

DIPLMAG - MENSA DIPLOMACY SIG NEWS

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This is the bimonthly newsletter of the American Mensa Postal Diplomacy SIG. Dues are \$2.00 per year. Membership is also open to Canadians and any other bona fide M's. Non-Mensans may receive this paper for \$2.00 per year, but may not join the SIG. Send all funds to the Chairman. Diplomacy is a registered trademark for a game Copyright by the Avalon Hill Game Co., Baltimore, Md. 21214.

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We've lost some members. I don't know whether the SIG and National dues increases had anything to do with it. I do know that three novice players dropped out when they found out that Diplomacy didn't really turn them on. One M left because of the pressure of other obligations, and one let his National membership lapse. When the 1978/79 Mensa Register comes out in July, we'll see if other National membership lapses account for some of the other drop-outs.

In any event, we've picked up two new members, Tony Earl and Richard Wolterson, and a membership renewal from Stephen Morrill, bringing our membership total to 32. A new Membership list is attached to this issue. I'll start printing the new Biographies in the next issue. If you haven't returned yours yet, please do so right away.

To keep our books balanced, I have had to drop those who haven't paid their 1978 SIG dues from our mailing list, effective immediately. A very few people, where I feel the circumstances warrant, will receive this issue even though they haven't renewed, in one last effort to get them back into the fold. If you are one of these people, please renew or drop me a line, fellows.

American Mensa experienced the lowest drop-out rates in its history in 1976 and 1977. This may have been directly related to the explosive growth in SIGs which occurred during that time. It's too early yet to say whether the dues increase to \$20/year has significantly affected the 1978 renewals. We were up to almost 29,000 members as of March 1978.

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PRELIMINARY ELECTION NOTICE

Nominations for the posts of Chairman and Senior Committeeman will be due in August. At this time, I'd like to call for a volunteer to serve as Election Commissioner, so I can announce his name and address in the July newsletter.

I am willing to run for re-election as SIG Chairman. However, if anyone out there has a craving to hold this post, please let me know. Whoever serves as SIG Chairman ought to be able to write and print DIPLOMAG as well. It has been the experience of Mensa SIGs that these jobs are best combined in one person when membership is under 50. There is a gray area for SIGs with from 50 to 99 members, where newsletter production depends on individual circumstances, such as size and frequency, and time available to the coordinator. But, since our SIG has never had over 45 members, one person ought to be able to handle both jobs.

GUEST EDITORIAL - Gamesmaster Errors

To what extent should players be required to be alert for and correct GM errors?

Most gamesmasters have a good house rule to the effect that if a GM error goes undetected for two seasons the adjudication becomes final regardless of the error.

Fine, but what if a GM error is detected by only one of two affected players while the other player is, by the error, misled, and thereby induced to submit impossible orders?

Some players feel that they should be entitled to rely upon the printed adjudications. If, in reliance thereon, they are induced to submit impossible orders (or even less effective orders), they feel the game should revert to the season of the GM error, the GM should publish a correction, and the misled player should then have an opportunity to revise his orders.

I disagree. GM error is inevitable; part of the game. If you save all orders for face to face games and then replay them in the quiet of your den, taking time for careful study of each conflict and adjudication, I predict that you will find an error in most face to face games.

Postal players naturally rely more upon the accuracy of the GM than do FTF players because between reports of the moves our minds wander. Probably most of us are unable to keep our boards set up so that we need to rely upon the GM to reestablish the position for us. How many of us go back to the prior issue and repeat all the study that led to our published orders?

Nevertheless, we should assume responsibility to check the accuracy of the published adjudications. If we lack the interest, time, patience or ability to discover a GM error we should suffer the consequences of our neglect.

FOR EXAMPLE: The GM reports orders as follows. FOR ENGLAND: fleet Tyrrhenian Sea to Naples, army Rome supports fleet Tyrr. Sea to Naples, fleet Western Med to Tyrr Sea. FOR AUSTRIA: fleet Naples to Tyrr Sea. The English order "fleet Western Med to Tyrr Sea" should not have been underscored because it succeeds (see GRI 1971 Rulebook, Rule IX-7, pages 5 & 6 - identical in 1976 A-H Rulebook). Austria notes the error and submits effective counter measures next season. But England fails to note that his order Western Med to Tyrr Sea succeeded and should NOT have been underscored. He submits useless orders to a non-existent fleet in Western Med and fails to submit any order for the fleet which had moved to Tyrr Sea. England should not have an opportunity to correct his mistake. The more alert Austrian player should have the benefit of his detecting the GM error.

- Bill Young, 618 Indian Rd.
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((Bill's article offers another good reason why Postal players ought to keep a record of their game or games on file somewhere. I have always advised players to mount a conference map on corkboard or heavy cardboard (such as one side of a corrugated box) and place pins in the board to represent the units. All 7 Standard color maptacks are available in small pillboxes in stationery stores. Have the map in front of you when you read the GM's report, and move the pins per the printed orders. If there is a mistake, you're likely to find it.))

GAMES-IN-DIPLOMAG NEWS

If the "United States Diplomacy III" variant game now running in my BUSHWACKER is still going when BUSH folds in July, I'll carry the game reports here in alternate months. This started out as an all-Mensan game, but when we had a rash of drop-outs, we had to accept some non-M's to fill up the holes.

For the benefit of those of you who don't see BUSHWACKER, at the presenttime the U.S. Diplomacy game (fought on a map of North America) seems to be a 3-way struggle between M's Jerry Montgomery (playing DIXIE) and Stephen Locke (New England) and non-M Bob Johnson (NORTHWEST). M Walter Compton is hanging on by his finernails as TEXAS. Every-one else has been eliminated, except for a couple of "Flying Dutchman" CALIFORNIA units held by "Chip" Charnley in the Midwest.

I'd like to know whether there is any interest in the formation of another all-M Variant game in the pages of DIPLOMAG after the U.S. game ends. Since all Regular Mensa Diplomacy games are being superbly handled in the pages of Don Horton's CLAW & FANG, I feel that I should limit my offerings to variants.

If you have never played a variant game, you might be interested for a change of pace. I could offer you an 8-player game based on the Regular map called the Swiss Variant II. in which Switzerland is not only passable, but a Great Power (With a Navy, too). This offers new challenges to both the Swiss player and to all 4 of his neighbors. I could also offer a worldwide (but small) variant for either 7 or 8 players, called Small World. While a Mercator map of the whole world is used, there are only 45 Supply Centers (7-man) or 47 (8-man), a figure that I've found to be about the maximum for a good postal variant. Another offering could be "Rail and Sea," which permits fast movements "by rail" within your own country, and for fleets on the high seas, including trips around Africa to Suez and the Middle East. Middle East is the 35th Supply Center, with the special quality of permitting Home builds there for whoever owns it.

If you think you'd be interested, please complete the following coupon and return it to me. The Game Fee is undetermined, but would probably be around \$3.00.

____ Yes, I'd be interested in playing in an All-Mensan Variant game in DIPLOMAG (Alternate month reports to be run by Xerox).

NAME & ADDRESS: _____

GAME PREFERRED: ___ Swiss Variant; ___ Small World; ___ Rail & Sea

____ I'm curious. Here's \$1.00. Send me copies of the maps/rules for all 3 games.

____ Here's 50¢. Send me a copy of the map & rules for _____
(one of the above)

____ No, I'm not interested in Variant games, but think that DIPLOMAG ought to run some sort of Diplomacy game.

____ I think DIPLOMAG should retain its present format as the SIG Newsletter only.

DON'T FORGET THE ANNUAL GATHERING in Cleveland, June 23-25, 1978. There will be an official Mensa Diplomacy Tournament. Bill Young and I both hope to arrive at the Bond Court Hotel on Thursday evening, so try to reach us by phone, or watch the bulletin board(s) for details. If we are unable to obtain a special room for the purpose, the games will be played in Bill Young's room. Bill has requested time for games at 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturday. I mentioned to Bill that 10 a.m. Saturday might interfere with all of the other workshop events planned for that time. I've been informed that the big SIG SIG Meeting (of all SIG Coordinators) will be held on Friday evening, and have suggested that we try for a game after that meeting breaks up. We shall have to play things by ear. Dave Blank will be there to defend his title. If you're coming, please notify Bill and me.

The 1979 AG will be held in KANSAS CITY. West Coast Diplomats, please file that in your future book. East Coast SIG members had better make an effort to get to Cleveland this year. The AG is not going to get any closer to you for several years.

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DIPLOMACY CONVENTIONS

DIPCON XI (June 30th-July 2nd), California State University, Northridge (Los Angeles), California. Held in conjunction with GLASCon III. For registration, write Russell Fox, 5160 Donna Ave., Tarzana, Calif. 91356. The International Diplomacy Assn. Annual Meeting will be held at this Con. This is the oldest of the Diplomacy conventions, and always considered the most important. (Each year, DipCon is held in a different part of the country. Next year, it's supposed to return to the East.)

ORIGINS IV (July 14th-16th). Held on the campus of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich. There will be a Diplomacy tournament as part of a wargamers show. Write to Al Slisinger, 12554 Dresden, Detroit, Mich. 48205, for details.

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That's all the SIG news for now. Next issue, I may have some interesting news about variants. If you think you'd be interested in participating in a low key organization to classify, study and rate variants (as to their playability), please drop me a line. More than that I cannot say now, except that this would be a chance for hobby newcomers to get in on the ground floor. This project is not my creation, but I've been asked to participate. It's not connected w/ any other variant organization.

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