

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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GM-Player Relations Issue

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As promised, this is the special issue on GM-player relations. It is twice the size of the usual issue, which has given me a great deal of flexibility. I have not only been able to include a wide variety of different articles, but I could present some really long ones without crowding everything else aside. Thus, the opening item, a debate which ran thru several issues of Impassable, complete with comments by Boyer and myself, plus another article referred to by one of the debaters, runs 6½ pages. I suspect that this issue is the most extensive discussion of GM-player relations ever presented in a Dipzine.

Now that I have tooted my own horn, a correction is in order for the plug given in the last issue for The Mixumaxu Gazette. Believe it or not, I am apparently guilty of damming with faint praise. I said that "...significant delays putting out the zine are pretty much unknown..." Bob Lipton informs me that the zine has never been late, and I believe him. I had included that to be on the safe side, because I had once received a zine as late as 7 whole days after the move deadline. Be advised that the move deadlines are Friday, and I nearly always receive the zine the following Tues, or occasionally Wed. We are talking about NY-Wash DC mail delivery here. TMG is the most reliable zine that I get, punctuality-wise. The recent issue #74 contained a long (5 pages!) piece of serious fiction of mine concerning a Cross Game Alliance club and its intrigues with other Diplomacy organizations, set in the 1980's and early 1990's. I think its the best Diplomacy-oriented thing I've ever written. It will eventually be reprinted here, but that's at least two years in the future.

Our new subscribers are Michel Liesnard (Belgium!), John Michalski, Richard K Kovalcik, Jr, Steven Decker, Cecil Nurse, Allen Beals, Galen Workman, Don Berry, David Marshall, Andy Cook, Keith Fletcher and Scott Jones. Thanx also go out to the pubbers of Der Fliegende Hollander and The Ninth Circle for their plugs.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lakofka-Von Metzke debate on gamesmastering.....	<u>Impassable</u> .....	1
(with additional comments by Boyer and Berch)		
With Pen and Sword through Europe, or .....	<u>Platypus Pie</u> .....	7
We couldn't play, but boy could we write! (Ward)		
Joint Order Dispute in 1974 DG (11 contributors).....	<u>Dolchstoss</u> .....	9
Short takes from the Experts (Boardman, Lipton .....	(various zines).....	14
Von Metzke and Birsan)		
Postal Diplomacy and the right of Ownership (von Metzke)..<	<u>Liaisons Dangereuses</u> .....	15
Error correction Dispute in 1970BJ (Boyer and Phillips)...	<u>Impassable</u> .....	16

In addition, there is filler by Schlickbernd, von Metzke, and Beyerlein,

((We start off with the Lakofka-Von Metzke debate on gamesmastering. It can be viewed on two levels: One, the subject actually being discussed: deadline extensions. But it is also useful to read this as a clash of two different styles of gamesmastering both of which are practiced to this day. There were other levels to this debate but they don't concern us here. It began with Chapter 4 of Len's "A Guide to the GM" which appeared in Impassable #10, 9/24/72. Only those aspects of Chapter 4 which deal with deadline extensions have been included altho this material appeared in two different places in the zine. And now, on with the action.....))

I. You cannot be lax with your deadline!!

If a player says the magazine did not arrive, or he did send orders in, you say "TOUGH"! You won't make friends this way, but you must be equally fair (and harsh) to all players equally! NEVER make exceptions for any player! If you allow for insurance methods (sealed orders, receipts, etc.) then it is the player's fault if he misses a move. Do not allow late orders either unless you spell out under what specific conditions late orders will be accepted. I allow orders postmarked 3 full working days (i.e. postmarked Monday--deadline Thursday) before the deadline, regardless of distance (if sent air mail for more than 300 miles away), to be accepted if they arrive up to 10 days before the next deadline! I feel a post office foul up is not exclusively the player's fault. Orders postmarked 2 days prior to the deadline or arriving within 9 days of the next deadline are not accepted. Why 10 days? Many good players use the deadline to their advantage. It is bad practice to extend a deadline so that the notice of extension arrives 4 days before the old deadline or later. Such late notice screws up a player's game! I accept no responsibility for: 1)certified mail or special delivery that I was not home to receive, 2)any phoned in orders to others than myself, 3)any western union orders, or 4)any postage due mail.

II. Deadline Extensions.

The only reasons for these are:

A. Vacation or unavailability of a player if there is one full season's notice!

B. Death or illness in the player's family.

C. Screw up on your part--late mailing, sent to wrong address, etc.

D. Dramatic GM errors in adjudication.

There are no extensions for:

E. Sudden business trips or vacations

F. Failure to receive the magazine--the player should have agreements with other

players to tell him when the zine arrives.

G. Failure to reach the GM by phone

H. Deadline too short--if you are in accord with your own standards and house rules.

I. Self evident GM errors such as incorrect home center tallies, typos, failure to show proper success or failure of a single order, etc.

Finally, you must

never ever accept phoned in moves one minute late!! Player "A" calls Player "B" and says: "Well, it's after the deadline (5-10 minutes), what did you do?" He then calls the GM and tells him; his car broke down, his bunion was thought to be terminal, his dog died, the GM's phone was busy, etc. In short, he could not get to the phone before the deadline, will you accept his moves!? Tell him NO! It is GM Diplomacy! Finally, be sure to post the deadline time or they will call you until midnight! Also, what time zone applies, or they will go by their clocks and gain from 1-3 hours. Ignorance or naivete is no excuse! You must be strict!

((Corad's opening shot appeared as a letter to the editor in #11, 10/13/72))

"Having been a gamesmaster myself, I speak from the same vantage point as does Len, and in spite of this I disagree with his rigidity. My attitude toward late moves, missed orders, screw-ups, overtime phone calls, and the whole binge is this: Postal Diplomacy is a game for people, run by and participated in by people. It is not a computer exercise or a training school for adherence to Robert's Rules of Order.

Reasonable limitations on just how far you will go are one thing; absolute unbending tautness is another. The latter is, in my mind, undesirable. Example: Any time an error of the post office is demonstrated to me to have occurred, I will make adjustments. Any time. If it is impossible to adjust, for reasons of the game having gone too far, I will compensate the injured player in some way agreeable to both of us. But I will not reply by saying 'toughsky---sky.'

Another example: Len is paranoid about cheating. I have never seen an instance of player cheating yet, and I've played in 75 games and run 40. (I have seen Gamesmaster cheating, but that's unrelated.) If some guy calls me up five minutes after the deadline and says, 'Here are my moves, your line was busy,' of course I'll take them. Further, any moves postmarked on or before the deadline which arrive before I type the game in question are accepted...it is my belief that it is the responsibility of the players to keep their moves and strategies to themselves until

the printed results are out. (As an aside, in one of my current games, Len himself ran afoul of this attitude of mine. After the deadline had passed, Len called up his mortal enemy in the game and told him what he had done. Meanwhile, I had discovered a mess in adjudication and had delayed the game accordingly.)

Example: A player should not be obligated or expected 'to have agreements with other players' to advise them of receipt of an issue. So, if player X doesn't get his magazine, I will under no conditions hold him liable. Amateur publishing is at best an erratic and tenuous thing; 90% of all gamesmasters experience occasional printing delays. Sometimes the reasons are unjustifiable, other times they are quite valid. (For instance, I once delayed an issue two weeks because I had only enough money to either eat or mail the 'zine. I preferred to eat.) But, the delays are common, and for players to expect or to presume utter precision is unrealistic. And for the gamesmaster to penalize people because they do not so presume is the height of arrogance and unfairness.

I will agree with Len to an extent, though. There is a point. If a player claims he hasn't gotten the issue several times, then there's a suspicious character. If a person invariably phones ten minutes after every deadline, especially if his game ally lives in the same town, then there are suspicions validly raised. And if some ass undertakes to abuse the reasonable leeways extended by a 'soft-hearted' (which I prefer to read as 'human') gamesmaster, then there is a necessity to clamp down or watch the game sink into the sunset.

But the simple-minded thesis that System X is unbeatable and must therefore be followed is asinine. Len is saying, if we read between his lines, that any GM who shaves his rules to accommodate reasonable problems is miserable and horrid. Bull. Any gamesmaster who won't give a millimeter is intolerable. With that kind of split-second piddling, who the hell can have any fun?"

--Conrad von Metzke

((Issue #12, 11-3-72 had Lakofka's reply))

A REBUTTAL TO VON METZKE'S LETTER  
by Len Lakofka

The issue that we are debating is not rigidity in gamesmastering techniques, it is fairness to ALL 7 players! I believe that the GM MUST be equally harsh/lenient to all the players. Conrad's loose concept, of how a deadline should be upheld, is a detriment to

players in his games. Conrad says that a player can postmark a move ON the deadline and he will accept it, if he hasn't adjudicated the game yet! GOOD LORD what caprice! If he happens to do the adjudication on the day of the deadline, one player might get screwed, if he does it 4 days after, someone else takes the shaft. In short, Conrad is admitting that he is sloppy, not reasonable, sloppy! A deadline is made to be enforced. U.S. Post Office screw-ups are the only thing to be taken into fair consideration. However, you MUST set a rule. Even if the PO goofs, sometime has to be TOO late. When a player enters a game he has a right to equal treatment, no less, but certainly no more. The player has a right to expect the GM to honor his deadline and enforce it, not use it as a circled date on his calendar!

The concept that the punch line of a move/strategy should wait until the zine is printed is also nonsense. When you have worked on a move you use materials that will arrive at the player's home on or just after the deadline. Or you may favor telling part of a tactical move BEFORE the material is printed to calm the opponent down or to get a head start in negotiating the next season. You can do none of this if the player can post a move on the deadline, or call the GM after the deadline, and the GM will accept the move!! Why have a deadline?

Conrad's suggestion that if a player makes a habit of doing this or that, you can 'suspect' him. Yet, in a crucial position, you only need a capricious GM ruling once!

Conrad mentioned a game which he is GMing and in which I'm one of the players. So far he has allowed a player the right to 'more time' and extended the deadline, then promptly told everyone else that this would not be allowed again! He also announced an extension when he found a error, in the situation he refers to, after I had told my opponent my strategy. Conrad says that is foolish on my part, I say it is bad GMing on his!

Conrad claims, in conclusion, that I would not bend to accommodate reasonable problems. That is, of course, false. I have, what I believe is a fair late move acceptance policy. If a situation arises not covered in my house-rules or by prior ruling, I will attempt to be fair. What I will not be is random and unequally generous to one player at the expense of other player's rights in future rulings!

((Von Metzke's rejoinder appeared in #14, 12/15/72, and begins on the next page.....))

MORE ON GAMESMASTERS AND DEADLINES  
(A rebuttal written by Conrad von Metzke)

The issue Len is debating, by his inter-pretation, is fairness. The issue I am debating is rigidity in Gamesmastering. 'Let him who standeth tense and taut as doth the drawn bow, snap swift to shards with the welcome wisp (of wind).' John Suckling. Let my honourable opponent take note that he suffers the effects of the same false reasoning that plagues so many gamesmasters. It is patently absurd to suggest that by adjudicating and processing game moves in the manner discussed in my previous letter, anyone is getting 'screwed.'

It is only rational to adopt as one's presuppositive notion the idea that, on any given deadline, all players will submit moves on time. Almost all gamesmasters so presume, else they should be predisposed to solicit replacement or standby orders before the dawning of the deadline. (Arranging standby moves for an errant player after the deadline changes the predisposition not one whit; it merely acts to assuage the effects of the inaccuracy thereof.)

Therefore, no player who submits his orders is going to get screwed merely because any given other player also submits them. The best possible Diplomacy game, qualitatively speaking, is one in which no moves are ever missed, no orders are ever miswritten, and all players are precisely equal in all aspects of skill. This is perforce impossible, and so what we try to do is come as close as is possible. My adjudication system is merely a way of decreasing missed moves without actually cheating anyone or illogically delaying the game.

There is no sloppiness involved. Terms such as 'sloppy,' 'shafted,' 'screwed,' and the like are irrelevant in this context. No player who would otherwise have missed a move can get 'screwed' by having his orders accepted after all; no player whose orders are already in can be 'screwed' by having another player's orders also accepted, since this was the assumption in the first place. The point where rigidity must take precedence is in determining the origin date of orders, and if Lakofka would confine his sterile perfectionism to this level, he would go unquestioned.

Or is 'sloppy,' in Len's dictionary, a synonym for 'humanistic'? If so, then I freely admit my sloppiness, all the while admiring Mr. Lakofka for his absolute, unfluttering neatness.

On the matter of Len's punchy idiocies about revealing one's moves and strategy before formal adjudication has arrived, such matters are the province of each player. If he wants to spill his beans, he is welcome to, but at his own risk. The rulebook specifies that negotiation time limits reoccur seasonally in fifteen-minute increments. In postal play allowances obviously must be made for travel time, and the average allowance is three weeks. This new, longer time span incorporates the existence of several delays or lags. One of them is the period required for the printed adjudications to arrive in the players' hands. This time may be equated to the five minutes or so normally used in personal games for the actual reading of orders; generally, nothing can be negotiated in that particular time period. If negotiation does occur, it is at the risk of a backfire, either because the postal game has hit a snag or because the personal game has included a soon-discovered misreading or illegality.

The crux of this whole thing is that some people, Len among them, have one set of definitions concerning what makes a good game and a good gamesmaster, and other people, the present author included, have another set. By my definition Len would not bend to accomodate reasonable problems. The fact that Len does not view his own attitudes this way does not make the charge false, as he rather pompously wails. Actually, about all it does mean is that people with his values like his games, and people with my values like my games, and only sporadically the twain shall meet, thank God. (Anyone intrigued with the 'why' of this division in Gamesmasterial ranks ought to read Bob Ward's superb analysis in Platypus Pie #13, from Brenton Ver Ploeg).

((We'll get to that article at the end, but first this series has some parting shots. What follows is from #16, 2/4/73; the "This Editor" is Impassable's John Boyer))

From Lenard Lakofka--"Von Metzke is right about one thing. People who prefer 'my' games and gamesmastering certainly won't play in his, and thank God 'my' side is the majority. If we all did things his way we'd wreck the hobby in fifteen minutes.

You can't possibly "presuppose that all players will submit moves on time." That's inventing a fake reality, because it just doesn't work that way. There's no point blubbering about what would be nice, you HAVE

to stick to what actually IS or you fall into the bottomless depths of total chaos. IF YOU SET ANY DEADLINE AT ALL, YOU HAVE TO ENFORCE IT, because if you don't you can never justify enforcing any deadline EVER!

Furthermore, players have to know where they stand. The trouble is that Conrad doesn't care two hoots whether he wins a game or not, or even whether he survives it; he's said so many times. But most players DO care, and because they care how the game is going at all stages they have to know just what each stage consists of. If they don't they can't plan any sort of long-term strategy for fear it will be screwed up by the Gamesmaster pulling one of his tricks. They will only be able to plan tactically, one move at a time, and that isn't how you play Diplomacy.

Equating postal games to in-person games is pointless, they aren't the same thing. I once got a letter that claimed that all postal Diplomacy games are variants because they don't use the rulebook rule on time limits, fifteen minutes ((Technically, that's true)). And there's a lot more that's different too. By mail, you don't have to worry about keeping a straight face while you're lying; you can't go listen at the keyholes; you can't refuse to give your ally a ride home if he backstabs you. In-person games are a form of social gathering (except in tournaments or club meetings), but if you try to apply that thought to mail games you're never going to get anywhere.

The giveaway in Conrad's article is that instead of refuting my arguments, he starts calling names. 'Punch idiocies,' 'pompously wail,' 'sterile perfectionism.' Why, I ask you, doesn't Conrad come up with some REAL ISSUES? Because he hasn't got any!

Conrad says, in conclusion, that there's a 'division in gamesmaster ranks.' Yes, there is! Both types of GM set up rules and guidelines designed to be fair, reasonable and useful. 'My side' means what they say; Conrad's side does whatever it feels like doing. No HOW in HELL can you get anything done that way?!

A player has a right to know the system used; he has a right to expect that the system will be applied the same way every time, so he can count on it in planning the way to play the game. Conrad denies him this. As I said before, that's just plain sloppy, and sloppy games are lousy games." From Conrad von Metzke---"Len was kind enough--or shall I say brazen enough?--to send his rebuttal to min in the last IMPASSABLE. If he felt that his truculent reply would cause his to go unanswered he is sorely in error.

Len's first point, before we begin--again--on the subject of strictness in Gamesmastering, is that of name calling. Len's rather thin skin has been piqued. Let me say that I shall call him no more names--instead I'll merely label him in truth--a pigheaded autocrat.

Len's rebuttal--with apparent blind wisdom and omniscient candor--points to what the Diplomacy-playing public wants. He says the majority favor his 'stric'--read totalitarian--interpretation of upholding the deadline. Yet his OWN POLL printed in Vox Populi #1 shows that half of the respondents believe that moves received, before the 'zine was typed, should be acceptable! Also, 40% said that special, but undefined, circumstances allow phoned-in moves to be accepted after the gamesmaster's time deadline. Now these results alone show that the players do want some degree of mercy from the gamesmaster in the acceptance of moves.

Or to quote the 'Universal Prayer'  
Teach me to feel another's woe  
To hide the fault I see;  
That mercy I to others show,  
That mercy show to me.

P.S. Len, your last moves to MONGO were 37 seconds late and your phone call arrived at 91 microseconds after my noon deadline--so...

This Editor speaks--The Vox Populi that Mr. von Metzke referred to was published by his opponent in this debate (I refuse to call it a feud for those bloodthirsty readers out in dippydom), Mr. Lakofka, did indeed report as Mr. von Metzke quoted. However, I wish to point out another finding which he did not point out: In the same issue, there was a poll on gamezines for which players voted. #1 on the list was Hoosier Archives which was predictable. I was happy to find my own Impassable came in #3. However, #2 was none other than Costaguana, Mr. von Metzke's gamezine. The final rank was determined by many factors including reproduction quality, as well as features, and not to forget the quality of gamesmastering. Let us take a look at the latter findings. Oh, before I forget, Mr. Lakofka's Liaisons Dangereuses also placed very highly in 5th spot.

Hoosier Archives got the highest rating on gamesmastering--an average of 8.9. (I must qualify this for those zines that got more than 6 votes. Several with less got a 9.0 avg.--such as Big Brother and an English zine, Ethil the Frog) I got the next highest with an 8.6 average with Costaguana getting 8.5 and Liaisons Dangereuses getting 7.9. Mr. Lakofka's lower avg. does not indicate that his philosophy isn't

appreciated--only that he probably made some mistakes. I know that I make enough.

However, the point I am making is that these two arch-rivals in this debate have been trying to cut each other's philosophy to shreds when in reality both philosophies exist in this hobby and both are thriving. If you're #2 or #5, you can't be all bad! Conrad von Metzke refers to a schism in the hobby. Much has been said about the old and new schools of Diplomacy players, and this schism has been defined and discussed in many different zines by many different writers. One claim that has been made is that the old school of fun Diplomacy has been losing out to the newer, more mercenary school of Diplomacy/Wargamers.

Actually, I believe that the old school will not die out. That school is merely a philosophy or perhaps a normal minority in the hobby. They were more venturesome willing to gamble their money on fun-error filled gamezines. Their motto was you only lived once--so why not have fun?! The new school of former wargamers have joined the hobby when they found that there was organization and more professionalism in the gamezines. These players care less about having fun and more about winning games that are well run.

Nay, the end is not in sight for the old school--they merely have been turned into an elite by the increasing masses of the new bloods. Each of the debaters represent their respective schools or philosophies, but as Mr. Lakofka's Vox Populi proved, there is plenty of room for both of them. If you want more information from Mr. Lakofka on his Vox Populi's Rogues Gallery (zine poll), write to him at: 4970 N. Marine Dr., Apt. 525, Chicago, IL 60640. The Gallery lists 38 gamezines!

Where do I stand as a gamesmaster? My views are that to make the game enjoyable, we should stick close to the schedule/pace. To me, that means publishing every three weeks. I think that if the zine comes out regularly, you will end up with less missed moves. As for this issue, I did not miss one set of moves. My congrats to all the players for not missing this time around! Keep it up, fellas. So, I am merciful enough'to recognize that there are problems with the U.S. Mail and so I have devised a system by which I will take unduly delayed mail. I do not promise to use late orders if I haven't print the games up because I don't want to encourage late moves. I just try to make it easier not to forget about the deadlines and to have rules that will cover mail problems. Peace.

((Well, as you might have guessed, I have a few comments to make on this. I would like to start by quoting the positively worst piece of advice for novices that I have ever seen in print, appearing in "The Cephids #3", summer 1975, the novice zine distributed by Robert Correll. It first appeared in Platypus Pie #9, 7/18/72. "...always write a letter to the person you have stabbed, and try to make certain that it arrives after the deadline date (that is, of course, obvious) and before the magazine arrives. This last part is less obvious, but equally as persuasive, if in a more subtle sense. There is always a shock when you see in the magazine that you have been stabbed." Unless you have phoned the GM to be certain that the game has been "locked in", you are taking a horrendous risk that the game may be delayed, with a new deadline set. These delays are not rare. Watson's Ruritania has had frequent delays due to his losing orders. Another zine recently announced "One player in the game has requested that the deadline be extended for one month. He has asked that his name and reason for the delay not be made public." I am not saying that this is right or wrong, only that it happens. 1976 IF was recently delayed when the Publisher didn't get the moves from a guest GM. The game may be delayed due to a "hidden error" that you couldn't have known about, such as the GM mistranscribing a player's moves. Not only will the delay ruin your beautiful stab if you've written the victim, but you'll probably be irrationally furious with the GM, and if no reason for the delay is announced, paranoid to boot.

In my limited observation, the most common cause for requesting and receiving a game delay is failure to receive the zine. This is one area where the GM could strive to locate a middle ground between the opposing positions. If the house rules stated that the player must notify the GM after failing to receive the zine by x days beyond the move deadline, then the number of such delays could be reduced. Further, the players would know just where they stand, so that GM refusal to extend the deadline would not appear arbitrary. Of course, this will only be applicable is the zine is pretty regular.

Rounding thins out is the aforementioned article from Platypus Pie #13 (Oct, 1972), beginning on the next page.

Brenton's reprint of the Great Organe Debate has caused me to re-read some of my collection of early Diplomacy 'zines; at least that part that is not safely reposing in the barn in Lebanon, Indiana. Rereading the grand old issues of 1964-1966 quickly illustrates two things: the press was much better then than now, and the play of the game by even the best of us would swiftly doom us to oblivion in any modern game!

It appears to me that this is easily explained by the differing types of players attracted to Diplomacy in 1964, versus the type that is attracted now. Almost all of the early games were peopled more or less exclusively by devotees of either science fiction or some other aspect of amateur press. They took this far more seriously than just reading an occasional story in ANALOGUE, or writing a letter to the editor.

Dan Brannan/Steve Cartier (one and the same for those of you not around in those days) more or less launched Wild N Woolly at the 1963 Los Angeles Science Fiction Convention. His first set of games was entirely populated by attendees at that meeting, though few of them are still active. Among those that are: Conrad von Metzke, Dr. Jerry Parnelle, and myself. Also there, and for quite some time active in Diplomacy were Dennis Smith and Phil Castora.

It was from Conrad and me that Bob Cline, longtime editor of the 'zine with no name, and Hal Naus, of ADAG, were introduced. Both of these gentlemen were, and presumably are, avid science fiction nuts.

I think, but am not certain, that it was Castora who was the link between the west coast publishing of Hannan, and the east coast plans of Boardman. John Boardman, as all know, is still active in the amateur press, though not (I believe) in the Amateur Press Association, from whence cometh his famous motto: "This publication is not edited under the supervision of Bangs Leslie Tapscott." But that is another story.

In any case it takes a certain frame of mind, best described as lunacy, to get very deeply into the science fiction scene. The lunacy is doubtless self-evolving, which explains why the minds heavily oriented towards imagination spent much of their press time in superb parody, satire, or involved chronology of rulers. Rod Walker is about the only one who still indulges these days.

Many, maybe even most, wrote in the names of their purported heads of state, and even the simplest agreement was likely to be consummated with sealing wax and ceremony. Formal treaties, in terms of the countries and not of the players, were common. And of course we could hardly be bothered with mundane affairs like stalemate positions, forced wins, and other varieties of unimportant impedimenta to true enjoyment of the game.

Then, somewhere around 1967, a gradual change took place; the new faces started coming from the ranks of gamers instead of sci-fi nuts. Someone had placed an ad in the GENERAL (the Avalon Hill magazine), and we were deluged with hordes of D-Day and Blitzkrieg enthusiasts.

They came of course from the two-man war game set. Since the guy opposite was a guaranteed enemy rather than a potential ally, there was hardly any need for persuasion. You win a two-man game on the skill of the tactics and maybe the luck of the dice. Press is meaningless, and not even to be considered. These new barbarians, in game after game, slaughtered the cultural elite of the old order.

It was probably inevitable; after all, the tactics of Diplomacy are simplicity itself compared to the Avalon Hill games. Or maybe it was that the tactics we were using were so sub-marginal that any effort at all sufficed to tear us apart.

I expect that if you had to rank the backgrounds of the top boards by most rating systems today, they would all have come from Avalon Hill's ambit, rather than the Science Fiction camp. If you ranked the acknowledged leaders in the press field (with Brenton's exception, who is perhaps a bit of both worlds) they are mostly from the science fiction school, even if they joined after the switch took place.

From a purely personal standpoint, the games today are perhaps more fun to play in. But I doubt that many of the current games will be worth reading and re-reading by the non-participants as many of the older issues are. Alas, the hobby is the less for it.

Bob Ward

((What follows are a few comments from the editor, Brenton Ver Ploeg))

---

Bob's comment is interesting, and an insider's viewpoint on the old days in Diplomacy is always interesting to read. But, in some cases at least, he overstates his case. To prove my case, I need turn no further than the current season of 1971EH, where Bob is doing very well in a board composed solely of players who have won at least one game of postal Diplomacy. But press? He has to be right. Many of my earlier games stayed interesting and alive for me because of the press, but I have to admit that 99% of it was known to by MY press, and its not something that anyone else would have read. Diplomacy players simply like to read their own trivia, I'm afraid. Myself included.

---

Here's a bit of reassurance from Bruce Schlickbernd, taken from his Poictesme #17, 7/5/75:

"A player in one of the games herein expressed concern over the fact that I "discuss" these games with some of the players. You need not worry, the only "discussions" I have are rather one way: they tell me what they are doing or planning on, and I say nothing. Please, give me credit for some sense; I help no one in my function as gamesmaster.

"However, I should not that obtaining an alliance against a player by claiming that he is being tipped off in some manner by the GM is illegal. You may not make me part of the negotiations since I only adjudicate it, not play in it. I don't like my name being smeared, and believe me, anyone caught doing this will be thrown out on his or her's ear. I do not play favorites, and no, I am not accusing anyone of this, I just want everyone to be clear on this."

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Sometimes, no matter how spectacularly a GM screws up, there's ~~somebody~~ somebody who finds that the results suit him just fine. The following is from Conrad von Metzke's Stab #96, 3/3/73:

"Errors: I screwed up this jinx game last time as follows. First, the German move F Ber-Kie fails. Second, Italy owns Marseilles and France does not; thus Italy builds two and France removes two. Third ((I'm not making any of this up)), the Russian move A Vie-Boh fails, thus Russia owns Vienna, Austria does not, Russia has no removal and Austria builds just the one.

"It seems like these orphan ware\_house 'zines each have a jinx game. This one is mine. Edi Birsan has 1970-DI. And which one will yours be, Mary Ann Fleming?

"Oh well, players were previously notified by virtue of having sent The Profound Clam #1 and 2."((Took two, fancy that. Sad to relate, but Conrad cracked up once again from this game, and took to blurting out "Game 1971-DN sucks" whenever he typed up the results in Stab. But back to our story....))

"One player, whose putrid, decaying identity shall remain a secret, objects in toto to all the adjustments for my errors, believing things should stand as printed. Oh GOD, that's funny."



When GM-player disputes arise in British zines, they often like to discuss them in some detail, with comments solicited from respected Diplomacy players, even tho they are not players in that particular game. These comments are often of the form of "How would I rule if the facts were a little different". The dispute arose over the use of "joint orders", a procedure really better suited to face-to-face play. The issues involved include 1) What constitutes deception of the GM?? 2) Are joint orders proper in Postal Diplomacy, and if so, should restrictions be placed on their use. The dispute arose in 1974 DG. The original moves were in a special edition of Dolchstoss XXIII which went out only to players, so I don't have a copy. The Dispute began in Dolchstoss XXIV 10/14/74. Material in double parenthesis is by the editor, Richard Sharp.

'...THE FATAL ENTRANCE OF DUNCAN...'

(Macbeth)

Two sets of orders still to come, but before we can get down to the game there's some explaining to be done, isn't there? This is the last time I run a so-called expert game - this was a nice clean zine till Morris got at it. Well, it's a long story, and I'll let those most involved have their say first.

DUNCAN MORRIS I wish to make my actions last season quite clear, and to repudiate the allegation of forgery. I do not, and indeed did not, deny that I sent in a second set of joint orders, and that they were not all that Dennis had expected. What happened was this: Dennis sent me a signed set of joint orders, leaving the destinations of four of his units blank. I retained this set, and sent another set, signed by me, to Dennis. This second set he sent in after signing it and adding his own orders for the four units. The original set was then completed by me, and signed. The date on the latter was (as I remember) 6 September, and on the former 30 August. Thus in due course Richard received two sets of joint orders, both validly signed by the two parties, and was, by his own house rules, bound to accept the later set. I therefore freely admit deceiving Dennis (all part of the game of postal Diplomacy, in my view), but most vigorously deny that I cheated or deceived the GM in any way. I trust that this will clear up the situation.

DENNIS LOVE ... I assume you still intend to accept the forged (altered, manufactured, illegal - call them what you like) joint orders you received in my name for Spring 1902. Under protest (for I still consider that units allowed to stand unordered are nevertheless under orders and to fill in a blank illegally is to change or alter that order), I am continuing to send in orders for Russia, based on the position stated in Dolchstoss XXIII, rather than withdraw from the game and cause still more disruption. I do consider, however, that when you allow a player to deceive the gamesmaster in this way and be seen by all to do so you undermine your own position. You can hardly complain if others attempt to do so, in ways you might find less admirable than the clever Duncan's.

GLYN PALMER Dennis Love has written claiming that his last orders ... were forged and that a correction is to be published. I hope all this is a pack of lies....

CHRIS HARVEY ... What is going on ??

\*

GM RULING AND COMMENTS For those not up to date with this story, the facts are exactly as Duncan outlines them. I should add one or two facts that may or may not be thought relevant. Duncan filled in Dennis's orders in his own, undisguised hand. The sheet was headed simply RUSSIA-TURKEY JOINT ORDERS SPRING 1902, and all of it was in Dennis's writing except Duncan's controversial additions.

I told Dennis on the phone that I was ruling in favour of Duncan's view, and having since thought the matter over very carefully I am certain that this is right. I regard this as quite an important test case of the joint-order principle, and there seem to me to be several issues at stake.

Let's start with what, to me, is one of the most fundamental rules for any GM: no gamesmaster should ever be required to make any assumption, however obvious, about the purpose of a move, or about the relations between the players. In this case I knew that Duncan had written those orders, and that Dennis would not approve; this was quite clear before all this forgery stuff was first mentioned. But what people think is none of my business; I am required to decide whether orders are legal, and then adjudicate them.

There is no question that orders are legal if another player writes them for you, so long as you sign them: this is universally accepted. Indeed, in the present case Duncan's orders were all in Dennis's writing !

It is commonly ruled (not universally) that a player may not alter another player's section of joint orders, and this is my ruling. But Duncan did not alter anything. He merely filled in blanks that were left for that purpose.

The essential point may be summed up like this. Had Dennis decided to let Duncan order his northern units, and to replace the first set of joint orders with another set that included this arrangement, everything would have happened exactly as it did. I know this didn't happen, but that requires an assumption on my part.

Signing joint orders is a risk; signing joint orders with Duncan is suicide. The plain fact is that Dennis was careless, not only in signing the orders incomplete but more so in listing his northern units at all. The only safe procedure is to leave out the units you don't want your opponent to know about - or, better still, put a note to the effect that these units will be unilaterally ordered. This is standard practice.

So, Dennis, I can understand your kicking yourself. What I cannot understand is your trying to kick me ! Your letter implies that I am so besotted with admiration for Duncan's clever swindle that I am ignoring the rules so as to allow it. Frankly, I find this rather offensive. I can only conclude that you've let irritation affect your judgement. There is no suggestion whatever of deception of the GM here, actual or intended. To suggest that there is is entirely irresponsible. It is accusing Duncan of the only form of cheating actually recognized in this game, and one which Duncan knows would result in his expulsion from the game if he did try it. It is also accusing me of condoning cheating. I suggest you face up to the fact that you have been caught with your pants down, and stop making baseless allegations against other people. Not for the first time, Duncan has brought off a coup, and I agree with his observation that this dirty trick is completely in the spirit of the game, and no reason for rancour.

Still not done, alas. There remains the question of the letter Dennis sent out (in good faith) telling the other players that the move would be replayed. This was the result of a telephone conversation between myself, stranded in Devon, and Pete Birks, acting as neutral arbitrator: being obviously unable to check the written orders, I told Pete that if Duncan really had gone off his rocker at last and tried forging signatures then the deadline would be postponed. Pete told Dennis, and Dennis told the others, who reacted in their different ways: Glyn and Chris were suspicious, Andy and Les took no notice, Duncan I should think laughed like a drain. Pete Cousins has sent no orders as yet (still time) so may possibly have been caught out, in which case Dennis will have unwittingly pulled off a swindle as memorable as Duncan's ! Always send orders unless you have positive instructions direct from the GM telling you not to.

The final aspect: Duncan's letter above. In my view, Duncan would have been within his rights to refuse to comment, leaving the others (especially Chris) to wonder whether Dennis had been conning them all along ! By writing that letter, then, Duncan may have taken some of the sting out of his stratagem in the interests of clearing the matter up. Anyway, I trust the game can now continue without any more suspicion than is usual in Diplomacy !

Although I should not consider reversing my verdict now, I would welcome comments on the situation and on my ruling. In particular, I would ask 5 senior authorities on the game for their verdicts: if Don Turnbull, Hartley Patterson, Richard Walkerdine, Nick Bullock and John Piggott would like to let me know which set of orders they would have accepted, I should be most grateful. I realize all these gentlemen (except Piggott, of course) are already heavily burdened, but I would take a majority vote from them as being pretty conclusive, and if it goes against me I shall admit I was wrong. But the adjudication stands, come what may.

And now (or rather tomorrow morning) some moves: I hope other people have found this problem as interesting as I have.

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((We'll skip the moves, thank you, they have nothing to do with the dispute, which continued even as the game proceeded. The conclusion was in #XXV, 11/3/74

'...BUT LOVE IS BLIND...'  
(The Merchant of Venice)

Well, as last time, we'll have the argument first and the game afterwards. Many thanks to all who wrote, especially the 5 GMs I invited to comment. But first, we'll hear from Dennis again.

DENNIS LOVE (i) First, my sincere apologies to all those (including our revered GM) who have been put out and inconvenienced by the recent alarms and excursions. (ii) I will, of course, take the GM's ruling as final and binding - though you can hardly blame me for trying to swing the decision my way. I do think it a pity that my role has been shifted from victim and mug (granted) to the untrustworthy, ungracious villain-of-the-piece. (iii) It wasn't mentioned that the second set of orders that Duncan Morris sent in (in my handwriting) formed only a part of a letter that I'd sent to him suggesting the joint orders in the first place. The actual details were introduced by the phrase 'if you should write up the suggestions overleaf ...' but all this and other incriminating phrases had been blanked out with 'Hypake' by Duncan. All you who discuss possible moves in your letters (and who doesn't) and finish with your signature in a dated letter might remember this and reflect carefully ... (iv) Pete Birks was only contacted since Richard was on holiday. He gave a ruling in the light of his knowledge of the situation - hence the letters I wrote to all the other players in BDC 59R soon afterwards. At that time I really believed that my signature had been forged; it was the only explanation of a set of orders I hadn't written being accepted by the GM. (v) On Richard's return, it was only my explanations and attempts to solve the mystery that led to the piecing together of the real facts. Had I said nothing or denied everything there was an excellent chance that the original ruling (that the moves would be corrected in the next edition) might have stood. (vi) One last apology to those who have written to me (and who still do) and haven't had a reply in time to do anything about it; owing to the GM decision after Spring '02 and an unfortunate late arrival of the magazine with the autumn moves I've had just three days each time before the deadline expired. (vii) - ((in press)) (viii) I have to admit it, it was a very crafty trick for Duncan to play and I really set myself up for it. Now can we please get on with the game ...

Reply: Some points to take up there before the GM verdicts. First, Dennis, no one is calling you the 'villain' or suggesting you acted other than in good faith. Next, it's true that the orders were part of a letter: but they had a sheet to themselves, were headed up, and the signature is to the orders, not the letter ('signed for Russia: D.Love'). So there is no need for a 'general warning'. I did not mention the letter before as it is an obvious irrelevancy - GMs are always getting orders with other stuff crossed out on the back, and in my view we are not required to read the back of the orders; in fact the conditional phrase Dennis mentions was not painted out, the Hypake being used on some totally irrelevant stuff about the Black Sea fleet. If I had wanted to take the letter into consideration I could easily have read all of it, but I considered it was nothing to do with me, the orders being complete in themselves. As for your point (v) above, as I explained patiently at the time there was no chance that the moves would have been replayed. This would have meant treating the orders as forged and blacklisting Duncan, which I would certainly not have done without hearing his side - and one word from him would have made all clear! If you had 'denied everything', then things would move onto a different level altogether, and you would have been blacklisted!

Now let's see what the experts think.

DON TURNBULL As I see it, Duncan Morris acted entirely legally, if not (in the view of his ally at any rate) morally. Dennis Love left himself wide open to trickery of precisely the 'stuff' of postal Diplomacy.... To send a signed set of orders with a few units left unordered is sheer suicide. I agree entirely with you that the GM must not be put in the position where he has to make any assumption. I also agree entirely with your ruling in these circumstances.... Those words Dennis Love used: 'forged' - they were not; forgery implies copying someone else's writing and this was not done; 'altered' is again not true since alteration does not include addition; 'manufactured' I suppose they were, but there ain't nothing illegal about that; 'illegal' they were certainly not. Had Duncan actually altered anything you would have had to judge the result illegal; but how did you know when Duncan's writing was appended? He could have written in the orders for those units, sent the thing back to Dennis for approval, received it back by return as a safeguard and then mailed it to you. I know it's unlikely that's what happened, but you are not allowed to make assumptions, no matter how abstruse or how obvious.

HARTLEY PATTERSON You are really asking two questions here: how would I rule and were you right? (1) War Bulletin house rules make no mention of joint orders or of signatures. They do say the 'latest postmark' will be used.... I would have printed the second set. Dennis would then have written in complaining. Duncan had undoubtedly written orders for Dennis's units when Dennis had intended a different set. Duncan has therefore 'deceived the GM' and would be thrown out. (2) In Dolchstoss house rules ... the point at issue is: are Joint Orders properly signed a legal entity no matter what they contain? By accepting the second set you are saying they are - and I think I would agree. I would further rule that unless house rules said to the contrary Duncan could have altered Dennis's entire move and still been safe! The conclusion is that Joint Orders are a foolish anomaly ... and should be dispensed with. They are in no circumstances a protection against double-dealing, as a player can always ((supersede them)). I don't understand why players bother.

RICHARD WALKERDINE I hate joint orders, whether as player or GM. If I send some as a player I quake with fear and trepidation for a week or two (substitute month for week if referring to Bellicus or WB games).... Your actions were absolutely correct.... In fact I'd go even further and say that if I received a set of joint orders ((in which one player had altered his opponent's orders)) I'd still accept them. ((Joint orders no guarantee)) ... of course a careful player will make a spare set of his orders and send it in timed to arrive on the deadline day, so he can be sure that if anything goes wrong with the joint set the orders the GM actually uses - those received last - will be what he wants. But not everyone thinks of that ....

MICK BULLOCK Quite agree with your ruling re Duncan Morris/Dennis Love joint orders; serves him right for using the damned things.

So our 'expert panel' is unanimous, apart from Hartley's reservations about WB house rules, not applicable here. Before I comment, some remarks from other members:

DAVE ROSS I think your ruling was absolutely right, as there seems to have been no question of Duncan trying to deceive you. I only wish I could get away with something like that.

JACQUES PARRY ... your ruling was correct; but I would go further and say that if you get orders signed by the appropriate person you should accept them even though they were not written by that person, whether or not he originally wrote different orders. If you let the other chap get hold of your orders on the way to the GM you deserve everything that's coming to you.

PETE COUSINS ... Why do people want joint orders? I can see no advantage or assurance in them. The person you suspect can easily change his orders knowing yours, etc. I never submit joint orders and I'm always suspicious of people who ask for them.... The main point of this case is (( example of possibly ambiguous orders depending on whether unordered units may be supported - analogous point to John's above)).

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EDITORIAL SUMMARY Well, there we have it. Verdict is unanimous thumbs up for the ruling, near-unanimous thumbs down for joint orders. I think Don's point is a very good one: there is no way I could be sure that those orders had come about in the way they did, no matter what I might suspect. John and Pete both raise a similar point about unordered units, but the 1971 Rules (IX,6) clearly state that an unordered unit may be supported, and in my view zines that rule otherwise (e.g. Hannibal) are running variants. As for John's hypothetical case, I would rule that any order necessarily supersedes a non-order, and I would have considered the units ordered as in the first set. In passing, I must observe that I hate Hartley's 'latest postmark' rule - does he keep all his envelopes, and do they all have legible postmarks? I do not accept the extremist theory that altered orders should be accepted, and I think our new house rules should ban this.

Finally, a defence of joint orders as they clearly need a spokesman. I use them in 4 cases, all valid uses I think. (1) When I absolutely trust someone and wish him to see that I trust him. (2) When my co-signatory would gain greatly from my joint orders but would not expect me to issue such orders. (3) To stab inexperienced players! (4) Most important, as a useful if risky device when time is short (e.g. international games) and there is no time for me to write to a player, receive his reply and send in orders. So I would oppose any move to eliminate joint orders altogether.

I think all this has been interesting and useful, and apparently many readers agree

with me for once. The lesson for all players is clear: your signature is a very valuable thing, and you don't chuck it around lightly. I think the off-board stratagems help to make Diplomacy the marvellous game it is, and I will always be sympathetic to the tricker rather than the tricked, so long as no deception is involved. Playing in games with the likes of Duncan, Nicky Palmer, etc, is experiencing Diplomacy at its best and most nerve-wracking, and I wouldn't miss it for anything. You have to take risks or relapse into a paranoid defensiveness that must lose; you have to fight fire with fire.

And now, in case you'd forgotten, this is a game, and here are the orders.

**(((For complex reasons pertaining to how I put this together and the fact that Dolchstoss used oversized paper at that time, I had to omit the comments of one writer:**

**JOHN PIGGOT** There can be no doubt that you made the right decision. You already know what I think about joint orders from various issues of Ethil ((((The Frog, Piggot's zine)))), and this present episode merely reinforces that they're the single most cretinous thing to hit Diplomacy apart from your behaviour with the Calhaver awards ((oh God...)). All I can say is, thank God Duncan never played in Ethil. This episode brings to mind a further problem, however, for which I have no solution to offer. Suppose Duncan had written nothing in the blank spaces - you would then have used the second set of orders for all units which received orders in that set, but what about the unordered ones? Would you have ruled that a set of orders for the units had been received, and used the first set in that instance, or would you have simply left them unordered in the adjudication??

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A particularly defective form of GM-player relationship is when there is no player. In Everything #23( 10-75) Doug Beyerlein discusses how this comes about, how to prevent it, and what view raters take toward this. Whether his suggestion is practical.....

Elsewhere in this issue is the corrected player listing for 1974GG. It was corrected because Mark Zimmermann informed me that he was not the original player in Spring 1901 for Austria. I then wrote to David Holmes, the gm, and he clarified the situation. Basically, although the situation is very complicated, the problem is/was that there was no player assigned to Austria prior to the Spring 1901 deadline. Or actually the player assigned did not end up playing and thus the game started with effectively one country in civil disorder. Unfortunately, this seems to be happening more frequently now that player interest in new game openings is not meeting the supply. Another game example is 1975GA. There no one started playing France until Spring 1902. A rather poor way to start a game and in fact a very unfair way. With one country in civil disorder at the start an unnatural vacuum immediately occurs on the board upsetting play. I believe that in most cases this occurs for the following reason. A gamesmaster has trouble filling a game. Because of this, interest in a game opening advertised some months back is construed by the gm to mean that the player is still interested and has signed up for the game. In fact, the player in question might have only been inquiring about the availability of game openings, or perhaps because of the large time lapse has lost interest in the particular game opening. In any case, the gm finally gets seven players and announces that the game has started. When the player does not respond with Spring 1901 orders the country is allowed to sit and die. Or a player is found to try to do something with an opening in fall 1901 to stave off doom. Some gms try assigning stand-bys to certain players or countries in Spring 1901 to guarantee that someone will send in orders, but this is hardly the solution. The solution is that every gm when starting a new game get an updated indication from all seven players that they are still interested in playing. This should be done prior to the announcement of the game's start. If one or more of the players do not respond within reasonable time then the gm should hold up the game until the seventh interested person is found. That would eliminate 99 percent of these problems and allow for a much smoother and balanced game for everyone involved. I do not want to try policing new games to see that they are handled correctly at the start. I will, however, assign irregular status to games that I find grossly neglecting the idea that Diplomacy is a seven player game. For that reason 1974GG and 1975GA were given irregular status. Comments?

SHORT TAKES FROM THE EXPERTS

On this page, a collection of rulings, opinions, and exotica from postal Diplomacy's most experienced GMs, all somewhat related to the topic of this issue. I have had to edit considerably in presenting this, but in no case has the original intentions of the writers been altered.

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One of the rare sections of the rulebook where the GM is explicitly given discretion is discussed in this excerpt from Graustark #256 (1/15/72). The game is 1970BB, the GM John Boardman, who hints that he might interpret the rule differently for a beginner. "Italy's orders were mixed up with a bit too much holiday grog: There is no unit in Naf and the Italian "A Spa" is actually F Spa(n.c.). Because of the influx of newcomers to postal play, the adjudications merit some explanation. One of the ambiguities in the Rulebook (Page 3, Paragraph 5 ((he means 4)) ) is: "A badly written order, which nevertheless can have only one meaning, must be followed." Since Italy does have a unit in Spain, if the quoted rule is interpreted liberally, as do some gamesmasters, Spa would succeed to Gascony.....((as it was, "A Spa-Gas" was disallowed)). The rulebook is designed for over-the-board play, and minor fluffs, as a result of haste, are accepted in accordance with the "badly written order" rule. While speed is a factor in Postal play, too, it is the result of time to negotiate, not the minutes it take to write orders. Consequently, it is my policy to virtually ignore the "badly written order" rule in postal games, especially when an experienced player commits the error.((While a matter like this is clearly within the discretion of the GM, I must confess the logic of this position is lost on me. Boardman's theory that the rule exists just to cover errors of haste strikes me as just speculation. If its a "minor fluff" in FTF play, then its a minor fluff in postal play, because its the same error. A similar error occured in Spring 1901 in the Hoosier Archives Demo game, "A Tri-Alb" and it was disallowed by Buchanan)).

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This is a letter and response from Graustark #266 (6/3/72):

Bill Drakert: "Can one power "loan" a unit to another if he approves and writes the gamesmaster to simplify the tactical coordination; i.e. Power B is given the right (until rescinded) to make the moves for one of Power A's pieces?"

John Boardman: "Yes, but this must be done in instructions to one's ally and not to the Gamesmaster. Frequently, in a Russo-Turkish allinace, Turkey will be given effective control of the southern Russian fleet. This means that Turkey tells Russia what he wants done with that fleet, and Russia passes the order on to the Gamesmaster - if he wishes. I suspect that something of this sort is now going on in 1970BN."

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Should a GM reveal who voted how when a draw vote fails? The issue was raised briefly in The Mixumaxu Gazette #61 (2/6/77) in the letters-to-the-editor column.

John Brennick: "Why shouldn't I be able to find out this way whether Turkey or someone else doesn't want the draw? The game of Diplomacy is supposed to be a game of "international intrigue" and "cunning negotiation". What? Has the game of ruthless Diplomacy gone soft? Calling for a vote is in fact a part of negotiations. In real life, if one country called the other nations together and asked them to vote for peace, and one nation stayed back and refused to vote or voted no, that would give the others a notion of his intentions. In a face-to-face game with no "God" or supreme power present, the vote would also take place."

Robert Lipton: "I have no objection to your finding out how other players view a draw between the players; but the gamesmaster's job is simply to adjudicate, not to aid the players in their negotiations....What some people do at face-to-face games has no bearing on how I run my games. I would point out, however, that time is an important factor in face-to-face games. After five or six hours of continous negotiation, most people are too tired to worry about pulling a 1st minute stab. Again, in the over-the-board games I've played, in my group there were no last minute stabs".((Some GMs take an intermediate position, giving the score (e.g. 2for, one opposed, one not voting) but not who did what. As for last minute stabs, in FTF play I have seen them. At Origins III, they occured in both rounds in my games, altho this may have been an artifact of the scoring system used, and the fact that the players were mostly strangers))

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 WITH CONRAD'S MADNESS!!!!

by Conrad von Metzke

The following observations are prompted by a number of events in the recent past: Games have been voted by their players out of their original magazines and into others; at least one well-known postal gamesmaster has gone one record as claiming to 'own' the games he runs; at least one prominent gamesmaster has issued a conflict to his house-rules specifically formulating a contract for services and actions between himself and his players; and probably as a result of all or some of these things, a wide variety of moves to transfer games from one place to another has sprung up. It is to the point that I think we need a little reassessment.

I quote from the House Rules of John Piggott, dated January 1973: "Registration in a game implies the formation of a contract between the player and the GM. The GM agrees to run the game in a reasonably accurate and efficient manner, and to ensure the transfer of the game to a new GM if he is unable to continue. The player agrees to observe the Rules of Diplomacy and these House Rules, and to play in the game till its end or until his elimination. The player agrees to supply the GM with any changes of address, temporary or permanent, and to notify the GM in writing if he must resign. Failure of one party to comply with these terms will automatically result in the forfeiture of all rights to the other party".

This, to my mind, is a valuable document, despite its weaknesses (e.g. "reasonably accurate and efficient" is unacceptably ambiguous). It spells out the facts that a player has rights and a GM has rights; it tries to grapple with a definition of the rights; and it includes a forfeiture clause under which license is given to act, at least by implication.

Up to this point the matter of rights has largely centered on the players. This was inevitable, considering that any given publisher starts out by having absolute control over anyone who elects to play in his games (he does, after all, have some of everyone's money, plus the only complete record of the game up to any given point). Thus it was natural that, amid the flowers, a weed or two arose. Gamesmasters whose only interest was in getting the money and splitting for Timbuktu. Several did, and many were the fed-up players by the time people began to think about resolving the matter.

The first really well-thought-out statement came from Larry Peery, who concluded after extensive investigation and analysis that the players was all the rights, and a given game unquestionably 'belonged' to them. To a great extent, the community agreed with these findings, and soon thereafter Larry's evidence was used as a partial rationale for transferring a game from one place to another. It is ironic to recall that the Gamesmaster from whom the game was taken was Larry Peery.

This landmark, after being allowed to impinge itself on everyone's consciousness, gave rise to a recent rapid succession of similar attempts. First Buddy Tretick had every one of his games put up for transfer votes, and three of the four were moved. (The fourth has since been orphaned.) Then, moves were made against games run by Joe Antosiak, Steve Cooper, Chris Schleicher, and Conrad von Metzke--the latter two successful. And at this writing the speculations about transferring other games are rife and myriad.

But all of this loses sight of one fact of major importance: A gamesmaster retains certain rights too. The original Peery declaration that the players own the game lock, stock and barrel was an admirable first step in sorting out such matters, but it is patently untrue. (Peery's work can perhaps be compared to Charles Reinsel's contribution to rating systems: A noteworthy landmark, but wholly obsolete today.)

For it is undeniable that, as Lewis Pulipher has said, "arguing is just a goddamned hobby," and both players and GM's give extensively of themselves in pursuing the hobby. True, GM's charge money, but I know of only one who makes a profit. Thus, some GM's go kaput with the loot, but most do not, and some who do make arrangements. And GM's are the ones who have to receive the mail, make the adjudications, take the time and effort for the typing, duplicate and collate the issues, and get everything sent out. And then answer the complaints, sort out the missing persons, replace the defaulters, and all the while keep the injections of life-blood (new players, variety, etc.) coursing through the proceedings. I would imagine that a Gamesmaster spends as much time and energy on a single game as do all seven players combined. That outlay alone gives him a say in the matter of who owns what.

I would venture to suggest that we have finally reached that point in our hobby where it is possible to determine, at least in rough-draft form, the 'rights' held by each of the parties in a postal Diplomacy game. The players, as Mr. Piggott has noted, have the right to expect reasonable accuracy and efficiency; the Gamesmaster has the right to expect a reasonable definition of reasonable. By way of a form of codification to 'accurate', the players have the right to expect 'full disclosure' in procedural matters appurtenant to the game (full explication of moves and unusual adjudications thereof; full information of the status and addresses of players; and the like); the Gamesmaster has the right to expect reasonable allowance for human error. Both parties have the right to expect faithfulness and promptness, but neither ought to wax vituperous nor headstrong as a consequence of the occasional mild lapse.

What we are searching for, of course, is a definition of the word 'reasonable,' and a rational application of it. To toss out a few definitions from my 1938 Webster's Collegiate, 'reasonable' means "just, fair-minded, rational, equitable, moderate." Take your pick, they all imply a mutuality, an allowance for the exceptional, and in particular a cautious ("moderate") appraisal of any situation which implies a digression to the unreasonable.

Lots of big words. In the last analysis they can be, and very much need to be, boiled down to an appreciation on all sides of this Diplomacy address that the game is played by people. People, in case someone hadn't noticed, are human, and it is time we stopped expecting anyone's deification. Not, you understand, that I'm in favour of error, sloppiness and/or erratic behaviour; but let's face it, perfection tends to lactic variety. Consider that fact for a moment the next time one of your players misses a move, or one of your Gamesmasters is slightly behind schedule; if everything were perfect, would you really be having any fun?

The above article first appeared (in this reduced form) in Les Liaisons Dangereuses #44 (Len La-kofka, 644 West Briar Pl. Chicago, Illinois 60657) on May 18, 1973, in his 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue.

The houserules of Impassable at the time of this rather complex dispute apparently provided for error correction even after one season if it could be done with "disrupting" the game. What follows is from #29, 11/12/73. The Italian player eventually won in 1923.

Game 1970BJ, Deadline is delayed

We are delaying this game upon request from the Italian player. We were also asked to make a final ruling on the Italian Fleet Smyrna of Fall 1908. We were told to be serious and to not hurry through with it. Okay, we had typed up a two page response, but we will mail the response to the player and just print a synopsis of the important points:

1) In Autumn '08 I erred in disbanding Italy's F Sny when he did not submit orders for the retreat, but submitted orders for the winter builds of that year. He had General Orders on hand. At first, I stood on the grounds that his G.O.'s did not give directions for retreats. He maintained that G.O.'s allow players to make a retreat even though they didn't specify how. I then considered this an "automatic retreat" solution and this was in contradiction to a houserule of mine in which I do not allow automatic retreats. Still, I have had no precedence with Houserules since I never had to use them before--the players who do bother to send in G.O.'s are the ones who don't miss!

2) The error was made three months ago in issue #25. After Issue #27 was published, I was shown by Austria to have allowed an Italian F Eas. I notified all of this printing error and this is how Italy finally realized what I did in Autumn '08 in issue #25. We had letters and phone calls about this and I thought we reached an agreement in which he accepted my error as a standing order due to my houserule #3.

3) After issue #28 was published, Italy brought up another argument concerning, again, houserule #3. It revolved around the clause in which the GM would correct errors if it did not unduly disrupt the game despite the fact that it was reported and brought to his attention three months later.

4) My decision, after much thought, was this: I made an error which I am not yet sure is an error, but will grant the status as an error in A '08, issue #25. This error was brought to my attention after issue #27 over two months later. The player was, in accordance to my houserules, responsible for bringing this error to my attention prior to

the next deadline (which was issue #26 and two months ago). He did not. The game's error thus became part of the game and a new balance of power was established as a result.

The definition of "disrupt" is: to impede or halt a normal continuity. The new argument from Italy is that if I do not replace the fleet, it would be disrupting the game. My answer is that due to his mistake of not informing me sooner, that his error has become part of the game as much as any poor move would have resulted in the same manner. In consequence, the game has evolved a new balance of power and a new aspect for the battle of the Eastern Med area of the board. To add a fleet in Eas now would constitute playing favoritism with Italy and disrupting the current game! I, therefore, sincerely believe that a disruption would be caused by the addition of this fleet, and that the alternative of going back to Aut. '08 is also a disruption -- both are undue disruptions of the current game. The "new" game, post error, has become the legal game due to Italy's own mistake. The pre-error game is now irretrievable and also not desirable ((except by Italy!)). In the same line, Italy's mistake not to bring my error up sooner has made it impossible to correct it without affecting the balance of power, but we cannot play favorites and just correct the errors of one player -- even tho an error of our own was involved. At least, the G.O.'s were used to build F Rom. All positions, therefore, remain as reported in Issue #28 of Impassable.

((The conclusion to this matter occurred in Impassable #30.))

Press:

Rome (Eas-Aeg): I am playing this game under protest of what I believe is palpable failure of the gamesmaster to follow his own houserules. John admits my contention that houserule #3 obligates him to correct errors even if they are not brought immediately to his attention provided it can be done without disrupting the game, and he further admits that the situation that would exist without the error can be restored simply by placing my F Eas on the board. His contention in the face of the prima facie case for correction of his error is that the error, left uncorrected, became a part of the game which cannot be disrupted. But that is a sophistry which does not hold up if examined. No error can be corrected without disrupting the situation it creates! The phrase in the houserule is therefore reduced to "the error will be corrected only if it can be done without



correcting the error" which is gibberish, and which I cannot accept as a legitimate interpretation. I am further unhappy with his summary, and chronology, but I won't go into that.

Impassable replies to Italy: The houserule's interpretation is the GM's and only he can determine the correct determination if the semantics happen not to be clear. With #3, it is not absolutely clear when an error, not reported, becomes non-correctable due to "disrupting the game." It was not an easy decision for me, as I had to balance all the factors, of which I tried to bring most up in last issue, and determine whether the error (mine) compounded by a player's "error" was correctable or not. According to #3, the players have a responsibility to bring to the GM's attention within the specified time period of any GM errors made. If not reported early, it is up to the GM to decide whether the error can be corrected. The point which had to be taken carefully was whether the player's lack of informing the GM in due time caused a new game to be formed on the basis of the GM's error. In 70BJ, a few seasons passed by with this error. As a result, the balance of power has shifted, and the alliance structure has also changed. It is true that GM's have a responsibility to correct errors, but so does the player! I can't say it any better than that the player's error "stood-off" the GM's error. Similarly, if Mr. Nixon has erred as President (you choose the error), then it was the citizen's responsibility to see that such error was corrected. However, if the citizens wait too long, whatever Mr. Nixon has done will sooner or later be unchangeable. Take, for example, the war in Vietnam. Perhaps Mr.

McGovern was correct that we should have pulled out right away. In so, then Mr. Nixon was in "error" to keep us in there so long. But it is now too late to get us out of there as he has done so. The deaths of hundreds or thousands of Americans can not be "corrected". This analogy is a little ((!!)) off track, but as with this game, I felt that the error not correctable due to the player forgetting to remind me of the error for too long of a period. Yes, putting the unit back in Eas would put the game back to what it was, but that is missing the whole point that the game's players, alliances, and the balance of power have changed. The houserule was to allow the GM to decide when going back to the season of error was non-disrupting to a greater or lesser degree. If the GM could not determine this, then everytime an error was pointed out, even ten years later, the GM would be

forced to start all over. The responsibility given to the players to inform the GM of his errors was also an act of expediency to keep the game going forward. This, I sincerely believe, is the real ground of houserule #3.

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((Once upon a time, Diplomacy Review, the house organ of the IDA published such items as the Ombudsman's recommendations. Here are two, by John Leeder, on the subject of GM-player relations, taken from Vol V, #1, Jan/Feb 1976.))

(2) Players who live near the gamesmaster of games in which they are playing have a small but real advantage over other players in that communications between the GM and them take less time. It is therefore recommended that GMs not increase these players' advantage by revealing game results to them by telephone, or any means other than the mails. The Ombudsman and IDA Judicial committee urge all GMs to adopt this policy and to specify it in their house rules. (Such a policy would not, of course, apply to purely local games.)

(3) Furthermore, it is recommended that game results not be revealed by long-distance telephone, unless it is evident that their games results have been delayed in the mails. Postal Diplomacy is a postal game, and many players cannot afford the use of long distance telephone. Players should not be discriminated against on the basis of their financial status, so it is recommended that GMs adopt the policy and specify it in their houserules.

((If it is unfair for one player to get the results earlier, then it should be unfair for a publisher to play in his own zine, using a guest GM. Last fall, I enquired of the Guest GM of 1976 ID if I could get the results by phone from him early, as I was leaving the country for a few weeks, and was afraid that the zine would not come before I left. I was told that this would be unfair to the other players. Yet, also in the game was the publisher (Russel Fox), who of course had to get the results early to put them in his zine. I might add that the above recommendations by Leeder have never been universally accepted, as many pubbers see no big harm to the practice. I've even gotten early results third hand, and they haven't always been right, either! However, you should always beware of telling others what you've done just after the deadline, as they may try to coax a deadline extension out of the GM.....))

This one comes from Conrad Von Metke's Stab #108, Nov 1973. At least, I think it was #108. The number is in German. "I should explain that the reason I long ago agreed to accept perpetual orders, whereas most GMS don't, is that once I didn't. Being apprised of this, dear glorious Eric Just typed his orders complete with all contingencies ((ah, that's not quite how Conrad spelled it)) onto a ditto master, ran off 100 copies, individually game dated each page, and mailed me the pile. That was enough for me. Andy Phillips later pulled a similar stunt when I tried to revive the prohibition, and I've never bother since."

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Another area of GM discretion in his relations with the players is in deciding what press to run. Here are some thought of Edi Birsan, taken from The Arena #32 (7/23/73): "Working on your press is probably the hardest thing to do. I started The Arena with very harsh press rules to force good press. It didn't work and I had no press at all. Then I shifted to open press and it was so bad that it made me sick to type it. As a recourse to sanity I decided to run my own press in answer to most of the press published. Thus the datelines IDE and Nasrib. The hope being to come down on everyone's press and hence force them to put more time and concern for their writings. About 20% of the press never gets to the because I just refuse to send it out in my zine. Examples...((sorry, but I just refuse....)). You must decide what to do with your press early. I have screened out most one liners that are senseless, though I would probably print a two paragraph put down or vicious attack that I thought had some kind of style that took the great step from the sewer to the gutter. Sometimes you may get flak from the players, but if you take a hard nose stand your basic power position will over ride their objections and eventually the quality of the press in your zine will increase".

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One of the worst strains that can occur in GM-player relationships is when there is a struggle between two persons, both of whom are seeking to GM the same game. One such game was 1971 BG, featuring a clash between the Publisher Peery and the Guest GM, Beshera. Another was 1967 A, and its conclusion is described by Conrad Von Metzke in his Stab #88 (8/20/72): "Some time ago suggestions or irregularity in this game caused the one remaining original player and the Editor to agree on forming a three-man commission to determine propriety and legality. This commission has not yet ruled, but certain developements have rendered its deliberations moot.

"John Koning, original gamesmaster, stated at the Chicago convention that he planned to resume the game at the point at which I picked it up, way back when, ((1917, to be specific. Conrad is writing in 1926)) using the three original players (Pournelle, Clark Smythe). John says they have all agreed. (At least Clark and Smythe have; Jerry is on record as endorsing such a move.)

"This brings up the considerable question of which version of this game will be official and legal. I am frankly incensed that John would pull such a stunt, and I will fight recognition of his abortion through all available channels. My principle argument will be neither Clark nor Smythe is any more a player than I am, having both resigned in writing and having endorsed - Clark in writing, Smythe by international implication confirmed by telephone - replacement appointments.

"But the development of this in one sense obviates the current play. If Koning's restart is recognized, all vestige of legality will vanish from my version. If my version is recognized, that will imply recognition of the legality of my tenure as GM and of the replacement of Clark and Smythe. Either way, the future of the present browse is assured. The stalemate is guaranteed and perpetual.

"I therefore declare Gamesmaster prerogative and herewith declare Game 1967 A, the oldest active game and longest running in history ((Supporters of the legitimacy of 1962A dispute this point)) in point of actual and game time, a stalemate. For purposes of official records it will cease at the end of 1926, and three stalemated players and their positions are.....((He then lists them))... Note that only two centers have changed hands - both Italian-owned behind the English lines - since 1918, and none since 1922. Finally, the last unit on the board to actually move anywhere did so in 1923." ((Nowadays most GMS declare a draw after three years of no changes in # of supply centers. The game's conclusion was reported as such in Everything#2 ))•