

Presenting the DIPLOMACY DIGEST Third Anniversary Awards (See page 5)

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Third Anniversary issue

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An overdue plane flight and bad connections got me to the Oakland U site of MichiCon IX at 10:45 PM Fri night, and I was plenty worried. Visions of everything being closed up and being unable to get into my dorm room danced in my head. And the campus seemed totally deserted. I finally found a group of custodial employees, but when I asked about a gaming convention, I got just blank stares. "A lot of kids screaming and yelling?" I asked despirately. Oh yes, that they say, and pointed me to where such activity used to be going on.

From this level of dispair, things changed rapidly. An "official" table was still functioning, and no sooner had I gotten my name tag and directions to the dorm when a tall bearded gentleman came over to me and introduced himself as Allan Calhamer. I managed to stammer out that I was Mark Berch. Yes I know he said, you're the one who was writing me about the scoring system, and I think you're right on both of your points. At this point we fell into a dsicussion about the scoring system, and were joined by Harley Jordan and Fred Davis.

The scoring system committee had selected a new system by Calhamer. Bascically, unless you were the leader, your score was your final number of centers. If the leader has more than 8, your score was diminished one point for every SC more than 8 that the leader had. All survivors got a minimum of 1, unless there was a win, which gave them 0. The leader got his SC count, plus 2 points for being an undisputed leader, with a maximum of 18. The first problem is that once you reach the 16 center level as undisputed leader, you hit your maximum of 18, and so there is no incentive to go for the win. Second, Allan wanted to have the scores posted after the first round, but I was afraid that this would disrupt the second round, as those at a given board with the most first round points would have great trouble finding allies. The first problem could easily be corrected; the second could be by keeping the scores secret, but Allan found that impractical, and suggested a leveling plan: All the scores at a given board (second tound was seeded) would be reset at the median, so everyone would have the same score. In a sense, round one would be a qualifying, determing which board you play on.

The problem was, the scoring system hd already been picked, and its committee ad-journed. Of its members, Ben Zablocki wasn't attending, and Harley liked the changes, but was unhappy wjth the idea of changing it per se. I sounded out Bob Sergeant the next morning, and the chan ges were OK with him. It was decided to leave the whole thing ~~up~~ to Herb Barents, who would be actually in charge. He didn't like either change, so that took care of that. I thought you might be interested, tho, in some of the backround.

The tournament itself was run by the team of Barents, Jordan, Davis and Calhamer at a high level of efficiency. Turnout was not great -- 8 boards the first round, 7 the second. This is not surprising --- the best levels of participation are normally with

tournaments held in conjunction with Origins; and besides, this one was quite early. A tornado warning disrupted first round play (midwestern publishers please note: This is a rare example of an acceptable mention of weather in a dipzine). My own performance can be summed up in two words: Creamed twice. I always do poorly in tournaments.

That evening was a meeting of the DipCon Society, attended by about 25. This turned out to be a rather interesting discussion. The three cons offered to us as hosts were all turned down. I voted against them all, because none had dorms available, and that can be a pretty significant factor for some. Beyond that, an interesting issue was discussed: Both the constitution and common sense dictate that the Dipcons be rotated to different parts of the country. But is it worth going to a second class con, or to a part of the country where few will go, just to follow that rule? We all knew Michicon was a sure bet ---- indeed, its the best run con I've ever attended. So why not go with it again? Also, its the west coast's "turn" for a con, but the last one held there (1978) had only three dippy players from outside the west coast, and had a low turnout at the tournament itself. Another complicating factor is that Origins hasn't picked a site yet for 1981 --- perhaps that will solve the problem.

Sunday morning was the seminar. I started off by giving a talk on French openings. I had hoped that there would be even more newcomers there --- you have no idea how silly it is to give a talk like that to the likes of e.g. Jim Yerkey and Bob Sergeant. After that was a most informative discussion, led by Harley Jordan on the running of tournaments. One point mentioned was the value of the much-maligned paperwork. This can actually speed up the starting of the games, and assure that place-in-line has no bearing on what board you are on, and who with. There was a box with slips of paper, each with a board and country on it, and you just drew one. A wide number of topics were discussed, including two long games versus three shorter ones, both games Saturday vs one Sat, one Sunday; the scoring system used; flexible deadlines (permitting people to get behind, hoping that they will get caught up) versus rigid ones (which is how things were run); the particular scoring system used, and other sundry topics. I really enjoyed that discussion, which ran close to two hours. There was no screaming and yelling, everybody who wanted to was able to contribute.

Oh, also on Sat night, I gave a short talk on NADF, setting out what it is and why it came into being. As I plan an essay on that in around the Sept issue, I'll put that off for now. Of course, a most enjoyable part of any con is getting to see people. I particularly enjoyed meeting some people for the first time, such as Bill La Fosse, Allan Calhamer, Harley Jordan, Bill Becker and Russel Blau and some others, and seeing some people again who I've met previously. But alas, all things must end. And so, after watching Bob Sergeant plunk down \$400 for a second railroad (relatively early in the game) (actually, his position required some desperate action), I trundled away.

Reaction to the Lexicon was very strong and positive. This being an anniversary issue, I'll indulge myself in a few quotes. Gary Coughlan: "...this is one novice who really enjoyed it...up to date with references to Barker and Hurst scoring system...I love justifications for suicide against and remailing a letter." Doug Beyerlein: "A collector's item for all Diplomacy players." Dave Marshall: "Mark Berch obviously put one hell of a lot of work into this project, and it shows." Rod Walker: "It's a truly significant issue and a fantastic contribution to the hobby." It also got plugs from Roy Henricks, Steve McLendon, Bob Sergeant and Lee Kendter and Ron Brown and many others; I'm very appreciative ---- the orders are coming in! I also got some corrections from Rod, plus various suggestions for the update, which will likely appear in late fall 1981. The worst gaffe was leaving Randolph Smyth's Fol Si Fie out of the century club of those who have passed 100. He's at 126, many of them 20+ pagers, and has long been one of my most favorite reads.

Two people did mention that while they enjoyed the issue, they were worried that those who didn't wouldn't like to see such a large chunk of their sub disappear. Of course, that's the risk you take with any theme issues. Anyhow, these two suggested that I might have issued the Lexicon as a separate publication, as a reference handbook. Well

Gee, guys, I'd just love to be able to churn out ole' DD month after month, and then toss off some Handbooks from time to time. But there's a limit to how much I can publish, and twelve 11-12 page issues of DD is about it. Besides, that would cost you an extra 15¢, writing me to send the dough.

Since this issue is going to be used as a sample (#27 is getting a little old), DD is devoted entirely to the presentation of articles about Diplomacy. There are no games run here. Usually reprinted material, drawn from the second largest archives in North America, predominates. This issue, as an anniversary issue, is somewhat different different, since usually the front page editorial doesn't run much more than one page. And normally there is only one The Zine Column.

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((Despite a confident bet to the contrary, the Canadian Postal strike did not occur. And that brings to mind this gem from Paroxysm #19, Dec 25, 1975, author unspecified))

MAIL BOXES THREATEN STRIKE ACTION!

OTTAWA (SPECIAL TO PAROXYSM) Canada and the postal Diplomacy community, having just suffered thru a strike by postal workers face yet another mail slow up. This time it is the Canadian Union of Post Boxes (CUPD) who are threatening to walk of the job(not literally, of course). A CUPD spokesman ((spokesthing?)) indicated that the major demands of the mail strike are: reduction of work hours from a 24 hour day to a ten hour day; some sort of equitable wage settlement, including sunday premiums, plus a two-week paid vacation.

CUPD officials were angered by the response from the Post-Master General, Bryce Mackasey. Mackasey has recently stated that he "cannot believe the ridiculous requests of the CUPD. We have modernized the post boxes in the past few years. All have been repainted in beautiful white with red and blue stripes. What more can they wish?"

No matter what the outcome of the strike is the losers will be, as always, the Canadian public and businesses. As a last resort the Mail Boxes plan a strategy which reminds one of Andrew Carnegie and Gordon Anderson. The former used it but neither copywrited it (probably due to "abandonment of use"). The plan --- the lockout.
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((The next article goes way way back to Oct 8, 1966 (Graustark #105), almost the beginnings of postal Diplomacy. In it, the inventor of the game discusses his play in the very first 7-man game that went to completion. Keep in mind that deadlines were 2-weeks in those days, tho service was likly faster, and that Allan is describing a game (postal Diplomacy) that has evolved much since them.))

ON THE PLAY OF POSTAL DIPLOMACY

In postal diplomacy, there is no time for discussions back and forth between two parties; consequently, when an offer of alliance is sent, possible objections to it and questions about it should be anticipated and answered beforehand.

Over-the-board play shows that even alliances which are genuinely good for both parties are frequently questioned by the offeree. Frequently he 1) wants to know the exact variations visualized by the offerer and 2) wants to know what the alliance will do at very long range, that is, after they havve knocked out their first Great Power target. Thus, enuf exact variations shoudl be included to give the other player some feeling of security that you won't attack him, and that you have a real intention of attacking the named enemy, and that they two of you ave the capabilityto defeat the named enemy. The long range request is probably not a reasonable one, but nonetheless it is a frequent request, so some reasonable long range plan should be included; if there is one.

The result of all this is quite a lot of work on the first move. Later, however, the simplest notes serve to hpld the alliance together. Only ocaasionally is it necessary to write something lengthy, to a single player in the game (when you want him to make a major change of policy, and have a reasonable case for it in terms of mutual interest).

In the Ruritania game, 1963B((a different zine, unrelated to the present Ruritania)), I wote messages of the following lengths to different countries in the first move.

(I played Germany. The messages were single spaced):

Austria	½ page	Italy	1 page
Austria and Russia	1¼ page	England and Italy	1 page
Austria, Russia and Italy	2 pages	France	½ page
Russia	1 page	Turkey	a few lines

The message to Russia, Italy, and Austria asked for a four-way alliance ("RIGA", from the initials fo the countries). The message to Russia and Austria asking for a three way alliance, calling for the same neutralized zones as the four-way alliance, in case Italy did not join. The message to Russia called for a two way alliance consistant with the three-way alliance, in case Austria did not join; similarly the letter to Austria alone. ((Notice how the bulk of his diplomatic effort initially went to the east, whereas in present styles, Germany begins with the primary interest in the west)).

The messages laid the basis of my intended policy; alliance with Austria or Russia, preferably both, and still better the three in one alliance; still better Italy too. The remaining letter discussed minor points, opened channels of communication, hopefully lulled suspicions, laid the basis for other alliances if the eastern alliances misfired, and so on.

Russia and Austria accepted, Italy did not. It would have been silly to offer the four-way only, because then I would have been left with notheing. There would have been no time to come forward with a three-way after learning of Italy's intention, and he might decline by just not writing.. As it was, England and Italy misplayed, and we swarmed all over them. Turkey was overwhelmed too, leaving 4 countries. I attempt3d to win by Blitzkrieg against France, and went up to 15 supply centers, but I miscalculated and had to cover my homeland to ho,d it against Austria and Russia, so could not raise beyond 12 pieces. Eventually, Austria and Russia prevailed against Germany. It was still a pretty sucessful game for germany, and the serious mistakes were not in the opening. ((As I have mentioned on other ocassions, players' endgame statements are often not that accurate, adn this appears to be no exception. Allan never got above 14, and according to Boardman's summary, once the game was down to 4 countries, he attacked both A and R first, and then later betrayed his French ally. While I do not have the zine to check this out, the SC chart is consistant with the Boardman description.))

It is well to remember that players who live close together can communicate back and forth faster; they can irom out more difficulties between them. Consequesntly, they are more likely to ally at the start, and much more likely to drift into alliance later even if they oppose each other at the start; than players who live far apart.

In 1963B, Germnay was in Boston, Austria and Russia in Los Angeles ((members of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, one of the early sources of the hobby's members) and the other 4 in New York. I felt certain that the New York four, connected by ten-cent phone calls. would drift together eventually; hence I mobilized the other three, which were well placed for an alliance anyway. As it was, I had hoped to fool E into a G-E-I attack on France, without telling him that the RIGA alliance was in the backround. Before I sent the letters, I realized that Italy would spill the beans, because they both hailed from a place called East Patterson, New Jersey; they couldn't talk about the game day after day without sooner or later telling each other all they knew. Consequently, I should have rewritten the letter to Italy to remove references to formal allianes with A and R; but seven pages of letters are enuf, so I let the matter ride, and Italy rejected the four way alliance, and England and France allied instead of fighting.

The press releases can be used for propaganda value. In general, I think they sho ld be used to attempt to justify one's actions in temrs of the realities of the situation, to assure allies that you are with them (in the language of a statement to the world, of course) and so on. For example Boardman as Turkey tipped me off that Bruce Pelz was playing russia under an assumed name ("Adhemar Grauhugel"; he was married to the Austrian player) and described Pelz as a "Germanophile". Subsequently, I sent in releases full of Teutonic cliches about G, A, and R building a new order in eastern

Europe, destiny, culture, etc. These releases became especially mysterious and beautiful around 1904, when it became necessary to attack Russia by surprise, in order to seal the upper reaches of the Baltic before I wheeled against France.

I do not believe that releases taunting or belittling the other player are diplomatically wise.

Where players play many games, it might be wise for them to save copies of their best first-round letters and copy or even duplicate them in other games. Amendments can be written in, stuff can be stricken out, blanks can be filled in, and so forth. In due course, one might have more than one set of letters for each country. If as Russia you want to attack Turkey first, you send out the "Russia A" letters; if you want to attack Austria first, you send out the "Russia B" letters. If you like letters you receive you copy them for later games. (Thus, perhaps, "I sent my version of Calhaver's RIGA letter. He sent me Smythe's ITA.") This "canned correspondence" would apply only to the first move, of course, but it is precisely there that you need long letters. ((Its interesting which of these ideas have been adopted, and which have not.))

DIPLOMACY DIGEST THIRD ANNIVERSARY AWARDS

This zine has been published now for three years, and to mark the occasion, I am broadcasting the following awards. All of the descriptions should be read with the proviso "in North America, that I am aware of, in my opinion." I am not familiar enough with the British hobby to comment. And even here there is lots that I don't see, hence the second phrase. And it must be stressed that these are purely subjective evaluations. I speak for no one other than myself. Also, please note the rather ad hoc nature of most of these awards. This is deliberate. Rather than coming up with categories, and seeing who could be crammed into them, I looked at the people themselves, to see where their contributions came from. I do hope that those whose names do not appear will not feel unduly offended. Ordering is alphabetical.

- For unequalled reliability in GMing: John Boardman, editor of Graustark.
- For unsurpassed excellence at what the game is all about --- winning: Dave Crockett
- For service to the hobby in picking up standby positions: Ron Kelly
- For service to the hobby by getting the Boardman Number operation running: Lee Kendter, Sr
- For publishing the best new zine of the past 12 months: Bruce Linsey (Voice of Doom)
- For providing the liveliest letter column, and for showing that very fast paced games can be well run and enjoyable: John Michalski, editor of Brutus Bulletin.
- For excellence in that fine tradition of a publisher writing about play-of-the-game in his own zine: Randolph Smyth, editor of Fol Si Fie.
- For guiding the creation of a new hobby organization of great promise (NADF), and for organizing the North American Variant Bank: Rod Walker.

((From the fabled first anniversary of The Pouch #53 (March 2, 1974) comes a very personal view of the hobby from Conrad von Metzke))

CHAOS TAMING

or, How to Make Order into Boredom by Taking Yourself Ever-So-Seriously

Postal Diplomacy is about to turn twelve. Think about it this way for a moment: The day is almost here when the hobby will be older than some of its players. And as one who has been around for the entire fadago, I assure you that the Founding Fathers never in their wildest nightmares conceived of that.

I always like to reminisce on anniversaries, so let me get started. By and large, the twelve years have been chaotic ones; looking merely at the surface evidence is proof enough of that. Magazines have come and gone in incredible numbers; players have done the same; ideas have been born, have transmuted, have died, have been transfigured, have

become legends.

Looking below the surface to escape the chaos of the outer veneer is a lost cause; underneath, the hobby is as loony as it is on top. While they lived, magazines and players were typified by rare degrees of intellectual, emotional and social decomposition such that any future anthropologist researching our hobby will think us an organization of Incurable Outpatients. What other group would tolerate the disarray of erratic publishing, dreadful printing, missed moves, published insults, rejoined insults, and a participant attrition rate approaching 40%? My God, even the Post Office won't stand for that! We not only permit it, we love it! We must; we keep on, year after year, guzzling it all up.

But the last few months have seen a New Voice in the Wilderness; the shining light of order, of Professional Standards, slinking in to tame the winds, worming its way to conquer confusion. ((He refers to the appearance of Diplomacy World)).

No doubt the New Scheme of Things comes as a result of the growth of the rabble. In the Old Days, when activists can be numbered in the tens, it really wasn't worth the trouble to try to cement any form of organization together; for one thing, trying to devise a Chiefs-and-Indians structure doesn't work too well when you don't have enough people to serve as Indians. But now that the active participants have moved into four figures, the time seems to have come. Where up to now the only thing professional about Diplomacy was the game itself, now the "fanzines" are looking at the world of "prozines" with jealous eyes. And so, friends, we're on our way to the Big Time. Buckle your seat belts. Just be sure that you don't fall asleep during the trip.

After twelve gleefully degenerate years as a chaos-monger, I've learned a few lessons. Paramount among them is, Order is a sedative. The minute this hobby goes pro, I go to sleep, and I freely and firmly predict that my example will be followed by one glorious mass exit into the bedrooms.

Why? Because Diplomacy is not, no matter how many strategy and tactics articles bleat the contrary, a serious business. It is a hobby. It is a past-time. It is fun. It is in no way a profession. And those who are now thinking in terms of making it one, are instead making it into a perversion.

Let me speak from personal experience for a moment. After having been involved in at least 300 games, postal and personal, since I first learnt the thing in 1961, I have come to know a fair amount about How to Play (Austria/England/France/etc), How to Conquer (A/E/F/etc) in Six Moves or Fewer, How to Pull a Reverse Double Lepanto on Albania, and similar exciting things. I certainly don't know it all, but I know some of it. Much of it, even. On the other hand, I have yet to read an article telling me how to do these things; any time such a piece shows up in a magazine, I read something else. Such matters are among the many things which ought only to be found out the hard way, 'cos that's the only way it's any fun. (In case you care, I once did write an article on How to Play Austria. Reprinted in its entirety, it reads: "To win with Austria, start out by giving each of the other six players the finger. The first one to flip the bird back is good for a game long alliance, and you can take the other six ((six??)) in alphabetical order." So much for strategy articles. That little thing did provoke one sincere question: "Alphabetical order by country or player name?" Answer: "Of Course."

So chaos is on its way out, wot? So what do we do now? More repetitiously arid essays on How to Do This and That? Treatises on "good play"? How to write press? (Answers: "you take a sheet of paper and write on it.") Good God Almighty; anybody who has the effrontery to charge you money to read tripe like that is a bloody crook, and the thought of paying for it is an insult to my intelligence. And now this rabbit hash is to be 'improved' and 'upgraded' by offset printing and permit-imprint mailing? Jesus! Next they'll make Warren Harding a great president by air-brushing his photos.....

On well..Crusades were never won on the soapbox. I suppose the only solution is to put my ~~top~~ money where my mouth is and buy only what I like. After all, what I'm really advocating is anarchy, and anarchy says that you can do whatever you damn well

a potential attack on Swe or Russia herself, and then there's bel...note that France and Germany have additional problems in that they cannot move freely in their own countries without causing a little friction. Germany gets upset over pieces in Bur, Italy gets distraught over fleets in Mar, and Russia has cat fits over pieces in Pru or Sil.

Thus, the province of bel is right in the center of things. England wants it so as to gain two quick builds, hopefully without having to fight for it. France or Germany may be willing to cede it to her for her cooperation later. Any other province in the area will very likely mean total war with some other power. Germany wants Bel so as to secure the lowlands. This makes her less easily attacked by England from the sea and gives her an important wedge to use versus Bur in case war with France ever begins. France wants bel because it presses directly on bur. She may give it to an ally to take by fleet capture (since a fleet can't move or lend support inland) so as to keep the peace, but it is always a reluctant gift. Note that bur is the hinge-pin to land attack of France. It impinges on two key areas of France and will cause great defensive problems if it falls to a hostile power. Imagine what would happen if an enemy piece does move to bur. The French player must defend par, mar, and gas. Were gas to fall his problems are compounded ten-fold -- it impinges on par, bre, spa, and mar! But I digress.

Thus, we see that each country desires to own Bel. Not only for the build it will supply, but also for the tactical-diplomatic position it will give the possessor. There is, of course, another very important reason why the belgian sector ignites, other than possession of bel itself. To not have a fight there, i.e. a three-player alliance, will produce many problems.

France will have to attack Italy, Germany would have to take on Austria or Russia, or attack Italy the hard way, and England could only attack Russia in the north. As soon as such attacks would be made, the balance of power would be thrown into chaos! Cooperation between even two of the powers is greatly impeded by the fact that they soon find themselves tripping all over each other. Each of the powers must, more or less single handed, attack another of the great powers. ((Len's analysis is unduly pessimistic here, and games do in fact begin with such alliances successfully operating, especially in face to face diplomacy, where three way alliances are easier to arrange.))

Therefore, we find that the most equitable solution is for two of these powers to ally versus the third. This is why I say that these countries are involved in two classic patterns in Diplomacy.)The other being the inevitable fight among R,A,T in the Balkans.

Now let us analyze three possible alliances. The best alliance is probably the G-E one. The reasons for this are: independent building capability --- England builds almost all fleets, while G builds almost all armies, (thus, neither is in a position to stab the other), great mobility --- areas of cooperation are present not only against France, but also against Russia, greater development possibility --- they can cooperate by giving supports for each other's attacks, as opposed to having to attack an enemy from two sides, and finally, each country can ally with another player without interfering with his primary alliance with the other. England and Italy can ally versus France, as can England and Turkey versus Russia, while Germany can ally with Austria versus Russia or with Italy or Turkey versus Austria and neither gets in the other's way. Let me make a note here. The alliance is good in that a stab cannot be driven home because England can't penetrate inland easily, and Germany can't penetrate the seas easily. Thus, if they stab, they can make only minor progress. However, the fact that they must telegraph their punch, England building armies, and Germany building fleets, plus the fact that they can't really make deep independent inroads into that enemy makes a stab difficult.

For France and Germany to ally, the problem is one of builds. One or the other or both must build more fleets than normal. Thus, if he gets stabbed, his defenses have been greatly compromised. His development, his mobility and his cooperation capability are all as good as the E-G alliance. Now, by assigning values to alliance characteristics we find that the F-G alliance is better ((than E-G, I assume)), yet this estimate reflects a perfect alliance in which stabs will not occur.

For England and France to ally would seem to be as viable an alliance as E-G. However, the situation is different. E and F can cooperate effectively only against G. Other factors are good, but builds are slightly inhibited.

Now, let us add the final facet to this analysis, namely the other powers. If we see that one of these alliances will form more often than not, what would you do if you were the odd man in the sector? Cry? Well...your best approach is obviously other alliances. To throw up your hands in despair is the mark of the very poor diplomacy player.

As E, you can call on either I or R to form mutual aggression treaties vs F and G respectively. As G, seek mutual aggression treaties with I and R ((same two countries)). As France, you should consider crying! France will be hard pressed to call on Russia vs G, and Russia does not want to fight both G and E in Scandinavia because she will lose. Italy can't help you because you would have to allow Italian fleets into the Mid ((but if you really need the help, that seems like a reasonable price)) or somehow Austria has to be persuaded to allow Italy to move out of Tyrolia. Austria will not be too fond of that possibility. As for Austrian aid, the problem is that Austria would have to turn away from the Balkan sector and she would have to move to Tyrol herself. Italy would not be fond of that. ((Well, it's not that bad. An adventurous Austria can afford a two front war, particularly if allied with both I and R against T, and with I and F against G, while R allies with F against E. The problem for France is putting all this together.)) Yet France can get help from the other powers because they would be fools to allow Germany and England to gobble up France and come after them ((Make up yer mind!))

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The Zine Column #25

#### ZINE NOOZE

Two fatso zines have arrived here recently worthy of note. One is Passchendaele #24, checking in at an amazing 53 pages, very little of it politics. There is an enormous amount of GM-player relations type material --- those who liked DD #4/5 and 32 will find lots to chew on here, with neat discussions of dealing with player errors, neutral orders, player rights on appeal (apertinentsubject, as Francois has recently been elected CDO ombudsman) and general GMing philosophy. On page 25-26, he poses some intriguing hypothetical questions, and novice pubbers especially would do well to ponder some of these. There are contributions by Smyth, me, and a few others, but mostly it's FC. Also in the issue is news of a very daring sort of game: A prize game, with a game fee of \$33, and \$200 going to the winner, with lesser amounts in case of draws. A real put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is game. No standbys, a sensible move in a game like this. But be sure you read his (voluminous) HRS first, as he has some unorthodox practices. Adificandos of the exotic should check out his S01 neutral orders (my favorite is "F Edi H" --- hows that for neutral!). And he has a rather complex patchwork of regulations on when you can or can't appeal. It should be an interesting game. Also in the issue are 4 games with commentary, three by FC, and he doesn't hesitate to stomp on someone's play if he thinks it isn't working out! And on page 51 he announces a real throat slitting plan, a series of "completely honest...and frank" plugs, with no "second-thoughts secret". He promises some plugs will be "quite negative", and assures his readers that "I will viciously axe all zines I'm not rather fond of." He promises to analyze such touchy matters as how GMs deal with criticism and protests. I sure hope FC is toughening his hide, cause while that is commonplace in Britian, it sure isn't here. Also, FC solicits for his second anniversary, #28; I should have a few pieces in that issue. And Francois, if you're silly enough to go for a record, the longest single anniversary I'm aware of is the aforementioned Pow ch #53, at 77 pages (Box 32 Station A, Ottawa K1N0T9Ont; 10/\$3.50)

Weighing in at 44 pages and somewhat postage-due was Greatest Hits #27. Peter Birks runs a personality type zine (like Pass and VOD, but unlike, say, Claw and Fang) that is always full of interesting reading. Presented are results of a rather detailed questionnaire, which fetched a remarkable 35 replies, and it gives an interesting look at the preferences of at least one slice of the British hobby. The discussion is generously larded with quotes from the respondents. Also included are more-or-less regular features.

like his pop-music reviews, a poker column, some political comments, a sizable letter column, and accounts of his personal life. Missing but very common in GH are book reviews of SF and mystery writers. The quality of writing here is quite high, reminding me in some ways of Bob Lipton. The zine features a lot of reader feedback, with Birks participating but not trying to dominate --- but he's really everywhere, commenting on the games, kibbizing the press, and even interrupting himself. Diplomacy per se isn't covered that much --- you won;t find article on the game, tho there's plenty of personalities. If a dispute or problem flares up in a game, tho, it does spill over into the letter column. It consistantly features plenty of reading, normally 18-24 pages. I'm not certain of the overseas surfaze mail price, but its about 70¢ (39 Handforth Road London SW9 0LL, triweekly. Simplest is to buy 2 pound notes at a large bank and mail)

Some folds are in the news. Newcomer Flying Dutchman didn't make it, and at the other end, Claw and Fang, after 8 long years is calling it quits, and will switch to carbon copy later in 1980. C&F was the real workhorse of the hobby, often running over 30 games at once. Horton is the heaviest user of GGMs in the hobby's history, enabling a lot of people to try their hand. Unfortunately, Don apparently did not believe in using much, if any, supervisory authority, and so some of those games ran into problems. But the zine will sorely be missed, because a whole lotta people played there. On the brighter side, Steve says he may not wind Dragon and Lamb entirely down after all. This is good news indeed! He's thinking interms of getting it down to 5-6 games. Perhaps all the games could be GGMed, leaving Steve free to do some more writng for his zine.

In Egnog #50, Konrad Baumeister announces that he is going to sue Curt Gibson for \$20,000, for libel. Curt has been hounding KB in a vendetta for years, even writing people in games he (Curt) isn't even in. While I can sympathize with Konrad, this is a very ill-advised plan. He refers to having an "airtight case (I've spoken to two lawyers)" but I think his chances of winning such a case are very low, and his chances of getting more than nominal damages (\$1) are almost non-existent. Curt might not even bother defending himself, tho I rather suspect he'd enjoy it. And that's not the only way it could backfire. The idea of using the court system to resolve a hobby matter is not going to sit well with a lot of people (such as me). The last person to do something like that in a big way, or rather to threaten to, was Gordon Anderson and the "DipCon" affair, and he was roundly booed. I hope that some of KB's many friends will urge him to reconsider. Not to end on a negative note, KB has a good article on an often overlooked French opening, and a second discussion on an early German move south.

I should clarify what I said lastish about Randolph Smyth having no openings --- that was in the context of newcomers to the hobby. He does have a game (invitational) set to start no earlier than Jan 1981, and will pick the players from those who apply.



The Zine Column #26

Telling Lies

I will try to keep this as short as I can, but its been 6 months (!) so quite a bit has accumulated, and besides, I've gotten many new subbers recently. Anyhow, I'm sure many of you have received a sample of Oaklyn's FLD, especially if you are new to the hobby. And since its physically very attractive, I'm sure some of you have decided to sub. If you have, you will discover something very strange --- stories that appear there appear nowhere else in the hobby. This is very unusual --- we pubbers are a talkative lot, and if one of us breaks a good story, you can be sure others will repeat it for their readers. But Bernie's tales are not repeated because they are lies. Examples follow.

In the April 1980 issue he acuses John Michalski of "stealing stationery" and the "unauthorized use of...post office bulk mail rate postage meters", and implies that he has contacted the government about this (and John isn't the first person he's made that threat to.) Now, John has explained to the hobby several times the arraignment that he

makes to mail and print his zine from work --- but Bernie doesn't mention that, doesn't. And he doesn't mention the fact that scrounging envelopes is a very common and accepted practice. I, for example, have sent out many dozens of packages of back issues, all of them in recycled manilla envelopes. Many are fished right out of trash cans.

In the May 1980 issue things really get dirty. On page 18, he says that Fred Daviss, the IDA ombudsman at the time, told John Leeder "that he would disqualify himself if he was ever called upon to adjudicate against me." Actually, he said just the opposite! He said (Runestone #275) that with one minor exception he would not disqualify himself (the one exception being if the dispute hinged on is Oaklyn = Tretick; since Fred knows first hand that he is, his mind is already made up on that point). Next up is Lee Kenter, Sr, the Boardman Number Custodian. Bernie details a peculiar incident in which Lee "demonstrated offense" over an extremely trivial matter --- the failure to write both Sr and Jr on an issue of FLD. As this was supposedly in a fone conversation, it can't be literally disproven. But such pettiness is totally out of character for Lee. What's more, I have received many letters from him; not one was signed with "SR". Indeed, his return address stamp doesn't have either Sr or Jr on it. Lee says the story is a total fabrication, and I believe him. And then there's me. Bernie informs his readers that I am the hobby ombudsman. Pretty presumptuous of me, isn't it? Well, I'm not, have never said that I am, and if Bernie can show where I have, I'll give him a lifetime sub to DD.

Sometimes things are probably just the result of laziness and carelessness. A letter is reprinted from Shreve supposedly to Boardman, but actually was written to Michalski. It seems that Bernie didn't bother to check with Shreve. In other cases he is truly pathetic. Twice in the May issue he hectors Konrad Baumeister for supposedly withholding some proof that Oaklyn is not Tretick. Imagine --- this coming from a person who has never once presented any proof that he is a real person --- like a xerox of a drivers license. But that doesn't stop him from hectoring KB for something he himself can't do. And in some cases he is downright sleazy. He makes a series of threats, if a dispute that the ENC is handling is not resolved to his precise satisfaction. In one he claims to have "embarrassing" letters written by me and by Rod Walker to some unnamed persons. There aren't any such letters that I know of --- this is just innuendo. Rod actually called Bernie's bluff and demanded that the letters be published!

The June issue continues in this vein. He says that he has been "told" that I predicted that FLD would fold. It is true that I have an infamous bet that according to the law of averages, two zines from a given list would fold by the end of 1980. And some people have predicted that FLD will fail --- but not me, and FLD is not on that list. But that doesn't matter to Bernie --- he just goes on to lecture me about how I should "withhold" my opinion on such things. And on page 21 is a new victim. David Perlmutter, a relative newcomer to the hobby. It seems that Dave has been doing a series of zine reviews for Claw and Fang, and did a somewhat mixed review on FLD --- a mixture of praise and criticism. And Dave had the temerity to say "Not a page goes by without an attack on Mark Berch or someone else." So Bernie lets him have it, questioning his honesty, etc. It's pretty bad, and utterly uncalled for. And elsewhere in the issue he dumps on Don Horton, but I won't bore you with the preposterous details.

But it is on page 22 that he makes one of the most cynical requirements ever made by a GM. It is an essay on player's requirements in his games. Mostly it is sensible stuff (keep your sub up, get your moves in on time) or Bernie's endless padding. But item 9 is the real kicker. Any complaints about the games are to go "only to the game-master". They are expressly not permitted to "criticize or complain to someone who cannot do anything about it." They can't even complain to the other players --- Bernie nails that one down twice, by requiring that they also "not receive, from anyone, complaints that I ((the player)) can't do anything about, but to redirect the person to someone who can do something about it." And these are not just suggestions --- he calls them "mandatory". This is a horrible, totally corrupt requirement. Indeed, one of the best things you can do when faced with a dispute with your GM --- any GM --- is to ask someone else's advice. None of us are perfect; we all have blind spots. Particularly

newcomers, who may not realize that a certain procedure, which seems unfair to them, is actually quite acceptable, or at least tolerated. Be discreet, make it off the record if you like. I have received numerous such requests for advice, from both players and GMs alike, and most GMs and experienced players who've been around receive them from time to time. I personally haven't had much in the way of disputes with GMs, but when I do, I usually check out my position with a few friends. This is especially necessary for Oaklyn because in his day, about 10 years ago as Tretick, he was the most widely criticized GM in the history of the hobby. And its true again as Oaklyn, often for the exact same things (because he doesn't see anything wrong with them, and because he doesn't learn). I know of no present North American GM whose GMing has been so widely criticized as Oaklyn's. He has obviously been stung by that, but rather than changing his ways, he's drawing a curtain around his games --- make no mistake about it: He's tired of having his unethical conduct exposed to the hobby, and this is his response.

Well, you might say, so what. First, Bernie gets a lot of novices into his zine, which is unsurprising, as a newcomer cannot distinguish the trash from the flash in FLD. And novices are the lifeblood of our high-turnover hobby. And they are getting a horribly distorted view of things. The BNC a man offended by trivia. GMs too paranoid to permit general discussion of their errors. A hobby full of scoundrels. Not to mention his constant attacks on the Rulebook. Its a dismal picture he paints for them. Or let me put this on a more personal level, and tell you a little something about Fred Davis. Fred has been publishing Buswacker for over 8 years, an astounding record. He has created a series of variants, including Abstraction, Small World, U.S. Dip, which have proved to be highly popular, and presently keeps a variant archives. He served several times as IDA Ombudsman, and just recently he stepped in to chair the DipCon Society Committee, when Rod suddenly had to pull out. His activities with the Mensa Society have brought many new members into the hobby. Plus he has given many people, including me, very useful advice. And let me tell you, Fred deserves better than this, because the hobby owes him a great deal. The same goes for other repeated victims of Tretick, such as Kendter, Walker and others. These three issues of FLD are nothing new --- its been going on for some time. I am getting sick and tired of seeing my friends slandered every time an FLD comes out - not to mention his personal correspondence.

Now that we're agreed -- I hope -- that this is a serious problem, what should be done about it? My attempts to resolve this via intermediaries went nowhere; similarly for writing him directly (he doesn't even bother to answer my letters). And the hobby itself has shown him a lot of disapproval, he gets very few plugs --- in fact gets many Negative plugs, saying to avoid his games and/or zine. But that hasn't worked either. There is only one thing that he is dependent on the hobby for: game openings where he can play. So if the hobby is to show its disapproval in a meaningful way, it must be in that direction. Thus, this winter I tried to get the hobby's GMs to agree to withhold their openings. Many GMs signed the PST, newcomers and old hands alike. A few pubbers have said they will not sign, tho they will not let him into any of their games either. One pubber (Francois Guerrier) gave a legitimate reason for not signing. But there are enuf who will let him play. I suspect that some of those don't care what he does so long as he does it to someone else. As one GM, writing about himself, put it: "If all this seems to you like I am acting like some Medieval Baron concerned only about his own domain in this hobby ... that's exactly how I view the structure of this hobby." I ask him, and I ask some of you this: How much longer are you willing to put up with this disgraceful conduct? Rod was complaining in the summer of 1978, I did my big expose in the summer of 1979, and here it is, Su80, and we've got the same damn problem. Are you prepared to watch his total disregard for hobby norms and ethics in S81, Su82, S83 to match the three we've had? No? Then what are you going to do about it?

Gentlemen, you are either part of the solution or part of the problem. Bernie can harm this hobby. It doesn't feel very good to open an FLD and know that you or one or your friends is being lied about to an unknown set of people (and Bernie keeps back issues in stock), and know there's not much you can do about it. If you aren't willing to join with the rest of the hobby and do something meaningful, aren't you permitting this to happen? Please think about it, for this is my final pitch on the subject. And players, let your GM know your thoughts on the subject.