

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Potpourri Issue

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This issue marks the fourth anniversary of DD, but I am saving the big blowout for the August issue, #50. That will have the Dippy Trivia, History, and General Tomfoolery Quiz. I have uncovered all manner of out-of-the-way facts, peculiar quotations barely believable events and the like. And to keep things lively, for those questions that no one gets right (i.e. most of them), I'll award a point to the most entertaining answer. I also seek original articles for this issue, and I pay \$2/page sub credit. Get them to me by August 20th at the latest.

If you're getting this as a sample, don't bother to look for the postal games. There aren't any. DD is devoted to articles, letters, etc, about everything connected to the game and hobby. That includes strategy, history, humor, GMing, feuds, tournaments, ethics and cheating, press, ratings, stabbing, personalities, face-to-face play, publishing and much more. Most are, unlike this one, arranged into theme issues. The articles, mostly reprints, are drawn from my archives of over 7400 zines, second largest in North America. There is also The Zine Column, which comments on whats appearing in the hobby's zines. All back issues are in stock, but, except for the Lexicon, you must be a subber to buy them.

I have good news indeed to report. The two GMs that I can give my highest personal recommendation to (on the basis of my games with them, and watching others) both, somewhat unexpectedly, have openings. Lee Kendter, Sr 4347 Benner St Phila PA 19135 has decided to keep Why Me? going with just games and letters. Game Fee is \$5, subs 40¢ each. Bob Sergeant 3242 Lupine Drive Indianapolis IN 46224 is now accepting applications for games which will start in September. This will allow him to sort out the players, honor I-don't-wanna-play-with-X requests, and perhaps accomodate country preference lists, which are encouraged. GF is \$3 (absurdly underpriced) and subs are 10/\$5. Their reputations are so high that these openings will fill very rapidly.

I'm not much of a fan of cops 'n' robbers shows on TV. Their ending are dreadfully predictable (bad guy gets it in the last 5 minutes), their use of stereotypes is repetitive, and it seems like all too often, the writers don't know how to move the plot along without just resorting to violence. The main characters are overly "colorful", quietly competant or humorously inept. They are given to excessive dramatics and constantly spitting out tough little speeches. They aren't usually permitted to have real failings and vulnerabilities, just foibles and occassional slipups. And all too often they are so "heroic" that there's no one to identify with but the crooks. But there is one super exception to this, "Hill Street Blues". We started watching it in May and were hooked. The characters seem very real and carefully drawn. Instead of angry retorts people often keep their mouth shut -- just like people usually do. The episodes are interlocked, so there are several stories going at once, and you can't be sure any given one will be wrapped up that week or not. There is an air of stress and claustrophobia and lets-celebrate-life's-little-victories and the like that seems real. I like it, and I suggest you give it a try!

Taking Offense

There seems to be a rash of this going around. In Dragon and the Lamb #54 Steve McLendon took great offense at some comments that Jack Masters made in Black Frog about 1980AN. Bruce Linsey (who seems to be putting out an issue almost every week) rebutted at some length comments made by an unnamed person about his style of play, writing in Voice of Doom. And there was a third set of such tart remarks somewhere a few months ago, can't quite put my hands on this. Readers should take all such comments about play in games, whether they are the original comments or the rebuttal, with more than a grain of salt. I'm not taking sides (for once...) in any of these disputes. But keep in mind that (counting the GM) there are at least 8 views of any game, and you'd be amazed at how different these can be. There is no true one. The players themselves are hardly objective. And an outsider simply doesn't have all the facts, the inside story on who is saying what to whom. If the game is still going on, both the original comments and the rebuttal may just be part of the game's maneuvering, or perhaps setting up excuses for failure. Don't underestimate that at all! Walt Buchanan once told me that he ran a big article on the joys of a two-way game long alliance primarily to forstall his getting a reputation as a stabber. Masters once faked a hobby withdrawl just to gain an edge in a Claw and Fang game, Keith Sherwood claims to have touched off the "tro" controversy just to cover a deliberate disorder, Bernie Oaklyn has been attacked numerous times in his games because of his crooked publishing antics, the list goes on and on. Also, people are VERY sensitive about their reputations, particularly if they play a lot of games. This means that when you comment on another's play in any manner, make sure that you are very specific about what you mean. And keep in mind that that rebuttal might well be an overreaction. One time my commentary for a game was censored by the GM because he thought that the player might take offense about a reference to his supposed reputation. And don't forget, even if a player does have a reputation as a stabber, if he's a good player, he's not going to play every game with the same philosophy and style. Differing games call for differing approaches, and besides, its dangerous to become predictable regardless of what approach you take. And last of all, remember, its just a game.

New Zines

PolitBarito Mike Mitchell (959 Alamo Road) and John Pack (240 Kimberly Ln Los Alamos NM  
Paranoiacs' Monthly Jack Fleming 5000 22nd NE #211 Seattle WA 98105 87544)  
The Schamer Steven Duke Rt 3 Fairfield Pike, Shelbyville TN 37160  
Diplomacy by Moonlight Eric Ozog 1526 N. Lawler Ave Chicago Ill 60651  
The Great War in Modern Memory Guy R. and Elizabeth Hall 1103-B Lorrain Austin TX 78703

Naturally, with any new zine these are listings, not recommendations. I might add that Ozog's GMing has come into question in a letter in Brutus Bulletin.

Fakes Return

After a short lull, there has been an upsurge in hoax zines again. Dave Carter 118 Horsham Ave Willowdale Ontario M2N 1Z9 does a regular column for his Sleepless Knights on fakes, reveiwing each one and speculating on authorship. So sure enuf, #2 of SK was faked, the the perpetrator missed a good chance to slip in a fake fake into that column. A hoax #90 of Brutus Bulletin appeared. The subzines here look realistic so I suspect that the subzine editors got together and did this one. Voice of Doom #37 was also faked, with press considerably better than what usually appears. These latter two represent a tremendous amount of work --- both were over 20 pages! I'm curious to know who has so much energy. I suppose that for someone who likes to publish something occassionally, but doesn't want the responsibility of a regular zine, putting out hoaxes is a fine outlet, and provides amusement for all, even if you don't get paid for expenses. Who knows, there even may be a hoax-collective operating, with members co-operating to share the work and expenses. Its all in fun, and whoever thought up the idea of having Brux write a letter complaining that Caruso improved his Whitedonia without Brux's permission practically knocked me off my chair.....

((Back in DD #41, I reprinted the first part of Birsan's famous compilation of "FAMOUS STABS IN POSTAL DIPLOMACY", which covered evil doings in 71EH and 71BC. We now continue with a few more from the article, first appearing in the 1975 IDA Handbook))

GAME: 71972CR 'ZINE: Hoosier Archives GM: Walt Buchanan

Positions at the end of the S07 move:

France: (Edi Birsan) A Bre, A Par, F Mid (3)

Germany: Gene Prosnitz) F Eng, A Kie, A Bur, A Ruh, A Pic (5)

Italy: (Douglas Beyerlein) A Spa, Mar, Pie, Mun, Tyo, Tri; F Lyo, Wes, Tyh, Tun, Gre(11)

Russia (Brenton Ver Floeg) F Nrg, Nth, Lon, Den, Bot, Bla; A Yor, Pru, Sil, Boh, Gal  
A Bud, Sev, StP (14)

Past History France and Germany were in their 7th year of consecutive war, while Italy and Russia were crowing off a 7-year alliance. In the spring, Russia had conveyed A Ank back to Russia, apparently signalling to the Italians that the alliance would continue to a sweep. Italy moved further west with his units, picking up support into Mun from Russia. This was the second winners-only invitational game in HA and had already seen Hal Naus (A), Len Lakofka (T) and John McCallum (E) all wiped out by decisive stabs. ((At this point, you might want to predict what you think would be an effective stab, keeping in mind both short and long range gains to be gained by the move))

The stab:

France: F Mid-Bre, A Bre-Pic, A Par S A Bre-Pic/ann/

Germany: F Eng-Bre, A Pic-Par, A Bur S A Pic-Par, A Kie-Mun, A Ruh S A Kie-Mun.

Italy: A Spa-Gas, A Mar S A Spa-Gas, A Mun-Kie (ret to Sil), A Tyo-Mun, A Pie-Tyo,  
A Tri-Vie, F Tun-NAf, F Lyo-Spa(sc), F Tyh-Wes, F Wes-Mid.

Russia: F Nwg-NAO, F Den-Kie, F Nth-Hel, F Lon-Nth, A Yor-Lon, A StP-Nwy, F Bot-Bal,  
A Sil-Ber, A Pru S A Sil-Ber, A Boh-Vie, A Bud-Ser, A Gal-Bud, A Sev-Con,  
F Bla C A Sev-Con. Gains Ser, Con, Ber, Kie for 18 centers and wins!

By winning with such a stab, Brenton became the "Most Outstanding Player" in the 1973 Calhamer awards as well as winning the game and the trophy for the HA win.

Strong Points: The basis of the stab lies in ver Floeg's lulling Beyerlein asleep during the game and his constant eye to the set-up. Note the move out of Ank in the spring, and note how the Italians were pulled way out of position by commitments in the west. The followup of the units into Austria indicates that even if Doug had been able to standoff the first push, by guarding both Vie and Ser ((i.e. A Tyo-Vie, A Tri-Ser)), the Balkans would have fallen the next season anyway. Also note that Germany was pulled into an attack on Italy and thus was talked out of Kie by a stab of the stabber. Note the same technique here as in the previous ((in DD #41)) stab: arrange to have someone stab a third party and then nail him in the process of having the victim attacking another. That's the mark of a good stab --- besides taking many centers, it knocks someone out of the game, or wins, in this case.

Weak Points: It was a gamble, in that Russia was aware of the constant stream of letters and fone calls from F and G predicting such a stab of Italy as part of a virtual necessity of Russian foreign policy. If the Russians were unable to talk the Germans into joining for one turn and directing the attack on Mun, then there would be the possibility that Italian safe moves in the south combined with German wait-and-see moves could have given the game to a sudden-death playoff in 1908 with R tottering at 17 centers. Outside of that, the stab was well planned and executed.

Points of Note: One important factor is the premeditation of the stab. Is it planned, and if so for how long did it develop? Stabs thike the one above and the forthcoming report on 73BI come across as planned from the start with an almost timeable precision. Others, like 71BC and probably the majority of experienced stabs, come where there is a much shorter time period of setting up involved, and the chances of setting up

success momentarily flitter before the eyes of the knife wielders. Several players have come up with what approaches a moral question of "How could he be so diabolical as to do that to good ole \_\_\_\_\_?" because things seemed so premeditated. To them I can only say that the techniques of the great stab are known fairly well and are employed repeatedly in the well-played Winner's Only games because in those games there is an added incentive to use the stab --- the incentive of glory, fame, ego, or whatever you want to call it. I prefer to call it "playing under the lights". These winner games are special, and thus they bring out in players the extreme of the arts they know. Neither Bytwerk, ver Floeg, nor later Rocamora are particularly known for stabbing, yet when under the lights, none of them hesitated to get the cutting action in motion. None of their reputations has been heavily damaged by it, as was the case with the victor of the First Hoosier Archives Game. Premeditation is a very difficult thing, and when done, and done with a flair, players should be prepared for any backlash that may come from minor playing segments of the Dippy community. Hopefully, as analysis of the stabs becomes more widely known, players will understand the extent to which one goes to gain it, the careful consideration that goes into making the go decision and the incentives that encourage it. With this in mind we now have one of the best set-up stabs ever conducted in a HA game.

((But before that, some additional background on the previous stab. After the W06 adjustments, G had written I what Beyerlein would later call "an excellent plan for Italy to stab Russia". Movement to Ser, Tri, Vie, Tyo, Smy, and Gre would take Vie, Bud, and Smy by fall; Russia would actually go down. But, in a letter to the GM, Beyerlein explained that he truly wanted a two way draw to succeed, to show that a player does not always have to stab to win, and he had been allied with Russia all game. Indeed, ver Floeg had become a good friend, and deserved the draw. Finally, there was the risk that G would switch sides and ally with R against I. So he turned down the plan (I don't know if this turn-down was transmitted to G, tho). Thus it is unsurprising that Germany turned on Italy in the final season. As for the final season, Italy received numerous letters from F and G warning of the stab. But, he wrote to the GM, even if G and I were well-prepared for the stab, that would just delay the win till 1908, due to Italian weakness in the Balkans and Russian strength in the north. So he decided to trust Russia, and hope for the best.))

GAME: 1973BI

'ZINE: Hoosier Archives

GM: Walt Buchanan

Positions at end of W06

Austria (Arnold Vagts): A Bud, Ser; F Alb (3)  
 France (Mike Rocamora): F Edi, Eng, Lyo, Tun, Wes, Bre; A Bel, Bur, Mar, Pie (10)  
 Germany (Randy Bytwerk): A Mun, Ber, Boh, Sil, War, Lvn, Mos; F Nwy, Den (9)  
 Italy (Eric Verheiden): F Rom; A Ven, Vie (3)  
 Turkey (Alan Calahmer): A Con, Ank; F Smy, Nap, Gre, Bul(ec) (6)

Past History: For six game-years the F-G alliance has been holding strong, first eliminating England and then turning east on Russia and Italy. The eastern powers had, after great amounts of internal strife, got together to form a stalemate line against what they saw as a hold alliance in the west.

In the 1906 moves Alan Calahmer stabbed the eastern allies and took three centers from them, going from 3 to 6 and destroying the stalemate line. The inspiration of the Turkish stab could only have been from the west, for T was giving up an almost-assured 6-way draw if he continued, for a chance, a very long one at that, at a win or a smaller draw. Verheiden and Vagts, the principle targets, were caught flat in the middle of a knifing Turkey and an advancing F-G alliance that seemed as strong as ever.

The sTab:

Austria: F Alb-Gre, A Ser S F Alb-Gre, A Bud-Vie  
 France: F Edi-Nwg, F Bre-Eng, A Bel-Hol, A Bur-Ruh, A Mar-Bur, F Eng-Nth, A Pie-Ven  
 F Lyo-Tus, F Wes-Tyh, F Tun S F Wes-Tyh  
 Germany: A Mun-Tyo, A Boh S A Mun-Tyo, A Ber-Mun, A Sil-Gal, A War-Ukr, A Lvn S A Mos

A Mos, F Den, F Nwy all hold.

Italy: A Vie H, A Ven-Apu, F Rom-Nap

Russia: A StP-Mos, A Sev S A StP-Mos, F Rum H

Turkey: F Bul(ec)-Bla, A Con-Bul, A Ank-Con, F Gre-Ion, F Nap S F Gre-Ion, F Smy-Aeg

Strong Points: The Germans have been caught as they moved east by the French coming in on all sides. Hol is lost, Kie is gone, Nwy is hopeless and Mun strictly a matter of time. With the advances in the south, the stalemate line in Italy is lost which means that even if the Germans are able to regroup in Russia the French can always force the 18th center in the south. The stab was made strategically possible by the style of play used by Turkey, which brought him to stab his allies in hope of securing a greater draw and the slim chance of pulling a possible victory, if the Germans stood the French off long enough for the Turks to clear the east out before the French presence was heavily felt. However, the Turks were convinced to move before the French, thus giving the French the green light, or the go-ahead signal, to nail the Germans in the next turn. (( He's really biased against the Turks, eh? Perhaps T expected F to move at the same time he did in 1906. Or maybe he was afraid that F and G went to war too early, that IRA would take advantage of that not by moving immediately west, but by first eliminating a 3-center Turkey. If he did not expect to be in a 6-way draw, then he had nothing to lose)) With the movement of the French fleets the Turks had already lost the gamble of getting to Italy in force before France.


This was a premeditated stab, planned for some time before it came off, with diplomatic overtures to the east, namely to Turkey, being made long in advance to prepare for this knifing. Bytwerk, tending to have a reputation for keeping with one long-term ally, was ripe for such a stab as are all people who go for the Holy alliance structure in a high pressure game. What F did was to realize this, and build on it, knowing that the time would come when the road to victory would rest on Randy's back and he would take it.

Weak Points: If the board had united against France, they probably could have stopped him, tho A and R would probably go down in the process ((not much incentive to join the alliance!)). Initially I thought that this is the way the game would develop as I was writing the analysis for the game at the time. The weak points were that Turkey could cause trouble for France if he had been able to ally with the Austrians and the Italians to initially halt the French in the south, and then to support the Germans in the north. As a two player exercise, it might be a valuable experience to replay this with a friend, one side taking France and the other taking the rest of the board ((hardly a simulation of reality, tho!))

Also note that the Germans made no attempt at making safe moves in the north such as a standoff in the Nth with his fleets in Den and Nwy. This could have saved Nwy and blunted the French attack long enough to give the Germans time to redeploy some of the critical central armies into the German centers before they were forced by removals to eliminate the armies. The idea of safe moves, moves which guard against a stab, is something that players do not seem to employ as readily as they should. When an alliance reaches the point of having extra units, the potential for a stab increases and therefore the alliance partners should begin a series of agreed standoffs in neutral zones to assure that their trust in each other will be supported by a lack of opportunity for a stab.

Outcome: The east refused to get together and the Germans made some poor moves thus hurting any chance for stopping the French, and F sailed in for a well-planned victory. Since then Mike Rocamora made a clean sweep of the 1974 pressure games by winning the three-round DipCon VII tournament, employing both the stab technique of the set-up and the longterm alliance as the situation called for. ((That's enough for this issue. This superb article will conclude a few issues hence)).

((From Platypus Pie #16, 11-27-72)) PRESS RELEASE OF THE DAY -- FROM AN OLD sTab game: "Moscow: Well, we thought we had this deal with Turkey, and he stabbed us. Then we thought we had this deal with Austria, and he stabbed us. We were allied with Germany, then he stabbed us, and now England holds the capital. All in all it hasn't been too good a year" --- Bob Ward.

  
((Since you should be getting this article -- indeed this issue -- just before DIPCON, I think it appropriate that something be included on such events of the past. This one is rather long, but it gives the "feel" of a time when the hobby was quite different from what it is today. The result is that DIPCON XI<sup>4</sup>, I suspect, will not greatly resemble DIPCON IV. From Hoosier Archives #34, Sept 4, 1971. Triple parens are by Carol Buchanan, who typed HA)).

A HOOSIER AT DIPCON IV  
by Walter Buchanan

Western 603 winged its way into San Diego at 3:25 P.M. on August 23, 1971. An ex-sailor had returned home. However, this time I was coming to San Diego for a much more exciting reason than going to sea. I had come to attend DIPCON IV which was to convene on August 26th and I had arrived early to socialize and to rifle any Diplomacy collection I could lay my hands on!

On stepping into the passenger terminal, I was met by a sea of strange faces. Larry Peery was to meet me there, but all I had to go on was a snapshot in which he was sitting on a car about 200 feet from the camera lens! Anyway, as I looked around in a bewildered fashion a little guy and a big guy approached me. Mutt and Jeff, I thought. However, when the little guy said, "We expected you to be in uniform," I correctly guessed him to be Larry. The big guy turned out to be "one of the bigger lights in Dippy weighing in at 225 pounds," none other than Rod Walker.

After innumerable letters during the last several months, I was finally meeting the guys on the other end. And a pleasure it was too. We went back to Larry's apartment and talked. Then we went to a Chinese restaurant and talked. Rod ate. Then we went back to Larry's apartment and talked some more. After the equivalent of a seven hour long distance conference phone call, I figured I had recouped the expense of my plane ticket already! I had only flown from Colorado since we were visiting my wife's folks there. She couldn't be persuaded to go with me, however. Alas, as a confirmed Diplomacy widow, she wanted to stay with Mother instead of experiencing the exciting rigors of FTF Diplomacy. Imagine!

During my stay in San Diego, I stayed at Larry's. He was a most hospitable host, could even cook, and insisted I take the only bed in the place while he slept on the living room floor. This was on the nights he came home. Never did find out the name of the girl, oops, I mean where he stayed the rest of the time...

On Tuesday morning I got Larry up bright and early (I know he'll hate farm boys for the rest of his life!) and cajoled him into some breakfast. Then after browsing through his files (marking the zines I could lift later!) we went over to Rod Walker's.

After a short ride, we arrived at famous Barad Hawley and the even more famous Pandemonium Press. Alas, instead of teams of printers and copy boys, all I found was one old cantankerous Sears ditto machine in the garage. Maybe that's why it's called Pandemonium. How else could one produce all those innumerable zines on one little old ditto machine?

The first thing Rod did was show me his operation while Larry ran some of his own stuff off on the venerable press, "an old and faithful servant" as Rod called it. When Larry came back awhile later, I heard him muttering. Among several expletives I heard the word "old" but never "faithful." Anyway, Rod showed me his files and record system. Can you imagine Diplomacy material stuffed into every nook and cranny in the house? (((good grief, yes! C.))) This is not to mention all the zines in the garage. We spent the afternoon going through a lot of them, and I acquired many new additions. Wonder what Rod will do when he finds I lifted the Knowable #3 he didn't know he had?!

later in the afternoon, we heard the house shaking in front and with great aplomb I yelled "Earthquake" and dived under a desk. However, Rod informed me it was only Bonnie, so I regained my composure, at least until I met her. She muttered something about Diplomacy nuts (((I can see her point. C.))) and stalked through the house to see her mother. Poor Rod. Can you imagine having a mother-in-law in the back yard?

Soon it was time to eat and, unbelievably, Bonnie had invited me to dinner. Poisoned, I figured. However, when I sat down and found that Rod was already half through his meal (Oh, I forgot to mention that we had gone to a Mexican restaurant an hour before and I had

watched Rod gulp down 2 tacos, 4 tamales, 8 tostados, 16....now what else was there?), I figured the food was okay. It was, too. Rod's little girl, Toad (who else but Rod would name his daughter that?!) had helped with the salad and everything was delicious. Bonnie even joined us for a beer, and I found she wasn't so bad after all. In fact, before the evening was over, we split a six-pack and discovered that we both liked submarines, Russian peasants, and didn't know anything about Lucrezia Borgia. Oh well, at least Rod didn't talk about Diplomacy all the time. Could it have been because of Bonnie?!

Wednesday was Archives Day. Larry Peery found that he hadn't called me a packrat in vain. His collection will never be the same again, I'm sure. However, I did squeeze in time to go over to UCSD and see TTT Publications in operation. Would you believe 10,000 pieces of paper this summer?! And I thought Larry was an ecologist.

Before a late dinner we stopped by to see Hal Naus. I found him to be a very nice guy and a true Diplomat. He had a shed in the back yard devoted exclusively to his Dippy activities. ADAG, Inc. had finally found a permanent home. After getting a lot of good zines, I tried to take a picture of Hal in his den, but the stupid flash wouldn't work. However, before the DIPCON was over, I did get pictures of almost everyone. Good ol' Sol.

After leaving Hal's place, Larry and I went to the Chuckwagon, the smorgasbord restaurant where we were to have our big banquet on Saturday night. We decided to test the food. After three plates of roast beef with all the trimmings, I decided it was adequate. Larry rolled me out to the car and we went home.

Thursday was the exciting first day of DIPCON IV. I spent the morning completing the rape of Larry's collection and then in the afternoon, Rod, Larry, and I had an executive committee meeting. It mostly consisted of deciding on the best way to stab Doug Beyerlein during the games, and when Rod left the room, Larry and I figured out how to stab him. I had craftily picked a chair with the back against the wall, so I figured I was safe.

Before the evening session, we went out to get some snacks. Larry got some avocados and made some excellent dip. We all enjoyed it immensely during the game. Wish we had gone easier on the little bowl Larry brought in, however. When we were ready for seconds, we found that Rod had already cleaned out the big bowl in the kitchen.

Pretty soon, Peter Weber and Boy Strayer arrived from Arizona. It was nice to see Pete again and I noticed the summer hadn't hurt his hair a bit. He had dropped by in July to see Hoosier Archives during his cross-country Diplomacy odyssey. (Who is worse, the New York or San Diego bunch, Pete?!). It was also nice to meet Bob Strayer. At least I thought so until the game. That dirty, backstabbing..... When George Harter of San Diego arrived, we had enough for a five-man game. Rod used the occasion to gain inspiration for Erehwon #53. I even got the first ditto he messed up. But then again, who else would want it?! ((sigh... only my packrat husband....C.))

The game turned out pretty well. George survived and when the game ended, Pete was first with me in second. I modestly thought I could have done better except for the ol' Peery gambit. Who else would throw the game to the guy that stabbed him?! Bob didn't want to be left out and stabbed me. I therefore secretly decided to stomp him into fudge the next day. George even claimed I stabbed him, but deep down, I'm sure he knows I could never do such a dastardly deed.

After so much treachery, we decided to break the game up on Doug Beyerlein's arrival. Then we immediately started plotting for the next day.

People trickled in all day on Friday. Dan Alderson led the procession by flying in at midnight. Really, Dan.

We set up shop at the UCSD campus and by noon had enough for the first seven-man game. Before the day was out, we had three games going and some nuts played until 4:30 A.M. Really! A whole raft of people came from IA. Of the old timers, Dan Brannan and Phil Castora came. I thought they had disappeared years ago; Maybe Wild 'n Woolly will rise again?!

Of the newcomers that arrived from IA, Arnie Vagts and Ben Zablocki are engaged in postal play.

The games on Friday turned out well, although I lost track of who did what to whom. I do know that poor Doug Beyerlein learned to regret his awesome postal reputation. He was stabbed right and left, but luckily the local Red Cross was able to keep him going until the next day. However, I didn't feel too bad since he stabbed me first. Isn't that always the way?! The game I was in broke up in Fall 1910. Pete Weber and I came in 1st and 2nd respectively. Someone would almost think we had something going. If only we had played one more year!

Saturday was the biggest day of all. Things actually got moving in the morning, if you can believe that after the night before. A super Youngstown Variant game got underway on a huge map that Ben Zablocki had drawn. I started the game as Russia, but Bruce Coy of IA took it over since I wanted to talk archives with Dan Alderson. Nuts, aren't I? (You don't have to agree, Carol!) Anyway, the last I heard, Bruce was doing very well and was headed for victory.

Later in the day, I got into a seven-man publishers game. The line-up was: Austria--Larry Peery, England--Hal Naus, France--Doug Beyerlein, Germany--yours truly, Italy--Arnie Vagts for Rod Walker, Russia--Dan Brannan, and Turkey--Ted Holcombe. The game was interesting even though it didn't get very far due to the other activities of the day. I did take fiendish delight, though, in engineering a German-Italian alliance that wiped out Doug Beyerlein's France. That dirty, back-stabber! (Remember, Doug, you promised not to enter another postal game for two years.) Anyway, Dan Brannan wants to continue the game by mail. Will any of you GMs out there volunteer?!

The games were adjourned for dinner. We had a great meal at the Chuckwagon as Larry and I had predicted. About twenty people attended the banquet. Jerry White and his wife from Oregon didn't attend, but I guess on your honeymoon some things are more important than Diplomacy.

After the meal, everyone sat around groggily and listened to Rod, Larry, and me give talks. After all, who else there was more long winded?! Rod gave an excellent talk on the new rulebook that should be out within the month (king's x), I explained the goals of the Archives project, and Larry finished things off with a talk on the new political-military wargames he is designing. All in all, I think the whole affair was a huge success.

Everyone then adjourned back to UCSD and we had a business meeting. We decided that a committee should be appointed to pick future DIPCON sites, so one part of the country couldn't hog it all. Also discussed were the current problems within TDA and what could be done. I'm sure you'll hear more on this later!

After the meeting, the games continued until the wee hours of the morning. I understand there was more of the same on Sunday, but I had to leave bright and early the next morning for the good ol' midwestern heartland ((read "midwestern" swampland C.)).

Some further highlights of that last full day (for me) included meeting Hal Naus' wife (can you imagine a Diplomacy widow that doesn't think her husband is nuts?!)) (((no comment, C.))) and hearing Dan Alderson explain his new space war game. He also was very nice about GMing most of the games at the DIPCON.

I would like to close by thanking everyone for making my trip so enjoyable. Larry Peery was the perfect host and it was also nice to visit at Rod's and Hal's. I came home with many pleasant memories and a whole cardboard box full of zines that I had rifled from Larry's, Rod's and Hal's collections. Hoosier Archives probably won't have any more such substantial additions for a long, long time.

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((Of those mentioned, Larry Peery recently resumed publishing, Doug Beyerlein runs an orphanzine and takes an occasional standby position and writes articles, Vagts appeared for a short time in the present DW demo game, Ben Zablocki plays postally and does very well in east coast tournaments, Rod Walker is prez of NADF and has some variant projects Dan Brannan was heard from in 1980 in letters and a few games as Steve Cartier, Hal Naus recently shut down his zine A.D.A.G., and Walt still has the Hoosier Archives

Odd-Ball Game #1 1976CQ (Arrakis) has to be one of the vicious games in all of hobby history. 1901 saw 4 home centers seized; Con and Ber (plus Swe and Rum for 8!) France got Mun -- but lost Bre, and T and A stood off in Gre. In 1902, R took Bul, Ank, Smy from T, and Nwy for 12!! T took Ser and Gre from Austria, who took Mun (from France) and Venice (from Italy) while F/G exchanged Par and Bel. In 1903, R turned on Austria taking his Bud, Vie, and Mun, plus T's Serbia for 16. But Austria continued to press France, seizing Paris. France also lost Mar to Italy, but compensated with Hol and Rom, even as G took London! Thus, by W03, the all 7 players were still in the game, only E and R had more than one home center remaining! At this point, the GM, believe it or not switched the game to a subzine, despite the fact that it sure must have had quite a following.

"Odd-Ball Games" will be a new but occasional series in DIPLOMACY DIGEST. Let me know if you want to see more of this stuff. Its hard to find, tho.



((The question of whether to replace a vanished player is almost as old as the hobby itself. Here are some views at opposite ends of the hobby's history. The first is from Trantor #11, March 13, 1965 --- a time at which there were only 6 zines in the entire hobby! Writer is John McCallum, triple paren response by the late John Smythe))

Re ... substituting new players for inactive ones. On the whole I think it is a bad idea. A GM must be above reproach... it must be obvious to all that he is being fair. I can think of few things more likely to bring charges of favoritism and so forth against him than his bring in new players into the middle of a game. There would be bound to be cries that the new entrant is a friend of so-and-so, or he has a grudge against some one else and so forth. If the player dropping out himself gets a new player to re-place him then that is something else. But the GM shouldn't. If a player is inactive then the good fortune or the bad fortune that that fact brings to his neighbors must lie where it falls. (((The choice of replacement would not be arbitrary. I stated that "The GM reserves the right to remove the offending player and replace said player with the first alternate." To eliminate charges of favoritism, etc etc all the GM would have to do is publish the list of alternates.))) Of course, if a player is inactive any other player is free to try to stir him into renewed interest....but the GM should leave these things alone, and let the players take any initiative called for or, if a player pleases, sit out a few rounds, at his discretion.

((Next up is John Michalski writing in Why Me? #40, 4-3-81))

I was disappointed to see the letter from Russ Blau with the same old dumb lines about how no standbys cause him problems and spoil a game. Perhaps if a standby had come in to replace the irresponsible dropout he chose as an ally, said standby would promptly stab Mr Bla in the back, and then we'd hear a slightly different tune.

Standbys are nothing but trouble. I can count on the fingers of half a hand the number of times I've been helped, or just not hurt, by a standby. Most often one finds a standby who doesn't care, and rarely is contacted, let alone contacts anyone else. And they play accordingly. I would much rather take my chances with the dead units than to turn an ongoing game over and "reshuffle the deck" by tossing an unknown into it. If you enter a game with 7 others for better or worse, I think, and you should play it out from there. If your enemy drops, you decided right. If your ally drops, Mr Blau might try sending them a few postcards with orders to be signed and mailed, or even just some blank cards with a return envelope, and say, "I can understand your giving up, but please let me play out your spot for at least 2 seasons so I don't go down the tubes." That's legal, and will work if you try and are not dealing with a total loser. Some people might resent the ploy, but you can still try it. ((You should check with your GM, since a few will not permit this)) (Just mail it separate from your own orders of course). It beats the hell out of finding the typical standby suddenly beside you. I don't think that Mr Blau used much thought. A no-standby policy is the only way to go.

((Finally there is my response from the next issue of Why Me?))

I was disappointed to see the letter from John Michalski with the same old dumb lines about how standbys cause him problems and spoil a game. If you had a good alliance with the dropout, you should be able to persuade his replacement to just step into the shoes of the former player -- IF you're a good diplomat. And if he were an enemy, well, you have a fresh chance to persuade him -- or trick him. Standbys present an opportunity/risk that lesser diplomats often flub. I've been helped far more often than I've been harmed.

I guess what it comes down to is why you play Diplomacy. I play for the negotiation, the intrigue, the contact with another person on whatever level. And let me tell you, CD never answers his mail. He cannot be swindled --- its either too easy (you know he'll just hold) or impossible (he won't move off target). He's no fun at all. CD is just fine if you want to increase your chances of winning -- but then you're better off with chess or solitaire. I think its good that people like Jerry Jones offer no-standby games, so that people have their choice. But no-standbys produces less negotiation, and that to me means an inferior game.



--- but this will be priveleged information which I cannot divulge to anyone!Heh, heh.  
((The game (72CI) began with the two firmly allied, with I going after F and A allying with R to take Mun from Boh in FO1. I don't know how it all ended, because EtF died in #46 and I don't know where the game went. But then (1915) I-A were still allied. Next is Jim Benes in DIPPY Vol 4 #16, 12-5-77))

Well, gentlemen, as you can see this is a rather unusual lineup. We have two brothers enrolled in the game. Some of you may object to this, and your objections will be honored. We will either refund your money or place you in our next game, if you choose not to play in this contest.

In order to help you, let us give you as much information as we have in the matter. Phil Senn has a Kentucky address. Randall has an APO New York, which would seem to indicate that their lines of communication will not be as advantageous as brothers living under the same roof. Let us further state that in a previous DIPPY game two players were enrolled who lived in a small Wisconsin town. Neither lasted, as memory serves us, beyond 1905.

So it seems to us that blood-or-close geographical relations can be as detrimental as constructive. But the final choice is yours.....

((In the next issue, Dave Crockett did opt out, and on 1-23-77 the game (77G) got under way with the brothers as I-T.. The game got underway with I attacking A with no success and T attacking R with only sporadic success. Ironically, the next game had a father and son (Bernie Oaklyn and James Alan) but this fact was not revealed to the GM))  
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((Everybody agrees that growth in the hobby is good, and that newcomers should be helped in any way possible, right? Guess again. Here's John Piggott in Ethil the Frog, Cycle 2 #20, August 1978))

...But lets get back to the way we should treat newcomers to the hobby. Me, I'm not in favor of mollycoddling them. "Novice Player Packages" are not needed at the moment: its more fun to make your own explorations (assuming that you are really interested, and if you aren't, why should we bother with you? See later), and those people with the spare time and energy needed to prepare novice packages could be more usefully occupied elsewhere. All the newcomer needs is 6 opponents and a GM; once these essentials are provided, he should be left to sink or swim (naturally any GM worthy of the name would be willing to answer a novice's sensible questions, whose answers might be well-known to most members of the hobby). Many features in zines, whilst potentially of greatest use to relative newcomers, are in fact of most interest to the "old guard". Richard Sharp's "Who's Who" in Dolchstoss is an example; its much too cliqueish to be intellegible to the absolute novice....

In fact, the hobby ((by this, he means the British hobby. Its always amusing to read in some British zine that "No one in the hobby does" this or that --- whereas in fact the rpactice may be common or even the norm here in North America)) as I see it is now big enuf to sustain itself for several years even if the influx of new players falls to zero. There are, what? 500 or so Diplomacy players, but only 100 or so are needed to form a viable and enjoyable hobby with enuf scope to satisfy everyone. (Remember, when I started playing Diplomacy by mail the British hobby contained about 30 people; it was slightly bigger when Davidson and I were in 50 games each). So, tho I'm willing to welcome and, within reason, help any newcomers who accost me, I'm not going to put myself out trying to keep surplus people in the hobby if they want to leave, nor am I prepared to go out into the streets actively looking for new players. We have enuf ALREADY! We do not really need any more!

((That triggered the following from Keith Black in the next issue:))

... I doubt that you will find many new publishers to agree that we have enuf players already. Take Agar's Pigmy, for example: he recently complained that "the number of subscribers currently continues to grow (currently around 80) I seem to be attracting established players who are happy to sub, but because they're already in some games they do not start any new ones." This is a shame, as Pigmy is a fine little

zine which could go places given sufficient support. It means that publishers have no option but to try and attract new blood, in the form of beginners who find the cliquishness of hard-core zines like Ethil and Dolchstoss a bit off-putting.

The danger is that many of these newcomers will decide that the hobby doesn't interest them, and drop out, quite possibly from their first game. This might have the effect of condemning new zines to a long wait in the second division, because experienced players wouldn't want to play in them while there is a risk that their games will be spoiled by dropouts.

The only solution must be to educate the newcomers, so that they can see all the hobby has to offer early on. Thus we may avoid unnecessary wastage, and perhaps help those who don't belong to realize this before they put their names down for too many games. However, I don't believe we will ever be able to eliminate entirely unfortunate cases such as that of Peter Sanham ((more on this affair perhaps in another issue)) So what form should this education take? The most commonly proffered suggestion, a "newcomers package", has been tried before with some success. For myself, I found Pete Swanson's The Tangled Web We Weave most enlightening; I don't think it showed me anything I wouldn't have discovered myself within a year, tho it certainly speeded up the learning process. Nor do I think it helped prevent me from becoming disillusioned with the hobby -- sympathetic publishers took care of that -- but it answered many questions before I knew enough to ask them.

((He then goes on to discuss mechanisms and sponsorship, concluding)) ... Who can blame John C Piggott when he holds himself aloof, confident that the quality and impenetrability of his zine will keep him well supplied with subscribers of the requisite caliber? It is up to those new publishers like Agar, aided perhaps by people like myself who are sympathetic to both camps, to do what they can before they, too, succumb to the prevalent air of laissez-faire. Exit in a cloud of cynicism.((Next is Piggott's resp.))

In the latest Pigmy Stephen Agar reveals that he intends to publish quite soon --- at the moment he's looking for contributions and suggestions. I wonder if he'll manage to be brutally objective. In his position I'd probably make dozens of enemies by saying what I actually thought about such zines as Leviathan and Whiskey Mac!... Despite the pleasure and interest which it will give to the people who receive it, I still think Stephen's novice package is basically an unnecessary item. As Keith says, it won't teach any one anything they won't eventually find out for themselves by other means, and meanwhile preparing it is going to cost Stephen a lot in terms of time and energy, commodities which could be put to better use elsewhere. Like making sure that games in Pigmy don't take 3 months to get off the ground, for instance.

((In response to a letter to John Miller, Piggott continued:)) I'm not suggesting that we ignore new members entirely; but help is given on an individual basis rather than wholesale spoonfeeding thru a lengthy, generally available publication. I'm sure any decent GM is willing to help new players find their feet in the hobby.

((Here we have opted for the opposite approach. The single smartest move that a novice can make is to send a business size envelope, self-addressed, to Bruce Linsey 24A Quarry Drive Albany, N.Y. 12205 and ask for the novice package, "Supernova" This is free to novices (but 35¢ in stamps would be nice) and 75¢ to others. This has 35 oversized pages crammed with good reading, mostly original but with some excellent reprints. Yes, there is a certain romance attached to learning-by-mistakes. But the price of these errors can be very high, and a serious jolt to a newcomer who may not be 100% committed to the hobby. For example, the Rulebook uses "Nor" as an abbreviation, but many GMs will not accept it, a fact unknown to many novices. You can learn this by having a position ruined -- or you can read it on page 7. It's very easy to underestimate the time a postal game takes -- and get into dangerously deep water on this account Page 4 has a good warning on this. As for taking time from other tasks, S spread the work around by using a large number of writers. And this is more efficient. GMs don't have to answer the same questions over and over. Supernova's quality is such that it can be used for years and year to come; that effort need not be repeated. And numerous novices have written to express their appreciation.))