

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Hobby History

Mark L Berch
11713 Stonington Pl
Silver Spring MD 20902

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Enclosed is a ballot for the Runestone Poll. Please take a few moments to fill this out and a stamp to send it in. This is your chance to be heard. Usually, publishers have more "say" in this hobby because of our zines, but in this poll, everyone gets the same vote. If you like the GMing and zines you get, you can let the hobby see this. And if not, well sometimes a kick in the pants gets things going in a better direction. This is the chance for the hobby to collectively express their views, and to recognize excellence in publishing and GMing.

Some of you may have objections to how this or that aspect of the Poll is run. Its inevitable. For example, Bruce uses a combination of the preference matrix and the modified mean to compute a final score, and some people don't like that. But, if he went just to the mean, some people would consider that a step in the wrong direction; if he went just to the matrix, others would see that as a misstep. There's no way a pollster can avoid making choices that some people won't agree with.

But please vote anyhow. The RP last year had 411 votes. More people by far participate directly in this than in any other single hobby activity, and I'm hoping that this year will be no different.

THE ZINE COLUMN # 104

Bruce McIntyre (6191 Winch St Burnaby B.C. Canada) has taken the current rage for 7-player 7-game gunboat tournaments a step further with his "Silent Seven" game. Players are identified by pseudonyms, so that you could know that, say Austria on board #1 is Germany on board two. "Crossgaming" is thus encouraged, and a scoring system is set up so that overall, there will be just one winner (not seven). Thus, he asks that the MNC give this just one Miller Number. That seems fair to me. This is, in essence, one game being played on seven boards, altho pieces cannot cross boards (there are other variants which do permit that). Interestingly enough, this issue arose in a different form many years ago when the first 7-player, 7-board tournaments of regular diplomacy were organized. There was some discussion as to whether these games, with their strong potential for the forbidden crossgaming, were entitled to RNS (they did get them). Anyhow, Bruce is going to some lengths to stifle even the use of orders to negotiate, since even deliberate disorders will be converted to Holds. CR is \$10, and he also wants to set up a prize pool.

TURN TO BOTTOM OF PAGE 10

((It's easy to take something like the game flyer for granted, but even it has a history. For that we turn to Rod Walker in Voice of Doom #81, July 1983))

Come Play With Us

A recent issue of VoD mentioned (in a letter column) Conrad von Metzke's ((many years earlier)) to get Charles Reinsel's name removed from the postal game flyer which was then found in Diplomacy sets. That raises all sorts of questions, such as how thre came to be a flyer in the first place ... and how the flyer got to its present form (which does not name any postal GMs at all). Perhaps nobody cares about the answers. Well, you are going to get them anyhow..... attempt

Postal Diplomacy got its start thru science fiction fandom primarily, and for a long time that was its chief source of input. Most of the players were part of the college crowd --- undergrads, grad students, and faculty. Fellow students and faculty were another chief source of new players. In those early days, too, Graustark was the hobby center, and all inquiries about the game seemed to find their way there, thru Allan Calhamer, Games Research (then owner of the game). other GMs, SF conventions, and what have you.

The time came, however, by about 1967-69, that the hobby became more diversified and much larger. Concern was expressed then, too, about expanding the number of postal players, of locating people who might want to play bymail and giving them a chance to join the fun. Wargaming, per se, was beginning to become very widespread, and it was recognized that these people would be drawn to Diplomacy, but would not get into the hobby traditional entry ways. (I'm saying all this from hindsight; we didn't express all this in such neat phrases in those days.)

Somewhere along the line somebody (I don't recall who) bruted about the idea that there should be a general information flyer in the Diplomacy gamebox, with information on the hobby and a list of GMs. Nobody seemed to know how we might accomplish this. I decided to try the direct approach: I drafted a text for the flyer, a list of the then-active GMs, and a letter to John Moot (President of GRI) and sent it off. John liked the idea and, after some circulation of the text, it was printed and inserted into the game box. It was that simple: John was delighted with the idea---after all, the availability of play-by-mail will cause the popularity of the game to increase.

At the time, we had not really considered the problem of keeping the list of GMs current. Every GM in the hobby was included --- we felt that there was no other way to do it. So Reinsel's name was on the list, despite a lot of misgivings by the prime movers of the affair. But GMs move, GMs go out of business, and so on, so that the flyer got out of date very fast. The problem was that economy demanded that the flyer be reproduced in large quantities, , so that any change would require reprinting and maybe also the expense of pulling old flyers out and putting new ones in. GRI liked the idea of a flyer as a service but the expense of keeping it current soon proved to be a barrier to the concept of listing all GMs.

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"A problem for the hobby here in Germany is that some people are over-sensitive and condemn war games as being militaristic, immoral and endangering the young--which is in no sense true. In the seven years of the German Diplomacy hobby about 300 people have taken part, from all age groups and from all regions of West Germany, but there isn't one person who could be described as being militaristic or politically extreme right (or even neo-Nazi)! On the contrary, many of the players are rather left-wing, some sympathize with the "Greens" (an environmentalist party which has had some spectacular election victories in the last two years and now sits in many town and state parliaments, including Berlin and Hamburg. It is very likely that they will get into the Bundestag if there is an election in March, 1983.)"

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Summer, unable to attract more players (and with Albion converted to a general wargaming magazine and running diplomacy games in its subzine Courier, who could blame Albion readers for staying where they were?). Moeshoeshoe ((Michel Feron's zine)) died after its first game, to be replaced by Michel Liesnard's Oh Les Aura! with a Youngestown variant game.

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Neither of these scenarios is very appealing. We've been lucky, couldbe.. ((Neither of these scenarios is very likely, either. If someone wants to start up a zine, he will, regardless of, say, whether someone else can handle all the games. We've almost always had a comfortable excess of openings (versus demand for openings), yet that doesn't stop new zines from appearing. I think the most likely effect from a delay or non-existence of Albion and WB would have been that the British hobby would have been more strongly influenced by the american hobby. Don and Hartley were able to quickly establish a British style and tradition, and would deal with players who had little or no knowledge of the american way of doing things.))

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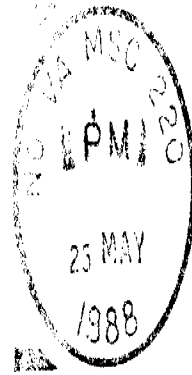
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mate issue of Big Hits, Scott Hansen has the clever idea of incorporating the WAP rule on an individual option. Players are allowed to leave "general orders" in case of an NMR. And these can be, he states explicitly "repeat last season's orders". Thus, if you're in a game with general orders, you might want to specify WAP as a quick and unambiguous method of protecting yourself against an NMR.

One of the most ambitious hobby projects I've ever seen is a new, invitational-only game being organized by Bill Quinn, a Former BNC. The game fee is \$150.00. The prize fund is \$1000, to the winner or split among those who draw. He promises more serious players, shorter seasons for builds, etc. But the part that intrigues me is the economics. A typical non-orphaned game run by a decent GM tends to run 2-2½ years. This one should run a bit longer, since players can be expected to be more persevering, and more likely to adopt balance of play philosophy. But lets figure 2 years. $\$150 \times 7 = 1050$. He skims off \$50 for postage and buys a 2-year CD for \$1000. That should return him about \$170 (pre-tax) interest ---- not a bad fee for his services as GM at all! And a two-year game won't run \$50 in postage anyhow. And if he doesn't want to deal with the tax, well, tax-free munis are running 7-8% too. This isn't at all to criticize Bill. If he can pull this off without a bitter quarrel over the prize fund (a real possibility), I say, more power to him!

1987AM has ended with one of the fastest wins ever, Austria in 1904 by concession with 15 centers (Jim Diehl). One of these days, someone will go thru old issues of Everything and discover how common games with both Jim Diehl and Gary Behnen are (this one had both too)... Don Del Grande reports that his rating system for Tournament Diplomacy (IDTR) shows the winner to be Dave Race, who won ManorCon and came in 6th at MidCon. He already has 9 tournaments lined up in 1988 to be rated, including two in Australia, one in Canada and two in Britain... Life Goes On will apparently not go on, as Hugh has decided to fold the zine. The zine, which had some emphasis on the topic of education, never did hit its stride. The games will be run in a Warehouse zine, Trust Me, I Play Diplomacy... Bob Acheson, who is involved in running Can-Con, tells me that he is doing everything now under the name of Doug Wm Acheson, and would prefer the latter name be used... I read in ECU that Magus has folded. Its been a while since I've seen this zine (I wasn't allowed to sub) but it did consistently well in the Runestone Poll... Also folding is Big Hits of Mid-America, and it appears that Scott is leaving the hobby as well except to GM three of his games (the rest will be rehoused). He began publishing Irksome!, first as a subzine to Brutus Bulletin, and later as an independent zine (and at one point, I think Michalski had a subzine in Irk, a nice turnabout. Scott was a mainstream, low-profile pubber who was more pleasant to read than most of us, and was pretty good about discussing his personal life in such a way to keep it interesting... Benzene #39 has a cute map. The normal outside edge of the map, which is impassable, has been placed in the center, and labeled as impassable. The outer edge of this map is in effect, Switzerland --- and thus the outside of the map has Mar, Bur, Mun, Tyo and Pie (i.e. all of Switzerland's normal neighbors). But the topology is exactly the same, and so you could play a regular game on this map, tho it would be very disorienting to play on this inside-out map... 1988c (Arhem in Passehendaele) has one of the strangest Austrian FOL moves you'll ever see. Mark Weidmark clashed with Russia in Gal, supported Italy into Gre against Turkish opposition, and sailed his fleet into Venice! With no build coming, Italy will have a hard time taking Tun for a build --- not to mention antagonizing France by entering Pie. The game also features a letter-perfect triple attack on England, complete with A Stp-Fwy, F Den-Rth, and F Eng-Lon...

Mark L. Berch
11713 Stonington Place
Silver spring, MD 20902



Larry -

#50 was great; I'll
plug it next time
I sent ma reply to
Cuerrier, so you don't need
to bother with that

Larry Peery ~~PH~~
Box 8416
San Diego CA 92102

