

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Mark L Berch
492 Naylor Place
Alexandria, Va 22304

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After delays caused by a letter lost in trans-Atlantic mail, I have now purchased 50 copies of Sharp's book The Game of Diplomacy. I don't know when they'll arrive but I expect some time in late August at the latest. There will be a review of this book in DW #22, which you should be getting soon. I will be selling these for \$13.00, about \$2¹/₂ less than you'd pay in England (that price includes postage). For those who wish to buy, send me a check for \$13, and your copy will be mailed as soon as it arrives. Alternatively, you can mail me a self addressed stamped postcard (SASP?). When the books arrive I will mail the postcard to you to let you know so that you can mail the \$13 in then, assuming that you're still interested. The order in this is going to be strictly the order in which I receive the checks; first come first serve. If I get a heavy order of checks and/or postcards, I send in a second order to the publishers in London. I would appreciate other publishers informing their readers, since this information will appear in DW 23 which won't appear until some time in August.

Former Brutus Bulletin admireres please note: Contrary to the impression that many (myself included) got from #37, the zine is NOT folding. The games will continue by flyer on their same ultra-reliable two-week scheduld. The rest of the zine will appear at about 4- or 6- week intervals, and will likely no longer be that 2 oz each. The pressure of putting forth such a huge output every two weeks was just too much (Francois Cuerrier please note!).

Lastish I erred in saying that Eric Verheiden hadn't entered a new game in years. Also, Bob Sergeant informs me that the DTRS uses the number of gamestarts, n, only those games actually finished, so it doesn't matter if there's a delay in publishing gamestarts. As best I can figure it, that means that $n = N$ in their formula, but don't take my word for it.

With regard to DIPCON, please note that, regardless of what you may have read in preliminary information on the subject, the tournament will be starting on Sat Morning, not on Friday evening. My own plans are somewhat up in the air, as compared to lastish. I have not heard from John Boyer at all, so I really don't know whether my ambitious plans for getting players' commentary as the game is going on have been approved. If not, then I'll likely just enter the tournament as a player. Participation in such a plan, incidently, would be entirely voluntary; those who were not interested or too busy could just ignore the entire thing. Writing a commentary on a face to face game is, at least according to Konrad Baumeister, who is one of the few dippy publishers ever to have tried it, more difficult than doing a postal commentary. One must take into consideration not only what is said, but how it is said, the players' demeanor, etc. Thats why I'd like to get as much data as possible before attempting (didja notice how I eased the "p" out of that word?) the commentary.

The Zine Column #16

McLendon Counterattacks on DTRS Criticism!

This issue was all set to be sent to the printers, when what should arrive but Steve McLendon's Dragon and the Lamb #33. In it he reprinted the entire Zine Column #13 on standbys in DTRS, and then appended his criticism. I am reprinting this in its entirety, adding numbers to the text, which are keyed to my responses which follow.

"The preceding on pages 11 and 12 was written by Mark Berch and just appeared in his latest issue of DIPLOMACY DIGEST. For about 6 months now Mark has been criticizing, nit-picking, and otherwise thoroughly lambasting DTRS in DD ((1))

"Mark has raised valid?/(at least, he thought they were valid). points in the past, and Bob and I have tried to compromise on most of them. But I have come to realize that with Mark there is no such thing as compromise. It is ~~either~~ done Mark's way or it is done the wrong way. ((2))

"In the past he has printed only those letters which expressed views in opposition to DTRS. In his latest issue, as noted above on the subject of standbys, a letter from Ron Kelly was printed. Yet just last month, in his zine WHY ME?, Lee Kendter in a mini-editorial came out in favor of our handling of standbys. But Mark saw fit not to print that. No sense clouding an issue with an opposing view, right? ((3)) But there are indeed two sides on this issue, and for every letter Mark can pull out hostile to our treatment of standbys I almost guarantee that I can match him letter for letter from those who favor our policy. ((4))

"In rating systems of the past the methods used for scoring standbys have always been a trouble spot. And I suspect that it will continue to be so forever more. Other-wise rational men have printed searing diatribes, thrown temper fits, and shown other innocuous ((sic?)) conduct over this very same issue. ((5))

"I will be the first to admit that DTRS is not perfect, but I know of no other rating system that is either else we would have tried to continue that one. Has Berch ever, at any time, made a recommendation on how we should score standbys, both past, present and future? No, he hasn't. He has carefully avoided that briar patch, yet he will print reams denouncing the way we are doing it. Constructive criticism I can accept, but this ^{is} negative criticism in its most blatant form ((6))

"As for Kelly's statement that Sergeant, Kendter and myself "rarely play as standbys", it is totally false. I have taken over 9 or 10 standby positions and I have never declined to standby when asked. As far as I know, neither has Bob or Lee. And contrary to the recent actions of others, I will not begin refusing standby positions now just because standbys will be rated under a different system. (you "others", to make your point properly, are you now going to stop signing up for games because starting players are under a different system?) ((7))

"The hobby at present has no current player rating system. ((8)) Bob and I thought it needed one, and since no one else seemed very eager to get things rolling, we decided to take the initiative. I had wanted to hold off on publication of DTRS until Denis Agosta came out with another issue of Everything to bring the game reports up to date. But Jerry wanted to get the ball rolling on a rating system and asked us to get it ready for the next issue of DW, especially since it was unclear as to when Dennis would indeed publish the next Everything. And since Bob and I have placed ourselves at Jerry's disposal we obligated as best we could with what we had.

"But Mark wants to hold up its publication until we get it right. "Right" being according to the Berch definition, of course. ((9)). I for one, would be more than happy to see the Mark Berch Rating System accepted hobby-wide. Then I could throw away all my files and save myself much grief and certainly hundreds (if not thousands) of hours of work. I dare say I could find more enjoyable things to do with my time.

"Do I hear an offer from Mark Berch, or Ron Kelly, or anybody for that matter, to devise and maintain a rating system? Or to revive one of the old ones? Those of you who have been so outspoken against DTRS, have you ever considered coming in with

something better? This is a free country, you know. Now I have done some preliminary checking around there is no law in any state which prohibits you from starting up your own rating system. And don't think you will hurt my feelings. Indeed, I will even write you a letter of recommendation and support."

What follows are solely my opinions; Ron can write Steve directly if he chooses.

1. True (4 months, actually). But I've had some good things to say about DTRS too. In that editorial the recent changes were labeled "all for the better", the amount of work they had done was called "staggering" and (contrary to Ron Kelly) I said I thought the idea of separated systems deserved a good chance.

2. You may not be aware of my compromises, but I sure am! For example, I happen to agree with Fred Davis in disagreeing with your lower limit on the number of centers you can have and still be rated as the winner, and I have other small differences. But in the spirit of compromise, if you will, I brushed these aside and said that "the question of the treatment of standbys" is "my only significant objection", and indeed it was the only objection mentioned in the editorial.

3. I don't buy this criticism at all. You say "only those letters". With one exception, every letter on the subject of standbys has been opposed to DTRS's policy. That exception was a thoughtful letter from Bob Sergeant which arrived after #21-22 was mailed. Yes, there was a mini-editorial in Why Me? Kendter has his forum. As it turns out, Ron Kelly doesn't publish, so I gave him a forum. DIPLOMACY DIGEST has frequently printed points of view which I don't agree with. Your article on handling mistwriten orders is one example. Thruout my discussion of trades vs mutual subs, the views of traders were constantly quoted, and in fact in issue #21-22 I noted that Kendter, Sr and Jerry Jones had come out with pro-trading editorials. As for DTRS, in #20 I printed your long letter on the subject in toto as well as Bob Sergeant's editorial, also in toto. So please don't tell me that I print only anti-DTRS material. Finally, that editorial was clearly designed to be a presentation of my views on the subject, not some dispassionate treatise by an unconcerned writer.

4. I'm sure you could match me 2 for one or even 3 for 1. After all, its your DTRS so most letters would go to you. But as I said in #20, "those who don't like it write me. And those who do like it will natually write you or Bob.", so what we see is selective. And of course there's two sides to this issue. My readers will understand that if there weren't another side you guys wouldn't still be sticking to your position in this matter.

5. Agreed, tho I put it less colorfully.

6. No, I haven't suggested just how it could be done, and I don't especially care. What I do care about is whether or not they are rated, not the details of how. DTRS makes their contributions --- positive or negative, invisible. So far as I'm concerned, any system you guys come up with will be better than the non-system you have now, and that's my point.

7. See, another benefit from printing Ron's letter! You've cleared up a misimpression that he and presumably others have.

8. Oh? What about Doug Hollingsworth's Calhamer Point Count List? Its current.

9. Of course. When I present my evaluation, I will apply my standards, no one else's. I daresay you do the same. That editorial was laced with phrases like "in my opinion"

10. While I tip my hat to the way you said it, I think that your implied requirement that I be ready, willing, and able to launch the MBRS is unfair and unreasonable. Look, I happen to think the governor of my state has been doing a rotten job, but that doesn't mean I'd have done a better job as governor, and I wouldn't let that stop me from criticizing. A Hobby type example? You see your neighbor about to plant a hedge. "Say, John, that particular variety won't thrive in this climate". So he buys different shrubs and starts his digging and you say "Ah, you're spacing them so far apart that they'll never form a hedge that way." So he refills the holes and

as he starts to redig them you chime in with "Er, those 6" holes are too shallow and..." at which point he explodes: "Look, do you want to dig the damn holes? No? Then Shut up!" Don't take this too literally as a metaphor, in the present situation.

But I feel the same way toward starting my own rating system. I keep plenty busy in the hobby these days, what with my games, this zine, lots of article writing, doing commentary (in both Bob's and Steve's zines) on games, writing letters-to-the editor (one appeared in that very issue of D & L) etc. I don't have the inclination to push some of this aside to create a standby rating system. But there's no reason why that disinclination should disqualify me from vigorously presenting my views.

In short, I stand squarely behind my editorial in DD #21-22. Please note that I said it was fine with me if they printed it in their zines and in fact if I were Steve or Bob, that's exactly what I'd do, and be pleased with it. But in its present form it's just not ready yet for DW. I mean no disrespect in that --- there's plenty of things I've written I wouldn't consider good enough for DW. Recall that the idea of the pair of rating systems is Steve's, and in fact he still says that's what they plan to do. What we have now is incomplete, or unfinished, or a work-in-progress. Call it what you like, it is not in its final, completed form and as such, it doesn't, in my opinion, belong in DW.

One postscript. My firm preference is that this dispute be limited to the subject matter involved, and not spill over into unrelated areas. If third parties are planning to chime in on this discussion, please keep that in mind.

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However, just to be on the safe side, below appears the aforementioned Kendter, Sr editorial in Why Me #14.. It is true that I have not printed any pro-nonstandby letters, but then again I haven't had any written to me.

"There has also been some talk in the hobby about the various rating systems for diplomacy games. I have some feelings on the subject too. I believe that a rating system should reflect the players ability in games that he starts only. I do not believe that how a player does in a standby position is a fair evaluation of how that player can play. I have taken over standby positions that on the surface did not look too bad, but the players in that game had made up their minds who was going to be attack beforehand (often the reason the original player dropped in the first place) and in many cases wouldn't even answer my correspondence! Also, I think that a rating system should list only active players. Many of the ratings systems are really a "rouges gallery" of who played the game since it started. This has a place I guess, but I would like to know how I am doing versus the players who are active now not who played 10 years ago. This is only my personal opinion and is stated as such. Incidentally, on page 12 is the latest CaThamer point count list for those who are interested, Doug Hollingworth keeps this up to date and does a very fine job. ((Interestingly, this system meets neither of Lee's criteria, which shows that Lee is pretty openminded!))

((Next up is Harry Drews' account of Origins II, in Baltimore, in the Summer of 1976. That was my first Con; indeed, it was the first time I had ever even seen a dippy game that I wasn't in. From Paroxiasm #35, 8 August 1976. I have excised some of the preliminary travel information, and non-dippy material))

TWO INNOCENTS ABROAD (An Odyssey to Baltimore)

...I ambled over to the trade center and was suitably impressed with the big names and beautiful games. To me this was Mecca and I paid dutiful homage. Eventually we had enough and headed off downtown to the ((Holiday)) Inn, in the dark...With a little trouble, tho, we found our way home that night. A Brief visit was made to the Birsauron Den ((this refers to Edi Birsan, one of the hobby's most colorful and well liked players.)) where a few notables were collected, but the reception was with a wet towel and we headed off to bed. This was to be the pattern for the whole weekend; the people we met were very friendly and we made lots of acquaintances but not much was related to the people already know from the postal games.

The Saturday Diplomacy Tournament saw me draw Germany --- this was OK as I like this country, but fate seemed intent on doing me in. France was played by the most stubborn, illogical twit I ever met. (Oh nothing personal in this--I am talking only in a game sense.) He stabbed me in SO1 and never let up. Russia in the person of Adam Gruen became a staunch ally but England (Stan Johnson) played it very honest and non-committal. I used all the tricks we knew and we kicked England out of Scandinavia, eventually, he came out openly against me. Austria in the person of Bob Heslop of SPI also played a crafty game and tried the old stab. We held him off and eventually we had western support in this. Italy (Jeremy Paulson) played a total chickenshit game and was the dupe for Austria throughout. Turkey was stabbed early on and became another Austrian puppet. In the midgame the situation was as follows: R/G vs F/E vs T/A/I. Of course, Russia couldn't stand the pressure and caved in slowly. England became more amiable and agreed to our plan of throwing the game his way. We held off France and let him ((England, I assume)) and let him take all our centers. France was sore but had to go along to preserve the wall against the east. Finally, in 1907 Germany was eliminated ((sounds more like suicide to me)) and the game later ended as a five way draw but England had the most centers.

Saturday night saw us engage in a pickup game of Diplomacy that proved to be the most fun of all the Dippy games that weekend. England was mine and Russia was played by Mark Burden, a postal acquaintance. I wish I could remember more names, but anyhow I had an easy time of it playing F, R and G off against each other. Germany was my ally all along, but I was so much into the wheeling and dealing end of it that I stabbed and made up again with gay abandon. My play wasn't coldly rational but I enjoyed myself and was winning the way England always will where there is no united opposition against her.

Sunday dawned and we got up grogily after a night of limited sleep. Checkout time came and went and we headed off to the campus. This time around we were blessed with Italy, not the biggest prize of all, but quite a workable one considering that Adam Gruen was Russia and Mark Burden was Turkey. Both were good friends by then. The west was in upheaval and things looked quite good. My conscience got the better of me and I pledged myself to an eastern pact. We stomped Austria and then blitzed west. Things didn't coalesce against us there because Germany was bribed into sticking to the alliance with Russia. My goal was to continue to play an exciting and open type of game, so I agreed to let Turkey pull in behind me so he could "have some place to go." I didn't want to be nasty to Mark two games in a row and I figured we could stab Adam. Wouldn't you know it -- my niceness didn't pay off. I was stabbed just after we had broken open France and the game seemed won. Ah, well, no grudges for that one and I did my best tactically to hold the R/T/G vultures to two centers at which point I had to put in a replacement because of a time squeeze.

We picked up a few more games and headed off just before 3 PM. The trip back was very relaxed...The time in Baltimore had been very well spent and everything was right. The people were a lot of fun and no hassles with anything or anyone, even if so many of them Yanks did speak with funny accents. Thank for a very good con, Avalon Hill.

((And now for a closing item of a very different character. I was written by an unknown person labeled only as "Chronicler". It appeared in Anubis #6, March 1975. This was edited by "Ozymandias". I believe that is a pseudonym for Doug Ronson, but I am not 100% certain of this. Perhaps John Leeder or Randolph Smyth will correct me if this is wrong))

At the Recent Diplomacy tournament in Boston, on the second board in the second and final round Drew McGee was wiped out as England in 1903. In 1907 the remaining players, Birsan, Mahler, Leahy, Van Handen, Klein and McKeon conceded the game to McGee since they felt he had played the best. As it happened, McGee won the tournament when the first board, which happened to include Rocamora, ended in a stalemate and a 6-way draw. Attempts to contact McGee to inform him of his glorious victory

were unsuccessful at first since he'd gone home two hours before he was declared victor at Board #2.

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The Zine Column #14

Oaklyn/Tretick, James Alan: Some serious charges, and a warning to my readers.

Once upon a time there was a publisher of La Guerre named Buddy Tretick. Some of the hobby's top players played there in its heyday in the late 60's. But things went sour. In my screening of old dippy zines for articles for reprinting here, I have never come across a GM so intensely villified. Two things are remarkable about these charges. First, the wide range of those making them, including people (like Boardman and Walker), who normally come down on different sides of issues, and other highly reputed players like Ver Ploeg and Arnie Vagts, and the general lack of defenders. Second, the fact that what he was accused of included some of the most serious things a GM could possibly be charged with: Falsification of players' orders, playing in his own games, placing his own pre-teen son in his games, frequent failure to receive a players' orders, dropping some games while at the same time starting other games, failure to mail issues of his zine --- the list goes on and on. Eventually Buddy left the hobby.

Then on Feb 17, 1978, publication of La Guerre resumed with Vol VI, issue 1-1. It was published by one "Bernie Oaklyn", with the same address as Buddy Tretick. That issue announced the gamestart for 1978XX. A number of similarities between the styles of the two men then lead to a lively debate as to whether the two men were in fact the same person. Bernie explicitly and repeatedly denied this fact. I am not going to even summarize the evidence; a good collection of this evidence appeared in Dragon and the Lamb #23 (Sept 18, 1978). The most compelling item comes from Bernie himself, who in a letter in D & L #22 said that he "looked up Buddy in the local telephone directory", after having gotten his name referred to him by Don Miller. As it happens, I had at that time the local directory for that area of suburban Maryland; there is no such listing. A call to local information revealed no listing for him. Indeed, it was well known that Buddy has always had an unlisted number. And there's plenty more evidence. Fred Davis had a face to face game at his house in early February, 1978, at which time Buddy Tretick and his son Jimmy attended. Fred got to talking to Ted McDonald later, who had met Bernie. The physical descriptions of both men, down to their hair styles, were the same.

Meanwhile, Oaklyn was in 1978IE in John Boardman's Graustark. In the fine American tradition of the bounty hunter, he asked his readers if anyone could honestly say that they had seen both Bernie and Buddy and that they were in fact separate human beings. He got no takers, but he did get a letter from Jack Frost, who had phoned Bernie/Buddy in Nov 1978, begging the conversation by calling him Buddy, and after getting a "Yes" response, continued the conversation referring to him as Bernie. Bernie-Buddy never noticed this change. Frost said some other things which I'll get to later. Boardman then decided that " 'Oaklyn' is Tretick " and insisted that "Oaklyn" either sign his orders with his true name Tretick (as per Boardman's House Rule 11) or include a statement that Oaklyn is the true name and Tretick is the pseudonym. This Oaklyn refused to do, and Boardman expelled him from the game.

All this is background for the following letter from Ron Kelly, concerning the aforementioned game "1978XX". I have edited it somewhat, and the comments in (()) are mine:

"This reminds me ((referring to the Boardman article)) of a previous experience I had with "Oaklyn". On 19 Jan 78 I sent him a money order for \$3.50 for a sub to his zine, and requested to be a standby for regular games of Diplomacy ((Ron included a Xerox of this letter and the Money order)).

I then received the 17 Feb 78 issue of his zine, in which he listed me as the standby player for 1978XX, which had not yet received a Boardman Number.

There was nothing unusual about issue #2...#3, dated 5 April 78 listed Austria as N.M.R. ((Xerox was enclosed)). In spite of the NMR, the Austria units moved, and it was stated that a Becky Cofman had submitted the Aus orders. However, there was no address given for this "Becky Cofman" in order to verify if such a person really existed. There was nothing in issue #3 which requested me to submit standby orders for Austria, and since the FO1 moves for Austria had been submitted by a third party, I assumed that my position as a standby for this game had been overlooked, and thus did not send in any WO1 orders for Austria, nor did I contact the GM in any way whatsoever. I assumed that Austria would be played either by the original player or by this "Becky Cofman" ..this issue lists Buddy Tretick as Co-editor.

When I received issue #4 of ((what had now become Front de Liberation du Diplomacy)) F.L.D. dated May 2 1978 to my surprise and shock, I read that I had submitted WO1 orders for Austria, as the original player had NMRed! ((The zine states: "Moves for Austria were submitted by Ron Kelly")) This is an absolute and total lie; and proves beyond anydoubt that Oaklyn-Tretick is an absolute liar and a dishonest GM. I have never submitted any orders to any game whatsoever to Oaklyn-Tretick. ((Ron then stats that he declined to submit SO2 orders because))...I do not want to get involved in games run by a GM I knew beforehand to be dishonest. I have been burned enough in my years in the hobby by GMs who I did not discover to be dishonest and/or incompetent. until after I had gotten into their games...

((At this point, Ron wonders if there really is a Becky Cofman, or if this is just a front name used by Oaklyn, and asks if anyone has heard of her before. He cites this as an example of one of the reasons why he frowns on the practice of using "phantom" or neutral orders for NMRing orders, except when they are in the HRs. I might add that I think that the neutral-orders-printed-in-the-HRs is the single best way of handling 1901 NMRs.))

In spite of the fact that I chose not to participate in any games in F.L.D., I did want to continue to receive the zine, and therefore I did not request a refund of my sub. However, Oaklyn-Tretick then cut off my sub, and never sent me another copy of F.L.D., NOR DID HE REFUND my sub balance. Thus, in effect he stole the balance of my sub money... in addition to being a Liar and dishonest GM, he is also a THIEF!"

Ok, maybe you think the above letter is just the usual bit of player-GM squabbling and not really worth all this space. I beg to differ. Ron is accusing Bernie of falsification of orders, this time of the identity of the order submitter. Ron could be charged in a rating system for a game in which he never participated.

The problem here is that its really, at this level, just one person's word against another's. Bernie could deny it all, and claim that the builds were phoned, etc.

However, there is considerable evidence that Bernie is screwing up here, not Ron, and the evidence comes from Bernie. Shortly after the above mentioned #4, on June 10, 1978, Bernie decided to repint the complete record of 1978XX and also the SO1 moves in 1978YY, in Vol 1, #1 of F.L.D. I have a copy of this. It lists Bernie as editro, with his new address, and states that Tretick has nothing to do with this magazine. The moves have been retyped. Ron is again listed as the player of record for Austria for the Winter builds. But there is printed an astounding special notice. After noting that the original Austrian player submitted SO1 moves by phone and was not heard from since, he states:

"Fall 1901 and Winter 1901 orders were submitted by Becky Cofman who lives in Rockville, Md. Ronald Kelly, who paid his subscription and requested to be a stand-by player for any of my games, failed to respond to numerous mail inquiries at his last known address. Ron is hereby discharged from that position."

As you can see, Bernie is now singing a totally different tune. Before he said that Kelly submitted the builds, now he says that not only did Cofman submit them, but that Kelly refused to respond to his letters. This is too much. For those of you who just joined the hobby, Ron is in something like 80 games, all of them as

standby player. He has stood by in literally hundreds of games. In addition, I have literally dozens of times seen something like "Thanks to Ron Kelly for submitting the requested standby orders, but they were not needed." published. While of course it is possible that this game was some sort of fluke, you don't get a reputation like Ron has by ignoring requests to standby. Further, there was NO request in the zine for Ron to submit those ~~AW~~ 1901 order. Indeed, that issue still listed the original Austrian player ("Farid F. El-Wailly") as having possession of the country.

In short, Bernie's versions are self-contradictory, and he is ascribing behavior to Ron which is totally out of character for Ron.

Let's go back now to the Frost letter mentioned earlier. Jack Frost is the Original Italian player in 1978XX. He says:

"I have in my possession several envelopes and handwriting samples from persons reported to be "Stephen ~~Andrews~~", "Brian Edwards", and others from Silver Spring, Md. ((These are the Turkey and Russia in 1978XX)). The unusual thing about them is that they all have the same typewriter and scrawl used by Buddy-Bernie. When I accused Bernie-Buddy of being these persons he said they were kids that he had to help with their mail!"

This prompted Ron Kelly to write:

"When I read Frost's statements, I was reminded of a player from Silver Spring Md I encountered in 1978, a "James Alan", who was a fellow player in a game in Against The Odds ((1978AH)) When I first encountered him, there was something about his letters ((he enclosed a Xerox)), his style of negotiating, writing, etc., which reminded me of "Oaklyn" ((who was also in that 1978AH game)). However, I decided that there was probably no connection, as the phone numbers were different, and dismissed it from my mind. But after reading what Frost had to say, I decided to try to check this "Alan" out. I decided to call there late that night, when I would hopefully wake up the person answering, and thus catch him off guard. I called him a little after 11 PM, and a lady answered. I could tell from her voice that she had ((sneaky character, isn't he?)) obviously been asleep. I said "Good Evening, Ma'am, may I speak to Bernie?" She responded, in a sleepy voice, "he doesn't live here, you'll have to call him at his house. This is where his son James lives." I asked "You mean James Alan?" and she answered "Of course; but he isn't here at the present time. ; would you like to leave a message?" I then said "No thank you. I'll just call Bernie over at his house. By the way, you are speaking of Bernie Oaklyn, is that correct?" To which she responded, "Yes, would you like the number?" I said, "No thank you, I already have it," and hung up.

((Ron then points out that James Alan is Germany in Oaklyn's 1978XX)). This is further evidence that Oaklyn-Tretick is engaging in improper activities as a GM. The fact that James and Bernie have different last names is no big mystery, when you consider the possibilities of Divorce((Buddy Tretick was in fact divorced)) step-father, step-children, name changes, etc. There are several possible reasonable explanations.

The fact that Bernie Oaklyn is James Alan's father does not prove that Oaklyn and Tretick are the same person ((Actually, that phone call tends to show that his present name really is Bernie Oaklyn. That being the case, then Boardman may well have acted improperly in expelling him, since his House rules do not require that a player own up to a "pseudonym")) But it is one more piece of evidence to indicate that Oaklyn is engaging in underhanded and dishonest and illegal acts he has been accused of by various people in the hobby. ((At this point Ron speculates on the true, correct name, and then concludes:)) I think that all games published and/or GMed by Oaklyn-Tretick, even for short periods of time, should be declared irregular by the Boardman Number Custodian due to GM dishonesty and interference in the games. "

Again, this is a very serious charge. To GM a game in which your son is playing shows very poor judgement (you wouldn't find Lee Kendter doing that); to do so with-

out informing the other players (especially when the last names are different) is completely unethical, and would render the game irregular. But was the charge true? Clearly a call to James Alan was in order.

James, or Jimmy, the name he was called to the phone by, is 19, and emphatically denied that he is in any way related to either Buddy Tretick or Bernie Oaklyn. He also stated that he had seen both persons and was absolutely certain that they were in fact quite different. I read to him the part from the Kelly letter, describing the phone call to the sleepy woman; How could this happen, I asked? Could it be that a woman there was under the misimpression that he was Bernie's son? No, he said, there is only my sister and my mother, neither of whom would say such a thing. He had no explanation as to why Ron would say such a thing about him, and complained that Ron never answered his letters for the games they were in. So James has directly contradicted Ron Kelly.

I then asked who else had seen the two of them, and could say for sure that the two people were definitely different. Strangely, there were only three such people that he could name, a rather small list. Two were Andrews and Edwards, who I'll get to in a minute. The third was Don Miller, who, James said, had gotten the two together in the first place. He was certain that Miller had seen them both and could say that they were different.

And aside here on Don Miller: In his time he was one of the most important pubbers of all, and his total output of zines puts him in the top 4 of all time. He was very highly respected, there was no hint of scandal; he was one of the true pillars of both the regular and Variant hobbies. He still publishes, but mostly in the fantasy, SciFi, and general gaming hobby. I phoned him, and he denied ever introducing the two and in fact said that he had never met Bernie at all and didn't even recall talking to him on the phone. And he was quite sure of this. So James has directly contradicted Don Miller as well.

I asked if James knew Stephen Andrews and Brian Edwards. Oh yes, real good friends, I see them all the time, and they saw Bernie frequently. I asked for their phone numbers, but he said he didn't have either one of them. This I find very odd: You're 19 years old, you have two very good friends, whom you're in a dippy game with and you don't have either of their phone numbers, even tho they are both local calls. Also, the gamestart list "Steven Andrews, c/o Cooper"; similarly "Brian Edwards, c/o Kasner" (in both cases followed by addresses). Were these, I asked James, companions they worked for or what? (Having seen Frost's letter, I didn't think they were!) No, he said, those are the names of the people they live with. "People they live with", I repeated. "Yes," he said.

I drew a blank with Kasner, but found Cooper in the phone book; a woman answered and said that Steven Andrews wasn't there. "Will he be home later in the day?" I enquired. I was then told that Steven didn't live there at all. I seems he was a very good friend of Cooper's son, came around frequently, and picked up his mail there. I asked for Steven's home telephone number; She gave it to me:

It was the same as that of James Alan.

I forgot to mention that I asked the Copper person whether Steven had ever lived there; she said no. Thus, James lied to me when he said that the "c/o" was just the name of the people they lived with. And he lied to me when he said he didn't know Steven Andrews' phone number, when in reality it is the same as James Alan's. As both have the same phone number, they must both have the same address.

One final nail in the coffin. Buddy Tretick's son was once entered in a game (other than in La Guerre, that is). This was 1972DM, in Fred Winter's Carbon 13, as Germany. His address was given as 3702 Wendy Lane, which was Buddy Tretick's old address. His name?: James Alan Tretick. Sure, James Alan denied ever hearing of James Alan Tretick, but this is too much to be a coincidence. It all ties up.

Its time to wrap this up with some conclusions. I am somewhat reluctant to comment on the GMing of a GM under whom I have not played, and infact have never done so in print before. But I'm going do make an exception.

1. The person known to the hobby and the world as Bernie Oaklyn is the same person as was once knowmas Buddy or Bernard Tretick.
2. James Alan, once known as James Alan Tretick, is his son.
3. Oaklyn is an unethical and dishonest GM. This is based on a) his treatment of Ron Kelly b) His lying about Buddy Tretick c) His placing his own son in a game he was GMing with notification to the rest of the players utterly lacking d) his placing at least two players in a game with the same address, and then obscuring that fact by having at least one of them pick up his mail at another address. I might add that there have been proven charges of improper activity by Oaklyn game as Guest GM in a Claw and Fang game, in which he illegally tried to get Alan into the game.
4. There is a significant chance that one or more of James Alan, Steven Andrews, and Brian Edwards are simply fronts for Oaklyn.
5. "1978XX", given the BN of 1978AY, is irregular. If charges of GM impropriety are raised about other Oaklyn games, Oaklyn is not entitled to "the benefit of doubt"
6. Any game with both Alan and Oaklyn in it should be considered irregular, unless there is some reason for not doing so. This would include 1978AP and 1978AH, and possibly others.
7. Oaklyn's game openings should be ignored, or marked with a special warning, by those in the hobby who compile lists of such openings.
8. GMs should under no circumstance place more than one of Oaklyn, Alan, Andrews, and Edwards in any one game. Caution should be observed before placing more than one "unknown" player from the Silver Spring, Rockville, Gaithersburg, Wheaton, Potomac, Bethesda, or Kensington areas.
9. I would warn my readers that under no circumstances could joining a GMed-by-Oaklyn game be considered a prudent move. Players should resist strenuously having an orphaned game transferred to Oaklyn.

Those are my firmly held opinions. Designation of games as irregular is done officially by the BNC, and in a more limited way by ratingsmasters. Oaklyn and Alan will have the right of reply. But please, do me and yourself a favor, and don't just repeat the same old lies. It ought to be crystal clear by now that the overwhelming weight of evidence means that people just aren't going to believe them anymore. It is time to make a fresh start with the truth. Otherwise your general lack of believability will dog you as long as you play postal diplomacy. Think about it. The jig is up, and its time you both faced that fact.

The Zine Column #15

DIPLOMACY DIGEST is getting some company!!!

DD is a genzine, with only articles, a relatively rare bird in a hobby with mostly gamezines. But this will be changing if the hobby's newest mini-trend holds up. As mentioned last month (it was a scoop for DD, folks!) Scott Marley, custodian for the DW trade zines in his new "Orchives", is now publishing genzine called Utopia, Ltd, issue #1 of which just appeared. The main purpose will be to function as a newszine, with items culled from those trades. He will also list game openings. Scott sensibly begins with an essay on who he is, as relatively few people had ever heard of him before (I certainly hadn't). Tho he's been playing postal dippy for nearly five years, as he puts it "to become well known in this hobby, one must either publish a zine, write excessively in other people's zines, or run off to Argentina with the collected gamefees of seven or more players" or, I might add, become a very sucessful player. He has also printed a partial list of his holdings to try to get

some of the gaps filled. He also has plans to make the "Orchives" as a resource center, and will make Xeroxs available for 5¢ a page.

Anyone with news of general interest to the hobby is strongly encouraged to write it up and pass it along to Scott. If its in your zine, I suggest a brief attached note so he won't miss it. If its a longer item, you might try your hand at writing a summary. Such activity is not limited to publishers, tho! If you've pulled off a particularly interesting coup or victory, or your game has had a unique sort of season, or some sort of what-you-think-is-a-record or whatever, write it up and send it to him. All such material is of course subject to editing and rewrite by Scott, who, I understand, is professionally an editor. Indeed, I wonder how common it is for those publishers who are employed to have writing as a very major part of their job. Richard Sharp is a professional writer, John Leeder is an editor, and writing is a very major part of my job. Its probably quite common. (Scott Marley 12682 Swidler Place, Santa Ana, Calif 92705. Subs 12/\$3.00. Monthly)

A second entry will be The National, in the process of being revived by the super-energetic Francois Cuerrier, slated for appearance this summer. This will be a canadian-interest zine, including materials on GMing, canadian hobby history, a census, information about the CDO, and more. I will be contributing there.

Francois, incidently, just published an astonishing 39 page Passchendaele #10, one of the largest gamezines ever published. This included results of his reader poll, possibly one of the most intensive examinations of a pubber's own zine ever published, a whole raft of articles on play of the game, the hobby in general, publishing, etc, plus the games as well. Francois has a unique writing style, highly self-conscious and sometimes verging on stream-of-consciousness. It is a fine example of the "personality-type" of dipzine, which alas is not nearly as common as it used to be. (2005 Thompson Residence, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ont K1N 9A7 Canada. Subs arefor each issue, 33¢ + 1¢/page over 10, 12¢/page less than 8, which doesn't normally happen. GF is \$1.50, always open, and standbys are paid)

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((Here's a thoughtful look at draw votes from Randolph Smyth, who has often written about Houserules in his zine (Fol-Si-Fie #62, 17 Sept 1976)))

HOUSERULE V, 2: "...The GM will, on request, withhold the identity of the player requesting a vote, and will normally make public only the news of its success/failure after the fact. However, any player may request that his true vote be made public by the GM."

This rule, applying to all FSF games, is in my experience unique; the hobby's methods of dealing with game-ending votes cover a broad spectrum. I've seen zines where each individual's vote is always revealed in complete (and excruciating) detail, right through to what is perhaps the most common case of absolute secrecy, with only the final yes/no decision publicized by the GM. As you may deduce, I'm not in full agreement with either policy.

The only virtue of "enforced revelation" appears to be a quicker game: with all the cards face up, holdouts are pinpointed and eliminated if necessary. A GM with a lump-sum gamefee system and an eye on his wallet may be keen to institute such a rule. The idea that allies can monitor each others' good faith doesn't hold up in most cases---a player planning a stab will vote as an alliance member until he's in position to win. The risk of a draw vote going through is necessary, since otherwise his "ally" gets wise prematurely. The result is a cleaner game (by truncation of the "dirty" bits), but a less interesting one, since it's been channelled away from the course preferred by one or more players.

The usual reason cited for the face-up rule is that there is never any doubt of who the belligerents are in a real war. Even accepting that the game should be as similar as possible to real life (which I don't), I disagree with the argument itself. History is full of cases where the instigator, by

clever diplomacy and propaganda, appeared to the world as the shocked defender. Bismark was an expert; and the U.S. treatment of Japanese diplomats in 1941 is a more recent example.

The opposite extreme, where nothing is known of the mechanics of the vote (a "face-down" rule) sits better but not perfectly. The tactical commitments a player makes in negotiation can (and must, sooner or later) be backed up or repudiated on the board. The player who makes a claim of desiring or rejecting a proposal should similarly be able to prove his assertions with a public revelation of his actual vote, if he so desires. If all but one of the players choose to do this, then the holdout's view may be revealed; but if all the other players are willing to make a specific and concerted effort to get this information, it should then be rewarded. Six players who view the game as over deserve some protection against a seventh who shoots down every proposal on principle. As a GM, I have enough interest in the thickness of my own wallet to make things tougher on someone who doesn't have the guts or ability to get out and break up a locked game any other way.

Another system involves tallying the results and presenting them in the "five yes, two no" format. This represents the purest form of compromise between the extremes; while not inferior, it gives no startling advantages either. It simply combines some aspects of its parent systems.

My houserule reflects a personal idea of what is intended with a vote. To anyone regarding it as a pure test of whether all players want to end the game, I say nonsense. Many players use a vote to probe or provoke weaknesses in the opposing alliances, or the conditions and order-of-finish as a jumping-off point for negotiations. Nothing wrong with this at all---but let's recognize that the vote is more often than not a diplomatic weapon.

I believe the proper application of my rule gives the greatest potential for interaction, cooperation, threats and surprises---which is what the game of Diplomacy is all about.

A final reminder for the Zine and gamesmaster poll. Your cooperation is vital; good pubbers and GMs deserve the vote of confidence. Poor ones can often be woken up with a good kick to the shins. Rank each zine from 10 (best, as in D- but you know who I mean) to 0 (the pits). Do the same for the GMs, referring to them by name, and not by zine. North-American zines only. Send your votes by the end of June to John Leeder, 2202 Broadview Road, N.W., Calgary, Alberta Canada T2N 3H8.

I really apologize for the jumbled condition of this issue. It was all set when D&L #33 arrived, and I had trouble rearranging things. Also, I have just heard from John Boyer, so cancel that comment on page 1. However, some things still need to be worked out so I am still not sure of my own personal plans. The latest plans for the tournament are in Lee Kendter's Why Me #16 (4347 Benner Street, Phila Pa 19135; . subs are 10 for \$3.50)