defences which will be the pushover.

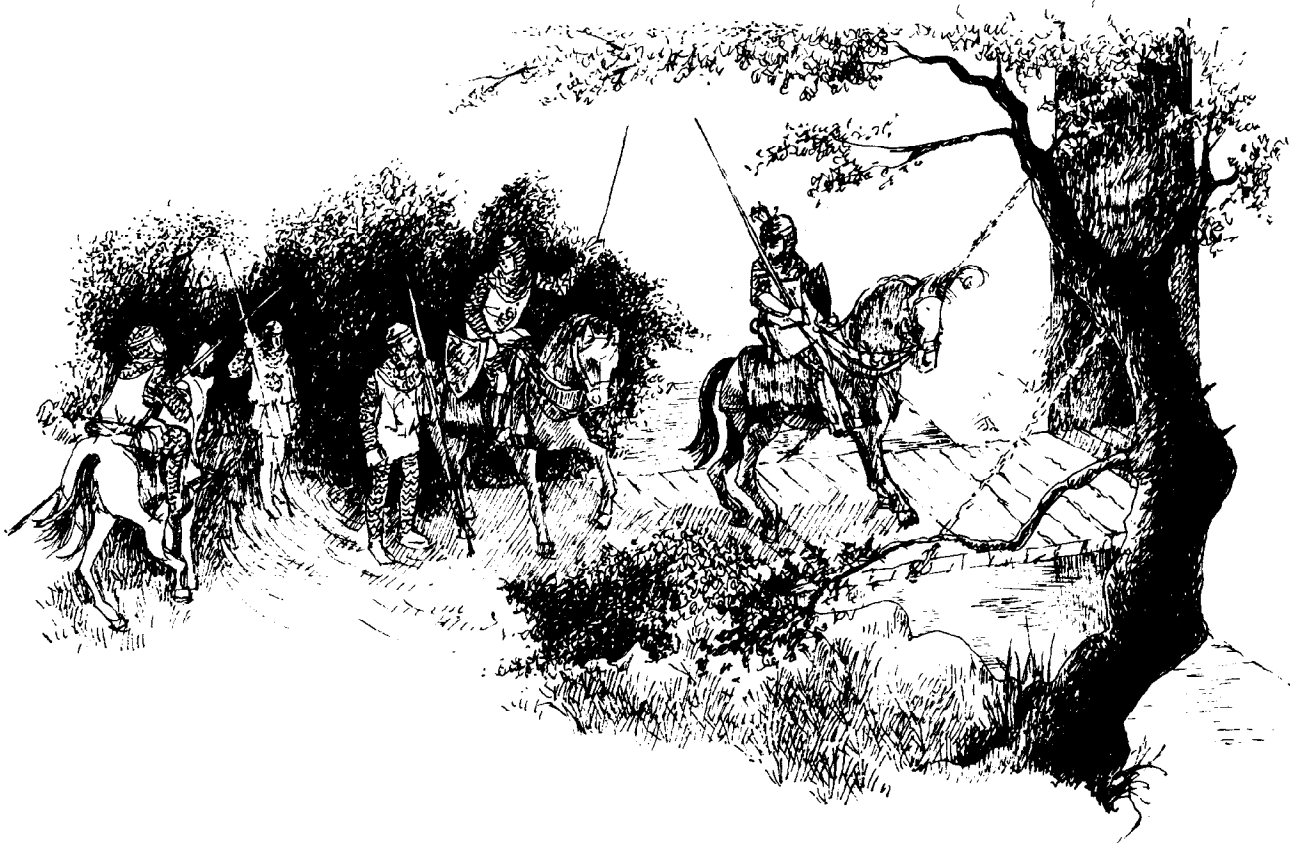
Much more persuasive and potentially lethal is Bob's mock-fealty trick, a device surely too fiendish and subtle to occur to most players spontaneously. This is used when A is two fiefs away from B, without any favours from the intervening non-player fief C to allow passage. B therefore feels quite safe, and A loses no opportunity to point out to him that by spying on C he can ensure that A doesn't obtain any favours. However, when A is ready to attack B, he simply swears fealty to C, which automatically gives him right of passage to get at B on the same turn! True, A is now required to pay scutage to C (a fairly small sum), but against this C will come to A's aid automatically when not itself on (randomly-generated) campaign, giving A some useful extra insurance.

A few words on the other options beyond the main lines of strategy suggested here. *Townsmen* normally increase by 5% per turn, but if you raise taxes they will remain stable in numbers or actually decrease, whereas if you reduce taxes they will multiply faster, and if you let them off tax altogether they will gallop ahead at over 25% per turn, all gained from other fiefs. High taxes at the start for the crucial early moves and low taxes in the middle-game seems the best balance. *Castles* offer a cost-effective way of increasing defending strength without paying for more knights: there is some evidence from my experience that low-taxed townsmen will voluntarily build up the castle in 'random' events, but perhaps this was just coincidence (at 0 tax I had this event twice in three turns).

The *champion* (derided by Bob as a vainglorious idiot who keeps getting captured and making you ransom him back) has been quite successful in my experience, and though knights can be assigned to patrol the home fief to prevent him trying his luck (he only sallies forth when your army is inactive) it's probably worthwhile (and more fun) to let him have his silly head. *Mines, lumber mills* and *fishing villages* are all useful secondary investments when you have orders and cash to spare: the last are probably the best as they produce food, weakening your dependence on the harvest. *Raids* will produce income (if successful) from adjacent fiefs if you've nothing better to do with your knights: if you decide to maintain a reasonable number of knights from the start, this is a good order for the first few turns until you become strong enough

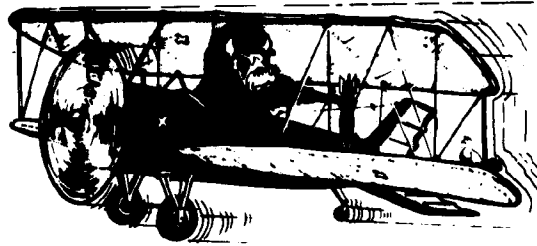
to win sieges (but the income from raids will not match the cost of the knights). *Favours* should normally be bought at the maximum price of 1000: after 803 or so you won't care about saving a few hundred gold. As with all the other things you can spend variable money on, the chance seems to vary between about 20% for 100 spent to 80 or 90% at 1000. *Shipping* has the useful double function of offering trade possibilities and giving your army the chance to strike anywhere along the coast.

Overall, Feudal Lords is a clever little game which will not make great demands on your time or your pocket, and which rewards hard-working and sincere diplomacy more than most other games: as such, it may be a particularly suitable game for players coming in from the Diplomacy scene. Over the long haul it is a shade repetitive, the economic interest fading into the background once everyone has got their affairs streamlined, but the delicate politico-military problems should maintain interest in most cases till the end of the game, with even weak fiefs having the chance to come out as winners by backing the right side. Of the advice in this article, I'm fairly sure that the economic strategy is the right one (give or take minor changes to meet the game situation), but there is a case for a more cautious diplomatic line, expanding more gradually and aiming to be in a strong second place to rally an alliance against the leader in the end-game. Which approach you choose should depend both on your style and on the other players in your game, but either way you should find yourself enjoying your lordly feuds. ●



'... knights can be assigned to patrol the home fief ...'

Go ahead and try several play-by-mail companies, but be sure to try the best: Flying Buffalo Inc., the only company that has been running pbm games since 1970 (not just "the 70's").



- ▶ **Our games are completely refereed by our computers.*** No human moderator interferes with your game. The computer is fast, unbiased, and does not make mistakes. It treats all the players exactly the same. We don't move units in your game. And we don't interpret your orders according to how we think you should be playing the game.
- ▶ **Each player makes the same number of moves.** Each game has deadlines and all turns in a game are processed at the same time. A player living in Arizona, or one who is willing to spend lots of money on phone calls can't get in more moves than you.
- ▶ **No hidden fees.** You are only charged the turn fee for each turn. No extra "special actions" or "battle reports." Our players are not attacked by moderator-controlled enemies, then charged a special "battle report" fee for that privilege.
- ▶ **You are on an equal footing with the other players.** Each game has a limited number of players, and every player starts on Turn One (with the exception of *Starlord* and *Heroic Fantasy*, which have special rules). No player is allowed to have more than one position. You don't have to fight players who have been in the game building up for the last three years, and you don't have to fight rich players who "buy" the game by spending hundreds of dollars a month on extra positions and special actions.
- ▶ **You buy the rules first.** We don't allow you to join a game until after you see the rules. We want you to be sure you are interested before you find yourself in the middle of a game.

* If you really want a game run by a person, you can try our game *Treacherous Trajan's Trap*, which is hand-run. But we really think the computer does a better job.



■ WE CREATED THE PBM INDUSTRY ■

- ★ **STARWEB®** a strategic game of interstellar conflict and diplomatic intrigue; six character types vie to achieve the victory points necessary to win the game
- ★ **BATTLEPLAN™** contemporary strategic warfare in a European setting; armies, navies, missiles, and spies all aid your nation in the game
- ★ **HEROIC FANTASY™** magic and mayhem; stalwart adventurers exploring labyrinthine mazes
- ★ **GALACTIC CONFLICT™** galaxy-wide battle for supremacy in a mad dash for victory
- ★ **STARLORD™** stellar barons strive to become the all-powerful galactic emperor
- ★ **FEUDAL LORDS™** classic medieval strategy and economics in an Arthurian setting
- ★ **NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION™** boom!



Providing reliable computer-moderated service to thousands of play-by-mail customers worldwide, since 1970.

SOURCE Address TCV448
Compuserve Address 70030,240

FLYING BUFFALO INC.
 P.O. Box 1467 • Dept. B3
 SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85252-1467

Ask for our free catalog, or send \$5 for the rules to all of the above games. Please do not ask to enter any game before reading the rules.

What do you do in TRIBES OF CRANE if you meet a player who runs a hundred tribes? Where can you get maps for the whole of BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE? Who can give you the low-down on your STARWEB opponents? TERRY TALLMAN describes . . .

The Art of Power Gaming

EVERY game system has Power Gamers. You may not have the time, the energy, or in some games the money to take this role yourself, but you'll meet them and can gain considerable game advantages if you can recognise them and use their resources for your own ends.

A Power Gamer is a player who is willing to devote himself single-mindedly to accumulating a mass of data about the games he plays, sufficient to give him a decisive influence on the game. There are three main types. The *Imperialist* is primarily concerned with achieving a specific level of game success, usually control of a major geographic area: in Tribes of Crane this is the player who operates 23 tribes, five political positions, and the city leaders at both ends of a lucrative trade run. The *Data Gatherer* aims to be the best source of information about the game. He amasses vast index files and computer listings of maps, market listings, player strengths, and anything else relevant to the game. In Beyond the Stellar Empire, a game that specifically encourages this type, he will have a map of every system, planet and city, as well as the *latest* report from every major market. The *Politician* is concerned with accumulating data on players. Is X a competent player? Is he a reliable ally? What is his current strength? To which alliances does he belong? Ask the Politician - he knows, or he can find out for you.

Unlike the average player, who only plays one position and who communicates minimally with other players, the Power Gamer operates as many positions as the game permits and his finances allow. Tribes of Crane is an example of a game (not all that common even in the professional sector of PBM) which can be assaulted by pure money. In games I and II and of the American version it's not uncommon to find players operating from a dozen to nearly a hundred tribes and political positions.

There are some obvious advantages to this. It's very easy to set up a major military campaign and not have to worry about enemies learning of your plans through unreliable allies. Typically, though, a player with this many units is doing more than wandering round knocking off enemy tribes. He will probably be operating two or more tribes on trade runs. This allows him to avoid the restrictions and fluctuations typical of trade in the UK version operated by Mitregames, and equally it allows him to protect himself against the raiders and blockades which appear in Schubel & Son's US version.

Many tribes are operated as 'sleepers'. They move from city to city, growing just

enough to support their immediate needs. They normally ignore contacts from other players, since their owner doesn't want them linked to himself. Often, an Imperialist Power Gamer will move a large number of sleeper tribes towards a battle that isn't planned to occur for six months to a year. Such battles are virtually impossible to anticipate because their common ownership is unknown to the other players.

Sleeper tribes also give the Power Gamer the advantage of current scouting on tribes and cities as they pass. Most players keep records of all scouting reports, but the Power Gamer will have anything from 25% to 65% of all the units currently on the board in his files. This is rarely accomplished by one player acting alone; more usually, a group of players, normally led by one or more Power Gamers, pool their scouting to obtain such results. Nevertheless, one player with a large number of tribes may receive 40+ new scouting reports per month, compared with the two or three which a player operating one tribe will receive.



The Crane Tribal Alliance (CTA), in the early days of US Crane I, and more recently the Halton Factor in Crane II, have had as their stated goal 'winning the game'. At its peak, the CTA held nearly 200 tribes in its alliance, the bulk of which were controlled by three players. This concentration allowed for several sweeping campaigns that saw the destruction of dozens of units and a number of cities changing hands. While many smaller-scale players also fight wars and capture cities, it's usually the Power Gamer who is reviled or heralded in the magazines and newsletters discussing the game.

Beyond the Stellar Empire was in part designed to avoid this kind of unit buildup. While much less a game for the Imperialist, it offers an irresistible attraction to the Data Gatherer. The alliance structure of the game revolves around companies controlled, initially, by the game master. But soon there emerges a player or players in each group with computerized or card records of all the data that is available to the players. And in BSE that's a great deal. If you are in contact with one of the Data Gatherers, you will have access to a vast range of facts about the game.

Possibly the best-organized group of Power Gamers in BSE is the Chatan. Through extensive contacts in the game and a large fleet of ships of their own, they have put together one of the most comprehensive data bases in the game. This is constantly updated and extended by contact with most of the other groups. Significantly, BSE is one of the first games to spawn a player-organised computer information network.

The Politicians usually overlap their techniques with the other types of Power Gamer. In games like Starweb, Starlord and Diplomacy it's always possible to run into a new player who won't communicate. At least not with you. That's when you turn to the player who seems to know everyone.

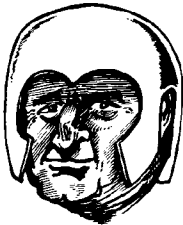
The good political player writes to large numbers of players and collects scraps of information on every player he hears about (a purely altruistic case is the UK Diplomacy survey *Who's Where*, which has been intermittently published as a hobby service and enables you instantly to unmask players like Keith Pottage in FLAGSHIP 2 who claim to be innocent novices). The Politician may not be in a current game with a particular player but if he hears that someone is a good alliance player, a gun-and-run type, an information gatherer, or somehow useful to know, then one more nugget of information goes into his files. This will also pay off in games like Crane and BSE with hundreds of players: if some small unit you've never heard of starts banging away at your forces you probably want to find out who is running it. The chances are that if the player has had any contacts at all it will be with one of the Power Gamers (with whom the Politician will naturally try to be in regular touch). It may be that the unit was scouted by a sleeper and responded to a contact card. Or he may have approached a Data Gatherer for maps because he was new to the game.

The Power Gamers' experience, information and contacts will give them a decided edge over the novice. However, you can use them to great advantage. They are usually willing to give far more information than they receive, in the hope that at some later date you will be able to repay that favor with a tidbit that averts a battle, or uncovers a spy . . . or even - sometimes, with a bit of luck - wins an 'unwinnable' game. ●

(Note: Terry Tallman, who plays in numerous professional games while running a postal Diplomacy zine, is willing to answer letters from readers about the games in this article and others - see the small ads page).

... but how do power gamers get that way? **THE SPACE GAMER's** long-standing PBM expert **W. G. ARMINTROUT** interviews **BILL JACKSON** on how he first failed and then succeeded in **STAR VENTURE** ...

TALES of the AMAX ALLIANCE



STAR VENTURE RULES SUMMARY

As a starting-level player in Schubel & Son's STAR VENTURE, you find yourself at the safe haven of Imperia where all ships begin their service.

The universe is a 5 x 5 x 5 grid of sectors. Each sector contains at least one solar system; each system has several worlds; each world is divided into ten sectors. You know only the location of the three gamemaster-run colonies – you must map out the rest for yourself.

You start out with either a medium freighter or a destroyer – or both or several, if you can afford it. Ships are divided into six sections, each rated for how much they can contain. You can configure your ship's equipment for yourself, giving priority to engines or shields, troops or fuel.

The weapon systems are beamers, missiles and fighters against shields and jammers. Also vital for ships are food and fuel – miscalculate, and you may lose your ship. (The game equations are listed in the rulebook.)

As you tour the galaxy, you will have opportunities to form your own colonies. Colonies produce food and fuel. They may also serve as marketplaces, repair depots and industrial sites. You may also form ground parties, to serve as supply depots or as assault forces (to capture colonies). Players who have 'game wealth' may also purchase other ships, from scouts and tankers to cruisers and battle globes.

To play STAR VENTURE, you write down your 'actions' – one action per optical scan turn card. Cards are given priority numbers so the computer knows when to run them. There is no limit on the number of cards in one move, or the number of actions for a single ship. There are no deadlines. 100% computer-moderated.

ON a desperately cold, blizzardy Friday evening there came a knock at my door. I opened it, and there stood Jackson.

I let him in.

Bill Jackson is an old friend I don't see very often, and when I do it is always unexpected. Officially he's a chemical engineer, but he's also part elf. He brought me a *Dungeons & Dragons* adventure one time – *The Solimar Quest* – that together we managed to publish. Other times he's into computer programming, genealogical research, historical games, even espionage. I was the one who got him interested in STAR VENTURE.

'Did you see the write-up?' he asked, brushing off the snow.

I knew what he meant. Rumours had been flying for some time. 'Are you the AMAX Alliance?'

He nodded. I forced him into a chair next to a steaming pot of fondue, and wrestled a tape recorder in front of him.

'Tell me,' I said, 'how you and your buddies became the second-most powerful force in the galaxy, in only twelve months.'

He did.

In the beginning, the four of us each had a destroyer. We didn't know what we were going to do. We said – 'well, let's fly over to Rex [a gamemaster colony] and we'll start trying to see what prices are on things.'

So we started fooling around with trade. We found out that if we were going to trade we needed a medium freighter, so we each got a medium freighter.

We quickly found out there was no profit in that. It was terrible. It was costing us a fortune to get anywhere.

So we said – 'OK, let's go big time. Let's capture a colony'. We spotted this little colony, Todos Santos, and we said, 'let's put down some troops there.'

I scanned it carefully. As a matter of fact, I made a mathematical model on my computer to play an invasion out according to the equations, to find out what the minimum number of troops and equipment was that would give us a 95% chance of taking the colony. So we got all these troops in there, PFV's [planetary fighting vehicles] and everything – 200 troops, 10 heavy PFV's, 5 light PFV's, and 10 crew.

We originally decided – 'let's bombard them a little bit before we capture them, because we might get lucky and knock out the other troops.' We attacked with the *A.A. Utah*, bombarded once ... only to find out later we'd blown away all the colony's production units! We didn't touch a single troop.

I learned a big lesson right then on how battles work. They made the battle algorithm in the program *stupid*. The computer picks out the weakest unit of your total force to fire first. So going into the attack, it picks my 10 crew and says: 10 crew fire laser pistols attacking colony.

And then the colony – the weakest thing it had was 150 troops! – fires back and blows away *all* the planetary fighting vehicles in one shot. (And it killed my crew ...)

There wasn't anything left except my 200 troops, and 200 troops fire their laser pistols and wipe out the whole colony. In one shot. That's the way it is. That's how stupid it is. There's no finesse in it – boom, boom, boom.

Then we marched in and took the colony.

We captured a grand total of about 300 units of food and 300 units of fuel. That's it. It was so worthless. (But we felt wonderful about it, that we had captured that sucker in spite of how stupid the battle was. We really felt good about it.)

Then I decided, when I got into the game a little further, that I was going to have a big colony. I said – 'well, I'll capture one. I'm going to capture Port Van Allen, the second-largest player-owned colony.' I started modelling it out, figuring out what I would need. I decided I needed about 11,000 troops and something in the neighborhood of 200 heavy PFV's to go in and capture it.

Well, it was out of the question. No way could I afford that kind of thing, and even if I could have, the return of the colony probably wouldn't have been worth it. Another plan frustrated.

At this point, my interest in the game was dying quickly. After playing STAR VENTURE for about eight months I got kind of frustrated analyzing the game and how expensive it is to ever build yourself a base where you can produce materials and make profits. Two of my initial group were

still strongly in the game (the other two had faded out altogether). The one that was still in the game with me had resorted to strict violence – he'd gotten into blowing away ships, large numbers of ships.

So I went and got violent one night and bought seven destroyers, and armed them with fighters, and shields to the max. (I had already determined that fighters are just an awesome weapon in this game. They can wipe out anything, unless you're prepared for them.)

My first attack, I went in with four of those destroyers and attacked twelve ships. I blew them all up and never got any damage whatsoever.

On my second attempt I went in with three against six. I sustained some minor damage in the cargo section of one ship, but destroyed three and heavily damaged three.

After we'd gotten to the point where we – my ally and I – had destroyed some 30 or 40 ships (we'd never lost a ship yet), I scanned system sixty-two and found about fourteen ships in there, all prime targets. So I loaded up my fighters, gunned up the engines, flew into system 62 and let them have it.

Well, I ran into the first guys *ever* that were ready for such a thing. Those guys were loaded with fighters too, and shields.

I went in with four ships, and my first three fighter attacks were blown up by jammers. (It seemed really incredible to me because I had scanned these ships with a ship with only four sensors, and to get away with that meant they couldn't have more than four jammers. A jammer



times five percent gives you the percentage chance of destroying a fighter. At most it was 24% to destroy my incoming fighter. I could buy it destroying one fighter coming in – 24% – but three in a row? $24\% \times 24\% \times 24\%$ is less than 1%. It was pretty bad. It was terrible.)

They ended up getting severe damage on two of my ships and minor damage on one, but my ships all got out. I blew away four enemy ships, and seriously damaged five others, but five of them escaped without any damage at all.

I was going to rebuild my ships when I made contact with a guy that was interested in forming an alliance. I had written him a letter, to at least get on friendly grounds with him. He wrote back and said he had to get out of the game – he couldn't afford it – and he had two destroyers he'd give to me, the DARKSEID and the APOCALYPSE.

Immediately my intentions were to take these two ships and cash them in on a scout. I got the APOCALYPSE back to Imperia and was stripping her down, but I made a mistake in one of my cards and DARKSEID was stranded right over this colony Rex in system Relay, which is lousy with piracy.

A board and capture attempt was made, and DARKSEID was captured. One of the letters in the newsletter gave me a hint that BILBO THE BASHFUL had captured my ship.

So I decided – well, I'm going to call this guy up. I was very evasive and so was he. I finally just came out and said, 'Hey, I *know* who you are. I know what ships you have. We've tangled before in system 62!'

We began communicating. He started telling me his strategy. I'd tell him wherever I found any ships, and he'd go in and capture them. (He's got an awesome number of ships – about forty, medium freighters and destroyers mostly, and one heavy freighter. And a colony under construction.) BILBO and I formed an alliance.

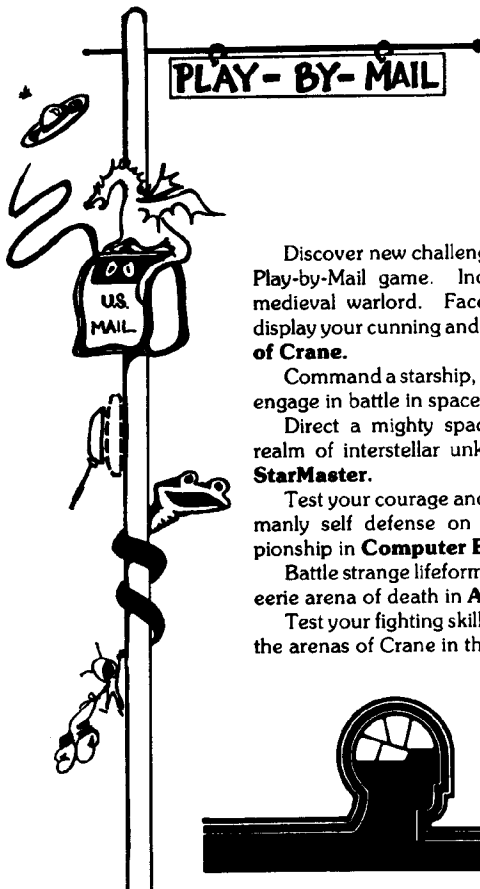
(Up to this time I was the AMAX ALLIANCE, and I had a terrible reputation. I never admitted to BILBO that I was the Amax Alliance, and to this day he doesn't have any idea. The Amax Alliance is still the other guy I used to play with. He has three destroyers. I've divested myself of that, and now I'm pacifist.)

Meantime there was a major war going on between the UNITED FEDERATION and the CAPE SYSTEM. The Cape System Alliance had Port Van Allen in system 38, and another one right next door to it on the same planet called House of Chaos.

Port Van Allen was taking a beating. The United Federation was flying all kinds of ships in there and blowing it to pieces.

BILBO, while talking to me one day, said: 'I hear that Mike Morris of United Federation is getting out of the game.'

please turn over



Discover new challenges with a Schubel & Son Play-by-Mail game. Indulge your fantasy as a medieval warlord. Face plagues and sieges... display your cunning and diplomacy in **The Tribes of Crane**.

Command a starship, build trading colonies and engage in battle in space playing **Star Venture**.

Direct a mighty space fleet and explore the realm of interstellar unknown in the galaxies of **StarMaster**.

Test your courage and ring wisdom in the art of manly self defense on your way to the championship in **Computer Boxing**.

Battle strange lifeforms from other planets in an eerie arena of death in **Alien Conflict**.

Test your fighting skills with archaic weapons in the arenas of Crane in the game **Arena Combat**.

SCHUBEL & SON, INC.

P.O. BOX 214848
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95821

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS OUR FIRST CONCERN.

Form the great alliances necessary for survival and victory in the contemporary world of bombers and missiles in **Strategic Conflict**.

Delve into the magical wonders of the world of Clanthor the Magnificent in **Catacombs of Chaos**.

Rebuild your shattered economy, expand your technology to move toward world domination in **Global Supremacy**.

Build bases, battle aliens and quest for survival in the devastated world of **Horizons End!**

Begin building your fantasy world with the leader in Play-by-Mail. Send \$1.00 for your Schubel & Son catalog today. The \$1.00 fee will be credited to your account when you sign up for one of our games by sending in the coupon in the catalog.

In Europe contact: **Mitre Wargames Lothlorien, 77 Burntwood Grange Rd., Wandsworth Common, London, England SW18.**

QUALITY SERVICE SINCE 1974!

**TALES of the
AMAX ALLIANCE**

continued from previous page

And I said, 'Oh? That's interesting.'
So I called Mike Morris. 'Are you getting out of the game?'

'Yes,' he said. 'In fact, I want to sell off most of my stuff.'

'What do you want to sell?'

'I've got a super freighter. I've got GIBRALTAR, probably the largest colony in the game. I've got a troop transport. I've got seven destroyers. And he says, besides that, his other ally has another major colony, DREDGE-NOT, on the same planet, almost as big as Gibraltar.

Massive. The kind of things that would require an investment... I would say, between him and his brother-in-law, they had invested seven to eight hundred dollars in the game to get this kind of positioning. I figured at minimum he was going to ask \$50 for a colony, because to build a colony like that I figured it had to cost \$300.

I said, 'How much are you asking for these things?'

'I was thinking about \$25 on the colony.'

'How about \$20?'

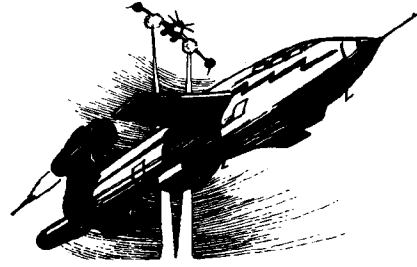
'Yes. Twenty dollars.'

So I bought the colony. Then I got to talking to my friends at work that used to play, and they said - 'A transport? Come on! Let's buy a transport! And look at all the ships they've got! We'll pay as much as \$2 a destroyer for them, and the transport... we'll probably go as high as fifteen, twenty dollars.'

We ended up buying, between him and his brother-in-law, 12 other destroyers, the troop transport, the super freighter, the other colony, and some gigantic ground parties. About \$60 for this whole thing.

Not only did I get a good deal, but now I'm in a position where I can enjoy the game again. I'm turning all my destroyers in for one battleship. I've got a super freighter, a battleship, and a scout. That's my whole fleet.

(The transport, by the way, is going to be run by the Amax Alliance. He's going to use it strictly for capturing colonies. You can carry 800 troops on one of those things, and we've got the game wealth to



buy that now. Eight hundred troops - you go in, land, BOOM, take the colony, it's all over.)

The one guy still gets a big kick out of going into a system and blowing ships away. He thinks it's just *wonderful*. I thought it was wonderful too, destroying ships, but after a while I started thinking: 'what good is this? what is this accomplishing?'

I'm kind of becoming pacifist. I'm going into trading directly with BILBO. We're going to form a galactic empire, more or less. I think pretty much we've got the

**Extract from STAR VENTURE
turn results**

SHIP TURN RESULT

Ship ID # 29 SYZYG Destroyer
Location: System # 62 HELLAS X: 6 Y: 5 Z: 4
Wealth: 500

-- CONTROL SECTION --
Shields: 2
Jammers: 1
Sensors: 4
Damage: 0

-- ENGINE SECTION --
Shields: 3
Engines: 3
Fuel: 12
Damage: 0

-- CARGO SECTION --
Life Supports: 0
Sensors: 0
Jammers: 0
Shields: 0
Laboratories: 0
Engines: 0
Beams: 0
Fighters: 0
Missiles: 0
Prod.Units: 0
Farm Units: 0
RM Prod.Units: 0
Fuel Prod.Units: 0
Space Ports: 0
Forts: 0
Light PFV.: 0
Heavy PFV.: 0
PEV.: 0
Raw Materials: 0
Consumer Goods: 0
Food: 0
Fuel: 0
Damage: 20

-- EXPLORATION SECTION --
Shields: 1
Sensors: 0
Laboratories: 0
Damage: 0

-- SUPPORT SECTION --
Shields: 6
Life Supports: 8
Crew: 50
Aliens: 0
Troops: 0
Colonists: 0
Bio.Samples: 0
Food: 0
Damage: 0

-- WEAPONS SECTION --
Shields: 5
Beams: 4
Fighters: 0
Missiles: 0
Damage: 0

.....
Warning: Food supplies are low.
Event: Intense solar flare - scan effectiveness decreased!

STAR VENTURE BATTLE REPORT

Date: 1/24/84

The ground party # 317 VIVA DAVID boards the # 259 medium freighter NOSTROMOS using 93 troops and 120 aliens.

The boarding party tries to enter the hull of the NOSTROMOS and succeeds.

The boarding party engages the defenders inside the ship.

The fighting is intense throughout the ship.

In fighting near the bridge 10 attacking aliens are killed.

There is very hard fighting throughout the ship.

In fighting on the bridge 22 of the defending crew were killed.

The fighting is often hand-to-hand.

In fighting near the bridge 2 attacking troops are killed.

In fighting on the bridge 3 of the defending crew were killed.

The boarding party captures the medium freighter NOSTROMOS.

corner on it. BILBO is the power in the game from number of ships captured. The United Federation was the major power in the game from a standpoint of colony size, but the people who ran that are no longer in the game. (I'm in a hurry to get all the ships I bought from them out of the galaxy, in to Indomito and cashed in so nobody tries to kill them—they do have rather a bad reputation.)

The other major power would be the Cape System. They lost, I'm sure, in the neighborhood of 20 to 30 ships and they just about got their colony obliterated. I think I'd just quit after that.

I feel real good about the game now because I have a base to build on. We're talking about a colony that can virtually build ten fighters for one 25¢ turn card. The game is exponential—as you increase power a little, you become much more powerful from a standpoint of spending money and what you get in return. I'm in a position where I can spend very little money and get an awesome amount of game wealth back, as compared with the beginning player.

So we're building up a powerful empire, BILBO and I, at one corner of the galaxy. We're by far the most powerful force in the galaxy.

We chatted a while longer, and then he went out into the blizzard, which seemed to have redoubled in intensity. The slush clawed at his feet and snowflakes whipped against his face as we shook hands over the doorstep. He didn't seem to notice. I guess his mind was on Imperia, and maybe they don't have snowstorms there. ●

Colony # 2 REX in sector # 4

Wealth:	8,619	
Crew:		85
Troops:		2776
Colonists:		1289
Aliens:		817
Bio.Samples:		0
Life Supports:		0
Sensors:		0
Jammers:		0
Shields:		0
Laboratories:		0
Engines:		0
Beams:		0
Fighters:		0
Missiles:		0
Prod.Units:		18
Farm Units:		17
RM Prod.Units:		16
Fuel Prod.Units:		24
Space Ports:		3
Fort:		39
Light PFV.:		45
Heavy PFV.:		36
PEV.:		0
Raw Materials:		2243
Consumer Goods:		0
Food:		2984
Fuel:		2453

.....
MESSAGE: LARGE GP'S NOT WELCOME NEAR STARPORT

Issue 1: 28 pages
Issue 2: 32 pages
Issue 3: 36 pages
Stay aboard! The best is yet to come! The FLAGSHIP of postal gaming ...

Market report for REX. Wealth available for colony purchases: 28,724

Item	Qty. Available	To Buy	To Sell
Crew:	0	8	6
Troops:	586	6	4
Colonists:	4084	5	4
Aliens:	327	3	2
Bio.Samples:	513	36	31
Life Supports:	53	8	6
Sensors:	41	12	10

HOW TO FAIL AT ZORPHWAR

Losing manoeuvres and terrible strategies

by

A. D. YOUNG



ZORPHWAR - RULES SUMMARY

Tactical space game. You and 7 other players command mobile Base ships and a fleet of warships constructed by the Base to your instructions. There is a choice of 8 ship types (see table), from which you select an initial 25 points' worth and a further 15 points' worth each turn that your Base survives. Normally you can only build three types throughout the game, but you can pay to gain knowledge of another type, or get it by capture or gift from another player.

Space is a two-dimensional 256 x 256 globe. There are no speed limits but ships vary in their capacity to accelerate. Acceleration is calculated using Pythagoras, so a calculator is desirable. Energy is not used for movement, but for phasors, transporters (to send raiding parties to capture enemy ships) and defense. All ships have phasors (energy guns) and torpedoes, but in addition each ship type except the scout has its own special weapon.

Disruption bombs are delayed-action torpedoes causing ships to be buffeted out of position rather than damaged. *Doomsday torpedoes* always destroy their targets (except bases and stars). *Invisibility cloaks* cost energy to use, but make you disappear from other players' printouts and prevent boarding. You can't fire while invisible. *Zapper beams* cost energy but teleport the target to a random point in the universe. *Supernovas* are stars set off by Kamikaze ships flying into them: they destroy any ship within twenty units. *Damping fields* cancel half the phasor beams fired near the ship, and prevent other ships in the area from restocking energy for next turn. *Neutralizer rays* stop any weapons except Kamikaze supernovas.

Victory is achieved by scoring points for destroying ships in the time available. The game is anonymous and 100% computer-moderated.

I HAVE played a good many PBM tactical space games and am also quite used to precise vectorial calculations of the kind involved in playing ZORPHWAR. Thus I thought that ZW would not prove too difficult, provided a few sensible tactics were employed in accordance with a sound strategic approach.

Having come a poor third in my first two games it became clear that whatever those tactics and strategies were I had not found them. This gave me pause for thought, caused a change of strategy and has led to the present discussion. My current game seems to be progressing much better but I would not claim to know how to win. What I do know is a few things that should not be done, (hence the title above), and this article is intended to help new players avoid making the same mistakes.

I do not mean to bemuse you with idiocies like suggesting that your ships ram each other, dive into stars or patrol each others fire zones. Rather I would like to present some strategies and manoeuvres which appear sound (at least they did to me), but which in practice prove to be losers. In addition, there are a number of other strategies which I have noticed many players employing which are also clearly unsound.

1. Avoid & Conquer

My first stroke of strategic genius seemed obvious and thus it was pursued with gusto. The reasoning goes as follows. Every player has the same building capacity (provided that their Base ship remains intact) and concentrated fire (of all kinds) is needed to break down the shields of large ships, which gains the highest points. Thus the sensible approach is to avoid conflict while waiting until other players have suffered some attrition and then move in to annihilate the survivors with superior force. There is nothing very

revolutionary about this since it is a ploy as old as warfare itself and is generally sound. Unfortunately it does not work in ZW.

There are basically two reasons for this failure. Firstly, ZW is short and sharp. The game ends somewhere between turns 8-16. A player who pussy-foots about for 5 or 6 turns waiting for an opportunity is simply denying himself scoring time. The others may be gouging each other to death but they are scoring points in the process. Furthermore, for every score made, another ship disappears, and while it does make someone weaker it also means that there is one less ship to score from.

Secondly, it is not so easy to bear down on these weakened opponents. You can usually track someone down easily enough but most likely both fleets will have velocity vectors which allow only a one-turn encounter, after which they sweep on around the map. ZW is very much a game of opportunistic fire. Oh, to be sure you may strive to match velocities and so hold them in your sights a little longer. The trouble is that the other players have minds of their own and are not at all keen to be caught next to a vastly superior force.

My technique for bringing off this cunning avoidance strategy was to put the fleet in motion towards the unpopulated centre and thereafter veer away from anyone who looked like coming near, while tossing disruption bombs in their direction. At least this had the virtue of working even if it was entirely the wrong thing to do. Other players seemed to apply the same strategy but their method was to zig-zag about in ever decreasing circles near their original location. This had the effect of attracting several of the more mobile players who could lob torps into the area from a safe distance without fear of retaliation. All things considered, avoidance is no way to conquer.

2. Crossing the T

A maneuver which navies have endeavoured to pull on their opponents since time immemorial is the crossing of the T. That is, where the opponent is in line ahead, you bring your forces across the top of the line to form a T. In this way all your guns may be concentrated upon the lead ship(s) of your opponent while allowing only his lead ship(s) to fire at you. The maneuver allows superior concentrated fire irrespective of fleet size and as such ought to be a natural for ZW. Although this

ZORPHWAR - SHIP TYPES SUMMARY

Type	Cost	Energy	Acceleration	Phasors	Tubes	Special
Scout	1	50/15	30	1	1	—
Escort	2	100/25	20	1	2	Disruption
Cutter	4	150/40	20	1	2	Doomsday
Laser	6	250/75	15	2	4	Invisibility
Harrier	8	400/100	15	2	4	Zapper
Kamikaze	10	500/125	15	2	5	Supernova
Repulsor	14	750/200	15	3	10	Damping
Juggernaut	13	900/250	15	3	10	Neutralizer
Base	—	2000/500	10	—	—	—

Each type has 3-5 torpedoes per torpedo tube in stock. The energy figure shows the initial (maximum) energy stock and the normal increment per turn. Larger ships have proportionately larger crews, which can be used for boarding parties.

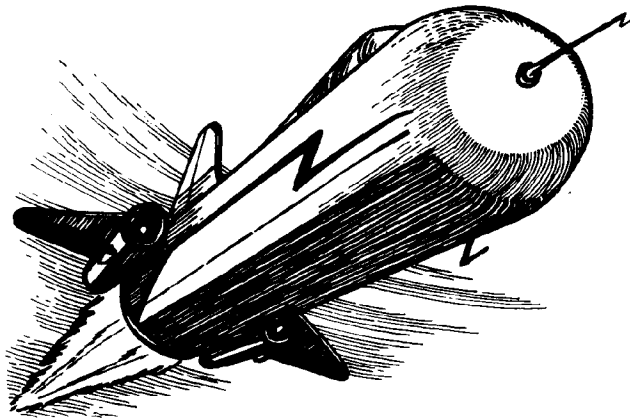
may be sound, it ain't necessarily so in all cases.

Specifically it fails when Juggernauts are at the head of the column, which is often the case. The damn Jug simply whacks on a neutralising field or three and that is the end of that for another turn. Repulsors can have a similar Damping effect upon proceedings. Kamikazes must be approached with caution, which only leaves the lesser fry on which to try this classic. The difficulty with them is that they are more mobile than the large ships, making the successful completion of such an obvious maneuver well-nigh impossible

3. Fancy Configuration

Well, now, I have read E. E. Smith like the rest of you and know all about cones of fire, cylinders of correscent flame and englobement. I do not doubt that they are jolly fine maneuvers, if you can bring them off. The trouble is that your opponent knows about them too and he has this disconcerting habit of escaping your trap or even trying to enclose your fleet instead.

If you can manage to gain the positional advantage by such maneuvers this is all to the good, although there are a few drawbacks as outlined below. For the most part however the combined vectoring of your fleet with that of your opponent will be such that no neat arrangement is possible. The best that may be achieved is an intermeshing of the fleets which naturally results in a free for all. I suspect that if the Lensmen and others had played ZW they would have changed their ideas considerably.



Apart from the time wasted in roaming about, attempting to entrap the other fellow's fleet by such fancy tricks, there are other problems. Getting too close to increase phasor damage may result in the unavoidable flaming or neutralisation of your own fleet on the other side of the trap. Damping fields are fine for maintaining the drain on your enemies' energy, but will affect your ships as well unless the Rep is isolated, which can hardly be the case here. If your forces are distributed neatly over a circle of less than long range radius, with the idea, say, of getting the other guy's base world in the middle, it might just happen that he (or some other enterprising player) drives a Kam into a star there instead. Curtains!

4. Conserving Ammunition/Energy

And very commendable too. After all we

would not want to go about indiscriminately firing off expensive ordnance or draining the energy banks unnecessarily, would we? Furthermore we are not fooled by this business of resupply at the base ship. It is a tricky maneuver at best, fraught with peril and not so easy to bring off, especially since it means breaking contact with the enemy in most instances.

Thus, instead of letting go with every torp and Joule at our command upon the slightest provocation we prudently wait our chance until the sure kills arrive. The trouble is that they never do. This seemingly sensible attitude derives from too much experience of more long-range games and not enough of the realities of ZW.

In the first place, the brevity of the game means that the scoring opportunities are not all that many, so that every one has to

please turn over

SPECIAL OFFER:

THE FIRST BOOK ON PBM

Nicky Palmer's next book, *Beyond the Arcade* (Mosaic Publishing) is divided in equal halves between PBM games and 'thinking' home computer games, with comparisons between the two and advice on how to design and market your own. PBM games discussed include Starweb, Starlord, Starmaster, Keys of Bled, Crasimoff's World, Warboid World, Beyond the Stellar Empire, Tribes of Crane, Galactic Conquest, Feudal Lords, Emphyrean Challenge, Terra II, Universe II and Starglobe. Each chapter reviews and contrasts the game against each other to help you find the ones most to your taste. The home computer section covers classic and modified adventure games, resource allocation games, wargames, and a vast range of other types.

US readers should be warned that the home computer section concentrates on games available in the UK (the PBM section, like FLAGSHIP, is fully international).

This is the first book ever to appear on our hobby. You can get it from FLAGSHIP (UK subscription address page 3) *now, post free*, for £6.95/\$12 (surface mail).

Quest of the Great Jewels

The third war of the Great Jewels is over, having ended with the intervention of the Powers-That-Be, but not before most of Zorplia was laid waste and the greater part of its inhabitants destroyed. The Powers-That-Be have sealed the Great Jewels (talismans of immense power) and many of the lesser talismans in the Forbidden Cities and set enchanted armies to guard them. Only scattered remnants of the four peoples remain. Dragons and other terrors roam the land. Can you marshal your forces and come forth to be the sole ruler of Zorplia?

Quest of the Great Jewels is a totally computer-moderated play-by-mail fantasy wargame. You assume the role of one of 4 types of being and compete with 11 other players on a map consisting of 255 provinces. You have at your disposal leaders to lead your armies, citadels to protect your provinces, siege equipment with which to batter down opposing citadels and magical talismans to aid you in your quest (if you can find them). You may meet mercenaries who will sell you troops, dragons guarding treasures, and even (hopefully not, though) the dreaded Drevonyx.

Please send \$2.50 for a rule book before entering. Turn fees are \$2.50 for turns 1-10, \$3.00 for turns 11-20 and \$3.50 thereafter. There is a \$2.50 setup fee (refundable), but no other 'hidden' costs. We also run ZORPHWAR, a fast-paced computer moderated space wargame for 8 players. Rules for Zorphwar are only \$1.00. Overseas players please add \$1.00 for rules and \$0.50 per turn additional to cover airmail costs.



ZORPH ENTERPRISES
Dept F1
3646 Gibsonia Rd.
Gibsonia, PA 15044, USA

HOW TO FAIL AT ZORPHWAR

continued from previous page

count. In addition you cannot avoid taking losses yourself and ships lost with full weapon supplies are a waste. Kams chucked carelessly into stars with full supply are a *criminal* waste. In the second place, it is very difficult to break through the shields of large ships in one turn. Usually it requires several, with an accumulation of damage to finish them off. Thus hanging on to Energy or Torps just postpones the job. If you do run dry then it's time to dock with the Base. There is just not much point in finishing the game well stocked with supplies.

5. Dispersal

While I have been guilty of this due to an inability to handle the propulsion systems at least I could see that strategically it is a bummer. Other players seem to hold a different view. Whether it is the multiplicity of targets which excites them, or just a plain lack of understanding concerning concentrated fire, I do not know. The fact of the matter is that about half of the players seem to send at least some of their ships off into the void, bereft of friend or companion.

The inevitable result of this lunacy is that the lone ship meets another player's fleet which stayed intact and is flamed down ignominiously without getting a shot in. It only takes one Jug to neutralise it while the others in the fleet do the damage. This applies as much to Jugs themselves as to smaller ships. Kams roaming free may seem attractive but phasors fire before movement, putting paid to their supernova act.

I suppose that the chief motivation for sending these loners off is to be able to lob torps into opposition fleets from long range. This may effectively be accomplished while travelling at some speed which increases the range of attack. Players with Cutters and Doomsday torps tend to be particularly prone to this aberration. The fault here is that torps find it notoriously difficult to hit a target so that large numbers are needed in a well designed pattern. The only case for dispersal is when the Base ship peels off into open space about half-way through the game to create another fleet which operates in other directions.

These five losers probably do not exhaust the list by any means. No doubt I shall find others as time goes on and I am sure that those who are familiar with ZW have experienced some of them already. The curious thing is that, with the exception of the last, they all seemed like a good idea at the time.

The reason stems from a combination of mobility and exotic weaponry. ZW has a highly maneuverable and dynamically realistic movement system which is played on the surface of a toroid (donut). Thus it is not quite the 2D game that it appears. The exotic special weapons require particular attention to combined arms and sequence of fire. This forces us into a rethinking of 'obvious' strategic approaches, and so far as I know the perfect plan for the game has so far eluded us all.

MOSCOW '41



MOSCOW '41 is a wargame depicting the WWII Battle for Moscow, 1941. MOSCOW '41 is offered in two forms: a complete game for face-to-face (FTF) play and a play by mail version. Both feature the innovative 'map maneuver' system in which players mark their unit positions on an overlay covering their maps. This allows a player to deploy and move his units without his opponent's knowledge creating a playable 'fog of war'. MOSCOW '41 was reviewed in *The Gamesman* (#18) as 'one of the few truly operational simulations of a World War II battle...and as...refreshing and challenging'. To order or for more information, write:

MOSCOW '41 FTF game: \$5.95
MOSCOW '41 PBM game: \$7.95
*Subsequent one-time PBM processing fee of \$24.95. Money refunded if dissatisfied.

VIGARD SIMULATIONS
P.O. Box 231
Orangevale, CA 95662-0231

WRITE FOR FLAGSHIP!

FLAGSHIP welcomes contributions! We now have all the artwork we can use for the foreseeable future, but we'd like to expand our panel of reviewers. We especially want players who are familiar with the less-well-known games: if you've never seen it in FLAGSHIP, it's probably because we're waiting for *you!* Articles should be typed double-spaced. Printed material will be paid for at a minimum rate of \$9/£6 per 1000 words. We also have a couple of positions left for US reviewers willing to play *new games (free)* and report on them for the magazine.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

Send this form (or a copy) with US \$11 or £6 to:
(US readers) Flying Buffalo Inc.,
P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale,
AZ 85252-1467
(Rest of the world) FLAGSHIP,
P.O. Box 12, Aldridge,
Walsall, West Midlands WS9 0TJ



I'd like to subscribe to FLAGSHIP for four issues starting with number I understand that if I am dissatisfied, I can cancel at one month's notice and my sub. will then be refunded, minus the cost, at the one-issue rate, of copies already sent.

Name (please print)

Address

..... Postcode

AVALON HILL GAMES



No. 1 IN CONFLICT—

**SIMULATION — HISTORICAL — SF —
ADVENTURE — SPORTS AND
MICRO-COMPUTER GAMES**

NEWS! GAMES NEWS!

SQUAD LEADER scenarios 91-100
Ten new scenarios from W.W.II depicting
engagements from Belgium 1940 to Germany
1945 and mainly featuring the U.S. forces from
G.I. Anvil of Victory. £2.50 plus 30p postage
and packing.

AVAILABLE FROM YOUR LOCAL STOCKIST:



ABERDEEN:
Black Donald's Game Shop, 3 Waverley Place.
Tel: 643740.
Games Gallery, 30 Market Street. Tel: 22730

ALDERSHOT, HANTS:
Esdevium Games, 185 Victoria Road. Tel: 311443.

BIRMINGHAM:
Games Centre, 141 New Street. Tel: 643-5115.

BRIGHTON, SUSSEX:
The Gamer, 18 Sydney Street. Tel: 698424.
Games Centre, 52 Western Road.

BRISTOL, AVON:
Forever People, 59 Park Street. Tel: 25454.

CAMBRIDGE:
Games & Puzzles, 6 Green Street. Tel: 355188.

CARDIFF:
F. C. Parker, 46-48 Royal Arcade. Tel: 21159.

CHESTER:
Arts & Crafts Studio, 14-16 St. Michael's Row
Tel: 24900.

EDINBURGH:
The Games Gallery, 13 Forrest Road. Tel: 226-3354
The Games Gallery, 132 Lothian Road. Tel: 229-2348
The Toy Tub, 100A Raeburn Place. Tel: 332-7951.

GLASGOW:
Games Gallery, 156 Buchanan Street. Tel: 3321518

GLOUCESTER:
The Toy Shop, 7/8 Promenade, East Gate Shopping
Centre. Tel: 31417.

HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKS:
Not Just Stamps, 17/19 Crendon Street. Tel: 41717

HITCHIN, HERTS:
Gaytime, 19/25 Hermitage Road. Tel: 59239

HULL:
Games 'N' Models, 66 George Street. Tel: 24910

IPSWICH:
War & Peace, 8 Upper Orwell Street. Tel: 58356

KINGSTON-upon-THAMES, SURREY:
Games Unlimited, 2 Castle Street. Tel: 549-6486

LEEDS:
Dragonbyte, 51A Queen Street, Morley. Tel: 522690
Games, Unit 20, Merrion Centre. Tel: 456376.
Maggie Models, 65a Harrogate Road. Tel: 692617

LONDON:
The Games Centre, 22 Oxford Street, W 1
Tel: 637-7911
Adventure Worlds, 13 Gillingham St SW1
Tel: 828-2660

MIDDLESBROUGH CLEVELAND:
Games Store, 161 Linthorpe Road. Tel: 247553

NEWCASTLE-upon-TYNE:
Games Gallery, 103 Grey Street. Tel: 612999

NORTHAMPTON:
The Model Shop, 230 Wellingborough Road
Tel: 32223

NORWICH, NORFOLK:
Games Room, 29A Elm Hill. Tel: 28140
J. Langley, 20/21 Royal Arcade. Tel: 21959

NOTTINGHAM:
Games Centre, 31 Lister Gate

OXFORD:
The Gameskeeper, 105 Cowley Road. Tel: 721348

PORTHCAWL, MID GLAMORGAN:
Gryphon Games, 60 New Road

PORTSMOUTH:
Southsea Models, 35 Highland Road, Southsea
Tel: 733208

RAGLAN, GWENT:
Castles in the Air, Monmouth Road. Tel: 690214

SCARBOROUGH, YORKS:
Hobbies, 15 Hanover Road. Tel: 65221

SOUTHAMPTON, HANTS:
Pastimes II, Unit 15, East Street. Tel: 21789

SOUTHEND, ESSEX:
Warlord Games Shop, 818 London Road, Leigh
Tel: 73308

SWANSEA:
Swansea Models & Hobbies Ltd., Plymouth Street
Tel: 52877

FRANCE:
Jeux Actuels, BP534, 27005 Evreux Cedex
L'Oeuf Cube, 24 Rue Linne, 75005 Paris

THE NETHERLANDS:
Broese Kemink Booksellers, Stadhuisbrug 5, Utrecht

SWITZERLAND:
Au Vieux Paris, Rue de la Servette 1, Geneva

SPAIN:
Joc Play, S.A. Aribau 272-274, Barcelona 6



SEND S.A.E. FOR COMPLETE LIST OF GAMES.
IN CASE OF DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING ANY
GAME. WE CAN SUPPLY DIRECT,
U.K. P&P CHARGES £1.75 FOR ONE GAME;
£3.00 FOR 3 GAMES.

ALLOW UP TO 28 DAYS FOR DELIVERY.

AVALON HILL GAMES
650 HIGH ROAD, NORTH FINCHLEY
N12 0NL.
Tel: 01-445-3044

TRADE AND OVERSEAS ENQUIRIES WELCOME

KINDLY MENTION "FLAGSHIP" WHEN REPLYING TO ADVERTISEMENTS

John Pridmore's issue 1 extravaganza was spurned with horror by serious WARBOID WORLD players. Now BOB COOK of *Adventures by Mail* tunnels to the rescue with

EIGHT PATHS TO WARBOID VICTORY

THE following strategies are discussed briefly and are not meant to be all-encompassing. Strategies are very important in WARBOID WORLD. In other PBM games you can often rely on your diplomatic skills to strengthen a weak strategy. In WARBOID WORLD if your strategy is weak you will be eliminated from the game quickly.

STANDARD STRATEGY – The Standard Strategy is just common sense that should be observed throughout the game. Try to build up a lot of external power for the mid and late game, you will need it to 'protective-seize' your attacking 'boids. Establish sensors in convenient hexes passed by your Sensoids – the one energy they cost is more than made up for by the security they provide. Since you cannot build Satelloids, the only way to get control of them is to find them on the surface and seize control with your STIC. Obvious locations for them are hexes within your home area without sensors and the intervening hex rows between you and neighboring enemy home areas. Don't rely on Satelloids as a first line of defence. They are powerful but they fight after normal combat and won't help prevent your STIC from being shut down. Always repair the maximum amount of factories each turn. Always dig a tunnel each turn unless you have arrived prematurely at your destination hex. Guard your own tunnels with Bomboids. In the mid and late game resist

WARBOID WORLD – RULES SUMMARY

16-player game with total player anonymity. You are a ramshackle Subterranean Industrial Complex (STIC) which has been programmed to take control of wandering robots and wage war on enemy STICs. Human life is regrettably extinct.

You start with your underground fastness and a limited number of factories, power plants, robots (called 'boids) and a Sensor Network to detect 'boid movement. There are 25 'boid types which can be built or captured, each with different capabilities for attack, defence, movement and special powers: for example, a Zomboid will make 'boids ignore their controllers and wander off, while a Generaloid will increase the attack power of friendly forces. Movement is both on the surface and by digging tunnels. Combat is possible only in the same hex, though control of a Satelloid enables you to call down nuclear/particle-beam strikes to your aid.

Victory points are gained by destroying enemy 'boids and enemy STICs; the winner is the player with most points after a time secretly determined by the GM, between 15 and 30 turns.

All reports 100% computerized.



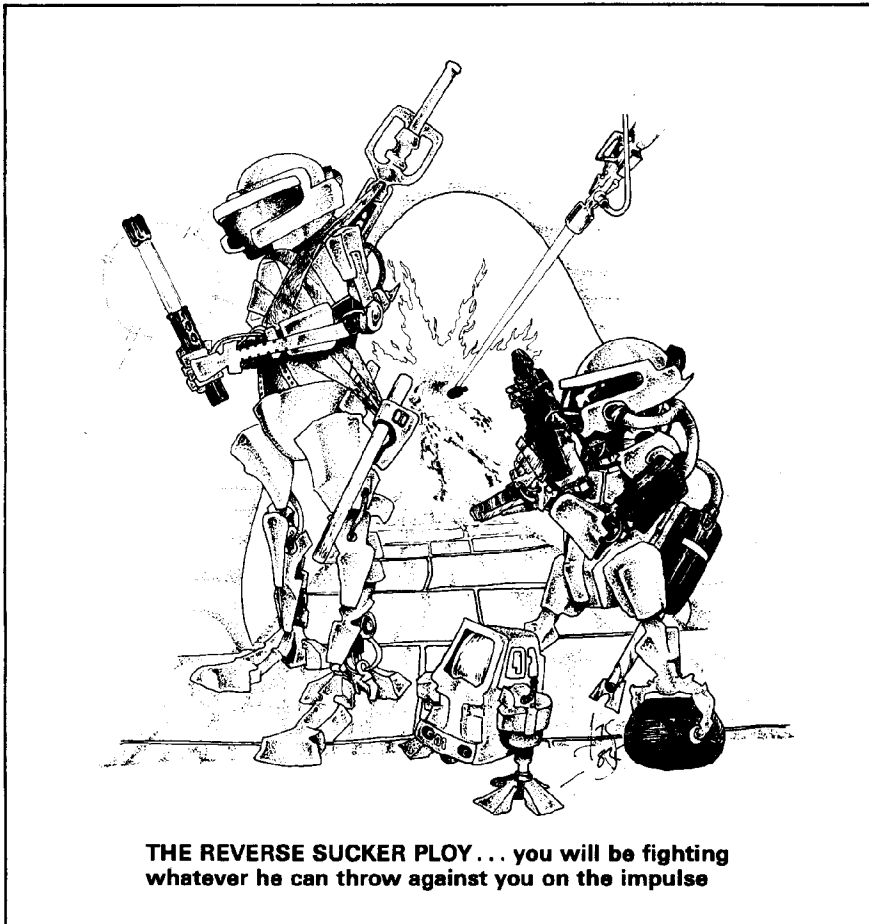
the temptation to build a lot of low class 'boids. They may cause you to 'max out' at 64 'boids prematurely. Once you start controlling over 35 'boids, start building more costly 'boids unless you need the special abilities of the lower class ones.

'BLIND HIM WITH SENSOIDS' STRATEGY – You build a force of fully charged Sensoids and build a tunnel to the edge of the enemy home area you wish to invade. You disperse your Sensoids and have them attack and destroy enemy sensors. Be sure to establish sensors of your own before moving on. When you are

ready to attack, forget about tunnels and move your attack force in overland. Only move to hexes where the enemy is 'blind'. Of course the enemy could get lucky and move one of his 'boids to the same location as your attack force or use a Satelloid-O to spot you. Those are the chances you take but you hope for the best.

BOMBOID STRATEGY – This is primarily a way to defend your STIC from enemy invasions. You place a Bomboid on your center hex above your STIC. You also place a Bomboid in each adjacent hex. These are the most likely places an enemy tunnel will pop up. When a tunnel goes pop up here you can destroy it immediately and prevent an enemy invasion before it starts.

CONTROLLOID INVASION – In this strategy you build primarily Controlloids with your factories. You tunnel directly to an enemy center hex and pop up. Next turn you move in your Controlloids, as many as



possible. Even if the enemy has moved in some nearby 'boids to protect his center hex, it probably won't be enough and three of your Controlloids should survive to shut him down. Of course this can't be done against someone using the Bomboid Strategy. This could be an interesting way to try for an early game shutdown but your three starting Controlloids would most certainly be required.

SUCKER PLOY - This is a dangerous tactic but it can give great results. Using this ploy you pop up tunnels in several locations adjacent to your center hex as well as directly into your center hex. You then build 'boids with a lot of attack power. Then place a Seismoid or two on the surface and wait. When you find a tunnel is approaching you send your attack 'boids to the surface. You also station a 'bomboid on the center hex. If the enemy pops up in your center hex you blow up his tunnel and this strategy didn't work. If he pops up adjacent to you, you move your Bomboid to his tunnel location to blow it up next turn. You then move your attack force atop your center hex. Now you are ready for a slugfest against his first wave. You get a bunch of victory points for destroying enemy 'boids. Since his tunnel will be blown up he won't be able to reinforce his forces and you can chop them up at your leisure. An alternate option would be to move your attack force down his tunnel and into his STIC. Of course the danger comes in when he attacks with too many 'boids for you to handle. The Sucker Ploy can quickly make a sucker out of you too!

REVERSE SUCKER PLOY - This is similar to the Sucker Ploy but this time you bring the battle to the enemy. You tunnel to a hex adjacent to an enemy center hex (so he can see you coming). You send an attack force against him composed entirely of Warboids. You aren't trying to shut him down so there is no need for Controlloids. A Nullboid or two won't hurt though unless you have lots of external power to protective-seize all your 'boids. You hang around his center hex and encourage him to have battle with you. Since you brought along the attack 'boids you will carve up his forces as you will be fighting whatever he can throw against you on the impulse. He didn't have as much time as you to plan his forces since your attack will hopefully be a bit of a surprise. A couple of turns later you can send in a couple of Controlloids to make his life more interesting. By then you will have reaped the victory points from your destruction of his 'boids.

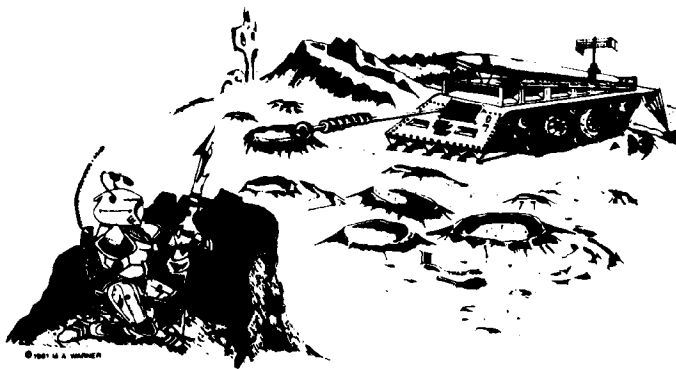
VOLUNTARY BLINDFOLD STRATEGY - Some players have the idea that destroying their own sensors in the first few turns of the game can give great benefits. Early in the game you have an energy shortage and the 70 or so sensors you control are eating up most of your available energy. You should resist the temptation to blind yourself just to gain a small amount of extra energy in the early game. Replacing your sensors later will cost you much more than your saved. Besides, to destroy a sensor costs you a unit of energy. The only sensors that are possibly worth destroying in the early game are those lying adjacent

to your barrier. You will need all the sensors you can get in the later game when energy becomes less of a problem and you find yourself being invaded on one or more fronts.

SATELLITE ATTACK - With this strategy you use any defensive posture such as the BOMBROID STRATEGY given above. You forsake any plans of invasion. Instead you build a lot of Sensoids and Energyboids. You send out your Sensoids to plant sensors in as many hexes as possible in enemy territory. You also locate as many Satelloids as possible, preferably those controlling Nuclear and Particle Beam satellites. You dig a tunnel directly to each of these Satelloids and funnel Energyboids to them so that you can use them each turn and keep them constantly recharged. Your sensors help you spot enemy targets. If you have trouble spotting enemy 'boids try using any Satelloid-O's you have found to observe some random enemy center hexes. Generally this will yield some very juicy cannon fodder. ●

Editorial note: FLAGSHIP policy is not to publish reviews (EXPLORER'S FINDINGS) by company staff of their own games, but to accept interesting strategy analyses (PROFESSIONAL SECRETS), on the grounds that they know them better than anyone. Designers are also welcome in GHOST IN THE MACHINE (see Jon Clemens this issue). In all cases the 'house rule' is that designer articles should avoid direct propaganda for the game and concentrate on the nitty-gritty of the design and how to play it.

CRATER WAR



As a **COMMANDER** of space forces, you:

direct Cyborg Tanks, Missiles,
Tactical Nuclear Weapons,
APCs, Mines, Troops to

become the **SPACE COMMANDER** of a
mineral rich asteroid in
space.

Test your forces, tactical skills, strategy and
diplomacy against the abilities of 15 other
players.

For a copy of the rules, send \$2.00 US for each set of rules desired;
TO ENTER A GAME IMMEDIATELY send \$11.00 US [deposit, two game turns and rules] to:

JABBERWOCK ENTERPRISES, Inc., P.O.Box 158, Somers, CT 06071

KINGS

How would you like to be the absolute ruler of a country in semi-medieval times?

Maximum player freedom - player interaction.

For more information on **KINGS** and our 14 other by-mail games, write to:

JF&L
305 East Caffery
Pharr, TX. 78577

Voted by the readers of The Space Gamer magazine
BEST "PLAY BY MAIL" GAME OF 1982

Warboid World

The first war almost destroyed the world. All life was vanquished. Now the machines have begun to wage war on each other in the fight for the conquest of **WARBOID WORLD**.

WARBOID WORLD is a game which requires you to develop strategies never before used in a pbm game. Victory can only be achieved with skill and through tactical play.

WARBOID WORLD is now moderated in the UK. Send £1 for rulebook and master maps or £10 for complete starter package which includes rulebook, master maps, set-up fee for a game, £2 goodfaith deposit and the first three turns. The deposit is returned when you finish the game or are eliminated along the way. Subsequent turns cost £1.75 each.

BALROG ADVENTURES

39 Chapman Avenue, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 8EJ

WARBOID WORLD in North America and Canada. Send \$20 for starter package as indicated above (includes \$5 goodfaith deposit). Or \$1 for the rules.

ADVENTURES BY MAIL

PO Box 424, Cohoes, New York 12047

CRASSIMOFF'S WORLD

PLAY-BY-MAIL GAME

- * FULL TIME GAMESMASTER
- * OVER 200 DIFFERENT PLAYERS
- * FULLY DESIGNED FANTASY WORLD
- * BI-MONTHLY PLAYERS NEWSLETTER
- * FLEXIBLE GAME SYSTEM GIVING FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND ACTIONS
- * RUNNING FOR OVER TWO YEARS

Crassimoff's World is a PBM game of exploration and adventure. As a player you assume the role of chieftain in a band of brave adventurers set on gaining knowledge and power. Your party will set out from a small town, knowing nothing about the world apart from a few rumours. As you travel you will learn more about the land and its secrets, encountering other parties, races and creatures.

"There are tokens detailing magic, spells, creatures, parties met, artifacts, treasure, money, and many other items which you discover as you play the game. KJC Games has been running Crasimoff's World for over a year now, and the effort the gamesmaster puts into each turn never ceases to amaze me. Most players find themselves offered a different scenario each turn, or find that a new twist has happened to an existing adventure."

As reviewed in

WHITE DWARF

37

If you wish to enrol in Crasimoff's World, send a £5.00 cheque/P.O. payable to K.J.C. Games. For this you will receive a rulebook, set up material, the latest newsletter, and the first four rounds. Future rounds are £1.25 each.

U.S. enrolment \$10; fifth and subsequent rounds \$2.50.

Copies of the White Dwarf review are available free of charge from K.J.C. Games.

Return to:

K.J.C. Games, 5 Vicarage Avenue,
Cleveleys, LANCASHIRE FY5 2BD



Please enrol me in Crasimoff's World. Enclosed is £5.00 for which I receive the rulebook, set up material and the first four rounds. Future rounds are £1.25 each.

NAME

ADDRESS

Return to:

K.J.C. Games, 5 Vicarage Ave., Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 2BD

The two games we are most often asked about are Feudal Lords and the new GLOBAL SUPREMACY. A full analysis of this game will follow in a later issue, but to whet your appetite WILLIAM McCARTHY and TERRY TALLMAN report the latest on the

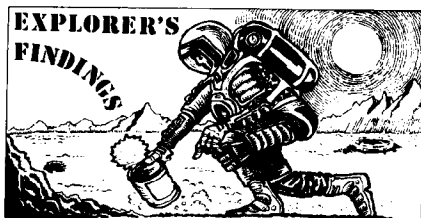
STRUGGLE FOR THE GLOBE

FIRST released in fall 1983, Global Supremacy had already started six 80-player games by the end of the year, and there is no sign of the rush diminishing. Basically, it is a contemporary wargame, but a number of innovative features combined with more traditional PBM techniques such as Special Actions make it very different from board wargames.

Players start with one 'province' (a small country or part of a large one, along the lines of the board game Risk) in a world attempting to recover from a nuclear World War III. Whether such a recovery is remotely feasible may be a moot point, as the designer remarks, but here it's assumed that each province has retained some industrial capability on which to build.

Innovation A is that the game map is quite simply the real world map, and the first thing you need is a first-rate world atlas on which to plan your moves. Players start with two cities, and can build up to 10: these must be real cities (arising from the ruins) on your map, with the longitude and latitude specified. All major terrain features in the real world are factors in the game.

Innovation B is a nearly complete catalog of weaponry and military units from which to choose - 25 pages of ground, naval and air forces, each detailed with price, armament, operating range, and special functions. Each player chooses his initial forces



according to his position - Lebanon, for instance, normally concentrates on armor, while Antarctica needs icebreakers to escape the surrounding pack ice. Production requires production points and money, and sometimes other resources; these (oil, metals, and radioactive materials) are essential to run your industries and conduct campaigns. At the strategic level, some suspension of disbelief is necessary. Large countries such as Russia and Brazil have the most potential in these natural resources, but smaller nations start with greater stockpiles, and the first games have all been marked by an early scramble by small, heavily-armed countries to jump their larger neighbors. In game 1, Seattle was under nuclear attack (unusually as few countries have initial radioactive materials) after only two months, and in game 2 Russia was rapidly carved up by Iceland, Afghanistan and North Korea.

Although there are rules for insurgency and espionage, the overwhelming emphasis of the game is on building up industrial and military strength and then striking out for the global supremacy of

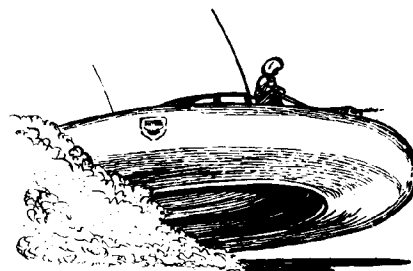
the the name. Few details are given of how combat is resolved by the gamemasters, leaving the players to gather experience the hard way. However, numerous special information sheets are provided on aspects as diverse as ship-to-shore shelling, scouting, river usage and regimental formation (the basic unit is the battalion). This saves the need for numerous special actions, usefully in what is otherwise a pretty expensive game (each battle costs \$3.50, the same as the normal turn fee). Support units (maintenance, medical, headquarters and others) play a major part, adding to the feeling of realism at the tactical level.

Player turnover is about the average for any new game, around 10 to 20 per cent dropping out (usually from the less favoured countries) after the initial free turns in the start-up package are concluded.

Diplomacy is extremely intensive and fast: overseas players are finding themselves squeezed out by their US rivals, who are using the telephone for quick consultation.

At this stage, most players are still feeling their way into the system, and no firm verdict is possible, but the general feeling so far is very positive, with even instant victims of the first games coming back for more. But don't join up unless you are prepared to write lots of letters, speak yards of cassette tape, or multiply your telephone bills: this is one game in which the silent player is irrevocably doomed. ●

GLOBAL SUPREMACY™		Country <u>ITALY</u>	
Account Balance: TURN SHEET			
FORCE COMPOSITION Units and Cargo	MOVEMENT FROM/TO Exact Locations	ORDERS When to execute	GAMEMASTER REPLY Resolution, comments
65 P-51 (40 P-51 BEING BUILT THIS TURN)	Province From: City: <u>SICILY</u> Latitude: <u>SIRACUSA</u> Longitude: <u>37.02 N</u> <u>15.19 E</u> Province To: City: Latitude: Longitude:	AIRSTRIKE ESCORT BOMBERS IN NEXT BLOCK AND STRAFE TO HELP AIRSTRIKE	See Combat Results
5 B-17	Province From: City: <u>SARDINIA</u> Latitude: <u>CAGLIARI</u> Longitude: <u>31.16 N</u> <u>9.08 E</u> Province To: City: <u>CORSICA</u> City: <u>BASTIA</u> Latitude: <u>42.43 N</u> Longitude: <u>9.27 E</u>	AIRSTRIKE BOMB SPANISH BASES AND PRODUCE UNITS!	See Combat Results All planes that survived returned to starting bases
10 FREIGHTERS (5 BEING BUILT) 1 FRIGATE (BEING BUILT) 100 M x 20 CARGO PTS EACH 50 R x 20 CARGO PTS EACH 2000 + 1000 = 3000, FA'S WILL MAKE TWO TRIPS.	Province From: City: <u>ITALY</u> Latitude: <u>SARONA</u> Longitude: <u>44.19 N</u> <u>8.28 E</u> Province To: City: <u>LIBYA</u> City: <u>AL KHUUS</u> Latitude: <u>32.35 N</u> Longitude: <u>14.10 E</u>	MOVE TO AL KHUUS TRADE 100 M AND 50 R TO LIBYA FRIGATE ESCORTS; COVER FOR FREIGHTERS IF ATTACKED.	100 M and 50 R gifted to Libya without difficulty. If you need more room, use a separate sheet to list units and make notes about your trades.



Global Supremacy Order Sheets

GLOBAL SUPREMACY™		Country <u>ITALY</u>	
Game # <u>1</u>			
PRODUCTION SHEET		UNITS	
LOCATION AND COST Province and City		Name and Number	
Province: <u>ITALY</u> City: <u>ROME</u> Latitude: <u>41.52 N</u> Longitude: <u>12.37 E</u>		10 x Infantry BATTAL	
		1 x GROUND BASE	
		1 x INDUSTRY	
		1 x RANGER BATTN	
		4 x FIXED AAA BATTAL	
		1 x RADAR-1	
Province: <u>ITALY</u> City: <u>SARONA</u> Latitude: <u>44.19 N</u> Longitude: <u>8.28 E</u>	Production Pts: <u>55 P</u> Metal Pts: <u>70 M</u> Oil Pts: <u>-</u> Radioactive Pts: <u>-</u> Money Pts: <u>2 P</u>	2 x NAVAL BASE	
		5 x FREIGHTER	

Global Supremacy is a Trademark of Schudel & Son



THIS issue's three contributors are two game designers and a genuine 24-caliber ghost. John Nicholson, of Vorcon Wars, completes his advice to the budding moderator with a look at the exciting moment of the public launch of the new game. John Clemens, of Clemens & Associates (Universe II, Terra II, Conquest of Insula II) discusses the factors deciding how much to reveal to the players. And the ghost? He's an industry figure who wishes to be anonymous, giving his candid guide to the industry's catch-phrases. There may be somebody who this piece doesn't offend; if so, we apologise for the oversight!

PBM Game Design: How Much Information? [Jon Clemens]

DESIGNING a game is one of those activities which seems relatively simple until it is attempted. Beyond the basic mechanics of play there are many subtle factors that should be considered. One of these is the matter of how much information should be supplied to the player at the beginning of the game.

Before we proceed to a discussion of information, we should clarify what we mean by the term 'game'. A game is defined as 'a contest with certain rules.' A contest implies that a player is striving to outperform the other players.

Many Play-By-Mail companies do not actually operate games. They operate correspondence systems where the 'player' communicates what he/she wishes to do, and the gamemaster subjectively evaluates whether the action will succeed, and responds accordingly. As there is no interaction between players, the gamemaster is free to respond in a way that keeps the 'player' entertained. This type of system is not included in our consideration. We are concerned with true games, where it is important to the player to achieve goals within the interactive framework of the game environment and entities controlled by the other players. The excitement of a game is derived from the lack of certainty that these goals will be achieved.

PBM games may be designed as either fixed duration or unending. The fixed-duration games generally stress short-term analysis and tactics. Since the game needs to get off to a fast start, fairly complete information regarding the rules and operation of the game is furnished to the player. The uncertainty in the game comes from not knowing the other players' choices, rather than a combination of other players' choices and a lack of information.

Unending games provide greater flexibility in the amount of information that may be supplied, due to the lack of time pressure. The game designer may choose to provide only as much information as is necessary to 'set the stage' for the player and enable him/her to operate long enough to start learning more about the game. This lack of certainty about how to proceed forces the player to be much more original in approaching the game. It is no longer just a matter of sitting down with a calculator and computing the optimum sequence. One must establish limited objectives, try various actions, and grow toward the overall goal. Adaptation and flexibility are frequently the determining factors in survival.

We used this approach in the design of UNIVERSE II and TERRA II. With UNIVERSE II the task was much easier as the

setting was in the future and could be molded into anything we wanted. We chose to thrust the player into an unknown universe with little information other than the functioning of the starship being commanded. The only information about the environment that was provided was a movement grid, and a garbled signal received from an alien source. The result is that the player must grope through the unknown, try various actions, ask questions, and learn from other players in an effort to survive and succeed.

The design of TERRA II was more difficult, in that the setting is a medieval culture. Because the setting was predetermined, it was necessary to use other means to create the uncertainty that is ordinarily associated with a lack of information. This was achieved by developing an extremely complex system in which the player must establish objectives based on fragmentary information (as in real life). He/she must then choose which skills to develop based on the objectives already established. In addition, because each tribe begins the game in a blinding snowstorm caused by the oncoming Ice Age, the player is unaware of his tribe's location and the whereabouts of other tribes, villages or cities. To increase the realism, we have not provided a coordinate system, thus making it necessary for tribes to map out the territory.

While the amount of information provided varies widely from one game to another, it can be a significant factor in determining the level of enjoyment experienced by the players. When choosing a PBM game in which to participate, consider carefully whether you prefer the analysis of known facts or exploration of the unknown. ●

Starting your own PBM game: THE LAUNCH [John Nicholson]

IN my last two reports I have dealt with the preparations for running a Play By Mail game. In this issue I propose to detail some of the other aspects which must concern you if you are proposing to sell your game to the public in a professional manner.

I will assume that your game is written and has been play-tested by a group of friends long enough for it to be proven as playable, with all contingencies for errors covered either in the rules or by some other instructions. When you offer a service like postal gaming, you owe it to your participants to provide a good game that is fair to all players. If you are still developing your game then you must state so, and perhaps offer the game at a lower price (or even free), otherwise you may receive a lot of nasty letters when you are forced to change a rule that many players may be depending on during their play.

Then stand back and take a critical view of the game. Ask if it can be played by a larger number of people from all over the country. When you were play-testing, was there a need for a considerable interchange of information which wouldn't be available to players some distance apart? Was the essence of the game the speed it was being played, and would this stand being slowed down?

Assume now that you decide to go ahead. What about the public launch?

Presumably, by making your game public, you will want to charge for playing it. So you have to consider how much it is worth. Is the information offered each turn value for money? Postage is not a large portion of the total outlay but it is significant, especially if there is an increase in postal charges. Is there a great deal of ancillary equipment provided to players? For example, do you have to get paper printed for order forms? Initially, you could draw special sheets yourself, but for a more professional appearance you must consider proper artwork and printing. You may have a map, some special papers or tokens, all of which have to be prepared and printed beforehand. At first sight this may seem expensive, but if you are sure of your market, and can afford it, then buy a large quantity, so the cost of each print is kept very low.

Obviously you have to cover your charges for paper, envelopes etc., but try not to overcharge, otherwise your players may feel cheated. You may even consider a flexible price structure for each game or a fixed price for the total game, no matter how many turns are played. Whatever your choice, to be fair to your participants, you have to stick to this for the duration of that game.

Then there is your personal time, the game may start out to be a friendly pastime, but if it is successful it can soon change your view of the situation. If you think about how much your time would be worth if you were working on a different job for someone else, then you may charge five or more pounds (\$7) per hour. So although you won't exactly charge yourself, your time becomes quite a major expense. I can hear you all say 'but it's only a hobby.' Yes, very true, as long as you do not branch out and continually expand. At a certain point you may have to reconsider your position and make a total commitment. To quote a well-worn phrase, 'YOU HAVE STARTED THE BALL ROLLING' and if you are not careful 'IT BECOMES VERY DIFFICULT TO STOP'. You are offering a service to other people and you have to take responsibility for continuing to provide that service.

You need to consider whether the game is to have a fixed or flexible turnaround time. Does each player have to write a considerable amount of mail to other players and await replies before making his next move? Your decision on this aspect will strongly influence your players' attitudes towards the game. It may be that you can run both a fast game and a slower game to suit different players. One thing which may considerably influence the turnaround is how much time you have to devote to each game? To take an exaggerated example, if each of your games takes a day to process and you have eight games, then you could not even think about a one week turnaround. (Mind you, if that were the case I don't think I would even consider a four week turnaround.)

Finally, the marketing of your game is very important and a major factor in its success. Care should be taken with this topic, as initially it is probably one of the largest expenses involved in setting up the game.

There are many ways you can advertise and all are worth examining. If the game is computer-based, then by all means look around for an advertising space in the numerous computer magazines. However, if the computer aspects of the game do not affect it significantly then there would be little sense in advertising in such magazines. What type of people are you trying to attract? Certain magazines may have larger circulations, but will the people that reply want to play, or will they merely be writing out of curiosity about the new product? A false impression of your success may be gained in this manner so take care.

There are the dedicated magazines for games players, some of which concentrate so closely on specific games topics that you may have a ready harvest waiting to be plucked. I cannot let this topic pass without mentioning magazines such as FLAGSHIP, which encompasses all of the PBM games and is sold throughout the world. You may get a far better response by advertising in this way and at least you are relatively sure of most readers being interested in your game.


Contact your local games club, asking if they can place a poster or advert on their club wall. Alternatively, you can send out leaflets or flyers to these clubs for circulation. You can even arrange for flyers to be placed into magazines, providing a far greater impact when opening the pages (although this method can be costly).

Once you are established, then a useful source of new players is introductions from existing ones, and you may even feel that some small bonus is appropriate for this service. It is amazing how effective *word of mouth* can be.

Advertising rates can vary greatly from a few pounds or dollars up to hundreds per quarter page in some of the larger full glossy mags with circulations of over 100,000. If you want a special position in one of these magazines or colour then unfortunately you have to pay for this as well. It may be worth paying for a large advert once, but unless you are reasonably sure of a good response, you may have to consider such a large outlay very carefully.

please turn over

KRISTARYAN™



PLAY EVIL

Tired of the limitations of being moralistic? Tired of losing a key treasure horde just because it belongs to someone else? Do you desire to rule the universe and battle Gods face to face? Do you want to beat real people rather than computer generated monsters? Are you sick of getting the exact same responses every week? Now you can steal, pillage... and win! KRISTARYAN--send \$10 (for rule book and 3 FREE plays \$2.50 after that) and enjoy freedom.

KRISTARYAN ENT. c/o Roy Clark
2518 Renegade Ave. Bakersfield
CA. 93306

ICBM...International Computers

By Mail.

FEUDAL LORDS

is a game of medieval strategic warfare set in mock Arthurian Britain. You, as Baron (or Baroness) must manage your economy, feed your peasants, create Knights, build Lumber Mills, Markets and Ships whilst fighting for the vacant throne of England.

FEUDAL LORDS is an entirely computer-moderated game of some complexity run under licence in the UK by ICBM. It's our fastest-growing game and one look at the rules will show you why.

Turn fees are only £1 plus as SSAE with a £2 returnable deposit and turn-around is *fast* by virtue of our UK-based computer.

So don't forget: 'Druidic fertility drug increases your population by 38'.

FEUDAL LORDS Rules 50p. Please don't ask for a game until you've read the rules! From ICBM, the First, the Biggest, the Best. Catch us if you can.

ICBM,
PO Box 94, Bath St.,
Walsall, West Midlands.



Whatever the advertising method, you have to decide what to say and how to catch the reader's eye. Wording is very important, as the information offered in the advert is the only thing that readers can use to evaluate your game. Try not to exaggerate the salient points, though artistic licence in wording can be considerable bait for people still reconsidering whether or not to take a chance.

If the advert is only a few simple lines then leave it up to the magazine to 'typeset' it, but if you are going for ¼ page or larger advert, then there is normally enough room to add some artwork, and think about getting your own typesetting done. Some publishers offer to prove both for a small cost, but you can do it yourself providing your artwork is good enough. Take care though, as some publishers will only accept a certain standard of artwork and may require it to be relaid to suit their typeface.

What sort of advert should you place? Well, in the first instance a few lines in the small ads column may be all that is required. If you don't receive any replies, then don't be too despondent – it may still be worth placing a larger, more eye-catching one, for the future.

Timing of advertising is also important. It is no good getting everything ready, sending in an advert and expecting replies the next week. Most magazines have to be printed well in advance of their calendar dates. So once you have placed your first advert it may be 4 or 5 weeks before it is published, and then a couple more weeks whilst the issue reaches the newsagents and people buy it, read it, and decide to write to you. Thus six or more weeks will pass before you see any response from your advert. If your chosen magazine is published monthly and you want to place a follow-on advertisement in the next issue, then you will have to book it before your first has been published. It seems risky but confidence in your product should see you through.

I hope this series has given you some insight into some of the points to watch out for when setting up your own game. There is a great deal of satisfaction in being a Godlike figure, master of all your games, watching them develop and change as players struggle to fight out their battles. Only you can see what is in store for them, and, without intervening in the game, you will find yourself looking forward to the next chapter. There are a great many compensations for the work needed to start well-engineered PBM project, and who knows? – The sky may well be the limit.

Let the buyer beware [Cassandra]

ENTIRELY COMPUTER MODERATED

– Moderated without any imagination whatsoever.

HUMAN MODERATOR

– Moderated by a dyspeptic, forgetful, disorganised schizophrenic who hates you personally.

SERVING YOU SINCE THE 70's

– Serving you since December 31st 1979.

SERVING YOU SINCE 1970

– I am Rick Loomis.

NEW IMAGINATIVE COMPANY

– Serving you since Tuesday.

STATE OF THE ART GAME SYSTEM

– Not yet play-tested.

VOTED BEST GAME BY SPACE GAMER READERS

– Not generally known, but one year a small percentage of respondents to the yearly SPACE GAMER game review survey stated that they had never heard of THE SPACE GAMER. (Draw your own conclusions)

WE ARE THE LEADER

– We count the number of turns we process.

WE ARE THE LEADER

– We count the number of games we run.

WE ARE THE LEADER

– We count how much money we make.

OPTIONAL SPECIAL ACTIONS

– To get anywhere you're going to have to pay twice the game turn fee.

FREE SPECIAL ACTIONS

– Should have been in the rules in the first place.

DEADLINE

– If the player is late he's wrong. If the game company is late the player is still wrong.

ACT OF GOD

– Typist is a moron.

FOG OF WAR

– See above.

UNREALISTIC REQUEST

– We didn't think anyone would ever think of that!

NO WAITING LIST TO START

– You're playing this one by yourself Charlie.

FIRST TURN AND SET UP FREE

– Included in the price of the rules.

SEND FOR RULEBOOK

– Pay for rulebook.

SIMPLE GAME SYSTEM

– This one's boring.

NEW LEVELS OF COMPLEXITY

– Even the moderators don't understand the rules.

MANY SECRETS TO BE DISCOVERED

– We haven't finished designing the game yet.

WE'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

– We'd like to thank you for the free advertising.

BACKED BY AN APPLE-80 DOSPLUS MODEM 128K WINCHESTER

– We assume you're easily impressed.

COMPUTER ASSISTED

– This game needs a computer to assist it.

UNIQUE METHOD OF COMBAT RESOLUTION

– Do you think anyone else would use a system like this?

RULES COMPLETE WITH ERRATA

– These rules will be complete with the errata.

SIGN UP NOW AND BE FIRST ON THE LIST

– Help our 'buy a micro computer' fund.

RESULTS IN ENGLISH

– Just as your Income Tax form is in English.

NO WAITING FOR DEADLINES

– Send as much money as you can as fast as you can.

NO HIDDEN CHARGES

– With the amount of money you're going to spend who needs them!

FREE NEWSLETTER FOR EVERY PLAYER

– Hear the worst about other people's games.

MODERATED PERSONALLY BY THE DESIGNER

– We can't afford staff.

NOW WITH A FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL MODERATOR

– I've just got married.

WE HAVE ADDED A SECOND MODERATOR

– Our son has learnt to read.

★ **Had a raw deal from a PBM company? Write to FLAGSHIP about it and help other players.** ★

First we brought you over 30,000 turns of **BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE** and **WARBOID WORLD**. Now we introduce our new Play By Mail game of Xenophobia, Conquest, and Space Warfare called . . .

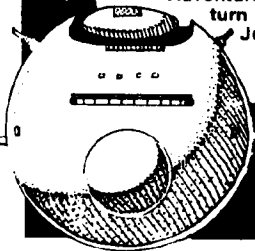
CAPITOL

CAPITOL Features —

- A strategic space warfare game, completely computer moderated.
- Approximately 100 players per game.
- Players design their race's characteristics and description.
- Design your own starships and build them at your star bases.
- Expand your empire and conquer other races.
- An "advanced stage" of the game introduces new technologies of stargates and improved ship movement capabilities.
- CAPITOL's simplified order formats are easy to remember. No coding your orders onto computer cards or other gimmicks.
- CAPITOL has an easy to understand rule book, complete with numerous examples.
- CAPITOL was subjected to the largest playtest of ANY commercial PBM game. Over 100 players played 1500 turns of CAPITOL prior to its release.
- Adventures By Mail has been providing continuous 48 hour turn around time for all our games since July, 1981. Just ask our players!
 - Each turn of Capitol costs \$2.50 for the first 60 orders. Each additional 30 orders costs \$1.00.

"CAPITOL is fast becoming the standard against which other space warfare games are compared"

- With each rule book you receive a set of overlays to use in mapping the game and moving your ships.
- Mapping CAPITOL is extremely interesting, using the computer printed maps you receive with your turn results.
- No due dates. CAPITOL allows you three turns per month. Most other computer moderated games have the usual one turn every three weeks (approximately).
- Capitol is a balanced game. Each player may buy a maximum of two setups per game.



**SEND \$2.50 FOR COMPLETE RULES PACKAGE TO:
Adventures By Mail, PO Box 436, Cohoes, NY 12047**

Vorcon Wars

A COMPUTER MODERATED PLAY BY MAIL GAME

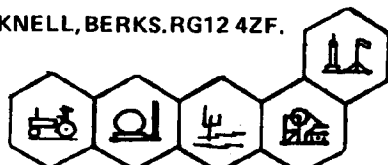
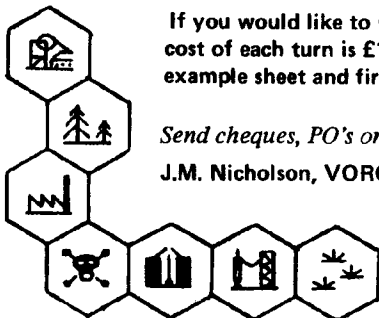
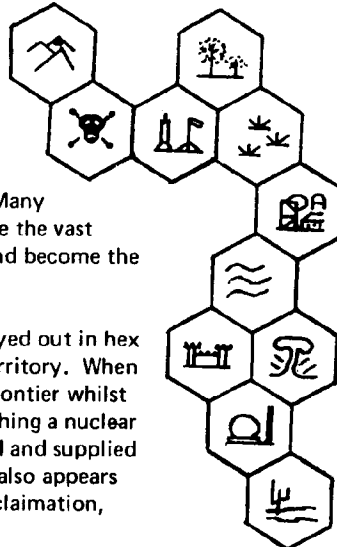
In a distant solar system the planet **VORCON** has been abandoned by its tyrannical ruler. Many spacecraft are now converging on it from all sides of the galaxy to claim ownership and mine the vast untapped supply of minerals. You can take place in this fascinating battle for supremacy and become the ultimate ruler.

The game is played on the fully circumnavigable surface of the planet **VORCON** which is layed out in hex format. Use satellites and transporters for surveillance and protection of your expanding territory. When an offensive is in order then make full use of fortifications and minefields to protect your frontier whilst you advance. Your battles are portrayed in full depth with the ultimate possibility of launching a nuclear offensive in your quest for ownership. All is not 'plain sailing', your men still have to be fed and supplied with weapons; therefore agricultural and industrial resources must be maintained. A trader also appears periodically to supply those missing items. Many more options such as prospecting, land reclamation, development and flooding are also available to help you in your quest.

If you would like to play or require further details then write to me at the following address. The cost of each turn is £1.00, but £1.50 will pay for the introduction package of rule book, hex sheet, example sheet and first three turns.

Send cheques, PO's or cash to:—

J.M. Nicholson, VORCON GAMES, 71 JUNIPER, BIRCH HILL, BRACKNELL, BERKS. RG12 4ZF.



Would you enjoy a universe in which PBM games were reality? Before answering, read CHRIS HARVEY's sympathetic account of the problems of Trund T. Trund...

It was the only thing he could do . . .

TRUND T. TRUND was worried. The fact that he was worried was in itself of interest because the inhabitants of Third Level Grome (Gromons) did not usually worry or for that matter even think.

Trund T. Trund (the middle T stood for 'Trund'), a third level, and thus the lowest level of life form on Gromon, had reported for duty as ordered at 03.00 hours to the Communications centre of his Military Second Level Overlord Beauregard B. Blatt. As the lowest form of life, he had expected the usual orders to mind-link to his other 17,761 Trunds to keep his sector of the planet running for the next duty period. What he had not expected was to find that Beauregard B. Blatt (the B stood for Blatt) had placed his Zeon-Blaster against his forehead and blown away not only the upper part of his torso but most of the surrounding countryside as well. This, thought Trund T. Trund, was against regulations and thus the last thing that a

Second Leveller would be expected to do. Without pausing to consider the implications of the comment 'the last thing', Trund therefore set about working out just what had caused his Overlord to waste ammunition.

Certainly life on the planet Gromon had developed some peculiarities in the last few weeks, but Third Levellers were never told much about what went on and all he had been able to mind-link were a few unsubstantiated rumours. Rumour had it that Deep Spaceships calling themselves STARTLORDS had arrived in Gromon's inner space and entered immediately into fierce combat with orbiting veterans of the VORTCON WARS. Both sides apparently were fighting under different rules and moving at different speeds whilst calling the others cheats. The situation had been more than complicated by the STARTLORD commander declaring himself Emperyr only to be immediately challenged by ships of the ETTUEL Alliance seeking out intelligent life for the glory of something they called their UNIVERSTE II. To Trund T. Trund it was all very worrying. In fact, he had not worried so much since the results of the General Gromon-wide election when the 17 billion level Threes had put up candidates against the 23,000 Level Ones. Given the system of one Gromon one vote in operation on Gromon, Trund was at a loss to understand how his fellow Level Threes could have lost the election. (Actually they *had* won. It was just that the Level Ones hadn't told them.) No, it was certainly the most worrying time Trund could remember since the 12th Century AFTER. (ie before the Fall of Blarth, but after the Great Soaking.)

More than that, parties of adventurers had been spotted on the surface of Gromon fighting tribal battles with each other. One group calling themselves the TRIBESTS OF CRANET had surged into fierce conflict with nomadic herdsmen of the TERRAT II. Bloodthirsty battle cries of 'moderated by humans', 'completely computer controlled' had been hurled with vigour with each side retiring from the combat only when the seemingly magic words of 'special encounters' had been summoned as a mutually agreed truce point. Not even underground did Gromon seem safe any longer. Small groups of adventurers carrying reams of strange-looking paper were systematically turning over every cave, dungeon and tunnel in the name of HEROIC FANTASTY or CATACOMBS OF CTHAOS or even, Godt forbid, BLTED and CRASTI-

TRAVELLERS' TALES



MOFFT. Every so often a battle would stop midway whilst leading figures in each group would get together and argue over seemingly meaningless points of trivia in any one of a dozen 'rule books'. (The phrase 'rule book' was alien to Trund T. Trund who had only once sent for such an article from something called the LORDS OF VALETIAT, and was still waiting for it.)

But surely, the highly trained military mind of a Second Level Gromon, a mind capable of ordering the decimation of entire Galaxies without a quiver, would not have been overloaded by just this? Certainly something else must have occurred. Effortlessly Trund mind-linked with his batch brothers in his sector. Was there anything new? Well it seemed that below even the caverns of the HEROIC FANTASTYs a new race of Robots had been discovered. These strange WARBOITDS when contacted had firmly refused to believe in the existence of any other life forms at all, and had said that even if there were any they wouldn't talk to them, indeed didn't even know how to. Trund T. Trund shuddered a little at that. The very idea that these creatures did not recognise the 5x3 (Trund mentally crossed his nine fingers at once) communications system, upon which everyone knew all intelligent life was based, was close to heresy. Let ideas like that proliferate, thought Trund and the very fabric of the society set up by the FEUTDAL LORTDS would be in danger. Clearly the situation was serious but not so serious that the outer ring of Gromon defences in space could not act as a haven of the last resort. Surely not.

Trund operated the communicator, usually operated only by Second Levellers and wired in to the latest transmission from Station Alpha Zero One, normally reserved for Blatt's Ear only. The drug-soaked voice of a spaced-out Level Two bounced, wafted, and plunged down the ether. (Born to it, thought Trund.)

'Hey Blatt baby, where you bin? You ain't gonna believe this one sport. Know what I got up here? I got a guy who says he's the One True Ghod, a looney who wants to sell me AAR EMMs, a fruitcake who keeps wanting to know what our women, whatever they are, look like since he's had it with loot and pillage, your usual run of the mill Emperor, some creep in a wide tie and check jacket who says he can get me the best prices on intergalactic baubles only used once fell off the back of a starship, just my size, absolutely kosher and a little robotic like machine. Hey Blatt, I mean this last one's the wierdest. Like man he's got something he calls a Planet Buster with him and he wants to know how many points we have on the ground before he lets it fly . . .'

Trund reached for the Zeon Blaster, it was the only thing he could do really. ●



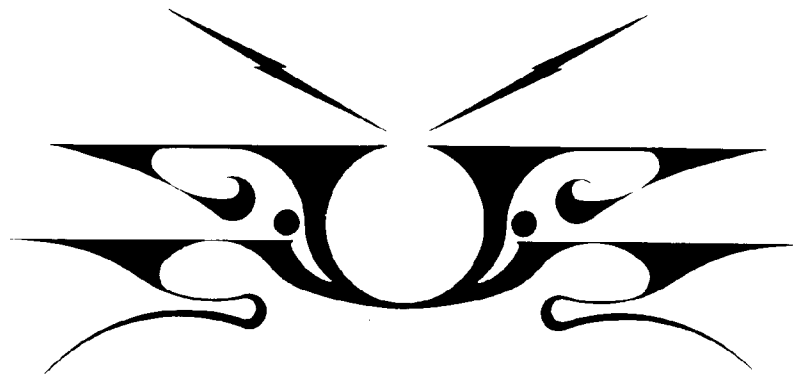
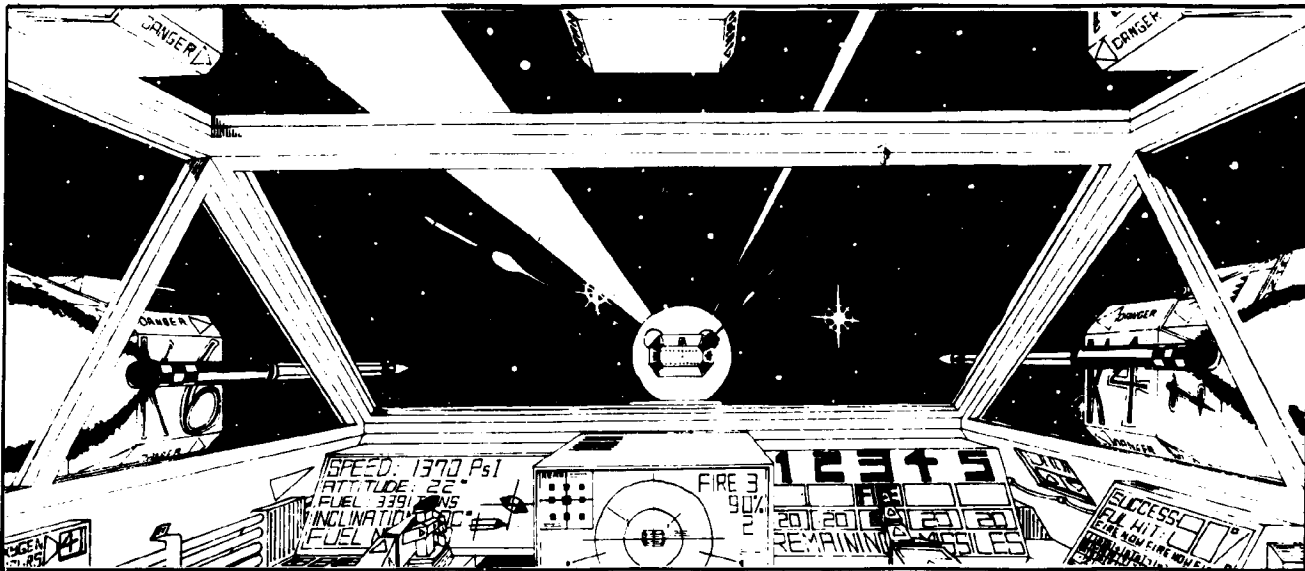
Become a fierce Nomad chieftan or a daring sea raider in a dark-ages world of mystery and adventure.

LORDS OF THE DARK HORSE

A unique play-by-mail experience from

ADVENTURES DESIGN GROUP INC.
P.O. Box 821072
Dallas TX 75382

Setup — \$17.50
Turn — \$3.50



STARLORD

STARLORD is a colourful computer-run play-by-mail game of galactic warfare on a grand strategic scale. In each game there are one thousand stars to conquer and up to fifty players involved in the conflict. The ultimate aim is to become Emperor but the game doesn't end there. When you capture the Throne Star at the hub of the galaxy, you gain control of all the Empry's ships and stars and try to hold on to power. Meanwhile, all the other players continue their struggle to grab the Throne. The Emperor does have one advantage though - he plays for free!

Designed and programmed in the UK, processed in the UK, STARLORD offers a regular turn-round of 2 weeks to British and British Forces players. And when we say regular, we mean it! International games run every 4 weeks.

Each turn you receive by post a computer print-out in FULL COLOUR unique to your position in the game. This features:-

- * A TACTICAL STAR-MAP IN COLOUR
- * A COMMAND SHIP STATUS REPORT
- * BATTLE REPORTS IN COLOURS MATCHING THE MAP
- * A CUSTOMIZED ORDERS SHEET ALSO IN COLOUR
- * ALL REPORTS IN ENGLISH (NOT COMPUTER CODE)

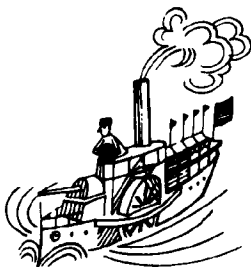
STARLORD costs £1-25 and has no hidden extras or deposits to pay. In fact, new players get the rules and first print-out free! If you think you've got what it takes to conquer the galaxy, you can be entered in a game immediately for just £1-25. Cheques to 'STARLORD' please. No SAE is required - simply write to:-

STARLORD, 1 Rake Hey Close, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside, L46 6EW.

Are YOU a Postal Diplomacy failure? Do you lose EVERY game you enter? Is 1904 just a dream? In short, when it comes to Diplomacy, are you a worthless, inept fool? Of course you are! Well, you can stop worrying because in the second of his exclusive articles KEITH POTTAGE ('The world's greatest Postal Diplomacy player' - K.P.) reveals his secrets as he relives

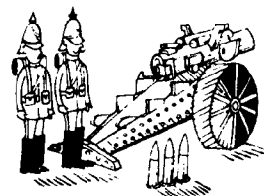
GAMESTART ALPHA VICTORY

(PART II)



After the Spring 1901 moves the board looked liked this:

AUSTRIA - PAUL WRAY - F Tri, A Vie, A Ser.
ENGLAND - ED PLATT - F NWG, F NTH, A Yor.
FRANCE - N. B. GALL - F MAO, A Bur, A Spa.
GERMANY - T. GOMERSON - F Den, A Kie, A Mun.
ITALY - ALLAN TIMMS - F IOS, A Apu, A Ven.
RUSSIA - K. POTTAGE - F GOB, F Sev, A War, A St.P.
TURKEY - EVELYN BAKER - F Ank, A Arm, A Bul.



I WAS playing Russia and as I told you last time I'd discovered that my opponents were the usual bunch of wierdos you get in this hobby. The most normal seemed Paul Wray so I thought I'd contact him first. I decided to ring him as I've always found that you can get through much more in a phone call than you can in a letter.

The phone had been ringing for ages, and I was just about to put my receiver down when he answered. He seemed tired and annoyed.

'YES!!!' (Pant)

'Hello Paul. My name's Keith Pottage ...'

'WHO?' (Pant)

'Keith Pottage and ...'

'What the HELL do you want?'

'Eh? Well we're playing in that postal diplomacy game and I ...'

'Good God. (Pant) Do you know *what* I was doing?'

'Have I interrupted something?'

'You witless cretin! (No, not you darling, this twerp Pottage). Leave us alone!!'

'But about Galicia. I've been thinking about entering ...'

'So have I. Get lost.'

And he banged the phone down. Some people. A couple of days later I got a letter from him.

Dear Keith,

I'm very sorry about the way I talked to you over the phone but you'd rung at an extremely embarrassing moment. My girlfriend says you've got a very bad sense of timing (mind you, she tells me the same thing).

As I said last time I'll tell you what I'm going to do each season until you take advantage of the information to attack me. This season I'll probably order A Ser-Bul on the assumption that Turkey will move her A Bul to either Rum or Gre. Would you agree to neither of us entering Galicia? Then I could move against Italy and you could attack Turkey. I don't want to attack Turkey myself as I think Evelyn

rather fancies me and I don't want to spoil my chances by violating her territory ... If you see what I mean. (This lad should be on bromide.)

Now as you recall I'd made a complete fool of myself by trying to get a date with Evelyn and finding out she was a man. Obviously Austria didn't know. There must be *some way* I could use this. Threaten to tell his girlfriend he fancies Evelyn? Tell him that Evelyn is male but still fancies him? I'd have to give it some thought.

I then turned my attention to Turkey who'd attacked me in the spring. (Always write to a player who attacks you).

Dear Evelyn,

I hope when you receive this letter it doesn't disturb you doing something important. Like trying to get your seams straight, or mascaring your lips. Your secret's out Evelyn 'Dear', and unless you want to be known as the hobby's first transvestite player you'd better do as I say. (Actually he'd be the hobby's second transvestite player as there's a man in Birmingham whose disgusting personal habits include getting a pair of grapefruit and ... well never mind.) Order A Bul-Gre, F Ank-BLA, A Arm-Ank and your secret's safe with me. All right?

I look forward to your reply.

Oh, and by the way, don't douse your letter in 'intimate' this time. It makes my dog sick.

Yours, Keith Pottage

Yes, this is one of the delights of playing Diplomacy. Blackmailing people. Virtually anything you find out about your opponents can be used to your benefit, and discovering that England (ED PLATT) was a computer was a Godsend. Just so long as I remembered that someone had to be programming him.

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your latest printout. I am collecting statistical data for a book on Diplomacy and your figures will be very helpful. So far I've only used the statistics from America covering the first 2,000 games played there and it's interesting to note the differences. You might be interested to see the following:-

Chances of English victory if 1st. country attacked is Russia ... 3.2%

Chances of English victory if 1st. country attacked is Germany ... 5.1%

Chances of English victory if 1st. country attacked is France ... 7.4%

Need I say more?

(Data from the American Institute of Diplomacy Studies, A.I.D.S.)

BACK ISSUES

We still have stocks of earlier issues available for £1.75/\$3 per issue: order from the subscription address on page 3 to complete your set of FLAGSHIP.

KEEP FLAGSHIP RACING AHEAD

... tell advertisers you saw their game in FLAGSHIP. Ask non-advertisers when they're going to start. Every page of advertising pays for two pages of articles.

If the programmer believed any of this preposterous rubbish then he certainly wouldn't attack me. I didn't particularly care which of the others he picked on, although seeing that France was being played by a self-made millionaire who was bribing us all to move as he wished, it would be better if he were the one England picked on. Besides someone with a computer wouldn't need cash would they? Nicky Palmer doesn't. [Splutter! Ed.]

Germany was being played by a sixteen year old brat who was basing his play on Richard Sharp's *The Game Of Diplomacy*. I could just imagine the little horror peering over the board, wearing an anti-nuclear badge on his denim jacket, listening to Judas Priest, a bit of fluff on his upper lip failing to filter his alarming halitosis, and so many spots he'd look like the bottom of a bird cage. I wrote,

Dear Trevor,

We seem to have a lot in common. I've taken your advice and made my peace with Austria, neither of us will enter Galicia without the other's permission. Unfortunately I doubt whether I will get a build this year unless you let me into Sweden. If you do I'll let you dictate what my build will be in the winter. What do you think of a joint attack on England? We may be able to get one of your fleets in the North Sea if I've a fleet in Sweden to cut an English fleet's support from Norway.

His reply.

Dear Keith,

Yes I'll let you into Sweden. (Good). Your idea of a joint attack on England is good. (Of course it is.) Actually I think England will have an army in Norway. (So do I.) By the way, I can't seem to get a reply from Italy, can you? (No.)

As far as France is concerned he seems a really good, honest player. (Bribed you too eh?) His idea is for the three of us all to attack England. (So the computer didn't accept the bribe.) I think it will work, what do you think? (I think you're a berk.)

Finally I'd like to ask your advice, in confidence of course. (Ohhhh, you can trust meeee!!!) Evelyn thinks I'm sexy. (Good grief.) She's asked me to send her a revealing photo of myself. Why do you think this is? (It's called extortion, you buffoon.) Anyway I can't send her a photo of my body, I'm a bit weedy. (Never!!) So I'm going to send her a photo cut out of one of these body building magazines. Do you think I'll get anything? (Six months probably.) Anyway I'm sure I can rely on your discretion.

Yours, Trevor

Dear Trevor,

The three-way attack on England is a splendid idea. I'm all for it.

Your idea of sending the photo of a physical jerk to Evelyn sounds very clever. I'm sure it will work. I've tried chatting her up myself but she said she was already devoted to you. You must be quite a young charmer!

Don't worry, I won't tell a soul,

Yours... Keith

Dear Paul (Austria),

Trevor is getting the hots over Evelyn and has been sending the poor girl



TRAVELLERS' TALES

disgusting pictures of himself. Unbelievably it's worked and he's just written saying they're meeting this weekend.

Look, we're right between them. I don't expect you to attack Germany but can we both attack Turkey? You see Paul, I can't stand liars. I'm sorry but that's just the way I've been brought up. As soon as I find out a person is untrustworthy and deceitful I refuse to have anything to do with them. Such people make me sick.

I've stopped writing to Italy for this very reason.

All the best, Keith

Next I wrote to Italy.

Dear Allan,

I didn't seem to get a letter from you last season. (No doubt because you didn't send one.) I've been to the Post Office H.Q. to lodge an official complaint though. (Well I glared at the building as I walked by.) So I'm sure your next letter will get through. (Can you write?)

Have you decided who to attack yet? No-one seems to be going for you so you can wait till next season to make your choice. Might I suggest attacking Austria? Turkey is going to and if you join in he won't last long. If however you fancy attacking Turkey or France what about this idea? A second army isn't much use to Italy unless he's attacking Austria so if you can get Austria and/or Germany to dislodge one of your armies you could disband it, build a fleet, and continue with own army and three fleets. With such naval strength you'd be able to attack France or Turkey more effectively and you'd virtually control the Mediterranean.

All the best, Keith

I got no reply to this and none from Evelyn. I did however get my instructions from France.

Pottage,

Order A War-Ukr, F Sev-Rum, A St.P.-Nor, F GOB-Swe. Build armies. Enclosed is a share in Galls Tripe.

N.B. Gall in Galls Tripe

I looked at his instructions, too a deep breath and sent in my orders. When the magazine came...

Austria *A vie-Bud, A Ser-Bul, F Tri st. BUILD A VIE.*

England *F NTH Convoys A Yor-Nor supp by FNWG. BUILD F Lon. F MAO-Por, A Spa st., A Bur-Bel. BUILD F Bre, F Mar, A Par.*

France *F Den st., A Kie-Hol, A Mun st., BUILD F Kie, A Ber.*

Germany *A Ven st., F IOS convoys A Apu-Tun. BUILD F Nap.*

Italy *A War-Ukr, F Sev-BLA, FGOB-Swe, A St.P.-Fin. BUILD F ST.P.n.c.*

Russia *No moves received! F Ank, A Bul, A Arm all stand.*

Turkey

Cautious development on all sides, but yes, I had defied N.B.Gall!! I felt that I wouldn't be able to look at myself in the mirror unless I stood up to his cheap bribery (and it was pretty cheap). Besides I remembered a newspaper story from a couple of weeks earlier.

GALLS TRIPE BANKRUPT! N.B.Gall arrested by F.B.I. agents posing as drug dealers. Share values fall on Stock Market. A typical Diplomacy player. Crooked. ●

TO BE CONTINUED



THE EAGLES OF BLED SEND CONGRATULATIONS TO NICKY PALMER AND FLAGSHIP

THE KEYS OF BLED

THE KEYS OF BLED is a play-by-mail experience set on an archaic and anarchic fantasy world. As a participant, you will have to account for the supply of your people, their morale & combat ability, your own political leadership rating and many other inter-related factors.

The game system embraces multiple group control, each of which is able to act independently of the others, a combat system which allows you to deploy individual units prior to combat actually taking place, assigning both objectives & risk levels on a detailed combat resolution sheet, and more detailed gamesmaster scene-setting than usual.

To enable you to more fully assess the merits of the game, a free rulebook, describing the game system, can be obtained from:

THE KEYS OF BLED (F), 95 King Street, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 8NZ

Subsequently, your first four turns are also free of charge. Thereafter, turns cost £1.50 or \$2.75, though there are a number of advance purchase options which substantially reduce the overall cost to the player.



**THE
SPOKESMEN
SPEAK...**

NOTE: this section is for official press releases from the PBM companies. We may shorten and paraphrase them but we will not evaluate them: we think you want to hear what they have to say directly. We do not take responsibility for any claims made.

CENTRAL TEXAS COMPUTING

We're hiring an independent software designer to move our new game NOMADS to the Lisa, and to do new mapping and graphics for us. This will (unfortunately) delay the release of NOMADS, but when you see it, you'll agree the detailed results are worth it!

Universe III game news: Several players have taken damage and crew loss through the use of propulsion pods. The Etuel claim to be unable to prevent this at present, but are rumoured to be working on it.

Quadrant VI: Alliances appear to be making a determined effort to eliminate rogue Terran ships who prey on their Earth companions. There are rumors of large purchases of Sing Nahrevs, the robot battlewagons, but no one seems to know who is buying them, or why.

Q VII: Colonization has stepped up with the discovery of new habitable planets, some inside the borders of alien empires.

Q VIII: Several colonies have begun underwater mining ventures, with notable success.

ZORPH ENTERPRISES (US)

Our newest game, Quest of the Great Jewels™, is a fantasy-based wargame: this completed testing and came on the market last September. We plan to introduce at least two new games in 1984, one a large-scale empire-type game, the other a game of modern global military and economic conflict. All our games are entirely computer-moderated.

JF&L (US)

Our latest release is Wolf Pack, a two-player game of convoy warfare. Other JF&L games are Quest for Adventure (featuring the attempts of a knight to clear his name of accusations made by an Evil High Priest) and Kings. In the latter game, the Latavian Press report stiff resistance by an Orcish rising in the South, but continuing progress in the invasion of Paranor. Thane Rupert, King of Shadar and an ally of Paranor, has disappeared following the offer of 1000 BP for his head by Fuer Norm of Latavia. Could it be someone has collected?

ADVENTURES BY MAIL (US)

We currently moderate three games. Beyond the Stellar Empire is our premier science fiction RPG, human moderated with computer assistance. This was rated

one of the 'favorite 100 games' of 1983 by GAMES magazine (the only PBM game on the list). Warboid World is computer-moderated (and covered elsewhere in this issue). Our latest game, Capitol, pits teams of eight player-races against each other for galactic domination: each game has 96 players.

ADVENTURES DESIGN GROUP (US)

Hypercruiser, a game of exploration, commerce and conflict in space, is entering play test: we welcome players regardless of experience with no set up charge and only a \$1 turn fee. Players command ships in the Navy or private business, administer outposts and cities, or develop worlds of their own.

In Lords of the Dark Horse, a player group has formed the independent 'Kingdom of Tyle' in the east, and are making a name for themselves in trade and military prowess. Far to the north, the nomads are preparing to take the war against the hated southrons into their own lands.

MITREGAMES (UK)

We have engaged a third full-time GM, and envisage taking on a fourth in the summer. We are discussing a European version of Global Supremacy with Schubel & Son.

SCHUBEL & SON (US)

Our latest release is Horizon's End! Players command small groups struggling for survival on a distant planet left isolated in the backwash of the Great Interstellar War. The game is designed as the ultimate synthesis between computer- and human-moderated games, offering a choice each turn between a Computer Card Turn (\$2.50 for 10 actions selected from a range of 78, entered by you on optically readable cards), a Standard Turn (\$3.50

for eight actions, from the 78, specified to the Game Master with explanatory notes, for him to enter with any necessary corrections) and a Special Turn (\$5 for four completely open special actions). This enables players to play cheaply with the vast range of standard actions most of the time, filling in with special choices at key moments.

4 SIGHT (US)

This issue of FLAGSHIP marks the launch of THE WEAPON, after three years of development and playtesting through 30,000 orders. Players design their own spaceships with varied mixes of engines, shields, beams, sensors and cloaking devices – and even the dreaded WEAPON itself, capable of destroying ships and worlds alike. Each player controls an empire-wide bank account as well as local resources on each world; these are used to build ships, units of star troopers, fortresses, remote probes, barriers, and warp gates. Victory demands a mixture of exploration, trade, diplomacy and military skill, making for a complex challenge married to some of the clearest turn sheets in the hobby.

QUEST COMPUTER SERVICES (US)

LAND LORDS, our limited-duration fantasy wargame, is nearing the end of playtesting, and a full-scale launch is expected in the next FLAGSHIP. Players compete to find three 'treasures' hidden somewhere in the 'land'. Every game will have a different map in seven-color graphics, showing caravans, fortresses, castles, villages, dragons, and other items within sight range of the player: we claim that we can convert any map submitted to us into an exact copy for the game. Enquiries welcome from May onwards.

SPECIAL OFFERS TO FLAGSHIP READERS

As a reader of FLAGSHIP you are entitled to discounts from many of the PBM companies who want to encourage our development as a major magazine for the whole hobby. Cut out the coupons below and send them with any new game applications (you cannot use them for game positions you have already started). See GALACTIC VIEW and THE SPOKESMEN SPEAK for lists of games from each company.



FLYING BUFFALO INCORPORATED
Free rules package (normal price \$5)

CLEMENS AND ASSOCIATES
One free turn in any new Clemens game

ICBM
Free start-up and one free turn in any new ICBM game

STARLORD
One free turn in any new UK game

VORCON WARS
£1 or \$1 off start-up fee

MITREGAMES
£1.50 off start-up fee for Starmaster or Tribes of Crane

KEYS OF BLEED
One extra free turn

SCHUBEL & SON
\$1 off set-up fee for Arena Conflict or Alien Conflict

K.J.C. GAMES
One free turn of Casinoff's World

ZORPH ENTERPRISES
One free turn in any Zorph game

JABBERWOCK ENTERPRISES
One free turn in Crater War

4 SIGHT
One free turn in THE WEAPON

ICBM...International Computers

By Mail.

THIS IS AN ADVERTISEMENT

It has been suggested to us that ICBM's standard advertisement is not very informative, consisting as it does of a half page drawing and a list of prices. On the other hand the previous one has been criticised as not being attractive enough. So we thought that for this issue of FLAGSHIP we would try an experiment.

In this advertisement we are going to tell you about ICBM and ask you to let us know which type of advertisement you find more useful or interesting.

So, ICBM began life around 1970 running FLYING BUFFALO's game Nuclear Destruction. From there we graduated to games like, Battle Plan and eventually Starweb. All these games were, and are 'postboxed', which means that we collect the orders in the UK and post them to the USA for carrying out. This isn't something we try to hide, it's something we boast about, since we were the first people in the UK to allow UK gamers to play American games with the minimum of cost and trouble, and moreover against UK based players. When we started to run CLEMENS & Associates games of Terra II and Universe II we changed our name to ICBM to emphasise the variety of games we offered (and to avoid tax!)

Our most well-known games are undoubtedly Starweb, Universe II and Terra II, all of which are postboxed and all of which have large followings. Now however we are putting more emphasis on our UK run games, FEUDAL LORDS and GALACTIC CONFLICT. It's not that these games are better than the others, it's just that that's where we see our business going in the next few years. Incidentally, we are a full-time professional business in the sense that several people rely on us for their sole source of income. Also in all our history we have never folded a game whilst we've had players for it. At the moment we are running the following games at the following prices. When we price a game incidentally we give you the full price (plus an SSAE); there are no extra, special or hidden charges in any of ICBM's games.

TERRA II, UNIVERSE II and CONQUEST OF INSULA II all from CLEMENS and all costing £1.90 a turn with £1 for the rulebook. Turnarounds have improved recently and average about two weeks.

STARWEB now costs £1.75 a turn with a rulebook price of £1. It has deadlines of two weeks and similar turnarounds.

FEUDAL LORDS and GALACTIC CONFLICT, however, are our two fastest moving and growing games. Rulebooks for both cost .50p and turn fees are £1. We require a £2 deposit from all players for each game they are in and a Stamped-Self-Addressed-Envelope with each turn. (The deposit is to discourage players from dropping out of the game and thus spoiling it for the others.)

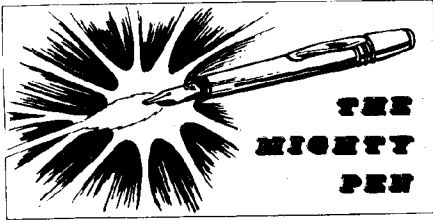
Briefly, FEUDAL LORDS is a strategic level game of economic, diplomatic and military control of 46 'FIEFS' set in a loose adaptation on the 'England' of 800 AD. It's billed as Arthurian but it has some magical and fantasy elements in it via random actions of the computer, so actual Arthurian emphasis is largely coincidental. FEUDAL LORDS is not a simple game of hack and thrust. Each turn the Baron or Baroness must feed the fief's populace of knights, peasants and townsfolk, whilst searching out mines, engaging in foreign trade and talking to other power-hungry neighbours. Not to mention planning to conquer more than half of England and Wales to put him/herself on the vacant Throne. The game is a complex one and one that is very easy to lose. At ICBM we ask that you join no game of ours without seeing the rules first and we recommend strongly that you spend 50p on the rules to this one before seeing if you've got what it takes to conquer England.

Looks like we've run out of space, so next issue of FLAGSHIP we'll give you a biased rundown on GALACTIC CONFLICT.

Remember, the above was not an article, it was an advertisement. If you would like to see more ads like this one then let us know. Thanks for reading, enjoy your games.

ICBM
PO Box 94, Bath St., Walsall, West Midlands.

ICBM THE FIRST. THE BEST. THE BIGGEST. CATCH US IF YOU CAN.



The feathery touch...

... FLAGSHIP seems set on a lighter, more broad-ranging, course...

LEX YOUNG
(Mt Eliza, Australia)

... Required reading at funeral services
... I find FLAGSHIP too sombre.

KEITH POTTAGE
(Wakefield, Yorks)

NP: Both comments based on issue 1, and both by writers trying to redress the balance with their contributions in this issue. Issues 1 & 2 deliberately attempted to establish our credibility as the 'Flagship of postal gaming' by covering a very wide variety of games despite the limited number of pages which we could then afford. This issue, as discussed in the editorial, is using the extra space to give greater weight to analysis and discussion, and we are all agog to see from the Feedback if you approve of this or not. As for the 'sombre' quality: we reckon to have 1-2 humorous pieces in each issue, and think this is as much as you want to see - but as always we are open to your Feedback advice!

The Vorcon strikes back

A few comments on Andrew Barton's review of Vorcon Wars. Details on starvation are covered within the rules, but, as with any campaign it is up to the ability of the commander to control this process. The game is designed to give more mundane tasks such as feeding precedence in the early stages while players familiarise themselves with the surrounding territory. The progress of the older games clearly shows that later in the game starvation ceases to be a problem, and the player becomes immersed in battles, surveillance problems, and other more advanced techniques. Food supply is only a problem for a small percentage of the players, and I would therefore suggest that the difficulties arise from inexperience rather than the rules.

The review also referred to possible problems in controlling the large areas

owned later in the game. Good mapping coupled with good use of signal beacons enables a player to monitor 100 or more hexes so precisely that if any one is lost it can immediately be identified by the change in resources and number of troops owned.

Finally, with regard to the speed of player contact, no player is more than seven hexes from his nearest opponent, so contact is theoretically possible in three turns. This gap is deliberate to provide each player with adequate resources to find and use in projects before meeting any opposition. I do agree that rates of expansion can be slow, though the fast-turnaround games give a different impression: in these, over 80 per cent of the plant is taken by turn TEN.

JOHN NICHOLSON
(Vorcon Games)

Andrew Barton replies: Like many designers, I think John tends to judge his games from the way that they *ought* to be played, and perhaps doesn't give enough weight to the problems which can be encountered if new players interpret the rules differently and follow unexpected strategies. I think Vorcon Wars is an excellent game, full of subtle tactical options, but experienced players have a definite advantage over novices in knowing how the rules work in practice.

The German scene

... Your readers may be interested in some notes on the growing PBM hobby in Germany. There are still only 100-200 players really active in the hobby; the numbers are increasing rapidly but if I go to a convention I still recognise most of the faces. About 85 per cent of all games are amateur, some running since eight years ago and with very clear rules: often these are more colorful and complex than 'professional' games. Flying Buffalo now has a German agent running games such as Starweb and Feudal Lords in translation, but this is a very new development.

FRANK-OLIVER-LOTHAR GRABERT
(Stuttgart)

NP: We have half-a-dozen German readers, plus a sprinkling in other countries (Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, France, Australia, Canada) in addition to our main readership in the US (over 50 per cent) and the UK. Our guesstimate of the world total is around 15000 players, and growing fast.

Professionals and Amateurs: can the gulf be bridged?

... Postal *Diplomacy* in the US, unlike Britain, is totally separate from other postal games. If you can crack that barrier it will be a real first. The average American postal dipster doesn't know commercial PBM exists and thinks *Dungeons and Dragons* is for zit-faced pre-teens. And he doesn't read the commercial gaming magazines as none of them (until FLAGSHIP) acknowledged postal *Diplomacy's* existence because the game itself is an Avalon Hill product) (and hence outside their own interests).

TERRY TALLMAN
(Seattle, WA)

New Look grips Clothing Industry

... What about producing FLAGSHIP T-shirts?

CHRIS McCARTHY
(Liverpool)

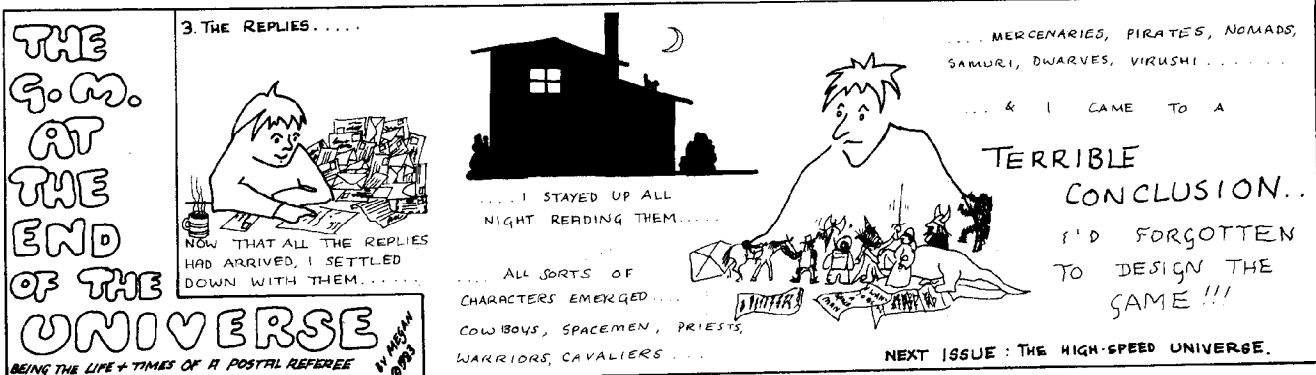
NP: Also suggested by Ian Bolton. We could have Andrew Stewart's magazine logo (see page 3) on the back, but we'd want a slogan for the front. 'FLAGSHIP readers do it by mail?' - no, perhaps not! Any ideas (see Feedback questions)? The main advantage would be to spot each other and gain attention at conventions.

Capsule rules gain support

... FLAGSHIP is the most professional and best-organised publication I've seen to date. I especially liked the idea of putting capsule rule summaries in the article. One disadvantage of most reviews is the time spent explaining the rules - the capsules are an excellent solution.

STEVE SAFIGAN
(Dahlgren, VA)

NP: Not everyone agrees: a zine review remarked 'The much-vaunted rule summaries didn't tell me much I didn't know already.' The point about the summaries is to resolve the problem that, for any game, half the readers will probably know the rules already, and will therefore be bored to have to plough through a page describing them; the other half will be perplexed if we leave out the rules and go straight to the comment and analysis. The capsules are normally written after the article and are designed to enable the reader new to the game to understand the main points of the article. If you know the game, you should skip the capsule altogether and go straight to the meat.



FLAGSHIP 1 – FEEDBACK

A rich bag of international feedback made **VIEW FROM THE THRONE** by Lee Simpson the runaway winner, with over 50% putting it top of their lists. Paul Kerridge (**MAKING YOUR MARK IN UNIVERSE**) came second, followed by Rob Chapman (**HOW TO WIN AT PBM**), William McCarthy (**THE SINGERS OF CRANE**) and Graham Buckell (**SUPERWEB**). Average rating for the issue as a whole was 8.1 out of 10.

The artwork was generally liked, with one or two exceptions, in particular the strip cartoon 'The GM at the end of the Universe'. In view of this apparently general antipathy, we plan to suspend the column after this issue – but, rather than just kill it off, we're giving you the chance to vote on it with this issue's Feedback.

The sections all had more votes for 'same size' than for any change, except for the review/feature sections Explorer's Findings and Professional Secrets, both of which were in heavy demand.

The games you play are too numerous to list – we seem to have fans of virtually every PBM game among our readership. A number of readers asked for more coverage of PBM wargames (e.g. Feudal Lords, Manifest Destiny, World Campaigns, Global Supremacy) and we've taken this to heart.

Overall, though, the most striking thing about the feedback was the enthusiasm. Thank you: we'll try to keep it up.

Winner of the subscription extension was Frank Wakefield II (Fort Thomas, KY).

FLAGSHIP 2 & 3 – FEEDBACK

Once again we ask for your guidance to help us tailor FLAGSHIP to your preferences, and again we are offering a two-issue extension to the first name drawn on JULY 31 from all feedback received by then at the editorial address on page 3. The feedback form was squeezed out from issue 2, so we're asking for your views on both issues – if you didn't get issue 2, or have forgotten it, leave questions 3 and 4 blank.

1. Rate this issue from 0 (terrible) to 10 (terrific).
2. Which article in issue 3 did you like best?
3. Which article in issue 2 did you like best?
4. Which issue so far have you liked best?
5. Is there an area you feel we are giving too little coverage? (Which?)
6. Is there an area which we cover and you personally find boring? (Which?)
7. Should we call a halt to 'The GM at the end of the Universe' and use the space for something else?
8. Suppose we increase another 4 pages. Would you like to see
 - (a) more games covered or
 - (b) deeper and longer articles on the same number of games?
9. Would you be likely to buy a FLAGSHIP T-shirt?
10. Would you like to see (a) more (b) the same (c) less humo(u)r in the magazine?
11. If this was your last issue, would you resubscribe?

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

We suggest you use this facility to contact other players in your games. Any FLAGSHIP *subscriber* is entitled to a free 15-word classified ad. Further words (and all words for non-subscribers) are 15c or 10p; heavy type is 22c/15p. Or you can advertise at \$7.50 or £5 semit-display per single column inch.

UK Starlord 27, 100, 101. Vorcon Wars 11, 13. Key of Bled. Starmaster. Swap information? Andrew Barton 01-723 3705.

MANORCON, 13-16 July 1984 at The Manor House, Bristol Rd Sth, Northfield, Birmingham, UK. Diplomacy tournament in *teams* (form yours in advance or on the spot) and many other games. Don't miss this unique event! Details from Nick Kinzett, 11 Daleway Rd, Green Lane, Coventry (02403-414759).

VOLUNTEERS WANTED for postal playtest service for new games. Peter Calcraft, 25 Garners Lane, Davenport, Stockport, Ches, UK.

UK TERRA II – Join a growing southern alliance. Peaceful intentions, information exchange. Presently around Halda, Pechak and Flyssa; contact Royce Kirk, 84 Mansfield, East Calder, West Lothian.

US Crane (all games), Global Supremacy (2, 3, 4); for information exchange, alliance-building, discussion of FLAGSHIP articles, write Terry Tallman, 820 West Armour St, Seattle, Washington 98119, USA.



If you've ever been killed by the evil goblin, flamed by a dragon or turned to stone by a wizard...

then you need **Micro Adventurer** – the new monthly magazine devoted to all microcomputer adventures, war games and simulations.

Each issue offers a wide range of stimulating features, including:

- Helpline and Contact columns
- Reviews of the latest adventures
- Competitions with exciting prizes
- War gaming advice
- Adventures to type in and play
- Profiles of famous adventurers
- Advice on how to write your own adventures

If all this sounds too good to be true then fill in the form below to make sure you receive your copy of **Micro Adventurer**.

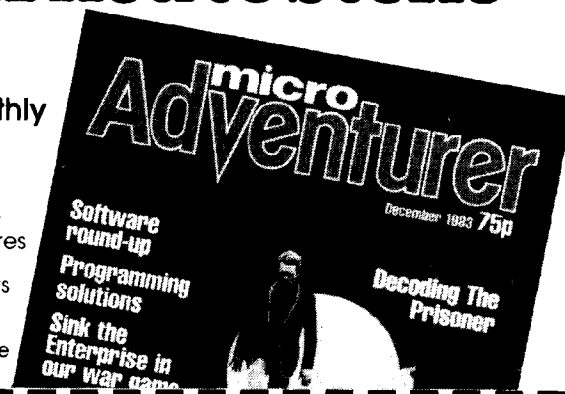
SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Please send me 12 issues (a year's subscription) of **Micro Adventurer**, beginning with the _____ issue.

Name _____

Address _____

Signature _____ Date _____



This order should be accompanied by a cheque made payable to **Micro Adventurer**.

UK subscribers

A year's subscription is \$10.00 – please send this form with payment to **Micro Adventurer**, Subscriptions Department, Oakfield House, Perrymount Rd, Haywards Heath, Sussex.

US/Canadian subscribers

A year's subscription at air-speeded rates is US\$33.95 – please send this form with payment to **Micro Adventurer**, c/o Business Press International, 205 East 42nd St., New York, NY 10017.



**GALACTIC
VIEW**

Quest Computer Services, General Delivery, Dahlgren, VA 22448
Schubel & Son Inc., PO Box 214848, Sacramento, CA 95821
Superior Simulations, PO Box 505, Fairfield, Idaho 83327
Vigard Simulations, PO Box 231, Orangevale, CA 95662
Zorph Enterprises, 3646 Gibsonia Rd, Gibsonia, PA 15044

UK

Balrog Adventures, 39 Chapman Ave, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8EJ
(Tel 0622-61210)
ICBM, PO Box 94, Bath St, Walsall, West Midlands
K.J.C. Games, 5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 2BD
(Tel 0253-853040)
Keys of Bled, 95 King St, Ramsgate, Kent
Mitregames, 77 Burntwood Grange Rd, Wandsworth Common,
London SW18
Starlord, 1 Rake Hey Close, Moreton, Wirrel, Merseyside L46 6EW
Time Patterns (Starglobe), 97 Devonshire Rd, Birmingham B20 2PG
Vorcon Wars, 71 Juniper, Birch Hill, Bracknell, Berks

**FLAGSHIP's game-finding service:
where to go and what it costs**

This is a list of all PBM companies mentioned in FLAGSHIP 1-3.

US

Adventures By Mail, PO Box 436, Cohoes, NY 12047
Adventures Design Group Inc., PO Box 821072, Dallas, TX 75382
Capps & Capps, PO Box 280237, Dallas, TX 75228
(Tel 214/681-0325)
Central Texas Computing, 710-S, Southwest Tower, Austin, TX 78701
Clemens & Associates, PO Box 4539, San Clemente, CA 92672
Fantastic Simulations, PO Box 24566, Denver, CO 80224
Flying Buffalo Inc., PO Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252-1467
(Tel 602/966-4727)
4 Sight, PO Box 1903, Indianapolis, IN 46206
Graaf Simulations, 27530 Harper, St Clair Shores, MI 48081
JF & L, PO Box 76, Pharr, TX 78577

The following are the list of games referred to issues 1 and 2, cross-referenced to the companies above, with a guide to prices. Please note:

- (1) While we believe prices to be correct as we go to press, they may have changed by the time you read the magazine.
- (2) Most games offer a starter package, giving you the rules and some free turns: the cost of this, and how many free turns (not including setup turns) you get, is shown separately from the standard turn fee.
- (3) When a stamped addressed envelope is required, the cost of the stamp has been added to the turn fee.
- (4) The special offers to FLAGSHIP readers mentioned elsewhere are not included, so the price to you may be less if you use the appropriate coupon.
- (5) We feel the table gives some interesting comparisons. However, the prices does not give an indication of game quality - see the articles for that - nor of speed of GMing. Since the games differ widely in type, around speed, and complexity, direct comparisons of game fees should be interpreted with caution!

Game	US players contact...	US prices (dollars)				Other fees	UK players contact...	UK prices (pounds)			
		Rules & startup	Free turns	Turn fee	Rules & startup			Free turns	Turn fee	Other fees	
Crasimoff's World	KJC Games	10.00	4	2.50	1.20(b)	As US	5.00	4	1.25	0.75(b)	
Empyrean Challenge	Superior Sim	26.00*	1	5.00	(x)	As US	32.00 As US+\$2.50 postage (\$ only)				
Feudal Lords	Flying Buffalo/Graaf	10.00	3	2.50	None	ICBM	2.50*	0	1.16	None	
Fleet Maneuvers	Fantastic Sim	15.00	6	2.50	None	As US	(\$ only)				
Global Supremacy	Schubel	3.50	1	3.50	(u)	As US	(\$ only)				
Horizon's End	Schubel	5.00	0	2.50	(z)	As US	(\$ only)				
Keys of Bled	Keys of Bled	Free	4	2.75	None	As US	Free	4	1.50	None	
Starlord	Flying Buffalo	6.00	0	2.50	None	Starlord	Free	0	1.25	None	
Starmaster	Schubel	10.00	3	2.50	(z)	Mitre	7.50	2	1.50	(z)	
Star Venture	Schubel	5.00	0	2.00	(v)	As US	(\$ only)				
Starweb	Flying Buffalo	2.00	0	3.50	(y)	ICBM	3.00*	0	1.91	None	
Terra II	Clemens	10.00	2	3.50	None	ICBM	1.75	0	1.75	None	
Tribes of Crane	Schubel	10.50	2	3.50	(z)	Mitre	6.50	4	1.50	(z)	
Universe II/III	Clemens/Central Texas	7.00	1	3.50	None	ICBM	1.00	0	1.91	None	
Vorcon Wars	Vorcon Wars	2.50	3	1.75	None	As US	1.50	3	1.00	None	
Warboid World	Adventures By Mail	20.00*	3	3.50	None	Balrog	9.00*	3	1.75	None	
Zorph War	Zorph Enterprises	3.00	0	1.50	None	As US	(\$ only)				

Note: Flying Buffalo and ICBM request players not to start games until they have read the rules (so have no starter package).

* Includes deposit returnable if you play to the end

(b) Charge for battle report when battles occur

(x) Turn fee is \$5.00 or 20c/ship or colony or 5c/order, whichever is most. Rulebook costs \$6 (US) or \$12.50 (elsewhere)

(u) \$3.50 for production orders and combat results, \$1.00 for monthly update

(v) 8 free actions, then 25c/action, \$1.50 battle reports, 50c messages

(y) US Starweb fees rise by 50c every 10 turns to reflect the larger forces the player is likely to control

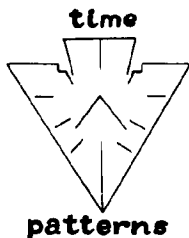
(z) A wide variety of possible actions beyond the basic turn, which have a variety of separate charges

COMING NEXT ISSUE:

**GALACTIC CONQUEST
ADVANCED TERRA II
CONQUEST OF INSULA**

**PLAY BY ELECTRONIC MAIL - SPORTS GAMES BY MAIL
ADAPTING GAMES FOR POSTAL PLAY**

... and much more!



STARGLOBE

- ★ U.K. BASED
- ★ NO WAITING TO JOIN
- ★ TESTED SOFTWARE
- ★ REAL TIME GAME
(1 earth day = 1 game year)
- ★ NO TIMED MOVES
- ★ NO DEADLINES
- ★ NO LIMITS ON NUMBER OF STARSHIPS PER PLAYER
- ★ 3-D UNIVERSE OBEYING RELATIVITY
- ★ LOTS OF PLANETS TO EXPLORE AND CONQUER

*A game of Interstellar
Exploration, Combat
and Conquest*

The game is based on a STARGLOBE of 2000 stars in which a lost colony has established itself. You are a STARSHIP CAPTAIN, sent by the autocratic rulers of the lost colony and their powerful computer to explore and conquer part of the huge globular cluster, 100 light years in diameter. A course has been planned for you and programmed into your ship's computer, but you can choose whether or not to obey these instructions and where to steer among the 2000 stars. Whichever choice you make, you seek to advance to a position of power by intelligence, initiative, conquest and sheer good luck.

Regular Cost: £1 per report (USA \$3 including first class airmail). Reports can be sent as often as twice per week or as seldom as once per month depending on your actions.

Send £2 (\$6 USA) to STARGLOBE, 97 Devonshire Rd, Birmingham B20 2PG, UK (cheques made payable to: Time Patterns) for the introductory package and pre-launch questionnaire: this sum will include your first move in the game, which will be the launch of your starship from the home planet in the centre of the globular cluster.

STAR MASTER

THE TRIBES OF CRANE

Whether it's the excitement of alien races in the vast reaches of outer space . . . or the thrill of tribal intrigue, trade and combat on another planet . . . MITREGAMES offers the best in play by mail gaming. **STARMASTER** is a game of galactic exploration, diplomacy, and conquest, in which you begin by designing your own race. **THE TRIBES OF CRANE** is set in a beautiful, intriguing planet of fertile plains and myriad seas - you are a tribe struggling for wealth, strength - and survival! All turns processed in under a week.

STARMASTER costs £7.50 to start (including rulebook and the first two turns). Each additional turn costs £1.50

THE TRIBES OF CRANE costs £6.50 to start (including rulebook and the first four turns). Each additional turn costs £1.50

For further details, write to:

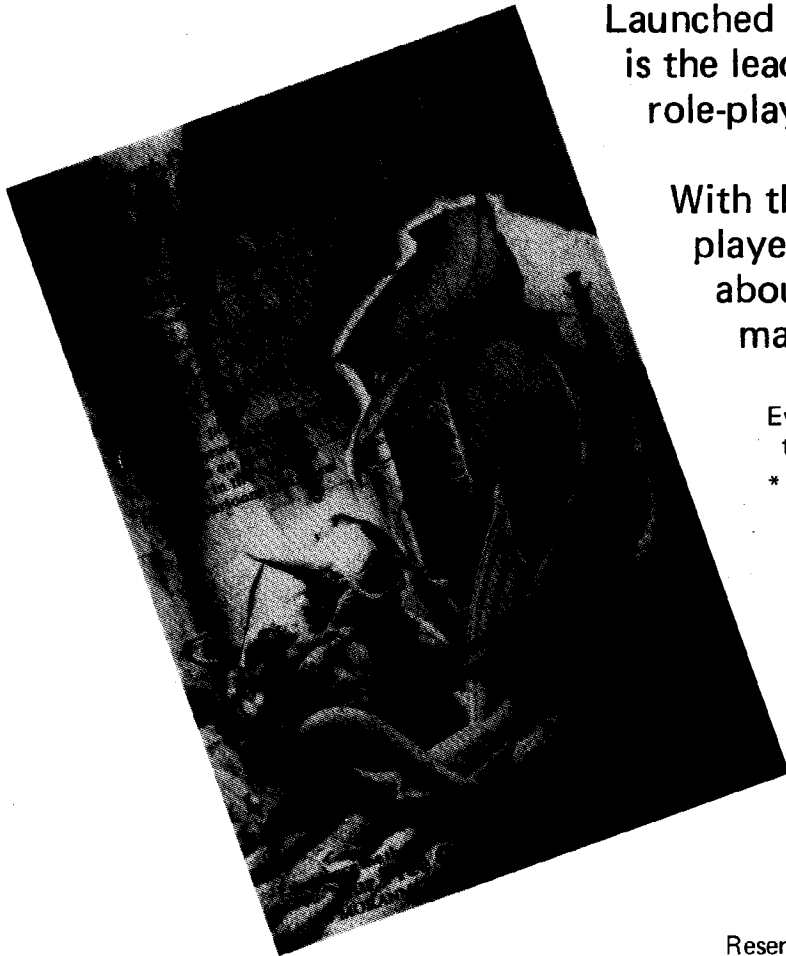


MITREGAMES

Lothlorien
77 Burntwood Grange
Wandsworth Common
London SW18
Tel: 01-870 1290

US players contact Schubel & Son, Sacramento, California 95821

Adventuring in your imagination starts here



Launched in 1983, IMAGINE™ magazine is the leading source of new material for role-playing gamers.

With the growth in adventure games, players need a forum for information about the hobby, and IMAGINE magazine is it.

Every month its 48 pages include the best in:

- * New game scenarios and 'brief encounters' for your campaigns.
- * Editorial features about (virtually) anything connected with adventure games.
- * New rules and other material for the TSR range of games.
- * Exciting fiction from writers such as Dave Langford and Brian Lumley.
- * News and reviews of games, films and books.

Reserve your copy of the next issue with your local newsagent or games retailer NOW.

With a host of other regular features, IMAGINE magazine represents outstanding value to all role-playing gamers.

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

Just complete the coupon using BLOCK CAPITALS, and mail it with your cheque or postal order for the special subscription price of £12 made payable to TSR UK Ltd. (*The normal subscription price, including postage, would be £15.12, so you save £3.12.*)

US subscriptions \$30 (surface) \$42 (air)
Europe £21 (air) Elsewhere £25

TSR UK Ltd
The Mill
Rathmore Road
CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD



To: IMAGINE Magazine Subscriptions,
TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road,
CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD

Please send me a 12 months subscription to
IMAGINE magazine

Signature.....

Name.....

Address.....
.....
.....
.....
.....