

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #81
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Hobby History

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MARYCON 1984

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RURITANIA

((For our opening item, we go all the way back to 1964! The following appeared as a letter in Tony Watson's Ruritanian #40, December 1977, by Charles Hanson:))

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I spent some time playing spy for Ruritanian. That was back in the summer of 1964 At the Worldcon in San Francisco ((a SciFi con)), I got to talking with Ted, and that is where I first heard of Diplomacy. Ted was publishing Ruritanian and running a game with Jack Root playing France and Allan Calhamer playing Germany; they were allied. Against them were Bruce Pelz((playing under the name "Adhemar Grauhugel")) and Dian Girad playing Austria. The other nations had been eliminated by then. Bruce and Dian were engaged so their alliance was unbreakable and Calhamer made the mistake of stabbing his ally, causing Jack to put all his forces at the command of the R-A combine. I knew the people well, so I got their plans on the promise not to betray them to the enemy. I then wrote spy reports in to Ruritanian which I had mailed to friends all over Europe to be mailed back to Ted. He had no idea who his star reporter and spy was. I put my name in for the next game, and filled the time writing spy reports which reached him just before publication time, but showed knowledge of the plans of the combatants. Ted nearly went ape trying to figure out who was sending the reports. They never came from the same place twice. When I told him who it was, he was really flabbergasted. ((Ah, the things people will do to harass the gm. Next we move to Hoosier Archives #36 for an essay whose author is not given. I have edited it somewhat.))

Ruritanian was the second Diplomacy Zine ever published ... making its first appearance a scant 4 months after Graustark #1 it was published by Dave McDaniel of the L.A. Science Fiction Society for the first 26 issues. It was then taken over by Dr. Boardman, where its game, 1963B, was carried to completion in issue #40...The game 63B was notable in itself. It was the only postal game that our founder, Allan Calhamer ever played in, and was one of the very few that John Boardman played in ((this was written in 1971, I forgot to mention. Allan later joined a few other postal games, and I believe won one of them)). A very interesting summary of the game was published by Dr. Boardman in Graustark #87 of 3 April 1966 and is summarized below:

1963B:...This game...included members of the L.A.S.F.S.. The Russian player entered under the name of "Adhemar Grauhugel", but it soon became common knowledge that he was actually Bruce Pelz - husband of the Austrian player Dian Pelz ((At the beginning of the game, Dian (Girard) was Bruce's fiancée. Sneaky, eh? --- Buchanan)) The Pelzes cooperated with Calhamer ... playing Germany in a very effective Dreikaiserbund. Weak play by ... Italy, and lack of coordination among the other players generally, led to the triumph of the dreikaiserbund. By 1905 Calhamer concluded that he would be the next victim of the Family Pact, and he anticipated this development by attacking the Pelz forces. An ill timed double cross of his remaining ally, France, started the German Kaiser downhill, as France promptly joined the combine against him.

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((And so ended the first 7-player postal game in hobby history. Finally, I'd like to reprint the bulk of the first page of the first issue of Ruritania. While the actual historical significance of issue #1 of the second zine (not counting the elusive Mongo) is not that great, it shows a style that, alas, has pretty much disappeared from hobby zines. See whether you like it. The issue is dated 13 Sept 1963))

Fall 1900: HOSTILITIES THREATEN ALL ACROSS CONTINENT

CENTURY OPENS WITH FEAR OF WAR

Munitions Manufacturers Begin New Year of Celebration

The Centennial celebrations all across Europe have scarcely died away, and everywhere citizens are beginning to look about them to appraise the political situation. As the last bits of confetti settle into the wastebaskets of a continent, the popping of champagne corks threatens to soon be replaced with the thunder of cannon. Incidents on the borders and in the embassies have been increasing international tensions and threats are following toasts among the sovereigns in power from London to Moscow. International experts on our staff are predicting open warfare within the next year.

In preparation for the imminent hostilities, we are establishing communications with the military and governmental forces of the seven major powers. It will be the policy of this paper to keep our readers constantly informed of every action of all the European powers in the coming conflict ---- if it happens in Europe, you will read it first in Ruritania, unless you wrote it yourself.

We promise first publication of all treaties and agreements made public, with full text of every statement made by military or civil sources; we also guarantee the security of unofficial statements and unclassified materials discovered by our correspondents. We will keep our readers informed of the full details of every military action made on the continent and in the seas about her, in the Near East and North Africa.

All heads of state and military personnel, by virtue of their need for such comprehensive and trustworthy coverage of the diplo-military situation, are guaranteed ten-year subscriptions upon their entry into conflict. At the end of this period, we will reevaluate our financial condition, and a slight assessment may be made of member nations. Defeated nations may, if they wish, continue to receive Ruritania free of charge for the duration of the conflict in the area of Europe. Non-combatants may subscribe for one American dollar for a subjective time of 5 years. Combatants will receive their copies by the fastest practical route -- by air in most cases, by personal messenger in others.

Beginning with the next issue, to be dated "Spring 1901", the seven powers will join conflict. Guiding the nations will be... ((the names of the players then followed. The reference to "air" reflects the fact that in those days there were two postage rates: first class and air, for ordinary letters, which cost 10¢ and 15¢ per issue respectively... Nowadays, for better or worse, you just don't see that type of introduction))

CONTINENTAL EUROPE

((We continue our look at very early hobby history with a view of Europe. What follows are two essays which appeared in Walter Luc Haas' Swiss zine Bumm #17, July 1976. The first is by Michel Feron, entitled "Diplomacy in Continental Europe"))

....Science Fiction was also involved in the birth of Diplomacy in continental Europe. Indeed, I was in contact with John Boardman, as I am a SF fan myself. I had already read many references to Dippy in various SF magazines, so I asked John Boardman about it, and he was kind enuf to give me some information, and to publish my letter in Graustark. This caused lots of letters from US players, and ... Rod Walker was kind enough to send me a copy of the rules. However, I couldn't find any players, so the matter was abandoned for a few years.

The real spark for Belgium (and continental Europe), strangely enuf, was ignited in Germany... In 1970, the World Science Fiction Convention was held in Heidelberg, and quite a few US fans attended. One had brought his dippy set, and they staged a public game (at the entrance hall). This caught the fancy of another Belgian fan, Michel Liesnard, who was able to find some players at the school he attended....((this part is covered in the next essay)).

Another SF convention, this time the European SF Con held during July 1972 in Trieste, Italy, was to help the spreading of Diplomacy into other European countries. Indeed, during an evening there. Liesnard and myself organized a Diplomacy event. Due to publicity in the convention hall, many people attended; so much, in fact, that we decided to make it the first European Dippy Con. There were players from England, France, Italy, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, and even Turkey! Amounst these were two players who later were able to start their own Dippy Zine: Roland Prevot from France (Vortigen, 1974), and Ake Jonsson from Sweden (The Polar Knight, Feb 1975) .

The only* country of continental Europe where Diplomacy started independently from SF was Italy, where Enrico Manfredi started his own magazine Il Corriere Diplomatico after having seen ... Don Turnbull's Albion (Dec 1972). (((*: with "only", Michel means before Bumm was published. Bumm also had its sources in ...Albion and Courier ..wlbh))) ((The second is by Michel Liesnard))

Altho Michel Feron did mention ... Graustark in the third issue of his fanzine Le Sac a Charbon as early as 1968, one may consider, in what concerns the Belgian scene at least, that everything started between Aug 21st and 24th, 1970, when Michel and I, both attending the 28th World SF Con in Heidelberg We soon got Xerox copies of the rules and the map, and decided to start a postal game as soon as we could find 5 other players. At that time, I was still a student at the Brussels Institute for Translators and Interpreters, where I easily recruited 4 pioneers among my friends: Jean-Paul Macedoni, an Italian who played Italy, Paco Perea, a Spaniard who played Russia, Michael Bihay and Michel Tinclerm, two Belgians who respectively chose Germany and England. Then Florian de Favori, my stepfather, was induced to take Turkey, while I crowed myself French leader and Michel Feron turned into a Hapsburg.

Since 6 of us were living in Brussels (Paco had to go back to Liege every week-end, tho), and because we didn't find anyone to arbitrate the game, we selected Feron, who lives in Hannut, to be the GM. This, the fact that a player was also a referee, probably explains why this very first continental European Dippy game is known to purists as "1971AA in parenthesis".

All we still needed was a fanzine, and we did know that courageous and experienced guy in Hannut owned ten fingers, a typewriter, and a duplicator, and so: Moeshoeshoe was born! Those who wonder where the title comes from should remember that Feron is a geography freak and history freak, and, indeed, Moeshoeshoe is just the name of two kings of Lesotho.

Issue #1, dated Feb 1971, was mainly devoted to an inflammatory press-release

mailbox to cause me to think seriously and at long length about the "Diplomacy world". These publications are the latest issues of Xenogogic and Impassable. The reason they have caused me to think (an activity from which I usually try to refrain at all costs) is that these two publications represent 2 different philosophies of gaming. The former is an old and venerable gaming newsletter (by diplomacy standards), and represents the game of diplomacy as it was played several years ago. The latter is much newer, and tho it is efficiently organized and very well published, I find it extremely disconcerting both for the philosophy for which it stands and because it is a symbol for the qualities which the hobby ... has lost.

The Xenogogic is also a disturbing document, mainly because it marks the end of an era. Larry Peery, its publisher, came into Diplomacy in 1966. By the time I became interested in postal diplomacy (1967) Larry was a competent player and GM of what I considered the old school. His magazine was one of the most articulate and interesting Diplomacy publications, one that I enjoyed, not because of the games therein, or because I expected to find any particularly interesting strategy or tactics, but just because I enjoyed reading what Larry had to say. X was always interesting, often amusing, sometimes profound; it was always worth reading for its own sake alone. Now in this latest issue, Larry tells us that he will curtail his GMing activities and that he will publish only occasionally in the future. Fortunately, all is not lost: Larry will publish (even if less frequently) which is all that matters. However, Larry's semi-retirement from postal diplomacy publishing upsets me because it symbolizes a trend that is taking place in postal diplomacy.

In his article in Platypus Pie #13, John Ward pointed out the growing schism between the two philosophies of postal Diplomacy. The old school look upon postal diplomacy as an entertaining pastime. They were interested in playing diplomacy, true, but the game was a means of recreation, a means of expression, and a means of contact with other people. The second school which has gained dominance in recent years is more interested in the game per se and is much less interested in the peripheral aspects. It focuses on good strategy and tactics as the highest ideal and thus the use of the game as a vehicle of expression are often lacking.

In the last year, we have seen the retirement of Rod Walker, and it seems, of John McCallum, from Diplomacy publishing. Now Peery has grown disillusioned and will decrease activity. New publishers have come to take their places but the emphasis has changed. Players are only interested in getting into good games and getting high ratings; the quantity and quality of press releases have decrease drastically. We are coming into an era where professionalism is tantamount to nirvana and because of this, much of the fun is missing.

The biggest chance, I think, is in the GMs. GMs of the old school stamped their publications with their own personalities. The magazine was a vehicle for them as well as for the readers and thus every publications was unique. In order to be successful in the long run, GMs had to be both articulate and foreceful, so that whether the reader agreed or disagreed, whether he loathed or loved the zine, whether it frustrated or enlightened him, he was always interested. ((For GMs in that sentence, read "editors". In those days, every zine had a GM; and further, guest GMing was virtually unknown)). There are still a few of these types of zines around (Graustark, Platypus Pie, and Cos-taguana come to mind) but they are only a small minority.

The aura of professionalism seems to be everywhere. It is hard to open a magazine without being deluged by more tactical articles. Writing articles on tactics seems to be the new status symbol among modern diplomacy players. It's a shame that these same players don't get the same satisfaction out of writing a good press release. While I think that tactical articles can be interesting and informative I also think that we should remember that there is more to Diplomacy than tactics (Gads, Hoosier Archives even prints an index of these articles for us!).

Nowadays we also have the organizations. These brutes (the very word sends shivers down my spine) are anathema to all that I hold interesting in diplomacy. For

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Issue #1, dated Feb 1971, was mainly devoted to an inflammatory press-release

mailbox to cause me to think seriously and at long length about the "Diplomacy world". These publications are the latest issues of Xenogogic and Impassable. The reason they have caused me to think (an activity from which I usually try to refrain at all costs) is that these two publications represent 2 different philosophies of gaming. The former is an old and venerable gaming newsletter (by diplomacy standards), and represents the game of diplomacy as it was played several years ago. The latter is much newer, and tho it is efficiently organized and very well published, I find it extremely disconcerting both for the philosophy for which it stands and because it is a symbol for the qualities which the hobby ... has lost.

The Xenogogic is also a disturbing document, mainly because it marks the end of an era. Larry Peery, its publisher, came into Diplomacy in 1966. By the time I became interested in postal diplomacy (1967) Larry was a competent player and GM of what I considered the old school. His magazine was one of the most articulate and interesting Diplomacy publications, one that I enjoyed, not because of the games therein, or because I expected to find any particularly interesting strategy or tactics, but just because I enjoyed reading what Larry had to say. X was always interesting, often amusing, sometimes profound; it was always worth reading for its own sake alone. Now in this latest issue, Larry tells us that he will curtail his GMing activities and that he will publish only occasionally in the future. Fortunately, all is not lost: Larry will publish (even if less frequently) which is all that matters. However, Larry's semi-retirement from postal diplomacy publishing upsets me because it symbolizes a trend that is taking place in postal diplomacy.

In his article in Platypus Pie #13, John Ward pointed out the growing schism between the two philosophies of postal Diplomacy. The old school look upon postal diplomacy as an entertaining pastime. They were interested in playing diplomacy, true, but the game was a means of recreation, a means of expression, and a means of contact with other people. The second school which has gained dominance in recent years is more interested in the game per se and is much less interested in the peripheral aspects. It focuses on good strategy and tactics as the highest ideal and thus the use of the game as a vehicle of expression are often lacking.

In the last year, we have seen the retirement of Rod Walker, and it seems, of John McCallum, from Diplomacy publishing. Now Peery has grown disillusioned and will decrease activity. New publishers have come to take their places but the emphasis has changed. Players are only interested in getting into good games and getting high ratings; the quantity and quality of press releases have decrease drastically. We are coming into an era where professionalism is tantamount to nirvana and because of this, much of the fun is missing.

The biggest chance, I think, is in the GMs. GMs of the old school stamped their publications with their own personalities. The magazine was a vehicle for them as well as for the readers and thus every publications was unique. In order to be successful in the long run, GMs had to be both articulate and forceful, so that whether the reader agreed or disagreed, whether he loathed or loved the zine, whether it frustrated or enlightened him, he was always interested. ((For GMs in that sentence, read "editors". In those days, every zine had a GM; and further, guest GMing was virtually unknown)). There are still a few of these types of zines around (Graustark, Platypus Pie, and Cos-taguana come to mind) but they are only a small minority.

The aura of professionalism seems to be everywhere. It is hard to open a magazine without being deluged by more tactical articles. Writing articles on tactics seems to be the new status symbol among modern diplomacy players. It's a shame that these same players don't get the same satisfaction out of writing a good press release. While I think that tactical articles can be interesting and informative I also think that we should remember that there is more to Diplomacy than tactics (Gads, Hoosier Archives even prints an index of these articles for us!).

Nowadays we also have the organizations. These brutes (the very word sends shivers down my spine) are anathema to all that I hold interesting in diplomacy. For