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Gamesmastering

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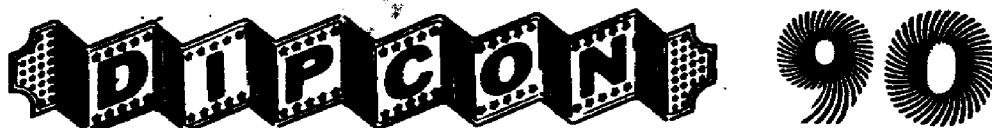
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Ah, the "notes", they're coming to me now. I know them well; I've written many in the past 13 years. They're generally on the address page. The wording varies, but typically, its, "I'll be glad to exchange another \$\$\$ in sub credit, but are you still publishing? If not, send cash, or this is last ish" or "Your sub has expired, and since my DD sub is so high, maybe you'd better send cash this time." or "Under the circumstances, I think I'd prefer to switch from a trade to a mutual sub."

In short, sensible pubbers can't pretend all is going normally.

Diplomacy Digest is not folding, and in fact, I'm not even thinking about that. August to early Oct is alsys the busiest time of the year for me, the hardest to work on the zine. I am normally out of town most of August, Sept tends to be hectic at work, and the Jewish holidays usually run till some point in early Oct. This year I had the complication that ally my July typing vanished, and I decided to stall rather than re-construct (it did turn up). So here I am. I realize that this is not a satisfactory frequency. I'll see if I can get this onto a better track this fall and winter.

I know what you're thinking: Berch has been reading other people's excuses for 13 years so now he's decided to try a few of them out himself! OK, on with the show, starting with some of the aforementioned July typing.



What? You say its more than a little late for a DipCon report? You say that if I could get this zine out on time you'd be glad to read such a report but now its hopelessly stale? True, all true. So I'll skip a lot of the news aspects of it. But I do want to include a report on the DipCon Society meeting, since I didn't see much in the way of a thoro writeup of that, and this report includes some of my commentary. And I'll close with some personal comments about DipCon.

Sunday morning was the DipCon Society meeting, and it was a pleasure to watch Dave Hood's masterful chairing. He had a big agenda to cover, at least 50 people jammed into the room --- and yet people didn't feel cut off. The next WorldCon will go to Australia, tho I just don't see any meaningful # of people going that far away. Next was a DipCon Charter amendment, pushed for years by Fred Davis to redraw

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((We'll begin this discussion with the letter column in Voice of Doom #90
The original comments by GM and editor Bruce Linsey will be inferred))

Kathy Byrne ((Now Kathy Caruso)): I see no reason why a player should be denied an ombudsman if he questions a ruling! I don't care how "obviously" right you are. It may be obvious to you or me, but not to the player. As the BNC, I have already had two players come to me and ask to me talk to their GM because he was refusing to allow an ombudsman (... two different GMs). However, in each case, I wrote the GMs and asked them, as a favor to me would they please allow an ombudsman even tho I knew their rulings were totally correct. Both GMs agreed and both players were satisfied even tho they lost the decision. As a player, if a GM ever told me that I couldn't go to an ombudsman, I would definately question the GM's motives. As the GM (and here I know we disagree), I feel you should try to keep your players happy, and if that means letting one of them take you to an ombudsman then you should do it! As I told one GM, if you are so sure that you are right, then you should have no qualms about going to an ombudsman. I really don't feel that it would be breaking your HRs to keep a player happy. Sometimes a ruling is a lot easier to accept if it is explained by an outsider.

Bruce Linsey: I think you have made your points very well The statement where you say you "know" we disagree is one on which we actually agree 100%. The only difference is a matter of semantics --- I don't view "keeping the players happy" as meaning that every move I make will please every player all the time. ((Thats a bit of a cheap shot --- Kathy didn't say or imply thats what meaning she had in mind either.)) I just mean that I will keep the players in a game which is well run, under my rules. I will come out on time, be consistant, etc. The players must create their "happiness" for themselves within that framework.

Yes, I see your point that a ruling is easier to accept if it is explained by an outsider. I addressed that in my ruling in #89. But there is another point ... which, altho brought up in a slightly different context, applies here as well.

... Consider the following case. A player wants an ombudsman for no good reason. He is mad at the GM for personal reasons and (apparently) wants to disrupt the game. In fact, he doesn't even bother to state what his complaint is -- he just wants an ombudsman. Should the GM call one, and delay the game? I don't think so, and I wouldn't in that circumstance. And this is not some far-fetched figment of my imagination. It happened to me. The player was Dick Martin, the GM Gary Coughlan, and the game Swedish Roundabout. As a player in the game, I was unhappy with the complaint, which was very clearly trumped up, and I was unhappy that the GM delayed the game to accomodate the player who was clearly in the wrong. In bending over backwards to be fair to a player who did not deserve it, the GM actually hurt the game for the rest of us. (I hasten to add that the game was on the whole extremely well run.) (And that I do not pu the blame on Gary, for obvious reason.) ((And that this is just Linsey's evaluation of the event, for obvious reasons))

...Going to an ombudsman takes time and creates a disturbance in the game. This ... is worth it if the player might be right; it is not worth it when the player's complaint is obviously wrong.

And ... I know the rules of the game as well as, and my HRs better than, any ombudsman. In a case where I am clearly right, I don't even want to take the chance, slim as it may be, that the ombudsman will mess things up by ruling differently.

For example, it would be very easy to misunderstand my H R regarding ((etc, etc. If its so easy, it should probably be rewritten))....Oh, sure I have a heck of a lot of confidence in Berch's ability ... and that applies to some others as well. But I don't even think I should have to take the outside chance that an ombudsman will rule incorrectly in a case where my adjudication is the correct one clearly. ((If Bruce has a list of people who he does have "a lot of confidence in", then just say that only those people will be approved as ombudsmen.))

An even better example was the premature end to MILKY WAY. No ombudsman who is thinking straight would allow a players word to take precedence over that of the GM regarding something submitted over the phone, when the HRS indicate that the GM's record of such communication is final. But what if the ombudsman in a momentary lapse ruled in favor of the player ... It could happen. And then what happens? Not only is the game currently in question affected, but other players get it into their heads that they could do the same thing -- and what's more, they now have a precedent to go on, because the GM has already been overruled in one such case --- why not theirs? ((This is getting pretty far-fetched even for me. Not only has this ombudsman made a colossal blunder, but another ombudsman is going to rely on it as precedent?)) No, thank The players here have to have some degree of confidence in me to make the correct rulings, because when I do, I will not always call for an ombudsman.

Really, this is another one of those questions where neither you nor I is "right". We are talking about 2 perfectly valid, tho divergent philosophies of GMing. Any player who would question my motives for refusing to call an ombudsman shouldn't be playing here in the first place.... There are times when it is not clear-cut which ruling ... is the correct one. Those are the times, in my opinion, when an ombudsman is needed. Your opinion, and I would guess that of most of the hobby is different from mine. You see the ombudsman as useful when a player needs needssomeone to make an unfavorable ruling easier to swallow. A spoonful of sugar, if you will.

I appreciate your input on this question immensely --- yours in the best response I have to date from my article....((aw, isn't he sweet. Who would have known that 6 months later the Linsey-Byrne feud would be raging?))((We now move to #95, May 15, 1984)).

Mark Berch: And I still say, you should give the players an ombudsman if they ask for one, period. You say, "...if someone does not trust my judgement as a GM, he should not be playing here..." Well, yes, but if you feel that way, no ombudsman should be needed at all. Its one thing to ask the players to trust your judgement; thats reasonable. Its quite another to ask them to accept the notion that you are infallible. You're not. And you could make the mistake of not realizing that an ombudsman is needed. Your players know you aren't perfect. And thus they will feel and be more secure knowing that an ombudsman is available if they think they need one.

Yes, an incorrect ruling by an ombudsman could harm that game and others, but thats the risk you take whenever you call for an ombudsman --- thats really an argument against having an ombudsman, period. By the same token, the players have the reverse risk under your present policy --- viz. that they'll be harmed by your error in not calling for an ombudsman. Moreover, that error could affect all your games. You can limit the effect of a bad mistake by an ombudsman by adding new language

to your houserules, or by stating that ombudsm~~an~~'s decisions are not precedents.

Bruce Linsey: Ah, but you...make the unstated but critical assumption that in a game being run under my HRS, the ombudsman is less likely to err than I am. No body claims infallibility, but I regard myself as familiar enough with my own HRS -- and the game rules, too --- to know when a player's complaint is simply out of line. My current policy stays. ((I don't assume anything of the sort -- either risk is there, and who is to say which is worse, either in terms of likelihood or consequences.))

(((

((Next, we turn to a symposium which took place in Costaguana Vol 10, #20 (May 1986). The questions had been distributed earlier))

QUESTION: Should a GM list retreat options for a dislodged unit, or should the players be required to analyze the possibilities for themselves?

Ken Hager I do not provide (retreat) information since I feel it falls beyond the GM's authority to do so. The GM would never list potential moves for a unit prior to Spring 1904, for example. Since retreats are moves, and are guided by specific rules, which are the players' responsibility to know, I feel that by listing the "legal" choices a GM is providing helpful information to a player, a pre-adjudication if you will, when in fact it's the player's responsibility to determine his own valid options per the rulebook. The same goes for listing unit changes with the supply center charts, especially when the options become complex, e.g. when an opponent has the option of retreating into one of your supply centers, or when you have a choice of retreating a unit off the board and rebuilding it. I feel that when the GM details these options, he is providing useful information to the players, which it is their responsibility to determine.

Bruce Linsey It's up to the GM whether he lists retreat options. My personal preference is that he do so.

Konrad Baumeister I always listed retreat possibilities, though this did nothing but create more opportunities for GMing error. I would suppose most players are familiar enough with the rulebook to figure it out.

Elmer Hinton It doesn't matter if he does or not, but it is better if he does so, in that no error will be made, especially by novices, over such things as open spaces due to standoffs. In fact, a GM who does not list the options might be construed as denying the players their full and correct adjudication of the turn. The only advantage in not doing so would be for the GM to snicker over some player's later mistake - a form of vicarious participation not to be encouraged.

Stephen Wilcox The only thing that matters here is consistency. It would not be fair to do it for some and not for others.

Melinda Holley As a GM, I list possible retreats for a dislodged piece. I don't believe this is GM interference. Experienced players know their

possible retreats. Novice players can use the information and make the game more enjoyable.

Randolph Smyth I list the options, but I remember a couple of times when I made a mistake! In any case, it's the players' responsibility to verify my list.

Ken Peel Couldn't care less, as long as it's stated one way or another.

Conrad von Metzke I don't mind telling you, this question - and your responses to it - were the substantial impetus for some of the foofaraw that I stuffed into my April Fool's issue concerning GM interference in adjudications and/or using a 'neutral' coign of vantage to give the players too much information. Although I am aware of, and careful about, efforts that reveal more than a referee should tell, I think there are limits to what is 'interference' and what is 'normal GM procedure.'

If one accepts that listing retreat options is improper for a GM, the logical extension becomes this: Ought not the GM also to avoid listing ownership of supply centers, success or failure of moves, and just about everything else that a GM routinely does in this hobby? There comes a point where this level of reasoning gets silly. At its ultimate extension, we ought not to have a GM at all, lest he/she say something untoward and overly revelatory. This brings us right back to Game 1962A, with - either effectively or actually - no GM at all.

I am especially interested in the apparent contrast between Konrad's and Elmer's letters, concerning the potential for error. On the surface, Konrad is saying that listing options will increase mistakes, where Elmer holds that doing so will reduce them. Actually, they're speaking to two different levels. Any time a GM does anything, the possibility of error is there. Elmer is, rather, dealing with player error caused by inadequate data. Quite distinct, really.

Unquestionably, the more things a GM does, the greater the potential for error, but that fact alone cannot be held forth as a reason for not doing something that needs doing. If it were, the GM would have to withdraw from doing anything, lest he goof.

Elmer's point makes a lot more sense to me. Let me carry his thesis one step along, and phrase it this way: If a GM lists options, then certainly there may be an error, but as Randolph says, the players need to check all adjudications and mention mistakes when found. In such a case with a retreat option, the flub can quickly be fixed, often in advance of the subsequent deadline, certainly by the time of it. But if options are not printed and the GM errs in computing the options, and if a player orders a retreat that the GM has incorrectly deemed impossible, then we have a much greater snarl and a longer delay, and we may even have subsequent moves printed - and revealing player intentions - only to have to pull them back to correct the error.

There is a very fine line - numerous shades of grey, indeed - in some of these supposedly "technical" matters, as to whether a GM is performing a service or an interference by doing something. I don't know that I buy the arguments advanced that novices will be helped by this stuff, whereas it won't matter to experienced players; to give a novice a boost over a seasoned veteran is very blatant favoritism, no matter whether in a good cause or not. If a novice needs guidance, it ought not to come from a sitting neutral arbiter. However, players (all players) need to know, and are entitled to know, that the GM knows what

he is doing. This hobby has gone beyond allowance for poor gamesmastering; we no longer need to tolerate it. The odd slip here and there, no matter; but a steady stream, no. And on that basis, it seems to me that it is well that GMs present their competence to the players in an unbroken stream of proper rulings and analyses. To keep records straight, keep players aware, and prevent delay-causing error (or delay-causing reliance on error), I say that such things as listing retreat options, supply centers owned, and the like, is quite proper and in fact quite ordinary.

((Clearly, listing and not-listing are both acceptable. But I think listing retreats is a very poor idea. A GM has no business detailing what the players upcoming options are. That is for the players to figure out for themselves. The GM is just there to adjudicate the game. Ken mentions a GM listing potential 1904 moves as unthinkable, but we need not go even that far. Have you ever heard of a GM detailing a players build options? (e.g. "Russia may build F Stp(nc), F StP(sc), A StP or decline the build") Of course not. Why is it proper to list the players legal retreats but not the legal builds? The GM is there to report what has already happened, not to list possible outcomes for the next season. Conrad asks the, "ought not the GM also avoid listing the ownership of SCs, success or failure of moves..." That is different. SC ownership is a book-keeping (hey, how often do you get to correctly break up a double letter which is itself between a pair of double letters?) function, just reporting what has already occurred. Likewise adjudicating the successes and failure of the moves. If a piece is annihilated, then of course the GM should list that this has already occurred. If the piece was dislodged, just say so. Don't, in effect, advise a player on his choices as to what to do about it. Yes, as Melinda and Elmer point out, this advice can help the novice. But that's not the GM's job, because if it is, there's no end to it. Does the GM also advise that retreat to Lyo might not work because Italy might also retreat there? That a build in Mar is impossible? That a fleet build in StP must specify the coast? If you wouldn't say, "In the next season, A Tun's choices are H, or A Tun-NAF", then why would you say "A Tun dislodged. In the next season, its choices are retreat to NAF or OTB." Either would be helpful to our novice. And you don't need to list retreats "to keep records straight". The GM need only check the of the actually ordered retreat, not the legality of every adjacent province. Its thus just not true that the full listing is something that "needs doing" You just need to check the one she actually picks. I agree that the fact that the GM might screw up the list is irrelevant. But advising that an army can retreat Rom to Ven, but that a fleet cannot is not a proper warning from the GM. The players are there to sort out their options. The GM is there to report on what they did.))



((Lets have a look at another seemingly routine GMing practice, what we would call here "tentative orders received". This is from Bullock's 1901 and all That #47, May 1975))

Pete Charlton: I don't think you should make a note of orders on file, as it sometimes spoils the possibilities of diplomacy, and the fact that orders in advance may be in case of a miss.

David Tant: Could you refrain from stating which countries you have orders on file from? ... It can indicate to people that their opponents have finished their diploming already. Eg. "Order on file from F & G" at the beginning of the game may well reveal the true state of affairs to England, who might otherwise believe he is allying with one against the other.

Mick Bullock: You two been getting together? OK, that's a good point David, and, always willing to go along with popular demand, I'll stop making a note of "orders on file" - indeed, have already done so. I assume

it's OK to carry on noting "adjustments on file" which usually only indicates someone wants to save a stamp.
((I'd have to agree with this. If a GM wants to reassure a player that anything has been received, he can always add a private note, altho this requires a bit more organization and planning. The problem at its most acute occurs when a GM has delayed a game due to too many NMRs (See DD #94 for extensive discussion of this situation). Most commonly, the GMs list who they didn't get orders from (tho not always). I'm uncomfortable with that, unless the GM is willing to assign a standby right then and there. This is just too much of a clue as to who might be NMRing. If the GM has gone to the trouble of delaying the game because of this, he can note on the individual copies of the defaulters that they should get orders in. On the other hand, if a player wants to have the fact that his orders are in, should the GM print it? That's related to the question of whether a GM should honor a request, "Please print my true vote on the draw/win proposal" I tend to think of both of these practices as OK, but a minimalistic approach to GMing would rule the other way.))



((Continuing our look at what a GM should say, we turn to Fall of Eagles #17, April 1978 for this exchange between player and GM:))

John Sandell: I have a point to raise about the non-build of "F StP" in 1977GX. It has always been your policy not to interfere in any way in a game. I therefore think your note to Robert ((the Russian player)) should have been a private one. You have disclosed that Robert wanted to build a fleet against England. England now knows Russia's intentions yet Russia has no unit to back himself up.

Richard Hucknall: Point Well taken John. I agree I should have explained privately to Robert why I could not accept a build of F StP. However, you ((the French player)) have no way of telling that the fleet was built against England. If Robert intended it to be StPnc then you are right, but if StPsc was intended then surely it was to continue the attack on Germany.

((I don't agree with John. If the player wrote "F StP", then exactly that should be printed. If this reveals any intentions (at a minimum, to build a fleet) without a "unit to back himself up", that's the breaks of the game. The GM is not there to shield the inept player from said breaks. He should print what he was given, no more no less. An obscuring notation like "impossible build" puts too much judgement into the hands of the GM. How obscure should he be? Should he be perhaps a little more specific and say, "impossible fleet build" which tells us that it was a fleet, but leaves open the possibility of F Mos or F Ank being ordered. And as for the "why", it's always permitted to comment on the application of the Rulebook, which after all, tells nothing of substance about a player's diplomacy. I also wonder whether John's assumption that this was indeed F StPnc was part of his game strategy. Perhaps he was trying to pretend that the Russian player had told him that it would be F StPnc. Or am I being too cynical?))

((Our next discussion began with John Marsden's essay in his Ode #79 (Oct 1986) on the End Game Proposal, the handling of which can be one of the GM's more nettlesome tasks. As is so often the case, only one paragraph of this caught the readers eye, so just that will appear:))

The Proposal Should Have A Reasonable Chance Of Success. There is no point in proposing an end in a situation in which the other players aren't going to want to know ((sic? does he mean finish?)) Such situation include ones where one player has a chance at a win and wants to try for it (unless the others want to concede of course), where the game still has a lot of play left in it, and where the diplomatic situation is still both active and fluid. In these situation, the other players will want to continue, so why waste the GM's time making foolish proposals?

((An answer came in the next issue:))

Allan Marsden: I disagree with your tone in the article ... The implication throughought is that the function of submitting a proposal is to terminate the game. In practice, it can be part of the diplomacy, both in that by submitting --- and letting it be known that you have submitted --- a proposal it is possible to give an impression, (right or wrong) of the posture you are adopting, and also because the responses to the proposal can give useful information about the way your opponents see the game (it is usually fairly easy to guess which players have voted which way ((easy to guess, but not easy to be sure that you're right)) ((Sounds innocuous, eh? And John indicated he'd go along with that. But the next issue saw a brisk rebuttal:))

Steve Froud: ...Allan Marsden admits that game-end proposals "can be part of the diplomacy ... to give an impression..." and to gain "useful information about the way your opponents see the game." Used in the way Allan suggests, therefore, game-end proposals are a collusion between the player and the GM to influence that player's negotiating position. This represents unacceptable GM interference and a distasteful departure from the original purpose of such proposals (i.e. to end the game having agreed upon the likely outcome). Thus, with the GM's input, such proposals, rather than stating the expected outcome influence the outcome. Personally I beleive that we can best remove the GM Interference and return the situation to that analogous to the face-to-face situation by insisting that a player writes to each player directly with his proposals. Each player then ignores or accepts this in his orders; the GM ignores such orders ((votes, I assume)) unless all the players accept it. Game-end tools are, however ... a prevalent tool in the hobby. To prevent their abuse I would suggest the following rules:

1. The proposers name is published with the proposal.
2. The proposer must vote for the proposal.
3. The GM simply states that the proposal has failed, or that the game is over. Under no circumstances should the GM reveal information ...i.e. the vote ((tally)) must not be published. ((Note that his first proposal would effectively cut the GM out of the entire process, except to reveal that the game had in fact ended. John Marsden replied:))

John Marsden: I'd say that (1) contradicted (3) ((that is, 1 + 3 means

that the proposal was published in the first place. And how could he both not reveal information and also publish the name of the proposer?) I wouldn't agree with (2) because, in the season that the proposal was submitted the game situation might change such that the proposer might change his mind, or want the game to continue... I agree, tho, that the uses Allan suggests cannot occur with the involvement of the GM --- altho there's nothing to stop the player from confusing the issue in diplomacy.

((#82 brought this rejoinder from))

Allan Marsden: I totally disagree with Steve Froud ... Firstly, if an endgame proposal -- in accordance with the HRS -- is a collusion between player and GM, then why isn't an order to move, say, F Bre-Eng, carried out by the GM ((also a collusion?)) Secondly, on a more general point, I, as a player, am not interested in what the intent of a rule or HR is. They simply define a framework within which I will operate to maximize my advantage ((A similar situation would be the use of totally artificial bids in bridge)). If this goes beyond the intent -- but not the wording -- of the rules, that is surely the GM's problem for not wording the rule with sufficient precision...

Andrew Glynn: I disagree with yourself and Mick regarding gameend proposals, since I don't approve of "spinning out games". There is room for bluff, even if voting numbers are revealed. This method means that the game is more likely to finish on the merits of diplomacy than endurance..

John Marsden: ... I think both Steve and Allan have overstated the case here. The GM's role must be totally impartial, but if a player submits a game-end proposal that is within the HRS ... it is not for the GM to know or consider whether it is a genuine attempt to end the game or not. He just publishes it and accepts the votes -- and that is the same as accepting and publishing orders... What I was trying to say in my article was that game-end proposals are a serious tool of the game, with a particular purpose --- but I don't really object to their use in the diplomacy. What I object to are "fatuous" proposals that are only submitted as a joke. ((And yet, John has just said that its not for the GM to consider whether the request is "genuine". This is a mighty fine line. It seems to me that a GM should be either concerned about the motive or not, and John here seems to be trying to have it both ways.))

((Continuing into #84:))

Steve Thomas: I'm not at all sure there's a foolproof way to decide whether a proposal is fatuous. In any case, if its intended as a joke, it may even be funny. The only real objection you can have is the workload ... but surely thats a lot less than the work of adjudicating the rest of the game. A system whereby the GM publishes any endgame proposal, and acts upon it as voted by the players, is the only fair method.. Any player who concedes a winning position deserves what he gets, and I can conceive of a position where a player not in the lead has a certain win ((especially in the British system, where dropouts are not replaced. the Ode HRS bar such a voted conclusion)) and you can't really blame players in such a position trying to save time...

((As those who know so well realize, I am absolutey opposed to a GM ever getting into player "intent". It is not his or her function, its an invitation for trouble. So if its a legal proposal, the GM ought to print it, regardless of whether its frivolous, or just a diplomatic probe, merely

posturing, etc. Beyond that, there is a difficult trade-off. The GM wants to give players a full rein for their diplomacy --- that's the name of the game. On the otherhand, the GM doesn't want to get himself --- or his functioning --- immeshed in the game, or a player's diplomacy, because he's not a player. My entire Shep Rose character was created to explore what sort of mischief could be created that way. But these goals work at cross purposes. The more info the GM gives out --- such as a vote tally of 4-1 ---- the more a player's diplomacy is enabled, and the more he can be drawn in. For example, suppose a player requests that the GM publish his true vote on a draw or concession proposal. Should a GM comply? Clearly, this will help the player, trying to persuade others how he voted. The GM is not aiding anyone's deception here, nor is he taking sides, since he'd do this for anyone who voted. On the other hand, he's clearly going beyond the GM's minimum duties, which is to run the game. Of course, a GM who even publishes a draw proposal is going beyond those minimum duties. After all, he can take the Steve Proud approach, and let the players write each other about it, and then publish just the adjudication, or a notice that the players have (unbeknownst to the spectators) agreed on a draw proposal. So it's really a question of degree --- how far will a GM go to move beyond the minimum. I know one GM (Randolph Smyth) whose policy it is to honor such a request. Once, long ago, I asked a GM to publish my true vote, and he told me flatly that this was GMing interference, and that if I wanted to persuade the other players of how I voted, I'd have to use the same skills I'd use in persuading them of anything else.))



((Next is a short announcement of GMing policy from the GM of Meglomania (a British zine, which appeared in #24 (MARCH 1980))

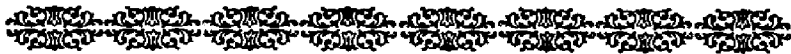
As a result of the general unfavourable response, I'm scrapping House Rule no. 8 and replacing it with this

8. When units have to be removed for a country in civil disorder (or when the player NMR's or forgets to order sufficient removals), the GM will remove the unit furthest from the player's home supply centres. This is calculated by the shortest route possible (ignoring convoys) from the nearest home centre. Units in supply centres will never be removed, and where two units are equidistant, the earliest in alphabetical order will be removed first. This procedure is repeated until no more removals are needed.

The only difference between this rule and rule XIV. 4 in the rulebook is that I ignore convoys, do not distinguish between armies and fleets, and never remove units in supply centres. I hope that the reasons for these changes are obvious, but doubtless some awkward sod or other will object, and I'll be forced to justify them.

((As a practical matter, I think when a GM announces that alter the Rulebook, that justifications should be provided, because it's a fairly drastic step. I don't have any problem with altering this particular rule. Indeed, the player's handout for Biped IV, which I wrote, stated that no CD removal would take place from a SC, which is the biggest drawback of the Rulebook procedure. However, this is hardly perfect, and it's a good example of a HR that wasn't checked out by having others read it.

What exactly does "ignoring convoys" mean? Does it mean that if there is a convoy route and an overland route, that we ignore the convoy route? Or does it mean that convoys are never available, so that an army in North Africa would be infinitely far away?))



((Among the most nettlesome of all GMing problems is that of the compounded error. This account comes from Greatest Hits #100, Sept 1982, and is by the GM Peter Birks))

1980 Nightmare Time

The problem here is as follows. In GH #98, I corrected an adjudication which appeared in #97, giving Turkey A Tun and F Wes, not the incorrect F Wes and F Tyh. Unfortunately, I neglected to correct this error when typing out Turkey's orders. In #99 I adjudicated according to (my) incorrect placing's of the units, even tho I had typed out the correction of my mistake.

Now, my HRS are quite clear about an uncorrected mistake, in that if the mistake is not pointed out by the following adjudication, then the mistake must stand. But I've already corrected the mistake, then made it again. Barry hasn't noticed this, and has failed to correct my remaking of the mistake.

Were the situation not so critical, we could muddle through, but it is. To "create" a Turkish F Tyh when I've already stated categorically that it does not exist would be unfair to France and Italy, but to retrospectively disallow Turkey's long convoy would be unfair to Turkey, since I did say that there is a F Tyh (or more precisely, I did fail to indicate after F Tyh "no such unit, A Tun stands unordered") in GH #98. As such I see no alternative but to ask for players to resubmit orders for Spring 1911 ((in effect, replaying the season printed in #99)). And Barry, please note that you have A Tun, not F Tyh. I'm sorry about this.. ((That's a plausible way of handling the mess, but not what I would have done. Mind you, I'm not one of those who feels that a season should never

be replayed. Indeed, as an ombudsman, I have ordered such a replay. But this doesn't warrant it. The failure to correct the remaking of the mistake should be treated as any other failure to correct a mistake. The error appeared in #98's adjudication. Since it wasn't pointed out by #99's deadline, the adjudication of #99 should have stood, in my view. Or looked at another way, a player's obligation to catch "mistakes" covers not only the original adjudication mistake, but the mistake of not rectifying the error in actual adjudication. I don't see that France and Italy are being treated unfairly. They could have spotted the error in #98's adjudication. But they didn't, so #98's error becomes ratified by failure to object, and thus the #99 adjudication should have been used.))



((Note that there were no personalities involved in that dispute. Not such with this item from En Passant #54, October 1974. We begin with the GM Greg Warden:))

Greg Warden: I trust that you ((the players in 1973BX)) have all received the letter from David Forte. He has now resigned from the game. I unfortunately do not have space to reprint the whole thing here, but I'll reprint just the last two paragraphs and then comment on it

David Forte: "One cannot escape the conclusion that discourtesy in failing to answer important and crucial requests for rules determinations, coupled with an arbitrary policy of putting in new players and moves, and sloppy adjudication thrown in, means Diplomacy ~~and~~ or even clean sets of moves are impossible.

"That being so, the game is no longer a game. The enjoyment is absent, for minimum predictability, information, and competent adjudications are not present, I cannot fight Austria, Italy, and the gamemaster at the same time. Regretfully, I resign, and I ask Greg Warden whether it might not be best if he consider the same."

WARDEN
~~Comment~~: I have never read such total bunk in my life. The only true part is the comment regarding sloppy adjudication. This I regret. I have never pretended to be infallible but of late my adjudications of this game have been sloppier even than usual. I'll try to do better. Part of the problem is that this game always comes last, and by the time I get to it I'm hurrying in order to get the 'zine out on time.

The part regarding the arbitrary replacement policy is sheer bunk. My policy is simple. I get replacement players when possible. If I can't the position remains open until someone sends in moves for it. The same is also true for substitute moves. I'll get them when a substitute is handy. If I can't find someone to make moves, the position stays open (all units hold). If a player has sent in general orders I will make sure to get substitute moves (see this present gameyear in this game for just such a situation). I've explained this situation to Mr. Forte before many times. Quite frankly, I'm tired of his incessant whining. The house rules have a provision whereby the players, by vote, can change any provision. Why didn't Mr. Forte try to change the rules, if he found them so arbitrary? ~~rules~~ The reason is that most players like these rules. That's the reason I use them; it would certainly be a lot easier for me to have all the units hold when a player misses moves. It would also get the games over with quicker and save me money. But obviously, since I don't charge for my games, I'm not out to make money, or, for that matter, to do things the easy way. I would rather make sure that the games are enjoyable and well-fought. Well-fought games are something Mr. Forte seems to dislike. He would much rather have his easy win a la Charles Reinsel with most of the countries in civil disorder. If Mr. Forte likes that sort of win he can go to some other magazine to find it.

"Discourtesy in answering" is total bunk again. First of all, I ~~did not~~ know in advance that Edi Birsan would send in moves for England. The position was so hopeless that I did not ask for a replacement. It was only a week before the deadline that I found out that Edi wanted to take over. To have notified Mr. Forte at that time would have given him a greatly unfair advantage over the other players. This is the kind of unfair advantage that Mr. Forte seems to continually want (since he seems eternally seeking after the cheap win) and that I, as gamemaster, am unwilling to provide. Also, I wish that just once Mr Forte, with all his continual complaining to me, would include a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Now for the last part. Mr. Forte asks me whether I shouldn't resign from this game. A GM, Mr. Forte cannot resign. In his case, it is called abandoning the game. You would be the first to swalk in your eternal falsetto if I did such a thing while you were still in the game. As a GM, I have a responsibility to the players to carry on. Many is the time when I would have liked to get rid of a particularly boring game, or a game that had unusually obnoxious or pesty players. Not so easy. But once in a while, fortune does smile on me: the player drops out, usually with the frenetic and fervent excuses that have the decisive smell of "sour grapes"

((GMS sometimes can't assign a standby player to an NMRed or resigned position. Very few such GMS, however, will just let another person parachute into the game, without notifying the players of record, which is apparently what Warden did here. I don't think such GMS are aware of how infuriating it is to be attacked by someone you didn't even know was in the game. You cannot conduct Diplomacy with such a person. As a player, you are entitled to know the status of the Great Powers, and if such a power is moving from Civil Disorder to being played. Thus, when Birsan took over this position, all the other players should have been notified. And given that it was only a week before the deadline, a new deadline should have been set. The other thing I didn't much care for here is Warden's personalizing the entire matter. Usually, it's the player who overindulges in this sort of thing, but here, Forte is rather dry in his comments. Warden's talk of "sour grapes", his insinuation that Forte just wants "his easy win" rather than "well fought games", etc, does not put Warden in a very good light. Moreover, he appears to be misrepresenting what Forte said. He claims that Forte wants an "unfair advantage" by being told of Birsan's arrival in the game, but it doesn't appear that Forte asked that he and only he be told of this. And this talk of Forte seeking a easy win.--At the time this occurred, Forte was merely tied for second. Mind you, I think Forte should have stayed in the game. But alas, it is all too common for a GM to lash out at a player no longer in the game. The elements of Warden's response (failure to try to look at things from the player's point of view, personalizing the dispute, imputing base motives to the player, misrepresenting what he said) are all too common. That's one of the reasons I reprinted this. Don't let this happen to you. You won't make yourself look good this way.))



((Lets have another look at a problem arising from when a player is replaced. We start with Arrakis #57, May 1976. In the Fall 1904 report for 1975EG, the Austrian player Mike Case is NMRed, all units hold. Below is the following from GM David Head:))

I received a change of address card from Case saying, "new address unknown cancel game." So I will need a new player for Austria and the lucky winner is Wayne Callahan...

((Thus, Case had in effect resigned, but with no final set of moves. #58 had the Winter builds, plus the following from the GM:))

The following is from Cal White: "When Mike resigned you should have delayed the game in order to inform the players. My moves were designed to work in cooperation with the Austrian player ((Cal was Italy)). Not knowing that Austria was undergoing a switch in command, these moves failed I had no time to write Wayne and ask him to make the originally expected moves. It fucked me up royally. You made a bad judgement call. I resign"

I don't think your excuse for resigning has much validity, Cal. It is the policy of many GMS not to delay the season in order to allow a replacement player to come in. I quote from the HRS: "Resigning players are requested to help the GM and the replacement player in making a smooth transition." Mike should have sent in Fall order with his resignation, to prevent an NMR, but he couldn't get any in, because of his move. I have no

sympathy for you, Cal, and can only say that I'm a little disappointed with your actions.

((The discussion finished in #59 with these comments:))

First some ~~more~~ from Cal White: "Your HRs say that it is the duty of the resigning player to help the new player's entry into the game as smooth as possible. This is true, but the PRIMARY responsibility still lies with the GM. By starting a game, you agree to try and provide as enjoyable an experience as possible for the players (within reason). You are doing the new player and his allies no favor by NMR'ng the country in question, while helping their enemies either recover or destroy the country. This would seem to be identical to the results obtained by favoritism or collusion. While I am sure that neither of these cases happened in 75EG it still serves to prove what kind of detrimental effect your action has on the game. If you can convince me that I'm wrong I'll apologize as I have no wish to be involved in a stupid feud, but I believe it will take some doing."

From John Leeder: I don't think you acted wrongly in the Case-Callahan changeover. Having one's ally NMR is a chance a player has to be prepared for.

Dave Head here: The primary responsibility does not lie with the GM. If a player resigns, he should be responsible for the change. When you join a game, you pay me to adjudicate the moves, and print the results and mail them to you. I don't remember ever promising to give an enjoyable experience, but, thru accurate GMing, the game should be enjoyable. Another point I just thought of, we made an addition to our HRs sometime back. In essence it states that a game will never be delayed because of an NMR or a number of NMRs.

((Even if it were a "bad judgement call" that would not justify a resignation. Such a drastic action in my view requires far more provocation than that. Head's action was within the range of normal GMing practice, and would be perfectly reasonable even without the HR he refers to. Whether it is the best policy is another matter. My recommendation would be that if a GM knows that the position is vacant, that he move immediately to replace the position and not permit the country to have no player of record. In essence, this is what happens when a standby is called, and then in the following season, the original player fails again to produce orders, so the standby's orders are used, so that there is no interregum with a lack of player of record. In that circumstance, the player's don't need to be notified, since they were already apprised of that possibility. However, if a player resigns without final orders, and a GM accepts that resignation, it would be reasonable to bring in a new player immediately. That would entail resetting the deadline, to let all players know of the new circumstance (and thus avoid a Forte/Warden type of dispute)).

((Finally, Cal was at that time a player. Since then, he's been a RNC and GMed for several zines. I wonder if he stills sees this issue in the same terms, and would delay the game. Cal??))

((Once upon a time, John Piggott published Ethil the Frog. The zine lasted 46 issues. About three years later, starting with issue #1 again, tho not, oddly enuf, with a notation of this being volume 2. This comes from that restart issue of Feb 12, 1977:))

And now I come to the most difficult problem of all: house rules. When I first started Ethil back in those days of blissful youth in 1972, and for some time after, it was standard practise for every editor to spend several pages of his first issue telling the players, at tedious and patronizing length, how they might or might not behave. But more recently attitudes seem to have changed (I must admit that I missed the first issues of several of the more recent zines, so my impressions could be erroneous); it seems that less importance attaches to house rules nowadays, and more to the actual play of the game.

In a recent Greatest Hits, Pete Birks (who really ought to know better at his age) tried to start a campaign for the standardization of house rules throughout the known cosmos, producing an eclectic synthesis, he suggested, which would give recommendations to cover all conceivable eventualities. Well, the mere mention of an eclectic synthesis sent me reeling towards Chambers, and by the time I'd found out what it meant I'd forgotten the whole thing in favour of thinking up bad jokes about eclectic lights, eclectic trains and Parliamentary by-elections. Apparently that's what everyone else did, too, as the whole thing seems to have fizzled out remarkably quickly - only Clive Booth reacted in favour, as I recall. What a stupid bloody idea, in any case - what GM worth his salt would wish to abrogate the responsibility of making his own rulings about his own games? Advice, yes; decisions, no.

Opinion is in any case unanimous among reputable GM's over simple rulebook problems, such as the legality of the Coastal Crawl, whether Spain touches North Africa, and the resolution of the convoy paradox. As for more contentious rulings, well, some players might like a bit of variety in what's allowed and what isn't.

I expect everybody has seen the catalogues of outrageous manoeuvres which Richard Sharp published in the last two issues of Dolchstoss. Duncan Morris visiting his opponent disguised as the GM, Andy Davidson burgling the GM's room (though not, alas, with striped jersey and jemmy) - these are all part and parcel of that cliché-ridden thing we call the 'fabric of Diplomacy', and I maintain that if we tried to legislate against these eventualities, or provided set methods of dealing with them, half the humour and, dammit, half the fun of playing Diplomacy would be lost. And, make no mistake, somewhere in Salisbury, Rhodesia, Morris lies in wait, ready and willing to drive a coach and horses through any anti-Morris laws; for even in the best-drafted acts there are always loopholes.

When I went to my public school in 1963 I was given a little book detailing the history of the school: its traditions, distinctions and iniquities. At the back was a page headed 'School Rules', and it went like this: 'There is only one comprehensive school rule: "Boys must at all times behave well and sensibly."' They rather spoil the effect then, by listing a couple of baker's dozens of specific rules interdicting whistling in the corridors, eating in the streets, wearing underpants on the playing field, and so forth; but nobody could deny the essential elegance of their original idea, could they?

And so Magdalen College School, Oxford, provides the blueprint for Ethil the Frog's house rules for the conduct of Diplomacy games. The ideal simplicity one would wish, alas, cannot be attained; the need to tell people which of several available methods I shall use to run my games still exists. But there are limits; I mean, I don't really have to put it in writing that players must get their orders to me by the deadline, and that late orders will cause NMR - do I? So here goes with Ethil house rules, 1977:

"Two-season game year; Winter builds to be ordered with Autumn moves, and may be conditional; conditional retreats to be ordered with previous season's moves; unordered retreats disbanded by GM; unordered removals taken by GM (his choice); two consecutive NMR's = anarchy; deception of the GM = instant removal from all games; GM's decision final, but mistakes can be corrected if notified at once.

Five lines ! Yet I don't think I've left anything of importance unsaid. Even if I have, I suppose anyone who isn't sure of what I'd do in a given situation could always write in and ask. Me, I prefer more interesting arguments, so this editorial stops

((Plenty of importance has been left unsaid. Will failed votes be reported with an exact tally of votes for and against? Does failure to vote count as a "yes" or "no"? How fast do you have to be to qualify for "at once"? Are players obligated to report omissions in the SC list?))
((As so often happens with editorials, it was just one piece of it which attracted a response. Next up is from #2:))

Clive Booth: I still don't think standardization of Diplomacy HRS is such a bad idea, and I don't see why you're against it. OK, so some GMS might like variety, by ruling in different ways in different cases, but if we had an exhaustive set of HRS, at least they'd be able to say, "Games played in this zine will not follow rule 21 of the standard HRS." Then all people would know where they stand. As it is, people don't know what the ruling will be until it is actually made, and then the arguments start.

John Piggott: I suspect that if a set of standard HRS did exist, GMS, far from giving a list of deviations from the norm, would be under considerable pressure to conform. After all, nobody is forced to go along with the Diplomacy Rulebook ... nevertheless, everyone does. ((I don't see that one has anything to do with the other. Conformance to the Rulebook is done to avoid chaos. A standard set of HRS is necessary to avoid chaos (at present, we don't have chaos and we don't have a standard set) so it doesn't have that driving force. John's argument underestimates GM's willingness to do things the way they want. If someone is as weakwilled as John thinks, he's not going to last long as a GM anyhow)) Dave Fisher commented that absolute rulings in these matters would cut down on the literary content of Dippyazines, as editors would have less opportunity for libelling each other.
((Next, to #3))

Jonathan Palfrey: I don't go along with your condemnation of the Birks initiative... If opinion is indeed unanimous about "simple Rulebook problems", then it might be a good idea and quite a simple matter to set down the consensus in black and white ... for the guidance of new players and new GMS. Your question, "What GM worth his salt would abrogate his responsibility of making his own rulings about his games?" is rather curious --- surely, the game is played under rules, and GMS mostly knuckle under and observe these things. It seems to me that the propose of standardization is merely for the purpose of rectifying what can be seen as omissions from the Rulebook. It is obviously confusing to players if different GMS use contradictory systems ... differences in games rulings only, I hasten to imply, is not meaning to imply that I think all GMS should be cloned look-alikes producing identical zines.

You say that you don't have to put in writing that late orders will cause an NMR, etc assuming that your players will be experienced enough to know about such common habits of GMS. But a GM who has to deal with novice players must put everything down specifically, and it would really be more efficient to get out a set of standard HRS that could be sent to everyone. This would mean that GMS would only have to put in writing any non-standard rulings that they would wish to apply.

John Piggott: Well, it looks like standard HRs are going to be written anyway...((etc. The plan he then described I don't believe ever came to fruition))... I do think that standardized rules, if accepted by the hobby at large, will cut down significantly on player's choice, despite the fact that no one wants this to happen. Standardized things have a way of creating their own norms. I can see it now -- "Ohh, look, Mavis, he's not going to use SHR XVII.3! Blessh, I'm not playing there!" In other words, there will be pressure, (conscious or not, it makes no difference) on the mavericks to conform...

As regards the novices' situation, I'm less certain. One occasionally hears horror stories - there was a particularly fine one a year or so back about a new player who failed to realize that he was meant to write letters to the others. ((And I seem to recall one in which a novice didn't realize that you could change your orders prior to deadline. After all, when the game was played with his pals over a table, orders were final)) I'm not at all sure what I'd do in a case like that; but I suspect that most newcomers have a pretty good idea of what to expect, their biggest help being a sight of games already in progress in their zine. Several pages of bureaucratic HRs could well confuse rather than enlighten.....

((We have several good novice packages here, which certainly cut down on the amount of gross ignorance.))

((If Mavis' pal doesn't want to play in a game that avoid Standard House Rule XVII.3, then this format is a fast and efficient way of pointing that out. While Piggott is worried about conformity, I think the opposite is more likely to occur. This is especially true on this side of the Atlantic, where the supply of game openings tends to exceed the demand nearly all the time. A GM, looking for a niche or edge or just some way to stand out, may well want to go deliberately against the grain, hoping to find that one person in 20, say, who wants to do it differently. One place where HRs sometimes are standardized is when several people are guest GM-ing in the same zine. Then, there's a real value in reducing confusion for people who play in several games, and some GMs have insisted that guest GMs all use the same HRs. But of even greater value would be a standardized format or list of topics, where the GM would indicate his choices. This might include the following:

4. Draws must/need not include all survivors
 9. Failure to vote counts as Yes/No/Depends on _____
 11. If circled, the following are permitted: Joint Orders Perpetual Orders General Orders
 16. If more than one draw or concenssion proposal passes, I do _____
 23. To get a season separation after 1901, there must be _____
- You get the idea. This avoids the unanimity that Piggott deplores, but at the same time, does force the GM to make his choices explicit on these topics. Some GMs might object, perhaps wishing to keep their views secret, or being too lazy to think these things thru until the crisis has arrived, but I don't have much sympathy for them. I think the players can benefit substantially from having this type of information. If they want to choose their GM on this basis (and some will, not most) it will be there in a form which permits a good side-by-side comparison. But even if not, it will give players a much clearer idea of what is involved in the running of a game. It would also benefit statisticians and survey takers. If enuf GMs participated, the material could be used to show how GMs operate collectively. If tracked over a period of time, we could see what changes are taking place in GMing practices. Is NMR insurance increasing or decreasing in availability? Someone else might want to calculate strictness/ratio for GMs. By looking at such questions

as "If you fail to give the nationality for an international support or convoy, the move will/will not be voided" and "Orders which arrive after the deadline but before I adjudicate will/ will not be used" you can get a measure of how strict or lenient the GM is. I don't think there will be any push for conformity. There's plenty of demand for both types of GMing. Of course, it would take a fair amount of work to figure out which are the most important questions to deal with, and you would have to be careful as to the wording. But the results might well be both useful and revealing.))



((Some of these issues pop up in this exchange from Fol Si File #148, September 24, 1982. Randolph Smyth, editor of ESF was at that time, the ombudsman for the Canadian Diplomacy Organization))

Mark Berch: I was a bit surprised to see your comments that no GM, until recently used DIAS ((Draws Include All Survivors)). John Boardman, Eric Verheiden, and Robert Lipton all use (er, used, in the case of Lipton) DIAS, and I'm sure there've been others. In the case at hand, the GM announced DIAS part way thru a game, in a situation where HRS were silent on the subject.

The question of how a GM can change the HRS while a game is still running is a very vexatious one, which causes no end of difficulty. Some feel they can do it by GM fiat, some by unanimous vote, some by majority vote, and some don't feel it should be done under any circumstances. I tend to feel that the more important the change, the more a GM should get unanimous consent, but there is plenty of precedent for just using a majority vote.

Randolph Smyth: I suppose I did imply that DIAS had never been used before, but in fact, my question, "When has DIAS ever been used?" was not rhetorical. I knew of no GM that had used it --- I've never had much contact with the 3 you mention --- and I'm glad to get an answer to the question. Still, you can only name 3, well established tho they may be, who have used DIAS, I would still call it an "unusual" rule, which players would have some justification in being surprised at.

On the general topic of changing HRS, I would lean toward either GM fiat or unanimous consent, rejecting the other two "options". "Not under any circumstances" is impossibly inflexible: If there is unanimous consent for a change, what possible reason can there be for its prohibition? I think "majority rule" is quite dangerous, particularly when issue specific to a particular game are being addressed: Rule changes then become a matter of Diplomacy if they favor one side or another. If the GM is unable to get unanimous consent for a change, the players will not accept a solution by GM fiat, and the issue cannot simply be dropped, I think an ombudsman is the proper route to take. ((If the concern is that of rule changes becoming part of the Diplomacy, then majority rule is not much worse than unanimous vote, and may even be better. Consider this simple situation: "John doesn't like the proposed rules change on DIAS. Let's eliminate him from the game, and then we'll have unanimous consent to do it our way." If all you require is majority rule, or if you do the "not under any circumstance" option that Randolph so dislikes, then you can avoid that sort of dynamic. But the struggle to get unanimous consent ("I'll go along with this if you first do the following.....") can indeed bring diplomacy into the question. Another angle to this is whether a distinction should -- or even can --

be made between an outright change in the HRs ("As a result of this huge mess, from here on out I'm not going to use general orders, I wish I'd never heard of them!") and adding a House Rule on an issue where the HRs were previously silent ("I never even heard of perpetual orders before, but I don't see anything wrong with them, so yes, you can use them!") It seems to be that a stricter standard should apply to the former than the latter.))

Which brings me ((Randolph continues)) to the next letter: "...I will not knowingly join any Diplomacy game which is DIAS. I wish to have this on record with you in your capacity as ombudsman. If a GM claims that a game that I am in was DIAS from the beginning, either he hid this fact when he was organizing the game, or he is lying."

...The text illustrates some of the problems an Ombudsman might be faced with over DIAS. First of all, I don't know of any GMs who are so desperate for players that they would deliberately conceal an unpopular HR: believe me, any resulting objections are far more of a headache than the tactic would be worth. In virtually every case, problems arise from thoughtlessness: the possibility of controversy is not even considered until the objections are received, and by then its too late to "back down". Therefore, the best way to avoid the argument is for the player to take some responsibility himself. If DIAS is unacceptable, just get a clear statement from the GM that the game is not DIAS before entering it.

((Which is exactly where the standardized HR format comes in. It forces the GM to be explicit on how things are to be run, and it makes it very easy for a player who wants to avoid a nasty surprise))

FROM PAGE 1

the regions (and also change the order of rotation slightly). The old map, which put a small region around Chicago because, in the early 70s, that was the big Dippy hub, has been obsolete for over ten years. This gives more sensible regions, and passed easily. The next amendment was to permit "proxy" voting by anyone who attended the previous three DipCons. To me, this is a great deal of effort to "solve" a largely non-existent problem. It garnered a very small plurality, far short of the 2/3 needed and so is dead for now.

Next were the 1991 DipCon bids. Brad Wilson deftly presented the case for Atlanticon, while Doug Acheson rather diffidently discussed CANCON in Toronto. This was a classic confrontation between a big wargaming convention and a more cozy all-dippy affair. Altho DIPCON began as the , in the early 70s it became attached to wargaming cons, and stayed in that mode almost without exception till the mid 80s. This produced some really huge tournaments, especially at the peak of this in 1981-1983. But then the pendulum swung, especially with the great success at MaryCon in 1986. Interestingly enuf, the original geographic rotation system was set up to avoid having the same geographic venue year after year, as people would vote for "here" again (specifically, Chicago had 4 in a row). But we've landed up with a lack of type-rotation, as "big-Con" attendees voted for repetitions, and now, "dip-only" attendees, very satisfied with that kind of experience, vote for more of the same. They get cheap dorm rooms (not expensive hotels), full control over the proceedings, and a sense of intimacy. But you give up the really large tournaments that a big wargaming can provide, and a bigger tournament means that its much less likely that most of the people know each other around

the board. Plus, there are going to be some people who really do want to go to a wargaming con --- and who can't swing going to 2 cons in one summer. Those people will opt for the wargaming con, not DipCon only.

Complicating this choice was the fact that many people thought that it was finally "Canada's turn". CANCON won the vote easily. Altho I voted for the loser, it was a pleasure to have two qualified Cons to choose from ---- beleive me, that hasn't always been true.

Finally, there were the hobby awards. From arguably the strongest slate ever Fred Davis won the Miller Award for Hobby Service, for a wide range of activities for the hobby going back to 1972, including extraordinary service to the variant community, helping with DipCon 1982, and much much more. Gary Behnen got the Koning award for best player, reflecting his postal sucesses. Francois Guerrier and somebody else tied for the Walker Award for best writing. FC's essay was pretty good, but it was the poorest selection of nominees ever. The Melinda Holley award for award for volume participation in the hobby went to Melinda Holley.

Next year's DipCon Committee will be Doug Acheson, Marc Peters, and Dave Hood.

I do have one criticism of how things were run. I don't mean to detract from Hool's fine job, but more by way of caution for future DipCons. The last round was, like the previous ones, unlimited in time. Unfortunately, when 5 PM rolled around, there were two games still running, one regular, and one gunboat. So the scoring of these two tournaments had to be put off. By the time I had to leave at 6:30, both games were still running. Indeed, the regular game was only at about 1907. This is unfair to the people at DipCon. I'm a big believer in uncurtailed games. DipCon 1982, which I ran, was the first time in many years that a multi-round tournament had used uncurtailed games. But still, its important to end on time. The Award Ceremony at the end can be a lot of fun, and give a sense of completion. But if its seriously delayed, people will steadily drift away, because of e.g. travel plans which cannot be changed. And that will detract from the DipCon experience as a whole. People don't like to grumble at the time, but I didn't like having to leave before it was over, and I'm sure others felt the same. The solution is to keep a tight rein on the pace of the games, and any game which is slowing down should be given manditory time limits for each season's negotiation. We did that in 1982, we had to "speed up" only two games, but all were finished in time to do the final scoring without being frantically rushed.

But most of all, DipCon is the people, like Steve Moore who wryly observed, "I'm using less and less paper each season"... hearing Jason Bergstrom's procedure for negotiating at gunboat games (he fished for allies by proposing draws in 1901)...learning that Larry Peery spends \$400/year just on typewriter ribbons...hearing Edi Birsan explain his GMing style, "If I don't like how you've written your orders, I'll just change them" (referring to mislabeling an army for a fleet, etc) learning from Eric Adenstadt the very distinctive way that NMRs are handled in games played in Austria...looking at fotos from DipCons in the old days (1969-1972), seeing pictures of Jeff Key (of the Key Opening), Derek Nelson, Stan Wrobel and others... hearing from Lee Kendter, Jr. that he sells about 1-2 variant catalogues a month...being told by Tom Nash that he's recently gotten inquiries about reentering the hobby from John Boyer and Dave Crockett...Hearing from Steve Cooley that GAMA's "Gamer of the Year" award may be discontinued ...talking to Jim Yerkey about how he had organized a team of very sucessful tournament players --- only to see the slaughtered Sat morning...And learning that Mark Lew is farsighted in one

eye, and nearsighted in the other.

My oddest experience, however, took place during a break in my Sunday dipgame. I was sitting in a toilet stall, when two players from my game came into the bathroom, and, unaware that I was there, started talking about the game! Yes, the classic setup! No, it wasn't anything about tactics, but one of them, I think Steve Cooley, remarked that I had managed to irritate all of my neighbors, except for the one person who wasn't in any position to help me anyhow. This would have been a mortifying experience, except for the fact that it was a dead-on accurate description. W03 had seen me with 9 pieces, but then it was downhill. AI had urged me to help with their campaign against T, which I was willing to do, but they were proposing different plans for my unit (P Bla). Finally, they got their act together, only to have one of them change his mind at the last minute. In a fit of pique, and not wanting to take sides and thereby irritate one of them, I decided to do neither plan. RAD choice. It ticked both of them off. And then, when I snatched Ank from Hohn Cho in what didn't turn out to be his last year, it was AIT vs Berch.

THE ZINE COLUMN # 119

NEWS—GNUS—NOOZE

More than one variant GM has mentioned that there is a glut of variant openings at present, meaning that some are taking a while to fill. Those who like large variants might want to try 17-player Anarchy. This uses a regular map, but each player starts with 2 widely separated SCs as his or her personal home centers --- there are no neutrals at all. Believe it or not, this has been played successfully in the 34 player version--1 SC apiece (Lee Kendter Jr 376A Willowbrook Dr Jeffersonville PA 19403). Jeff Suchard 210 Lille Ln #214 Newport Beach CA 92663 has openings in gunboat Colonia. Tim Moore 405 Fair Drive #101 Costa Mesa CA 92926 has openings for Machiavelli for those who've played it no more than once by mail, Michael Lowrey 1131-205 Parkridge Ln Raleigh NC 27605 has openings in Youngestown XII.

Tom Mainardi has returned to publishing with Concordia, (45 Zummo Way, Norristown PA 19401. With subs set at 10/\$4 and no game fees, this is a real bargain. To hopes to run a Bourse on a regular game.

The hobby awards are discussed in the DipCon report elsewhere, but some comments in BDDT #16 do bear some attention. Tom Dash, an unsuccessful nominee for the Miller Award opines that it was bizarre that he was even nominated. Altho its true that only one MA had appeared by then, the excellence of his zine could arguably be enuf to qualify for the ballot right there. Altho I didn't vote for Dash, I'd have no trouble including him on a ballot, because we on the nominating committee are just there to weed out unreasonable choices. So long as the resulting list is not preposterously large, we don't need to apply any standard more strict than that.... Dash also pointed out the problem of the Holley Award. It is true that this was switched, somewhat in midstream, from Best Female to "quantity participation." This may have caused some problems during the nomination phase, as some of the nominees were qualified under the former, not the latter standard. Dash feels that its new form is "not only a decidedly unnecessary award, but perhaps one that encourages burn-out or the overimportance of the hobby." Well, all the awards are unnecessary at

some level. But the hobby unquestionably has been served by people who have put out awesome volumes of sheer work ---- that would include people like Holley, Peery, von Metzke, Walker, Linsey. And I don't see that this award could encourage bureput, because I don't think the awards ever encourage anything. I think they work after the fact --- to recognize/reward what people have already done. Wash goes on to suggest --- I think --- a "lifetime achievement" type of award. This is very hard to pull off because most voters haven't been in the hobby long enuf to be able to get that sort of perspective. "And achievement in what? Hobby service? Play of the game? Writing?"

As I never tire of reminding people, I invented a system --- War by Automatic Pilot --- which copes with an NMR by reusing the previous orders instead of just all units hold (the player is still charged with an NMR and a standby is called). I read in the fat Excelsior #37 that Richard Sharp has gone a step further, and devised a system of "defensive orders". It adds onto the WAP system some additional moves: A dislodged piece will attempt to regain the lost ground. A unit that can support exactly one opposable move, or one threatened unit will do so. There is a list or priorities for these moves. Since the GM in no case has any discretion, there's nothing strictly speaking objectionable about this.

It tries to pucker out sensible, conservative choices for the units, but in doing so, pieces may try to do things that never occurred to the player in the first place. WAP, while it limits what can be done, at least has the virtue that every move was actually written by the player (albeit at for a different season). And by creating moves that the player of record never actually wrote, you increase the chances of deliberate NMRs, as players see a chance of getting something done without having to take the diplomatic heat for actually authoring the moves. This system is somewhat reminiscent of the system Jack Masters used some years back in which a computer program stepped in with the replacement moves. Of course, in this case, Sharp's algorithm is right out in the open, and you don't need a computer to operate it.....The same issue of XL has unusually complete HRs. In the category of removing players, McIntyre says, "missing deadlines so often as to have less than a 50% response rate at any time", and the traditional "missing two consecutive deadlines". I don't see how it would be possible to get below 50% (except in S01) without missing two consecutive anyhow. The worst you can do is alternate moves and misses, but that won't get you below unless you NMR in S01, but the rule is designed to operate only "after game year 1902". So I guess this means if you NMR in S03, you're at 00% and yer out. I've never understood why GMs need something more stringent than two consecutive misses. Yes, it's pretty awful if a player misses every other move, but there's lots of pretty awful things that occur, which we don't remove for. If the players are bothered by it, they have their own ways of dealing with it, and the GM ought to let it be. The removal is justified only if the GM has good reason to think the player of record is actually no longer playing the game. If a player follows up a miss with a set of orders, he's still in the game --- no matter how many times he repeats it. The GM should really not be concerned with the quality of a player's moves or how often he gets them in, so long as he demonstrates that he is still in the game. And a single miss --- even if it's his 10th --- is not enough to conclude that he's out of the game. Another thing this set of HRs does, which alas is quite common, is to be fuzzy on things. For example, under 2.17, it says that if you fail to keep up your sub you "will be removed". But under 3.12 it says that failure "puts you in grave danger of being NMRed". Well,

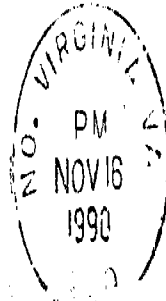
which is it? There's a world of difference between getting booted out and maybe being NMRed. Or this: "Parenthesized orders. A Rum-Bul(S by A Con) is not an order for the A Con unless I'm in a real good mood" A similar remark appears there for implied orders. Clearly, he's allowing himself to rule either way. And thus, either way, someone is going to wonder, darkly, just why the GM was/wasn't in a good mood in that particular case. This kind of ambiguity benefits no one.

I am not trying to belittle McIntyre or his HRs. This is a GMing issue and so I want to write about it. In fact, the XL HRs are among the most thoro I've seen for many years. For example, in dealing with the topic of multiple orders he describes carefully how conditional orders work & how he decides which set of orders is the last and hence to be used. Believe me, not one set of HRs in ten will take the time to cover both of these topics, and reading thru these HRs makes it clear that he's put a great deal of thought into how games shall be run. But unfortunately, it is all too common to include things that fail the basic test: Do they inform the players of exactly how the game will be run.

DIPLOMACY WORLD #60 has appeared, printed on newsprint --- not a first, but that's quite rare. Most interesting for me was a fascinating but much too short interview with Eric Klein. In it he mentions that he is starting one EMail game of Dippy per week! He has become so disenchanted with the slow speed of postal dippy that he will no longer be starting new postal games in Protocol, and in fact complains that "I am owed tens of numbers" by the BNC and MNC. Alas, the interview is too condensed. For example, one question says "Describe your famous "no NMR" policy and its implementation. Have there been any problems or complaints?" But the answer had no explanation of how the policy is implemented. He refers to the "chapters" of his zine but you can't tell exactly what this means. The issue, which runs 24 pages is overloaded with Convention material, which has happened in the past for Fall issues of DW. To cut costs, it is being mailed bulk rate (alas, my copy apparently took weeks...), but rates have been greatly reduced, down to 4/31C, print quality is very waxy on the eyes. It's an impressive start for the new editor, who, I understand will be expanding its size in the future (104F Terrace Dr GARY NC 27511. Its 4/315 in Canada).

Randy Grigsby has turned over the Miller Numbers to Lee Kender Sr. 4347 Renner St., Phila PA 19135. Lee is a previous MNC and BNC and I think this appointment is thus a first... Hoodwink is a new zine by Steven Carlberg 297 Eureka Dr Atlanta 30305 with openings in Diplomacy and gunboat... Tim Moore, in his fat Moire tossed out some questions about hobby disputes of the mid and late 80s, just to see how well people remembered what happened, and in a sense to see how people who weren't even there viewed things. I wasn't tempted to participate, but it was interesting to see (I'm looking at #11 here) the remarks of Pete Clark, who wasn't around then, Bruce McIntyre, full of specifics, and Tom Nash whose overall characterization of the dynamics of these disputes I don't agree with (for examples, issues were always important to both sides), chiming in with worries that even discussing these events and times would drag those involved previously into "Carrierism", a term which is not defined but would appear to include a fond rehashing of the events with an explicit desire to continue the discussion ad infinitum, thus turning Moire INTO "the modern The Not For Hire" (may it rot in the grave). Don't worry, Tom. All it will produce is run-on sentences.

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Larry-
Has your international
zone come out yet?

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