

# Talabwo

Issue Six

August 1, 1977

TALABWO (tah-LAH-bwo) is a normally dittographed, but temporarily Xeroxed, journal of postal Diplomacy variants printed by C.F. von Metzke, P.O. Box 626, San Diego, CA 92112, USA. Read on for all the usual colophon information.

ESSAY: I've been thinking for quite a long time on what I'm going to do with and about this journal. Regrettably, I thought a little too long; last weekend, just as I was preparing to type this issue at last (having finally decided what to say), both of my ditto machines conked out. They will be in the shop at least five, and maybe up to ten, weeks. So this is the first of the Xerox TALABWO issues, of which there will be as few as possible, containing as little as possible.

There will, however, be more issues. TALABWO - temporarily in abbreviated form, but back to semi-normal when the machines return home - will continue. The major purpose of the present issue is to explain why, under what conditions, and to what extent.

A very brief bit of background. TALABWO was begun several months ago to carry business of the World Variant Association. The latter was formed largely as a counter to the Diplomacy Variant Commission, formerly an IDA subsidiary now independent and long under severe fire from wide segments of the variant hobby for many reasons.

WVA started out auspiciously under my leadership, and looked to be going some where. And then, just as the birth-pains were about ironed out, the bomb dropped. Walt Buchanan asked me to take over as editor of DIPLOMACY WORLD, and for a wide variety of reasons I accepted his bid. This meant that something had to go; this is, after all, only a hobby, not a profession. TALABWO was announced as folding, and volunteers were sought to take it over and assume leadership of WVA. None came forth.

Then The DVC appointed Greg Costikyan of New York as its administrative officer. Greg is a man of sound mind and sensibility, and the first thing he did was to approach the WVA roster to see if they might care to incorporate themselves into a new, revised, substantially altered DVC - changed in such ways as to eliminate or mitigate the various problems that had bothered people in the past. Several of us accepted Greg's tender, and I was all set to send out a final TALABWO urging everybody to flock to Greg's new project. I even had the issue typed on stencil and partially printed.

Then the first issue of PHOENIX under Greg's tutelage arrived. I was frankly horrified.

You should all have seen PHOENIX No. 30 by now; if you haven't, get one (Greg Costikyan, 1675 York Ave., New York, NY 10028, USA). The first thing that struck me about it was that in all those pages of meanderings and variant business, there was almost nothing that was geared to the advancement of variants. Much of it is understandable; a first issue under a new editor, especially one who has heralded new programs, needs lots of explaining and discussing. But then, when all that is done, we are treated to - the same old idiocy! Votes to be taken on useless (and in some cases grossly offensive) proposals. References to all the positions available for appointment by the Miller Number Custodian, 98% of which I cannot conceive of needing to formalize. Etcetera. Etcetera. All in all, I am afraid that my opinion of Greg's PHOENIX is rather low.

Mentally, I've tried to make every reasonable allowance for Greg's newness to the job, and it's entirely possible that DVC will work out to a worthy group again. But I doubt it. Am I too cynical? Have I just lost faith in the system? Maybe. But perhaps my reasons are best explained by listing examples of my objections:

1. There is still, as pending business before the DVC, a motion of censure against a number of hobby figures and groups. DVC has no business even considering such rot. The purpose of DVC is supposed to be to promote variants; censure motions are invariably grossly damaging. Yet the motion remains on the docket despite the claims that DVC is now trying to mend fences.

2. I am appalled that new members be 'voted' in; under such a system, a prospective member may have to wait weeks before he knows if he's even allowed to offer his services. And DVC is the sort of group that will only appeal to people interested in the subject matter and the field; it has no other glory to offer, so the pure glory-seeker wouldn't even waste his time.

3. (The following is not directed at Greg or PHOENIX per se, but does relate to DVC) During WVA's life, over a dozen prominent variants buffs worked quite hard to revise the Miller Numbers into a sensible system. We succeeded. I think it no false claim that virtually anybody who is anybody in variants is reasonably happy with the system developed in TALABWO. So now what happens with DVC and the MNC? They want to appoint a new committee to revise the Miller Numbers!

When I first heard this, I was angry, but then, I'm not the MNC. So I wrote Robert Sacks and offered to do the job for him, suggesting that it would take a mere evening or two (given that I'd just done the variant numbers). Sacks' reply (largely printed in PHOENIX) was to appoint me and him as a committee of two to do the work, and guidelines were set forth. Sacks' letter happened to arrive while Dick Vedder was in town, and Dick and I read it at least ten times apiece before we finally threw up our hands in exasperation. Neither of us can understand the guidelines; they're gibberish. (If you think I'm wrong, then you explain them to me.) What little Dick and I did understand seemed unnecessarily complex, and not a little idiotic.

I could go on, but enough people have written me letters expressing various gripes about the "new" DVC and PHOENIX, that I see no need. For my part, I simply can't handle it, and don't intend to try.

Nevertheless, I cannot possibly continue TALABWO as originally intended. So I'm going to continue it after all, but with substantial alterations.

1. The Variant Numbers, as finalized in TALABWO 5, will continue, and I will remain as Custodian. If you have a game needing a number, write and ask. If you know of a game needing a number, tell me. Der Garvey of Ireland will handle this for Europe; please contact him for numbers in that region. For Canada, James Hymas originally agreed to handle the job, but until I hear from him on his position with respect to the new DVC, I can't speak for him. Jim?

TALABWO will also constitute a variant games openings listing, which I hope all interested publisher-recipients will reprint in full or in part. Again, information is earnestly solicited. For the U.K., Der Garvey has just begun such a publication, and I will not attempt to intrude on his territory nor duplicate his efforts, save only with international game openings.

And, TALABWO will be used as the forum for discussion in the one major project that I wish to continue working on as a "WVA" project - a Variant Handbook. I now have enough information on the English professional handbook to be able to deal with this, and I say we go ahead. Formerly, offers of help were received from Cal White, Jim Hymas, Lew Pulsipher, Der Garvey, Hartley Patterson and Dick Vedder. Anyone interested besides those? No formal committees, but the next issue of TALABWO will be devoted mainly to printing initial proposals from anybody who cares to send any.

So that's TALABWO. The rest of the ideas we'd contemplated will either have to be shelved or taken up by someone else. (Of course, as editor of DIPLOMACY WORLD, I'll be cramming a good bit of variants stuff into those pages.)

And speaking of DIPLOMACY WORLD, the variants "staff" - i.e. regular contributors - consists in Lew Pulsipher, Robert Sacks, Raymond Heuer and Der Garvey. Though I've officially eliminated the former system of having subject-area sub-editors, in general Lew will be handling variant design, Robert and Raymond will be handling variant news (including game openings), and Der will be supplying game reviews, synopses, and commentary. True, there's much crossover here; and it should also be understood that none of the named people is restricted to any subject. But as an outline of what to anticipate, the above will serve.

TALABWO again. As soon as my ditto machines are back, the schedule will be monthly. Until then, I'll try for monthly, but no promises. Size: We'll have to see what we need. Perhaps 10 p. per issue. Cost: 20 cents per copy. All current subscriptions are being reevaluated and entered at the new rate as from the first issue after I get my ditto back. (I.e., all past issues, and all the Xerox issues, are free.) Trades: If you print variants or variant material, gladly. Otherwise, no. Freebies: To Robert Sacks, Lew Pulsipher, Dick Vedder, Walt Buchanan, and the Boardman Number Custodian. (Der - your game openings thing is considered a trade.) Och - and Greg Costikyan.

That's about my limit for now; there are a few more VN assignments since last time, but I've notified the GMs individually, and I want to wait for my ditto before trying any listings. A mere three pages of this issue is going to cost me \$7.50 for printing and about \$10.00 for postage (to you Brits, that comes roughly to £10); now do you understand why I'm cutting it short? (Too bad my writing style is so blithery, else I might have kept it to two pages; but, what the hell is \$2.50 among friends?)

COMMENTS/OFFERS OF HELP/SLASHING ATTACKS EARNESTLY SOLICITED. For print, even...

RECIPIENTS OF THIS ISSUE (If your name is underlined, I am unsure of your interest in receiving future issues; please advise. If your name is (bracketed), I am almost positive that you don't want any more of these, and will drop you from my lists unless you advise otherwise soon.)

Alderson, (Baker), Beyerlein, Brown, Buchanan, (Correll), Davis, Doyle, Dunning, Fishman, Fox, Garvey, Haas, Halfmeier, Harper, Head, Homeier, Hymas, Janta-Polczyński, Jonsson, Kovalcik, Leeder, Liesnard, McGee, Neiger, Norris, Patterson, Peters, Phillies, (Prévot), Pulsipher, Quinton, Sacks, Stimmel, Vedder, Walker P., Walker R., Walkerdine, Ware, White.

AAGH - and St.André.