

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: SEPTEMBER 1992

Publisher: *Mark Nelson*, 112 Huntley Avenue, Spondon, DERBY. DE2 7DU. ENGLAND

Annals is an irregular zine which is intended to provide the framework for a political history of the Variant Hobby by examining source material. Why? There are many articles on the History of the Diplomacy Hobby but when it comes to Variants articles are few and far between.

It is well know that there are disagreements in the Variant Hobby and participants refer to events in 1986, 1977, 1981, 1974... all rather confussing when no, or little, explanation is given. By providing a comprehensive Variant History I hope it will be possible to re-examine these events in a new light.

MAILING LIST

Mark Berch (Possible supplier of archive material, Mark?), *Walt Buchanan* (can you help out?) *John Cain* (Australian Variant Bank?), *John Caruso*, *Fred C. Davis Jnr*, *Andrew England* (want to send me the material you promised?), *Lee Kendter Jnr* (NAVB), *John Leeder* (former MNC), *MARK NELSON* (Publisher), *James Nelson* (UKVB Archivist/Custodian --- what a greedy man!), *Larry Peery* (can you supply any of the zines I need?) *Robert Sacks* (former MNC) and *Cal White*.

* ZINES WANTED Copies of the following zines are wanted, all costs will be covered.

MNC zines: THE CONNUBIAL CHILD MOLESTER (Issue 1) & FAFHRD & THE GRAY MOUSER (Burt Labelle, Issue 1).

EL DORADO Dick Vedder. Variant Ratings zine. 1 (7/72)-6 (late 73).

NAVB REPORTS Dan Gallagher 1+ c. Jan 1975

NUMENOR Diplomacy variant zine produced by Rod Walker.

PHOENIX (Journal of the IDA VC, latter the DVC). Issues 1-25, 27-29 and 34+ required. Thanx to Cal for supplying those that I have. Robert/Walt/Larry/John Leeder, can you help?

NEXT ISSUE SCHEDULED FOR sometime REAL SOON, but don't quote me since this issue is two years late!.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR FUTURE ISSUES:

4. Diplomacy World 1-30.
5. The DVC (only if I can get the required back issues of Phoenix.)
6. Summary of events 1974-80.)
7. ARDA.

Copies of Issue One (Lord of Hosts 1 (11/74)-12 (2/77) and Issue Two (Taalabwo 1 (1/77)-5 (6/77)) can be provided on request.

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: PAGE TWO

LORD OF HOSTS 13-18

After Robert Sack's "departure" (see below) as MNC the following issues of the MNC zine were printed under this title:

- 13 (MNC Mike Smolin) July 1978.
- 14 (MNC Greg Costikyan) ??? 1979.
- 15 (MNC Greg Costikyan) March 1980.
- 16 (MNC Greg Costikyan) November 1980.
- 17 (MNC Greg Costikyan) April 1981.
- 18 (MNC John Leeder) October 14th 1981.

Is this a correct list of MNC publications by these custodians? I ask because LoH 14 is actually titled 1979.2 (it does not carry an issue number). There should be LoH 1979.1, where is it? However there are no Miller Numbers missing so if 1979.1 exists any numbers printed in it were reprinted in 1979.2. Anyone care to speculate on this?

THE CUSTODIANSHIP OF MIKE SMOLIN

It would appear that sometime between February 1977 (when LoH 12 appeared) and July 1978 (the date carried by the Smolin issue of LoH) Robert Sacks passed the position of MNC to Mike Smolin, or did he?

In LoH 13 Smolin referred to himself as the "AMNC". What does the letter "A" refer to? American? I think not, based on other evidence. Could it be Associate, possible hinting that whilst Smolin was issuing numbers and publishing LoH he *wasn't* the MNC but *only* a helper?

Smolin wrote:- *"I am turning over to Greg Costikyan all responsibilities for Miller Numbers. This has Bob Sacks' blessings. I hope that Greg can devote the needed time to being the AMNC, and wish him luck. Perhaps I'll meet some of you over some future game board."*

Smolin handed "*responsibilities for Miller Numbers*" over to a new AMNC with "*Bob Sacks' blessing*". This hints that Smolin wasn't MNC, and that Costikyan wouldn't be MNC; they were doing the work of MNC for an un-named individual who was "secretly" keeping the title of MNC.

Phoenix 31 (November 1977) contains a very illuminating letter from Robert Sacks (dated 28th August 1977) which was sent to Greg Costikyan, Ray Heuer, Richard Kovalcik, Michael Smolin and Richard Ware.

"I have decided I no longer have the energy to edit and publish LORD OF HOSTS and run all the variant projects I am responsible for. At the same time Richard Ware has indicated that he does not want the job. Therefore, effective immediately, the following changes are made:"

"Michael Smolin, Princial Vice Miller Number Custodian.
Richard Ware, Principal Associate Miller Number Custodian (appointment to expire 31 Dec. 1977).
Richard Kovalcik (Jnr), Assistant Miller Number Custodian."

"I will continue to prepare LORD OF HOSTS 13. When it is ready, I will send it to Richard Ware for publication; I expect he will show Michael Smolin and Richard Kovalcik the ropes."

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: PAGE THREE

SACKS cont "Effective 1 January 1978, Michael Smolin will become Principal Associate, Vice, and ACTING Miller Number Custodian. He will have the sole power to assign Miller Numbers (subject to the appointment of regional Associate Miller Number Custodians) and to edit and publish LORD OF HOSTS for the duration. Richard Kovalcik is to be his production assistant. I will remain Miller Number Custodian on leave of absence and Associate Miller Number Custodian (Registrar of Projects), and I will contribute as much as possible to LORD OF HOSTS."

"This situation will continue until one of the following occurs:

- 1) I die or otherwise determine that Michael Smolin should be full Miller Number Custodian.
- 2) I determine that there is a better acting or permanent Miller Number Custodian.
- 3) I finish the bulk of my project work or otherwise obtain sufficient energy and resume the office of Miller Number Custodian."

"In the interim, while on leave of absence, I will retain full administrative responsibility for the office of Miller Number Custodian. However, in addition to acting on the advice of the appropriate Deputy Miller Number Custodian, I will give especial attention to the wishes of the Acting Miller Number Custodian."

A most interesting letter which contains numerous points of interest. I shall just mention one. Contrary to what many have believed (for instance, see Fred C. Davis' "A Diplomacy Chronology" printed in Diplomacy World some years ago) Mike Smolin was not appointed to the position of MNC. Whilst Robert recognised that he didn't have the time to undertake the responsibilities of the position it is clear that he was unwilling to let go of the position.

There are a number of comments that has to be made about the choice of new Associate Custodian.

One of the things that characterize Robert's tenure as MNC is the large (and ever-changing) staff that he carried. (See Issue One, pages 5-6.) Mike Smolin was never part of the MNC staff. This isn't to say that he had no right becoming the new MNC, only that one would expect the new MNC to come from the MNC staff. What one really expects is that the new MNC would be either the Vice MNC (Richard Ware) or the Deputy MNC (Greg Costikyan). That these gentlemen were overlooked by Robert is not in itself remarkable, I can think of a number of circumstances under which this might occur. However it is slightly, just slightly, unusual and so it needs to be mentioned.

I do not want to discuss the pros and cons of the DVC in this issue. I note that many prominent Variant fans were members of this organization in the mid 1970's. LoH's 7-12 provide details on the membership of the DVC (see Issue 1, page 5). The name Mike Smolin does not appear. There are good reasons why a prominent name in variants might not belong to the DVC.

Looking through the few issues of Phoenix that I have (thanx Cal) I do notice something interesting. The mailing list printed in issue 30 (June 1977, page 7) does not contain the name Mike Smolin. In order to become a member of the DVC you had to be elected onto the body and Issue 30 contains two motions for the election of new members. One motion is for the election of Fred Davis Jnr, Ferkin Doyle, Der Gravey, Martin Janta-Polcynski, John Leeder, Richard Vedder, Conrad von Metzke and Cal White. You will notice that Mike Smolin is not on the list. The second motion is to tender seats to Conrad von Metzke and Rod Walker. Again Mike Smolin was not mentioned.

Yet in issue 31 (November 1977) Mik Smolin is listed as a "confirmed member" of the DVC. How did he become a member of the DVC? As an aside I note that a list of twenty-six prospective members for the Variant Awards Panel includes almost all prominent Variant fans in North America and the UK. Almost all. The name of Mike Smolin is missing.

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: PAGE FOUR

As far as I am aware Mike Smolin was not the editor of a mainstream diplomacy fanzine, or a diplomacy fanzine of any description. One could argue that the Custodian of a prominent Hobby Position should not be currently editing a fanzine. Almost all Hobby Custodians have either edited a fanzine before or after their tenure as a Custodian. In the case of the BNC & MNC most have edited publications as well as carrying out their duties as custodian. That Smolin was not a publisher is unusual and worth noting.

I can not think of a variant fan worthy of that accolade who has not designed at least one variant. It's almost a contradiction in title to be a variant fan without having published at least one variant of your own. It's just about possible, but I can't think of any significant variant fan without at least one design to their name.

I am not aware of any variant credited to Mike Smolin, certainly there are none in my collection. Could the NAVB Custodian advise me if there are any in the NAVB? A variant fan who has not designed a variant is a curiosity.

I have just spent some considerable time going through the MNC records as reported in LoH 1-12. Mike Smolin did not run any games as GM, unusual for a prospective MNC. He only played in one game, 1975Dbu (Youngstown II, Labelle rules) run by Robert Sacks in Burt Labelle's zine Pellucidar. (Labelle was the MNC prior to Robert.) Neither does Mike Smolin appear in any of the games listed in LoH 13-18.

What does this mean? I have no idea! But going on the facts that are available to me I have to question the selection of Mike Smolin as MNC. He was clearly not a suitable candidate. He had little or no knowledge of variants and I suspect little or no knowledge of publishing/the hobby at large.

Phoenix 32 (January 1978) contains the following comment by Robert Sacks: "Michael Smolin is the new Principal Associate, Vice and Acting MNC and is probably joing ((the DVC)) - I don't think anybody besides the MNC knows anything about him, and even he doesn't know much."

Enough said about this sordid buisness?

There are some points of note in the editorial of LoH 13. Smolin would not trade LoH but would send it free to anyone who "has requested and received a MN during the year, ((as well as)) the next few issues of the voice of the Miller Number Custodian, 'The Lord Of Hosts'."

As to issuing numbers, Smolin gave numbers to a number of games including a not insignificant number of European/British games indicating that someone, somewhere, was still in contact with non North-American fandom.

THE CUSTODIANSHIP OF GREG COSTIKYAN

Greg Costikyan is not a shadowy figure. In fact throughout the mid to late 1970's he was an active member of the hobby: publishing zines, running games, playing games and taking a part in hobby politics. He was also a fully paid up member of "The New York Conspiracy". More importantly he was clearly interested in diplomacy variants: he had ran variants, played variants, designed variants, been on Robert Sacks variant staff (as Deputy MNC from March 1976) and was a member of the DVC.

There is no doubting Greg Costikyan's credentials for the post of MNC, or AMNC. In issue 13 Greg refers to himself as "The Miller Number Custodian" and no mention is made of the AMNC position. Had Greg succeeded Robert Sacks as MNC?

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: PAGE FIVE

ISSUE FOURTEEN (1979)

Costikyan's mailing policy was different from Smolin's, he mailed the zine free to any variant GM or any editor with a variant waiting list.

In view of events a few years down the line the following comment by Costikyan is interesting:

"The power to subsidy is the power to control. Those who control the purse-strings, in effect, control the project. Consequently, the Miller Number Custodian will not accept per-game subsidies from the IDA/NA, Avalon-Hill, the so-called "Gamesmaster/Publisher Organization" or any other individual, group, or corporate body. All expenses will be paid for out of the Miller Number Custodian's pocket. Contributions of money, freely given and in no way tied to the number of Miller Numbers assigned, will be accepted with graciousness, but are not solicited."

LoH under Smolin/Costikyan and Leeder became less interesting then under it's hey day under Sacks and steadily moved towards the kind of zine published by custodians since Leeder (Alpha & Omega). That is to say a listing of new variant starts and game finishes. (There were also details of new designators in LoH, although strangely no details of any progression that has made by the "Associate Custodian for Projects" on recat work.) Issues 14 and 15 contained a brief listing of GMs with variant openings, no GMs from Europe/UK, and no numbers assigned to those areas.

ISSUE FIFTEEN (March 1980).

Costikyan announced his support for the formation of the North American Diplomacy Federation: "and when a charter mutually agreeable to all potential Steering Committee members is finalized, I will activate as a Steering Committee member."

Costikyan indicated his concern at the absence of an Associate Custodian issuing numbers for Britain and Europe and reports that he will contact the "*few people I know in Britian*" in an attempt to find a suitable person.

Costikyan reported that Robert Sacks was forming "*an independant, temporary, committee of inquiry to determine if Ray Heuer (Associate Custodian for Orphans) was guilty of maslfeasance, misfeasance, or wrong-doing in his capacities of Director of Orphan Games, Head of the Variant Orphan Rescue Service, and Associate MNC*" (G.Costikyan) and asked for evidence to be submitted.

Robert wrote:

"Over the past few years, funionaries of the IDA have attempted to usurp or seize the functions or office of Raymond heuer, Director of Orphan Games, Associate MNC and Head of the Variant Orphan Rescue Service. In addition, the IDA Treasurers have refused to honor outstanding subsidies to him for regular orphans placed. The excuse usually given for these acts is that Mr. Heuer is not performing his office."

"The office in question is the placement of regular, variant, and other diplomatic games with a new gamesmaster or publisher when the old gamesmaster or publisher defaults or requests it, and the game cannot be placed by the gamesmaster or publisher, or by any regional game insurance group he belongs to."

Serving on the commission were: Dennis Agosta (NBNC), John Boardman, Gregory Costikyan (MNC and Capo of DNYMPA), Roger Oliver (Variant Ombudsman) and Robert Sacks (Chairman of the DVC Administrative Committee, Associate MNC and Registra of Orphan Games). A deadline of May 1 1980 was announced for submission of evidence.

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: PAGE SIX

One wonder how independant this Commission could be. Heuer had served as a Variant Office throughout the tenure of both Sacks and Costikyan. Furthermore in Issue 1 (page 4) I provided some details on a DVC Tribunal which investiagted Robert Sacks suitability to continue as MNC. It turns out, Phoenix 26 (December 1976), that the head of this tribune was none other than Raymond Heuer. Heuer heads an investiagtion into Sacks and then Sacks heads an investigation into Heuer. Can anyone seriously believe that these investigations carry any weight whatsoever? I think not.

Finally ARDA 2 was plugged, the NAVB catalog listing published by Rod Walker.

ISSUE SIXTEEN (November 1980)

Nothing of note.

ISSUE SEVENTEEN (April 1981).

Sometime after the publication of Issue 16 Costikyan had ceased publication of his zine Urf Durfal and had lost interest in continuing in the position of MNC (which he readily admitted): Issue 16 contained the first MN's issued to GMs in 1981. Accordingly Greg asked for volunteers for the position of MNC. *"To my mind, the new MNC must a) have several years of experience in the hobby, b) have an interest in variants, and c) must have a general reputation for reliability."*

Significantly, to my mind, there is no mention of applicants having to be ready to sign any covenant covering their responsibilities as MNC. Indeed it is quite significant that no issue of LoH carried mention of the existance of the Covenant.

Remember Ray Heuer and the commission investigating his actions as Orphan Rehouser? Costikyan mentions that whilst he had orphaned two games, *"I still have several games, variant and regular, which need homes. Anyone interested in volunteering should write me. Be warned, however, that there has been a hiatus of about eight months, so it may be difficult getting these games going again."* One wonders what Heuer was doing in those eight months.

There was an interesting section at the end of the zine on a *radio* game in which all communication had to printed in the zine. Lee Kendter had refused to give this a BN (he felt that diplomacy being public violated the rulebook) whilst Costikyan argued that it violated no such rule and that in FTF games players could agree to conduct all diplomacy around the board, hence the game was not a variant.

My view? The game was a variant.

THE CUSTODIANSHIP OF JOHN LEEDER

John only published one issue as MNC, the last issue of LoH. This was the straw that broke the camel's back and it was because of comments made in this issue that a large feud broke out over "the covenant", recategorization and "the variant banks".

I don't want to cover this material in this issue, it belongs in the issue that covers ARDA; the publication of the NAVB produced by Rod Walker. As well as quoting from these two zines (LoH & ARDA) I intend to quote from a number of personal letters from this period which have come into my possession. If anyone wants to supply additional material...

NEXT ISSUE: A summary of variant politics in the 1970's as revealed in the page
s of Diplomacy World.

THE ANNALS OF ROME 3: PAGE SEVEN

THE MILLER NUMBER CUSTODIAN'S STAFF

Vice Custodian: 14-17 John Leeder

Associate Custodian for Projects: 14-16 Robert Sacks, post not listed in 17 (presumed defunct).

Associate Custodian for Orphans: 14-17 Ray Heuer

Provisional Associate Custodian for Europe and Orphans in Europe: 14 Der Gravey, 15-16 vacant.

COST OF OPERATING MILLER NUMBERS

In 1979 (exclusive of Smolin's costs).

printing LoH:	\$6.05	
postage	:	\$2.85
misc.	:	\$0.40
TOTAL	:	\$9.30
less	:	\$1.00 contribution towards operation of MN
NET COST	:	\$8.30