

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Potpourri

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For those who came in late, or who are getting this as a sample, please allow me to introduce myself: This is a zine like no other. DD has never and will never run postal games. Topics such as my personal life, national politics, music, beer, and all the rest appear very rarely. But when it comes to the game and hobby of Diplomacy, I cover everything. Most issues, unlike this one, are devoted to a single theme. These have included individual countries, hobby history, ethics, GMing, stabbing, humor, losing, publishing ---- everything which gives richness to the game and hobby. The backbone of this zine is the reprints, along with my commentary on them. I keep an enormous archives, including substantial holdings of foreign and very old material. Thus, for a theme issue I can gather material across a range of time and distance, to provide a range of viewpoints and personalities. I draw from zines well-known and obscure, for what interests me is only whether the item --- be it an article, a snippet from a letter, some press, etc --- deserves another audience. All back issues are kept in stock, so you can (if you subscribe), get them all, or just those topics which appeal to you. Single issues are 11-12 pages. Also included is a column of news and commentary from me as to whats going on in the hobby.

Except for Lexicon and Son of Lexicon, only subscribers may purchase back issues. Unlike some zines in the hobby, any one may sub. And if you change your mind, your money will be returned for the unused portion of your sub, no questions asked.

While I'm at it, I'll answer some common questions I get:

1. Yes, there is a small discount for ordering the complete run of back issues: \$2.50. To get this, you don't have to order any issue you already got as a sample or as part of your sub, nor do you need to order #42.
2. DD does run a letter column, and on rare occasions, it blossoms into an entire issue. But I don't have an "open" lettercol. Your letter must pertain to something that has appeared here previously. There's no time limit --- you can discuss topics from #1 if you want. Back issue ordering is so common that a lot of readers will have the issue, and I'll summarize if that will help.
3. Yes, so far as I'm concerned, you can reprint anything which appears here. Just credit the source, and be sure to send me a copy.

Any other questions, just ask. And now, on with the show!

I goofed last issue. I said that Claude Gautron "is" the new CDO Prez. That should have been "isn't". Thank to those who pointed this out. The real prez is Doug Acheson, 95 Dundonald St., Barrie, Ont, L4M 3T4 Canada; his actual title is "Co-ordinator"

((Europa Express is, arguably, the most honored zine ever to appear in North America, and ran for about 55 issues. This appreciation comes from Voice of Doom #40, June 1981, and was written by Bruce Linsey))

Europa Express

Europa Express is a brilliant, smashing success. Already it is my favorite zine, replacing BB in that regard. I just can't say enough about it, because the entire thing is produced very well in all respects. But, I have to start somewhere, so...

The GMing. While it's too early to call Gary a good GM, time will tell. My money says he's going to be one of the best in the hobby. How can I make a statement like that when to date he's only GMed a total of three seasons? I base it on two factors: his house rules and his enthusiasm, mostly the former. His house rules are perhaps second only to my own in their thoroughness. Well written and edited, they cover most of the situations likely to come up; as a player there I am satisfied that he has thought out and spelled out things very thoroughly. Good house rules correlate positively with good GMing, so this is a promising sign. As for enthusiasm, I've never seen anyone who likes what he's doing so much as Gary! The zine just bubbles over with it! To Gary, it's FUN FUN FUN putting out EE, and to me it's FUN FUN FUN participating there! Each of his three games (and he does plan to limit the zine to three at a time) is printed on a separate color page, so they can be easily distinguished. Moreover, the quality of play in my game there (Swedish Roundabout) is well above average, just to judge from the lineup. I feel almost as though I'm playing in an expert game... and it's loads of fun so far; better than either of the other two regular games I've started. I'll write more about the GMing when Gary is a little more established, so let's talk about the zine itself.

Like I said, it literally scintillates with enthusiasm! Gary is about the friendliest guy I've come in contact with in my dipping career, and he projects this into the zine. As a result, EE already boasts a very high level of reader participation in the form of letters, articles, and press. The press is not as voluminous as Retal's, nor as spicy as BB's; but the literary quality of it is higher, so far at least. All of the articles have been very good so far, like the great piece by Jim Williams last ish on different player types. Topics vary widely. The letter column is good and represents a wide variety of views from a large number of writers. I just wish he wouldn't chop up people's letters into little pieces; this destroys whatever style the writer has... but apparently Gary feels it more important to sort stuff by topic than by author.

A special feature, Focus on Fakes, is EE's news section on hobby hoaxes. Gary is perhaps the most pro-fake publisher around, and his two productions so far have been among the best.

Another service Gary is performing is that of trying to run an international zine. Because of his strong efforts at bridging the Atlantic, hobby-wise, EE's American readers have a chance to hear how things are done in Europa, and vice versa. I'm not sure how well this concept will work in terms of the games, though, as the several North Americans in each game are bound to have a distinct advantage over the one or two Europeans.

EE tends to shy away from heavy controversy. I enjoy contro, but what the heck... it's good to look forward to a zine this large and know that when you open it up there's not going to be a whole lot of name-calling and mudslinging.

I mentioned above the quality of the readers' submissions, but Gary himself is one of the best writers in the hobby today, just a shade below Masters and Smyth. But where Smyth is more or less limited to superb articles on play-of-the-game and Masters is at home only with humor/fiction/satire, Gary writes well on just about anything! His article on the use of the phone, reprinted in Supernova, contrasted with his pieces on the Great White Shark, contrasted with his "Henry Kissinger" essay in VD a while back -- all these go to show that when it comes to writing well on a variety of topics and in a variety of moods, Gary has perhaps no peers in the hobby.

Except for the way he handles letters, mentioned above, there is nothing I can criticize about this zine. As far as I am concerned, it's the closest publication to perfection in the hobby today. If you don't get it, you are to be pitied.

PROXY

((Proxy orders are when one player is permitted to order the units of another country. The player notifies the GM that henceforth (until rescinded) another player will be doing this. This practice is quite uncommon in the US, and I think most North American GMs would not permit. But in Britain, it is generally acceptable. The custom is for the GM not to reveal what is going on. This account of a more complicated use of these comes from the endgame statements for 1980DW, which appeared in the British zine, Last Stand #22, August 1982))

Harry Turner (England): ...when I found my neighbors were Doug Wakefield (F) the Abominable Screwtop ((Dave Browne)) in Germany, and Geoff Chase in Russia, I didn't look for long-term survival. However, during the first few seasons, Doug and Dave sparred so warily that England could even gain a little. Then in alliance with Dave ((G)), E and G put the screws on France, and Doug was rather at our mercy.

At that point, he ((F)) handed over control of his units to Frank ((Dashwood, the Turkish player)), who in turn sublet them to me, on the proviso that Germany should be stabbed. Since I long owed Dave a bad turn, I found this experience both congenial and amusing. Dave told me his orders, I told him mine, and then I wrote the French orders which would foil them. In due course, Germany was heatedly stabbed. Frank then took control of France again, to my disadvantage. But Doug retook control from Frank (all clear so far?), and - with occasional vicissitudes - France and England maintained an alliance until the end of the game....

Doug Wakefield (France): ...With mutual fear and respect abounding at the start and no solid alliances appeared. Dave, Harry and I fenced indecisively.... Dave, round about S03, won Harry over and life got difficult for me until I decided to tempt providence (and why not under the circumstances?) by handing over control of my unit to Harry, with neat camouflaging from Frank keeping the mud truly stirred so that the rest of the board didn't know whether Wakefield or someone else was France.

Harry took his chance well, cleverly masking his buildup against Dave by presenting an "inspired" French defense. When Dave's trouser-cord was finally severed I took up the considerably healthier France and attempted to stab Harry. The stab worked, but was rapidly undone when the much better position occupied by the developing A-T alliance was obvious.... ((result was an FT draw))

((Letting someone else order your pieces hardly seems like a prescription for success at Diplomacy. But clearly it can work, emboldening an enemy to stab his ally. Sure it's risky, but if you are being wiped out, what do you have to lose? You may have to let him have the units for several seasons, so he can be confident you won't snatch them back at the last minute. The GM will normally let the player resume control when he wants)) ((I have no problem with a player deceiving others as to whether the French pieces are being ordered by Turkey or England. Players are allowed to deceive. But the GM can't, and that's where the problem lies. If he knows that the pieces are being proxy ordered, but he prints the results as if they were not being proxy ordered, but ordered by the player of record, then he's party to a deception, and he's not allowed to do that. Deceiving is just for the players. The GM doesn't necessarily have to reveal who is ordering the pieces, but in my view, he must reveal that the pieces are proxy ordered))

THE NAME GAME

This is an occasional series which runs in DD, on the origins of the names of Dipzines. We start with Brenton ver Ploeg in Platypus Pie #6, April 1972:

"...in game 1969C, played in Brobdingnag...I used a press release character by the name of Glomphf the Magnificent, Eater of Frenchmen, and esteemed of life-loving peoples of the world. Glomphf was a 2000 ton Duck-Billed Platypus, with monstrous powers in his pads, and even more powerful weapons ingested, then egressed, thru various orificies of his body. A Platypus pie, needless to say, is of the same family as a cow pie, except for the fact that it is hard to step in a three-story tall platypus pile, they are one and the same in scope. It was once my intention to have different press characters for all my games. Accordingly there was...((he describes two more))...

This has all paled now, but it's discouraging to me that so few players seem to enjoy a game....After all these plans fell thru, I was left primarily with one character -- Glomphf and his family of fun-loving platypusses, spelled differently most times. In my foolish endeavor of starting a magazine, Playpus Pie seemed the most apt. Both for historical and aesthetic reasons, since the term may well describe much of the contents, as Federal Law requires."

Brenton is currently a lawyer in Florida. Next we turn to Diman #4, August 1975. A letter from Walter Luc Haas asks:

"Diman -- does this mean Dippy Maniac? Or is it the name of someone I should know?" To this, Brad Hessel replies:

"Neither. Diman, the proper pronunciation of which, incidently, is akin to the english word "diamond" -- is named rather idiosyncratically after a place where I spend some time, and where a number of wonderful things happened to me. I had no Diplomacy world connections in mind when I decided to so name my zine."

This explanation is somewhat atypical, in that it raises as many questions as it answers. Where is Diman, and what happened there?

Lastly, we return to 1972 for Fred Davis in Bushwacker #3

"This newsletter is named after Bushwacker, my comic strip and science fiction hero. Bushwacker was born in World War II, when I was in grade school. Many people in my class drew comic strips. It was only later that I found out it wasn't normal for almost every boy to invent his own comic strip characters. Bushwacker arrived... with rocket ships and ray guns. He brought every weapon ever seen in Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon into the contemporary world, including "U-235 bombs". He had a secret weapon that not only was bullet proof, but ricocheted enemy bullets back at them. "Bush" tore up Nazis and Japs until there weren't any left, and then went after the Foul Fiends of Space. Since he was always half-bombed from excessive consumption of Scotch, he frequently made blunders, but always won out in the end due to serendipity and minor miracles...This newsletter is dedicated to him and his derring-do, back in the days when you could always tell who were the villains by their horns, scars, or sideburns."

There then follows a remarkably detailed ^{description} of the world of the Bushwacker Republic, and other goings on you would not expect from staid Fred Davis. So far as I know, this is the only example of a zine title created by its editor, which goes back so far as WWII.

I'll run some more of these in the next Hobby History or potpourri issue. If any of you would like your own zine's origins written up, just send me the specifics.

((This is an excerpt from an essay on tactics by Eric Verheiden, which appeared in Hoosier Archives #114, May 26, 1973))

Another example of the poor use of convoys ... can be taken from the Average Aces game ((the second HA Demo game)). In spring 1906, Doug Beyerlein's Italy ... prepared for a spectacular trans-mediterranean convoy in the fall ((A Con-Spa!)) This maneuver managed to tie up 4 Italian fleets and, as it turned out, prevented at least two of them from ever getting to the front. A simple F Wes-Spa(sc) coupled with F Nap-Tyr-Wes and F Ion-Tun-RAF would have been much more effective as far as the attack against France was concerned. Alternatively ... build A Nap the preceeding winter followed by F Ion C A Nap-Tun in S06, and then F Wes C A Tun-Spa, F Ion-Tyr in F06. ((Altho useful, convoys are inherently inefficient, and may even tie up units the previous season getting into place. Longer convoys require 1) greater assurance that they will succeed 2) A more desperate need for an army rather than a fleet at the target place))



((DD has run statistics essays very very rarely. My comments on this one will show how two people can look at the same stats and notice very different things)) ((From Carpethagger #5 Nov 72, by Len Lakofka))

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM (Part 3)

The course of a Diplomacy game usually finds at least one player eliminated before the final result is achieved. By looking thru the records of 178 completed games in which clear cut wins (excluding wins with 15 or fewer centers held by the conceded "winner"), I have compiled the following historical data

Table I - Elimination of a country by F06 (i.e. W06 = Zero)

Country	wins	country eliminated								Countries Eliminated	
		A	E	F	G	I	R	T	Number	Average # per win	
Austria	22	-	1	3	4	5	6	8	27	1.226	
England	31	5	-	5	10	8	14	5	47	1.517	
France	21	9	6	-	8	5	2	2	32	1.521	
Germany	17	5	3	9	-	1	2	5	25	1.471	
Italy	15	7	2	6	1	-	1	6	23	1.533	
Turkey	33	15	5	1	10	7	10	-	48	1.454	

These figures point out that if any country, except Austria wins, 1½ countries, on the average are eliminated by 1906. Austria does not excise as large a mortality rate that early in the game. ((Thats what Len noticed. I was struck by the fact that in the English wins, 14 of them --- about 45% of the games-- featured Russia out by 1906. Thats almost as many as F and G combined! This is especially striking since England cannot by herself knock out Russia by 1906. This isn't just a matter of Russia having a glass jaw in games won by another power. Germany should have at least as good an access to Russia, yet we see only 2 Russian eliminations by 1906 in German wins. Early Russian elimination will of course be a good haringer for all her neighbors, but it seems to be more correlated with English success than with any other country. This is despite the fact that England has the poorest access to Russia of the 4 neighbors. I suspect the reason is that G, A and T can so often craft their wins by starting with an alliance with R that helps Russia --- and then either stab her, or win the race to victory. This is particularly true for Germany, but appears also to be true for Austria. England, however, has no use for such a strategy, and benefits by the early collapse of Russia))

((Table II deleted --- no really significant results here))

...By rearranging the figures we can examine the survival and early elimination record of the countries bordering the winner. Table III shows us that in all 7 cases, border countries survive strongly (in strengths of 7 or more) at a lower percentage than the percentage produced by dividing the border countries eliminations by total eliminations. This is not surprising: If your neighbor wins you tend to do poorly ((The strong-second-to-a-win tends not to be a neighbor)). The chances of your surviving past 1906 is far worse if you border the winner than if you do not. England is least destructive to his neighbors; A and R are the most. Survival shows a very large range. G allows one of his neighbors a strong survival most often while T is especially hard on them. (Be sure to notice the survival of F and E in Turkish wins; T is hard on Russia, but not vice versa)

TABLE III --

winning country	neighbors	<u>border eliminations</u> all eliminations	<u>border survival (7+)</u> all survivals (7+)
Austria	T, I, R, G	.851	.478
England	F, G, R	.678	.475
France	I, G, E	.602	.350
Germany	E, A, F, R	.760	.687
Italy	F, A, T	.826	.333
Russia	E, G, A, T	.876	.627
Turkey	I, A, R	.750	.207

((One of the questions which vexes strategy writers is how to define "neighbor", especially in the context of Italy. If you use the "Home Center to Home center in 2 seasons", then Italy is neighbor to G, not to T, plus E-R and A-T are not neighbors. You could up that to "3", which then allows E-R and I-T, but alas, F and A become neighbors. Can't do that. My own approach is to ignore the number of seasons (and also the black lines, which are pretty arbitrary) and say that neighbors can go from Home center to Home center without passing alongside the Home center of another power. That will give the table that Len uses. But is this cartographic approach the best? An alternative approach looks at game dynamics rather than the map. A neighbor is someone attacked in 1901. But this raises two secondary questions. Does the attack have to be mutual? Italy can attack Turkey with F Ion-Eas, but because of his backward fleet, Turkey cannot attack Italy. Second, do we have to take into account whether these attacks actually occur, or is the mere possibility alone enuf? Italy does occasionally attack Germany in 1901. But German attacks on Italy are so rare as to be hardly worth mentioning. If you compare the two, then Germany is clearly more of a neighbor than Turkey. For 1901, Italy attacks Germany far more often than Italy attacks Turkey. Indeed, if A Ven-Tyo is viewed as a potential attack on Mun, then conflict is quite common. Likewise for attacks on Italy: Italy is more likely to be attacked by Germany (or a GA alliance) than by Turkey (or a TA alliance). Alas, this game-dynamics approach gives the opposite answer to the cartographic approach. Its also limited to 1901. 1902 is a somewhat different story. I-T conflicts are much more common in 1902 than 1901, but I-G conflicts I'd say are up only slightly. But can countries really said to be neighbors if it takes them till 1902 to get into a good fight? I tend to think not. Both approaches are legit, but I would give the nod to saying that Italy's neighbors are A, F, and G. But its a close call.))

Finally, which country gets zapped most often? Table IV will tell us, won't you, Table IV?

TABLE IV -- Eliminations and survivals versus total eliminations and total survivals, respectively, for certain sectors of the board

sector		winner						
		A	E	F	G	I	R	T
Belgian sector (E, F, G)	eliminations	-	.563	.444	.480	-	-	-
	survivals	-	.250	.300	.313	-	-	-
Balkans (T, R, A)	eliminations	.518	-	-	-	-	.553	.521
	survivals	.087	-	-	-	-	.346	.147
Scandinavia (E, R, G)	eliminations	-	.563	-	.200	-	.328	-
	survivals	-	.317	-	.437	-	.286	-
Iberia (F, I, E)	eliminations	-	.234	.349	-	.348	-	-
	survivals	-	.285	.200	-	.333	-	-
Ionian sector (T, A, I)	eliminations	.481	-	-	-	.565	-	.458
	survivals	.217	-	-	-	.200	-	.083
Wasteland (G, A, R)	eliminations	.370	-	-	.280	-	.568	-
	survivals	.261	-	-	.375	-	.200	-

Now we shall examine each country.

If Austria wins she has eliminated a Balkan country first more times than she has eliminated either an Ionian or a Wasteland country. This implies that Germany has the best early survival if Austria wins, and Italy is next in line; Russia and Turkey get hurt most often. In like manner, Russia and Turkey strongly survive less often than do either Italy or Germany.

((This takes a bit of Examining here. Looking down Austria's column, TRA (Balkans) shows eliminations at .518, but GRA shows the lower .37. Since they only differ by the replacement of T with G, G is healthier than T. Likewise, a comparison of RTA (.518) with ITA (.481) shows Italy only a little healthier than R. Unfortunately, it's impossible to compare R and T here. Wasteland is safer than Ionian. It would appear, however that the difference is smaller than one would expect from the G vs T difference, meaning that R is probably in worse shape than T, tho not by much))

If England wins, she has conquered either the Belgian or Scandinavian sector first, and rarely gets to Iberia or beyond early in the game.

((He's really stretched things to include England in the Iberia sector at all. If Italy has been eliminated by 1906, England will seldom have had much direct role in this.))

If France wins it is a toss-up, but her land neighbors get hurt most often. France enters the Belgian sector prior to Iberia.

((In other words, In French-win games, by 1906, G is more likely to have been eliminated than Italy))

If Germany wins it is because of the death of a Belgian sector neighbor twice as often as it is because of the death of a Scandinavian power. Interpolation shows that France is an early German victim if Germany is to win. The inverse of the survivals in the three sectors bears this out even more!

((The Belgian and Scandinavian Sectors just exchange F for B. The sharp difference between the two sectors for German wins contrasts greatly with the English wins, where the two sectors give the same result! For E, French and Russian eliminations are equally promising, but G is much more oriented toward French elimination.))

If Italy wins, she goes East in force 11 out of 18 times before going West. She is least kind to her eastern neighbors, but generous in the West.

((The Italian data is more difficult to deal with because Italy has been placed in only two sectors, and they have only Italy in common. But they do break nicely on an F-W basis. With only 15 wins to work with, the results are vulnerable to statistical aberrations. My essay, "The Italian Wins" used 73 wins, looking not only at number of centers, but which centers were held. It appeared in DW #31, and was reprinted in the DW Anthology #1, from Larry Peery))

If Russia wins, she least often attacks England early. She has winning possibilities by going into Turkey, Austria, or Germany. The survival percentages favor Turkey and Austria, with France a strong contender.

((The Balkans-Wasteland comparison shows G and T at roughly equal risk))

If Turkey wins, she has destroyed Austria or Italy early, and/or gives them poor hope to survive.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, don't love your neighbor -- he may win!



I just noticed in this issue of Carpetbagger a discussion of NMR-insurance (GM calling a player collect if his orders haven't arrived close to deadline). I hadn't realized this practice went back as far as 1972. Indeed, the GM (Stephen Bell) even asks players to specify when during deadline weekend they would like to be called --- how's that for service!



((Next up is an item from Europa Express #14, May 1982))

"Academic Research Service" Is For You!

---by Mr. Anonymous

You might know me, but I doubt it. I'm pretty new to postal Diplomacy but just to be sure that none of what I'm going to relate will prejudice any of the players in my games I've asked Gary to withhold my name. I'm sure a lot of you know all about this and probably have your own stories, but it came as a real shock to this novice. It all started when I signed up for four games in a few zines I won't mention and immediately started receiving lots of mail.

All sorts of things came my way: letters, sample zines, offers of alliance--you know the stuff. One letter looked a bit different from the rest. It was a business envelope with a return address somewhere in New Jersey. Now I knew I didn't have any games where a New Jersey player was involved, but the envelope was addressed to the name I used to keep my Diplomacy related stuff separate from the regular mail, so I figured it was a sample zine. When I opened it, out fell what looked like a slick advertisement with a couple other sheets and a covering letter.

I don't know if I could get into trouble with copyright laws for copying the letter so here's a general idea of what it said. It was from a company called "Academic Research Service" who (they said) had been doing research for college students for more than 10 years. I remember reading about this sort of thing in Time magazine a couple years ago. They would do "research" that college students would then hand in as their own work. I thought they were run out of business, but I guess I was wrong. The letter went on to say that for six years they had been helping "some of the best Diplomacy players" gain their high positions. They also made a strong point that their services were strictly confidential.

The letter said that if I would fill out the enclosed questionnaires relating both to my games (zines, addresses, favorite alliance, etc.) and to my personal history, they'd research and draft "sample" letters for each of the six other players, "sample" orders to the gamesmaster, and some lively press. They made a big thing of all this being just "samples" even though they would be on quality bond paper, typed (not photocopied), and addressed envelopes would be enclosed for mailing. I took this to be some kind of legal disclaimer. It looked like everything would be taken care of. I would send them the letters I received from the other players to assist them in their "research" and they would draft suitable "sample" replies. All I had to do was handle shuffling letters from one source to the other and send them a check at the end of the month.

Another amazing thing about the offer was the guarantee. They wouldn't guarantee that I would win every game but they guaranteed that if I used their service and mailed a letter "like our sample" everytime I received one from them, I wouldn't be one of the first three players eliminated from my games. If I was so "unlucky", I would receive all my money back (NMRs invalidated the guarantee).

They also gave some amazing statistics for their "graduates". They said that 48.9% of the players using their methods had won their games, 36.3% were involved in 2-4 way draws, and 14.6% had taken 2nd, 3rd, or 4th place. That left only 2/10ths of one percent who received refunds. Incredible figures if they are true. No wonder some people seem to do so well.

Then there were the testimonials. "I don't know what I'd do without A.R.S. With their help I'm at the 'Top Board' of every rating system!..." "The best! I never learned to type--but I can play against anyone now!..." "Three firsts and a second! Thanks!..." "Better than a Selectric!". I didn't know what to think.

First thing I did after reading the stuff was to write to my gamesmasters to see if they knew about this and if their house rules said anything about it. Yeah, all you oldtimers are probably sniggering up your sleeves now but I'm still new at this. I found out writing to GMs was the wrong thing to do. Two of them said they didn't know anything about it and didn't want to know anything. A third wrote back saying ^{he} ~~my~~ ~~letter~~. And a fourth called to say ("totally off the record") that he had heard about such things and that these companies aren't mentioned in polite society, and especially not by a player to a GM. I got the hint.

So that's my story. I hope this article will help other neVICES who are faced with the same situation. It looks like the less said about research companies and "sample letters" the better you'll fit in. And as a final note, since I started using their service my games have improved remarkably. It ain't cheap, but it works.



((But seriously, folks...scattered throughout the hobby literature, often in smaller zines, are a variety of never-implemented ideas. This one is by Scott Hanson, and appeared in Irksome! #10, March 1982))

AUDIO DIPLOMACY

an idea whose time has come....maybe

When reading the results of your games, do you imagine...the Bloodsucker snickering as she plants the knife....Coughlan's drawl as he so eloquently calls you a SOB...Michalski's laughing as he accuses you of unnatural acts with goats...or Sherwood searching for words as he tries to explain that taking your home center was really an accident?

Can you imagine games results on a cassette tape so you wouldn't have to imagine all this?

I'm very surprised, with all the technical minded people in Dipdom, that I haven't seen this idea discussed before, with all the people into GMing or playing by computer. Cassette tape recorders have been around for a long time, and are quite cheap. But I suppose that by tradition Diplomacy is a game done in print. Dip by cassette would not add anything to the game itself, but it would make the game more fun...by making the game more personal, by being able to add music or sound effects, and being able to inflect the right shade of meaning for your press.

How the game would work is this: The players would, if they wished, record their moves on a cassette tape. This isn't even necessary--they could call them in to the GM who could record their voices quite easily, or they could just send them in on paper as normal...though for a special Audio game I'd suspect they'd want to take full advantage of the possibilities. The moves on tape aren't the fun thing...it's the press and comments that counts. The GM would just put it all together on one tape, then make copies on the tapes the players sent their moves in on, and send them back.

The GM can package the game however he wants, though I'd recommended writing out the results to make setting up the board easier. He could have the players reading their own moves on the tape, interjecting for failed moves and dislodgements, read the moves himself, or put only the press on tape. He could make the tape into a news report, a interview, a "report from the front," a concert...whatever his imagination could come up with and he had time to do.

A bit of equipment would be needed...the GM would need two tape recorders, either both cassette or, better yet, one cassette and one reel to reel. Each of the players would need a cassette recorder. That's the minimum...but you could add equalizers, a mixing board, etc, make the thing a full scale production. Or, if the GM had access to a studio of some sort, he could really go to town!

Of course, you wouldn't have to restrict this to just the game report. You could do a whole zine on tape, with people reading articles, doing plays, and (of course) music reviews. There is already a rock music magazine on tape, so the idea isn't completely new.

There are a couple drawbacks to all this. One is time--it'll take time to put the tape together and time to make copies of it. The professional the tape is going to sound, the more time it'll take to do it. Another is expertise...if you don't know how to work the equipment, it'll take longer and be very frustrating. Expense is another consideration...it costs money to have tapes duplicated if you don't do it yourself, and postage will be a costly business. A cassette...be it 5 minutes or 60 or 120 minutes, will cost around 60 cents to mail, about the cost of a zine. Cassettes themselves are about a dollar for the cheapest...if you reuse them each turn and have players send in their own, it won't be a much of a problem.

Any reactions to this idea??? It could add a whole lot of enjoyment to a game, but it won't be for everyone. It'll take time and dedication from both players and GM to make it work. But if it works, it'll be a blast!

I have access to a studio at our college radio station, so it'd be easy for me to run something like this. But I have no idea of the time involved, so I won't make any promises yet. But if you're interested and would like to try something new, let me know, and maybe we can get a trail game going this fall.

THE MAIL

Eric Prosius: I have a House rule to propose on agreed draws:...It takes 2 seasons to pass a draw. At the first deadline...one "no" vote kills the proposal. If there are none, one "yes" vote passes. NVRs count as neither...If a player achieves a rulebook win at this time, the game is

over. If the draw passes this first vote, players must still submit orders for the next season. They have until the next deadline to veto the draw by changing their vote to "no"...Otherwise it passes for good and the game is over. I formulated this rule in response to a question in KK. It was criticized as "one big headache for the GM"...This rule's advantage is that if people neglect voting thru carelessness ... they can correct their error when they see the draw has passed the first vote. ((That doesn't strike me as a "big headache". The problem is, the first round of balloting is basically meaningless. A "yes" won't end the game, and a "no" vote can be cast in round 2 just as well. So there's virtually no incentive to vote either way. Moreover, if there players really are agreed to end the game, why make them ballot twice to do it?))

Bruce McIntyre: ...I like to see the position before I as a GM decide what an NVR will be, but I lean toward NVR = No. But if the conclusion is looking obvious, I often go NVR = Yes, making certain to tell the players if this is the case. If I forget, it's a no. I don't agree that voting is not a requirement. I think that a player who doesn't bother voting ever should sometimes suffer the consequences, and if it becomes apparent that someone in the game feels it is beneath his dignity to vote, I'll force him to do so by NVR = Yes. ((Make up your mind here. If voting is a requirement, shouldn't you say so explicitly in your HRS? You seem to feel that a person doesn't have to vote every time, but she does have to vote occasionally --- can't have a policy of never voting. So where precisely do you draw the line --- vote at least 20% of the time? Your approach generally seems very ad hoc. You are using some sort of judgement as to NVR = Yes or no depending on circumstances ---should a GM be that much "into" a game? And you risk suspicious players thinking you are playing favorites. More consistent practices reduce that risk))
What about the case where two or more proposals pass at the same time? I've always felt that the common HR "all powers involved in all passed draws share in the (usually large) draw" is inadequate. I ask players sending in two or more yes votes to indicate preference ... only if the preference lists show a dead tie do I use a standard rule. ((The "standard rule" should NEVER NEVER be used. The game should not end unless its conclusion has been specifically agreed upon. Yes on EFG and Yes on EFR does not equal Yes on EFGR. Suppose EFG and EFR pass, but EFGP is voted down? How can you enforce a draw that was voted down? And if EFR + EFG = EFRG, then by the same logic EFR + EFG = EF. After all, the players have agreed to exclude both R and G, just as well as including both. The simplest solution is for the GM to rank them (e.g. alphabetically), or to say that if more than one passes, the players aren't really agreed, and the game must go on.))

THE ZINE COLUMN # 110

NEWS—GNUS—NOOZE

Jack McHugh 280 Sanford Road, Upper Darby PA 19082 will be running a single elimination tournament of Intimate Diplomacy. This is a 2-person game (you get a pool of credits to bid for the allegiance of the other powers) with of course no Diplomacy. I've played in two of these tournaments run expertly by Mark Larzelere, and had a lot of fun. To sign up, send \$5 to Jack, which gives you a shot at the \$40 prize to the winner. The game will be run, I think, in Comrad's Arms (Tom Swider 75 Maple Ave Apt A, Collingswood, N.J. 08108. 2/*1)

The last issue of DD had an editorial scolding Ken Peel for something he had written in ZR. Ken had criticized the actions of an unnamed person without being sure a) precisely what had happened and b) whether indeed it had occurred at all. I got a friendly and detailed letter from Ken, in which he essentially confirmed my reading of the event. Specifically, Ken says that Ceryk told him it was a letter written by XX. But then Ken heard from someone he didn't name that it was really a phone call from VY. Ken was unable to get a confirmation from XX by deadline time, so he ran both the letter and phone versions, minus the names. To me that is poor journalism. With no tangible evidence and no confirmation, Ken cannot be sure this ever occurred, and should not have run the story. Subsequently, Ken was satisfied that there was no such phone call from VY, but did get confirmation from XX (I'm using "XX" because I haven't been able to get that confirmation as yet). But again I state: Don't talk about letters you haven't seen, or phone calls you weren't a party to, unless you've got a confirmation that it actually occurred.

The Solution-for-a-nonexistent-problem award goes to the discussion in XL #25 for having a separate block of Boardman Numbers for Canadians. It is said that this would "make it easier for Canadian stats keepers to keep track of Canadian games" What's the problem? Game starts and ends always list the zines anyway, so they are already easy to tell apart. If an orphaned game crosses the border, will it need a new number? If it doesn't, you can't rely on the system. And if a game has a Guest GM on one side of the border, and a pubber on the other, is it a "Canadian Game"? And maybe a separate block for Electronic mail games. And one for game run by Melinda Holley --- she opens games at a rate not much different from the entire Canadian Hobby. Indeed, the largest block of all would be games in which Melinda Holley is a player. There's no end of ways to complicate the BNC's job. There are separate blocks for overseas games, but that's in response to a legit problem. The considerable expense and delay of trans-Atlantic mailings, plus the massive amount of work that then can be delegated.

Time for some short takes....Bruce McIntyre relates that the new Canadian Diplomacy sets have the 1971 Rulebook (there has since been a 1976 and 1983 one), Italy/France and England/Germany colors are indistinguishable and nothing inside on the postal diplomacy hobby...Dick Martin 17601 Lisa Drive Rockville MD 20855 has done a splendid job with the 1988 PDO Census (with significant help from Ken Peel and Julie Martin). It shows 666 from USA and only 40 from Canada --- I wonder if that reflects a lack of information on Canadians. Surely there are more than 40. Another geographic anomaly is that both MD and VA have far more players than NY! Anyway, well worth the \$1 price tag....XL #25 describes a curious variant with England starting with 6 home centers --- and an army in each!...In Passchendaele #75, Guerrier treads the uncertain waters of the so-called Honest-Review, by which he is equally willing to praise as to criticize. It's all his personal preferences, of course, but this is a style of zine review which one very rarely sees....Paul Gardner 20 Spruce St, Brattleboro VT 05301 is now the US head of the ISE. If you want to buy an overseas publication, and pay in dollars, the ISE is the way to do it...Fred Davis has announced that the North American Variant Bank is being turned over to Lee Kendter, Jr (264 Spruce Ct Bensalem PA 19020) as of April 30 1989. This consists largely of over 900 manila folders of rules+maps! They are arranged in the ARDA catalogue system, which uses various categories and subcategories...FSF #193 has a good essay by Randolph Smyth about what the leader sometimes needs to do in endgames where he wants to shorten the draw...