



RUNESTONE POLL 1988

**Pollster Bruce Linsey surveys
his new Poll Headquarters Bldg.**

GAMEFINDER

Of the eleven game and toy stores checked this time, eight had Diplomacy, seven had Empire Builder, and four had Railway Rivals. None offered to sell Gunboat.

ERIC DEPT.

Last evening Eric was up at the neighbor's playing, and I went to get him for dinner. He saw me and yelled, "I'm not coming home!" I replied, "Yes you are, it's dinner time." He screeched, "If you make me come home, I'll throw this rock at you!" I said, "If you throw that rock at me, you won't be allowed to play with your friend any more today." Eric's friend said, "It doesn't matter, it's time for me to go in now anyway." Eric shrieked, "Oh good! Then I can throw the rock now!" It hurt.

ROSS DEPT.

About an hour after the preceding, Ross came up to me looking very sad. I took the ice-pack off my temple and said, "What's wrong, Ross?" He answered, "Daddy, you like Eric better, don't you?" Horrified, I exclaimed, "No, of course not - why?" "Well, you let him throw a rock at you; why can't I?"

NEW SUBSCRIPTION RATES

I'm tired of trying to adjust these rates every few minutes. From here on, COSTA costs whatever you think it's worth. Send whatever amount you feel is appropriate, and then be sure and notify me when your sub has expired. If you think COSTA is worth less than nothing, please send your invoice.

IT LIVES AFTER ALL!! IT'S NOT DYING!! (Just decomposing as usual.)

CONRADO GUANA

incorporating The Easter Wombat

Volume XI, Number 17

April 1, 1988

Okay, we really cocked this numbering up rather! See, the Mexican issue was numbered XI/11 but should have been XI/12. So the next issue was correctly numbered XI/13. Next was Rod's little XI/13.5, which is also correct. But now we run into real trouble. COSTAGUANA CANADA, which should have been XI/14, was numbered XII/1 (sic!). This was followed by XI/15, which no-one has ever seen (nor will they) because it was destroyed by the printer in error. This was 'followed' by XI/16, which was erroneously numbered XI/15, not because I was then aware of the destroyed issue, but rather because I forgot about COSTA CANADA.

So! This issue is correctly and properly XI/17, which leaves a gap for the late lamented destroyed issue (dammit, it was a beaut, too; Bruce Geryk on the cover in passionate pink, a vicious denunciation of Randolph Smyth for daring to suggest that I should denounce somebody, Melinda arguing in favor of killing people...oh well, 24 pages of typing kaput....), of which by the way true archivists are able to get a mere remnant - I made five copies each of pp. 10 and 11 and sent them to the players in 'Crescendo' and 'Pimmallone,' and those copies will probably some day be collectors' items.

* **SPECIAL NOTICE:** Last issue I announced that COSTA was cutting back to a limited warehouse-type thing. I've changed my mind! Please DISREGARD that announcement; your beloved COSTA will be continuing as usual! WOW! *

GAME OPENINGS:

REGULAR DIP: Up to three games available. No fee, just a sub. Thus far we have Bruce Linsey, Mark Berch, Doug Beyerlein, Rod Walker and Walt Buchanan signed, and of course Melinda Holley wants in all three.

GUNBOAT: Up to two games open. Just Melinda so far, for both.

RAILWAY RIVALS: No limit on openings. Next section to start (three so far, need one more) will use the new Greenland map.

RIVAL RAILWAYS: Neat new variant on the preceding, in which you build track as usual but then switch lines for the runs. Two signed. First section will use the Gibraltar map.

GUNBOAT RIVALS: (Terrible name, eh?) Another 'Rivals' variant; this time play is as usual except you don't learn where your opponents' tracks are.

RATHER SILLY RIVALS: Co-invented by Robin ap Cynan, the principle here is to start with a finished game and play backward, un-running races and taking up track....

COSTA BOOKS, STUDY GUIDES AND PAMPHLETS

COSTA the Wonderful has now been around in some form since 1965, and so many people have expressed curiosity about the past, questioned some 'historical' reference I've made, asked how all my years of GMing could possibly have led to the rather quaint set of rules I use, etc., that I thought some need existed for explanatory material to assist you. The following are now available or planned shortly:

AN INTRODUCTION TO COSTAGUANA ('America's Gem'). Soft cover, \$4.95. Covers such essential topics as: What to expect in a typical issue; origin of the name; explanation of the volume numbers; complete printing history including synopses of all issues; photos of the editor using mimeo, ditto, hecto, photocopying, and a pen; and a special appendix breaking down the complete history of COSTA subscription rates.

THE BEST OF COSTAGUANA. A six-volume series reprinting the most important items that have appeared in these pages. More than 80% of the material is written by Conrad himself. Vol. I covers 1965-7; Vol. II, 1968-9; Vol. III, 1970-73; Vol. IV, 1974; Vol. V, 1975-77; and Vol. VI, 1978-83. (Note: Vol. VI is blank, owing to the fact that no issues were published in those years.) Price \$22.50 each; embossing extra.

COSTAGUANA PLOT SYNOPSIS. Designed for quick-study preparation for examinations, term papers, etc. Clear, concise digest-form presentation of all 23 years of COSTA, with cross-references to all major names, events, feuds, etc. \$15.75. Not available to Harvard undergrads.

COSTAGUANA TEE-SHIRTS. Finest weave, made in Guatemala, 100% cotton. Emblazoned with the first line of Conrad's "Nocturno" and a picture of (your choice) Haydn, Bruckner, Mahler or Depeche Mode. Sizes: Small, medium, large, grandiose. \$19.99.

COSTAGUANA MERCHANDISE CATALOGUE. 28 pp. A detailed list, with photos, of all COSTAGUANA souvenir items available or planned for the future. Full price and ordering information, plus money-saving coupons. In addition to all preceding items, includes: Balloons, planters, Hummel figurines, toilet seat covers, stationery, return address labels, and a special gold-embossed edition of the boxed game set autographed by COSTAGUANA's editor. \$5., refundable with first \$25 order.

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A BLATANT APPEAL

You all know that COSTAGUANA won the Runestone Poll the past two years running, right? You also know that COSTA has seen a few modest hard times this last few months, right? This implies that COSTA is not likely to win three years in a row, right?

Well, this leaves me with a very serious problem. I want to win again. It is VERY IMPORTANT to me to win again. In fact, if I am to be happy during the next phase of my life, I HAVE to win again. And I am therefore earnestly soliciting your help to make sure that happens.

To understand the essential nature of this, it is necessary that I tell you a bit about my wife. Well, no...actually, I need to tell you something about my mother-in-law (my wife being very much her child).

Mildred Miller Karlan, my mother-in-law. Sigh. Dear lady. But she has a Major Quirk of Personality which my chosen spouse has inherited. My mother-in-law is a knick-knack freak and a perfectionist in the matter of the arrangement of said knicks (or knacks). Every extra spot in her house has a porcelain figurine on it, and each of those is meticulously dusted and arranged daily. And all who do homage to her will (absolutely must, that's her Rule #7) lead their lives equivalently.

So. When I won the first time, I was so proud of the certificate that I framed it and hung it on the wall. And when I won the second time, I did likewise, and made a nice pair out of the two. Unfortunately, I lack Mother Mildred's skill in this sort of thing, and I put them on a patch of wall and in such a way that they look ridiculous without a third one hanging there. And I can't move them now, or I'd be left with two ugly nail holes in the plaster. And I can't fix the holes because that would require painting, which I can't afford.

So I really need your help in getting that third certificate. It means a lot, friends, believe me; I really want my marriage to endure, and I know that without that third frame, it's Divorce Court in a flash. So I'm asking - no, I'm begging - for friendship's sake, vote COSTA a 'ten' in the Poll this year.

But let's be realistic. A few people won't see this plea, and will vote a lower place in the mistaken belief that they're being fair and honest - as usual with such people, without regard for the damage they may be doing to the editor's psyche and/or entire life. Worse yet, a few of you who are reading this are going to say "Pshaw!" (you know, a few people really do say "Pshaw!") and actually cast a 'nine' or even, oh unutterable slime that they are, an 'eight.' (Last year some idiot actually voted a 'zero.' He has since been appropriately destroyed.) So what the rest of us must do is help offset these wieners. Not only do we need to vote COSTA a 'ten,' we also need to vote down three or four other 'zines which look likely to provide strong competition. PRAXIS, EXCITEMENT CITY UNLIMITED, THE 'ZINE REGISTER and MAGUS are the ones I'm most worried about; someone suggested DIPLOMACY WORLD to me also, but I think that's carrying things a bit far.

For these 'zines, I think votes of, oh, say 'five' or 'six' ought to take care of things. If you really feel guilty and want to push it to a 'seven,' I guess that's okay, though we're getting iffy now. Under no circumstances should you go higher; too damned dangerous, you never know what kind of recruiting campaigns these guys are going to mount.

Now, I know, some of you are thinking, "Gadzooks!" (Recent surveys indicate that more people say "Gadzooks!" than say "Pshaw!") "This is not ethical, it may cause the poor maligned Poll to suffer a skew!" Well, I have two answers to that; one of them is printable, and is, "So what? Aren't I more important than some stupid Poll? Haven't I been good to you all this time, neglecting my children in order to get those wonderful issues out to you?"

But just to allay any lingering fears, I checked with two authorities and got the following replies:

BRUCE LINSEY: "I agree completely that you should have all the 'tens' you deserve; by all rights you should win. However, I don't think I had better distribute ballots with the '10' pre-printed in the COSTA space."

DICK MARTIN: "Yes, of course for you I'll urge my readers to take the thing seriously this time. I can always subvert it in 1989."

So, friends, PLEASE PLEASE PRETTY PLEASE?? Thanks a million.

PEOPLE I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH

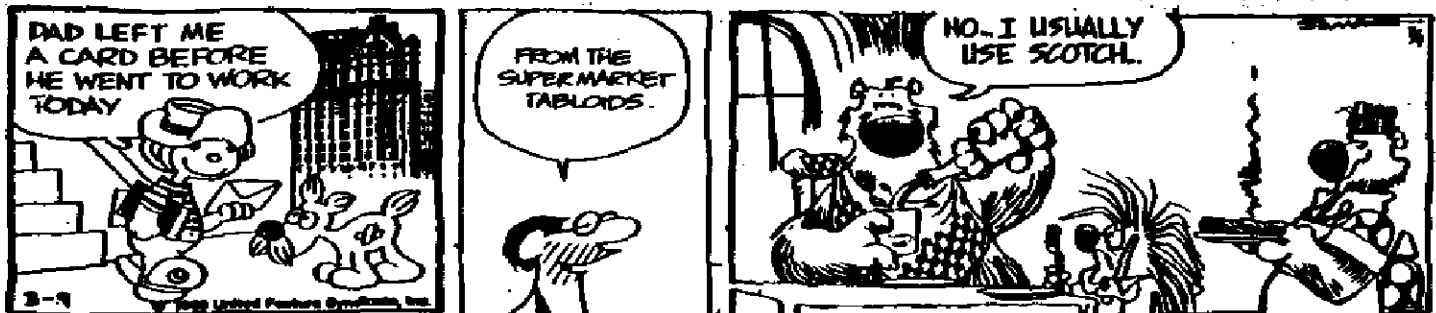
I have a serious personal problem with people with strange names. I have an even greater problem with people who purposely do wierd things with their names. There's something sinister about this, it seems to me. And people like that need constant watching, if not outright eradication.

By rights, I'm an expert. How would you like to be saddled with the name Conrad Frieener von Metzke? Care to borrow it long enough to try making a reservation at a Chinese restaurant?

But at least, stuck with it though I may be, I'm up front about it. I don't hide it, or diddle with it to make it more palatable, or make excuses for it - no, I bear up under the jokes ("Connie," "Cornbread," "Freezer," "von Messy") in the enduring knowledge that my name is mine, and nobody else (thank God) can make that statement....

But some people completely mishandle their names, and thereby incur my critical scrutiny. And among the situations that put me off completely are those in which people have used their names in a manner obviously designed to mislead us. For instance, I am bothered by:

1. People who are stuck with ridiculous names that simply cry out for ridicule, and yet make no effort to change them - like John Piggott.
2. People who immigrate to this country and Anglicize half their name, but not the other half - like Bruce (Mieczyslaw) Geryk.
3. People whose names are blatant lies - like Doug Brown and Cal White. (I guess this one could be worse, though; ever met a black man named Green?)
4. People who use an initial and a middle name (usually lawyers), making us wonder what's wrong with that first name - like R. Jacob Walters. (How do I introduce you? "Arjacob, this is Fred." And what is so dreadfully secret about a first name like Ruggiero?)
5. People who try to convince us that they're really two people, like Steve and Linda Courtenanche. (Anybody ever met this Steve-and-Linda person? Is it a he in drag, or what?)
6. People who somehow think it is important that we know they have a father - like Fred Davis, Jr. Almost asinine as the Icelandic system where everybody is ALWAYS someone's son (Thorsen) or daughter (Thorsdottir). Heck, if we wanted to meet your pop, we'd ask!
7. People who name Cons after themselves - like Larry Peery. Ah, but now that I've got to the subject of Larry Peery, let me go get some more paper....



HOW THIS ISSUE CAME TO BE by Conrad von Metzke

Well, first I typed it, then I had it printed, then I bought stamps....

Actually, that wasn't what I meant. This issue, you will soon see, is rather atypical in that it contains things COSTA is famous for hating. But I have always harbored a secret desire to do this sort of thing at least once, just to see if I could. Articles on "good play" and various other tactical/interpersonal game skills are so far removed from the normal content of this 'zine that to see them present here is almost like entering a new world - COSTA taken over by Walt Buchanan, or some such thing. In fact, I've let it be known that I utterly loathe such trips as the ensuing articles will represent. Still, I wanted to see what I could do on this level, just to be able to say I'd done it. You never know when I'll need resumé material....

Also, this was supposed to have been the last issue, and I thought it might be trippy to blow out of here with a real bang - and when the situation changed and it became evident I'd still be publishing, nothing really had to be changed, I could still go out in style and then come right back in with a whole different style! The point (if there is one) is that I can do this no matter what the future holds. Even if the future holds all the wild cards. Thank God we're playing cribbage....

Anyway, so I had this idea for a serious 'tactical' issue, right? So I wrote to several people whose previous efforts along these lines were well-known to me, and who owed me favors, and I begged and bribed. Not a good response, actually: Walt Buchanan and John Leeder have left the hobby, John Koning is deceased, John Boardman isn't speaking to me, Allan Calhauer wanted too much money...it went on like that for a time. And as the deadline rushed closer and the file remained empty, I finally broke down and approached some friends whose efforts in this field are such inferior, but who did at least agree to do the job. I'm sorry; I wish I could offer better material. Please don't fall asleep. Think of this as an experiment that went sadly awry, that came in far short of expectation, that almost makes this issue a pale reflection of the worst of DIPLOMACY WORLD, that makes me completely reevaluate my friendships....

But I may have salvaged something in the process of writing a certain amount of the material myself. In fact, I almost wish I'd written the whole thing in the first place. Well, but then that means I have to spend more time doing typing, and I don't want to do that...maybe I'll just do some judicious editing and rewriting. Or maybe...yeah, that's it! Maybe I'll just print an issue with only the articles from Larry Peery! Neat! Since Larry didn't send one, that will save one hell of a lot of work - and, as an additional virtue, it will offer Larry's best contribution yet to this hobby! (Maybe I'll mix in Rod Walker's article too; he didn't send one either.) Or perhaps I'll turn the whole project over to Bruce Geryk and see how an expert dwindles a mailing list - though from the evidence of the last few lines, I'm doing fine on that level by myself.

Oh well. The page is almost full. What follows is my first and last venture into serious article-printing, my first traipse outside the pale of silliness and general madcap tomfoolery, my first toying with sheer boredom, my first approach to wishing that COSTA and this whole stupid hobby would just pack up and go away....

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Your Opponent *

(* but were too couth to ask)

by Bruce Linsey

The reason why most people don't win most of their Diplomacy games is that they don't take into account all of the available information about their fellow players. Oh sure, most of us base our alliance decisions on our opponents' playing records, on who is or is not a stabber, and so on. But this sort of knowledge is just the tip of an iceberg floating in an entire ocean full of data about any given player in your games. You've all heard the phrase, "Know Thy Enemy", right? Well, never has this advice held so true as over the Diplomacy board. If you think you can manipulate Player XXX just by knowing that he doesn't stab or that he has two wins as Germany, imagine how much more string-pulling you can do if you know everything there is to know about the guy -- perhaps even more than he himself knows! What wonderful diplomatic doors are unlocked for you, if only your opponents' lives are placed at your fingertips like open books.

The problem, you see, is that such a catalogue covering each hobbyist in such depth has not existed -- until now. For the past three years, I have privately done the necessary research to assemble a veritable encyclopedia covering all aspects of the lives of every single North American hobby member. This is far more than just your run-of-the-mill collection of endgame stats; nor is it just dry data such as dates of birth, parents' names, etc. No, this publication will really allow you to know your opponents, down to shoe sizes, favorite ice cream flavors, and sexual practices. I now, as the crowning achievement of my hobby services, offer the new, computerized, continuously-updated Goldfish Bowl of North American Diplomats.

The obvious question is, how did I manage to gather all of this data and piece it together without any of you knowing about it? I can now reveal that. In my employ, I have a network of spies operating both in and out of the hobby. Many of them are in very high places. For example, my agent at the U.S. Census Bureau, who I'll call "Max", provides me constantly with extremely valuable information. Another of my most valued employees is "Rex", the chairman of the Board of Directors of a certain New York City hospital where 9 hobby members (and 14 hobbyists' spouses and children) just happen to have been born. These people report to me on a regular basis.

Not all of my people are so highly placed, of course -- it's important to obtain an influx of data at the grass roots level as well. You all deal daily with my spies. They work behind the counter at the store where you buy your booze, at your local auto repair shop, as teacher aides in your kids' schools, etc. On more than one occasion, I've had to have an agent buy the house next to one of you so as to glean close-up information. In point of fact, it requires a staff of trained spies numbering in excess of 85,000 to keep track of fewer than 2000 hobbyists. But the final product made it all worthwhile.

Initially, I was planning to keep the encyclopedia for my own exclusive personal use, thereby gaining me an insurmountable advantage in all my games. But since I've retired from active playing, I've decided instead to offer it to the rest of you. Goldfish Bowl is alphabetized, and at 4914 pages had to be physically split into sixteen separate volumes.

Just to give you an idea of the wealth of information included, here's a little snippet taken from the middle of the 5-page entry on myself:

A REALLY COMPREHENSIVE OPENING FOR FRANCE

by Mark L. Berch

Many writers make openings a lot more complicated than they have to be. But an ambitious player can get a lot of mileage out of those French pieces. Strap yourselves in for the ride!

Iberia is the richest and easiest prize for any player at the opening gun, so don't hold back. F Bre-Mid sets the stage for taking Portugal in the fall. Likewise A Par-Gas sends you on your way to Spain. Unfortunately you're not going to be the only one headed there. You'd be surprised at how often Italy is interested too, and orders A Ven-Pie. This can cause all sorts of agonies for the fall. Unnecessary agonies. Just order A Mar-Pie and put a stop to it.

Now, what about Belgium? Some say that you should dangle it before both England and Germany, and let them plead for your help. Well, I say, take it yourself and let them fight for the right not to be your next victim. The power moves for the armies here are A Par-Pic and A Mar-Bur. So add those to what we've already covered. Now, as for the fleet, I also favor adding F Bre-Eng. Some say that this is overkill, Belgium-wise. But if England has opened to the Channel, you've probably just saved your Belgium campaign. So toss that one in too.

But what about Germany? Hey, support yourself to Burgundy as millions of forward-looking French players have done for almost thirty years. But where should the attack come from, so many ask? This is another one of those completely unnecessary disputations. Play it safe! Do them both! So, add both A Mar-Bur, A Par S A Mar Bur and A Par-Bur, A Mar S A Par-Bur to what we've already got.

Well, I think that pretty much covers everything, and we didn't even have to take that much space. Whoops! I forgot A Mar-Spa. Well, most players do this anyhow. But sometimes it's the most common things that we forget to do.

Okay, that was a lot of territory to cover, so let's review. This is what you should submit as your Spring 1901 orders:

F Bre-Mid. A Par-Gas. A Mar-Pie. A Par-Pic. A Mar-Bur. F Bre-Eng.
A Par-Bur. A Mar S A Par-Bur. A Mar-Bur. A Par S A Mar-Bur. A Mar-Spa.

What sort of game should you use this opening in? Actually, it doesn't matter one whit what sort of game you choose - it will work equally well in a novice or an expert game. But I suggest that you pick a GM who is GMing his first game. It will give him an opportunity to reflect on whether he really wants to be a GM.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENCOURAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS: Report cards given by the San Diego City Schools have a space for 'parent reply,' for use if the parent cannot manage a personal conference with the teacher. By actual measurement, this space is 1 mm. smaller than a Wheat Thin cracker. And the space already contains instructions for its use!

SUPERPOWER EAST: The Austro-Italo-Russo-Turkish Alliance

by Randolph Smyth

It's occasionally frustrating to get into a game and realize that everyone on your side of the board is competent and likeable, while everyone on the other side isn't worth the cost of your stationery. The usual result is that you're forced to attack one of the guys that you'd ordinarily be happy to ally with, while a couple of idiots screw up the game with their constant stupidity on the other side. This article addresses the best way for capable eastern powers to escape this result, and pick up some western centers in the process.

We have to make a few assumptions here: (1) That none of the eastern powers (R/A/I/T) have done anything to irritate one of the others in Spring or Fall 1901; (2) That the western powers have demonstrated their incompetence by that time; and (3) That all four of the eastern guys are therefore prepared to cooperate against the west. We'll start with post-Fall 1901 positions of:

AUSTRIA: A Tri, A Ser, F Gre (+2)
 ENGLAND: F Eng, F Nwg, A Wal (he NMRed in S.O1)
 FRANCE: F Bel, A Pic, A Bur (He went F Bro-ENG, then F Eng-Bel)
 GERMANY: F Bal, A Mun, A Hol (he ordered A Kie-Hol, F Bal C Kie-Swe)
 ITALY: A Ven, A Tun, F Ion (+1)
 RUSSIA: F Swe, A Nwy, A Ukr, F Rum (+3)
 TURKEY: A Bul, F Aeg, A Con (+1)

Russia got lucky against an NMRing England; the rest of the eastern positions are pretty standard.

For cooperation to succeed, Turkey must be willing to accept the fact that he would normally be the victim in this position. R/A/I could commit some forces to blitz Turkey and use whatever is left against the west. But the west would only fall apart slowly if the units must be dispersed; and the Turkish player is generally well liked by the others. So they agree to let him live - if he shows corresponding restraint.

The Winter orders, then, are:

A: Build A Vie, A Bud	I: Build F Nap
E: Build A Lon	R: Build F StP (N), A War,
F: NMR, plays one short	A Mos
G: Build A Kie	T: Build F Smy

Now the A/I/R/T alliance catches the western powers by surprise in the Spring:

A: A Vie-Tyo, A Bud-Vie, A Tri-Ven, A Ser-Tri, F Gre-Ion.
 E: A Lon-Pic, F Eng C A Lon-Pic, F Nwg-Nth, A Wal-Yor.
 G: F Bal-Den, A Ruh-Bel, A Hol S A Ruh-Bel, A Mun-Bur.
 F: A Pic-Bur, A Bur-Bel, F Bel-Pic.
 I: A Ven-Pic, F Nap-Tyn, F Ion H /d/, A Tun-NAf.
 R: F StP (N) - Bar, A Nwy H, F Swe-Ska, A Mos-StP, A War-Sil, A Ukr-Gal, F Rum H.
 T: F Smy-Eas, F Aeg S AUS F Gre-Ion, A Con-Bul, A Bul-Gre.

Russia can move A Nwy-Swe if he is more worried about Germany than England; this is optional. Note that Italy is apparently being 'stabbed' by Austria and Italy, but his F Ion has a good retreat in Tun, and watch what happens in the Fall:

DIPLOMACY'S ULTIMATE WEAPON: THE NMR

by Doug Beyerlein

NMR: No Moves Received. These three words strike terror in the hearts of postal Diplomacy players everywhere. No matter how good your diplomacy, how brilliant your board tactics, or how devious your game strategy, it takes only one little NMR at the wrong time to destroy all of your hopes for glory on the game board.

From my first postal game in 1966 through the peak of my playing career in the early '70s I hated NMRs. I planned and schemed against them. I sent gamesmasters postcards to return upon receipt of my orders; I sent multiple sets of identical orders at different times from different locations; I phoned my orders in; and I beat the dreaded NMR. I beat it badly.

In an eight year period of playing in over 20 games at any one time I suffered only one NMR. It occurred early in my playing career and it kept me from making a winter build. But then how was I to know that my orders would be on a mail train traveling through Port Chicago, California, on the day the port was bombed by the radical left in protest against US involvement in Vietnam? The train was damaged and my letter and moves destroyed in resulting fire. But never again did I let a NMR be printed next to my name.

I retired from serious postal play in the mid 70s when I took over as custodian of the Boardman Numbers. From then on I was rarely concerned about NMRs. I was too busy keeping track of game finishes and other BNC business. But it was then that I came across Nik Reynolds and the real potential of NMRs.

Nik (without the 'c') was one of the many faceless names that can be found in all postal Diplomacy zines. Never one to write letters to the editor, write articles, or publish a zine, he just played in a few games here and there. But as I ran across a game of his in one small zine or another I noticed a curious thing: there was often a NMR next to his name, but his country was usually doing just fine. I mean he wasn't winning games, but he always seemed to be a part of any draw that was called.

Finally, to satisfy my curiosity, I went back to some of Nik's finished games and went through them season by season. That was when I discovered what I call the ultimate potential of the NMR. What I found was that Nik would NMR at important junctures in the game. When he was in an alliance that was about to attack a third party Nik's country would suddenly

HOW TO BEAT THE BOREDOM

by Richard J. Walkerdine

I remember going to a Diplomacy convention many years ago and hearing a very young player say how much he was enjoying it. Quick as a flash one of the older players turned to him and said, "You're not here to enjoy yourself, my lad, you're here to play games!" It was said in fun of course, but it set me thinking.

Just how many people really enjoy postal Diplomacy? Most of us? I doubt it. Consider. Most of the games you play follow the same pattern: You make some early progress, then come up against a big alliance (or suffer a really mean stab) and from then on it's downhill all the way. Once in a long while you do better than that and actually get to the point where you might be able to go for a win - but then the editor folds the 'zine and in the chaos of trying to rehouse the orphan you miss a season and down you go again. It's depressing and demoralising and, after a few short months, intensely boring.

But we play the damn game year after year. Are we mad, or just plain stupid? Well, some of us are probably both, of course, but in most cases you'll find that players who have been around for many years have found an extra dimension to the hobby, something which is no part of Diplomacy but which allows us to beat the boredom of the game itself by generating a new interest. In some cases this will be making new friends, discussing politics or other matters of interest, pretending to be great authors by writing lots of press, and so on. In my case, however, I don't give a damn about friendship or any of the rest of that crap, I beat the boredom by driving people crazy!

And it's such a satisfying thing to do, with endless variety. Here are just a few of my techniques, I'm sure you can think of variations.

Work hard on your Diplomacy letters, make them really friendly and interesting and try to get on good terms with the other players. Find out their interests. If they like music offer to send them a tape of some album they want but haven't got - but when you send it make sure it's a blank tape. They'll return it of course whereupon you send it back saying it sounds fine on your stereo. It gets returned again so next time you send the real tape with a note asking if they're sure their equipment is okay. A few episodes like this will soon have them wondering about their sanity.

If you are a publisher select one or two victims and now and then, say once in three or four issues, send their 'zine to them a couple of weeks late. When they tell you it arrived too late for them to meet the deadline show some sympathy and accept their late orders but insist that their copy was posted at the same time as all the others. After a few months they will believe their mail service is really bad and will start to get nervous every time a 'zine is a day or two late. Then, when they get to the point where they might actually win a game, get the 'zine to them on time but claim their orders never arrived! The sudden switch from a late 'zine to late orders - and especially if it means they lose the game - should go a long way to pushing them over the brink.

The above are fairly subtle methods but sometimes it's fun to be a bit more direct. If you know a player is going to be attending a con one weekend there's a perfect opportunity to break into his house and cause as much damage as possible, and anyone who has suffered a really

messy burglary will know how badly that can affect someone. If your victim is married the opportunities are even more exciting; while he is locked in the study writing letters and reading maps his wife is going to be in just the right state to react favourably to some attention from someone else - and of course after you've had your fill of her you make sure he finds out about it. An even better situation is when your victim has a young daughter, preferably underage, though I'll leave you to work out the rest of this method.

So keep struggling through this wonderful hobby of ours. Don't let the game get you down, make sure you use it as a means of generating new interests - and if those interests are similar to mine you might even find that they help you to actually win a game once in a while!

#####_#####

UNCLE CONNIE'S TOUGHEST CROSSWORD EVER!

1	2
3	4

ACROSS:

1. Typical comic-strip indicator for sleep
2. Last letter of the English alphabet
3. Double consonant in word describing action of carbonated beverages when shaken (hint: The answer is not "Blow up all over you and get Coke down in your shoes")
4. Letter doubling as pictograph of one type of framing used in house construction

DOWN:

1. Same as 2 down
2. Same as 3 up
3. Mirror image of 4 across, backward
4. The only English letter which does not appear in this common sentence: "The quick brown fox jumped over the laying dogs."

POSTAL GAMING - IS THERE A FUTURE WITHOUT ME? by Bruce Geryk

As most of you already know, I recently stopped publishing my own Diplomacy 'zine, BLUNT INSTRUMENTS, in disgust over the current state of affairs throughout the hobby. When I entered the hobby, I expected to find it populated by normal, healthy games-players; instead, I found it mostly filled with uneducated, socially-misfit freaks whose gaming served as a substitute for normal, satisfying lives. The greatest flaw these people exhibit, without exception, is that they are boring. There is no nicer word. That's too bad, because a few of these people obviously have - or had - potential. Instead, they chose to sink into nothingness in dead-end jobs, escaping reality by pretending that postal gaming actually has some real value. Worse than these losers, however, are the welfare cases, the illiterates, the handicapped and the poor.

Although I am not perfect, I think it not immodest of me to set myself as the example of what this hobby ought to contain: Bright, attractive, affluent young professionals or pre-professionals with a real mission for success and achievement, who play games to broaden their outlook and hone their intellect, and whose hobby contacts are future professional contacts and references. As but one example, I had hoped to meet a number of lawyers in this hobby, because my future personal ambitions involve having legal contacts in several states to work with my investments and handle certain corporate matters. I also needed a couple of stockbrokers and a few other things. But I didn't locate anyone at all; these are the types that obviously avoid this hobby like the plague! And obviously I have no use at all for postal workers, social studies teachers, retired civil servants, taxicab dispatchers, 'phone company salesmen, or others of equal insignificance.

From the hobby's standpoint, this situation would be very difficult to change without a wholesale housecleaning. For one thing, people of my calibre will lose patience rather quickly and depart - as I did - without others of roughly equal value in the ranks. Worse, once we leave (and we will), there will be nobody of any significance left to take charge of the housecleaning. And you obviously can't do it yourselves; look how long Sacks has been around!

So I think the only real solution is going to have to be to disband the hobby altogether. That won't really solve the problem of the losers, they will probably just find some other hobby to pollute (sort of like urban renewal; the residents just move somewhere else), but it will certainly clean up postal gaming, which is really all I set out to do.

But I did say earlier that I'm not perfect, and I have one dilemma still unresolved: If I clean up this hobby by having it disband, where will be my forum to do my just gloating? Fortunately, I have an idea for a postal hobby to deal with that. Details to follow.

/// //

HE'S
DEAD
JIMI

HOW TO GET ON YOUR GM'S GOOD SIDE

by Mark L. Berch

The best foundation for a solid GM-player relation is to establish that you are not someone to be messed with. You are entitled to everything within your rights. When you accept those rights, you're only doing what you are allowed to do. Don't ever let the GM insist that you can't do something simply because no one else does it.

Take, for example, that little-used practice of conditional preference lists at gamestart. "Use List A unless Jones asks for France as first choice, in which case use List B." Don't take any squawk. His houserules say that orders can't be contingent on other orders, but these aren't orders, are they? And if you want to build Fleet Moscow, go right ahead. If he complains, just point out that it's your supply center, and it's open. That's all the Rulebook requires. If he thinks that build runs afoul of some other rule, let him cite the rule. He won't find it. Even a novice Diplomat could win that argument. If you want a tougher job, some winter when you are even, remove a piece you don't want, and take a build. There's no rule saying you can't both build and remove, so long as your piece count comes out right. Your GM will respect you more when he realizes that you stand up for your rights.

And respect is the key to a good GM-player relationship. Here's a quick quiz: The Spring 1901 results come out, and include this for you: "Austria: F Trieste to Albania, A Vienna to Galicia, A Budapest to Serbia."

How do you respond? Look again. Are you being treated with respect? No! You write back to the GM: "I must insist that my country be referred to by its proper name, Austria-Hungary." Such an offense is worth at least four paragraphs of scolding. Even lesser offenses should be mentioned. For example, suppose you write orders for two pieces, and the GM prints them in the reverse order that you presented them. Explain to the GM that you told your ally that if the support order came first, that was a signal to your ally that you intended to do the support a second season, and now you'll have to waste money on a postcard to tell him this, and the GM's action makes you look forgetful. The GM will appreciate your keeping him on his toes.

Discussions of houserules are another good area for developing the GM-player relationship. Suppose that the 'zine comes. Your French position is NMRed, with the note, "Orders for French pieces arrived, but there was no signature. My houserules clearly state, 'Orders that are not signed will not be used,' so I had to NMR the player." Are you stuck? Absolutely not. You can help your board position and help educate your GM. Just write him back: "My orders were signed. I used ASL - American Sign Language. It may be that you intended to require a written signature. If so, you might want to amend your house rules at some future time. But let's use my orders, OK?"

You should also look for ways to save time for your GM. For example, phone him with your orders on the night of the deadline. This way, he doesn't have to file the orders in a folder and then pull them out again. It also helps to remind him that this is deadline night and that he is in fact GMing games of postal Diplomacy. You might even want to mention those facts to him. Similarly, if he's made any errors the previous

season, calling him up on deadline night is the perfect time. This saves him the bother of having to put out some silly interim issue to notify the players.

If a GM says that he wants a lot of press, that's another area where you can oblige him. No, I don't mean something like sending him eight pages of press. That's too straightforward, and won't get him to be thinking about you. I'd suggest sending him just two pages, but in Norwegian. He'll appreciate the educational experience of learning how sloooooow typing goes in a foreign language. It will also give him the opportunity to ponder the philosophical question of the value of printing something no one will be able to read. If he does print it, be sure to thank him later for waiving his usual policy against the printing of very obscene and highly inflammatory material in press.

Also, be sure that any essay that you write for him ends real abruptly, without even any

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AND NOW, LET'S DO GAMES!!

Game 1985Mrb32 - Davy Crockett - Fall 1909

After the Spring move, the Turkish A Lvn /r/ War. And all draws were defeated.

AUSTRIA: a pru-ber. a sil s pru-ber. a boh s mun. a tyo-pie. a mun s pru-ber. a ven s tyo-pie. a vie-tyo.

ENGLAND: NMR! a's lvn, stp; f's tyn, wee, tun, bal, bot, nth h.

FRANCE: a pie-tyo. a sar-pie. a bur s GER ruh-mun. f lyo s tus. f tus s ENG tyn.

GERMANY: a kie s ruh-mun. a ruh-mun. a ber s ruh-mun.

TURKEY: a mos s war-lvn. a war-lvn. a ukr s mos. a alb-apu. f adr c alb-apu. f eas-ion. f nap s rom. f seg s eas-ion. f ion-tyn. f rom s ion-tyn.

Eng a lvn /r/ pru, o.t.b. Aus a mun, Fre a pie, Ger a ber are all squished.

I don't see much point in a supply center chart; totals are unchanged, the only actual shift is the trade of Mun for Ber. Austria and France may each build one to replace the destroyed units; Germany is entitled to build two but has no place to put either.

I am not in the least concerned over the NMR, I'm pretty sure it's just mixed-up communications.

Draw proposals for next time: 1) A/T, 2) A/F/T, and 3) A/E/F/T. Votes, the retreat, the builds, and Spring 1910 moves are all due by MONDAY, MAY 2, 1988.

Press on next page. However, I must interject here a very sad note; your original GM, John Walker, died on Jan. 27 of that recurring cancer that forced him in and out of the hobby for so long. Please turn to the inside back cover of the issue for something a bit more fitting than this simple stark notice.

THE BACK END

You may have noticed that some of this issue is silly. That's because this is my annual April Fool's Issue - late, of course, in keeping with recent COSTA tradition. Now, normally I'd let you wonder for a while and then reveal all in the next issue, but since there isn't going to be a next to use as a forum, I have to do it here.

It is important for players to note that, whatever else may be screwy in these pages, the game moves are quite legit. Also, the two games that ended last time will be written up properly (end-game statements still welcome, I have very few) and sent to all participants even if they are otherwise leaving us.

The Runestone Poll ballot is also on the level; I strongly urge you to fill it out and participate. In a spirit of real self-sacrifice, I have not written a '10' on the COSTA line; you can do that yourself. But whatever you do, please vote.

A deep nod of thanks to all the fine friends who wrote articles for this issue (yes, they really did!); I can think of no more smashing way to go out than with participation by some of the 'greats.'

AND FINALLY

I respectfully dedicate this issue, and the spirit that created it, to the memory of my friend

John C. Walker

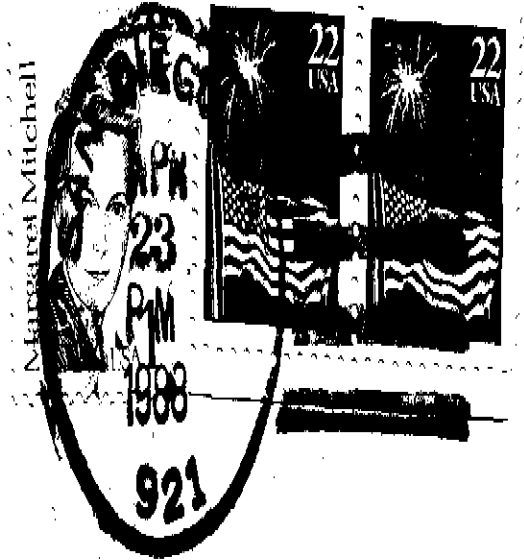
who loved fun above all else in this hobby, and who would I think, have approved. I hope so.

'Bye now,

Uncle Connie

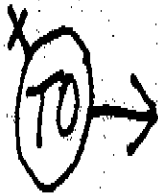
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