

Players may wait to read the rules on this page until the first courier reaches the grassland village.

## last move up

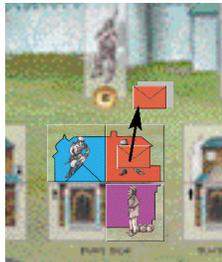
Couriers moving from an inn in the grassland village to the palace have fulfilled their mission. The couriers are placed under the courier supplies of their players. As always, the third courier remains behind in the inn.

Any messages that the couriers carried are left with the corresponding palace guard (just above the village). A guard may have more than one message.

Couriers that reach the palace by skipping the grassland village are also placed under the players' courier supplies. Any message carried by such a courier is given to the number 10 palace guard.

**Note:** if a player gives **his** message to a palace guard on **his** turn, he may, **on the same turn**, take the additional action: bribe a guard (see right). In his following turns, he may take any of the four actions.

*It is red's turn and he chooses to move two couriers upward from the PAWL Hof inn. He places the officer and cossack under the blue and red players' courier supplies. As the cossack carried his message, he gives it to the palace guard there and red may bribe the guard.*



## d) bribe the guard

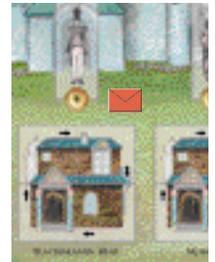
Only a player whose message is with a palace guard may bribe the guard on his turn.

The guard only takes a message into the palace when he is given the correct number of rubles (6, 8, or 10) or more.

The player determines if he has enough rubles to bribe the guard by summing the face values of the coins he has collected when his couriers were left behind. If the player has collected enough rubles to bribe the guard, he turns them over, showing all players his coins. If he has enough (or more) to bribe the guard, the guard takes the message to the czar and the player wins the game!

If the player does not have enough rubles to bribe the guard, he must choose one of the other three actions. A player may always look at the coins he has collected to know their sum.

*It is red's turn. He needs 6 rubles to bribe the guard. He sums the coins he has collected and gets a total of 5 rubles (2, 2, and 1). He needs only 1 more ruble to successfully bribe the guard and win the game. He decides to use the "travel to the next village" action in a village where one of his couriers will be left behind. He collects one coin (1 ruble), which is enough to give him 6 rubles, enough to bribe the guard and win the game!*



## Game end

As soon as a player has accumulated the necessary sum to bribe the guard (shown by the guard's number), he delivers his message to the czar and wins the game. He may now use the title "Messenger to the Czar".

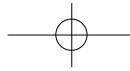
If all coins are turned before any player accumulates enough coins to bribe the guard, the player who first tried to bribe the guard is the winner.

**Development:**  
Team Annaberg

*The publisher, developer, and authors thank all test players, rule readers, and all others involved in helping with this game.*

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Rio Grande Games  
PO Box 45715  
Rio Rancho, NM 87174  
RioGames@aol.com  
www.riograndegames.com





# Message to the Czar

**Who delivers the message?**  
by Christiane Knepel and Antje Graf

2 to 5 players  
20 to 40 minutes  
10 years and up

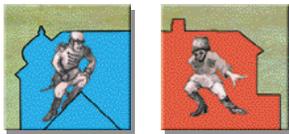
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## Overview

The governors have important messages that must reach the czar as quickly as possible. Because the governors live in provinces in the far reaches of his empire, a governor must be clever and a little lucky to be the first to get his message to the czar, winning the game and the favor of the czar. The players each send several couriers on the long and convoluted trip to the czar's palace. Along the way, the couriers travel from village to village through swamps, forests, and mountains. In each village, the couriers check in to one of the inns and spend the night. But only the early risers will be able to move on to the next village in the morning. Those who sleep late must remain in the village for another night, hoping the new day will provide better opportunities.

## Contents

- 1 game board
- 60 couriers (3 each of 4 different types per player)
- 6 signs ( ЗАКРЫТО = "closed" in Russian)
- 5 messages
- 30 coins (21 @ 1, 9 @ 2)
- 1 rule booklet



couriers



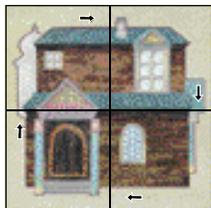
coins



"closed" sign



messages



inn

palace with guard

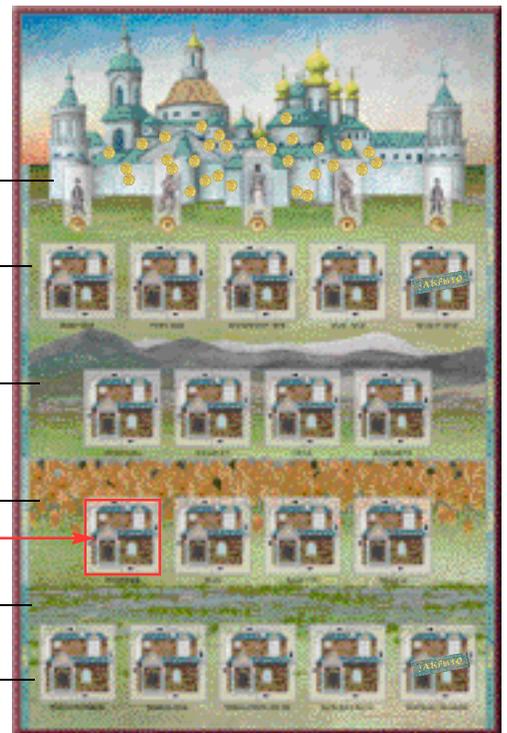
grassland

mountain

forest

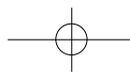
swamp

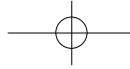
village



game board

\*These may also be used to replace missing or lost coins.





## Preparation

Shuffle all the coins face down and place them in the palace.

Depending on the number of players, some of the inns may be closed for the game. Place the closed signs on those inns:

**2 players:** KOSAKEN-KLUB, DATSCHA-DOMIZIL; NIKOLAJ; KATHARINA; MASL HOF, ROMAN HOF

**3 players:** DATSCHA-DOMIZIL; NIKOLAJ; KATHARINA; ROMAN HOF

**4 players:** DATSCHA-DOMIZIL; ROMAN HOF

**5 players:** none

The players choose a starting player using any method they want.

- Each player, in clockwise order starting with the starting player:
- chooses a color, takes 12 couriers in his color, shuffles them face down, and places them face down in a stack in his play area,
  - draws his top-most courier, turns it over, and places it with his **message** in an **empty** inn the swamp village (bottom-most) in the appropriate room (see right),
  - draws another courier and places it face up next to his stack of face-down couriers to start his discard pile.

## Goal

Each player tries to be the first to get his courier with his message to the czar's palace, and then past the guard to the czar himself. The couriers start in the swamp village (bottom-most) and travel upward from village to village to the palace.

## Playing the game

Beginning with the starting player and continuing in clockwise order, players take turns. On each turn a player takes **one** of 4 actions:

- place a courier
- hand off his message
- travel to the next village
- bribe the guard

A player may only use the last action (bribe the guard) when his message has reached a palace guard.

### a) place a courier

Place one of **his** couriers in the **swamp** village (bottom-most) in the appropriate room in one of the inns:

- any **one** of the couriers in the player's discard pile, or
- the player draws the top-most courier from his courier supply, turns it over, and places it.

If the player draws a courier from the courier supply and cannot place it because there is no empty room (all "his" rooms are occupied or the inns are full) for him at any inn in the swamp village, he places the drawn courier face up in his discard pile and ends his turn.

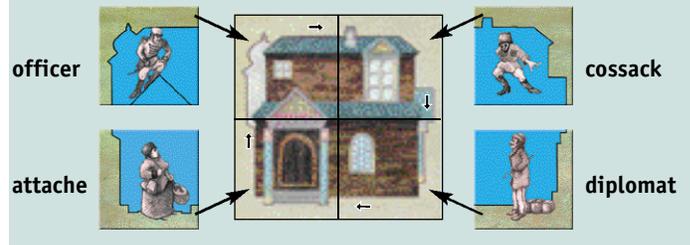
2

### possible starting positions with 4 players

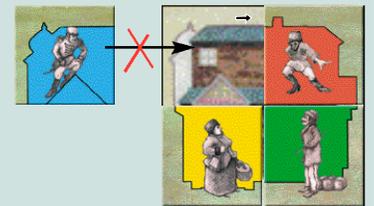


### The 4 courier types

There are 4 courier types. Each type must always take the same room in every inn he visits: the officer's room is above left, the cossack's room is right above, the diplomat's room is right below, and the attache's room is left below. A courier may **not** take any other room.



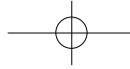
**"No vacancy"**  
An inn is full when 3 couriers are visiting. A fourth courier may never visit an inn!



If, at the end of his turn, a player has no couriers in his discard pile, he draws the top-most card from his courier supply and places it face up as the new discard pile. All couriers in the discard pile should be placed separately so all can be seen and accessed.

Rarely: if a player exhausts his courier supply, he may, if there is an unused player color available, take the 12 couriers in the unused color, shuffle them, and place them face down in a stack as his new courier supply.

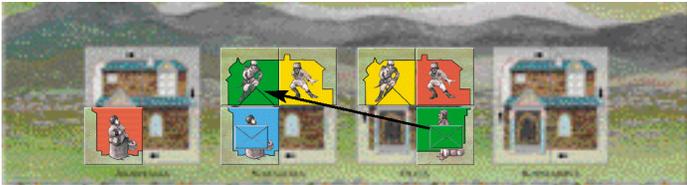




## b) hand off his message

The player transfers his message **within the same village** from one of his couriers to another of his couriers. The new courier may be in the same inn or a different inn, but both must be in the same village.

**?** Why? The player uses tactics to gain a more favorable position for his message.



From the **OLGA** inn, the **diplomat** hands off his **message** to his colleague, the **officer**, staying in the **NATASCHA** inn.

## c) travel to the next village

The couriers travel from the village in the swamp upward to the one in the forest, then to the mountain, and finally over the grassland to the palace as described below.

A player may only move couriers from full inns (those with exactly 3 couriers) where he has at least one of his **own** couriers.

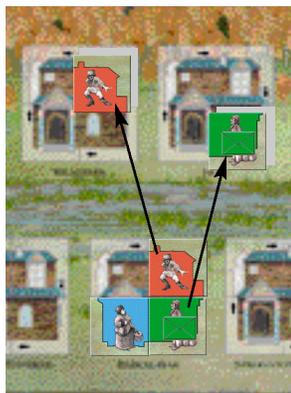
The player moves exactly **two** of the three couriers upward to the next village: the courier pointed to by the arrow in the empty room and the courier in the room next to him. The third courier remains behind. The player who owns the courier left behind takes one coin from the pile of coins in the palace, placing it face down in his play area. The **player moving the couriers** determines the **order** in which he moves the two couriers and the inn each is moved to.

**?** Why is the order important? The order may allow a player to move his message toward the palace more efficiently (see right).

He must move the two couriers to **different** inns in the next village (upward on the board). If a moved courier carries a message, the message moves with him.

The arrow in the empty room in the **BAIKAL-BAR** inn points to a **cossack**. In the next room, is a **diplomat** (with message). These two couriers move on, but the **attache** must remain in the inn.

The player moves the **cossack** to the **WLADIMIR** inn and the **diplomat**, with his message to the **IWAN** inn.



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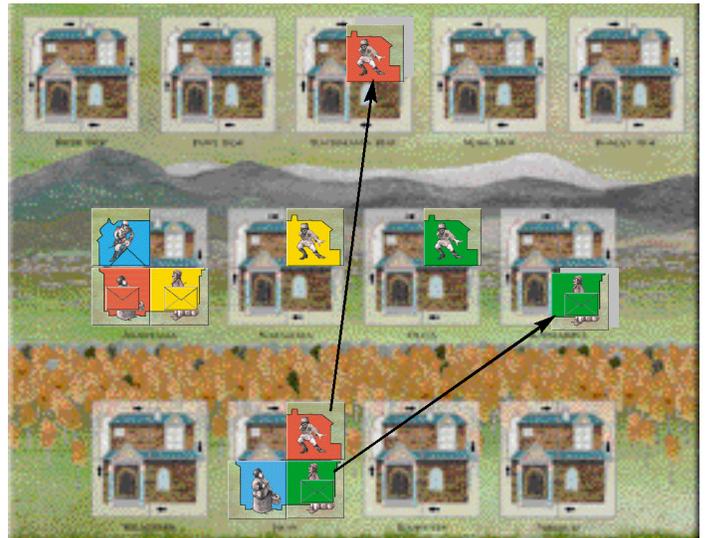
## skipping a village

If a courier reaches a village that has no empty room for him in any of the inns, he travels upward to the next village to find a room.

- This can happen when all of "his" rooms in the inns in the village are full, and/or
- the inns are full (with 3 guests), and/or
- the first courier moves to an inn that has the only empty room in the village for the second courier, so the second courier cannot stay there.

If there is no room in the next village for the courier, he moves further upward, and so on, until he finds a room or reaches the palace.

**Note:** only couriers **moving upward** may skip over a village. A player, wanting to **place** a courier in an inn in the swamp, but finding no room, must wait. A player may not move a courier upward when **placing** a courier in the swamp.



It is **red's** turn and he chooses to move up two couriers from the full **IWAN** inn. Based on the arrow in the empty room, he will move the **diplomat** first and moves him with his **message** to the **KATHARINA** inn. Having done so, there are no rooms in the mountain village for his **cossack**: **ANASTASIA** is full (3 guests), in **NATASCHA** and **OLGA** his room is occupied, and he cannot visit **KATHARINA** because the other moved courier, the **diplomat**, just checked in there. Thus, by choosing to move the **diplomat** first, **red** is able to skip his **cossack** past the mountain village to an empty room in the grassland village.

