

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Draws

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In issue #17 of The Zine Register, Tom Nash writes, "I would be very surprised if DD survived to make it into the next ZR." I should like to point out that people have been wondering about DD's folding since before young whippersnapper Nash even joined the hobby. That harrumphing aside, such a prediction has a perverse sort of dynamic. Here I am, Tom, so now what are you going to do? Are you going to refuse to publish for years if need be, so that your next issue can say I didn't survive? ZR only comes out twice a year (a proper rate for a ZR, I might add), but I've never had a 6-month publishing break, so that was a pretty risky prediction to make. Mind you, it's Nash's zine, and he ought to call things exactly as he sees them. But I am a trifle ticked that entire review said nothing about the contents of the zine, but just on Nash's remark's about its future ("fading fast", etc).

In a slightly similar vein CCC #35 is given over to a splendid review of zines. Hood's write-up says, "The three-a-year pace relegates the zine to a lower stature than it would have otherwise." That's a bit harsh. 1989 had #118-#123 (6) and 1990 had #124-128 (5). The question of whether this ought to affect the "stature" of the zine is more problematic. There's no doubt that it does so affect, but should it? Diplomacy World's 4 issues per year (vastly larger issues I might add) doesn't seem to tarnish its luster. Admittedly, if a zine runs games, the regularity and frequency are very important, and likewise for a zine with a hot lettercol. But that's not DD. On the otherhand, DD has traditionally run a fair amount of news, whose value is degraded with slow frequency. However, since the mid 80-s, when the current slowdown in publication began, the news has been commentary-on-news more than straight news, which is somewhat less time-dependent. But the zine itself has really seen relatively little change. I've pulled the issue from 8 years ago (March 1983). It's the same size --- 11 pages --- and not that different from what you've got in your hands now. A "Zine" to be sure is more than the sum of its individual issues. But how important ought the volume of the zine be? You pay for ten issues --- so long as you get them, do you care how long it takes?

Not to end on a negative note, I do want to thank Lowrey and Hood for their nice writups in CCC #35 --- I'd expect anyone to find the issue helpful (Michael Lowrey 3241 Walnut Creek Pkwy Raleigh NC 27606. \$1 per issue)

((Lets start our look at draws with this discussion from Ode #86))

Mike Close: ...I take the attitude that 'if I cannot win a game, then I do not carry on just to get a better draw. ((Interesting, that use of the word, "better" rather than "shorter". He seems to be revealing that he really does think the shorter draw is "better"!!)) I know that it would score more in the ratings, but personally, I couldn't give a damn about the ratings, because they are not necessarily a true reflection of the player's ability. I play this game because I enjoy it, and I don't see the point in eliminating someone who has put a lot of work into the game just to make it a 3-way draw rather than a 4-way. You might play against him in another game ((why should that have anything to do with it? By that reasoning, you could never stab anyone either!)) Mind you, if I can win.....

Steve Jones: .... I agree ... that a small power can be kept in a 4-way draw by one or two of the other participants because they feel the contribution made to the game by that player deserves some reward. It is impossible to generalize on this factor because personalities play such an important role; for instance, one player might have been objectionable in some way, and this might earn him the order of the boot, or he may have played a vital role in stopping one of the other players from gaining a win, thereby ensuring a place in the draw from the other players who would not have gained anything otherwise. ((Of course, said "vital role" is likely to be viewed as being "objectionable" by the player seeking to win!)). In this sense, the "natural" result must be the one which the players nominate, and agree upon among themselves ..... however, if the player holding out against the "natural" result is a minority of one, his stand is morally reprehensible, on the grounds that he is waisting everyone's time, patience, and money over the issue.

((We hop now to Ode #87))

Andrew Glynn: Can I refute Mike Close's veiled accusation that I play for as short a draw as possible merely to promote myself in the ratings? I would point out that I actually have no idea where I stand in the ratings anyway - the only ratings that I see are those occasionally produced in War and Peace, and since, for some inexplicable reason, almost all of my wins have occurred in that zine, I view these as "just a bit of fun". I agree entirely that players shouldn't be judged on the basis of ratings ... I aim to shorten the draw because I believe that a 3-way draw is a better and more satisfactory result than a 7-way, and I aim to get the best result possible, for my own satisfaction. I am surprised to find Mike disagreeing with me on this, I must say.

John Marsden(editor) I don't think you've really grasped Mike's point, Andrew. Mike (and I) plays partly for the enjoyment of diplomacy, as much for the result. If, at the end of an enjoyable game, no one is likely to win outright, why eliminate someone who may have contributed greatly to the game, especially if that can only be done by all the other players conspiring together? It may give you more satisfaction, but it doesn't me, or Mike. Looks like you have to agree to disagree with us as well.

Andrew Glynn: In reply to Steve: his first argument, that draw shortening is dangerous because it can result in letting the greater power break thru, does not in any way counter my argument that a player should aim to shorten the draw where possible. I clearly wasn't advocating that a 15 center power should seek to eliminate his 2 center ally, in a stalemate with a 17 center power. Let's have some common sense, eh? ((But let's not over draw things either. If Mr. 17 really would like a 2-way rather than a 3-way, in most cases, he can pull back to the point where Ms. 15 can safely devour Mr. 2)). Steve then argues that if players agree to leave one player in the game, even tho in all other senses, he could be eliminated, merely because he's played hard, then this must be a natural result. Taking this argument to its extreme, one player could write 10 letters to every other player in 1901, and be voted victory in SOL because of this effort, and because he's such a damn good egg. A natural result to Steve. I think I'll have to differ with Steve as well...

((Next on to #88))

Martin Lewis: Concerning Andrew Glynn's defense of his views on draws, I must say that I too regard a 3-way as better than a 4-way, in that if a draw is inevitable then I look to see if I can shorten it. I've played in few games which ended in draws, however, so my experience is limited. In some games, I have looked to keep a player in the game simply because of the help he's given. If I was going to remove a player from a likely draw, tho, I'd give a lot of consideration to the position, and I wouldn't attempt to keep a game going for years just to eliminate one player --- if a draw is inevitable, then I'd go for that rather than spending ages trying to reduce it. Yet, as Mike implied in his letter in Ode #86, if by motivating the players to take out one of the prospective draw countries, I achieve a position from which I can win, I'd certainly consider it. To do so just because you'd rather have 3 players rather than 4 is to get a bad rep for future games --- next time, it could be you.

John Marsden: That sounds like an excellent argument for flexibility -- its important to consider the individual game, not pre-set principles.

((The discussion then finished up in #90:))

Nick Kinzette: ....Just in case anyone believes otherwise, the only reason I kept going in 38eme was because I was trying to win, and this was founded on considerably more than a hope that one of my opponents would NMR. In short, I felt justified in extending the game until Steve and Andrew had demonstrated beyond all doubt their ability to stop me. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't extend a game in order to reduce a 4-way to a 3-way, altho I might extend a game to get personally as "close" to a win as possible. That's because I've proven to my own satisfaction that the concept of Calhamer Points acts directly contrary to the urge to win outright ((C.P. distributes the winners point equally among the drawers)), and thus should be discarded.

John Marsden: As GM .... I thought that the point at which you accepted the result was entirely the right one .... Of course players ought to try to win, but I think to try to blame the concept of CPs for the preponderance of wins today is a logical fallacy ---I can think of many more likely reasons....

((I wanted to start with this exchange because because by discussing the legitimacy of shortening the draw, we are getting at a fundamental question: What exactly is a draw? And moreover: What is the end of the game supposed to represent?))

((The Rulebook isn't much help. The "object of the game" is to win. Players may vote a draw (draw by stalemate isn't specifically mentioned), but this does not appear to be the "object of the game". It is instead an alternative outcome to a win. But no guidance is given as to what the draw represents, with one exception. The Rulebook does say that "all players who still have pieces on the board share equally in a draw." This does imply that the draw is something of value, since one could hardly be said to "share" a worthless. I've always been puzzled by the use of the term "equally" in the Rulebook. What did Calhmer mean by sharing equally, as opposed to sharing unequally? This might sound like directions to a Ratingsmaster that everyone in a draw get the same number of points, except that the concept of ratings did not even exist at the time the Rulebook was written. But what, specifically, is being shared here? Is a draw really a shared win? Moreover, what sense of the word "shared" is intended? Two men can share a woman equally, meaning that they both have access to her. Or two men can share a pizza equally, meaning that each gets his own 4 slices. This is directly relevant to the question of whether a two way draw is better than a three way draw. If we take it in the "shared pizza" sense, then a two way draw is better. But if taken in the "shared woman" sense, there may be no difference at all. Similarly, if a draw is viewed as a shared win, then that would seem to fit with the pizza model, but otherwise, not. In other words, if Calhmer had said "all players ... gain an equal portion of the draw", then it would be clear that the shorter draw would be better. But if Calhmer had said, "all players ... participate in a equal manner in a draw", then the size of the draw would appear not to matter --- you were either a participant, or you weren't. But the term "shared" is generic to both concepts, and thus finesses the distinction.))

((So the player is really on his own in such situations. The first factor to consider has really nothing to do with the intrinsic validity of shortening the draw: What's the cost/benefit analysis? This was alluded to in the reprinted materials. Does shortening the draw provide a meaningful improvement in your chances for winning? Does it expose you to significant risk that someone else might win? If you have no allies, this will usually be simple enough. Your chances will probably improve even if you are to see none of the spoils. If a longstanding alliance is being restructured, unexpected snags will sometimes result. On the other side, there is likely to be only risk, no benefit. You as the leader can of course reduce that risk if you feel it is inhibiting the other players by pulling back. Of course, the price you pay is reducing (or eliminating) your extra chances for a win. But if the alliance against you refuses to take any risk, you may have to pull back just to induce them to do it. (But a caveat. There was a postal game once in which a 14 center player withdrew from non-SCs to facilitate a three way alliance's plans to eliminate a 4-SC member of their coalition. In the following season, the largest power of the alliance attacked not only the 4-center player, but his ally as well, and in addition, snatched a center from the 14-SC leader. When the wild melee was over, the former leader and Mr. Stabber were at 17-17. But the piece that snatched the first center from the

leader landed up as a raider, the (former) leader was thus unable to consolidate his statemate line and actually lost!) But more commonly, there is no significant play for a win, and thus the question is in its most unadorned form: Is shortening the draw a legitimate part of the game?)

((That in turn raises question which arises in many contexts: Is it the process or the result that counts? Does the end justify the means? Most players would find the shorter draw more satisfying, but "most" does not mean "all". If Diplomacy is viewed as a wargame (or more precisely, to the degree that Diplomacy is viewed as a wargame), then shortening the draw is entirely legitimate. Indeed, under some circumstances, it might even be unsportsmanlike not to. In tournament competition, players are "supposed" to try to maximize their scores (altho only in DipCon XV, so far as I know, did we actually stick that reminder into the rules handout) This is only fair, for if players at one table throw away their positions, others are unjustly enriched. And since virtually all tournament scoring systems provide a higher reward for smaller draws, the players should be pressed toward that result. But even in postal games, it is to me a perfectly normal part of the game, and indeed, one of the most intense phases, albeit a somewhat gruesome one. One of my most interesting games was 1976IF. My 16-center Germany was stalled by a 4-way alliance led by the redoubtable Doug Peyerlein, one of postal Diplomacy's most expert players. We agreed to shorten the draw. I was determined to retain every tactical and diplomatic possibility of springing for a win during this process, and he was equally determined to take no unnecessary risks. It was a nerve-wracking process (a Beyerlein win was also a conceivable outcome in the latter stages) and ended in a very satisfying 17-17 draw. The elimination of powers is a normal process in mid-game, and I see no reason why it shouldn't be normal in endgame as well.))

((But Diplomacy is more than a wargame. It is also an intensely social game, and indeed, the conflict between the competing demands of a "wargame" and "social game" experience give Diplomacy much of its distinct charm. The wargamer likes to say that if a player has not secured for herself the security of a statemate line, or some other situation where she cannot be safely eliminated, then she does not deserve to be included in the draw. But the social player points out that alliances are based at some point on persuading people to do things for you --- and one of those "things" can be that you "ought" to be in a draw. Why is persuading someone to keep you in the game any less legitimate than persuading someone to do anything else in the game? Diplomacy is not a game of utter ruthlessness, because utterly ruthless players tend not to be the most successful ones. Or, if you don't agree with that, it is certainly true that the-more-ruthless-you-are-the-better-you-will-do is a "rule" whose efficacy has not been born out. If a player can form a relationship that protects himself when his pieces cannot, who is to say that this too is not part of the game? The formation of relationships to obtain specific ends is an integral part of the game, and I don't see that an exception should be made at endgame.))

((Ultimately, the game is what the participants make of it, and that principle transcends any theoretical constructions of what "ought" to be, and even releases a player from being consistant, either on a game-to-game basis or even consistant with his own philosophy. This is most dramatically seen at the end of a game. I remember seeing an endgame

statement in which a player revealed that he had declined to eliminate another player solely because he was so entertained by the guy's press that he didn't want to cut it off. Altho it didn't seem likely at the time, it turned out that that decision landed him with a draw instead of a (probable) win. In a game in the Voice of Doom, a player vote ended up giving the win to a 1-center player (No Vote Received counted as Yes). The players petitioned the GM to restart the game. Altho the ponderous VoD HRS failed to cover the circumstance, the GM agreed --- the game was what the players made of it. And sometimes they make things that are apparently contrary to the Rulebook. A good example of this is in the current Diplomacy World, where the demo game 1989AM ended in a "E/R/G/G/I draw". The explanation provided by Dave Hood ("Turkey and pubber of DW") is that "Italy is deemed to be only a 20% partner while the other two have 40% of the draw each" Italy was in fact the strongest player and facing a seemingly unbreakable E-G alliance, altho the game only got to 1905. I'm not sure just exactly what the 40-40-20 split is supposed to denote --- instructions to the ratingsmaster? If so, I suspect that most ratingsmasters, if not all, will follow their own rules as to how to rate draws of three players. But this outcome does blur the distinction between a 5 way draw and a three way draw. Even more ambiguous is a type of outcome which I have never seen in a North American game, but occasionally shows up in British games. In that circumstance the players decline to describe the game as a win or draw, let alone the size of the draw. Instead, the players agree on a ranking list outcome. For example, "E and G, joint first, R third, T and I joint 4th, A sixth, France 7th". The use of the "joint-first" would seem to imply that this should best be viewed as a draw, and most of these outcomes have that. But I recall at least one that did not. These are all clear examples of the game being what the players make of it. And its certainly not an exhaustive list. For example:

1. Suppose the players simply announced that the game was drawn, without specifying who was or was not included? The GM might refuse to put such an ambiguous proposal to a formal draw vote, but the players could certainly agree to such an outcome among themselves --- and then go their separate ways. What if anything should the GM do? The GM might simply declare the game a draw of all survivors. But I doubt that any set of HRS would explicitly give him the authorization to do so (yet another Berchian example of how its impossible to write a complete set of HRS!) Moreover, a GM ought to have some qualms about imposing a result on the game without any specific evidence that this is what the players intended. If the GM does nothing, he provides even less guidance to the ratingsmasters.

2. Suppose, to take this a step further, the players simply voted the game "ended". Do the players actually have an obligation to decide precisely how the game has ended? The GM of course needs to know whether the game has ended, so she'll know whether to keep running the game. Moreover, even if the players did decide precisely how the game ended, do they have any obligation to communicate the specifics? If it really is their game, couldn't the players decide that it isn't anyone else's business how the game ended? This circumstance is not to be confused with a game simply being abandoned. There, nothing whatsoever was decided. Here, the players made an affirmative decision that the game was over. But maybe they decide that trying to agree on an exact outcome was more bother than it was worth. Or maybe they just wanted their outcome

kept secret. It could be that none of the players wanted the game rated, and they felt that this was the best way to accomplish that. Or maybe they just wanted to be ornery, stir up a fuss, or provide something to debate. It wouldn't be the first time for any of those motives!

3. Suppose the HRs require that draws include all survivors, but the players agree to a draw which excludes a survivor. Presumably the GM wanted to run a DIAS game, and put the HR in to attract like-minded players --- but who really owns the game? Assuming that the players refuse to submit further orders, can the GM override them and call it a DIAS draw? Ought a ratingsmaster go with the GM's call or the players vote?

4. The same question could arise on other common HR requirements, such as the one that requires a winner to have at least as many SCs as any other player, or that games not end before 1905. What happens when the players ignore such a rule. I have seen GMs state that they have received an illegal game-end proposal and will not transmit it for a vote, but the players can easily get around it, and if GM-player relations are very poor they may do it out of spite.

((If you would like to address yourselves to any of these circumstances, feel free, and if I get some interesting responses, I'll run them next issue))



((Next we turn back to Dec 1973, and Rod Walker, writing in Hoosier Archives #129))

#### SHUT UP AND DEAL THE PIECES

I swear this is where I got off. As I wrote to John Boyer, its the same tired old debate ((the issue had been discussed in some previous issues of HA)) with the same tired old people. The "Win-only" and the "strong Second" people are still at it, even to the arguments about names ("we should really be called Balance-of-Power players...")

Well, let me say a few words. First, lets get the names straight. We aren't going to get anywhere with those long, turgid names. We need something more to the point. So, Balance of Power (BOP) it is. And Strong Second - S.S. - sounds like a snake hissing, so -----

As between the Bops and the Hisses, I don't see that much to choose. I've been pretty much identified with the Hisses in the past because I was certainly down on the Bops. A Bop would rather beat you on the head than let you win, and hence makes a trustworthy ally only to a point. A Hiss, on the other hand ... well, you never know what a Hiss will do, but if you give him a sense of the inevitable... Anyway, a Bop is more predictable.

The most entertaining sort of game is where 2 Hisses combine to cut down a Bop who is in the lead. One of the two Hisses is going to win and the other come in second, while a second Bop will have to be content with third. The Hue and cry raised by the two Bops is too funny to be believed ((as he berates one Hiss for letting the other win)). On the other hand, sometime, listen to a Hiss who is being destroyed by a Bop on his way to victory ((and hence isn't going to come in second)). Thats fun too.

It seems to me that there are 3 ways to look at Diplomacy (at least). One is to view it as a simulation. The Hisses do that, essentially. They can then see the sense of coming in second, or third, or at least being a survivor, because in the real world, that's what happens. In a real war, you have the top winner (e.g. USA in WWII) but there is a second winner (USSR in WWII) and so on. In real life, he who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day, and a Hiss can appreciate that and apply it to Diplomacy.

The second viewpoint is to see Diplomacy as a Wargame. Here you don't have to worry about reality, or about salvaging something from defeat so you can rise again. Here is the black-and-white view that you either win or you lose. Adolph Hitler, who was always out of touch with reality in some ways, lost his grip on it entirely in late WWII. For him, the war was either won or it was lost, with no middle ground, no second place, no "survivors points" or whatever. During 1944 he became determined to destroy Germany utterly in order to prove he had lost. ((I think this analysis is rubbish. After the horrific fighting in the USSR in 1941-1943, I think that he correctly understood that the Russians would not settle for anything except his imprisonment or death. And this notion that Hitler needed to prove that he had lost is armchair psychiatry without any proof)). I'm sure the Bops can appreciate this point of view. Hitler would never take second (he might not even agree to a draw) and must therefore surely be not only a saint but the veritable Messiah of the Bops. ((That I can agree with. I think it was his unwillingness to be second to EF hegemony in western Europe that may have driven him to war in the first place.))

(I suppose that Talleyrand, who served the Bourbons, the Republic, and the Bonaparts with equal ease and ardor, must surely be the Hisses chief saint -- or more possibly Alkibiades, who served Athens, Sparta, and Persia at various times. Anyway, a good Hiss rides the tide.) ((And an alert reader notices how this paragraph is out of place. Most dippy writers compose directly on the typewriter, and don't do a whole lot of editing, so if the idea comes late, it shows up a little late!))

The third way of looking at Diplomacy is as a game, period. The idea is to play the game and have a good time. If you win, fine; if you come in second, fine; and so on. Of course, you may play this game differently from that one. Your position and who the other players are have a great deal to do with your objectives and playing style. Maybe you want a long-term alliance with a certain player and a "forever" alliance is the price you have to pay to get him. If things turn out such that you keep the alliance, fine; if you stab the guy in mid-game, well, that's how the ol' game plan crumbles. Maybe you will want to play toady to somebody for the whole game --- possibly because that guy is fighting Len Lakofka and you toady act will drive him up the walls. He yells and screams and writes letters and bubbles press releases and just really makes the game.) And maybe, toward the end of the game, you see a real long-shot chance of winning through a really screwy plan that you have never tried and are dying to. So you do, and maybe you succeed and maybe you don't. Or perhaps you've been thru the thick and thin with this ally, and you can't bring yourself to stab him, even tho you thereby insure stalemate, and even tho you'd knife him in a minute in some other game. (Or maybe he's already knifed you elsewhere). ((Or maybe you've long track of exactly what point it is Rod is exemplifying here.



I think Rod here is describing a player who is centered more on the process of the game rather than the conclusion. For such a player, the relative merit of drawing or not drawing (see, this is a theme issue on draws. While there was some focus on draws at the start of the essay, Rod has now shifted away from that decisively, never to return --- after all, he didn't write his essay for a theme issue on draws. So I, the reprinting editor, have to bring up "draws" back up again, so your attention won't wander. We now return you to your regularly scheduled interruption in the flow of Rod's essay) simply isn't part of the decision making process. In the "simulation" and "wargame" viewpoints, it certainly is.))

So what rules are we to apply to playing style? Every game is different. Sure, you may have general goals in mind for any game. Sure, you have some rules of thumb you tend to apply. But why be so consistent? World gets around, and a reputation for absolute consistency can do you in... ((the hobby was a lot smaller in those days, and more tightly knit, and so reputations could be more firmly established)) ((He then gave three examples of playing styles, only one of which I want to run here:))

John Beshara got a reputation for being a strong ally -- altho no Bop wanted to have anything to do with him, finally, because he was very determined to win. He was a Hiss's delight because he rarely broke agreements, and then normally had a fairly valid --if minor-- technicality as a rationale. With John, you knew pretty much where you were, which is a good thing.

...So a consistent and well-known playing style may do you good or ill --- altho I would suspect that a Hiss would be better off than a Bop ((with a generally consistent and well-known style, I assume, and not just Hisses are better off than Bops, period)). So where does that leave those of us who are just playing the game? Simple --- lay low, identify the Hisses and the Bops in the game, get them to do in each other and then walk down the middle to victory. Isn't that what its all about?

## THE ZINE COLUMN # 120

# NEWS-GNUS-NOOZE

For those of you who missed it the first time 'round, the 1990 Runestone Poll was won by Northn Flame, with Upstart and The Zine Register at place and show. The Poll pulled a very impressive 236 votes. Top GM was Russ Blau. Diplomacy Digest finished #49, and finished below the 50th percentile for only the second time in its history. On the other hand, in the Hall of Fame, which ranks zines over the history of the poll, DD is now ranked 4th, and this glorious past is available to you via the purchase of backs issues (advt.)

Eric Prosius ran the Poll for the first time, and inevitably, he has added his tinkering to the tinkering of his successors. He used a different method for figuring the modified mean. He discards exactly the top 10% and bottom 10% of the votes. So a zine getting 12 votes would have its top 1.2 votes discarded, and its bottom 1.2 votes. Exactly how one goes about discarding 1.2 votes is not explained, tho I'm sure its

nothing as crude as slicing off the bottom 20% of someone's ballot and seeing what disappeared. The final score is  $1/3$  from the Preference Matrix, and  $2/3$  from the Modified mean. All the results are in the 1990 Roar of the Crowd, ALONG WITH A THOUGHTFUL essay on what kind of information you can expect a poll like this to provide. He also reports on an interesting contest, where people were asked to predict the winner. By far the winner of that was Been There, Done That, tho the zine only came in seventh. Hey, I love these sort of side contests, and I'll suggest another one: What's the best zine that you don't get? That's not original with me --- somebody like Dave Perlmutter or Mark Lew came up with it, and it bothers me that I can't recall the source. Anybody?

Pete Gaughan this year is running the Marco Poll, but its methodology is so flawed that I cannot plug this poll. Basically, you rank your five favorite zines, your top one getting the most points, your 5th garnering the fewest. But arbitrary rules produce skewed results, and this is a pretty drastic case. If a player gets only 5 zines, and votes for all of them, then he gives a point (or whatever) for his least favorite zine, one that he may be pretty indifferent to. But if someone gets, say, 20 zines, his #5 zine will probably be quite well liked, but it automatically gets the exact same tally as another man's so-so zine. A certain amount of subjective influence and variation in a poll is inevitable, but this is structurally built in. A player with 20 zines will be severely restricted in the number of zines where he can express an opinion. A player who gets fewer than 6 experiences no such restriction. The number of zines you get should have nothing to do with the results --- there certainly shouldn't be a penalty in this regard.

I'd also like to throw into the pot another scoring idea, one designed specifically to eliminate arbitrary factors as much as possible. After all, even the Runestone Poll has an arbitrary modified mean system, and the Marco Poll uses an arbitrary point count system for the relative value of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. I'll call it 1D1V --- One Dipster, One Vote. Hmm, guess that should be 1D, 1V.

Each voter constructs a ranking list of as many zines as she cares to rank. The player is considered to be voting for the top zine on her list. The Pollster then collects the names of the zines which garnered only one vote. He then goes back to all the lists headed by those zines, and crosses off the top name from the list, so that the one vote is switched to the zine formerly at the #2 position. The Pollster then collects the names of all the zines having only 2 votes, and eliminates them, and continues the same process again. In other words, you get to vote first for your favorite zine, but if that zine is at some point eliminated, your vote is switched down to your second favorite zine, so that at each point, each voter gets one vote. Anyhow, this is continued until at some point, one zine has more votes and all the others combined (i.e. has more than half the votes). That zine wins, followed by the order of zines at that point. Next come the zines in the reverse order of their elimination, followed by the zines which got no votes at all.

The system has some clear advantages. It deals only in ranking, and thus introduces no arbitrary numbers whatsoever. Inputting the data --- which in the age of computers, is nearly all the work that the Pollster does prior to publishing --- is less time-consuming because no numbers need to be inputted. It will produce some ties, because there are no fractions to deal with. I don't see that as a big drawback. In the current e.g. Runestone Poll system, 8.01 beats out 8.00, but lets

face it, there's no significant or meaningful difference between those two performances. Players could vote for as many or few zines as they wanted, of course.

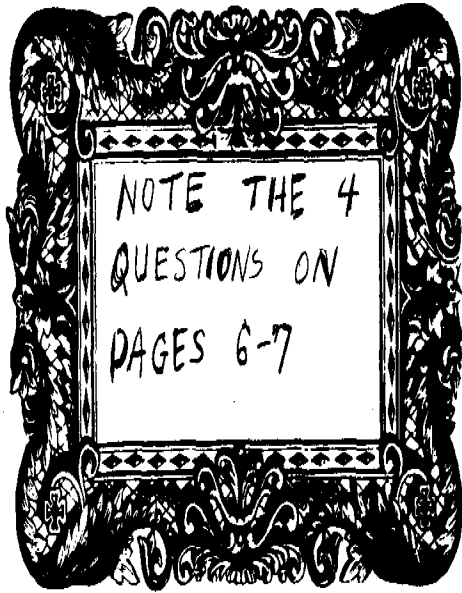
Indeed, with relatively little effort, the Runestone Poll ballots could be processed thru this system. The player's votes embody a ranking list, except that there are going to be ties among e.g. all the zines which received a 10 vote. You could give the vote to all of those zines, and not go down to the 9s until all of them had been knocked out. Or you could select one at random to be the "first" 10. Or you could have the computer give the vote to the zine which "needed" it the most, again until eliminated. I suspect these various methods would very similar results. The Marco Polo data could be run thru this system too, and of course there would be no problem with ties. But with only 5 zines on the list, a fair number of ballots would eventually be discarded entirely in cases where, if the voter had designated more, it might still be in.

I'm not saying that this method is superior to others, just that it would be an interesting variation. It is a system which is sometimes used in elections where there are more than 2 candidates for a post, and you want to avoid a runoff, but you still want the winner to show some sort of "majority", not a plurality.

Diplomacy World #61 is a nice improvement, providing more pages and considerably more variety than the previous issue. Melinda Holley has a nice solid piece looking at country strengths in gunboat dippy, Robert Sacks has a careful analysis of the Burgess scoring system, Mark Nelson has a nice how-will-it-turn-out piece based on a real game, there's a good letter column, and I have a piece on "obvious" GMing errors (viewed from the perspective of the player. I plan more such pieces.) There are two items (and only 2) that I have trouble with. The first is Brad Wilson's interview with Gary Behnen. It was utterly lifeless. I refuse to believe that Gary is as boring as he comes across here. So many of the questions were just the usual formula (what's your favorite great power .... tournament ... zine) or just plain pointless ("How have NMRs impacted Postal games you have played in?") Only the last question elicited any real life from Gary. The other was an article reprinted from Kathy's Korner #156. The essay itself was splendid --- a well organized argument for opening F Lon-Eng. But using material reprinted from US zines in the past 2-3 years is a poor idea, because a good number of readers will have seen it already. There's plenty of good material to reprint that very very few readers will have seen because of age of the fact that it came from a foreign zine. (David Hood 104-F Terrace Dr. Cary NC 27511. 4/\$10 US, 4/\$15 Canada).

And finally, its Runestone Poll Time again. This is your chance to speak up about what works for you and doesn't. For once, its not the publishers who get the main say or "last word" in something. More people directly participate in the RP than any other single hobby activity. I hope you'll add your views, because publishers (well, some of them!) need your feedback. Since 1977, this has been constructing one of the hobby's views of itself, and you can play your part by sending in a ballot to Eric. The deadline is June 30, but its easier on him if you do it early. And for those wanting the results, see the advertisement in the lower left side.

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