

The union of theory and practice is...

PRAXIS

#1
November 1985

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Editor's Mood: Euphoric

Welcome, you-all, to Praxis, the hobby's first admittedly redundant Diplomacy 'zine.

I would like to begin by explaining why I think that it would be good for the hobby to have a 'zine like Praxis at this particular time. I would like to, but I can't really come up with anything substantial. The Canadian market needed a new 'zine or two about a year ago, but they then got two fine ones, and I can't honestly say that the market is underdeveloped at this time. There a couple of Canadian 'zines around now that I know before starting that Praxis will never be as good as. That should depress me, I suppose, but right now my attitude is "Hell, who cares!" You see, I am going ahead with this because I have decided that I will enjoy it and find it worthwhile. I suspect, but cannot guarantee myself, that there are people out there who will find it entertaining too.

My name, by the way, is Alan Stewart. My address is 702-25 St. Mary St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 1R2. My telephone number is (416) 961-8095. Players in games here will get my business number for their convenience. This 'zine will cost...let me see, I had it figured out the other day...ninety-five cents...no, I decided that that was too high, it would turn people off. Better to lure people into subbing first, then really hit them in six months or so with a whopping increase....Alright, eighty cents an issue (Canadian), ten for seven dollars, plus no game fee for those who get their applications to play in before next issue. And for ~~YANKS~~ our friends across the undefended border, sixty American cents the issue, ten for five dollars. Praxis will publish every five weeks. My personal preference would be for four-week publication deadlines, but it is my hope to get a lot of ~~NOT/DOG/PLAYERS~~ Americans playing here, and I have come to the conclusion that these across-border games really need the five weeks, given the state of Canada Post. Mail deadlines will be on Fridays, phone deadlines the night before, and I expect that the 'zine will hit the streets by Monday evening. (Promises, promises...)

What will be in the 'zine, though? What will be its tone, or gimmick, or reason for being? I'd rather not answer those questions, at least not at this time. Partly, I'm afraid of turning off people with different interests (I'll do that later, but in Issue #1?) and partly I'm afraid of disappointing people by promising something that they are unable to find here. I think that I can say these things about Praxis: It will be outspoken (but good-humoured in dealing with other members of the Diplomacy community). Discussions about politics will find a welcome here, as will bad articles about strategy, tactics and psychology (you'll hear my reasoning about this point later on). You will find stuff about sports here, particularly baseball. You will not find much about computers, or science fiction. Nicknames--you won't find a lot of nicknames. People will generally be referred to by their legal names. You won't find much about wargames. Green stuff behind refrigerators--I hate it. You won't find much about that here.

Shall we get on with this? I've been waiting a long itme for this....

Struggle!

Struggle!: The Games of Praxis will open with three models of the struggle for control of Europe. There will be no gamefee for players sending their game applications in before the next issue.

Publishing a complete set of houserules in the first issue isn't my idea of a good time. There are too many of you out there who have no interest in the matter (some, even once you are playing). On the other hand, you deserve to know just exactly what you are getting into. The Ordinances of Praxis (I never liked the term "houserules", although I am sure it is quite suitable for those who meet regularly to play FTF) are ^{almost} complete, and a copy will be sent to all players, or for that matter to anyone else who wants a look at them. At this time I think it is sufficient to hit the highlights:

- * five-week deadlines (Americans please take note)
- * great powers will be allocated by means of preference list, with all unique choices first granted, and with powers chosen by two or more players allocated at random to one of those players. This practice will be followed until all powers are allocated, and no other method will be used to give the players "as a whole" something closer to their stated preferences
- * after 1901, seasons will be separated only on request of 50% of the surviving players
- * phoned orders must be submitted directly by the player to the GM. Don't even try to give them to Dr. Zhu; he is a peaceful man.
- * an NMR in Spring '01 is just that. No neutral orders will be used.
- * unit specification (i.e.: army or fleet?) is required. Specification of nationality is never required.
- * ambiguity: the GM shall assume that a player has attempted to order each unit he possesses, with the result that F Nwg-Nwy, F Nor-Edi is not ambiguous if the player has fleets in the Norwegian and North seas ~~but not the North Atlantic Ocean~~
- * only white press is allowed, unless the contrary is stated in the Notice of Game Opening
- * draw and concession proposals pass only if no player rejects them (in other words, NVR=Yes). All survivors need not be included in a voted draw

Enough of this. One extremely important note if you are thinking of applying for one of the first three games. IF THERE IS ANYONE IN THE HOBBY WITH WHOM YOU ARE UNWILLING TO PLAY, INDICATE THIS ON YOUR APPLICATION, AND OF COURSE SUCH A REQUEST WILL BE HONOURED AND KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. This first issue is going out to--well, God knows who, and who can tell who might sign up for a game here?

I trust that someone will, though. It would be damn embarrassing to have to dragoon people in just to fill one game. I can imagine it now: "Hello, Adele? Do you have any friends who know how to play Diplomacy? I'm in a jam. No, you won't do: you're my sister, and I'd get in trouble. You know that Christmas present you wanted? Well, it's in the bag if you can help me out."

ALGOMA

The revised Ontario provincial electoral district of ALGOMA, on the north shore of Lake Superior, stretches from the city limits of Sault Ste. Marie to Hornepayne, some 200 miles to the north. Despite this, its population is only 30,882, second lowest among the 130 revised electoral districts. The revised district's boundaries are the same as those of the existing district and of the district proposed in February 1984. The member is Bud Wildman, of the New Democratic Party.

"Bud"--what has happened to our sense of decorum? The federal electoral district of ALGOMA EAST was long represented by the Rt. Hon. Lester B. ("Mike") Pearson, former Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize Winner. He deserved it about as much as most of them do. I never liked Mike much, although he doesn't look so bad in retrospect.

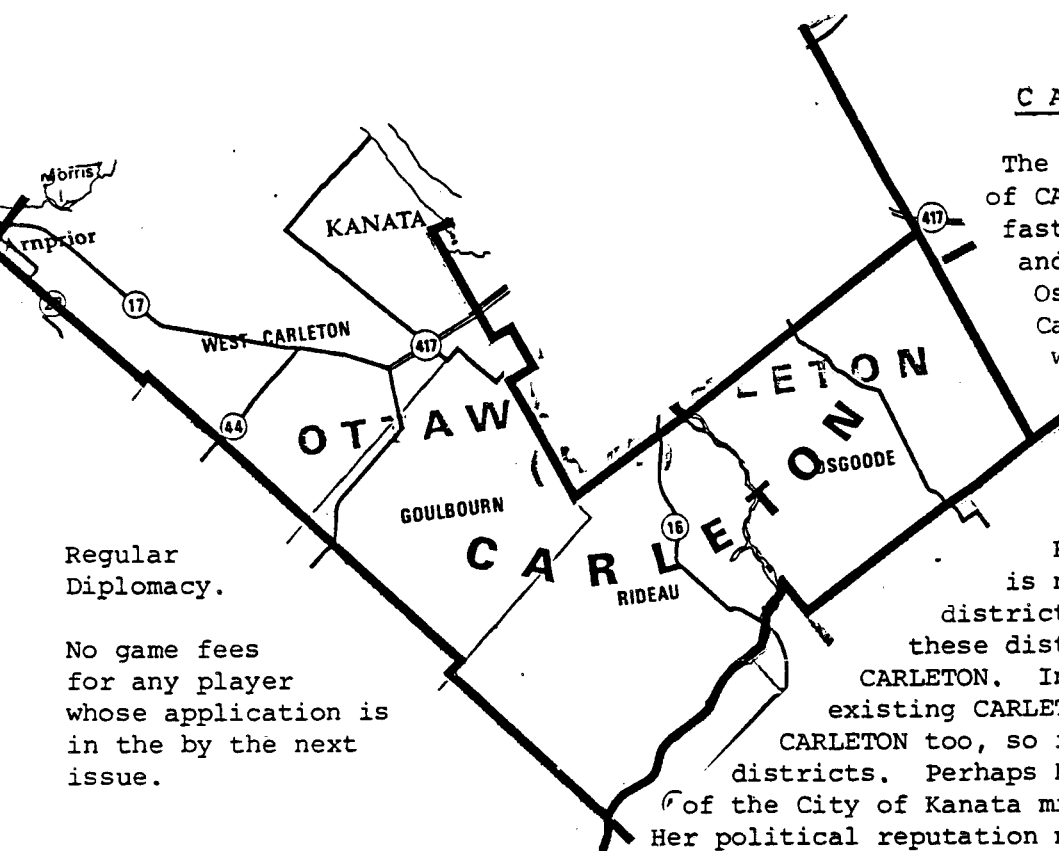
Regular diplomacy. No game fee for applicants who get their application in before the next issue.

BRANT - HALDIMAND

The revised electoral district of BRANT-HALDIMAND consists of the municipal county of Brant, the towns of Dunnville and Haldimand, and the Township of North Dumfries but excluding that part lying within the Township of Beverley. Its 1981 population is 63,546.

BRANT-HALDIMAND will almost surely be contested by the Hon. Robert Nixon, Treasurer of Ontario. His father, Harry C. Nixon, represented BRANT NORTH for the United Farmers of Ontario in 1919, and continued as member for that district and the later BRANT until 1961. Harry was, in 1943, the last Liberal Premier of Ontario--the last that is, until the Liberals and NDP combined to form a government in June of this year. Robert was Liberal leader himself from 1967-1975, and it looked like he might win all the marbles in 1975. His debate performance, in which he looked combative, angry, and strident, brought it all to naught and in fact the NDP took over the Opposition in that election.

Regular Diplomacy.
No game fee if you
apply by the next issue.



CARLETON

The proposed electoral district of CARLETON consists of the fast-growing City of Kanata and the townships of Goulbourn Osgoode, Rideau and West Carleton. Its 1981 population was 57,628.

Regular
Diplomacy.

No game fees
for any player
whose application is
in the by the next
issue.

by the fact that the City had all its money in one of the Western banks that collapsed. The sitting member for CARLETON, Bob Mitchell, distinguished himself by stating in the Legislature that the Commission that proposed the boundaries had only pretended to listen to the people at the public hearings and that the commissioners ought to be fired and someone else ought to start over.

CARLETON was formed out of the existing electoral districts of CARLETON, CARLETON-GRENVILLE AND RENFREW SOUTH. However there is no obvious candidate for the district, as none of the members for these districts live in the proposed CARLETON. In fact, there's a part of the existing CARLETON EAST in the proposed CARLETON too, so it's made up out of four districts. Perhaps Mayor Marianne Wilkinson of the City of Kanata might run in the new district. Her political reputation might have been hurt, though

Three gamestarts in total. I know I can handle that many. No doubt I could handle one or two more, too, but I'll do something I don't usually do here and accept advice from wiser hands about the danger of putting too many games in a new 'zine. I would like to run a variant though--perhaps "Far East", the variant that recently appeared in the fake Diplomacy World. We played it at a recent game at Chris Greaves' house and found it quite enjoyable and playable.

One of the reasons I'd like to play/GM a variant is that it gives a great opportunity for writing tactics articles. I mean, what is the likelihood of someone at this stage of Diplomacy's development finding a sensible opening that hasn't already been named and written about? But take a new variant and the field's wide open. Perhaps this 'zine could develop and publish a whole little coterie of "Far East" experts, giving exotic names to all types of openings, writing articles like "Indonesia can win without building fleets", debating which of us are genuine Far East experts and which mere poseurs.

If you are interested in playing "Far East", or any other variant, drop me a line and if there are enough of you with the same wants I'll run a variant game.

There's one thing that I see in a lot of 'zines that really bugs me, and that's space fillers. I mean, don't you think that publishers would have enough concern for the readers to plan out what they are going to say so that space fillers are not necessary? You can't have much concern for your readers if you just type away and find that you have space left over and just stick any old thing in there. What view of your readers' intelligence can you have, if you just stick something in and expect them not to guess that the thing is in there just to fill space? Oh, I know, it's not my 'zine, anybody can adopt whatever editorial policies they want in their own 'zines, but I really think that a better option than the space filler can be found. Something a little more creative, a little more respectful, something that does more than just say, "Oh, I've got a lot of space here, I think I'll just fill it up with any old thing or go on and on about nothing."

The Party Line

In this section you will generally find letters from subscribers. Right now, I have no subscribers. And so I would like to put forth some questions to all of you, and particularly to the gamesmasters among you. Maybe with some help we'll be able to work out the correct line on these questions--and if not, maybe this will serve as an open line whereby we can all listen to each other. (Make that "one another")

There are ethical questions concerning players, and then there are ethical questions concerning gamesmasters. My interest as a player has been in those questions raised by the fact that most gamesmasters are also players. The bond of confidentiality between players and gamesmasters is a sacred one, I would hope, and I hope that all would agree that no gamesmaster should take advantage of his duties in order to secure an advantage as a player. Or so I would hope. But how does one prevent oneself from doing so?

I invite answers to these questions, and a full set of responses will be published. Oh yes--it is not necessary to sub to this rag to get in on this. Send me a response, and if printed I'll send some pages to you even if you don't sub

1. You are GMing a game of Player A's. You know because of this, that he is quite sloppy and negligent with his orders. Always, they arrive (if at all) just before the deadline. Sometimes they arrive after--although he hasn't been NMRed yet because your houserules allow you to accept orders arriving after the deadline but before the 'zine is sent out, and your turnaround has been slow. Now you open your gamestart and find that you're in a game with player A. Can you allow your knowledge of his sloppiness to affect any decision you might make about whether or not to take him as an ally? If so, how do you justify taking confidential information into account--and if not, how do you prevent yourself from being affected by that information in playing the game?

2. Is paragraph #1 any different from a situation where you know that Player A is extremely scrupulous about his orders--always something arriving right away, and often a change or two of orders before the deadline arrives?

3. You are GMing three games in which Player A and Player B are both taking part. As far as any of your readers could tell, they are exemplary players--they ally in one game, fight in another, and don't commit themselves in the third. But they are talkative little devils--both of course have told you in the course of their calls to change orders that the "fight" is a sham, and that they had agreed a long time ago to ally in all games, and to stage little disagreements to fool the rest of the board. Of course you said nothing to this but "Hmmm-hmmm"--but now the gamestart arrives, and they are England and France and you are Germany. Does your knowledge of their habits affect your diplomacy in any way--and if not, how do you stop it?

4. You're in a game with Player A in Anything Goes--a 'zine whose houserules state that "Forgery of orders is allowed. It is the player's responsibility to design a format of orders that will make this more difficult. Give me a codeword, or do your orders up in a special way." It's a bad 'zine, and you're never signing up for another game there. But anyway the time has come where you have decided that you have to forge Player A's orders to survive, and as it happens his orders to you in your 'zine are always in a particular format--a line is drawn diagonally from the top left corner to the bottom right, and his orders are always on the right side of this

bizarre diagonal. Now of course, maybe he has a different format for his orders to Anything Goes. But he has told you that he had to design this weird format for use in that 'zine, so he's just using the diagonal-type orders for all his 'zines--he's had a bunch of order forms in that manner run off. The ethics of forgery may still be dubious despite the house rules--but if you decide to do it, do you do it by utilizing the diagonal form that you know he employs? If not, what do you do?

5. You had to expel Player A (this guy is a real nuisance, isn't he?) from your 'zine a year ago for lying to you as GM. The dispute was acrimonious, and a successful trip to the ombudsman (successful for you, that is) didn't stop a lot of people from denouncing you. You open your gamestart (say--maybe you're in too many games?) and there he is--Player A and you, brought together by fate. Do you resign? If not, how does this incident affect your diplomacy, if at all?

6. Same as number 5--except you never expelled A. You didn't think you had quite enough proof to turf him. In fact you've never spoken to him about it--you hadn't reached the stage where you thought it necessary to confront him and get a denial. But you're sure in your heart that he lied, and has a couple times. What do you do? Any effect on your diplomacy?

Enough of this. My opinions will come out after there's enough responses to print 'em up. Never having GMed before, I'm interested to see what's said by people who know whereof they speak.

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Opiates

Archbishop Lewis Garnsworthy of Metropolitan Toronto has been in the news again. During the election campaign he distinguished himself by comparing former Premier Davis' decision to extend the constitutionally-required funding of

Roman Catholic separate schools to the secondary level to "a decree of Adolph Hitler". No, he has never apologized. Soon after he was at it again, hectoring a special legislative committee looking into the matter, expounding on Frank Miller's election strategy, interrupting a member who was so audacious as to address him as "Reverend Garnsworthy" and discussing the suitability of the other titles tried out by the fawning politicians. "Reverend" wasn't respectful enough, you see.

As an Anglican, I am of course deeply ashamed and embarrassed that this man is able to speak out and claim that he is doing so in my name. But what puzzles me is why elected politicians--whether Anglicans, something else, or atheists--feel that they must allow this man to bully and hector them and why they allow him to continue to masquerade as a person whose views deserve to be listened to on matters of morality and public policy. I'm amazed that non-believers put up as much as they do with these political prelates--but if they are willing to excoriate Jerry Falwell, why do people like Garnsworthy come off unscathed? The sheer hypocrisy of his pretended concern for the 'integrity of the public school system' when it is obvious that his distress is at one of his competitors getting a bigger share of the cash, his pretence that the whole affair is 'undemocratic' when all three political parties supported the reform in the last election campaign--it is a sorry spectacle. Where was his concern for the public school system during the years of its decline into incompetence and indiscipline? Where was his voice during the last decade when thousands of parents--a substantial number of them not Roman Catholic--took their kids out of the system simply because they were unwilling to face the prospect of giving them an education becoming more inferior by the year?

If necessary, the government should give them some kind of back-handed tax break--that'll shut people like Garnsworthy up.

If you should see this, Your Grace, I will humbly bow the knee and tender my earnest apology.

The Historical Situation

When I look at a quiz, in a Diplomacy 'zine, I first give it a quick run-through to satisfy myself that I can answer all or nearly all the questions. If there appear to be too many that I can't handle, or worse, if there are some that I know I should know the answer to but which I can't come up with, I give the whole thing a pass. Why embarrass oneself?

If all of you out there are as lily-livered as me, I may get no entrants at all for this. There's a heavy 60's theme in this, five free issues to the winner, and maybe subsidiary prizes, depending on the number of entrants. Remember, maybe nobody else will enter, so you would win!

1. Name, for five points, the man, then considered a "Progressive" Republican, who defeated a Democrat whose slogan was "Your Home is Your Castle". Name that Democrat for another three points.
2. For five points, who was the TW3 girl and what did she do? Two points if you can only tell me what she did, one point if you can tell me only what TW3 was. Who was her boss, most of the time? (Three points). And her boss the very first time? (Five points).
3. Who said, "If George McGovern were President today, we would not need Gestapo tactics on the streets of Chicago."? Five points for the full answer, only two if instead you can tell me what the speaker was doing at the time, one point for telling me whom the remark was aimed at, three points for telling me the best biographer of the person the remark was aimed at.
4. Two black professional quarterbacks of the 60's later achieved distinction with different teams. Name them (two points), the teams they started with (two points), the teams they achieved distinction with (two points), and why this might be considered a trick question (two points).
5. What was unusual about the book, "Naked Came the Stranger"? (Two points).
6. According to John Diefenbaker, whose testimony proved that the United States wished to offer up Canada as a nuclear sacrifice? (Five points). Who supposedly referred to Diefenbaker as a "s.o.b."? (Two points). Who was supposedly sent up from the United States to destroy Diefenbaker politically? (3)
7. A veteran television network newsman was dropped from his anchor position and replaced by a team of two others. Name all three (six points). Name the predecessor of the dropped newsman (two points). That predecessor was, as of a year ago, still working. For whom? (two points). Oh yes, the newsman was dropped from his position as anchor of the 1964 political conventions, and when I speak of his predecessor I mean his predecessor not on the conventions but in his regular day-to-day job.
8. Who used the following political slogans,
 - * "Send them a message."
 - * "A choice not an echo."
 - * "He is fresh but the others are tired."
 - * "Trust the people." (One point each)
 - * "In your heart you know he's right."
 - * "Sixty days of decision"
9. What 60's television hit was on for a while two days a week? (2 points)? Who was the guest on the first episode of that show? (two points)? What role did he play? (one point)
10. Who led off for the 1961 New York Yankees? (two points).
11. What did John Kennedy and Barry Goldwater plan to do in 1964? (up to five points).
12. Who won the 1968 Democratic primary in New Hampshire? (2)?

Solidarity

In this department, I will, from time to time, fill you in on events affecting my personal life, or conversely, invite you to discourse about yours. I'll start off with the mundane. But it's a very real problem for me, and I hope that some of you out there may be able to help.

I live in a rent-controlled apartment in downtown Toronto. It's a real bargoen, and I couldn't afford to give it up. But for decades, it's been occupied by students at the University of Toronto, and by now it's pretty ramshackle. Essentially I want to get rid of all the existing living room furniture, get a new carpet, and generally clean the place up.

(1) How does one go about buying carpet? I don't plan to be in the place forever-- maybe no more than a year-and-a-half. How much should I expect to have to spend? Where should I go?

(2) The living room has a decent beige-coloured paint job on two walls, and wallpaper commemorating buttons and posters from American presidential campaigns (I kid you not) on another. What colour carpet would go best with this mix?

(3) The living room (it's a two-bedroom apartment) has an area I've used as a dining area, but it has a kitchen-type table there. Should I have a dining area there (it's off on the side by itself), and if so, how can I make this kitchen table type thing look less tacky. Permanent tablecloth, or what?

(4) My bedroom is very small. Does that bother anyone? Is there anyone out there who objects to being entertained in a small bedroom?* Should I try to make Dr. Zhu move out of the big bedroom? He pays more rent than I do. What if he refused to move?*Since most of you are male, do you think others object to being so treated?

(5) The chesterfield in the living room has a roll-out bed and I like it, but all the other pieces in the set are crappy and should be deep-sixed. Can I do that, keep the chesterfield but buy a different set of living-room chairs, or is that tacky?

(6) What colour chairs should I buy? How much should I expect to pay for them? Should I buy them used or second-hand.

(7) I don't know how to cook. Does anyone have or know of a good, simple beginners cookbook for one?

(8) What other decorations or amenities or junk make a living room look nice? Some kind of coffee table or something? Something to put up on the wall-it's pretty blank? Send in your ideas.

Now, once I get this living room business cleared up, I have another project. I tend to be shy by nature and I have decided that the best way to deal with this is through behaviour modification. So I figure that the best strategy is to pick some Saturday, and starting about noon, force myself to attempt to pick up girls until either I am successful or I have been turned down one hundred times (then I'm going home). Where should I start? Shopping malls seem attractive to me. "How to pick up men" books written for women always recommend trying to meet men in supermarkets. (I've always found this idea hilarious myself). Anyway, how about some good lines? What about good locations--libraries, record stores, the racetrack, the street? Remember, once I start I have to keep going until I've had my face slapped (symbolically only, of course), at least one hundred times, so there have to be a lot of prospects. How would you go about it?

That about sums it up. If you can solve these problems for me, I think I have the rest pretty well in hand for now. I'm probably going to be getting new employers in a few months, and I'll need your advice how to deal with them when the time comes.

What about you? Any problems of a personal nature that Praxis subscribers can help you with? Send in the best set of problems for solution and win three free issues.

False Consciousness

All Praxis subscribers, with the exception of Chris Carrier, are going to be happy when this department of Praxis doesn't appear, because False Consciousness will be devoted to the analysis of events in the world of Diplomacy when that analysis must take on a critical nature. Probably won't be too much of this, which will make everyone happy, as everyone knows that everyone finds feuds, controversies, and strong words repugnant and would like to see them banished from the hobby. (I do not believe this for one second, of course, but people feel they must say it.) I'm not feud-orientedⁱⁿ nature, but I do have a strong view of what's right and what's wrong and I would be less than honest with you, my potential subscribers, if I did not tell you that I expect that from time to time my righteous indignation will find its way into print.

I'll start by offering some mild criticisms of Ken Peel's "Call to Contain the Great Feud". Mild, because I view his attempt as well intentioned, but deeply flawed. I applaud him for undertaking the project. Wouldn't it be a Diplomacy player's dream to be known as the player who solved the Great Feud! Novices for years would read the standard history, "The Great feud almost tore Diplomacy apart. It could have finished the hobby. But the courageous and objective intervention of the great Ken Peel, tribune of the Diplomacy-playing masses, saved the hobby!!!!" I've daydreamed of it many times myself...An objective arbitrator, setting down firm guidelines, travelling to Dalton and Flushing for arbitration sessions, heated sessions eventually calmed by my firm, wise and objective chairmanship. Difficult times, difficulty bringing the parties together, then one last meeting where I lay it on the line, plead for fairness and forgiveness, and just before the meeting seems to break up, the parties turn back and say, "You're right. I have been unreasonably about this after all. ' Hammering out a written agreement, a signing ceremony at some motel halfway between Dalton and Flushing (I pick up the tab for all this, of course, for the hobby's sake.) Then the signing!!! The stalemate is broken!!! Kathy and Bruce get on the phone to the world!!! IT'S OVER!! They hug and kiss. The news gets out... IT'S OVER. Some guy named Alan Stewart SAVED THE HOBBY!!!!!! I go, of course to the celebration parties at both camps (impartial as I am) and everywhere people look at me with new-found respect...

Hey, that got out of hand, didn't it. Back to the point at hand.

Ken wants us to RESIGN FROM ZINES THAT GIVE SANCTUARY TO THE FEUD. Elsewhere he describes zines to be proscribed under this heading as those "infected" by the feud. Somewhat of a subjective judgment, I think. The only 'zines that I get that are "infected" by the feud, in the sense of devoting a lot of space to it, are The Not for Hire and No Fixed Address, and in both cases the extent of the infection has been confined to the printing of other people's letters. Should there be no forum for such activities? If the policy is intended to apply to every 'zine that mentions anything that can be construed as taking sides in the feud, then the policy is rather unrealistic. I think it highly unlikely that John Boardman, for example, will surrender editorial control of Graustark to some popular movement or subordinate his standards to theirs. And there are a lot of 'zines that support one side or the other in the feud by (pretending to?) attack both sides while making sure that one side or the other bears the brunt of the attack. (This is a particularly Canadian attribute, I have noticed, and I think that the reasons for this can be found in the Canadian national character, but I digress.) I bet that none of the editors of this type of 'zine would think of their 'zines as "infected" by the feud, but all put lots

of fuel on the fire and the combined effort of all of these 'zines, on both sides, is more important to the survival of the feud than the few letter-column or openly feud-oriented 'zines.

Ken wants to FREEZE THE CUSTODIAL STATUS OF FEUDERS. This is a particularly nefarious proposal. Anybody would have to "temporarily" drop out of a position if he was attacked, however unfairly or indeed maliciously, with the only alternative being to refrain from defending himself from such attacks. We could then see something like the "Designated Goon" in Hockey. Faction A assigns Spearcarrier G to attack Faction B's chief in the most vicious and unsubstantiated fashion. Faction B's Chief, if he has a custodial position, has to sit back and take it or give the position up. Spearcarrier G will of course have no custodianships at risk. This policy sets all hobby custodians up as a shooting gallery and says, "Take your best shots, boys!"

By the way, Ken, does this policy apply to both the General Editorship of Diplomacy World and to the custodianship of the Runestone Poll? The former is a much more important hobby position than the latter, I think, although the latter is closer to what most people have in mind when they think of custodianships.

I have a few observations about feuding that probably won't be of much use in ending this one but might help stop the next one. The first observation is that the real viciousness in feuds starts when people start to get involved just to defend their friends. A surprising number of people involved in The Great Feud first got involved, I think, by defending somebody else. The interesting thing is that even people who don't seem to get particularly mad at personal attacks directed at themselves are ready to start slinging mud on behalf of a friend. You have entirely separate side feuds like Berch-Langley that are based upon issues of no importance whatsoever except as they relate to the Great Feud, but of course that does not stop these side feuds from rapidly becoming as self-perpetuating and plain dirty as the source feud. The moral? Well, I can't conclude that defending friends is bad, but I would recommend (a) sticking as much as you can to defending the guy directly as opposed to counter-attacking his attackers and (b) not getting upset at personal attacks that are directed at you as a result. (Of course, some of your friends will probably jump into the fray anyway.)

Someone should study the geographical distribution of adherents of the two sides in the Great Feud, because it would make an interesting sociological study of how attitudes are transmitted. For example, can anyone explain to me why Canada is Linsey Country? Ron Brown, McIntyre, Smyth, Hutton, Carter, with only Acheson neutral as far as I know. There is some reason for it, but I don't know what. And of course there are pockets of supporters of Kathy in New York City and (I think?) northern California, and probably elsewhere around the U.S. I just don't know enough about the geographic distribution and find it fascinating. Here is a project for Chris Carrier.

Speaking of Chris, Ill uminated Megadip in Chris' The Megadiplomat #2 was the funniest thing I think I have ever read in the hobby. It is no doubt available from Chris at 1215 P Street 12, Sacramento CA, USA 85814. I intend to nominate it for the Walker award this year. It will be of interest to anyone who has (a) followed the feud OR (b) played the game Illuminati and it will make you roll in the aisles if you've done both.

That's my first plug, I guess. I thought it was kind of pointless for me to plug a lot of 'zines in this issue--everyone who is receiving it will have their own opinions as to what 'zines are worthy of notice. But a lot of you may not have seen Chris' subzine so I have made an exception. By the way, Chris, I suggested that we have a Feud Number Custodian in an old letter to Sleepless Knights. Any chance of calling them the Stewart Numbers?

That's quite enough FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS for one issue. Remember, if everyone does only things I approve of in the future, this department need never appear again!

Demystification

The Uses of Feigned Incomprehension

/The news of the Master's impending death had gotten around the college. It was assumed that the search for a replacement would be discussed at the next meeting of the Masters. Winslow, the Bursar, and his faction already had a replacement in mind.../

"After a silence, Winslow said... 'I take it that with your permission, Mr Deputy, the college will wish to discuss the vacancy we shall soon be faced with.'

'I don't understand,' said Chrystal at his sharpest.

'I thought I made myself fairly clear,' said Winslow.

'I don't understand,' said Chrystal. This kind of obstinate pretence of incomprehension was one of his favourite techniques at a meeting. "I should like us to be reminded of the statute governing the election of a Master."

/The reading of the statute was eventually agreed to./

'It makes my point,' said Chrystal. 'The college as a college can't take any action until the Mastership is vacant. There's no question before us. I move the next business.'

--C. P. Snow, Strangers and Brothers, v.2 ("The Masters"), p. 65 (Markham: Penguin Books Canada Limited, 1951).

C.P. Snow's Strangers and Brothers series is a loving examination of the worldliness of academic and professional men. One of Snow's obsessive interests-- or at least one of his hero, Lewis Eliot's--is in the attributes, practices, techniques, tactics and ploys that enable such men to wield influence over their own kind. The series is a kind of manual on "How to Persuade", if only because nothing that is relevant to this question is too minor for Snow to ignore.

In a meeting, feigned incomprehension can have a number of purposes. Where you wish to derail the slickly organized plan of action of another faction, feigned incomprehension--"I don't understand"--may stop the momentum of a rehearsed presentation, forcing the speaker to stumble and grope for new words with which to re-explain something he has already explained. The new extemporaneous words may not be as convincing as the memorized and rehearsed words that were all the speaker planned to use. Being forced to explain oneself is irritating--an irritation that, if allowed to surface, may itself anger and prejudice genuinely ununderstanding persons or persons undecided as to the merits of the speaker's cause. When an opposing faction unveils a surprise, feigned incomprehension may allow that few seconds' worth of recovery time that is necessary to devise a response to whatever has been sprung upon you.

And I bet you thought meetings were boring!

Feigned incomprehension in postal Diplomacy has different purposes. It deserves to be catalogued as a minor or useful device or ploy that nevertheless should be in the arsenal for use when required.

Consider this W '00 correspondence:

GERMANY: My first preference is for the alliance with you, but I suggest we open with a standoff in Burgundy. This is safer for you than promises of demilitarization, and an opening that is defensively safe for both of us should get an alliance off to a trusting start. Besides, we will conceal our intentions of alliance from prying eyes in other capitals...

FRANCE: No. I'm not impressed with the idea of wasting military capability with a standoff in Burgundy. I don't stand off with allies. This only weakens both of us to England's advantage, and makes me wonder about your motives... I should tell you that my current intention is to support myself into Burgundy.

GERMANY: Although I am suspicious of your excuse for your provocative moves, I am hearing nothing from ENGLAND and would like very much to work with you. Please let's keep Burgundy vacant in the fall...

FRANCE . My attempts to deal with ENGLAND have likewise been unsuccessful. I accept your proposal and hope that we can continue to work together...

S '01 moves: GERMANY F Kie-Den, A Ber-Kie, A Mun-Ruh

FRANCE F Bre-Mid, A Mar-Spa, A Par-Bur

FRANCE: I was a little bit surprised that you didn't follow through with the stand-off in Burgundy. Not that it hurts my position, but I like it when allies do what they say. I hope you got my letter accepting your proposed stand-off and your subsequent plea to "keep Burgundy vacant" thereby. That is what you meant, isn't it? Oh well, as you see, I gave up my plan to support myself in, so you can see that my intentions are good...

Usually a trusting diplomatic relationship is accompanied by clear channels of communication. Feigned incomprehension can be used to short-circuit the communications without breaking the relationship of trust. It attempts to cover objectively hostile moves so that they do not evoke hostility. The fist may land in your stomach, but when you look up to the face that launched the fist, you see not grinning malice but blameless bewilderment.

As with any ploy, there are pitfalls. Your protest of misunderstanding may not be believed, and the intended victim may hold greater resentment toward attempted manipulation than toward outright aggression. Or conversely, the intended victim may believe you, and decide that anyone who could misunderstand something like that must be too much of a moron to make a reliable ally anyway. This last result is particularly likely to occur if you try the ploy too often.

The dangers of feigned incomprehension provide an additional incentive for players to keep their letters to others clear, organized, and unambiguous. Rambling monologues that discuss the same issue or theatre in three different places are invitations to the player who would like to "misunderstand" something by taking it out of context. Remember that a sentence that could be misunderstood but which you are "absolutely sure" that he will get the drift of is an invitation to feigned incomprehension even if the honest variety does not occur.

The next time some importunate soul demands a "yes" or a "no" when the game may be on the line, don't forget the third option : "What?"

The purpose of the DEMYSTIFICATION section will be to present tactics, strategy and psychology articles of a kind that cannot be found elsewhere. Namely, bad ones. No, let me rephrase that--one kind of tactics article is the kind written by an accomplished player, a Randolph Smyth or a Mark Berch, drawing upon the experience of many years and successful coups. There is a virtually unlimited market for such articles, I believe, but there are only so many accomplished players who are also good writers, and these players have only so many hours to the day.

PRAXIS is the union of theory and practice, and I would like DEMYSTIFICATION to be a kind of workshop where players of a few years' experience, or even novices, may write about strategy, tactics and psychology without feeling that the editor is going to make them run the gauntlet before an article can be published, or worrying that the editor will compare their article unfavourably to one written on the same subject in 1976. I would go so far as to call it an outlet for half-formed ideas, and believe that even in that capacity it will be useful and of interest. Come one, come all, send your half-baked tactics articles here!!!! Or else, I will keep writing them, over and over and over again until you can't take it anymore. Don't say that you haven't been warned.

"I'm OK, You're Not OK": Letters to the Novice

There is now available a wide variety of material advising the novice how to write letters to experienced players. What about the other side of the coin: in what way if any should an experienced player's letter to a novice differ from his letter to anybody else? Let's look at some of the differences between the novice and the veteran and then work backwards to find out what these differences dictate for the opening letters.

1. The novice is excited by, and enthusiastic about, the game.

Be on your best letter-writing behaviour when you write the novice. He is looking for those first letters to come in, he is waiting for them, he is yearning to get them. Remember that feeling? He does not yet associate anyone's postmark with treachery, or dullness, or guilt (did I write that guy last season?).

Novices are often enjoined to include some details about their personal lives and interests in their first letters to experienced players. This advice would make more sense if it was turned on its head and directed at experienced players writing to novices. Only the novice lives in that state of hysterical enthusiasm that will make him interested to hear you describe the exact location of your native burg in Mississippi ("Golly, ain't that far away!") Only the novice might be sympathetically swayed by finding out that you, too, like to watch wrestling on TV, or buy Penthouse for the letters but find the pictures too gross. The time that it takes you to write out the boring details of your life is well worth the effort when writing to a novice because of the much greater likelihood that such information will lead to him allying with you rather than someone else. The hardened vet, after starting about twenty-five games, has already seen enough of the variety of the human species and couldn't care less that you are a transvestite, or an illegitimate child of Adolph Hitler, or a pseudonym for Bernie Tretick. In fact he is likely to resent novices, because each new entry in the hobby reminds him that he is no longer in his hobby youth himself, and reminds him also of the places in the hobby that these novices are taking, namely, those of the old friends from his generation who have left the hobby. The last thing he wants to hear about is novices' personal lives.

2. The novice knows nothing of the reputation and records of the other players.

This can be easily remedied; tell him about them, and make damn sure that your information on the matter is more complete, accurate and objective than the manipulative half-truths that the other players will try to feed him. Be direct and forthcoming, without worrying too much about whether the information you give to him will incline him to ally with you or attack you. If you have a lot of wins, tell him--he'll find out about it anyway, and is less likely to read sinister implications into it if he hears it from you. The danger of full disclosure is outweighed by the advantage secured by establishing a relationship wherein the novice feels that he can rely on you for honest and objective information. If you've told him about your spectacular stabs in the same 'zine before he hears about it from the guy over the mountains, and presented some plausible explanation for why it had to occur--well, if you've been that honest how can he not believe you when you tell him that you will stay out of the Channel?

Fill the novice in on the records and tendencies of the other players. Particularly useful are games where a player has handled the same country in a way that would hurt the novice if applied again. There's no problem here if the other players are good. Finding that out may cause the novice to ally with the better player for the learning experience and protection. Or it may cause him to ally with you out of fear. Whichever, you're still going on the principle that it pays to be a purveyor of honest data. Delicacy is called for, however, if you are asked to comment on a player that you consider to be downright bad. The novice may pass any bad-mouthing along. Probably best to stick to verifiable

statements. "Joe sometimes hurts his position by NMR'ing, as in 1983XX where his NMR in Fall '08 hurt both him and his trusting ally." "I have noticed, and others have mentioned to me too, that Smith generally stops writing after 1901." "Morris seems to me to be prone to stab without reason, as he may have done in 84TT where his stab destroyed an ally but Morris didn't seem to get as much out of it as the original attackers."

3. The novice may have played many face-to-face games without ever getting beyond mid -game.

Face-to-face games are rarely played to a finish. What the novice thinks of as a successful diplomacy game means nothing more to the vet than being in a strong position in 1905 or 1907, which is a long way away from winning.

Offer novices alliances in which your mid-game opportunities will be better than theirs. They may never have seen the difficulties that countries Y and Z have in keeping their growth even after taking out their first enemy. They will have (almost certainly) little conception of the dangers of stalemate lines. Throw that little sweetener into the pot to get the early alliance if you believe your country will have an easier time of it based on board position in the late midgame and endgame.

4. Novices are likely to be sensitive about their novicehood.

Some aren't, of course, but don't you be the one to find out whether a given one is or not. I think that novices are more sensitive to slights than are other players. And for my part, I was quite frankly amazed at some of the letters I as novice got from some experienced players. You are lucky indeed to get an alliance with someone whom you have written as though he were a moron. My favourite letter was one that could be paraphrased as follows, "I have never heard of you, so I will assume that you are a novice, and probably not too bright. I don't really want to ally with you for this reason, but if you make friendly moves I may consider it. Because you may not know, I will mention that A Mar S A Par-Bur is what I would consider to be an unfriendly move. If you want to attack England, you should go to the Channel." For once, I was left with nothing to say. I've gotten some other beauts, too...

Even if you know enough of the novice to think he's probably a fool, WHY share that knowledge with him? If you condescend to a novice, you are practically inviting him to abandon all other objectives in the game except that of showing you up, no matter what he has to take from other players in order to do it. And the proud novice won't necessarily tell you that he has been offended either. You may find out about it the hard way, when you open the game report.
