

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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I must apologize for the sorry state of #115. For the second time in 11 years of publication, I set up the pages in the wrong order.

Note that sub rates have gone up a bit here. I toyed with the idea of separate canadian rates, since postage there is 5¢ extra, but for the time being I'm not going to do that.

THE ZINE COLUMN # 106

In the last issue, I quoted Julie Martin as saying Bruce Linsey was "rejected as an applicant for the BNC because he was too controversial." I said this was untrue, that Bruce had never been an applicant. Julie has asked for a "retraction", saying: "I was told by BNC Don Ditter at the ByrneCon where he announced that Kathy Byrne was the new BNC that Bruce Linsey has ((sic, had?)) applied for the BNCship but that he had rejected Bruce because he felt that Bruce was too controversial..." Julie also said, "I was told by former BNC Lee Kendter, Sr at a WoodyCon about a year later that Bruce had applied for the BNCship when he stepped down..." OK, I've printed her side, now for the others:

Bruce Linsey: "I have never applied ... to become the BNC. It is not a job in which I have ever had the slightest bit of interest."

Don Ditter: "Bruce Linsey never applied for the BNC job under my tenure. I never considered him as a successor to me as BNC, nor to my knowledge did he wish to be considered"

Lee Kendter: "To the best of my knowledge, you ((Linsey)) never asked me about taking over the job of BNC. Since you never asked, I'm quite sure you were not turned down. Also, I never ran anything in the 'zine ((Everything)) about looking for a successor, so I don't know how you would have even known that I was looking for some one."

That certainly resolves the issue of whether Bruce was an applicant. As for those alleged statements at ByrneCon and WoodyCon, I can't conceive of either Don or Lee saying Bruce had applied when they knew he hadn't, so I think those statements she referred to are 100% fictitious.

Continued on bottom of Page 12

((We'll start this issue off with one person's views on why there are dipzines, anyhow. This is from the second cycle of Ethil the Frog, #1, Feb 1977. The writer is the Britisher John Piggott))

Let's start with a rap about the Laws of Fanzines, shall we?

Definitions, first. A fanzine is any amateur publication, be it concerned with games, SF, comics, mysteries, Cabinet committees, or all-in wrestling (fanzines about all these subjects exist). The only proviso is that it must be published for fun rather than profit, and occasionally this distinction becomes rather blurred, though so far all Dippyazines have clearly and demonstrably been published for no profit at all.

You might think that the fanzine editor (sometimes abbreviated to 'faned', though I'll try to avoid using it; it's an ugly word, like the similar 'moped' which is defined as what Birks did after he had crashed it) is free of any constraints - except that if his readers don't like what he's doing they can take their money elsewhere - but you'd be wrong. A series of subtle dictums, so subtle that many editors never realize their existence if it's not pointed out to them, guide each editor down a certain road. He explores detours or byways at his peril. The editor who seeks the Enchanted Duplicator, the best possible fanzine, has very little freedom of choice; his best paths are always predetermined.

This might indicate that I'm somewhat of a fatalist, and so I am, but not in the usual sense of the word. Not for me the dismal inevitability of 'Que sera, sera'; that's anathema to any free-thinking individual. But I'm governed, as are we all, by the natural restraints we normally call 'human nature'. (Asimov had a gobble-dygook term for it: psychohistorical inertia. Human nature is what he actually meant). And though, by exerting my will, I am able to escape temporarily from these bounds if I want to, my lifeline intersects those of some thousands of other people, and all these act according to the laws of human nature - exactly according to these laws, in fact, since in a mass of people individual deviations will damp each other out.

I refer to laws, for that is indeed what they are; they are no more open to argument than any other laws of nature.

If I cause an apple to drop from my hand, I know with 100% certainty that it will fall downwards, and if my knowledge of how people work were complete enough, I could predict exactly the effect any action would have on the mass of humanity...

There are at present what? 500 or so people actively participating in this hobby, and I maintain that as a bunch they will tend to react to events in just the same way as any other random sample of humanity. In fact, what I'm pleased to call 'Piggott's Laws of Fanzines' are just specific instances of the general laws of human nature operating.

Let me confess at this point that I personally formulated neither law. I stole the first one full-grown from the maw of SF fandom, where it's been known for years among the more abstruse theorists. I introduced it here, either in an early Greatest Hits or perhaps somewhere else, a couple of years ago - and when everyone I told it to agreed what a great truth it was, I didn't see why I shouldn't take the credit for bring it to general attention.

As for the Second Law, it came to me in a blinding flash of inspiration quite recently, as I was writing a letter to Pete Swanson. Again, I can hardly claim credit for its discovery; it's been floating around SF fandom for longer than I have, although it has only now attained the status of a Law in its own right. I think it deserves that status, for it's certainly more than a corollary to the First Law.

Now, everybody knows that good laws come in threes - Motion and Robotics, to name only six. Even now, then, somewhere in the inner recesses of the collective brain of Dippydom, festers the Third Law, unknown, unloved, but awaiting only the light-bulb of inspiration for it to leap forth like a butterfly from the pupa! A consummation, I may say, devoutly to be wished.

I mentioned the Laws of Robotics a few lines ago. It was a good choice, for they are very germane to my present discussion. Readers of Asimov will recall

that nearly all the robot stories depend on flaws, loopholes and misinterpretations of the Laws of Robotics which Campbell formulated for Asimov in 1941. And it's no surprise that the Laws of Fanzines are similarly open to misinterpretation and loopholes.

For instance, the First Law ('Every fanzine is produced solely for the benefit of its editor') is incomplete. As it stands, the Law shows the editor in a vacuum, producing his issues and sending them out to the readership, but otherwise ignoring them. We all know that isn't true. In fact, there are three factors impinging on the production of a good fanzine (see that magic number three again!), and they are:

- 1) The authority of the editor: he pays for the whole caboodle, and it is he who spends the most time on the zine. His word must be obeyed where his zine is concerned.

- 2) Public opinion: other editors and readers will pass judgement on a fanzine in letters and reviews. Nobody enjoys adverse criticism, and too much of it will cause a change, either by way of a dropout or a change in the fanzine's content.

- 3) The preferences of the readers. The editor's writings are what he wants to see in a fanzine; but what he receives from the readers for publication is what they want to read. (In this sense, you could quite justifiably say that a good fanzine is its readers). If the editor prints this stuff, the nature of the zine changes, and it can be a dangerous trap. Peter Mearns has several readers who play D&D, and by printing their contributions is encouraging this trend. Other editors, reviewing Puppet Theatre News, have commented: 'D&D, BLEAH!'

All of which goes to show that a zine is a much, much more complex creation than we're really capable of understanding at present. We can but scratch the surface of available knowledge and construct, for instance, the sort of simplified model implicit in the previous few paragraphs.

In contrast, the Second Law ('Fanzines should contain material that cannot be obtained elsewhere') seems pretty simple. Perhaps that's just because I haven't been

thinking about it for two years, but I rather suspect the First Law, dealing as it does with the problem of what makes a human being tick, will always be fairly intractable.

My basic aim with the Second Law is to launch out against imitations of G&P, of which there is an ever-present danger. I can only think of one example offhand: Owl and Weasel, which takes itself far too seriously for my taste, and seems never quite a fanzine, rather a collection of articles loosely strung together. The feeble attempts at humour which sometimes surface seem to grate rather than amuse. My point is simple: G&P pays its writers. Not a lot, 'tis true, but £10 for 1000 words is not to be sneezed at when you're writing about something you know quite well. And so, when people do write G&P-type articles (is there a decent label I could attach to these objects?) they'll send them straight to Albie Fiore at Festung Eduspiel, and he presumably will take his pick for publication under the delicate purple-puce covers of the Bedbug Island parish magazine. And we Diplomacy zine editors will be left with what G&P rejects, which for the most part will be unreadable crap. (G&P = Games & Puzzles)

Not that I'm claiming the sort of stuff I churn out by the million words is any better, of course (though if I couldn't do better than Richard Nash I think I'd go off and shoot myself); but my stuff is in-groupish, and it gives members of the in-group - anyone playing games by mail - something to giggle at, something they (hopefully) understand which they would never be able to read elsewhere. Take a look at 'Great Bores of Today' on page 12. I have unashamedly lifted the idea from Private Eye. I think it's just as funny as any of the originals, though no Eye reader would understand it; I doubt whether many G&P readers would understand it either. I'm sure most of the people reading this do, because they're members of the in-group that witnesses the 'war' between wargame-lovers and people (like me) to whom those little bits of cardboard are a feature of loathing. Why, dammit, I even gave the character in the picture the clothing and hairstyle appropriate to Nicky Palmer. (And I've exaggerated his conversation only very slightly...)

((In #3 there was further discussion. First is Lew Pulsipher, and then Piggott returns in triple parens))

Your so-called First Law of Fanzines is either untrue, or a tautology not worth mentioning. I must say that in your arguments with Eric Willis at Games Day you sounded like a silly ass, but I wasn't happy with Eric's attitude either. As I recall, you said that the only reason anyone could possibly have for publishing a Dipsine was 'ego'. Moreover, you expressed the opinion that human nature was such that a group could not possibly cooperate successfully in producing a fanzine. I disagree strongly with both suggestions. On the other hand, Eric seemed awfully nonchalant about the possibility of a zine folding - it is better to try (he said), and if you fail that's the breaks, than not to try at all. After hearing you and Willis, and before that Swanson and Willis, I wonder if there is anyone in the entire country who has a mature attitude about publishing. I'd certainly be hesitant about joining any game run by any of you, if (a big if) you really meant what you said.

About the ego idea: well, no doubt this is the reason why people start Dippy-zines, although there are practical reasons - in order to have something to trade for umpteen other zines, for example. I suppose usually the editor wants an outlet for his mouthings, and only in rare cases can he find that outlet in someone else's zine. But it's not ego that persuades a publisher to carry on with his games until they're over, long after he's lost interest. You could say it is to his benefit, as he feels better about carrying out his responsibility than dropping it all; but then your first law becomes a tautology - naturally the publisher does whatever pleases and benefits him, otherwise he wouldn't do it! I prefer to look on it as a habit. Given the sense of responsibility (which was not once mentioned in your argument when I was listening in), publishers develop the good habit of getting the zine out on time and doing a good job with it. Once the games are over, and interest is lost, it becomes a bad habit because it serves no purpose. Who would spend so much time and effort on a habit?

Smokers and heavy drinkers waste much more time, money and health (and let's not hear you say, as you did at Games Day, that everyone does it. A great many people don't smoke, and many drink little or not at all - in America, at least; one might get a different impression about British from reading Dipsines).

As for human nature, I think just about any historian will tell you that humans have a considerable capacity to cooperate. You seemed quite certain of your knowledge of human nature, but I think you ought to consider it again.

One further point - perhaps British publishers don't get into the publishing habit the way Americans do. A great many American zines turn around in less than a week, often three or four days. I understand that's quite rare here.

((No, it's not rare at all. Most of our zines aim at a turnaround time of one week or less; most achieve it regularly, and not a few always arrive on time! The brand leader, 1901, has never been more than three or four days late in 76 issues, and several less ancient zines are right up there with Mick. Leviathan, The Norns and Bellicus are as out-of-place in this country as they would be in America (and Bellicus has usually been very prompt just lately).

((The point about responsibility is a good one, and I'm glad someone has brought it up. You say it isn't ego that drives a departing publisher to finish his games after he's lost interest, and you're quite right; usually such games don't get finished, and that's why we have problems with orphaned games. Given the undeniable facts that (1) a publisher whose departure is imminent always says, 'Dropping out? Nothing could be further from my mind, guv!'; and (2) it isn't much fun being in the zine business if all you print are the bare bones of game reports - well, who's the more responsible? The chap who gives priority to game reports above all else, who is bound to lose interest quite soon? Or someone who recognizes the ego-trip function of the publishing game and runs

his zine accordingly, and who might conceivably be around the hobby in five years' time? Everyone can make his own choice, of course, but I know which one I would choose as a GM.

((One of the notable things about this hobby is that the zines widely advertized as 'good for players' always give emphasis to the myriad madneses of their editors: Roy Taylor with his crusade against wins by concession, Bullock with boogie, and so forth.

((I don't think the desire to trade is why people start Diplomacy publishing; as any reputable editor will tell you, it's less trouble to subscribe to all the zines you want, and a lot cheaper, too. But certainly the fact that producing a zine gives the editor a platform from which to declaim his eccentric enthusiasms is very

important; when I ceased publishing the old Ethil one of the hardest things I had to accept was that I couldn't give an instant reply if anyone took my name in vain, but had to rely on other editors to accommodate me. This is a great advantage of having a hobby replete with large letter columns, of course. I believe that in the US hobby more prominence attaches to 'articles' than to 'letters'. There's no real difference between the two, of course; an article is simply a long letter printed without editorial comment with a title at the top. But a 'letter' can touch on more than one subject, and may also be very short. Hence more people participate in the discussion, and that means a more interesting hobby for everyone. As always, Britain leads the world! Except when the subject is boogie, of course...))

((I count myself among those who strongly agree with both of Piggott's Rules. My comments on this topic appeared in DD #100, so I won't repeat them here.))

((Long ago, Charles Reinsel ran a zine called Big Brother. Because of his idiosyncratic and sometimes blatantly unfair GMing, the reputation that linger for Big Brother is a bad one. Yet that was not the whole story. Here is John McCallum, writing in Serendip #49, Sept 1970))

...Players have long been aware that a game with a high fee may well be worth the price...Reinsel's Big Brother, in its later stages, it charged a fee of \$6 per game, the highest fee ever sharged and one which only a few other zines have equalled. Moreover, BB was not a magazine with very much in the way of added attractions...Press releases were expected to be brief, and outside material, such as the Ratings List or Charles' view of the postal scene, would never take up more than a couple of pages. In spite of this, when Reinsel offered his loth game, which ... was announced as his last game, the response was so heavy that he had to open two additional games to absorb the overflow. The reason is clear: As regards the mechanics of GMing, the Big Brother games were extremely well run. Every issue appeared promptly on time. Minor errors of the type which mar so many games did not occur. So, many players considered his games worth the \$6 fee. In any event, the fee is not the major cost of a game to a player since he will have to pay postage on letters to other players and for submitting his moves. To pay \$4 instead of \$2 for a game fee does not mean that the cost of the game to the player has been doubled ... it seems to me that a player would be wise to choose a game that he thinks will be well run, that will progress at a reasonable rate, and whose magazine he will enjoys reading. Doing so will not always mean paying a higher fee but sometimes it will. When it does, I would say that the extra dollar or so is well spent... a higher game fee might help in ensuring player interest.

12. Random Thought	55	23. Not New York	43
12. Perelandria	55	24. Carolina Command and Co..	41
14. Diplomag	53	25. Cheesecake	40
15. Candian Diplomat	50	25. Frobozz	40
15. Excitement City Unlimit	50	25. House of Lords	40
15. Lord of Hosts	50	25. Northern Flame	40
15. Ter-ran	50	?? Graustark	??
15. Appliation General	50	?? Everything	??
15. Armchair Diplomat	50	?? Diplomacy World	??
21. Life of Monty	45	?? Fiat Bellum	??
21. Not up to Modern Gra...	45	?? Costaguana	??
		?? Kathy's Korner/White...	??

OK, thats 34 because of the tie at #25. It sure would be nice to have those missing circulations so the list would be more accurate. DW sez it has the highest circulation, so it certainly behoves itself to list its circulation (you hear me, Larry?).

Some interesting comparisons arise here. The three biggest zines in the old days had circulations (144+) which I'm pretty sure are bigger than anything on our current list. On the other hand, that list was probably pretty complete. The only zine I know of in North America which wasnt listed is Dippy, which at that time was less than a year old and pretty local. So 33 zines then got down to some pretty tiny affairs. On the other hand, 33 zines now doesn't even get us out of the mid-circulation range (which I would consider to run 30-60 subbers), let alone a whole slew of zines in the 20s and teens. So while we have few ---maybe no-triple-digit circulation zines now, we have a much larger range of zines. We're more spread out than we used to be.



((This short item from Chris Tringham in Meglomania #27, May 1980 deserves an honorable mention in the Crabbiness Hall of Fame))

Every now and then, some cretin or other produces an anonymous zine and sends it to prominent hobby members. What he expects is that editors will waste time speculating on the identity of the author. Well, John Lee and Jeremy Hoare have, suggesting that they know the author - or that he knows them. I'm not going to join in this childish game - unsigned material isn't worth the paper it's printed on, at least as far as I'm concerned. If anything worth commenting upon results from this, I'll mention it, but until then I've got better things to do with my time.



((The following is by Gil Neiger, appearing in The Pouch #96, Nov 1976))

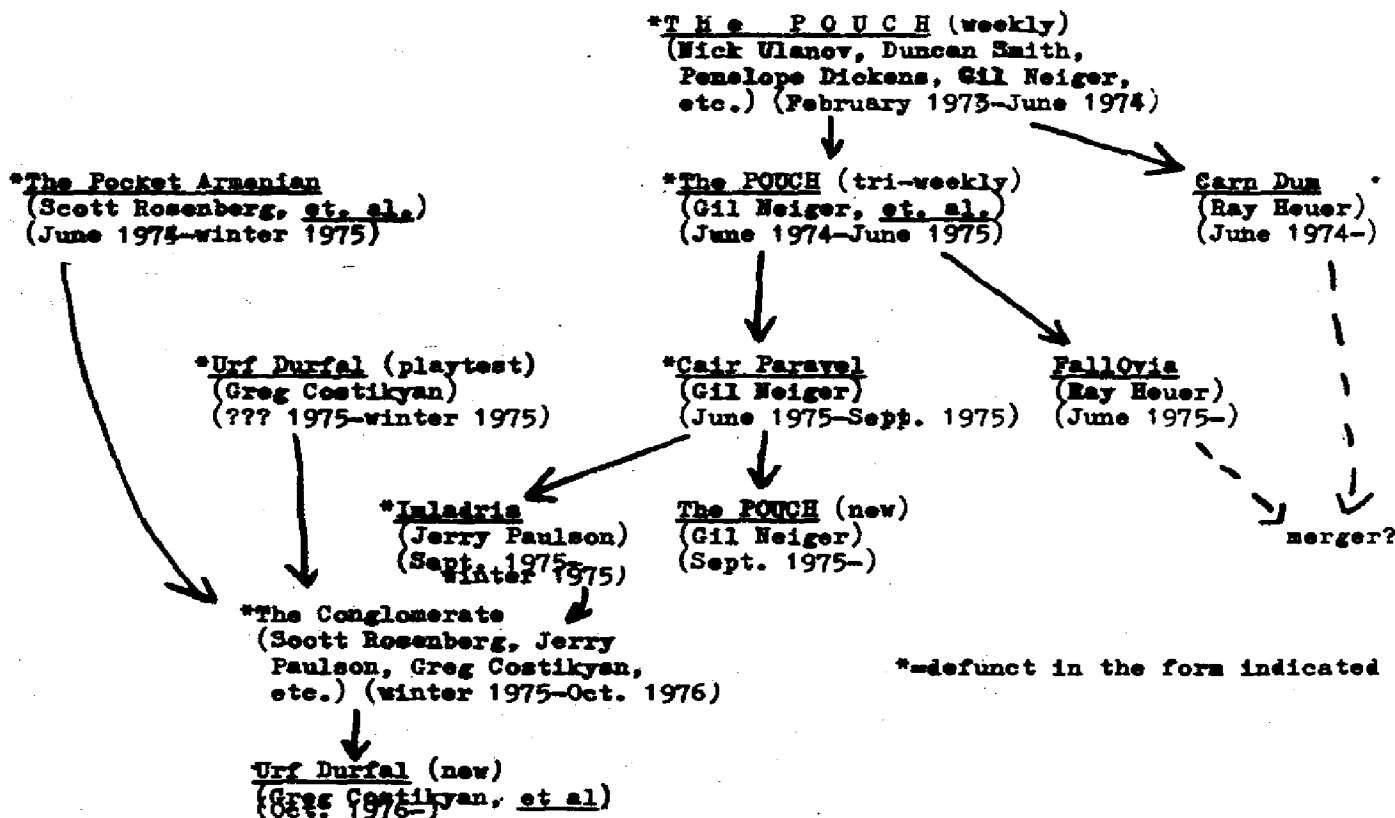
This is the first issue of The POUCH since number seventy-eight that has had the results of moves for more than two games. That issue had the word "MASSI" as its logo, which is Finnish for "The POUCH". It contained the reports of thirteen regular Diplomacy games, the results of a Bourae which was attached to one of those games and the announcement of the opening of 1975Kex, as well as the rules to SchizoDiplomacy and a few articles and press. It was dated April 26th, 1975, although it was probably mailed considerably later than that considering the fact that I was rather tardy with The POUCH in those days. I also announced in that issue that I was indeed going to be going to Brown University. It was fourteen pages long.

There was a long delay after the mailing out of that issue, which was followed by a long meeting of major New York Diplomacy publishers. The meeting was taped and the transcript of

the tape was printed in THE POCKET ARMENIAN. Following the meeting, The POUCH was split into two magazines: CAIR PARAVEL, which I published until the end of that summer, and FallOvia, which was published by Raymond Heuer, who was already publishing Carn Dûn, a variant offspring of The POUCH which was separated just before I started publishing. At the end of the summer, I ceased publishing CAIR PARAVEL, and Jeremy Paulson took it over, naming it Inladris - Sep of POUCH. He subsequently merged it with Scott Rosenberg's THE POCKET ARMENIAN and Greg Costikyan's Urf Duffal to form the Conglomerate, a 'zine whose name changed with every issue. Scott and Jerry have since folded this 'zine, and from what Jerry tells me, Greg will be keeping it up under the title, Urf Duffal - Grandson of POUCH.

In the meantime, I started publishing The POUCH again to report the results of 1975Kex. I picked up an orphan game, 1972EH, which ended in a three-way draw shortly after that. I have been publishing two serials, "The Providence Connection", which has been written by myself and Raymond Heuer, and "The Grand Reunion", which I alone have written.

The POUCH Family Tree



Only four of the original (weekly) POUCH are still being run. These are 1973DG, 1973GR, 1973HN and 1974AR, by my own recollection. Three of these are in FallOvia, and one (1973HN) is in Urf Duffal.

Of the three original publishers of The POUCH, Nick Ulanov, Duncan Smith and Paul Neuman, not one is publishing at the moment. In fact, none of them is really actively involved in postal Diplomacy. I joined The POUCH staff as a gamesmaster with the second issue. Before Nick and Duncan passed on The POUCH to me in June 1975 Paul Neuman quit as editor, Penelope Naughton Dickens ascended from contributing editor to editor, and I went to contributing editor. Ray and I were the main gamesmasters then.

So who runs the only descendent of The POUCH? I have the name, and I'm now the only member of the original editorial staff still going at it. But Ray is running the most of original games. In terms of man-hours put into the 'zine(s) Ray is far and away in the lead.

In terms of typing, printing, time on the subways carrying stencils, paper, machines, &c., on the phone working out arguments, settling feuds, arranging 'zine and game transfers, setting up meetings to work problems and the like, as well as general loss of sleep I can't think of anyone to rival Ray. Nick Ulanov might be a close second (especially considering the over one day of constant mimeographing that he engaged in when he produced the first anniversary issue). And Ray has Gertrude.

But then again, who cares?

((In terms of sheer energy and creativity, there's never been anything like The New York Conspiracy, at least in North America. Its members were the above mentioned names, plus Bob Lipton who had a separate zine, The Mixumaxu Gazette. If my records are correct, The Pouch lasted until the summer of 1978. UD ran for a while, but later somehow got changed into Zircast, the Predawn Leftist, which ran for a few dozen issues. I think, but I'm not sure, that both Fallovia and CD didn't last all that much longer, and the entire family tree died out by the 80s. Nowadays, new NY zines could arise, flourish and expire without ever knowing of the glories of the past.

But then again, who cares?))



((As part of the festivities for Greatest Hits #100 (August 1981), Pete Birks assembled an "All Time Zine Poll" for British zines. He had comments on all the zines, and I've picked out a few to reprint))

Bruce, dead and gone, but Simpkins trucks on, moaning that the world is out to get him, etc, etc, and why isn't life fair? A zine noted for its often pretty coloured covers (Paul gave them to his schoolkids to colour in) and the proof that people can't help but be changed by their work environment - which is all very well but can piss subscribers off if they feel they are being treated like eight-year olds. Most noted for a celebrated A5 edition which was printed A6 size on A5 paper. Very good if you had a microscope...

Fall of Eagles The best zine ever in which to play standard Diplomacy... Hucknall also had a dry line in understatement and killing by faint praise. Who can forget his comment on Steve Agars nth revival - "Steve has generously offered to take back the game he recently abandoned"... He couldn't stand idiots and he said so. Hucknall is an idiot himself occasionally, but aren't we all. Ill never forget setting myself up by entering his Diplomacy Quiz. Oh, the price of fame.

Late and lamented, however, Rhubovia isn't. I mean, how can you take an editor seriously who names his games after "girls he has been to bed with" (and if you can believe that) and then he goes and gets married and invited people back for a drink and gave them tea. Sharp was not amused and I, thankfully, was not invited. Also noted for his driving and "unfriendly" relationship with James O'Fee at EuroCon 2. Taking sides in this was a bit like choosing the Shah or the Ayatollah.

Why didn't Dolchstoss win? Both the top two ((zines in the poll)) treated their subscribers like ---- when they "burnt out". Both were writers of professional rank, but Dolchstoss was bigger, and litho ((offset)) to boot. And there, I think, lies the rub. Ethil the Frog might not objectively be special, but it was first. The letter column, the reviews, the occasional irrelevancies not found even in SF zines, the realization that there was more to adjudicating Diplomacy games than a boring collection of adjudications and only the occasional interesting piece of press. Dolchstoss MIGHT HAVE BEEN the first Diplomacy magazine, but Ethil

was the first zine.... It deserved to win.



((Fakes nowadays are quite rare. There's been almost nothing in two years. But there was a time when a true mania swept the hobby --- for fakes. This essay, by Gary Coughlan from Europa Express #1, Jan 1981 captures the spirit of the era))

\$\$ MASTERS AT WORK \$\$

It's over! The Diplomacy Hobby in North America can now breathe a collective sigh of relief! The siege of Black Frogs and fake zines should drop off considerably. On January 19, 1981, Jack Masters, the pubber of Black Frog and Faker Extraordinaire, went back to work at Lockheed when his 8-week strike ended.

But what an 8 weeks it has been! Jack Masters, before the strike, was always a prolific writer but with all that free time on his hands, he has been like a man constantly shooting off a pistol and no one knew who would be hit next, and many were.

He pubbed BF, his own zine on the following days: (Dates are when they reached Memphis): Nov 12, Nov 24, Dec 1, Dec 8, Dec 17, Dec 23, Jan 3, Jan 12 and Jan 15. Also he mailed out a Black Frog Questionnaire on Dec 10.

He faked or helped fake at least 4 zines during this period: Pearl on Nov 24; Murd'ring Ministers on Dec 13; Peek (with female nudes) on Jan 14; and even a fake EUROPA EXPRESS (mailed on Jan 19--Robert E. Lee's birthday!) before the real EUROPA EXPRESS came out. His fake EUROPA EXPRESS also had female nudes.

Masters is suspect in at least three other fakes during this 8-week period: Infidel on Dec 15; Y'all about Jan 8 (I think this was an East Coast production and I did not receive it); and Diplomacy Digest on Jan 20.

The only fake during this 8 weeks that I know he didn't do was the fake Retaliation because I did that one under the pseudonym of "Donovan" (So there John Michalski!). On Dec 4, Jack called me and asked if I had done the fake Retaliation. I confessed that I had and that Ron Brown in his next Murd'ring Ministers would announce that fact for the first time publicly. As all the world knows, Jack faked Murd'ring Ministers on Dec 13 and revealed me as "Donovan" stealing Ron's thunder as well as his zine! Clearly it was time to get even with Jack!

Hobby members in 6 states all pooled their resources to hit Jack where he would hurt the most: the authorship of his fakes. It was agreed to praise the fake Murd'ring Ministers extravagantly (it was very good and had female nudes) but to attribute it to Al Rodriguez who runs a sub-zine in the real Murd'ring Ministers. (Note: Early in 1980, after Jack had faked Volkerwanderung five times, he pointed the finger at Al Rodriguez so we were just following the Masters' precedence....) I made a few phone calls and wrote a few letters and received overwhelming encouragement and support in playing this joke on Jack.

The stage was set. In late December and early January, the following zines attributed the fake Murd'ring Ministers to Al Rodriguez: Volkerwanderung of Virginia, Voice of Doom of New York, Envoy of Pennsylvania, the real Murd'ring Ministers of California, Retaliation of Maryland and Emhain Macha of New York.

Jack Masters retaliated on several fronts. In the BF which arrived on Jan 12, he even attributed his own zine to Al Rodriguez with the following words: "Many of you may be surprised to learn that Black Frog is actually written by Al Rodriguez (as I myself was), but it seems like every zine that I have picked up in the last couple of weeks seems to attribute nearly everything I write to Al Rodriguez." (Upon reading this, I knew that we had bearded the lion in his own den!)

On Jan 14, Jack, aided by Jane Proskin struck again. They labeled the pubbers of the above zines (most of them) as "persona non grata" for reasons "that they know". These pubbers were advised to apologize for their actions in their zines or to never again receive a zine from Jane (full of female nudes of Jane). This zine was called Peek.

Apparently this last threat brought Bruce Linsey of the Voice of Doom close to the breaking point and to complete collapse upon receiving a letter from Jack Masters. In VOD's Jan 20 issue, Bruce wrote: "I have here an angry letter from Jack Masters, protesting the "lies" which appeared in VOD #29. After calling Jack to straighten things out, I'd like to correct the following comments from my last issue." (Bruce went on to give Jack credit for his fakes. What a weasel. As the hobby well knows, Bruce can never take a controversial stand and runs away at the first sign of a fight! A Yankee had once again ruined a good joke!)

Now I fully expect the other pubbers to confess their sins to Jack. But not I. I have no regrets. I don't fear Jack Masters. He has already taken Rumania from me in our Retaliation game. He has already faked this zine before it ever came out. Besides I am establishing a "Focus on Fakes" department which will examine any and all fakes sent to me---publicly. With the recent lack of publicity given to fakes, Jack can't afford to hurt me too badly! Right, Jack?! I said right, Jack? Jack? Oh, Jack?

Anyway the 8 weeks are now over and, not only the hobby is breathing a sigh of relief; so is Jack's wife, Ardyce, who told me: "Yes, yes, yes!!! He's working again! It was like having another kid around the house during summertime off from school----and almost as long! Always with the questions: "Are you fixing that for supper again?" Play Diplomacy with me? You can be Austria, France and Turkey and we'll keep Italy neutral!" "Are you going to be on the phone long? I have to call someone in my game." And he was always typing and running off copies of nude women(for his zine he said) at all hours of the night. But it's over now!"

But Ardyce, isn't Jack's vacation coming up soon? "Aaaaaaaaarrrrrrrggggghhhh!!!!!!!"

((AT the risk of sounding nostalgic, "those were the days". In fact, for a variety of reasons, 1980 may well be considered the high point of the North American hobby. But with regard to zines, there was a kind of giddiness in the hobby then. You never ^{^knew} what would show up in your mailbox those days ---- or who had put it out. DD was faked several times, and for one, I seem to recall 8 people taking credit for it. One of those I never did get a line on who did it. Volkerwanderung was faked I think 7 times. Gary had a special column in EE just to keep track, and Kieth Sherwood established an archives just for those. Non-existent zines were faked. People had the energy and time and money and good spirits for a lot of this. But sadly, it couldn't last. Linsey publicized the fact that some of the sensational writing Masters had put out under his name was actually lifted from James Thurber, word for word. And Thurber wasn't the only author he plagiarized. Masters could have taken a "Rats! I got caught!" approach or some such, but he became bitter, and lashed out with attacks on Fred Davis, Bruce Linsey and others and Black Frog became a horror to read....))



((Our last item is an appreciation of a zine still going strong, altho this was written 7 years ago))

It is not true that players in Retaliation write more press than the rest of the hobby combined. But it's close! Retal is probably the largest zine in the hobby right now; last issue checked in at 48 pages. The main reason it is so big is because it is overflowing with reams and reams and reams of press!

Retaliation, like most of the best zines around, is very reliable. Last issue was just a bit late, but I understand the players got the moves on time -- which I believe is always true when he mails the zine first class. Moreover, Dick is very dedicated toward doing things right. His players respond by taking as much interest in their games as any players in the hobby; the high level of press is a barometer of this interest.

The best thing about this zine, though, is that you can tell the publisher is having fun, and when he has fun, so do his readers. Practically all of what appears here is lighthearted if not downright humorous. Moreover, Retal spouts off in all directions at once; you never know what's going to be on the next page (unless you're in the middle of

a game, in which case expect PRESS for the next five or six pages!). Dick doesn't have the hangups and inhibitions of most pubbers; it's OK by him if a page or two is upside-down or stuff gets out of order. With some zines, such oversights come across as disorganization; with Dick, it just adds to the lighthearted atmosphere he tries (successfully) to create in the zine.

Dick writes the same way he publishes, too -- wittily and humorously. Whatever he puts in his pages is generally fun to read, down to the table of contents. And the back page usually contains a friendly, handwritten note from him, or better still, his sister Sue! A very personable editor of a very personable zine -- whoops, zeen!

But for all Dick contributes to Retal, his readers contribute more. This is because of a policy which is evident just by looking at his sub rates: he never stops encouraging subber participation in some form or another. He is blunt about it, too: he does not want to just mail out the copies to people who are merely going to sit there like bumps on a log and only read it. If you sub to Retal, you do something for it!

Last issue contained, for instance, a 7-page play by Gregory Russell which touched on most of the major issues, controversies and feuds in the hobby, satirizing a lot of the serious stuff that's going on. R-3 and MANIACAL are two of the most discussed games in the hobby, too.

There are weak points, the biggest of which is the press. If you like reading all that stuff, fine; if you don't there's still plenty for you elsewhere in the zine. In my opinion, about three-fourths of the press ought to go and the zine would improve overall. Also, Dick tends to have a fetish, almost, for not taking things seriously. This is OK -- it's a hobby, after all -- but he overdoes it. The best example of this is the way he handles his house rules, updating them in dribs and drabs each issue just to reinforce the notion that they aren't to be taken too seriously. This is fine if you don't want a handy reference to his GMing techniques, and so long as I'm not playing there, I don't. DEAPO's babblings are just plain tiresome at times, and I wish some of this stuff could be curtailed.

One other good point that I didn't mention was that Dick breaks up the zine well with comics, photos, and drawings. Sure is more pleasing from a graphical standpoint than reading page after page full of print like you often must in other zines, including VD. As most of my readers know, Dick and I disagree on topics involving GMing quite a bit more often than we agree. Nonetheless, Dick at least respects opposing viewpoints and will permit criticism to be printed. In the back of my mind is a worry that if he keeps putting out 40+ pages, he's going to burn out. But I hope this doesn't happen too soon, because the hobby will lose a fine zeen. Pace yourself, Dickie! And the rest of you Doomies -- send off for a sample post haste!

((IF you havent guessed, that was Bruce Linsey, writing in Voice of Doom #40, June 1981. Before the clouds came over the hobby, "those were the days."))



FROM PAGE 1.

I should add that at the time I wrote my statement, I did not know that Julie would name Lee and Don, so obviously I didnt have their statements. I just had Bruce's word that he hadn't done it. I've relied on Bruce's statements as to what he's done and not done for many years, and I've yet to be burned.

The problem is that Julie Martin is one of those handful of self-appointed Linsey-experts, who think they know Linsey much better than they really do. Anyone who really knows Bruce would realizethat for him to apply for this job would be completely out of character. In HoL, Julie is constantly supplying motives for why Bruce is doing this or that (especially with reference to the Runestone Poll) and how he operates. For example, in HoL #16, she says, "At the time" (around 1983) Bruce held no Hobby Position other than publisher, ^{if super nova} and, in my perception, he was making a power grab for any other Hobby Position he could get." Sounds like a grand analysis, but it bears no relationship to reality. The only pre-existing hobby position he's ever tried to get was the Runestone Poll. And even that, you can't "grab"; it has to be handed to you.