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RUNE STONE

The last issue in March, and the last under the current postal rates. Also noteworthy for containing an actual editorial on hobby affairs, as well as the following...

New House Rules: These are enclosed for all players. Other interested readers may have them for the asking. Changes from the previous edition are few, mostly minor wording changes which preserve the previous meaning or clarify it. Note, however, the new treatment of phone orders in sections 6 and 8.

Now, hang on, here we go....

A Radical but Simple Proposal for Clearing Up the Miller Numbers Problem:

The organizational side of the variant hobby is in a mess. It's time to do something about it.

The basic duties of the Miller Number Custodian are as follows:

- (1) to assign Miller Numbers to postal variant games as they begin;
- (2) to periodically publish LORD OF HOSTS (the variant equivalent of EVERYTHING... for regular games), containing information on gamestarts and statistics on completed variant games.

Robert Sacks is the nominal Miller Number Custodian. On Jan. 1, 1978, Robert handed those duties over to Michael Smolin, whom he appointed as Acting Miller Number Custodian. Robert wished to devote his time to variant projects which he considered more important, such as Miller Number Recategorization (more about that later).

Michael Smolin proved unable to handle the job, for whatever reasons. In spite of numerous requests, he did not get around to assigning MNs until Aug. 28, eight months after taking office; he still has not gotten around to publish an issue of LORD OF HOSTS, 15 months after his appointment; he is 3 1/2 months in arrears on assigning a Miller Number to at least one variant (5-player madman in RUNESTONE), a task which might take as much as five minutes if he dawdled.

However, the fact of Michael Smolin's inadequacy is not the real issue here. The real issue is Robert Sacks' abdication of his responsibility to oversee the activities of his appointee. If Robert Sacks' appointee is inadequate, Robert should have removed the appointment and either taken back the functions himself (which are, after all, the basic responsibilities of his office) or bestowed them on a competent person.

It is my feeling, however, that Robert in fact does not view these basic responsibilities as very important and that he is wrapped up in his "political" activities in the variant hobby (in which his empty title of Miller Number Custodian is a valuable aid).

It is therefore my conclusion that Robert Sacks should resign his post as Miller Number Custodian.

The next question is who is to replace Robert. My answer, which may prove surprising to some, is: no one.

To explain this, it is necessary to talk about Miller Number Categorization.

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The current Miller Number system is cumbersome and inadequate. A number such as, for example, 1977AChf, is composed of two parts. Like the Boardman Numbers, "1977AC" denotes the 29th variant to begin in 1977; "hf" indicates that Triumvirate is the variant being played. However, that last fact is not apparent unless one possesses a list of all variant designators, which have been simply assigned chronologically over the years. 1977AChf, then, conveys little information to the average observer, even a strong variants fan.

Miller Number recategorization has been attempted various times over the years, with frustrating results. What is needed is a system which will convey, simply but completely, information as to what variant is being played. In my view, this is impossible, and all the various attempts at recategorization over the years have been so much wasted effort. This applies to Robert Sacks' current project as well. It should be abandoned.

The way I see out of the morass is a simple one, and has the effect of also tying the variant hobby more closely to the regular hobby and giving it some of the respectability which it deserves but has often lacked due to the attitudes of some of the figures prominent in the variant branch. It is:

Variant games should be assigned numbers by the Boardman Number Custodian (a slight increase in workload, but not much; only 30-some variant began in 1978, for example.) They should be assigned Boardman Numbers in regular series with regular games. A variant game's Boardman Number should be followed by a lower case "v" to indicate that it is a variant. Any further information on the specific variant being played could be conveyed by the simple practice of using the name of the variant - a practice which seems highly radical in this computerized mathematics-dominated world.

For example, a series of assigned Boardman Numbers could be: 1979H, 1979I, 1979Jv (Gesta Danorum), 1979K, 1979L, 1979Mv (Jihad!), 1979N...

Similarly, variant game starts and variant game completions would be reported in EVERYTHING in the usual sequence with regular games.

The only flaw I see in this proposal is, as I have said, the slight increase in the workload of the Boardman Number Custodian. I feel that this would be a small price to pay for a rational variant numbering system, and for respectability in the variant hobby - at last.

This is a serious proposal which deserves to be taken seriously. I would appreciate comment from interested people, particularly from Dennis Agosta (Boardman Number Custodian), Robert Sacks and Michael Smolin (of course), and people active in the variant field. I say, why not do it?

~~NELSON WOULD TAKE THESE THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY AND CONSEQUENTLY KEPT LOSING LIMBS AND EYES AND~~

Strange. The moment this game filled, requests started to pour in. So, a few people will have to be disappointed. Here's the lineup:

Inperator, Winter 234 A.D.: (country choices random)

African Commander: Arthur Love, J. Villa Gavaz, Via Praloran 138,
Liniana, Bellino 32100, Italy.

Danude Commander: Victor Melucci, 773 Concourse Village East, Bronx, NY
10451, USA

Emperor: Steve Payne, 10 Bush St., Monterey, CA 93940, USA

Rhine Commander: Robert Paquin, 8885 Mauriac, St-Léonard, P.Q., Canada
H1P 2N4

Syrian Commander: Dan McLellan, c/o Expert Tool, 11617 147th St., Edmonton,
Alta., Canada T5M 1W3

The game will run on 6-week deadlines, under the "prophetic" system (see

the house rules) but Winter 235 will be played separately. Deadlines will be 6 weeks, with a longer period for the first season's initial negotiations. The Spring 235 deadline is thus Monday, May 1st.

Advice to players: careful of the special victory conditions. The last game ended abortively due to players overlooking them.

Map corrections: Cisalpine Gaul is a supply centre. The English Channel is called "Fretum". The Carthage-Palermo sea space boundary comes off the headland, i.e., one cannot move directly from Sicily to the Aeolian Sea.

Yes, I know the map is getting a little light as the masters get older. Go over it with a pen.

Steve Payne pays no games, as he was in the previous game. For the rest, it's deducted from your sub credit. If the balance is negative, send me money, Art, use whatever method is convenient. My bank is Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, 309 8th Ave. SW, Calgary, PC4 #12-46139.

Guess that covers it. Have fun!

BITS AND PIECES AND ULTIMATELY COPPED EVERY PAINFULLY INVOLVED SILLY AND UNNECESSARY FOR

Waiting List: This is the only game currently available in RUNESTONE. For Sacred Rhine: Paquin, McLeellan, Gemignani, Cheek, McLeellan?, Lowe? 1-3 spots.

On to the games...

Game 1977AR, Fall 1907: ITALY SHADOW OF FORMER GREATNESS! AUS, FRA INCREASE!

Once again, a French-English draw is called for; please vote with your next orders.

- Austria (Blair Gussack): a bud-rum, s by f bla; f smy a Tur f con-aeg; a ser-arg; a vis-tyr, s by a tri; a gal-alk.
- England (Dan McLeellan): a war-ukr, s by a nos; a lva-war; a Kie h; f nth h; a den-stp, e by f boh & f bal; f oly-lol; f nat h.
- France (David Head): f bel h; f mar-lyo; a mun-boh, s by a ail; a pra h; a bur-mun; a pie-ven, s by a tyr (latter ann); f tun-ion; f tyr-nap, s by a rom.
- Italy (Eric Roberge): (Retreated a tri to ven, f smy to eas); f ion-gre; a ven h, s by f adr; f eas-smy.
- Russia (Bob Normand): a sev h.
- Turkey (John Lipscomb): f con-aeg.

- Centres: Austria: vie, bud, tri, ser, gre, bul, rum, ank, smy (9) Build 2.
- England: home, nwy, swe, den, kie, stp, nos, war (10) No change.
- France: home, spa, por, bel, hol, mun, ber, tun, rom, nap (12) Build 2.
- Italy: ~~nap~~, ven, ~~tri~~, ~~aly~~ (1) Remove 3.
- Russia: sev (1) No change.
- Turkey: con (1) No change.

The Italian removal, though possibly straightforward, looks obvious enough to call for Winter/Spring orders; if you want separation, just ask. (Not you, Pierre!) The deadline is Mon., April 23. Don't forget to vote!

Vienna: I shall not rest until Italy is annihilated.

EDUCATED PEOPLE TO TAKE UNNECESSARY RISKS TO DO YOURSELVES NO GOOD AT ALL REALLY ONE DAY IT WILL

Variant standbys: Gemignani, Fisher, Baillie*, Payne, Cartier*, Lowe, LaFosse, Paquin, McLeellan.

Game 1978Efk, Winter 637: The Visigoths loan Massilia to the Franks and Cal, Hip and Tim to the Byzantines.

The Arabs built F Alx(sc) and A Nej; The Barbarians stood pat; the Byzantines built A Con, F Rho and A Cae; the Franks built F Aix; the Ostrogoths built A Rom; the Persians built A Ecb, A Nis and A Hor; the Visigoths have a build, as I neglected to credit them with Val; they build F NCa.

Spring orders fall due Monday, April 30.

A rules question from Steve Norris: According to my map, Dalmatia and Bohemia do not border. Barbarians attempted to move A Dalmatia-Bohemia and you failed it because no such unit, if there had been a unit there, would the order have failed because impossible, or is my map wrong? ((Your map is right. The Barbarian error was in miswriting "Dalmatia" for "Pannonia".))

Somewhere in the North: The scribe was nearly unrecognizable, covered with blood and gore. The barbarian leader slammed him up against the wall one more time, just to check to see if he was still remembering his lessons.

"How do you spell Dalmatia?!"

"P-A-N-N-I-A!" screamed the scribe.

"I can't hear you!"

The scribe screamed the letters louder.

"Do you think they can hear you there?" roared the barbarian leader.

The other shook his head in despair.

"Well," demanded the leader, "yell again, until they hear you."

In the background came the shrill (sic again) scream: "Somebody around here can't spell Pannonia!"

Mecca: Province after province recognizes the virtues of Islam. What other religion lets you slaughter people and then sends you to Heaven with all sorts of sexy women? Beats the Hell out of playing a harp, doesn't it?

Arabs to Ostrogoths: Look, Trevor, there's no easy pieces here, so why bother me? You don't really want Arab hordes rushing out of the Sahara, so why get me mad at you? Retreat to Cyrene like a cunning strategist and DON'T BUG ME. (Aside: sometimes politeness doesn't pay.)

Herat to Mecca: If you will turn over Basra, Baghdad and Mosul to our holy administrators, we being a reasonable people will sign a peace treaty and cease all action against our brave neighbour.

HAVETOBETAKENEVENBYTHECHAPINCHARGE BUTFORHEAVENSSAKEDONTBEAFRAIDOFHIDINGOHANDA

New Blood: Bob Albrecht, #14, 1520 23rd Ave. N, Lethbridge, Alta. T1N 4X9

Back Issues: A couple of people asked about these. I have copies of most issues going back to #133 (Sept. 7, 1976) and will soon junk about half of these, so if you want any, speak now. I have no idea what a complete set would cost, but the total page count is about 650, which would run \$6.50 for a start; I won't even try to estimate postage. François, I'm sure you'll appreciate that I just don't have the time to comb through them for articles. All or none, or some, from a given number on. Fair enough?

Damn! After two weeks of spring-like weather, it snowed again.... And of course I forgot to plug my car in, so the old battery won't turn it over.... And I feel my sinuses coming on again.... And I had too many late nights on the weekend.... I'm in a great mood....

CHIMO!

John Leeder,
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