

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #63
September 1982
Cross Game Considerations

Mark L Berch
492 Naylor Place
Alexandria VA 22304

Subs: 10 for \$3.50
Europe: 9 for £ 2
Circulation: 137

By the time you get this, I will be gone. I will be out of the country Oct 2-23. Mona and I will be strapping on our backpacks and heading for Spain. Mostly Spa(sc). Its our first vacation since spring 1981; we're really up for one!

DipCon XV - Tales of the Dipimasters is now available. It is as described last issue, and the moves for the entire top board game have been included. I've gotten some nice comments on it (Kathy's are printed elsewhere in this issue). Its 23 pages, and I think its well worth your \$1.

Due to a combination of a severe Sinus infection (which he still has) and drastic overtime requirements at work, DW is going to be about month late (for a change). As a result, Rod has been willing to give results out over the fone. I (but not DW) have taken the liberty to devide the results into zines and subzines, since, for reasons given lastish, I don't think they belong in the same poll. Thus, for zines: 1. Europa Express, 2. Paranoic's Monthly, 3. Just Among Friends, 4. Apalling Greed, 5. Brutus Bulletin, 6. Lone Star Diplomat, 7. Sleepless Knights, 8. Terran 9. Voice of Doom 10/11. Coat of Arms, Whitestonia(tie) 12. Diplomacy World, 13. The Scemer 14. Irksome, 15. St George and the Dragon 16. Murdrin Ministers 17. Snafu 18. Dogs of War, 19. Cheesecake, 20. Runestone, 21. Diplomacy by Moonlight. I didn't go far down in the list enough to get to DD's, obviously. EE certainly deserved to win. Several zines which I feel should have been in the top 8 (Whitestonia and VOD) didn't quite make it. The vote for BB I think was a nostalgia vote --- it was only published for about 2 months of the rating period.

The Subzines: "Dipimaster", "Diplomatic Immunity", "Woodpecker", "Mos Eisley's Spaceport", "Kathy's Korner", "Bersaglieri", "Magus". For my money, KK is easily the best of the lot. Neither Dipimaster nor Woodpecker have appeared more than twice in the ratings period, and are more in the catagory of one-shots. Their appearance can be attributed in large part (but not entirely) to appearing on several of the pre-printed ballots which appeared. I wonder if subzines which don't appear with at least semi-regularity should be included, but then thats not up to me.

The GMs: Doug Beyerlein, John Daly, Steve Heinowski, And Lischett, Bob Osuch, Bob Sergeant, Lee Kendter, Sr, Ron Brown/Ron Brown (they tied!) and Gary Coughlan. Conrats go to all 10 of you.

Simon Billenness 20 Winifred Road Coulsdon Surrey CR3 3JA publishes Twenty Years On, somewhat of a survey of the british hobby, and its available for 25p plus postage (send him \$2). #2 makes the interesting observation that with virtually no exceptions (GH and FOE) all british zines carry either other postal wargames, or carry variants of Diplomacy. Here I would say that no more than half the zines carry such material.

MULTIPLE WORLDS AND THE APPEARANCE OF AN IDEOLOGY IN THE GAME OF DIPLOMACY
by Allan B. Calhamer

Years ago, when I played face-to-face Diplomacy frequently with the same small group, two of the players began the practice of allying with each other in every game. With the other players allying here and there according to no set pattern, these two players obviously had an advantage since, in the event that a war developed at uneven odds, they were far more likely to be on the long tahn on the short side of the odds.

Of course, the pattern in their play was noticed after a few games. It was then quickly mentioned to all the other players at the start of the game. The remaining 5 would then swarm the other two and knock them out, after which their play returned to a more nearly typical pattern.

On another occasion, a friend of mine and I made a personal alliance to extend over all our games. We then considered all the possible combinations of countries we could draw (for countries were always assigned by chance...). There are 21 such combinations. We decided that 9 of the 21 lent themselves to the particular chicane we had in mind. For each of these 9, we devised first moves which would get the two countries off to a good start as allies. Using these moves, we not only always had a good alliance, but were relieved of the necessity of negotiating it. We usually went out together, for appearances sake, only briefly at the end of the negotiating period, and sometimes came back in looking angry.

I do not know whether the crowd sensed the pattern or not, but they were pretty good players, and about the third time we used this "super alliance", as we called it, we began to run into tough resistance on every front. Finally, the other partner decided that I must have a "super alliance" going with someone else on the board, conflicting with his; which notion was wrong, but in any case, he spilled the beans and the super-alliance came to an end.

In a sense, one might regard alignment and realignment upon positional considerations as the measure, the permanent alliance as the counter-measure, and the swarming of these permanent alliances as the counter-counter-measure. It is then apparent that the succession of measure and cointermeasure need not stop at any given point. But there is hardly any need to develop and prepare highly sophisticated counters, where there is little likelihood that one will be faced with the corresponding measures.

The evolution described above occurred in face to face games, where the same or nearly the same 7 players played in one game after another. Such an evolution is not so likely to occur in postal Diplomacy, where there are so many more players in the pool; and a player does not play with the same opponents very often.

A result similar to that of the permanent alliance can nevertheless be arrived at in Postal Diplomacy by developing a group of players who will continually ally with one another, large enough that two or three members can be expected to appear in each game. It is hard to assemble such a group, and hard to assemble it secretly. However, an ideology which has the effect of assembling such an ingroup will also carry with it all the advantages of such a group. Thus it is not so strange as it seems at first glance that a game as abstract as Diplomacy should also give rise to an ideology.

The adherents of this ideology apparently hold as their major principles that alliances should not be violated under any circumstances, and that they will not ally with any players with whom they have had unfavorable experience in this regard. They will thus gravitate toward alliance with each other, and they prefer to ally with each other anyway, as some of these letters have indicated. It's obvious that many letters are necessary in order for the ingroup to develop. They must proselytize; they must build up a file of experience on other players; they must adhere, at least to a degree to their ideology, themselves, as a confidence builder, even in games in which they could do better by discarding it or holding it in abeyance. They must lose this game to win that one.

This ideology then requires multiple worlds; that is, many games including overlapping personnel. It is, of course, subject to criticism on the grounds of realism. The nations of the First World War did not have the option before them of losing the first 9 in order to win the next six.

Let us first consider two simple states into which competition may fall, de-

pending upon the attitudes of the players toward the ideology just described:

State I: All players generally treat all agreements as void when no longer appropriate to the situation; or, in other words, they "stab".

State II: All players strictly adhere to any agreements they make.

First, of all, we note that in neither of these cases does any player have any advantage over the others, based upon the given facts alone, since they are all playing the same way in the same game. It is true that one player may feel more at home in State I, while another may have had more experience or done more thinking better in State II. One player may enjoy a State I game more, altho he does better in State II. State I may drive a given player up a wall, altho he loses his State II games, and so on, but all these situations require new facts, facts which are frequently of an arbitrary, evanescent or complicated character.

The only State we will consider which does not make use of Multiple Worlds is state I. Conceivable a hundred games of State I could be played by the same group, the play in each game being in no way dependednt on the course of any other game.. However it is not likely that any group will play State I games continually, because, for competitive reasons, sooner or later the permanent alliance, in one or another of its guises, will arise, carrying the competition into state III:

State III: Certain players adhere strictly to agreements which they make; ~~other~~ other players do not. Those who do, so nearly as possible, making agreements only with each other.

In this state, it is obvious that the players of the cartel, as I shall call it have the advantage over the other players, just as they did in the Face-To-Face situation described earlier.

This situation must be regarded as intolerable by sensible players outside the cartel. One obvious corrective effort, by analogy with the action taken in FTF games, might be expressed as State IV:

State IV: Players threatened by the cartels of State III form cartels of their own for the limited purpose of defeating the cartel of State III.

To the argument that, still, a cartel results, the answer is that the gagewas thrown down by others, and this may be the only way it can be picked up.

Players attempting to develop an anti-cartel cartel might find themselves cast in the role of defending the "stab". It must be remembered that the other side of the coin to the "stab" is the cartel. Players defeated by a "stab" sometimes become violently angry, apparently because the stab is quick and abrupt in character. It is also hard to conceal. The evil of the cartel is not so obvious. I have recently been defeated by a cartel. It was 6 or 8 moves before I learned, rather by accident, that the cartel members were regularly photocopying and exchanging my diplomatic correspondence. The game might have easily have been played thru without my ever learning of the fact.

It should also be born in mind that there has been a great deal of propaganda against the "stab"; hardly any against the cartel. Some, but by no means all, of this propaganda has been generated by the idealgous, in the course of developing their cartels. The result is an unfair picture of the relative disadvantages. Would you rather be beaten by a cartel or a stab? Is there any advantage to winning thru a cartel as opposed to winning thru a stab?

It must be remembered that the "stab" is permissable in this game. Judging by some of the attitudes I have encountered, I have almost begun to wonder if it were against the rules. It would be possible, tho to no purpose, to drive the rook out of chess, by refusing to play with anyone who moved his rooks; eventually, given only sufficient popular support, the variant thus created might shouldrout the original game.

What usually happens in a State I game is that the players play with a small reserve, either a unit or two. Or sometimes only one unit moves conservatively to do double duty of reserve and front line. The basic idea is to make the "stab" unfavorable by being able to delay it until, hopefully, someone will be able to hit the aggressor

in the rear. Sometimes circumstances compel the player to commit pieces that he had intended to use as reserves; then, of course, the likelihood of a "stab" goes up, but, in as much as it was enabled by the whole historical development of the game, it is understood and accepted by the victim.

One reason cartel players have the advantage in State III games is that they can put everything they have into the line from the very start, not bothering with reserves. In a single isolated game, they run the risk of a bad "stab", but by developing a class of players faithful to this ideology, they are protected by the fact that the fellow member will not break the cartel, since he wants to be inside it in other games.

Some players, including those who read this analysis, may prefer to follow the path of the cartel. It should be born in mind that the cartel has certain other problems. If there are, say, 3 members in the cartel, and they get off to a good start, it will soon appear that one of them has the best chances of the three, and another the worst. Now, if the lesser two, bound by the cartel, continue to cooperate with the leader, they are thereby sacrificing, as a practical matter, all their winning chances; altho, if they coalesce against the leader, they might have winning chances ((well, one of them might have winning chances)). It is probably true that they, in return, enhance their drawing chances. It may be argued that a 3-way draw is a respectable finish in a 7-way game. This matter depends upon what you mean by "respectable". Players who preferred State I or IV might say that a fighting 3-way draw was respectable, and a cartelized one was not.

Such cartel players also appear to want to justify some of their decisions on an ideological basis; notably their decision to turn upon and eliminate some one of the outer circle of their allies, who has not violated the ideology by "stabbing", but who, since he is not a member of the inner circle, will be the next to go, anyhow. Here they have relied on two minor points of ideology. One is to make finicky hairline distinctions concerning what was actually agreed upon. Another is to cite any tactical slip by the victim as an excuse for attacking him. The latter is interesting in the annals of excuse making, because there is nothing else in the ideology which deals with tactical slips in any way, however indirectly; apparently they actually violate their alliances to attack a player so marked out, so that they do violate their ideology themselves at times. No one not knowing that this point was ideological in character would suppose that a tactical slip would have such extraordinary diplomatic repercussions.

Finally, a player who has winning chances may feel some pressure to accept a draw, in order to remain in the cartel for the next game.

If players outside the cartel in Stage III fail in an effort to develop fully State IV, then one would expect the game to drag along in state III, giving the advantage, over and over, to the same knot of people, presumably longtime players who have considerable correspondence; in most cases, newer players, less frequent players, and other players continually taking a disproportionate share of the losses.

There is some possibility, then, that the game would begin to veer into State II. Then the ideologue would presumably be faced with the problem of remaining true to the ideology, in which case his current advantage would become diluted away, and he would appear to be, not a good player, but just someone who caught onto one idea which worked for the time being; or, to be a good player, he would have to devise some counter measure to his own cartel, which would require him to desert his own ideology. The problem has apparently already been encountered, and good play won over ideology, where the inner 3 members of the cartel stabbed the fourth, employing the "tactical slips" excuse.

If an effort were made to establish State IV, and the result were a nip and tuck battle with the cartel, a state of affairs might arise somewhat similar to the two-party system in politics. Unfortunately, the first stage of every game would be highly influenced by the mere number of members of each system present. If one cartel had 4 players in the game, the other three would be beaten from the start, without a

chance. Needless to say, this is not an argument against raising an opposition cartel. Without such force, the game might easily be 3 cartel members shooting fish in a barrel of 4 independents; or, as in a recent game, 4 cartel members knocking off the three independents, after which the inner 3 knocked off the 4th, after which a 3-way draw was declared.

The analogy to the 2-party system might be drawn out at great length, each separate game being analogous to a separate state or district.

If the effort described by state I succeeded, one would probably expect something like State I, occasionally slipping into State III, necessitating recourse to State IV again.

((Heavy. No doubt a good part of this came from Allan's experience in two "Hoosier Archives Demo Games", 73BI and 74CK, in which he played T both times. Let me quote then from some related comments by Arnold Vagts From Diplomacy World Vol 2, #1 in his endgame statement as Russia:))

"...Since Calhamer had thoroly demonstrated his belief in purely short term gains (i.e. a country should be expected to pick up an extra SC whenever possible with little regard for the consequences) in the last HA Demo game (73BI) where his continuation with his allies would have lead to a draw, I was not about to ally with him if I was required to trust him...." ((What one person views as a valid cross-game lesson another can view as evidence of a cartel. Later in discussing the FO1 moves, which included Germany doing A Tyo-Vie and F Hol S Fre A Pic-Bel, Vagts said....))

"....Calhamer was amazed that Lakofka(g) could attack both E and A without fearing a flank attack by F or R....Jeff Power (F), Lakofka, and myself all beleive in keeping treaties as much as possible to compliment an intergrated strategy...." ((This of course Calhamer viewed as a Cartel, and the game ended as an FGR draw))

((The article appeared in at least three different places, including Diman #11. In there, the Editor, Brad Hessel, made a few comments.....))

"...The catagories that Calhamer attempts to draw are excessively rigid, and tend to break down in actuality. Consider the case of Walt Buchanan for example ((an extremely successful player in the mid 70's)). He is a strong second, or state II player, in that he will refuse to be the first to break down an allaince... however, at the same time, he is an advocate of allying with only one player in a given game. Therefore, in a so-called State III game, regardless of the ratio of Strong Second to Win only players, Walt is likely to ally with one of the former, yes, but no more likely to participate in a purge of the latter than he is to attack anyone else, outside of his ally, whom he will remain loyal to no matter what." ((Actually, that overstates Buchanan's loyalty considerably --- Walt won nearly all of his games. But it is true that many players exhibit playing philosophies that do not easily fit into the molds required for Calmer's States II-IV))

((The article (which first appeared in late 1974) also ran in Erehwon. Len Lakofka had some rebuttal, which Rod Walker edited and ran in Erehwon #88:))

"Allan alludes to certain "real world" situations in WWI in which battles could not be exchanged for later victories but it should be noted that one didn't see England attack France, ally with France, France attack E, etc. In the real world the participants were fighting to a draw excluding some other participants selected because of their nasty habit of killing the former.

What we have here is an ideology of competance and agreements. What states does the real world of Diplomacy produce?

1. Cartelists. These people do for, game-long 2- and 3- player (or more bonds) based on trust (and past games) and go to a final result which is usually a draw. A boring exercise for everyone involved

2. Limited alliance Players. These people form alliances of precise durationand do all they can to strenghten and adhere to the agreement if the others in the agreement do likewise.

3. Short Term Alliance players. Agreements and alliances are very short-term or even on a season to season basis. Their word is usually good if it is given in precise unambiguous terms.

4. Stabbers They will say anything and they expect others to be dumb enough to go along even if they've stabbed them before in this game or other games. A cartel of stabbers is then a gaggle of jackals or a school of sharks waiting for blood --- their enemy's or their ally's.

How does the real world of Diplomacy players differ from Allan in Wonderland? Players tend to ally with persons they feel they can trust. Is that so unusual? If, in past games, a player has demonstrated a penchant for untrustworthiness, missed moves, tactical stupidity, or strategic incompetence, he will be an unlikely candidate for a good ally. A person who goes for short term gains with no overview of the board, no concept of vendetta, no understanding of a promise, will do very poorly in the long run....I have played with almost every player with a CPC rating of 3 or higher, either FTF or in the mail. Most of these players do well because of the amount of trust that can be placed in their written or spoken word...Many multiple winners have a superb overview of good play and good alliances. They will seldom take 2nd or puppet but they will favor long term agreements that will get them safely into the late middle or end game. In opposition are those who will take a quick gain and then get beaten upon by both enemy and ally alike. The latter group never understands why people dump on them and some even write 1600-word themes to vent their frustrations.....

((As is so often true in such debates, Lakofka and Calhmer are very much at cross purposes. Allan is concerned with the dynamics of the situation, how one style of play, especially expressed across several games, engenders a response. Len tries to reduce everything to the need to get a reliable ally. Note his four categories above. The first three always keep their word, and the fourth are the villains. Len presents cross-gaming considerations in terms of picking people whose track records in certain categories are approved by Len. Allan's view of the cross-game alliance is that of a marriage of convenience, where the desirable characteristic of the ally is not so much his skill or reliability(as Len views it), but purely his willingness to make such deals. The only place where these two views intersect is Allan's crack about using a minor tactical slip as an excuse to attack. Note how Len puts such a criterion in a very different light. And as we know, almost any excuse will do in a game where, in the long run, you have to attack someone.)

((For a blunter defense of cross-game considerations, we turn to this letter from Curt Gibson in Brutus Bulletin #57. The context had been an earlier airing, both in BB and in Dragon and the Lamb of the supposed automatic alliance of Verheiden and Kelly (see DD #49). From Feb 1980))

...This continued discussion of Kelly-Verheiden alliance habits is one of the best demonstrations of perverted minds we'll ever see....There are a number of qualities an experienced dipster seeks in ally preferences. Some would alter my following order of priorities, and of course personalities are a factor, often a major factor, but mainly they value an ally for: sincerity or loyalty, competence & cooperativeness, reliability and persistence, and a reasonable degree of unselfishness in sharing games ((Note that, at least in the early part of the game, you can only have learned these things from other games).. Maybe one should add, harmony in politics, hobby or national or both, but that could come under the general area of "personalities" or extra-gaming considerations....These 4 basis for ally preference ... are all factors of merit, not the whimsy that novices base alliance on. And this is all aside from factors of old scores to settle, which may take precedence, and needs to if dealing with unrepentant rascals. And Kelly & Verheiden would find only 10% of players strong in more than 2 of the 4 areas, and only 1% strong in all 4. So when they encounter each other in a game, wouldn't they be fools not to ally (Both strong in all 4).?.....Well, the above was meant for...any readers...duped by the 1977, 8, and 9 wave of silly anti-cross-gaming opinions that have been fouling up the hobby. The only thing wrong with cross gaming is that if your ally isn't a true blue, he'll likely stab you sooner or later,

((And speaking of generalizing from other games, consider this from Serendip #49, Sept 8, 1970. Charels Wells had groused that David Lindsay had stabbed him in 69G. That engendered the following from the editor, John McCallum))

But consider. When Dave was new to postal play he decided to learn what he could from the past and bought files of Graustark to further his education ((still a good idea, I might add, if you want to follow entire games all in one sitting)). Growing somewhat tired of the discussion of southeast asia, he then bought a stack of Bronbdingnabs and was particualrly interested in 1966V. In that game, as you will remember, you, playing England, and Richard Shagrin, playing Germany, had an alliance which swept all before it. Then, when the backbone of the opposition was broken, you turned on your ally, and went on to win, making your fourth consecutive victory in the 4 games of yours then completed. When Dave read all this, 1969G was just getting well into its stride. In this game Dave played Germany, you were once more, England, and, as in the previous game, an E-G alliaice was in effect. Realizing from his perusal of the earlier game that that alliance would not endure forever, Dave resolved to be on the hilt, rather than the blade, end of the knife that would eventually sever the bonds of alliance. Why do you say he is anathema? Surely, on the contrary, he is a most excellent young man who has studied well what you have to teach, and profitted by your instruction. I would say you could almost claim him as a disciple.

((Almost makes you feel good about being stabbed, eh? Why, you may ask, have I included this item? It is a type of cross game influence. Yet, I wonder if the line between this and more nefarious practices is as sharp as we'd like to think. Suppose you are allied with someone in Games A and B. He stabs you in game A, to your great surprise. Well, you say to yourself, I sure have just learned something from him. I've learned how little value he places on an allaince. Well, I'm going to put that lesson to early use, and profit by his instruction. Rather than let this confirmed stabber get me, I'll stab him first in game B, just as Dave did above. Now, dear reader, how does that situation distinguish itself from plain old fashion cross-game reprisal, which is of course the flip side of a cross game alliance?. They both amount to the same thing. You've stabbed me in game A, and as a direct consequence, I stab you in game B. And finally, if you replace "stab" with "don't stab" in the above tale, you get the cross game allaince. Sure, no formal words are spoken, no concrete deal is made. But actions, particularly at Diplomacy, speak ever so much louder than words))

|||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||
((One of the odder episodes in the annals of cross gaming was some comments made by Ron Stephens in Centurion #10 9-20-75. After defending himself against some criticisms from Jim Diehl, and pointing out that Jim had defended Gary Behnen vigou. rously in the great Poictesme controversy (see DD # 7/8), he notes the following:))

Recently, a new escalation has occured in Jim Diehl and Gary Behnen's "Get Stephens Campaign" While cross gaming alliances are allowed in most game zines, I don't think they are quite cricket. However, lest I be accused of hypocrisy, I have ocasionally resorted to them. The situation is that Jim Diehl declared his willingness to ally himself with a player in 75GK if that player would break an alliance with me in 75CS and attack me. The interesting thing about this is that Jim is not in 75CS.....

((What then followed was a chart of country assingments of some 12 games with either Behnen, Diehl or both, with notations of allied, or possibly allied. He invited other readers to supply information on these and other games, so that he could provide up-to-date information! He also noted that Both of these two were from Bloomington, MN, and noted that Nelson, Napolito, Ditter and Carlson were all also from Minnesota, which he said was "not an accusation, merely a hypothesis", whatever that means. The following issues of Centurion had no further mention of this business, so I don't really know how it all turned out from Stephens point of view))

((One approach would be just to have a HR against a CGA. Thus Rod Zaccalini's The Diplomacy Baron #1 had the following HR: "Cross Game Allainces are highly disapproved of, and cross game threats will be sufficiant grounds for expulsion from the game."

The Zine Column #56

Has it really happened until it gets reported in TZC?

DIPLOMACY DIGEST has been faked for the fourth time in 1982. Its a three page job, called "Trivia Quiz", with 40 questions making fun of Brux, John Michalski, Fred Davis, Bob Osuch and many others. Very entertaining. There's also an offer supposedly by me to sell nude pictures of my wife for \$1, and I've even received a \$1 check already. Sorry folks, there aren't any. I'm the one person who, I assure you, has no real need for them. I don't know who did it, but it has a Wichita postmark, and I suspect that its a Toadycon spinoff. Kathy has already taken credit for it, something she does with all DD fakes. I'll believe that when I see an entire intact Master.

A fake issue of Dipimaster has also appeared. Its a fairly slight effort, tho. So far as I can recall, this is the first fake of a subzine ---- has there been an earlier one? Several people have fingered Jack Fleming for that one.

I mentioned lastish that Mark Larzelere is planning to run an 8-player single elimination tournament of Intimate Diplomacy, a two player tactical game described in DD #60. He has now 5 players; there is a \$50 prize for the winner, and a \$10 entrance fee. If interested contact him promptly at 7607 Fontainebleau #2352 New Carrollton MD 20784. I think it will be fun, and with no negotiations, a change of pace!

Readers of Whitestonia know that John and Kathy have been lobbying ^{at me} everything from stale marshmallows to MX missiles. I've even got a bit of mail on it. I want to make two points. First, I did NOT say, with regard to the "Leeder Poll" business, that Gary Coughlan had "seen the error of his ways". I simply said he had "switched" his position. People switch their positions for lots of reasons, among them, that the facts have changed. The reason here was that Rod had said he wasn't going to renew the deal, as I indicated lastish. Second, John has said that I am "...The Only' person standing in the way of the Miller Numbers becoming active again." Untrue. I have absolutely nothing to do with the Miller Numbers. I don't issue them, and I have no say in the selection of a new MNC. Both of those tasks are the responsibility of the MNC and only the MNC. That is the way it has always operated in the past with both the MNC and the BNC. In this regard, John Leeder has announced an extensive retrenchment in his hobby activities. He and Marge have recently had a baby, and his two kids from a former marraige have come to live with them, so his family has gone from 2 to 5! He is presently selecting a new MNC, so we'll hear about this before very long.

The hobby has indeed gotten a lot of service from John Leeder. He has been publishing for 10 years, an extraordinary longevity in this hobby. He has been a major stalwart of the variant hobby in Canada, founded the N A Zine and GM Poll, functioned for years as an Ombudsman, produced the first North American zine in French, was a mainstay in the Canadian Diplomacy Organization, and in general provided great stability for the Canadian hobby. I don't know if he is leaving the hobby entirely; I hope not, but that is his plan. Games will be either transfered to other GMs or run by John to their completion.

I should also mention two other DipCon related publications. Whitestonia has put out a very entertaining parody or fake or whatever version of the souvineer booklet, and got it out well before mine. It purports to have contributions by a variety of people, tho this is rather suspect. And Eric Ozog did have extensive verbatim quotes from the Saturday morning Seminar reprinted in his Diplomacy by Moonlight.

A Pair of new Zines:

No Fixed Address Steve Hutton 704 Brant St London Ont Canada N5Y 3N1
The Prince Jim Meinel 628 Whitworth Ln So. Kenton WA 98055

TP is designed to be a warehouse zine until June; his games will use prophetic retreats (British style). NFA is picking up orphans from the demise of Passchendaele. So far as I can tell, P really has folded this time, and Ron Brown has moved to get the games rehoused. Its sad, but apparently true.

I do believe that I'll indulge myself in: THE MAILBAG

Chuff Afflerbach: Great issue, and great interview. I complimented you on your last interview, and I'm just as pleased with this one. As a new pebble in the river of Diplomacy, I appreciate knowing just whom I'm bumping into. And as for the success of your zine, it should be obvious that it is due to the quality of the product. With most zines, you have to be in a game or get to know the personalities involved to appreciate (or even understand) what is being written. But with DD you can pick up any issue and find it stands on its own, in a concise and comprehensive format....I too had been unable to reconcile my wife to my Diplomacy dabblings, that is, until your recent issue on your trip to Israel. She enjoyed it thoroughly....Her only criticism: "The print is too small" ((I get that complaint from time to time. It's a matter of economics. I'd have to up the price at least 10¢ if I went full sized. It's interesting about the Israel issue (#46): It's gotten more compliments than any issue aside from the Lexicon issue, but it's a poor seller when it comes to back issue sales))

Bill Becker: I do understand the Mrs. problem mentioned in your interview, and it's real for game players too....Your interview issue is very well done. It took some guts to do something as sappy sounding as the reverse self interview....As yet, DW has not reached its true potential, as the hobby as a whole does not understand what it is lacking... From the sound of many they'd just prefer the hobby to stagnate at 1000 players or so and retain a status quo pose. ((Change usually engenders resistance)).

Pat Conlon: The interview was....well, maybe you should have called it a "reprints" issue after all. It seems I've read every opinion you stated in the interview somewhere else before. ((Well, EXCUUUUUUUUSE Me! I'll go right out and change some of my opinions so you'll have some fresh ones to read!)) But now we have them all brought together in one big happy read. It was fun to read. ((Dats better!))

Mark Lew: Egotistical? Hell no. The "mark Berch" theme probably covers a broader part of the hobby than any of your other issues....I do agree with you on the Leeder poll, tho I seem to be alone in this...Still, I think you need to make some sharper definitions about boycotting. ((I suppose so, but that requires a borderline situation, which hasn't yet arisen))....I'm inclined to agree about subzines in the poll too (I am proud to be one of the few genuine subzines) ((Lew's "Benzene" appears in Irksome, and is for my taste, often quite entertaining. His writing style resembles a rougher and less structured version of very early Cuerrier, with distinct elements of stream-of-consciousness, surrealism and dadaism, and I think with more practice, and a little more care, could become quite a bit better.))....Scrabble also has a subculture, for similar reasons (bears replaying, uniques in its field) but lacks 2 important things that Diplomacy has -- convience for postal play & the negotiation which gives contact among the players rather than thru publications alone.

Bruce Linsey: Your interview with Kador was very interesting and well done. In fact, the issue was among your best ever, in my opinion....The wording in my tee shirt was actually, "DON'T TRUST A WORD I'M SAYING", and while wearing it I played to a 17-17 draw. ((Yes, but you didn't have "And I really mean it" on the back.))

Kathy Byrne: The booklet was pretty interesting. I enjoyed Kador's article very much....a commentary like his is much more useful than Board 1 moves transcribed. He really let you imagine the play of the game. I totally agree with Langley's comments on the secret scoring system! I liked the response and reaction part....loved Larzelere's article. Sorry I missed all the excitement.((I'm glad you liked the various outside contributions; I printed nearly all that I got)).

Peter Ashley: When I first read that DD #61-62 was going to have an interview with you, I thought it was going to be a disaster. Surprisingly, it wasn't; I found it to be rather enjoyable.

Gary Coughlan: I no longer want to get Diplomacy Digest.

Mark L Berch
492 Naylor Place
Alexandria VA 22304

If the number "(63)" appears by
your name, your sub has just
expired.

The following is from the Alexandria
Journal,

Look Ma, A Cavity

Substituting toothpaste for re-
moved mortar to avoid detection,
two inmates at the county jail this
week tried to scrape their way
through the wall of their cell, accord-
ing to the jail warden.

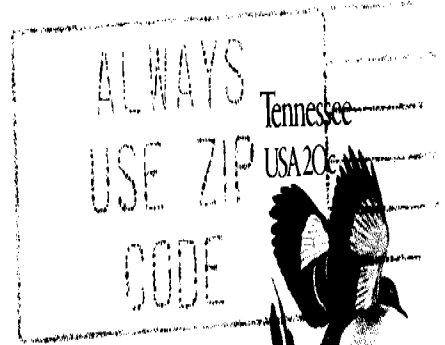
With an escape gleam in their
eyes, and despite regular check-ups
by guards, the two drilled away the
mortar around a cinder block with a
piece of metal from a bed and suc-
ceeded in extracting the block.

Before their escape plans could
crest, however, one of the county's
ultra-bright guards made a close-up
inspection of the loosened block,
capping indefinitely their aim to-
wards freedom, said warden Samuel
Saxton.

The two men, both in custody for a
previous brush with the law, were
charged with attempted escape and
destruction of property, Saxton said.
They were identified as William
Merica, 19, and Brian Johnson, 21.

Had they tried to squeeze through
their bridge to freedom, they would
have landed in a plumbing cavity be-
tween the walls, according to Saxton.

Yesterday county workers were
replacing the toothpaste with real
mortar.



Larry Peery (66)
Box 8416
San Diego CA 92102