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DIPLMOMACY DIGEST

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Mark L Merch
11713 Stonington Pl
Silver Spring MD 20902

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Bruce Linsey, who is getting married this summer, has continued his pullout from the hobby by turning over to me distribution of "Once Upon A Deadline". This is the largest hobby Handbook ever produced, and covers every facet of GMinz and vBlication. It runs over 200 oversized pages, with over 100 separate items. 29 people wrote original material for this publication, and when all the reprinted material is included, the voices of 80 people are heard, and this dversity of viewpoints is not only one of its greatest strengths, but one of the ways it faithfully reflects the reality of the hobby. There is a tremendous depth of advice on not only the standard sorts of topics, but issues that probably never occurred to you. Even if you would never consider GMinz or publishing, this is a fascinating view of those who do, and you'll gain a better understanding of, and appreciation for, what arrives in your mailbox or printer. So whether its as mainstream as Reyerlein's definitive essay on the fundimantals of adjudicating or as obscure as the psychology of folding, whether you want a comprehensive forum on Houserules, or an individual essay on team publishing, its all here. As I said back in 1986 when this first came out, as an @rchivist, I've seen it all, this is the richest amateur publication ever to appear in the hobby. If you've joined the hobby just recently (say, in the last year) its \$3. Its \$4 to all others. Its worth far more.

In a similar vein, Bruce Linsey has turned over distribution of Supernova to Bruce Reiff 432 Caldwell Dr. Cincinnati, OH 45216. This is the novice information packet which runs about 36 pages. Due to Linsey's tireless efforts, this is the mostly widely distributed hobby publication ever, as hundreds of copies have been mailed over the last 11 years. The hobby has had more than a dozen novice publications of various sorts, and this one I believe is the best.

One more superlative. "The Game of Diplomacy", the only book ever to appear on our game, is now available again as an authorized photocopy. At 149 pages for \$6 (\$6.50 Canada) its quite a bargain, and you get it in this country from Fred Davis 3210-K Wheaton Way Ellicott City, MD 21043. Allow 3-weeks for delivery.

REPORT TO THE IDA-NA PRESIDENT: THE SODALITY BY MARK L. BERCH

PURSUANT TO a request from the IDA-NA President, this special committee was convened with the instruction to prepare a report on the Sodality. The report follows.

The Sodality is a Cross Game Alliance (CGA) club whose origins are, like most CGAs, shrouded in uncertainty. It appears possible it had its beginnings in the Schenectady Wargamers Association in late 1979, and it may have been formed at the Fourth Annual Council of the Five Nations convention.

The first game in which it is certain that the Sodality was involved was 1980 TV, which featured a gamelong Franco-German-English alliance between three people, all of who were later shown to be members. 1981 saw considerable expansion. By the middle of 1982 the organization had grown so large -- easily over 100 members -- that a more detailed organization was required. Protocols were drafted and sent to all members in November 1982 and, after apparently limited debate, adopted in March 1983. These protocols required that no member was to attack another in a postal game; that when a member signed up for a game, he was required to notify the Sodality within 24 hours (this constituted an invitation to other Sodalites to join the waiting list for that game); that under no circumstances could more than three Sodalites join any game (if a fourth player inadvertently signed up for a game, he would be notified at once. If he were unable or unwilling to withdraw, he would be denied Sodality protection, although such a player would usually be the last to be eliminated).

Players were encouraged to sign up in pairs and trios so the game could be "closed" right away. To preserve secrecy, no one was to make explicit mention of the Sodality in his correspondence. Any complex correspondence from the Sodality, such as the resolution of a dispute, was usually done by phone.

All this was standard for CGAs of the time. Other features were not and doubtless contributed to the Sodality's success. Beginning in January 1984 the Sodality established a (secret) toll-free number (probably illegally) which members could call to find out which games were closed to further members and which signup lists were

((The story which begins at the top of this page is the most ambitious piece of fiction I have ever done, and one of the earliest, as I had been in the hobby only a year or so at the time. Bob Lipton had altered it only slightly for the Mixmaxu Gazette, mostly the addition of the last material in brackets. Altho its a bit repetitive, I left it in. The term "Cross Game alliance", for the young and innocent, refers to two people whose personal alliance spans several games at once. The ethics of such deals had been debated in the mid-70s. But no such actual clubs existed. Indeed, all the organizations and proceedings, despite fancy names are fictitious, except IDA-NA (International Diplomacy Organization - North America) and Calhaver Awards, which did exist at that time but have gone extinct. While the dates appeared in the future when it was written, they are now long in the past. Whether the cynicism which pervades the piece is also in the past, I leave to the reader.)) (From TAG # 74, 11-6-77)

looking for one or two more members. Sodalites were urged to state when they signed up whether or not they wanted a third Sodalite in the game. All members were required, by the Winter 1901 builds, to report whether the alliance was a race-to-victory or a draw type. Most important and controversial was Rule Eleven, the sacrifice rule. In any game, if a Sodalite lagged to a level of less than half the centers of the leader, he could be sacrificed. This rule is believed to have provided valuable cover for the Sodality, as such stabs could be used as proof the victim was not in a CGA with the stabbers. It also forced members not to rely too heavily on their Sodality memberships and avoided awkward endgame situations. The Sodality was the first major CGA club to adopt such a rule and in 1987 they upped the figure to 60%.

During 1984 and 1985 the Sodality continued to grow. Several dozen zines were being put out by Sodalites and scores of others were heavily infiltrated in terms of players, writers or financing. In February 1984 a 192-page manual on triple alliances was published and distributed to Sodality members. In the summer of 1984 a major decision was made to move into variants. Playtesting began on approximately three dozen new variants which seemed especially amenable to CGAs. Ultimately 14 were found useful and several zines were started to house half the sections started, with the remainder being placed in 17 variant zines targeted by the Sodality for takeover.

In 1985 two events took place whose effects were not noticed for some time. In October a Sodality member died suddenly. His distraught mother turned all his fanzines over to his close friend, one Roger Calemant. Calemant, however, was interested only in the sf fanzines and by the time agents of the Sodality had located him all the Diplomacy material had been discarded. Or so Calemant thought. The second was the start of an attempt to organize in the Spanish-speaking section of the hobby. Although there were by this time CGAs in the French and German areas, these had arisen indigenously; there had never been an attempt by a large, English-speaking CGA to move into another language. During the summer of 1985 two Sodalites had, by coincidence, both moved to Mexico. It was decided to allow them to organize their own CGA without formal ties to the Sodality, with a decision on whether or not merger could be risked tentatively set for July 1989.

1987 brought the Sodality's first crisis. Although the Sodality was a secret organization, Fred Davis, publisher of the venerable variant zine *Bushwacker*, concluded that a CGA was manipulating most of his games. Two of the games, the game fee for which included a subscription for the life of the game, were obviously being run as perpetual games (this was true; all non-Sodalites were out of the games). A comparison of alliance structures in *Bushwacker* games and games in eight other variant zines forced Davis to the conclusion that 22 of his players were in a CGA (which was not unlawful but which had to be disclosed under his houserules) and he decided to come down hard. In his 14th anniversary issue, Davis named the 22 and demanded they either give a complete accounting of their relationship or be expelled from the games. A one-month deadline was set.

In fact, Davis had spotted less than one-half of the Sodalites in *Bushwacker*, was totally unaware of the strength of the organization he was taking on and had included Jeff Gyles and Jerry Krammer, members of a different CGA, the Markush Claim, on his list. This last was a particularly unfortunate mistake for Davis because at that time the Sodality was negotiating with both Markush Claim and another CGA club, the Almonds (about which we know almost nothing). The Sodality had been leaning towards the Almonds because Markush Claim was also heavily into variants (although they favored a less intrusive style of penetration) and were unwilling to give that up. The Sodality needed an ally and Markush Claim was in a perfect position to help, despite Sodalites' fears that the two CGAs were growing more rapidly than the variants hobby, an accord was signed within days. Each CGA had a list of zines to stay out of, giving the other free rein. In over 150 regular and variant games, either

cross-CGA alliances were set up or a victorious CGA was selected. A joint committee was set up to handle approximately 25 particularly troublesome cases and to coordinate future Sodality-Markush Claim cooperation. But, but important for the Sodality was a Markush Claim pledge to "cooperative in awayway [sic] with the Sodality counterattack on Fred Davis."

This counterattack began immediately. All the Markush Claimants in *Bushwacker* games (except for Gyles and Krammer) were instructed to write Davis letters of protest. The 22 accused denied everything but Davis stood firm and expelled them all, refunding their game fees. The Markush Claimants and most of the remaining Sodalites then resigned from all games, even those with none of the accused players in them. All wrote the Miller Numbers Custodian with bitter complaints.

Phase Two began immediately after the mass resignation. This was spearheaded by wide distribution of a blistering article by Gyles. He had, in fact, been stomped several times by the Sodality in zines which Davis had not considered, including one in which his 27-center India in a Youngstown section (31F4 subvariant) had been completely crushed by a Sodalite triple alliance, including two members who had been expelled by Davis. A number of left-wing zines joined the criticism as they were bothered by the guilt-by-unproved-association aspect of Davis' charges. There were also about a dozen variant publishers with miscellaneous grudges against Davis (a low figure considering there were, at the time, about 200 variant publishers) who needed no coaxing to speak out. Most major publishers who might be antagonistic to either Davis' methods or principles were contacted. As much as possible of this Phase Two footwork was done by Markush Claim personelle to avert attention from the Sodality. In fact, the Sodality was employing one of Diplomacy's most cherished strategems: Let the other guy do the dirty work.

Once the level of censure had reached a fever pitch, the final phase began. The head of the variant sections of both CGAs sat down with the Miller Numbers Custodian. The MNC made the tactical error of starting right off with a statement that he believed Davis was right, that a CGA was controlling many of his games. This relieved the two agents of the necessity of pretending that the CGAs did not exist, so they were able to use a threat. The MNC was in 11 variant games and together the two CGAs could "reach" him in eight of these, destroying him in six and converting two probable victories to at best draws. On the other hand, if he went along, the MNC was promised that the two organizations would provide 300 additional subscriptions to the MNC's *Official Gazette*.

The MNC's decision was not difficult. On one hand were the stabs. On the other were the subs. In the Diplomacy press, Davis' detractors easily outnumbered his defenders. On the MNC's desk was a huge stack of complaints from *Bushwacker* players. The MNC agreed to declare all games from which players had been expelled or had resigned irregular due to gross GM mismanagement and directed the Variant Orphan Director to institute Class B transfer proceedings.

Davis decided that his position was untenable. He lacked sufficient standbys to completely cover the mass exit and was certain that many, if not all, would consent to standby in an unratable game. The MNC was against him, IDANA was doing nothing and his own sense of fairness had forced him to print the Gyles letter. The MNC had turned over his stash of letters to the Variants Ombudsman with the recommendation that a formal Statement of Obloquy be released, portending future criticism. Davis had always wondered when and how he would leave the publishing business. He resisted the temptation for a final, bitter editorial and simply folded the zine, paying off the subscribers and cooperating with the VOD in the rehousing of all the games.

In the months that followed Davis' fold the incident played itself out. Although there was no reason to do so, Krammer's letter was also released. After the hubbub had died down, numerous plugs for the *Official Gazette*, some

zines giving small sub extensions to those taking out subs to the *Gazette*. Its published circulation risen by more than 300, the plugs stopped. The Sodality, taking stock of the entire affair, decided it had been lucky. The word "Sodality" had not appeared in print. The *Bushwacker* games had been scattered, their original players restored and the irregular status lifted. A functioning alliance was set up with Markush Cidim. As a precaution, both CGAs replaced their variant heads and the Sodality revised its variant protocols, setting a (lower) maximum participation at one-third of the positions or five, whichever was smaller. A committee was set up to handle future crises.

The fall of Davis had more serious effects on the variant publishers. The second oldest variant publisher and a major pillar of the variant community had been completely discredited. This made other variant publishers less secure and more manipulable by CGAs and variant organizations. Most observers believe *Bushwacker's* folding was a major, if not the cause for the long slide from which variants have begin to recover only in the past year.

We have been unable to gather much information on the Sodality in 1988-89. Several attempts to form liasons with the Professional Diplomacy Players Association were apparent failures and Sodalites have generally avoided the high-stakes games. Although the Sodality set up a system of code phrases for use in blind telex games, there is no evidence of success. More seriously, there is some unverified evidence of contact in the Fall of 1989 with the Collocation. If this is true it is of the utmost importance that IDA/NA try to determine the reason for this contact. If a deal was struck we must determine what it was the Collocation wanted and how they got it.

In October 1990 Steve Sukkos sat down with his publisher friend, Ian Ir, and told him all about the Sodality. Steve's motives were twofold. He thought he could do better in his games by denouncing them and inviting the non-CGAs to swam the other Sodalites. Also, Steve wanted to make a name for himself and run successfully for IDA-NA office. He picked Ir because Ir was known to be anti-CGA and because he knew of two specific cases in which Ir had succumbed to a Sodality-based alliance, including a humiliating 1902 elimination as Austria in a *Tetraospid* demo game. Sukkos did not have a membership list. When the gamestart was announced the Sodality's secretary would send him a note with only the names of the other Sodality players in the game. Sukkos normally entered about eight games a year (and had recently stepped up the pace to collect more names) and had been in the Sodality for five years, so he had a fair-sized list. To this was added the 20 Davis had spotted and the names of the Sodality officers. In addition, Sukkos was certain of another 28 from recommendations given him by other Sodalites through the years. Next, Sukkos called the toll-free number, looking for "closed" games, avoiding zines with Sodality publishers. He gave this list to Ir who, if he felt he knew the publisher well enough, would call to get the names of the people on the signup list. If there were only three, these had to be Sodalites. These names were then fed into a computer. Using a pattern recognition program and setting very high standards, another 27 names were generated whose successes were almost invariably linked with known Sodalites and who had not been stabbed by known Sodalites (except under Rule Eleven). These 27 were then added to the list of known Sodalites and the program run again, generating yet more names. This process was repeated until no more names were generated. This process was aided by the Sodality's propensity for triple alliances.

Once the final list had been assembled, Ir ran the names through the computer again, looking for Sodality victims who were also publishers. From this list Ir extracted 19 who were on record as being anti-CGA, augmenting this to 25 by phoning some of whom he was not sure. This gave Sukkos a solid list of 25 zines in which to publish his denunciations (besides the zines in which he was playing). The necessity of stabbing or turning on allies in 18 games was a difficult question of timing but the mailing was accomplished on 20 January 1991. It appeared as press in all of his games and as either a letter

or an article in the 25 selected zines. In most of the latter cases, strong editorials appeared, with the editors drawing on their own experiences. The record, the name "The Sodality" first appeared in print in *Runestones* # 1453 on 25 Jan. 1991. A few days after this appearance a mass mailing was sent to 237 publishers.

The Sodality's emergency committee immediately cut off the toll-free number which Sukkos had listed. But, beyond this, the Sodality was in trouble. Sukkos was no Davis, making charges from outside with no proof, making expulsion threats. Sukkos even appeared to be acting alone, so there was no one else who could be worked upon. The article implied but did not state he had done all the legwork (Ir's contributions were put in the passive voice). And, instead of Davis' modest 22, with two errors, Sukkos had fingered 106 with no errors, nearly a quarter of the membership. The accused 106 were instructed to write indignant letters of denial, but it was hard to be persuasive -- after all, if Sukkos were making this up, why would he make the accusation is so many of his games? In some cases, no obvious good would come to him. Still, Sukkos had no tangible proof so the attack was not yet decisive.

It was during this period that the IDA-NA appointed this committee. Its existence was supposed to be secret and we have no idea how *The Mizumamul Gazette* found out about it less than ten days after it was set up.

On 15 February one of the publishers who had denounced the Sodality received a letter from one of his readers. The name "Sodality" was already familiar to him. He had been riffling through the fanzine collection of Roger Caléant less than a year earlier and recalled seeing a package of material with that label. He asked what to do. Within a week Sukkos had the packet which contained many names, especially of older members. There were 37 overlaps with the 106 already known. There was also a note about two Sodalites who had moved to Mexico to begin operations there. Finally, Caléant had included an affidavit as to how the materials had fallen into his hands. Sukkos withheld the Mexican names and on 2 March, went public with the rest. The Caléant list exposed a Sodality attempt to place one of its members (on the list) on the 1991 Calhamer Awards Committee. It now appears that a second Sodalite, whose name was not exposed at the time, did make it onto the committee.

Sukkos contacted the two Mexican Sodalites. One was no longer involved in organizational work but the other was, and was bitter. He had formed a tight network of players but in July 1989 the Sodality had turned him down, asking him to reapply in January 1992. He now felt the Sodality a sinking ship and agreed to print his own denunciation, complete with a raft of new names (and announcing his group would form an open CGA, operating in all-Mexican games only. It will be interesting to see how this concept works).

With this fresh exposure, Sukkos was no longer alone (the Caléant list was only the word of a dead man). The directors of Markush Claim decided that the Sodality was no longer viable. To protect their members' positions in variant games (by this date there were no regular games with members of both CGAs) Markush Claim, on 1 April 1991, ordered its members to try to swarm the Sodalites wherever possible, breaking all cross-CGA alliances.

The situation is now totally anarchic. The Sodality, perhaps in a spirit of revenge or as a desperate ploy to save some variant positions, released its entire list of known Markush Claimants. It is quite possible that every variant member is listed and there is at least one certain error on the list. Markush Claim retaliated in kind. More denunciations are occurring at the rate of four or five a week by various individuals. Many, if not most of these are fraudulent, made to gain allies in particular games. Many who would not consider being in a CGA have been accused. On the other hand, it is possible that these "free lance" denouncers have been urged to do so by a CGA, with the hope of discrediting denunciations in general so that authentic denunciations

of the remnants of the CGA would go unnoticed. 47 zines have folded in the last month alone and various Ombudsmen and hobby officials have been swamped with complaints. Chaos rules.

On the matter of recommending what IDA-NA should do about all this, the committee is split. One of us feels that the entire matter should be deliberately ignored. Another feels that the IDA-NA should do nothing at all. A third holds that the question should not be addressed since we were not explicitly asked for a recommendation. A fourth does not care one way or the other, a fifth has no opinion and the sixth abstained. Judging from IDA-NA's long history, we are confident that one of these positions will be adopted. (IDA-NA President's note appended to version submitted to the Council: Steve Sukkos has contacted me and has given me a list of Sodality Members containing 459 names, based on computer extension of his list, Calemant's and the Mexican list. Since four of the names on the list are those of members of the Secret Committee to investigate the Sodality and three of the others are on the Council, this matter will be held over until the General Meeting at DipCon XXIV in Calgary, where the matter will be brought to a vote by the attending membership. I am certain that the membership will react calmly and properly to this problem, as they have in the past.)

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FEEDBACK ON "THE QUESTIONS"

In the last issue, I posed 4 related questions on games being ended with the GM being told not quite what he wanted to hear. I only got 5 responses, and one was "not for print", but I'll go with what I've got.

1. In summary, suppose the players all told the GM that the game was "drawn" but didn't specify who was included.
Hood: Fine, the players can end the game any way they wish, but a GM can also report it to the hobby or RNC anyway he wishes that does not distort the result achieved. When a draw is reported that does not specify which powers are involved, it seems to me that the GM or RNC could fairly infer DIAS ((Draw includes all survivors)).
Johnson: I would consider it DIAS.
Larzelere: I suppose it would be a rulebook draw unless the GM had a Houserule providing for a different type of draw...

((I've never heard of a HR providing for a particular type of draw in a case where the players failed to specify. I agree with the "does not distort the result" criterion, but I think that DIAS does in fact distort the result. If the result really was DIAS, the players presumably would have said so. The most likely explanation is that the players had agreed that the game was drawn, couldn't agree on the shape of the draw, and they simply didn't care enough who was or wasn't included to thrash that issue out. But once they were agreed the game was drawn, there's no point in playing it any more. So as GM, I'd report it exactly as the players did, and of course the RNC should then do the same. Now a ratingsmaster would score the game is another matter entirely.

2. This time, the players just voted the game "ended". They told the GM that the game was over, but not even whether it was won.
Hood: Yes, players "own" the game, but they must play it according to the preannounced rules. In this case, the Rulebook and the HRS It seems to me that applying said rules would lead to either DIAS or abandonment, depending on how the players actually word their "ending" statement. The rules say that that a game ends with a win or a draw --- if the players do not vote either and do not send in further orders, then I as a GM would replace them all as I would any NMRing players.

((Since the players have said that the game has ended, and since the game must end with either-a-draw-or-a-win, one could infer that one of those has occurred. The question is whether the Rulebook obligates the players to say to the GM which it is. Obviously the answer is no. Imposing NMRs on the players doesn't really make sense. Only the players have the right to end the game (unless the HRS give the GM the right to end the game when it is stalemated), so it seems to me that once they have done what only they can do, they are relieved of their obligation to send in further orders.))

Ake E B Johnson: ... I would consider it to be abandoned.
3. The HRS require DIAS, but the players all agree on a draw which excludes someone. Who really owns the game.

Hood: ... I think the players have bound themselves to the House Rules. Since negotiation tactics assume the HRS being played under, I would hesitate to allow the players to change the rules as they go. There are variants which allow for rule-changing done unanimously --- regular Dip does not allow it. If someone in your hypothetical game sends his vote suspending the DIAS rules to another player to "verify" or confront ((??)) that player, or whatever, he should be able to depend on the GM to

overrule him pursuant to the HRS.

Larselers: I believe that once a game is started that all players entered knowing that it was a DIAS game, the question of "should we now make it a non-DIAS game" should not be submittable for a vote. You wouldn't vote on a question of "from now on, Spain will no longer be a SC" because that is assumed at the start to be something that will be in place for the entire game, and something the players do not have to negotiate over to keep in place. Player should not have to negotiate to keep the DIAS rule in effect, so the GM should be a bastard and enforce it, or not run DIAS games

Johnson The players have the ultimate say, of course. I personally do not use such rules, but if all players agree on any special HR for the game, I accept it.

((And why not? The players don't need to "negotiate" to retain DIAS or Spain as a SC. To retain, such a player need only ignore the entire discussion, and the proposal will lack unanimity. And as for Hood's argument, there is plenty of precedent for HRS changing during the game if proposed by the GM, which is normally how these things happen. Sure, negotiations assume the HRS being played under, but if all the players agree to the change that basis, so what? If the players are completely agreed on something, how can it be said that they own the game if they cannot effectuate what they have agreed on. It isn't going to produce any extra work for the GM, because it will mean the game is over right then and there. I don't see that the GM has the right to prolong a game which the players have agreed is in fact over.))

The last question extended this to some other types of requirements (e.g. winner must have at least as many SCs as other players) but I didn't get any separate response to that. The following more philosophical response wasn't keyed to the specific questions, so I'll run it here.

Guerrier It would appear to me that all of the problems you've described are pertinent only to ratingsmasters. But the players have not agreed to live up to anyone's expectations, standards or norms when they signed up ... other than their own. So of course they are free to pursue whatever form of game end they fancy.

When signing up they did agree - by acquiescence if nothing else - to live by the GM's HRS. That might create a

problem when they decide upon a type of conclusion which conflicts with the GM's rules. To the extent that the players were fully cognizant of the rules ... they might feel some sort of moral obligation to take the GM's views into account. (However, notice that the first two questions don't really bring the HRs into conflict. I have never seen HRs which obligate the players to tell the GM exactly what the outcome of the game, probably because its never occurred to a GM that players might refuse to so communicate)). As a practical matter, however, the players accepted the GM's rules upon signing up --- out of expedience. In other words, they followed the rules because this is the only sort of behavior that allowed them a place in the game. The rules served the "greater good", then, by allowing the game to proceed apace for the greater enjoyment of all. In the situations at hand, however, it would appear that the GM's or ratingsmaster's rules no longer serve this "greater good", in the sense that if they were enforced they might very well turn the player's enjoyment of the game into a form of torture. Instead of following the rules, the players might be best advised to simply vote their own conclusion and the go their separate ways.

This would leave the GM and ratingsmaster with several options: (1) go with the players' choice ((presumably that would mean the game is unrated, as the ratingsmaster does not know what the outcome is)) (2) impose one of their own, or (3) continue with the game .. replacing any players who fail to submit moves... Again, as a practical matter, none of the choices really matter. The original players have already gotten all the enjoyment they are going to get, and probably should go their own way if anyone attempts to change the conclusion of the game or continue the game...the official conclusion may well have little or nothing to do with the real outcome, which is all the players should be concerned with.

If they're not, they should be prepared to follow all the rules ...((these are)) players who care more about ratings than outcomes --- not exactly the type of player who would allow the game to get into the type of situation you describe. (A bit nihilistic, but it was such vintage Guerrier, I couldn't resist)



((I've written many times over the years on the topic of Ethics. Player ethics and GM ethics are the most common categories for ethics essays, but "hobby" ethics are important too, and this is probably the most tactically ~~xxx~~ oriented piece I've written in that category. It reflects my own view, which I still hold, that ethically sound practices in hobby disputes will also provide the most effective tactics. This is from Paschendale #38

ETHICS IN HOBBY DISPUTES

Most discussions of ethics deal with game situations, either player-player or GM-player. However, this is not the only area where ethical standards would be of value. General hobby disputes sometimes need them more. Most game disputes do not draw in people other than the people in the game, and perhaps the Ombudsman and BNC. Personality disputes in the hobby, however, can draw in many other people, and can last long after the original matter is merely history. The "it's only a game, and anything goes" reasoning can ameliorate things somewhat

in a game dispute, but it doesn't apply in other types of disputes.

I have come across a number of these, in my readings of old dippy 'zines, as an onlooker in some present ones (in an attempt to settle a few), and as a participant in a few cases. What follows are solely my personal opinions; I do not represent them as generally accepted hobby standards. And I do not guarantee that I always follow them myself.

1. If a dispute begins in private, an attempt to resolve it should be made in private. By "in private" I mean outside a 'zine. In a sense, publishers are cursed by their easy access to the print media. If they want to say something, in a few hours it can be in a hundred envelopes. Others have to get it published by someone else, who might well say: "Have you really tried to work this out?" It is much easier to resolve a misunderstanding before the first words appear in print, because that tends to lock people into positions. I personally consider the failure to try to solve such matters by letter or phone to be a breach of hobby ethics.

2. Never write a letter in the heat of anger. I consider this for myself to be an iron-bound rule, for any kind of letter. It is almost impossible to be persuasive when you are extremely angry, and you probably won't even realize that fact.

3. Stick to the facts. If other matters are to be brought into the attack, their relevance must be directly explained. Using the attack as a vehicle for venting all the complaints you have against that person is not going to sit well with the reader, and will distract the reader from your central complaint.

4. Avoid unduly inflammatory language. This is one of the most common of all tactical errors. Sure, it feels good to call the other guy an "asshole" but what good will that do? Think about it - have you ever read such an attack and said to yourself, "Of course! He's an asshole! Why didn't I think of that? Oh, what a persuasive observation!" Calling someone else names makes it much more difficult to resolve a matter. Further, it weakens your case. It permits your opponent to switch from the central issues to the side issue of your language. Indeed, if you are a victim of this, your best bet is to begin by chiding your opponent for his exaggerated language. This will plant doubts as to his credibility in the mind of the reader. Furthermore, on those rare occasions when you do use such language, it will have more meaning if you have not "devalued" the currency by using the language often.

5. Send your victim a copy of what you said about him, even if you have to spend the 20¢. Alas, this courtesy is all too often neglected. People are entitled to defend themselves, and it is infuriating to discover that others are reading things about you that you haven't seen. If someone neglects to send me a copy, I am sure to mention it so that the other person will appear to be the cad that he is. This is the responsibility of the publisher, but if the writer is not a publisher, he should make sure that the pubber will do this - or else do it himself.

6. Once private attempts to resolve something are underway, do not go into print unless it is clear that this is absolutely hopeless, and even then you should tell him first. Obviously, this does not

apply if the other guy has already gone to print. Such a step will damage, or even torpedo, any chances of settling things privately.

7. Avoid exaggeration. It's not fair to the other guy, and it shouldn't be necessary. Use direct, rather than indirect quotes. If the other guy says, "Silly", then you should say "Silly" - not "He called me foolish" or whatever.

8. Consider having the dispute arbitrated. Smyth and [now Caruso] are the ombudsmen, though they may not take your dispute. However, anyone mutually acceptable is fine. Suggest a few names and let him pick one. I sometimes get letters asking me to take sides or to assist someone in a dispute. I will often suggest arbitration, in part as a probe of the person's attitudes. If they refuse, I will suspect that either they know that their position is weak, or they are not really interested in settling the matter but would rather just slug it out. A mediator or arbitrator must be willing to spend some time on the dispute, and the other parties should understand the groundrules. This I might add is an excellent way to resolve a matter without "loss of face".

9. Pick your forum properly. Your 'zine and his (if appropriate) are always OK. But there are many 'zines around that want no part of feuds, so do not press your letters on them to publish. [Now Praxis] is usually an excellent choice, since personality disputes are part of its very character, and those who get it for the most part like to read this sort of material.

I am not against such disputes, or the airing of them in the hobby's 'zines. Indeed, I rather enjoy them most of the time. But if certain groundrules were kept to, these would not result in the bitterness and protractedness that often accompanies such disputes. I know of one dispute that has run for over 10 years, and people have left the hobby because of them. "Fighting Fair" keeps things in reasonable bounds, and reminds people that, after all, this is just a hobby.



One of the most valuable hobby services in the PDRO auction. It raises money for other hobby services, and allows you to buy (or try to) some things as bargains (e.g. subs to zines like Concordia, UpStart and Kathy's Korner) as well as pick up oddities as an autographed photo of Melinda Holley, and a raft of misc board games. For a catalogue, write to John Caruso 636 Astor Street Norristown PA 19101. John is being helped this year by John Fisher, Jr, and the money goes to such projects as supporting the BNC and the Zine Register.

DIPLOMAG has reached issue #100, and so far as I can recall, this is the first example of a newsletter of a dip-Organization ever reaching #100. Fred Davis has put this out since 1972 for the Mensa Special Interest Group for Diplomacy. This club has brought many members into the postal hobby over the years.

Mark J. Berch
11713 Stonington Place
Silver Spring MD 20902

Les A. ~~Winters~~ ~~Evans~~
3714 Wilburton Dr. #31
Ardmore, PA 19003

