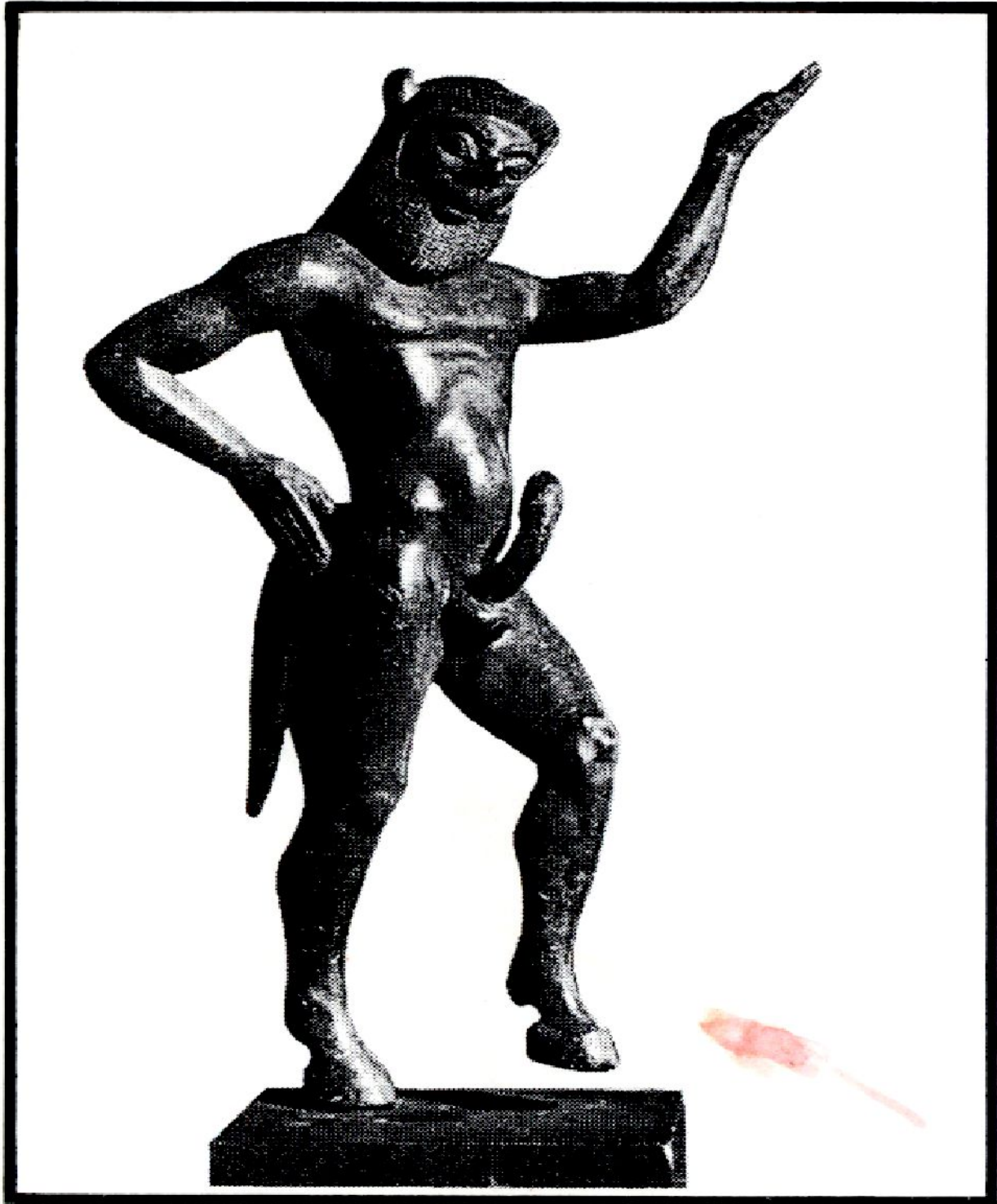


BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY



Volume III No. VI

Well, I've managed to get the turnaround back down to reasonable proportions after the exceedingly long absence of Bohemian Rhapsody over the summer. Apart from the last bumper issue, I really haven't done much in the way of magazine production since I arrived. I know that I've done a few issues this year, but I still haven't got back into the full swing of things since I left Belgium. The main problem is, you see, I'm enjoying life here too much to sit back and worry about magazine production. In Belgium it was a lot easier to hide away in my draughty garret and knock out an issue over the course of a weekend. But living in Norway is so much fun that I don't really want to spend all my spare time hunched over a keyboard.

No, I'm not going to fold. I'm not going to give the likes of Walkerdine that pleasure, I've just decided to sort out my priorities a little. But more of this after I discuss the Zine Poll results later on.

The most noticeable aspect of living in Norway is that the seasons change so dramatically. I was brought up in the north of England where, apart from the incessant rain, I got accustomed to fairly long summer evenings and long dark winter nights. Looking back I can remember it getting dark in mid-summer about ten or eleven o'clock and at about three or four at Christmas. The summers tended to be rather mild with the odd spell of fine weather when we'd take off our plastic macs and wellington boots, but for the most part the summers were pretty much indifferent. Except, that is, for the glorious summer of '76; that was the year I'd finished school and we had about ten weeks of holiday which was spent splashing about in the River Tees with my other mates.

Winter in England tends to be a joke, one way or another. Either it's really non-existent except for a few snowflakes in the New Year (my mother says that it always snows on Valentine's Day, and she's very rarely wrong), or either it comes down with a vengeance and cuts off half of northern England for months on end. Even in areas where there are heavy snowfalls each year (e.g. the 'all-weather' road to Alston which gets blocked each year) the English authorities still don't seem to understand the need for preparation for winter. I remember last Christmas my parents telling me that their water supply, which was supplied from a nearby tarn, had stopped because the tarn had frozen over and the water couldn't flow out of the bottom due to the lack of atmospheric pressure on the tarn's surface. So the local water board had to try to smash the ice so that there would be pressure upon the water surface again in order for water to flow again. Again, lack of preparation for the winter. In order to solve the problem, they drove a JCB onto the ice to break it (sounds a little silly to me, but...) which proved to be useless. In the end they had to rely on dynamite to blow a hole in the ice.

Having seen the equipment that is lying about here in Oslo for the winter, one can just see how unprepared the British are. I believe that the sum total of equipment is a number of trucks and a pile of salt. Salt which runs out after three weeks leaving the roads as bad as ever. In Romsås, the area of Oslo in which I live, which is the equivalent in size of a housing estate we've got three dirty great trucks and a number of snow-orientated mechanical devices which look as they belong in some science fiction movie. All this equipment just to keep a two mile stretch of road clear throughout the winter.

As I was saying, the seasons here in Norway are exciting. The summer is long and glorious. Even in Oslo it's hard to get to sleep at night because of the light, and we're still quite a haul from the Arctic Circle. The first time I visited Oslo I stayed one night at a friend's house just outside Oslo. We went to bed at three in the morning because it was getting dark and at five I had to get up again because it was too bright to sleep. This summer was hell to get through; I got very little sleep because of the odd hours the sun was keeping, and on top of that I was up until two each morning watching the World Cup.

Going to work in the summer mornings is fun too. Seeing the sunrise at that time of the day over the woods is fantastic. The evenings are an experience too; one of my favorite pastimes this summer was to sit on a boat in the fjord, wearing sunglasses until eleven at night, eating shrimps and sipping cool wine and watching the world go by on the dockside.

The autumn is something I'd forgotten about when I was living in Belgium. There autumn is that untidy bit between the hot sticky (and exceedingly y smelly) summer and the wet, windy, winter. Autumn there is celebrated by the cafes stopping serving outside on the pavement as the days get shorter and blacker as the trees in Antwerp's central park get greyer and greyer. Belgium in the autumn is a depressing place. So, imagine how I felt when I experienced a Norwegian autumn; the colours in the woods were fantastic; I don't think I've ever seen such glorious browns and golds as I've seen this year.

And now we're coming to my first ever full winter. Already the thermometer in Romsås is stuck at about freezing. There has been a few weeks of rain (just to make me feel at home, I suppose) then we're all expecting the snow to start falling any day now. I've got my skis out ready for when the snow gets deep enough for me to fall over into. Last weekend May-Britt and I went to visit some friends of hers in the centre of Norway, which has the reputation for being the coldest spot in Norway. Indeed, even though the winter has been here for only a couple of weeks, I was amazed to see that the temperature there was minus twelve degrees centigrade at noon in the middle of November.

It's going to be a long cold winter, I expect. And I suppose that in between throwing a few logs on the fire I may find some time to catch up upon some projects that I've got in mind for this magazine. For starters, this week I hope to get the house rules knocked out for En Garde, Diplomacy and Dragon Pass and produced in a small booklet for the next issue. The Diplomacy rules have been printed elsewhere, but I think that I need to have a little pile of them so that I can pop a copy in the post as the need arises. The Dragon Pass rules; well, no hard and fast rules need to be written here as the game is complex enough as it is, but a few guidelines are in order so as to make my life easier running the game. As for En Garde; I've been giving this a lot of thought, and after playing in a number of other games I feel that each game I've played in has it's own good points and one or two dodgy areas. I've got my hands on a five different houserules and with the aid of these I hope to come up with the definitive article. One rule which will certainly change is the Shylock rule. After all these were the early loan sharks, and a mere 10% interest is pathetic, so I'm thinking of making the interest 10% per month, which will be more in line with their function; and Shakespeare's Shylock wasn't the Venetian branch of Nat West, was he?

LETTERS

This letter column is somewhat dated because of a lack of a column in recent issues. So forgive both myself and the correspondent if the material appears to be rather old. In most cases I've excluded some of the more obvious ancient stuff except in the cases where I believe the letter may be interesting, controversial or whatever.

Steve Arnawoodian, Lansdale, USA:

Don't worry about what the others think or say about you and BR. Try to ignore the Polls, if you enjoy publishing then keep on going. I seldom rate zines with a 10, but yours along with Whitestonia would be the only 10s I'd give in a Poll. Mach Die Spuhl! would be an 8, or a 7 as it's written in French.

Chris Charles, Cheadle, Stoke On Trent:

I really must put pen to paper to comment on the 'so-called' Zine Poll which John Piggott is to run. When I came into the Hobby in the early 70's, the 'feud' between the 'Dippy Traditionalists' and those who started to run zines with a variety of games was in full swing, led in those far off days ("ah, sweet youth" - well, I was under 40 then - by Clive Booth's Chimaera which was one of the first games zines, as opposed to 'pure' Dippy zines. Whilst I thought that the heated debate was good fun, I have to admit that I couldn't take it all seriously. I have always preferred the 'all game' zines and if a handful of self-selected 'Hobby Elders' choose to pretend that the Hobby has not spread far beyond the original postal concept, then that is their business and they are entitled to their delusion.

I am, however, concerned that these folk should be attempting to hijack the Zine Poll and then suggest that respected Hobby figures such as Martin le Fevre (who has, in my opinion, done far more for the Postal Games Hobby than the self styled elders of the Hobby) have pushed themselves forward. In that respect, who invited John Piggott to redefine the Hobby to suit himself and his friends and to dismiss the greater part of the postal games hobby as "rubbish"? Is it perhaps not just a function of their age and nostalgia for the earlier days but a middle ages Luddite attempt to rewrite history. Richard Sharp suggests that the Zine Poll will rapidly become meaningless if it doesn't. The Hobby will grow, whether they like it or not as the number of zines including games other than Dippy have grown, despite their objections to zines such as Cimeara 10+ years ago. I certainly have no intention of voting in any so-called Zine Poll that excludes RGR, if only because David Watts has done more for postal gaming than any of the Sharp/Piggott clan can ever lay claim to.

In fact, the Zine Poll is pretty meaningless - certainly from a statistical point of view ever since Mick Bullock gave it up but it remains a Hobby event and the younger members of the Hobby - such as my son - enjoy taking part and reading and talking about the results. However, the Poll is manipulated by those in charge and in favour of their own prejudices, they will not succeed in stunting the growth of the Hobby in many new and interesting directions and their ostrich type behaviour will be clearly seen for what it is. Do Sharp and Co. realise how 'blimpish' they look to newcomers to the Hobby? More seriously, do they really believe that the Hobby is too big? Presumably, in their view, it should be limited to the likes of them and all who seek to play by post should petition humbly for permission to do so.

Luckily, I have faith in the innate anarchy of the Hobby - which, incidentally, is why Steve Doubleday's attempts to catalogue us all won't work - which doesn't need the imprimatur of a few "Dippy oldies" with narrow horizons to thrive.

Off the soapbox now to say that I hope that you don't mind my copying this to David Watts. I really do think it an insult to include him from the Poll.

I don't think that I responded to your questionnaire (anarchy again) but I particularly enjoyed your "foreign correspondent" bit and the reviews.

Incidentally, I absolutely agree with you about the sense of an absolute ban on drink/driving and wish it applied here. Drink is involved in most accidents after closing time and a lot of innocent deaths and injuries would be avoided if motorists knew that any alcohol would mean conviction - especially if coupled with stiff penalties. I was in Sweden last year and found their Systemlagets (I think) very dour places, to say nothing of the price of booze. It's not very original to point out we seem to apply their "fobidden fruit" attitude to sex and rush about trying to ban it, whilst Scandinavians do mad when they have access to cheap booze (as on holiday in Spain) and we go mad in "sex capitals" like Amsterdam.

MKS - Thankfully, John Piggott has seen sense in allowing magazines such as David Watt's RGR in the Zine Poll, but it would be interesting to see what John Piggott and Richard Sharp may say about your comments. I'll send this issue to them and then print any response they may make.

As for the drink/driving laws in Norway; it appears that I was wrong. A little alcohol, so I gather, is permitted, but the attitude of drivers, even hardened drinkers, is that they will refuse to drink one glass before going out on the roads. Which is a better attitude of British, or Belgian, drivers who don't seem to worry about having a pint or two (at least) before driving.

Neil Mason, Rotterdam, Holland:

I was in Utrecht with Henke (Langeveld) at a special Dutch games society meeting for role playing games. During the course of the day Henke held a meeting to discuss the formation of a special fantasy games group which would hold its own convention, etc.. Unfortunately, it seemed to disintegrate into a really boring argument (somewhat along the lines of the acrimonious debate in the pages of BR about what constitutes a real postal gaming zine) in Dutch about what sort of people we should let in. The argument seemed to go something like this:

"We should really call it the Dutch Role Playing Group because that is what we are interested in, isn't it?"

"No, it should be called the Dutch Fantasy Games Group because otherwise we are going to exclude people who play Warhammer and Dragon Pass."

"Anyway, if we call it the DRPGG we are going to have to let in people who play En Garde and WWII role-playing games, and we don't want those warmongers sullying our fantasies."

"Ah, but if we let in board gamers, we'll be swamped with Squad Leader fanatics using up all the tables."

"Yeah, and if we let in figure gamers in, we'll have all sorts here, ancient wargames aren't much different from Warhammer."

"My ancient British army's got a group of non-combatant Druids."

"But the main thing is Fantasy, if we only let people in who are interested in things that never happened we'll be alright."

"What about all those who want to fight Operation Olympic or the Third World War?"

"What's this about Ronnie?"

"No, you've got this all wrong. The main thing is magic. If it has magic we let it in!"

"But surely that excludes Paranoia, and that's a more fantastic (in its true sense) than any."

"I thought it was real life!"

"Does anyone want to play Traveller?"

...to be continued?

I DMD Paranoia which was listed as one of the attractions at one of the conventions (Paranoia, not my DMDing). One Dutch TV crew spent most of the day wandering around looking confused and photographing anyone in funny clothing (a group seemed to be doing a full dress bar-room brawl although maybe it was just a lively discussion about Dungeon Mastering Technique). They filmed our game of Paranoia although whether they will screen shots of an English Eccentric leading Dutch youth astray by subjecting them into playing games where at least one character is a dope fiend and a bunch of bigger happy mental defectives seem to rush around shooting up innocent workers with laser pistols.

What the Dutch people seem to be most interested in is M.A.D.D.. This seems to be the latest manifestation of the verbal majority, S.R.A.A.W. - Self Righteous Americans Against Wierdos. Apparently, it stands for Mothers Against Dungeons and Dragons and is a group of concerned mothers worried again about the effects of D&D on youngster's minds.

MKS - It hardly seems unlikely that various mother's groups will point out what sort of things that D&D do their offsprings minds. I don't mind playing the occasional game behind locked doors, but I don't think that I will ever dress up in a funny costume and beat someone over the head with a rubber wand and a plastic mace. Which, before anyone says it, is a far cry from the Sealed Knot loonies (of which I used to be one), at least they do their 'thing' for charity (mainly) and dress up authentically and then re-enact to some level of realism the events of some local battle before authentically carousing in some wayside tavern.

But, on the other hand, these soul saving societies are a load of bosh. Playing D&D is no worse than playing, say, Monopoly or Diplomacy. Each and every game has its shady side, if you look long and hard enough.

Then again, Holland is a strange spot. It was only in the past few years that schoolkids were told to take home a note to their parents which advised them to burn their kid's record collection because it was all the work of the Devil. And this was 'proved' on TV when a headmaster played a record backwards and he claimed that the Devil's voice was clearly audible ordering the listener to act out some vile deed. The fact that no-one watching the program could make anything out didn't seem to deter the do-gooder from causing a number of prized record collections to be destroyed. Little wonder why such idiots have inspired bands to put messages in their albums, which, if played backwards, would give a little speech 'from Satan'. Perhaps Holland is the only country in the world to have forward and reverse gears on their turntables.

Roberto Della-Sala, Watford:

Many thanks for Vol 3, No IV of BR, another truly splendid publication from your keyboard....keep up the good work...as Conrad said in Costaguana, "make BR to be the same as BR", i.e. don't change it!

I got back from Tamworth yesterday and have passed on your letter to Geoff (Kemp), who assures me that he'll sort everything out with you. I've also spoken to Peter (Sullivan) about any outstanding credits in the UKVB and he says he'll look into it for you.

MKS - Thanks for your letter and comments, Roberto. As a matter of interest, this letter was dated 27th May 1986 and still I haven't heard a word from Geoff Kemp despite writing him letters and sending him my magazine. Can anyone out there please tell me what my credit balance is with the UKVB?

Peter Sullivan, Bushey, Watford:

BR III/IV arrived this morn, so some comments on your version of the Guidelines for Variant Publishing:

Your proposals are fine in theory, but I doubt if they would be practicable. It is pointless to re-print the entire catalogue every three months and would prove rather expensive. Once the variants zine, Alternatives, gets going, it can carry a cumulative update list every issue of new variants in the Bank. Research into publication history of variants would be nice, but I can think of better things for the UKVB custodian to do with regard to promoting variants and variant playing; surely this is a job for the Archivist rather than the UKVB?

Addresses of variant designers will automatically be kept in the address list for Alternatives for most active designers. Possibly Alternatives could publish its address list every issue, although it's probably not worth it. Certainly it must be up to the individual designers to keep their addresses up to date, and not up to the UKVB or its custodian.

The questions of sanctions is one which I'm afraid you're in a minority of one. Even Steve Doubleday seems to agree that the most that we can do if someone is caddish enough to ignore the code is to make rude remarks in their general direction. Don't try to tell me that Sharp's proposed Diplomacy Editor's Association will be any use. Firstly, I don't believe that a Hobby service like the UKVB should become associated with any real or perceived 'clique' within the Hobby as a whole, and in any case, nothing will come of Sharp's suggestions anyway.

Finally, is anyone other than Steve going to want their variants put in the 'ASK' category, as you call it? If he's the only one, I think that any half-busy custodian would rather chuck out all the bureaucracy, give Steve his designs from the UKVB back to him, and carry on as we are now. (N.B. This is not a particularly serious bit).

Steve Green, London Colney, St. Albans:

Dragon Pass: Your explanation is a fair one considering the complexity of a 'Game Turn' and I must compliment you on your writing ability - your ability for explanation into words which don't extend to more than seven letters. I would be pleased to play Henk Langeveld or any other proposed player.

As to your proposition concerning the Marathon Game; sure, but perhaps with one minor modification, that being the victory conditions - could we use The Full Game victory conditions, i.e. taking opponent's forts rather than capitals?

MKS - I've got you down on the waiting list, Steve, now all I need is someone to play in the second game against you. I don't think it'd be fair to ask Henk as he's deeply embroiled in the first game (which is exciting to follow, perhaps I ought to consider doing some mapwork for the next set of moves) and he's little spare time these days what with the Dutch Games society he's involved in. But, there's another Dragon Pass devotee who reads this comic too, if I ask Greg nicely do you think he'll play? As for the victory conditions proposal, I think that had better be decided at the time of the game between you and your opponent, but I'm willing to run almost any variation of the rules. Oh yes, when you do play, please don't expect 100% accuracy in GMing each turn, as you can imagine GMing Dragon Pass ain't that easy, even though I do love it.

Chris Charles, Cheadle, Stoke On Trent:

You ask why so many of us gamers have disregarded the P.G.Y. produced by Steve Doubleday. Apart from the apparently inherent anarchistic attitude of the Hobby members as a whole, I must say that I have no intention of filling up a questionnaire that asks a lot of irrelevant and impertinent questions and, frankly, I have to admit to some surprise that an increasing number of people have apparently done so. I have nothing against Steve personally, but I am fed up with the increasing attempts of all sorts of people to pigeonhole, classify and categorise us all from the Driving Licence Centre and the central police upwards - or downwards. I have no objection to any other games player knowing my name and address but why that object should require details of my job, etc., is beyond me. I find it sad that you induce guilt in those who haven't dutifully filled in our forms and paid our 50p.s but I'm afraid that I don't see any real reason for doing so - and, neither, apparently, does most of the Hobby.

I think that BR is the most professional looking magazine that I see and I find your comments on other zines very informative. Also, on life in Norway!

MKS - Yes, I must apologise for having tried to induce guilt into those which hadn't filled in the PGY questionnaire. Reading your letter again, I must admit that I find the questions upon my personal life a bit funny, especially since no-one apart from Steve is going to use them. But, on the other hand, such an article can be useful. For example, there's the Black and Blue Book, produced by Diplomacy World's Larry Peery which lists all the players in the USA. This is an excellent article for those who want to know who lives where. Perhaps if the PGY was collated by information given by various editors listing only names and address, and cross-linked by area then the PGY would be worth having. Has anyone else any ideas/comments on this?

John Piggott, Carvey Island:

Just a quick note to announce the Zine Poll. As you will see, the rules make it clear that Bohemian Rhapsody is eligible. You'll recall that I wanted to use a purely formula approach to decide which zines were eligible; alas, this proved unworkable in the end, but since I had to resort to specifying zines by name in the announcement I was able to include yours, along with the others whose editors had made representations about the threat of exclusion.

Anyway, here it is, and I hope that you'll give the Poll a nice prominent plug in your next couple of issues Doops - MKS. I see that last year only five people voted for you. However, since then I think you've gained quite a number of readers and I trust a considerable number will take the trouble to vote this time. After all, the more the merrier, and if Bruce Linsey could get 265 votes last year for his American Zine Poll (that's 7 more than Walkerdine's record total in 1984) I don't see why we shouldn't beat him. We are British, after all.

Good luck.

MKS - Ta. I might need it. Anyway, any improvement over joint 72nd is more than welcome.

John Dodds, Streatham, London:

BR has contained some interesting points lately:

On the Zine Poll: I admit that it does seem crazy to exclude BR from the Poll, but I can see some sense in excluding the foreign (non-English) language zines. There is a problem in that some years, European zines have done well in the Poll on a small number of votes, but then an English zine could have been in the same position. It's the voting system that's at fault - if it biased the results in favour of large circulation magazines, which is a reasonable thing to do, then it would include all zines irrespective of their origin and the results would have come out in the wash.

But I suppose that John Piggott's argument is that the British and European hobbies are essentially different and the Zine Poll is for the British hobby, and not the wider organisation. Fair point, but a zine doesn't have to be published in Britain to be a part of our hobby. For example, The Orient Express was published from Tokyo for a while, but it was still as British as Yorkshire Pudding. And I would judge BR similarly, despite its extensive links with America and Europe.

On MidCon: As the committee member charged with running the publicity, I'm very grateful that you are publicising the Con throughout Europe. The reason that we did not advertise it widely throughout the continent last year was economic. MidCon runs on quite a tight budget and sending blocks of flyers overseas isn't cheap. We judged that the extra cash we would get in subscriptions from Europe wouldn't cover the cost of advertising. Of course, anyone from the continent would have been made most welcome at the convention, but sometimes you have to make financial judgements like this even though it seems to be at odds with the spirit of the hobby. MidCon cannot afford to make a loss, though its profits are as small as possible any surplus after the event has always been ploughed back into the hobby, for example for paying for the flyers in the Diplomacy box.

P.S. Wonders never cease! Darlington FC have survived for a season in Division 3.

MKS - Two points I must make; one about the Poll and the other about MidCon advertising. Firstly, I don't believe that the result of the Poll ought to be decided in favour of large circulation magazines. Popularity doesn't always equate with quality. Listen to the weekly music charts, are you telling me that that's the best in modern contemporary music, John? No way, the charts only show which is the most popular at that time. The Zine Poll winner shouldn't be the one with the biggest circulation list, it should be the one which is seen to be the best, and each magazine ought to have an equal chance regardless of its circulation.

Secondly, MidCon; you said yourself in this letter that BR has extensive links with the European Hobby. Therefore, wouldn't it have been sensible for you to have sent me just one flyer? Even through my 'extensive' contacts within Europe I wasn't able to find one mention of the MidCon '85. I don't know what the MidCon committee classes 'blocks of flyers' as, but surely it is somewhat larger than one flyer in an envelope with a 22p stamp on the outside. The net result of the nil advertising in Europe last year was that a number of West Germans, who would have gone that year, didn't go. I only found out about it by ringing up Rip Geoch for details. If you wish to use my extensive contacts, John, for next year, why not send me the flyers and the Progress Reports so that I can publish them here for all of Europe to see?

Nick Brown, New Southgate, London:

By the way, I think that DR should definitely feature a "Nordic Bits" as soon as possible. I would be very interested in the reactions of another culture attempting to embrace you - the last two didn't do very well! Bring back the bigoted anecdotes and tirades!!

MKS - Well, all the Norwegian tales (which like the Woodie stories are all true) will have to wait until I'm doing the magazine at home. Anyway, I've been saving them all up, and I'm now starting to receive a few more Belgic Bits from Andy Crowe marooned in Antwerp.

Ed Wrobel, Woodbridge, Virginia, USA:

I would have sent you my half tones (the ones of DipCon, one of which was printed last issue - MKS) but Ken (Peel) sent them to Larry Peery for Diplomacy World. When I found out, I got mad as hell and demanded them back. I'd lost all respect for Peery when he printed in his Xenogogic that Linsey's Poll proved that I was a 'criminal'. Considering how Linsey manipulated the voting (the US Zine Poll - MKS), I doubt that his Poll proved anything, except how desperate he was to have Voice of Doom shown as number 1.

Although it's been three weeks since I told both Ken and Peery that I want my photos back, nothing has shown up. Ken said he would call Peery again. I wouldn't be suprised if they show up in Diplomacy World although Ken says that Peery confirms that he has my letter changing permission.

Nice hobby we have here, eh? Just one more reason I've given up on 'Dipdom'.

MKS - Nice Hobby, you've said it, Ed. It's not much different here in the UK with rigged Zine Polls and editors going about spreading rumours and lies about each other. For God's sake, it's supposed to be a bloody Hobby, not a simulation of Watergate

Larry Peery, San Diego, California, USA:

Enclosed is the foto you asked Ken Peel for. He had sent it to me to use for DR but the person who took the foto (Ed Wrobel) would not let me use it. So, I'm sending it to you per Ken's request. Please let Ken know you got it.

Greg Stafford, Albany, California, USA:

Many thanks for Bohemian Rhapsody. I was suprised at the thrill which I got reading about the battles of Dragon Pass. I am honoured and flattered that the game is done, and I avidly look forward to more. Yes, please continue to send me copies. If I am able, I will try to interject into the rules discussions.

Concerning the items you requested: White Bear and Red Moon is the same as Dragon Pass. MB&M was the title for my own first couple of editions, but almost no-one could remember it properly and so we changed it.

Homad Gods has been gone so long that I don't even have any odd pices about, but I will keep my eyes peeled. I want to see a game some day of the two combined, and maybe even with Masters of Luck and Death. Dreams...

We occasionally find back issues of Myrm's Footnotes, but they are snatched up by locals. Frankly, the earlier issues are pretty useless, and we reprinted the useful stuff in European Companion. They are usually about the (then) current edition of Dragon Pass.

We plan to approach Avalon Hill with Nomad Gods. Their response will depend on their opinion of Dragon Pass sales. Wish us luck.

MKS - I do indeed! I also wish you a better cover than the existing Avalon Hill Dragon Pass box lid. Your Chessmen painting was streets better. If anything would put me off the current edition of DP it would be the cover. Having said that, if I'm to run another game of Dragon Pass in Bohemian Rhapsody then I'll have to get another issue of the game as at present I've got to keep all the units together in little boxes depending on their position on the board, else I'll waste 4 hours a time per adjudication just setting them up! I do hope that we will see Nomad Gods published again someday, and could someone explain to me what this 'Masters of Luck and Death' is?

Christoph Schunck, Bonn, W Germany:

One reason for the delay in this letter might be my once again move. This time, I am living in a twelve square metres room in a student home. But, looking forward to my law exams in July '87, time will always be a precious thing in my mind. Nevertheless, I would be pleased very much, if I was allowed to take part in your 'Dangling-Troll' Con around Easter 1987. Could you please inform me of the exact dates and things I have to do? Possibly, there might be a two-German crew, as Uwe Harnherz, a friend of mine showed high interest. Or is the Con limited to BR subbers?

MKS - If the convention does go ahead next year, which in all possibility, it might, then it will take place during the Easter week next year. The plan is as follows; on the first saturday the English contingent (so far only Martin le Fevre, Chris plus Lady have shown interest) will leave Harwich on the ferry. This will be the LinerCon bit until it docks in the Oslo Fjord on monday morning. I will host (i.e. supply floor space) the convention until thursday evening when the boat will leave from Oslo to arrive abck in Merrie England on saturday. Therefore, the Oslo bit of the convention will take place from monday until thursday, if it all goes ahead. What to bring? Lots of woolly clothes for a start, plenty of the folding green stuff (eating here ain't cheap) and I'd like those coming from the UK to bring some Newcastle Brown Ale, Branston Pickle, Horlicks and Shredded Wheat. Those coming from the continent, I'd like some Grolsch. No doubt, May-Britt will want a vat or three of various anti-freezes (i.e. ethyl alcohol). All excess duties will, of course, be paid by us. Actually, I'd like to have about 8 or 9 people turning up, but if more come, then, well, I'm sure I can find someplace somewhere for you all, even it is on the other side of the city. Incidentally, the convention won't be limited to BR subbers, but it'd be nice if all who came did subscribe to this magazine.

Roberto Della-Sala, Hatford:

Many thanks for the latest issue of Bohemian Rhapsody - as long as you keep up your good standards, lengths between deadlines/issues is of no concern to me! Anyway, basically I'm just writing in about your review of MARTCON 1986, or in fact, the introduction about getting into the States.

Though I thoroughly enjoyed your account, I have to disagree with you about the formalities you have to go through at JFK on arrival, or maybe, your slightly 'exaggerated' account of it.

As many people know, I spent the summer in the States (9 weeks), and though I'm not going to give an account of the trip here, perhaps I could give 'the other side of the story'?

On arrival at JFK, 6pm local time, our captain informed us that having arrived at the busiest possible time, there was no 'parking lot' (or whatever you call them), so we ended up taxiing around JFK for 25 minutes, but the captain kept us informed all the time. Immigration was a matter of routine, and it took us 15 minutes to get through, and was well organised. All fifteen 'cubicles' were open and airport staff directed us to lines, whereupon as soon as a cubicle became empty, we were shown there.

It was well air-conditioned, bright and very clean. However, I must admit that as the Immigration Officer looks through his directory of 'unwanted visitors' it is nerveing that your name could be there by accident! Also when asked how long I was staying in the USA for, I replied "nine weeks", I felt like dying, but the guy turned around and said "Enjoy it."

Bearing in mind that I flew to JFK about a month after you, Malc, I can only think that you were taken to an old arrivals hall or they did wonders in a month!

My baggage was waiting for me in the customs hall, and I was one of the first through - my luggage was neither opened, and the Customs Officer only asked verbally if I had anything to declare, to which I naturally said "no".

It was a doddle! Life is made easier because turning along the right hand side wall from the customs hall to the exit is a conveyor belt, you walk along beside it until you get to the exit.

Humidity and a lack of toilets is a problem, especially since a toilet can be called a 'rest room', the 'bathroom' or just a symbol on the door. In the main though, I agree, American toilets are the pits, especially at terminals, as I found out!

I travelled from NY - Little Rock (Ar) - Dallas (Tx) - Austin (Tx) - Washington DC - Baltimore (Md) - New York, approximately 10,000 miles by greyhound bus, and I have to admit that the bog on board was cleaned every stop (every 4 hours or so) and some MCs were awful, in particular the one in Dallas. (MKS - 'the' is there only one?)

Your trip to Washington DC could have been very comfy - you could either of got a Salem minibus to the Port Authority Bus Station in Manhattan off Times Square, for about ten dollars, or go by the PABS bus, which leaves every thirty minutes for eight dollars. Buses to Washington run hourly, or every ninety minutes, and the trip is very comfortable with wide seats, excellent air-conditioning and quiet and takes about four hours.

I think had you done a little more forward planning, e.g. made reservations for connecting flights in Sweden before leaving, you would hve saved a lot of hassle! I booked a flight from Little Rock-- Dallas - Austin - Little Rock in Watford, England, had tickets and was told to pay on the plane.

In the end, I opted for the bus as I had a 5 day bus pass which I didn't want to waste, so I cancelled my booking the night before the flight, and saved eighty dollars.

As for the train, I used the NY subway extensively and found the maps provided at the token booths helpful and easy to understand, compared to those of London Transport. I travelled into Greenwich Village at night, and by mistake into Harlem one afternoon, though scared out of my mind because of what we see on the TV. I did not encounter, or see, any signs of trouble.

I know what it's like turning up at someone's house and they don't know who you are and that you are coming! You see, Malc, Kathy (Byrne) knew I was in New York, but not in July when I was, but was expecting me in October, when you told her that I would be there!

(MKS - Now hang about. Let's get back onto this 'forward planning' bit; didn't you write and tell Kathy that you were coming at all, then? Surely you must have told her when you'd be arriving? As for my planning, I was told that I could have got a People's Express flight down from JFK and that I couldn't book in advance anyway. Just as well, because I did wait for four long hours in a corridor waiting to be admitted into America, and no amount of forward planning in Norway, or Sweden (where I've never set foot) would have foreseen that. In addition, I had to get to Ken Peel's place p.d.q. (pretty damn quick) so a bus was right out of the question.

It sounds as if you were in a different hall to where I was. The one I was in was old and dirty with the paint hanging off the ceiling. But before we could get to wait in the hall we had to line up in a long low corridor. Both of which were certainly not airconditioned. Perhaps, 6pm at JFK is a busy time for domestic flights and not international flights. I was certainly not exaggerating about my wait at JFK, and there must have been a few thousand of us waiting to get processed. But, I'll never forget that Swede screaming in the corridor for political asylum!

Consequently when I walked up to her door and asked "are you Kathy?" in a Matford accent, and I said I was Roberto, she was, to say in the least, stunned.

MKS - Roberto goes on in some detail about the disappearance of Kathy, but unfortunately, it's a little too vague to publish here, but remember Robert 'Hobby Sox' Sacks who was convinced that she'd been kidnapped by a Russian spy called 'Jaan'....?

I went back to my hosts that night, and soon left NY. But on my arrival 7 weeks later, Kathy informed me that the police had checked Sack's claim!!! The guy is a nutter!

Talking of nutters; Kathy related the story of when you went to a baseball game, refused to stand at the singing of 'The Stars and Stripes', became a wealth of knowledge on a game you've watched for 10 minutes, and acted very differently, if that's the right word.

MKS - Now hang on a mo, Roberto. If you ever start to believe only a tenth of a small fraction of what she says to you, then you'll only end up in trouble. To put it rather simply, Kathy has been endowed with what I would call a rich imagination, and I must defend myself in saying that at the Mets game I acted like the true English gentleman that what I've been brought up to be. If I recall correctly, it was Ms. Byrne who was jumping up and down waving her arms about in an obscene fashion screaming at Mooky Wilson what she'd like to do to/for him if she had half a chance.

I saw the Mets beat Atlanta Braves 2-0 from an Executive Box on the Messenine, was privileged to have a Diamond Club card, and met all the Mets, including the legendary Rusty Staub, who was retiring that match, or something like that!

MKS- Now look who's suddenly become a wealth of knowledge about Yankee Cricket in one game? Even though I watched the World Series on the box here every night, I still must admit that the game both baffles and delights me. Baseball is a great game, miles better than their pathetic football. My mate tells me that we/you have baseball in England, women play it and it's called 'rounders', or something. But I don't want to know....

Come, come Malc, admit it. The USA is a lot of fun! You were unlucky to have delays, but are you surprised? I acted like a semi-human (and no doubt you did too), but don't you think that your report is a 'little' unfair?

Whatcha mean 'semi-human'? That's my normal manner. Hell's teeth, there aren't many of us English football fans over 'ere now, and the precious few that are have to make up for the rest. And, no, I don't think that my report was a little unfair at all; for example I didn't mention at all about Woodie using his OAP pass to get over the New Jersey bridge, as promised. No, I don't think that I was unfair, just a little pissed off at hanging about at the airport for hours. I must admit that the US is a pile of fun, and I look forward to going there again soon possibly going via NY again so I can see another Mets game or three.

Do you know the dates for next year's DIPCON? I should be in the USA from July 4/5th through to mid-September, I hope.

Oh, by the way. I have a copy of the Washington Post given to me by Kathy - bloody surprised to see you there, I can tell you!!!

Sorry, I don't know the dates of DipCon XX, but if it's at the same time as this year, then I'm afraid that you'll be too late for it. Hey, Roberto, I think you deserve a free issue sometime. And thanks ever so much for the interesting letter.

Fred Davis Jnr., Baltimore, Maryland:

Bohemian Rhapsody III-VI arrived here yesterday. I was glad to see it, as I'd thought that either you'd folded, or the Post Office had lost it in it's usual efficient manner. Interesting photos. My wife's divorce lawyer will be contacting you for an affidavit shortly.

A couple of items which need comments or corrections. First, re JFK Airport. You hit the nail on the head. A lot of us try to avoid JFK, even if we hold American passports. Next to passing customs, the most annoying thing was trying to take the shuttle bus from one terminal to another. There was a fare of either 25 cents or 50 cents to use the bus, payable only in US coins, "Exact Change Only". I can remember the embarrassment I experienced as the driver would shout in 'New-Yorkese' (a distant dialect of English) at foreigners who had just stepped out of the International Arrivals terminal, "Fifty cents! Put fifty cents into the slot!" Where were they supposed to get small change? If they couldn't speak English, the driver simply shouted all the louder.

I arrived back in the States in September via Dulles airport, near Washington. This is a very pleasant place to clear customs. In fact, they treated us just as they do in London. They assumed that we were honest until proven guilty, and allowed those who had 'nothing to declare' to walk through without opening our bags. They didn't even stamp my passport. So, you might try to take a direct flight to Dulles next time. Several airlines serve the place, including Pan-Am. However, it is a rather long haul to downtown Washington from there.

Which brings me onto the second item, the 1987 DipCon. You will undoubtedly have half of the population of Madison on your neck for placing them in Illinois! While you will almost certainly fly into America via O'Hare Field, which is the great airport about 15 miles northwest of the Chicago Loop, Madison is another 100 miles away, across the State Line in Wisconsin. There are probably more people of Swedish ancestry than Norwegian there, but that part of Wisconsin is almost entirely settled by people of either Scandinavian or German background. However, most Norwegian and Swedes started to speak English almost as soon as they walked down the gnagplank, so you won't find many people left now who still know how to speak the Old Country tongue.

O'Hare Field is even bigger than JFK, but much better organised. There are only three main terminals instead of twelve. One is devoted entirely to international flights. I'm told that there is a bus service directly from O'Hare to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where DipCon will be held, which runs 6 or 7 times a day. I'm sure we'll receive more details when DipCon gets closer. Alternatively, you could look into a shuttle flight from O'Hare to Madison airport. Your travel agent can advise you. Personally, I plan to rent a car at O'Hare and drive to Madison, since I will be staying over in the Chicago area for a couple of days after DipCon.

The last point concerns "The Star Spangled Banner". You appear to be misinformed about which War this event took place in. This was not in the Revolution. This was in 1814, in what the Americans call the War of 1812 which was really part of the Napoleonic Wars. Since America had won its independence from England in 1783, you cannot call the American of the 1812-14 period 'colonials' anymore. They'd been independant for 30 years by then. If you can come to Baltimore, I'll be glad to take you to Fort McHenry, where you can see a movie explaining the Battle, and see some of the bombs which the Brits launched at the Fort (those which failed to 'burst in the air', that is). Agreed, the Royal Navy's bombardment was rather ineffective. The Navy expected the Americans to flee the fort when their guns opened fire. However, the Americans were either too dumb or too stubborn to flee. At this point we'll never know what it was.

But, the important point I wished to make was that Francis Scott Key, the author, only wrote the words to the song. The music is adapted from an old English drinking song called "To Anacreon in Heaven". So, the unsingable music of the American national anthem is really the creation of some private drinking clubs' in London, where it was sung after the quaffing of many a pint of beer, or bottle of rum.

MKS - Thanks, Fred, for the interesting snippets. I thought that I got my wars somewhat mixed up. Wasn't this the one in which the English burnt the, now, White House and it had to get repainted white to hide the smoke marks? Besides, what were the Americans getting involved with Napoleon's lot for?

Anyway, so we now all now how to approach the American national anthem in the best way; after a keg of rum. I've often wondered why, for a national anthem, it was hardly stirring stuff, little wonder if it was the result of many a drunken evening. Now, will people stop saying that I over-exaggerate things, now that it's seen that I don't make up the material for the magazine, but it's given to me...

DIPLOMACY 86N1 SPRING 1902

AUSTRIA
(John Keillor)

F(Tri), A(Vie) stand. A(Bud) s A(Vie).
A(Ser) s RUSSIAN F(Rum)-Bul.

ENGLAND ~~MMR~~
(Urban Smith)

Fs(Edi, Nor, NTH), A(Lon) all stand unordered.

FRANCE
(Louis Bezodis)

A(Spa)-Por, F(Bel) stand (no such unit),
A(Mar)-Bur, A(Par) s A(Mar)-Bur (no such unit)
F(Bre)-ENG (no such unit),
F(ENG) and A(Bur) stand unordered.

GERMANY ~~MMR~~
(Eoghan Barry)

F(Den) As(Hol, Kie, Ruh, Mun) all stand unordered.

ITALY
(Daniel Brooks)

F(Tun)-ION, A(Boh)-Vie, A(Tyr) s A(Boh)-Vie,
A(Ven) s A(Tyr).

RUSSIA
(Steve Green)

A(Mos)-Ukr, A(Ukr)-Gal, F(GoB)-StP s.c.,
F(Rum)-Bul, A(Sev)-Arm.

TURKEY
(Denise Yates)

A(Bul) stands, A(Gre) s A(Bul), F(BLA) s A(Bul).

Notes:

1. For clarity; France has F(ENG), A(Por), A(Mar), A(Bur).
2. Answer to a rules query: It is not allowed for a player to swap an Army to a Fleet, or vice versa, in an adjustments phase. If a player needs to do this then he's got to get another player to dislodge the unit in question (retreat it to 'off the board') and then replace the unit in the winter when the player is one unit down. It's a risky process, rarely attempted, but possible, and of course, one needs a lot of trust in one's ally to do this.

Press:

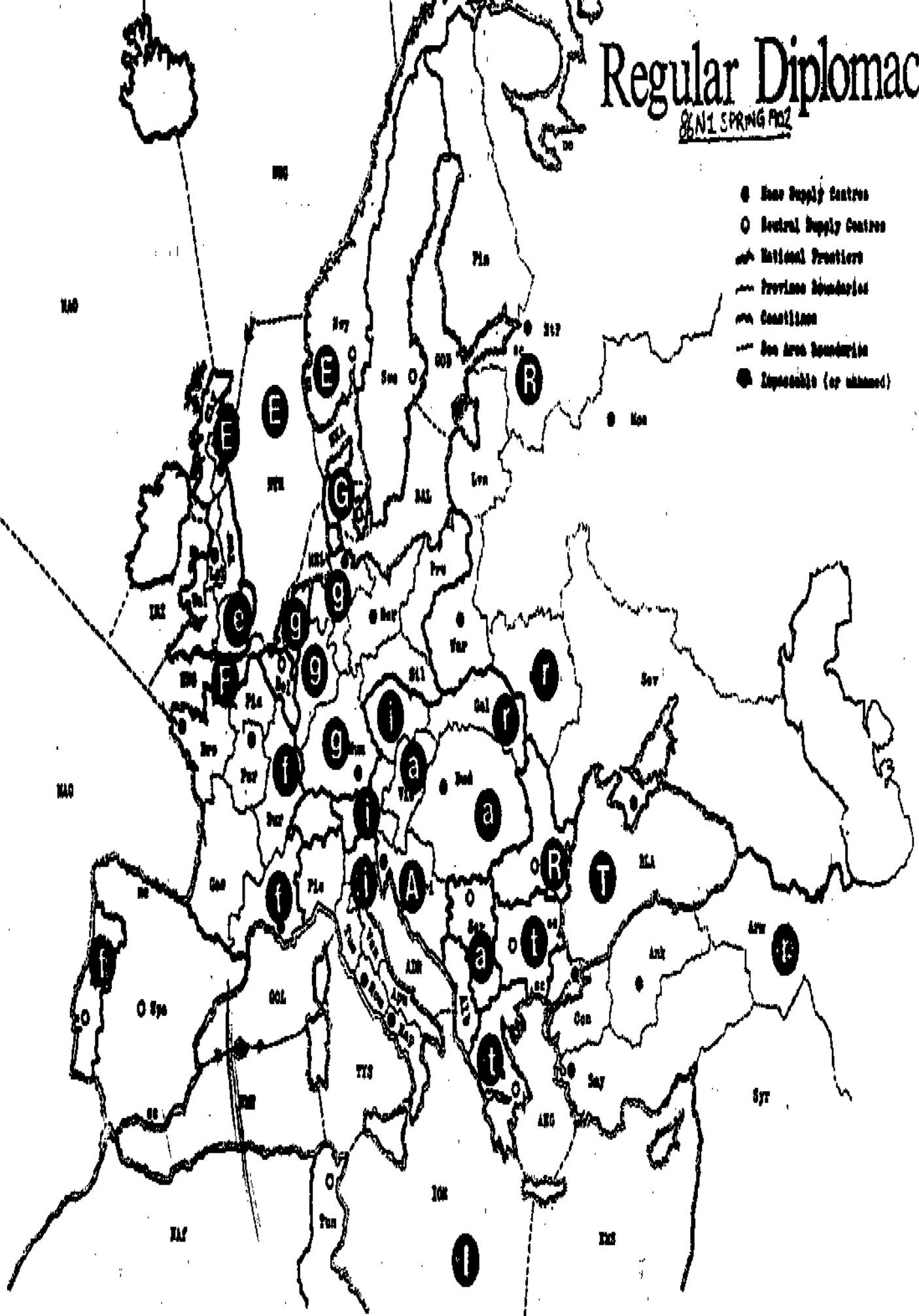
Russia - Germany: Still haven't heard from you, and am warned that you're becoming a hermit.

Austria - Turkey: Fancy forgetting to build - you idiot.

Regular Diplomacy

8/21 SPRING PDZ

- Base Supply Centres
- Neutral Supply Centres
- National Frontiers
- Province boundaries
- Counties
- Sea Area boundaries
- Impossible (or unknown)



DIPLOMACY 86N1 AUTUMN 1902

AUSTRIA (John Keillor)	A(Vie)-Tyr, F(Tri)-Alb, <u>A(Ser)-Tri</u> , <u>A(Bud)-Rum</u> .
ENGLAND (Urban Smith)	A(Lon)-Wal, F(NTH)-Lon, F(Edi)-NTH, <u>F(Nor)-Swe</u> .
FRANCE <u>NMR</u> (Louis Bezodis)	F(ENG), As(Bur, Mar, Por) all stand unordered.
GERMANY (Eoghan Barry)	A(Ruh)-Bel, A(Hol) s A(Ruh)-Bel, A(Kie)-Ber, A(Mun) s AUSTRIAN A(Vie)-Tyr, <u>F(Den)-Swe</u> .
ITALY (Daniel Brooks)	F(ION)-ADR, <u>A(Ven)-Tri</u> , <u>A(Tyr) s A(Ven)-Tri</u> , A(Boh)-Vie
RUSSIA (Steve Green)	<u>A(Ukr)-Sev</u> , <u>F(Rum)-Sev</u> , A(Arm)-Smy, <u>A(Gal)-Boh</u> , <u>F(St.P sc)</u> stands
TURKEY (Denise Yates)	A(Gre)-Ser, A(Bul) s A(Gre)-Ser, F(BLA) s A(Bul).

Retreats:

A: A(Ser) destroyed. No retreats were possible.
I: A(Tyr)-Pie

Adjustments:

A: Bud, Tri -Vie -Ser	= 2	disband F(Alb).
E: Edi, Lpl, Lon, Nor	= 4	no change.
F: Bre, Mar, Par, Spa +Por	= 5	no builds ordered. 1 short.
G: Ber, Kie, Mun, Den, Hol +Bel	= 6	build F(Kie).
I: Nap, Rom, Ven, Tun +Vie	= 5	build F(Nap).
R: Mos, Sev, StP, War, Rum +Smy	= 6	no builds ordered. 1 short.
T: Ank, Con, Bul, Gre +Ser -Smy	= 5	build A(Ank) A(Con).

Press:

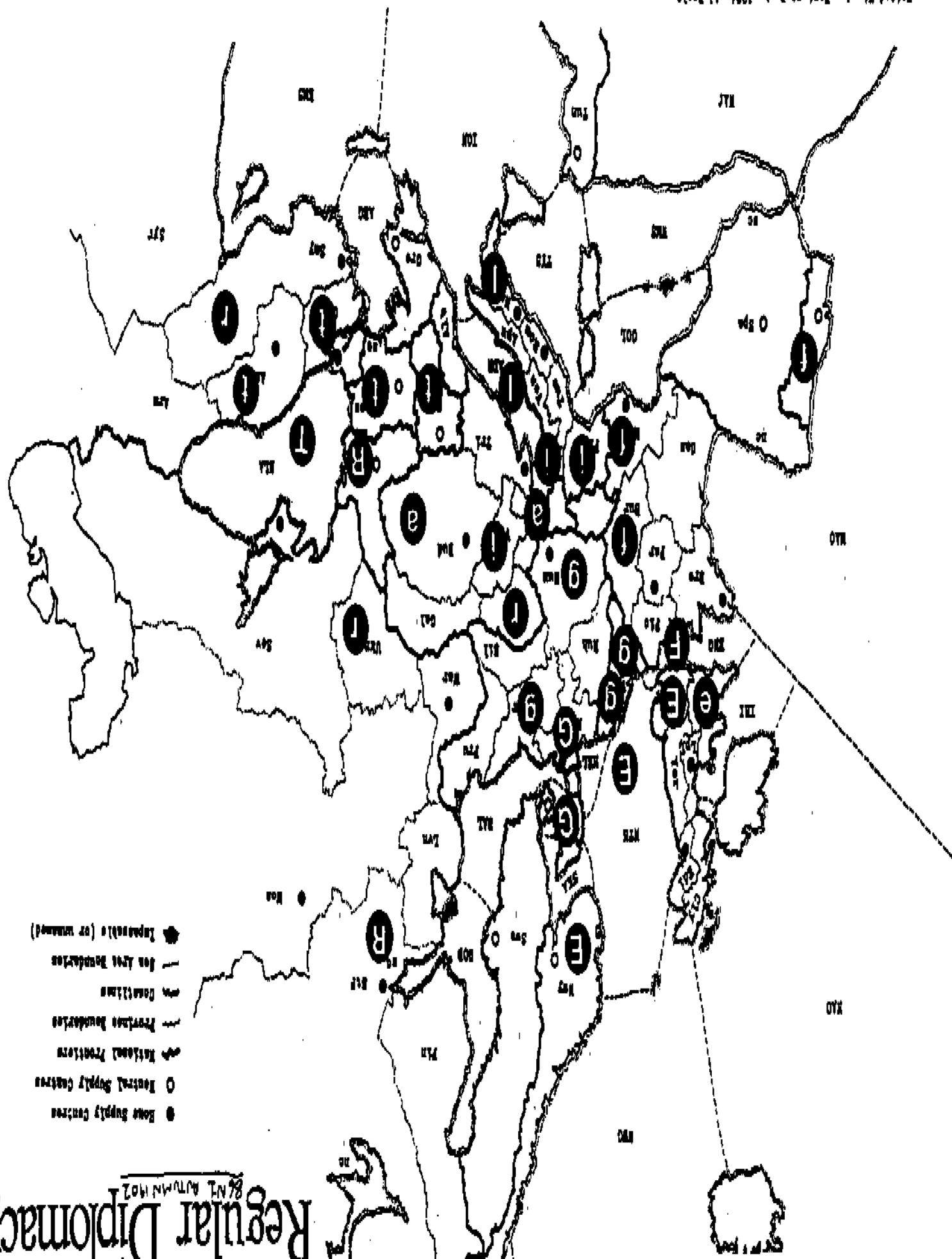
Germany - Russia: Alive and well, and writing from a very small hole in the ground.

Germany - Others: Yesssss.... and no.

Regular Diplomacy

86 NT AUTUMN 1982

- Home Supply Centres
- Neutral Supply Centres
- National Frontiers
- Provincial Boundaries
- District Boundaries
- Sea Area Boundaries
- Inhabitable (or unnamed)



DRAGON PASS (Game 1)

Turn 2

Active Player: Satar (Neil Mason).

An editorial apology:

One of major problems with trying to accurately report conflicts throughout the vast exotic regions of Gloranthia is that sometimes the vital communication which we so heavily rely upon, sometimes doesn't reach us here in time. Indeed, sometimes we discover, after a message hasn't reached us, that the unfortunate messenger has been waylaid by various scouting patrols and murdered in a callous fashion. Thankfully, more often, various reports aren't published at all because some of the Generals conducting the war are censoring some of our reporter's comments. But whenever a report does reach us here in Genghis, we do try and ensure that a report is accurate.

This was the case with the previous story in which we reported that the Crimson Bat and the Crater Maker fled before the Satarian forces to 2816 (references courtesy of the Gloranthian Fiscal and Economic Survey) prior to the massacre of the remaining Lunar forces who bravely remained behind at the River.

Information has now reached us that they, indeed, did not retreat in a north-westernly direction, but instead they moved to a different location. The fault, it would seem, is one of our own. The typesetter admitted that he misread the smudged notes offered by the reporter by saying, "I must have misread a six for an eight". So, it is assumed that the Crimson Bat and the Crater Makers are at 2616 instead.

More reports will be given after the full details of the Lunar advance have been collated.

The Defensive Spirit Magic (DSM) discussion continues:

Henke writes:

"The Blue Moon School was able to perform DSM even though its spirit was eliminated earlier in the game. A magician's DSM (in Dragon Pass) is a collection of spirits controlled by the unit. It should not be considered the disincorporation of the magicians themselves. If that were the case, then when the spirit was eliminated then the magician would snuff it too. Elimination does work the other way around, as we know, because spirits are released as soon as their 'owner' is killed."

For the first time, and after many readings, I've finally understood what Henke is actually saying. Yes, it does seem logical that the Blue Moon School can use DSM without any controlled spirits in tow. I think I'll lay the blame on the confusion on my part onto the rule book, which I think is unclear and confusing from time to time. I believe that one needs to have, and understand, the RuneQuest II rule book to fully comprehend some of the rulings in Dragon Pass. Perhaps the Chaosium chappies ought to have a good close look at the rule book for updating sometime. I reckon that all three of us have a few comments upon how the rule book can be clarified if Greg is interested.

Talking of rules problems, how about this one from Neil:

"I have recently spoken to Henke and he claims that after a re-reading of the combat rules he has gained the impression that magic can only be used against units that are also being attacked in melee. I can't agree with this, what about you?"

Personally, I can't agree with it either. But I haven't had a good close look at the rule book recently, so I can't say definitely one way or the other. Certainly, my brand of logic states that if a chap wants to whizz magic about the spot, I can't see him being limited to those units who are about to be attacked by spear and sword. But if Henke has seen something in the rule book which I've overlooked (it seems an all too common occurrence) then I'd be interested in hearing about it. But until then, I'll allow the magicians to throw their spells at whomever they want.

Any comments, anyone?

COMPUTER WARGAMING

by Ken Lussay

Many of the so called computer wargames on the market are little more than a variation on the theme of arcade games of one sort or another. The best example to this I have come across is a program called *ARNHEM* by CCS for the Amstrad 664 and the Sinclair 48K.

The game is designed for 1, 2 or 3 players: Allies against the computer; Allies against the Germans; and British and the US against the Germans. The full blown version of the game can take anything up to ten hours and involves some two hundred units battling it out across the Dutch countryside. For those with less time available, ranging from the British armoured push on Eindhoven to the paratroops' struggle to hold out in Arnhem.

Playing the game is simplicity itself. The computer asks you for each of the units, and these you feed in using the cursor on the map display. Once all the orders have been entered battle commences.

As with any game there are a few niggling things which could have been improved upon. There is nothing on the map display to show the relative strengths of the units which appear, nor the extent to which they have been depleted (this information needs to be reported specially and this process does interrupt the flow of the game). On the other hand, the map is superb. Only a small part can be seen on the screen at any particular time, but it scrolls nicely indeed; this brings home the most striking aspect of the program - how on earth they ever squeezed it into 48K?

So how does it simulate history? I have to say that I have my doubts. If you play the Allied forces to simulate what really happened, i.e. you spread your paratroops at all the critical points down the corridor to Arnhem then history does repeat itself. The Allied armoured forces do eventually make it to the southern edge of the bridge at Arnhem, but not before the Germans have wiped out all resistance in the town itself. If you stray from history, however, things get a little strange. By landing all Allied paratroops in a single area (either Arnhem or Nijmegen) they have enough strength to make chutney of any all German forces they encounter, while the Allied armoured forces make their own way unassisted to assured victory. The reason for this is that the designers made no provision for the Germans to destroy any of the bridges (which, historically, is a little unfair!) and the paratroops can thus be concentrated effectively instead of, as was actually necessary, being used piecemeal to take and guard the bridges.

Despite this, the game is a lot of fun, and one I would recommend to anyone looking for something in this field.

THE TRUE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICA

by Nalc Smith

The History of the Americas is one of the biggest mysteries to historians all over the world. Until today, no-one really understood who these early settlers were, why they arrived in America, and why they are stupid enough to buy the wrong bridge in London. However, enough evidence has come to light recently; from the crude etchings on the side of Brooklyn Bridge and from the anthropological studies of peck capped American tourists in Trafalgar Square drawing, "Hey, Marsha, ye gonna grab a pick-cho.", we have learned much about the history of this odd race.

The History of America goes a long way back into the mists of time. Way, way, back into the long dark days of the Ice Age when woolly mammoths roamed the tundra. Picture, if you will, a saddened individual sitting in his igloo....

Erik the Red looked thoughtfully at the long-empty vodka bottle that lay before him and sighed. He raised his eyes at the sound of the ice laden wind tearing past the igloo's entrance and wondered just how in hell were his band of half-frozen peasants armed only with jagged icicles would effectively storm the rich wooden huts belonging to the aristocracy. Bloody aristocracy, he thought for the umpteenth that day, sitting there on their fat arses in their warm huts, heated with mammoth dung fires, and all wrapped up in furs. Bloody fat arsed privileged slobs. Just how dare they sit there day after day, warm as toast, drinking vodka. Bloody hell.

That was the rub. As today, in those days the fortunate, the privileged, were separated from the majority by wealth. However, unlike these civilised times, land wasn't the key. Vodka was. After all, land was everywhere; if one could dig long enough to find it, and, besides, who really wanted to spend all day trying to keep it clear of glaciers?

There was one city once, however, called Atlantis which used parcels of land as its tokens of wealth, but when the economy folded just after the collapse of the continental shelf the locals decided to pack up and move off to the lovely spa town of Poppel. Unfortunately, just after the economy was re-floated, so to speak, they discovered that they were due a massive tax refund, to which the local pantheon of Gods agreed, and so the skies rained wealth for forty days and forty nights and the population was wiped out due to over-inflation and excess suffocation.

But, in frozen Siberia economists found that vodka was the ideal currency. Inflation was none existent as it was drunk as soon as it was obtained so everyone was happy, more or less. That is, until the day that the weather turned from the worse freezing up most of the vodka wells and drove the woolly mammoths south, who in turn started to pollute most of the rest. The effect was that the price of vodka shot through the wattle and daub.

The Russian Revolution wasn't going quite as planned. In fact it was a bloody disaster. Whoever thought of having a revolution, insisted Erik's concubine for the fiftieth time that day, in the middle of the Ice Age needed his head looking at. Erik had to agree, reports from the front weren't that cheery. That morning a group of highly spirited (95% proof) warring peasants rushed from their igloos to storm the wooden huts at the other end of the field failed to get twenty yards without succumbing to frostbite or mauling mammoths.

Suffice it to say the Red Revolution, as it was called, failed. The final straw was when the revolutionary igloo was flattened by a passing glacier. The peasants threw down their arms (not a difficult task when suffering from frostbite) and decided to run for it in case the aristocracy decided to get vindictive when the weather would buck up in an eon or two. As it was, they needn't have bothered as the aristocracy, battered down securely in their huts, didn't have a clue as to what was going on. In short, the peasants weren't missed until the aristocracy started to remark that it wasn't easy getting good help these days.

Erik led his men to the northern coast, jumped upon a passing ice floe and set sail for the west.

Little wonder why contemporary historians shake their heads and wonder at the folly of Erik. Surely only a man in desperation would hire Pakistani mercenaries to fight in the Siberian tundra in the middle of the Ice Age. Had he more sense, or the correct 'phone number, he would have contacted Hannibal and his troupe of performing elephants to partake in the revolution.

After many months of being cast adrift the hapless revolutionaries landed upon an undistinguishable muddy islet half way up a malaria-ridden river estuary. As soon as they leapt off the mostly melted icefloe the Pakistani mercenaries demanded sixteen months of back pay for each of them. Naturally, Erik refused, saying that it'd cost him an arm and a leg to which the mercenaries agreed, lopped off his head and cooked Erik for supper.

Thus the first settlers had arrived on Manhattan.

The Pakistanis then started to settle down into a race of shopkeepers, after all, there was no-one to soldier against upon that wretched island, and they began their long history and tradition of buying and selling each other's children and popping some of their own into the communal cooking pot.

Many, many, years later a ship appeared upon the horizon and was travelling up the river past the island until, quite by accident, it floundered upon a mudbank and eventually sank. Those upon board had to quickly grab their belongings and make a dash for the island. Imagine to their surprise, when they thought that they'd actually discovered India! The newcomers were those hardy souls who had set forth from Plymouth for the Isle of Wight, but by sheer fluke they'd got on the wrong ferry (in those days, remember, the signposts were few and far between and the Esso road map was still at the printers waiting for Caxton to finish his science fiction blockbuster, 'The Dooms Day Book') and ended up in the Americas.

Things started to go badly for these unfortunate pioneers. Most of them ended up in the pot before they were able to ransom their lives with their holy relics; a collection of hefty tomes entitled "The London Transport Authority Omnibus Driver's Guide", and a handful of pretty beads which later devolved into some local currency for those who didn't go to England to work on the buses.

Thus, the pioneers were permitted to head out into the wild west. Here in the wide open spaces questions began to arise about wealth, what were they to use to signify wealth? Clearly land was no good, as there were too much of it and after much discussion it was decided that buffalo shit made up into briquettes would be the ideal form of currency. And, it was found, that the bricks were able to burn quite well, thus forming the expression 'having money to burn' and 'where's there's muck there's money'.

And so American life went on. Even though the buffalo were slowly dying out (mainly because of the Irish settlers who, being greedy for the bricks, would continuously cut open these creatures in the vain hope that more would be inside), which made the value of the bricks more and more valuable, the brick currency was still able to continue until it stands where it does today.

Now, bearing in mind the American way of life; it wasn't long before casinos sprang up all over the country as gold prospectors and buffalo herdsman would rush into town and spend their hard earned money over the card table. Many hundreds of bricks, both golden and brown, were handed back and forth over the tables until they ended up in the hands of wealthy casino owners.

The Mob were also starting to get interested in things, alcohol sales were slumping, and they needed to get into a better racket, and quick. They saw the greed in the punters eyes as they literally threw away their bricks and, quite naturally, they wished to be at the receiving end of all this. So, quite simply, they stepped in and took over.

The American population were horrified. It wasn't that they minded throwing away their wealth, but to a bunch of retired pilchard fishermen from Sardinia? This was the final straw. Something had to be done, after all, America, they said, is a land of free enterprise and opportunity for all, providing that you belong; which these exiled Eyties most certainly didn't.

So, the elected government being the spoilt brats that they were came up with the following legislation: if anyone was going to get the bricks then it'd be them, else they'd make sure that no-one would get them. In other words; Prohibition.

The Prohibition hit the mobs low and hard. They didn't know what to do until one of the Bosses from the east side of Chicago came up with a scheme that would be a surefire success. His name was Cal 'Hammer' Capone. He gathered together all the Mob Bosses from all over the States to a meeting in Maryland where he proposed his new racket.

What it was was a scheme whereby seven punters would gather for a session and with a stake of three blocks each and then play this ludicrous game for hours and hours until one player had amassed a total of eighteen blocks, which he'd be allowed to take away with him. Thus leaving the croupier with a clear profit of three blocks a game. Now, said the Hammer, if we could organise hundreds of such games all over the country, we'd be drawing in three blocks a game per night. In short, lots of shit.

The mechanics of the game were hammered out that night. At first it was thought that the punters would be a little put off by the thought that they'd know that the 'bank' would make a clear three bricks a game. Cal thought about this for a while and said that if the 'bank' threw in twelve bricks in at the start of the game for the players to grab, then in the end there still would be the same profit margin for the Mob, but no-one could see this so clearly. Of course, no-one there could either. How could, they said, make three bricks profit if they gave away twelve? Was the Hammer off his rocker, they demanded? But after a number of demonstrations, which the Hammer both organised and profited, they conceded the point. It was shown that with such a game such a profit could be made.

The American public didn't know what hit them. They were offered such a slick package which they couldn't refuse; after all who could resist the chance to gain eighteen bricks of shit by only putting up a stake of three, and to which the organisers gave them a bit of help by giving the players twelve blocks of their own shit? It was a dream come true; surely the shit was almost being thrown away? The demand for the games was fantastic, and all the while the Mob got richer and richer, and no-one seemed to mind, except the government who still wasn't seeing any of it.

In the end, enough was enough. The government was going broke. Hell, they didn't even have enough money to keep the expense accounts going. Many a congressman found that to make ends meet they'd have to give up one or two of their mistresses. And that hurt! So, in their congressional magazine, *Politesse*, they made a proposal that Prohibition would have to end in the hope that the government would perhaps, one day, get some revenue in again.

The law was repealed. The Mob became bankrupt and Congress was filling its coffers once again and began, coincidentally, opening up the naughty areas of Washington DC again. Naturally, the Mob moved again, taking over Congress, leaving a broken man behind. The Hammer was at a loss as what to do with himself. He needed a purpose. After many a night of standing in queues in Georgetown with hordes of congressmen he decided to go into business for himself.

The rest is history. Cal 'Hammer' Capone produced his profiteering racket as a game. Naturally, a few changes had to be made; the map had to be changed from the heartland of Chicago to that of fashionable Europe, the bricks became blocks and a few terms were slightly amended. Knee-cappings became supported attacks, booze running was changed to convoying and gangland sieges became beleaguered garrisons. 1930 Fords were hardly recognisable as fleets and hitmen were armies. No longer were concrete overcoats in the game but, instead, dislodged units were written into the rules.

Unrecognisable from the Prohibition racket, the game became an overnight success story. Even in the White House fanatic devotees of the game were to be found. Conventions sprung up all over the United States for enthusiasts to gather and play the game. There was, however, an incident in the middle of the 70s during a convention at the Watergate Hotel where the President of the United States was discovered bugging the convention hall during the course of the game. Perhaps it didn't do much for his career, but it sure as hell opened up a whole new aspect to the game.

Since then the game has grown in popularity in leaps and bounds despite the attempts of the moral majority to ban it. Perhaps it'll catch on outside of America, but, somehow, historians doubt it.

QUIZ

This problem is based on the professional PBM game, Starglobe, in which I'm playing the part of a starship captain whose aim is to explore sections of the galaxy. The problem I'm giving you is one I had to work out (actually John Dodds came up with the formula) when I wanted to work out the three dimensional co-ordinates of an object hanging about in space. If you're into games that requires some thought you could do worse than play Starglobe. No doubt a full review will follow soon.

You are the navigational officer on the Star Ship 'Vollan Fury', which has just come out of hyperspace after departing from your home world, Monde. The co-ordinates for Monde is 0.00, 0.00, 0.00.

The captain informs you that the Vollan Fury is at reference: -7.6975 -1.3778 -9.7044

The ship's computer tells you that straight ahead of the ship (along the ship's y-axis) is a point at -0.6179 -0.1094 -0.7786. This reference enables you to determine which way the ship is pointing.

In addition one needs to know which way is 'up'. Therefore the computer informs you that there is a point (chosen at random) which lies directly above the ship's bridge. This point is at: 0.3161 0.8721 -0.3735. This is the z-axis.

All well and good, with this information one ought to be able to visualise where one is and which way one is pointing in relation to Monde.

Now, here's the problem which you, as navigational officer, has to solve: All objects located in space by the ship's sensors are given in the following way. The first is the range (in the same units as the 3-D co-ordinates), and the second two (theta and phi) indicate the object's direction.

Theta gives the angle of declination. Zero degrees is dead ahead, ninety is either above, to the side, or below, and 180 is astern.

Phi is a little more complex; this is the angle which the ship has to rotate (from the starboard bow) in an anti-clockwise direction to get the object onto the starboard bow. Example: if an object is seen in front of the ship and is above the bridge, then phi is 90. The ship's x-axis can be seen to run through the ship, phi is the angle above the x-axis.

Now, the problem is this: After coming out of hyper-space you see a star, BAIRMO, which is 16.0408 units away, and the two angles, theta and phi, are 158.6643 and 46.4994. Which means that it's a hell of a distance away and it's above and behind you. But your captain needs to know it's 3-D co-ordinates in relation to Monde, and to the ship.

Starglobe is run by Time Patterns of 97 Devonshire Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2PG.

THE ZINE POLL AND BR

I honestly don't know what to say about the Poll results, apart from saying that in every magazine that I've read since the Poll came out each editor mentioned that his magazine collected more voters than eligible. Clearly, something is wrong with the Zine Poll mechanism which allows 'outside' votes, possibly low votes to boot, for any magazine. So, what sort of votes did Bohemian Rhapsody pick up?

1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	
to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	
1.9	2.9	3.9	4.9	5.9	6.9	7.9	8.9	9.9	10.0
4	3	2	2	3	0	3	0	2	3

Which totals 22 votes (scoring 108.8 according to the figures which John Piggott has supplied) which is a vast improvement over the five votes BR picked up last year. I'm flattered. But there's a slight problem; only 14 of those who voted in the Poll were actually eligible to vote for BR. This means that 33% of the votes for this magazine were, to put it bluntly, rigged.

I don't doubt for a minute that these 'extra' eight votes were the votes at the bottom end of the above table, would anyone vote a '10' for a product which one doesn't see? I don't think so.

The only outcome from such blatant rigging is that it renders the whole Poll meaningless. The fact that Bohemian Rhapsody came 41st out of 43 doesn't mean that it's one of the worst magazines in the Hobby (do you think BR is so bad???), it just means that it can be shown that with 33% of rigged votes then it possible to relegate any magazine to a lower position in the table than it deserves.

The Poll doesn't bother me as a person, or an editor, because I am more than happy with this product as the majority of the readers are too, but it pisses me off in one sense; that this rigging has made those voter's votes utterly worthless. In short, the fourteen (maybe less, who knows?) who did vote for BR did nothing but waste a postage stamp on the whole affair.

Clearly, John Piggott now had a problem with the Poll. To prevent the Poll from becoming an absolute mockery he ought to put his foot down and clean up the whole mess. I suggest that John contacts each and every editor in turn with a list of those who voted for their respective magazines so each editor can try to sort out why various people were so kind to vote for his magazine when they shouldn't have been allowed to. I can't see any reason why the 'bad boys' shouldn't be named, after all if these cheats have tried, and succeeded, in affecting the Poll then these same cheats ought to have their names announced to the Hobby as a whole, whoever they are!

No doubt this will raise a few comments, and I'd like to hear what you, and John Piggott, has to say about all this.

How will all this affect Bohemian Rhapsody? Well, in a perverse way I'm almost glad that BR did attract so many 'free' votes because now I know that people are sitting up and taking notice of the magazine - no other magazine, proportionally, recieved such a positive and negative weighting in the Poll. It seems that either one likes BR and subscribes to it or else one hates the bloody thing (why, I'd like to know?) and doesn't. In any case, as I've said before, I'm not folding or anything. Admittedly, I was a little upset at the result at first, not because of the actual placement, but because that this is supposed to be a Hobby ran by us for all of us, and it seems to me that a lot of people are forgetting this simple fact.

To put the matter straight, BR is not a magazine for those interested in Power Playing Politics but for those who wish to play postal games in and around a decent magazine. Similarly that with at least 90% of the other magazines in the Hobby one assumes. Perhaps the rank and file of the Hobby, from the newest novice to the oldest hand ought to have a damn good look at the attitude of both themselves and the Hobby as a whole. Is it any wonder why every now and again, with increasing regularity, voices are starting to be heard saying 'The Hobby is going stale'? Perhaps it's going stale because any number of potential newcomers are being put off by the attitude of the Hobby. The only place where lies, deceit and underhand play belongs in this Hobby is on the Diplomacy board, and that's where it should stop!

Back to BR. I'll be carrying on in the usual manner, trying to produce an article that will be well worth reading. But, because it looks as if the Diplomacy games are becoming more and more in demand (since I printed the back page a few more gamers have expressed interest in playing, and it looks like they'll be a game for Norwegians starting shortly), and in addition they'll be a second Dragon Pass game as well as an En Garde game starting up, I'll have to have second thoughts about sending all the results out by flyer to all the players. Instead, I'll have the magazine ready before the deadline and then slot in the game results on the last night (possibly a wednesday) and have the magazine in the post to the printers the next day. Because of this time schedule and of the page count calculation I'll have to adjudicate the En Garde game possibly a week earlier as so to get that out of the way first.

The reason behind this idea is that I'm not exactly made of money. I don't mind spending a few bob on my Hobby, but I have to try to keep things in perspective. Also paying the Norwegian rate of tax (59%) doesn't help either. The last issue cost me quite a bit as will this issue - especially the front cover as I thought that it deserved special treatment from a local printer, and it cost almost as much to print as the whole of last issue to print and send.

So, in future, Bohemian Rhapsody will be geared towards those who wish to play games, but it will always contain plenty of articles if I can get them finished before the deadline. I don't intend to get caught up in the trap of waiting until the deadline before knocking out a thirty-odd page issue. It may mean that BR will become a little thinner (24 pages is, in actual fact, my target) but a little more regular.

Back to the financial bits; I'm afraid that a few trades may have to be cut sometime and from next issue I'm afraid that those in the US will have to receive theirs by surface mail. I'm sorry, but that's the way that it'll have to be.

Modulo Four

Finally I've managed to get toward the end of another traumatic issue of Bohemian Rhapsody. I wonder when I'll ever get an issue out without any bother; it seems that no matter how much preparation I do something always seem to go wrong. This issue's sorry tale revolves around my wishes to upgrade the keyboard. When the kit arrived John Dodds and I tried to assemble the 'fix it yourself in seconds' kit, and after four long hours we managed to get it all together. It looked really neat and the keyboard was superb, even though it was a poxy IBM-PC clone. But the only drawback was that I'd managed to dismantle the crystal on the main printed circuit board and I had to send the whole thing back for repair.

Even though the company (an Italian outfit called Sandy) was reputed, and indeed were, to be swift I realised that I'd have to do the magazine in another way. First of all I contemplated using my old Brother typewriter, which I got for my 21st many years ago, but after clogging up the platen roller with an address label that's now waiting for repair, so that was out of the question. Indeed, the Brother does work, providing, one doesn't bother with an y paper.

So, in desperation I then wiped off the dust off my manual portable I bought in Antwerp. The mixture of Belgian engineering and an AZERTY keyboard proved to be too much for me as those playing Diplomacy with me can profess, so that idea was a dead loss.

I then had a look at my other two computers, a Jupiter Ace and a Spectrum, neither of which I'd call decent magazine producing material and so I was forced to look towards the work's IBM mainframe. And I wish I hadn't. This issue, frankly, is a bloody mess and now I wish I'd waited for my QL to return, which it did last week.

Even so, the result, even if a little badly written, is quite nifty. I don't think I know of many other magazines, apart from House of Lords, which arrived this week, which has used a laser printer for the manuscript top copy. I thought that trying to get a magazine produced during my lunch breaks and after hours would have been really easy, but I was wrong. It was nothing but hard work. Half way through the manufacture (I don't there's any other way to describe it!) of this issue there was a disk crash in the laser printer, of all places, and so half of the character fonts were wiped out with the result that in some places I've got italics and in the later parts some small 10 point text. Add to that the problems of the IBM 'going-down' (what do you expect from a glorified typewriter company?) all the time and excessive job queues on the laser printer. In short, it's been a nightmare.

Thankfully, the ol' QL is back in action and I'm all raring to go again, except that now I'm getting concerned about the fuse going on my daisy wheel printer every hour or so. But I reckon that I'll be able to sort that problem soon and then we'll be laughing again. Sometimes, I wonder why I bother: bottom of the Pn? In two consecutive years, problems with technology, problems with moving house, problems with the bog seat (see last issue) and now I'm expected to go back to Belgium again for a while.

Talking of Belgium: did you hear that they're going to build a Disneyland there? Apparently, they're going to put the turnstiles at Ostend.

Seriously, I've just been told by 'Rumour Control' here at work that I'm due to go back to Woodisland for a month to work on a project. I was expecting to leave in January, but I met my boss in the corridor yesterday and his first words were "What are you doing here, you're supposed to be in Belgium?". Even though we're a telephone company, communications has never been our strong point.

The other month, we had our first English visitor in John Dodds and it gave May-Britt her first chance to meet some games players, the other being Geir Aaslid who runs Norway's games shop and games group here in Oslo. I'm not sure how John found his trip in Norway, as I expect he's still a little too stunned at the meat prices to let me know he's got back safely. But, if John pronounces Oslo a safe place to visit (except on Saturday nights when it's fun!) for body (not wallet) I expect that we'll have a few more games types clamouring to stay on our floor and help with the washing up.

Oh yes, it snowed yesterday. Yippee. So, at the weekend I'll be getting the skis out after giving my personal insurance policy a close examination.

Hopefully, I'll have another copy finished before Xmas, but I don't expect that you'll see it before the New Year. If not, have a happy Xmas and I'll be thinking of you as I ski uphill and downhill and into trees.

Malc

HOUSEKEEPING

Change of Address:

Simon Billenness, 630 Victory Blvd, Apt. 6F, Staten Island NY 10301, USA.

Andy Crowe, Bus38, Astridplein 31-32, Antwerpen 2018, BELGIUM.

Fred C Davis Jr., 3210 K Wheaton Way, Ellicott City Md 21043, USA

Peter Sullivan, St Chad's College, 18 North Bailey, Durham DH1 3RH.

Denise Yates, 152 Ankerline Crescent, Shooter's Hill, London SE18 3LG

Renewals Received:

Daniel Brooks

Christoph Schunck

Free Issues:

John Keillor

Martin le Fevre

Roberto Della-Sala

Renewals Required (one issue left in credit):

Steve Arnwoodian

Steve Green

Daniel Brooks

Mike Brockelhurst

Bob Masso

Last Issue unless I get a subscription renewal:

Tony Spencer

Peter Wade

Sue Gardener

John Chisholm

Alan Richards

Alan Richards

Andy Crowe

Ed Hutton

Richard Morris

Theo Clarke

Waiting Lists:

Diplomacy:

John Dodds, Dave Kotula, John Keillor (+4 wanted)

Dragon Pass:

Steve Green (1 or 2 wanted)

'Shadow' Diplomacy:

John Keillor (+6 wanted)

En Garde

(Waiting list opens later, maximum number of players is 50).

Diplomacy Standbys:

Nick Brennan, John Dodds. (2 Free issues when you join the list and another 3 when called up).

Games In Progress:

Diplomacy

Game 86N1

GM: Malcolm Smith

Dragon Pass

Game 1

GM: Malcolm Smith

Cover Art by May-Brill.

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